Wildfires sweep Southern California

By Megan Laser

Wildfires have been burning thousands of acres of land in several parts of Southern California since Dec. 4. In total, there have been seven separate fires throughout California: the Thomas Fire, Little Mountain Fire, Lilac Fire, Skirball Fire, Liberty Fire, Rye Fire and Creek Fire. Lately, they have been active winds throughout California. The winds have only made it harder for firefighters to contain some of the fires, as it acts as a fuel to spread the fire around faster.

The biggest fire currently is the Thomas Fire, located in the Ventura County. It started on Dec. 4 and continues to burn through thousands of acres. The fire has affected several areas, including Ventura, Ojai, Casitas Springs, Santa Paula, Carpinteria, Fillmore and the unincorporated areas of Ventura County and Mattila Canyon. As of Dec. 10, it is 135% contained and has destroyed over 175,000 acres of land. With a little over 750 structures completely destroyed and 162 damaged, 150 more buildings are threatened by the fire. In fact, there was a woman in her 70’s found dead in Wheeler Canyon, near the fire.

“The death involved a traffic incident during active fire evacuation. The cause of death is blunt force injuries with terminal smoke inhalation and thermal injuries,” wrote Ventura County Chief Medical Examiner Dr. Christopher Young, in an article by VC Star. However, this has been the only death caused by the fires.

Let us send our thoughts and prayers to all the victims who have lost everything that they have. We ask all, and performing a terrific show!” exclaimed Ruhena.

Winter Fest and the evening showcase was a resounding success for the drama classes as the L-Building was filled up minutes prior to the showcase beginning. The directors were front and center in addressing the audience before handing it off to the rest of the drama students in their introductory Christmas song performance.

“(The play) was a heart-warming, romantic comedy with musical aspects,” declared Jeremiah.

“And Addams Family Christmas” was written by students of the Advanced Drama class directed by a team of students which included Ruhena, Andrea and junior Rachel Nguyen. It is an annual tradition in the drama classes that the winter showcase be a completely student-run production with Drama teacher Anna Woods as council.

“(Ruhena, Rachel and I are the directors, and Ms. Woods) is kind of a mentor that gives us advice, but ultimately we are in charge,” explained Andrea.

Directors for the performance were decided by Ms. Woods herself, who asked for volunteers from her third and fourth year drama students. The class wanted the opportunity to write the whole 40 minute play and rehearsed it with the student directors at the helm. All decisions were made by the student directors, not Ms. Woods.

“The show was incredible, honestly one of the best loving, and spooktacular Christmas show you’ll ever see,” expiated Jeremiah. ♦

Math Team Co-captain Addison Chan placed 1st and member Bruce Leung placed 4th in the SCVMA (Santa Clarita Valley Mathematics Association) Math Olympiad for seniors at Valley Christian High School last Saturday. Math team member Dustin Luong was also chosen as one of the three seniors to represent Piedmont Hills at the competition.

The seniors were given 75 minutes to work through thirty math problems. Upon completion, judges from different schools worked together to determine a winner, which was decided by whoever solved the most problems correctly in the given time. After a long wait, they announced the winner of the competition at the award ceremony.

“(Bruce, Dustin and I) drove over to Valley Christian High School at 8am. The competition began around 8:30 and (lasted) 75 minutes. After that, we had free bagels and drinks, which the three of us definitely took advantage of,” recalled Addison. “Around half an hour to an hour later, they announced the winner. Three of us, having lost patience in waiting, nearly missed the announcements because we left the building to go on a walk.”

The Senior Olympiad featured a variety of problems, from many different fields of mathematics. “For the drama (and type of question) varies, but the more difficult problems (include) number theory, geometry, probabilities and algebra questions,” explained math teacher and Math Team advisor Rey Enriquez. “We don’t teach number theory as a class in this school so it’s a little tougher, and with the probabilities, it can go crazy.”

Addison attributed his success to good preparation. Prior to the competition, Addison and other members of the PHHS Math Team worked hard on numerous problem sets, giving him enough repetition to feel confident when heading into the competition. Addison also acknowledged that he didn’t do it all on his own.

“I’d like to thank Mr. Enriquez and Mr. Kuang for helping our math team out every step of the way. Though we all have ‘goldfish memory’ as Kuang likes calling it, we always end up pulling through,” stated Addison.

The next SCVMA math field day will take place in March of next year, at West Valley College. It will feature a variety of contests that math team members of all grades will compete in, in addition to specially selected students from the Common Core Math classes.
Senior boys strut the Male Pageant stage

By Anh Truong

Piedmont Hills’ Class of 2018’s contestants competed in the annual Male Pageant (Dec. 2 from 7pm to 10pm in the L-Building) by showcasing their talents and answering questions. The Male Pageant is only open to senior males who try out and get selected.

Mr. March Syed Rahim took the title of Piedmont Hills’ Next Top Model. The talent he showcased was playing the drums, which got him into the top six. For his lip syncing song, Syed lip synced to “I’m Just a Bill,” and for his interview question, Syed had to re-fashion how he would pick up someone he just met.

“I feel humbled and blessed that they would vote me as the winner. I love the people at this school and it feels good to receive their love back,” states Syed.

There were three rounds, the first one showcasing the contestants’ talents. In the second one, the hosts felt good to receive their love back, and for his interview question, they would vote me as the winner. I love the people at this school and it feels good to receive their love back,” states Syed.

All levels of choir performed at the event. Varsity Choir, Concert Choir and Jazz Choir (better known as the Treblemakers). A professional oboe player also attended as a special guest performer in the concert choir.

“Varsity Choir is the beginning of the choir and usually it’s the choir which is a majority freshmen. Concert Choir is for the advanced choir meaning it’s their third, fourth or fourth year of choir,” explained Varsity Choir student Isabella Banagug.

All the performers have spent the past few months preparing their pieces for the concert. They memorize rhythms, tempos and lyrics to put together the perfect performances and put in the extra time and effort to perfect them.

Many choirs rehearse every day in class, carefully picking out little details and practicing new and exciting pieces. Vocal jazz meets outside of class time, even on Wednesday mornings before school starts, shared Choir Council President Joy Hwang. Choir instructor Mr. Ellis selects songs that form the choir curriculum for the entire year and these are the basis for all of their concerts. He begins the class in the summer as he is going to make sure that he is as close to the students as possible.

“I have a working list which I’ve been developing over the last eight or nine years. Every time I hear a piece I like, I put it down on the list and I’ll write little notes next to it,” explained Mr. Ellis. “It would be like an English teacher going to the library and looking at books that would be appropriate for freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors and thinking about what they would like to work on, this year. Except for me, I’m not at the library. I am in some different groups and of course, sometimes I’ll go to conventions where you sit through about 100 different pieces and they actually give you the sheet music which is printed out.

The music performed at the winter concert was a myriad of melodies, making Christmas seem closer than ever.

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**Alumni reunion for the Treblemakers**

By Nathan Avalos

For Piedmont Hills’ Jazz Choir, Treblemakers, and the opportunity to catch up with old alumni of the choir has been opened for them.

“The Treblemakers (had a) combined concert with West Valley’s last Monday at 7pm,” said junior Lily Liu.

Mr. Ellis teaches at the West Valley campus, where some of the alumni have moved on to continue their careers in choir with Mr. Ellis. For some of the members of the Treblemakers it was a reunion with some of their alumni friends.

“Mr. Ellis directly directs the Jazz Choir at West Valley. Many of the Piedmont Hills Treblemakers graduates actually go on to join the Jazz Choir at West Valley, so it’s pretty easy to see the alumni again, exclaimed Lily.

Although this opportunity for the Treblemakers is exciting, an event like this has happened in past years.

“(The concert) has not (happened) in my career, but I have heard of collaborations spanning since before I was in vocal jazz,” explained senior Joy Hwang.

“We got there and rehearsed over all our pieces we were going to perform then we got on stage and sang six jazz songs the West Valley Choir performed and we did a song together,” described Megan Greaves.

The six songs that the choir sang were titled “Christmas Jazz,” “Chili Con Can,” “Stolen Moments,” and “I’m Beginning to See the Light!” These songs were also sung at the Winter Concert last Wednesdays. They actually sang “I’m Beginning to See the Light!” with the West Valley Choir alumni.

“It was a really cool experience to sing with a talented college Jazz Choir, the whole group had lots of fun,” exclaimed Megan.

Since Christmas is just around the corner, the Treblemakers also sang three Christmas songs to light up the stage. One of these songs was “The Bells,” “Jingle Bells” and “We Wish You a Merry Christmas.”

“Being in a contest is something I don’t think will ever be out of my mind,” says contestant Dan Johnson as he stated, “I have a lifetime memory and have fun doing so,” states contestant Dan Johnson.

Male Pageant is a great way to bring the Class of 2018 together for their last year of high school with fun and memories that will last forever.

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**Choir makes a ‘December to Remember’**

By Jessica Tseng

Piedmont Hills’ Alumni reunion for the Treblemakers (Dec. 2 from 7pm to 10pm in the L-Building) by showcasing their talents and answering questions. The Male Pageant is only open to senior males who try out and get selected.

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**Instrumental concert in a Winter Wonderland**

By Tat Ng

Furnished in holiday lights and seasonal treats, instrumental ensembles presented their winter pieces with a theme of “There’s Snow Place Like Home” last Friday in the L-Building. Audience members experienced the melodies of String Orchestra, Concert Band, Percussion Ensemble, Wind Ensemble and Symphony Orchestra. Instrumental Council Vice President Warren Lam illustrated the reason as “A winter instrumental concert with a holiday spirit twist.

The evening took off with String Orchestra performing Sinfonietta, Fantaisia on a 17th Century Tuba and Fur Uinto Ux from The Messiah. Sinfonietta was a dramatic piece with suspensful development while Fantaisia was much more calm and ethereal.

The last song from this orchestra was joyful and light to bring some holiday spirit to the evening.

The most difficult piece to prepare for was probably Sinfonietta, since... a lot of preparation was needed to keep the orchestra playing together with the correct dynamics and articulation,” violinist Elise Pham described.

The concert continued with Concert Band playing Dragons Fly on the Winds of Time, Sinfonietta and The Bells of Christmas. The opening song featured lively rhythms and enthusiastic melodies to pull the audience into an imaginative land and Sinfonietta included a mix of slow tunes and energetic beats. The Bells of Christmas was comprised of familiar Christmas ballads such as Silver Bells and Jingle Bells.

Percussion Ensemble showcased Take a Seat and Nutcracker to Go. Take a Seat was a unique number that allowed the ensemble to perform with drumsticks and wood chairs and Nutcracker to Go relied on the bells and marimbas to present samples from The Nutcracker with a cheerful theme.

“Take a Seat” was a little more difficult, because the rhythms were more complicated than the ones we usually play in band and orchestra,” explained percussionist Arthur Wong, “We also had to memorize the piece without the guidance of a conductor and it was harder to get the equipment.”

The festivities came to its conclusion with Symphony Orchestra presenting Introduction to Fair of Springer Chini, Gopak from Fair of Springer Chini, Beethoven’s Symphony No. 2 and A Christmas Festival. The beginning of this ensemble was fast-paced and lighthearted with the first two songs, then they showcased a thrilling and enthusiastic piece with Beethoven’s Symphony No. 2. A Christmas Festival ended the recital with a range of relaxed holiday melodies and vivid samples of holiday productions.

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By An Nguyen

It’s true, success is the result of working steadily toward a goal. But finals is fast-approaching and time is running out. For many college-bound high school students, the college application process begins early on, and preparing for finals is one crucial step on the road to an acceptance letter. With finals season nearing, you may be searching for ways to milk your year of hard work for every possible ounce of benefit.

"Admission to a competitive or prestigious college does not necessarily mean true success and happiness.”

First off, utilize powerful techniques to study more efficiently. Rather than glazing over your semester’s worth of notes to cram the information in, study in short bursts of time and interact with the content. As you study, make connections with the things you actually know and care about. Try not to confine yourself to one certain “learning style” though, varying your techniques and mindset. If you employ these techniques while studying, you will find that even your last-minute cramming may be worthwhile.

But despite the notoriety of last minute cramming, success in finals is about much more than rote studying. Of course, studying and grasp of the information is important, but at the last minute, it’s hard to cram a semester’s worth of content in. I know you think it is best to re-read as many notes as you can, but studies show that last-minute studying doesn’t result in long-term memory retention. You might feel confident, but it is really just your short-term memory speaking. At this point in the semester, it’s much more about physical and psychological preparation. You have to remember to take care of your body: eat right, get enough sleep, get plenty of exercise, and don’t overuse caffeine or other stimulants. Taking care of your body will ultimately feed your brain. It may not feel like it, but if done consistently and regularly, taking care of yourself will help you not just during finals, but long-term as well.

It may sound cliché, but besides taking care of your body physically, it is also important to take care of yourself mentally. Don’t forget to psych yourself up for victory! In fact, positivity is an essential part to success during the infamous finals week. For me, it is pertinent to surround myself with people who are positive—who not only want you to do well, but also care about your well-being. Optimism won’t just help calm your nerves in the short run, it will help you in the long run as well. According to the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, there is mounting evidence that optimism itself affects physical health factors by decreasing anxiety, high blood pressure and risk of cardiovascular disease and various cancers.

Ultimately, it is important to keep things in perspective: Remember that grades are not the most important thing in your life and do not define who you are. If it’s going to be a top college you’re worrying about, know that there is always another option out there. Contrary to popular belief, admission to a competitive or prestigious college does not necessarily mean true success and happiness. There are plenty of alternate routes for different people looking to achieve a happy future. In the hyper-competitive environment we live in, I can certainly see how tempting it may be to throw aside your own mental health or academic integrity in exchange for a shiny A+. But the risks are high. Not only do you risk losing much of your hard work built up all semester, you also run the risk of losing your admirable character.

So before you walk into finals equipped with your No. 2 pencil, relax. You’ve done your best. Take a deep breath and stay positive.
Evolution of Christmas

By Elizabeth Trinh

Everyone is familiar with the jolly elf, the North Pole, the elves, the jingle, the teddy bears, the lights, the music, and the Santa Claus. Christmas is celebrated all over the world, but how did it begin? We will explore the holiday's history and the many traditions associated with it.

December 25th is the birth date of Jesus Christ. This event is celebrated every year through the Christian Church and is considered a holy day of joy and peace. It is also known as the Feast of the Nativity, and in many countries, it is celebrated with extreme fanfare.

The first Christmas celebration was recorded in 336 AD by Pope Silvester I. In 376 AD, it was celebrated as a public holiday in Rome. It is believed that the date of December 25th was chosen because it was a time when the sun returned to its normal position after the winter solstice.

The story of Santa Claus is closely tied to the story of St. Nicholas, a Christian bishop who lived in the 4th century AD. St. Nicholas was known for his kindness and generosity, and he is said to have given gifts to the poor. This story evolved over time, and in the 10th century, it was said that St. Nicholas could be heard singing songs while he was delivering gifts.

By the 14th century, the story of St. Nicholas had become intertwined with the legend of Father Christmas. In the 16th century, Father Christmas was depicted as an old man with a white beard, and he was said to ride a reindeer sleigh, delivering gifts to children.

The story of Santa Claus as we know it today began in the 19th century. In 1822, Clement Clarke Moore wrote "A Visit From St. Nicholas," which later became known as "The Night Before Christmas." This poem helped to spread the story of Santa Claus to the United States.

In 1883, a cartoonist named Thomas Nast began drawing pictures of Santa Claus for Harper's Weekly magazine. These illustrations helped to popularize the idea of Santa Claus as a kind and generous figure who delivered gifts to children.

Today, Santa Claus is a beloved figure in Christmas celebrations around the world. He is often depicted as a white-bearded man wearing a red suit and riding a sleigh pulled by reindeer. He is associated with the act of delivering gifts to children, and his image is often used in advertising and marketing.

While the story of Santa Claus and Christmas has evolved over time, the core message ofkindness, generosity, and joy has remained the same. As we celebrate this holiday, let us remember the spirit of giving and the joy of spending time with loved ones.
n Dec. 9, freshman Barron Orais took first place in the All Around category in a gymnastics competition held in the San Jose Cal Sports Center 1-2-3 Sweep event, competing against other gymnasts from as far as Oregon. Competitions were judged in six events, and each event held a certain amount of points. Those points were then totaled up, and the person with the highest total score took the title of first All Around.

Barron has been actively participating in gymnastics for the past nine years. He excels at gymnastics, qualifying for the NorCal Elite All Star Team, which represents the Northern California region in national gymnastic competitions. To make it into the All Star Team, one must be ranked in the Top 6 in the state competition. Remarkably, Barron has made it into the All Star Team twice.

"As a kid, I have always had a lot of energy, so my parents wanted me to do something (with it) so they put me in gymnastics," describes Barron. He makes sure that gymnastics gets his full and undivided attention while he is competing, to perform to the best of his abilities. Barron warms up and then practices for four different categories. At the San Jose Cal Sports Center 1-2-3 Sweep event, Barron placed first in the All Around, Floor Exercise, Vault and High Bar categories.

Barron states that the vault is his best event. Out of all of the events he participates in, each practice with 15-30 minutes of conditioning. As far as Oregon. Competitors were judged in six events, and each event held a certain amount of points. Those points were then totaled up, and the person with the highest total score took the title of first All Around.

Barron was also invited to attend a gymnastics meet in New York but was unavailable as far as Oregon. Competitors were judged in six events, and each event held a certain amount of points. Those points were then totaled up, and the person with the highest total score took the title of first All Around.

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"I plan on continuing (gymnastics) for as long as I can, maybe until college," expresses Barron. "Mentally going for (my goal) is important because not many people understand that it's not just (going through the routine), you actually have to go for it and not be scared," stated Barron when inquired about the hardest task he's faced while doing gymnastics. Barron was also invited to attend a gymnastics meet in New York but was unavailable to attend the meet because of school.

"Whenever I am competing, I just try to clear my mind and only think about my routine," explains Barron. He practices five days a week, three and a half hours a day. During these practices, he warms up and then practices for four different events (out of six possible), such as floor exercises, pommel horse, rings, vault, high bar and parallel bars. Afterwards, he wraps up each practice with 15-30 minutes of conditioning. Out of all of the events he participates in, Barron states that the vault is his best event. When asked about his favorite moment in gymnastics, Barron simply stated that his first gymnastic meet changed the way he thought about competitions. Although gymnastics is not as popular as other sports, it still has many challenges.

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By Eric Nguyen

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History teacher David Andrews works as an education consultant outside of being a Piedmont Hills teacher.

"I have been doing this for a long time, and I think educating the heart is just as important as educating the mind," elaborates Mr. Andrews. "I think it's important that people find something they're really passionate about, and it can be pretty difficult to train someone to do something. But when it's done well, it's really fun and engaging for the participants. People get excited and want to be involved."

Throughout his consultant career, Mr. Andrews learned that passion plays a very important role in future success, especially in entrepreneurship.

"I think it's important that people find something that they're really passionate about, something they'd work for free to do," says Mr. Andrews. "Because over time, as you build relationships and add value without asking for anything in return, people will want to reward that."
Boys’ Soccer: New Season New Coach
By Reo Nguyen
Members of the Piedmont Hills Boys’ Soccer team welcome their new coach, Hugo Chago and reflect upon themselves in preparation for their next season.

Coach Chago is the latest boys’ soccer coach for PHHS and is taking place of coach Manny Elizondo.

According to senior captain Juan Pablo Mendoza, the overall sentiment of the team towards the new coach is positive.

“His’s valuable insight on and off the field as well as always having a positive outlook on the upcoming season.

“He’s a great coach for our team. He makes us work hard each day and prepares us for the battles we’ll have to face this year,” states Mendoza.

“So far he acts very professional but also relates and interacts well with the team,” chimis senior Justin Donatios. “He demands respect on and off the field and is something that is crucial to shaping the idea of a team. All in all Chago is a great coach and the (is) very excited for the season.”

In terms of their next season, PHHS won two of their scrimmages held early this month against Oak Grove and Cristo Rey, but an actual seasonal game of the league has yet to start.

The PHHS team as a whole are working hard to advance in this season’s leaderboard.

Girls’ Soccer kicks off into new season
By Brianna Casarez
Piedmont Hills JV and Varsity Girls Soccer teams kicked off pre-season games at home on Nov. 29 against Presentation High School.

Both teams had a rocky start to the season losing their games, with the score 2-0 for JV, and 1-0 for Varsity.

“We lost the game (against Presentation), but I think we played pretty well, especially since it was our first game together. As a team I think we should work 100% even if we’re tired, but it was our first time playing as a team so we have to work harder as the season moves on if we want to be a top team,” commented Varsity Forward Drew Bozarth.

“We’re feeling confident, and we’re excited for the rest of the season,” added Bozarth.

Both teams work hard during practice, learning new moves and plays while building up speed and endurance.

“We scrimmage most of the time on our next game, sharing and some conditioning when (the coaches) feel we’re out of shape,” explained Bozarth.

Pre-season games are a way for the teams and their coaches to get to know each other. These games do not count towards the team’s win-loss records because they are intended as practice for the regular season.

As the pre-season progresses, the girls learn how to play as a team. It also helps the coaches get a feel of the team’s skills and how they compare to other schools.

“I’m hoping to gain stronger chemistry as a team throughout pre-season and to grow as a team to be the best we know we can be. I think the best way for us to prepare for CCS (Central Coast Section) is to consistently work hard and play with purpose.”

Dribble: Forward Jenny Gonzalez past her opponent while trying to keep the ball in-bounds throughout the season, shared Varsity Captain Kyra Soto.

Both teams are working hard in preparation for CCS, which will take place in spring of 2018.

Piedmont Hills will take on Wil- low Glen on Jan. 3 for the first game of the regular season at home.

Boys’ Basketball: Boys’ Varsity Basketball beats Del Mar to start season
By Vanessa Bembo
Piedmont Hills’ Boys’ Basketball team started off the season against a Varsity win (47-32) at Palma High School.

Many returning players on the Varsity team were really stoked with their first win of the season bringing the girls closer to their goal.

“The team this season is really good,” said Power Forward Jimmy Justinus. “We all have really good chemistry. I have a really good feeling about this season.”

“Our team is really special, especially because of how close we are. We all respect each other equally, but at the same time we can mess around and (still) have a good time. This season is going to be really fun yet challenging since we’re playing really good competition, but as long as we play (hand together) we’ll do really well,” added Shooting Guard Isan Jandaur.

Physical Education teacher Pete Simos is the coach for the Varsity Boys’ Basketball team. Simos has made a huge impact on his players, giving advice on how to improve their skills and how to play as a team.

Boys’ Varsity Basketball team is looking forward to a fantastic season and the seniors are excited to make their last season in high school one for the books.

Girls’ Basketball shoots their way to victory
By Elizabeth Trinh
Piedmont Hills’ Girls’ Basketball season started with varsity’s victories against Fremont High School and San Jose High School with the final scores of 57-40 and 72-14. These pre-season game victories motivated the team for upcoming games.

“My favorite thing about being on the team is definitely my teammates. It’s pretty cool how close we’ve all gotten through our share of love for the same sport,” said Captain and Small Forward Emily Nguyen.

With the help of the team members trained hard to prepare themselves to meet their goal to have a longer winning streak and place first in the Santa Teresa East Division.

Some team members started training back in August and some even attended summer programs to physically prepare themselves for the hours of practice later on in the season.

In addition to the hours of conditioning and benefits of being a part of the team, there needs to be a balance between schoolwork and the team.

“One most challenging thing about being on the team is learning how to balance between school and practice. Basketball is a big high commitment and the games end around 9 and if we’re playing away, I probably don’t get home until around 10, and I’m usually exhausted by then,” admitted Nguyen.

The team wants basketball not only as a sport but rather something that they would dedicate their time to. These girls who participate in the sport have high hopes to extend their success into the upcoming season. "My favorite thing about being on the team is the group of girls that I play with," stated Shooting Guard Katy Vien. “I love the energy they have whether it’s on or off the court, how we motivate each other to do better, and how they love the game as much as I do.”

Overall, the Girls’ Basketball team has high hopes for the rest of the season thanks to their victories and encouragement both on and off the court.

Boys’ Basketball wins in-bounds on new season
By Jewel Nguyen
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“The team this season is really good,” said Power Forward Jimmy Justinus. “We all have really good chemistry. I have a really good feeling about this season.”

“Our team is really special, especially because of how close we are. We all respect each other equally, but at the same time we can mess around and (still) have a good time. This season is going to be really fun yet challenging since we’re playing really good competition, but as long as we play (hand together) we’ll do really well,” added Shooting Guard Isan Jandaur.

Physical Education teacher Pete Simos is the coach for the Varsity Boys’ Basketball team. Simos has made a huge impact on his players, giving advice on how to improve their skills and how to play as a team.
UPCOMING DATES

DECEMBER
12/12-12/20 Hanukkah
12/20-12/22 Finals
12/21 Winter Solstice
12/25-1/1/18 Holiday Break
12/24 Christmas Eve
12/25 Christmas Day
12/26-1/1/18 Kwanzaa
12/31 New Year’s Eve

JANUARY
1/1/18 New Year’s Day
1/1/18 Human Trafficking Awareness Day
1/8/18 Start of second semester
1/15/18 Martin Luther King Jr. Day

FEBRUARY
2/2/18 Ground Hog Day

Deck the halls with Christmas fir trees Fa la la la la la la la

By Carson Sandell

Piedmont Hills’ annual Christmas tree contest is back, with trees from various clubs and classes lining the Main Hall from Dec. 7 to Fri., Dec. 22. The new dance club, Las Mariposas Ballet Folklorico, won the contest. BC2M (Bring Change To Mind) and Class of 2018 placed 2nd and 3rd, respectively.

“Decorating the tree was interesting because it was a fun experience for club members to bond as a family,” said Las Mariposas Ballet Folklorico President Sofi Jaquez. Filled with Mexican paper flowers and Christmas stockings, their tree was chosen by ASB as the winning tree based on a rubric. The teachers also set up a Christmas tree in the hallway,” said Class of 2018 Vice President Emily Wong.

Many of the clubs decided to put an original twist on their trees.

“BC2M chose not to necessarily decorate in hopes of winning the Christmas tree contest. (Instead), we included the “take what you need concept” so that those who may be having a tough time with finals, whose friends aren’t holding a secret Santa or who aren’t having the merriest of holiday season, can still feel loved and encourage to make it through finals season,” stated BC2M President Paul-Michael Revolap.

Students are invited to take an ornament home as part of BC2M’s goal of promoting mental health and bringing joy to those going through a tough time. Along with ornaments, letters of encouragement were placed below their Christmas tree.

BSU (Black Student Union) also saw the contest as an opportunity to promote their club’s message in a unique way. Their Christmas tree’s theme was based on certain important African American figures in history.

“We chose to decorate this way because we want to show the school and our community that this is an important part of our black heritage and educate our school a little through our tree. These are very important people to our world who have affected change for our world-bettering and changing things for everyone,” explains BSU president Jerikka Thomas.

The continuing theme of senioritis among the Class of 2018 extended into their take on the traditional Christmas tree. They decided to go with an air freshener-shaped tree, rather than a fake fir tree.

“We have chosen to use a tree shaped car freshener because of its humor relating to senioritis and to stand out from the other trees in the hallway,” said Class of 2018 Vice President Emily Wong.

The teachers also set up a Christmas tree that fits for the first time. “They decorated it with their photos as a way of showcasing their holiday cheer,” remarks Treasurer Rebecca Huang.

The items donated were packaged and handed out to the homeless as part of ARK’s holiday cheer event.

ARK spreads holiday cheer downtown San Jose

By Nicholas Chang

ARK (Acts of Random Kindness) met downtown San Jose on Saturday to pack and distribute holiday care packages. More than 250 ARK club members gathered in the Martin Luther King Jr. Library to bundle helpful commodities into compact care packages and distribute these assortment of goodies to the homeless community living in downtown San Jose.

“Homelessness is definitely a big issue in San Jose, so I’m happy that ARK is taking initiative to show them that they’re not alone and that we care about them!” comments Co-President Lily Li.

This was the fourth annual Holiday Care pARkage event and it was hosted and coordinated by the Action Club. Over 20 schools from all across the Northern California region signed up to donate various items. Piedmont Hills’ ARK club donated hand warmers while other schools’ donations included dried foods, sweaters, blankets, water bottles, water, and feminine hygiene products. ARKers then banded these items into small care packages and split them up into groups of around 20 and walked around and handed out the care packages to the homeless population in San Jose.

“ARG brings joy to children at Christmas Carnival

By Nancy Li

In Dec.6, CSF (California Scholarship Foundation) travelled to San Antonio to give the students at Piedmont Hills High School, San Antonio Elementary School the poorest school in the district, qualifying it as a Title 1 School. At a school where most of the children never get to celebrate Christmas, CSF’s mission is to bring Christmas to them.

Many of the officers who attended the Christmas tree contest dressed up in holiday color's, santa, elves or other Christmas related characters. This year, Senior Jadyn Ger bravely dressed up to dress the Grinch and Math teacher Kevin Murphy and CSF club co-advisor Nancy Kenney donned as Santa and Mrs. Clause, respectively, for their 20th year in a row.

In the Grinch room, the students made Christmas themed crafts and DIYs such as paper ornaments, pom pom santas and christmas trees made out of paper plates painted green.

In the snack room, they made melted snowman cookies.

“Everyone gets to put a little frosting on their cookies and get to decorate their masterpieces, if they liked making it and when they finally got to eat it they were like oh my god this is so good!” laughed senior Anthony Ta.

In the games room, they played fun holiday themed games such as bean bag toss, pin the heart on the grinch, dance-off with the Grinch, and a giant inflatable bowling game.

In the santa room which is only for first graders, the students were allowed to sit on santa’s lap and give him their wish list, which they got to participate in and that they loved it. Believe it or not, I still have their picture with Santa. One is a senior now and the other one is a sophomore...as a mom, as a secretary, I think it’s a wonderful program. They still remember” expressed San Antonio Elementary School Administrative Assistant Leticia Corona.

The last room, the kindergarten room, is only for kindergartners but combines a little of bit of every other room.

Aside from all the wonderful activities, the students were encouraged to make it through finals. (Instead,) we included the ‘take what you need concept” so that this will be an easy way for students to get involved in this community,” explains UNICEF President Namrata Shetty.

According to UNICEF board member Kenneth Lien, the event was a hit.

“We managed to fill up all three boxes we laid out and collect more toys than any toy drives the school has had in previous years,” stated Kenneth.

ARK's goal of promoting spreading love and cheer this holiday season! We have all these hands on deck so we believe that this will be an easy way for students to get involved in this community,” explains UNICEF President Namrata Shetty.

This year is filled with different takes on the contest, but one thing remains consistent: the Christmas spirit at Piedmont Hills.

CSF brings joy to children at Christmas Carnival

By Nancy Li

CSF planned, most agreed that the best part was simply the interaction and joy Piedmont’s high school students brought to the children at San Antonio.

“The interaction is so great,” shared 2nd Grade San Antonio Elementary School Teacher Patrick Smith. “They have fun and kid around. One kid just said ‘Now I have a high school friend!’ It’s really cool.”

The winning tree was chosen by a rubric, as the winning tree based on a rubric.

Christmas stockings, their tree was chosen by ASB as the winning tree based on a rubric.