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Lamorinda Schools

Joaquin Moraga • Lafayette Elementary • Los Perales • Miramonte • Orinda Intermediate • Sleepy Hollow • Springhill • Stanley Middle • Wagner Ranch

Cinderella is in the House!

By Lee Borrowman

Fifty-five 4th and 5th grade actors and a tech crew of twelve. Two full casts. And two missing glass slippers!

Hot on the heels of Glorietta's glorious production of "Hello, Dolly!" OUSD's Ron Pickett and the students of Wagner Ranch will present Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Cinderella" the first weekend in June. The performers have been rehearsing weekly since January for what promises to be a fairy tale success story!

Pickett says, "This is a long standing tradition at Wagner Ranch. 'Cinderella' was preceded by favorites like 'The Wizard of Oz',

'Peter Pan', 'The Music Man', 'My Fair Lady,' 'The Sound of Music' and 'HONK!' We feel it is important to give the students the opportunity to experience 'the real process' of participating in a musical."

Putting on an elementary school play of such proportion can present challenges for the director, parent producers and many other volunteers, but there are valuable lessons young actors can learn during the production of a show. In addition to singing, acting and dancing, Pickett explains, "Children learn to work together as a team, set and meet goals, and articulate

clearly. These are all qualities that will help them be successful." The children have a lot of fun, and performing has another benefit: "It nurtures a strong confidence in their abilities. Confidence brings that overall happy feeling!" says Pickett. **Shows are June 1, at 4:00 and 7:30, and June 2, at 3:00 and 7:00. Tickets are \$7 for adults, \$5 for children and \$10 for reserved seats.**

See the Wagner Ranch website for details: <http://www.orinda.k12.ca.us/wagnerranch/Default.aspx?Page=Play>



Sophia Leksan displays a Darfur photo Photo by Lee Borrowman

JM Student Learns a Different Sort of Lesson

By Lee Borrowman

"I have a story for you," read the subject line of an email from JM Principal Catherine Mikes.

Although nobody knew it at the time, the prelude to the story Mikes wanted to tell was in these pages on April 4. It was an article about Respect All Differences (RAD) Week at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate, and a special presentation at the end of the week by members of the Campolino chapter of Students Take Action Now on Darfur (Campo STAND) which was, for many JM students, their first introduction to Darfur and to the word 'genocide.' In the audience that day sat 6th grader Sophia Leksan. Not long after the RAD events Sophia came to Mikes, bound and determined to help the children of Darfur.

"When she first came to me," said Mikes, "she was so genuine and passionate about her cause." Sophia later explained that, "Most of the (displaced) victims in Darfur are children under the age of five." She lowered her head and stared glumly at the table in front of her as she noted, "All those people are being killed just because of the color of their skin."

Sophia asked Mikes if she could set up a table at JM's Spring Fling/Open House on April 26, to inform people about the conditions in Darfur and raise funds to help the children. Mikes was impressed, and agreed to the plan. "She worked hard to pull it together. Her determination and heart have really impressed me for an eleven year old girl."

Sophia did a lot of internet research to prepare for the event, and partnered with Campo STAND which provided her with images from its slideshow and other supplies. JM teacher and RAD coordinator Patti Forster said, "In all my years working on RAD, I don't remember any JM student ever being inspired to take up a cause, and to go out and raise money for it, on their own, without a teacher as the guiding force." With the help of friends, Sophia raised \$175.52 at the event.

Sophia is now looking forward to a summer beach vacation with her family, but she will

not soon forget her experience this spring. "It doesn't matter how old you are or where you live. You can still help people who are in other places," says Sophia. She hopes that students at other schools will take up the cause: "You might be small, but you can make a big difference."

Catherine Mikes praised Anna Schoenbrunner and Katie Holmes for being wonderful role models with the ability to inspire younger students to take action. Schoenbrunner, who established Campo STAND this past year, writes: "STAND is honored to learn that we have inspired someone to take a stance and get involved- especially at such a young and vulnerable age. Most people think that middle schoolers (don't) pay much attention to current events, but we have learned through our work that this is simply not true. With a little inspiration and encouragement (students like Sophia) will be the leaders of tomorrow." Campo STAND just donated \$2000, from its fundraising and tee-shirt sales, to Relief International. You can reach Campo STAND by email: campostand@hotmail.com. For more information on the national STAND organization, go to www.standnow.org. For Darfur donation information, www.savedarfur.org and www.ri.org.



Anna Schoenbrunner and Katie Holmes at JM's RAD event



Ron Pickett and friends in rehearsal

Miramonte Speakers Prevail

By Nee-Sa Lossing

The Miramonte High School Public Speaking team reached their sought-after goal once again, the state tournament. Thirty-one students spoke at the tournament, which Miramonte first attended in 1982.

The success of the team was spread among many categories of speech, all of which are practiced throughout the school year leading up to the event.

In International Extemporaneous, Michelle Chern was a semi-finalist, while Tony Wang placed seventh.

In National Extemporaneous, Maria Theophanous placed fourth and Alina Hasanain placed sixth.

In addition, Joseph Chen was a semi-finalist in Original Prose and Poetry, Alison Karol

was a semi-finalist in Oratorical Interpretation, Zoe Pehrson was a semi-finalist in Thematic Interpretation, and Meghan Radler was a semi-finalist in Original Oratory.

The Public Forum debate team of Emily Chesbrough and Elliot Olson competed in the semi-finals, and placed third in state.

All members of the Miramonte Congress, a group of students assembled to emulate governmental congress in competitions against other schools, advanced in the tournament. Hayley Andrews, Alia Fite and Pierre Thompson were semi-finalists, while Rajan Banerjee was a finalist. The highlight of Congress' success was Nico Kirk-Giannini, who was the state champion.

"These students worked so hard, and it means so much to them to even qualify for state," said Miramonte Public Speaking teacher Sandy Maguire. "I was proud of all thirty-one of them."

After Miramonte's triumphs at state, eight students will continue on to participate at the national tournament in June.

Students include Zak Dychtwald, Elise Washburn, Shawdee Rouhafza, Tony Wang, Alina Hasanain, Lucas Duplancic, Jordan Mushe, and Nico Kirk-Giannini.

Other recent achievements for Miramonte Public Speaking include service club competitions, in which the winners are awarded scholarship money. Nico Kirk-Giannini was the Northern California regional champion in Rotary's Four Way Speech Contest, and was awarded \$900. Zak Dychtwald, the state champion and a national quarter-finalist, was awarded \$1500.

For the tenth year in a row, Miramonte students will be performing at the Orinda Masonic Club, at an annual public speaking event. Students include Zak Dychtwald, Nico Kirk-Giannini, and Shawdee Rouhafza.

After many such accomplishments in past years, and the more recent ones at state, Miramonte Public Speaking teacher Sandy Maguire was honored at the school's annual Visual Performing Arts (VPA) showcase.

"As a coach of the program I was deeply honored to be recognized by the VPA organization," said Maguire.

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