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Bye Bye Birdie at Orinda Intermediate School

Submitted by Carol Ann Barber



Ron Pickett rehearsing with Teenagers Photo submitted

The Bulldog Theater Company at Orinda Intermediate School will perform one of the most captivating musical shows of our time, Bye Bye Birdie, on November 7-10, 2007. The production is directed by Ron Pickett and produced by Amy Bush and Kathy Simon. The cast includes 70 OIS students in two casts with 25 additional OIS students as tech crew. Each of the actors' families has taken a role in the production

from set design, costumes, makeup, publicity and many other critical tasks.

Bye Bye Birdie is a satire done with the fondest affection and is tops in imagination and frivolity. It tells the story of Conrad Birdie, a rock and roll singer who is about to be inducted into the army. Conrad's agent and secretary concoct one final national publicity plan before his induction. See what ensues when Con-

rad bids a typical American teenage girl goodbye with an all-American kiss! Songs An English Teacher, The Telephone Hour, Put On a Happy Face, One Boy, A Lot of Livin' To Do, Kids, and Rosie are musical theater classics.

Working on a play is wonderful experience for these OIS students. As 8th grader Matthew Barber said at a recent rehearsal, "I like to sing and act, but the most important fact is that it is FUN!" Many of the kids have been in productions over the years and developed friendships. For the 6th graders, it is exciting to be immersed so quickly into a school production. Amrita Newton comments, "I have been in several plays and I always love the feeling of being on stage. I am really excited that I was cast as a Teenager in Bye Bye Birdie at OIS!"

Tickets are \$5 for the pre-view shows on Wednesday and Thursday, \$6 for General Admis-



sion and \$10 for Reserved seating for all remaining shows. General Admission tickets are available on the OIS website, Reserved tickets are available at the box office. Performance times are: Wednesday, November 7 at 4:30 pm (pre-view show), Thursday, November 8 at 4:30 pm (pre-view show), Friday, November 9 at 5:00 pm & 8:00 pm, and Saturday, November 10 at 3:00 pm & 7:00 pm.

Mark your calendar and join the excitement us OIS, 80 Ivy Drive, for what promises to be a great family event! Check the website for more information, www.orindaschools.org/ois.

AUHSD Calendar: Time to Get Involved

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Negri acknowledges that changing the calendar will not magically reduce student academic stress, but argues "this is one factor that can help, it creates more continuous blocks of education and, with the first semester ending at winter break, a vacation that's a real respite." This recommendation came from the research of Dr. Denise Clark Pope, Director of the Stressed Out Student project and lecturer at Stanford University School of Education.

The Study Committee will be formed in November. "It will be composed of 25 to 30 members, with representatives of students, parents, teachers and

administrative staff," promises Negri. The committee will not recommend a calendar, but will study the issues that have been raised.

Both the Board and staff are hoping for a high level of parent participation. "If you have a strong opinion or a strong interest in the underlying issues, volunteer for the committee," urges Whitmore. "I hope for an open minded review," says Negri, "this is not a black and white question, there is no one right calendar... We need to keep in mind the best interest of our first customers, the students."

Grandparents' Day at Wagner Ranch

By Linda Foley



Linda Foley with grandson Brice in his classroom

In 1978, President Jimmy Carter signed a proclamation designating the first Sunday after Labor Day as National Grandparents' Day. In a two-year old September tradition at Orinda's Wagner Ranch Elementary, grandparents are celebrated in a big way.

Learning from their grandparents' personal histories, cultures and values enhances children's value systems. Grandparents provide the kind of infrastructure for the youngest generation, only they can provide.

Says Janis Americh, principal at Wagner Ranch, "Grandparents enrich children's lives from simple ways such as planting flowers or baking cookies together to grander things such as taking them on trips, plays or to museums. In practical terms, grandparents are an important

part to the school community, even those who live far away. They support our fundraising efforts—buying gift-wrap and making donations—and matching funds through their workplaces. Others participate in volunteering in our school."

This year's visit found us inexplicably arriving in the first grade room twenty minutes early. The fresh-faced native Orinda teacher never missed a beat and encouraged our grandson to show us around the various work and learning stations, praising his creativity. Needless to say, we love her! More adept at our role this time around, we boldly sat on pint-sized chairs and admired his workbooks and the teacher's clever organizational skills—getting ready to scope out the other grandparents.

Other little people entered on cue, shadowed by a number of tentative (first time?) grandparents who undoubtedly felt their grandchild was the best and the brightest. Parents all over again, one generation removed.

The children hunkered down in the middle of the floor, their teacher encouraging each child to introduce his grandpar-

ent/s who then spoke of their professions, their hobbies and their homes. The teacher had an atlas at the ready to show how far one grandparent had traveled from the East Coast. Not to be topped, a child proudly said, his grandparent lived in Concord and came on a bus. We spoke of the importance of foreign languages, dental care, evolution of computers. Everyone learned. Everyone connected.

We moved onto the third grade class, which was conducted in the same manner. This group was not surprisingly more loquacious and energetic. While our grandson actually found three noteworthy things to say about me, he hit pay dirt when he introduced his grandfather saying that he likes trains. The interaction became livelier yet. In due time, a field trip was suggested (could it have been the teacher?) to see the train layout in our house. (The bait for volunteering had been set.)

Our enriching morning concluded in the gym where refreshments were served, a small presentation addressed the fiscal school situation, and opportunities arose to meet other grandpar-

ents—some even owned trains.

Principal Americh concludes "All said, we think that grandparents deserve our thanks and an opportunity to learn more about their grandchildren's education". Conversely, grandparents enjoy and value the opportunity to be part of the process.

New SELPA Director Strives for More Special Education Funding

By Jennifer Wake

Nearly 700,000 students with disabilities require special education services in school districts throughout California, yet according to newly hired Contra Costa Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) Director Stephany La Londe, only a small percentage of the allotted funding is reaching the schools.

One of La Londe's many goals for this area is to obtain more funding for special education from state and federal governments. She and other SELPA directors recently joined the E.C.H.O. Coalition (Every Child Holds Opportunity) which was developed to build awareness and support for adequate funding of special education.

"We're trying to get adequate funding for special education," La Londe said to parents, staff and community representa-

tives at a recent SELPA Community Advisory Committee meeting. "Laws came in saying how much funding should be applied to special education, but right now we're at about 17 percent of this funding."

According to statistics provided by the E.C.H.O. Coalition, the number of school-aged children with disabilities in California has increased exponentially—much of that attributed to a 480 percent increase in autism, and increases of nearly 50 percent in children with emotional disturbance and hearing problems. With federal and state funding for these students at such a low level, many school districts in California have been forced to cut programs for all students to make up for special education budget shortfalls.

La Londe hopes that through efforts like the E.C.H.O.

Coalition and other endeavors, school districts throughout California can obtain the necessary funds they need to serve all students.

As Director of Contra Costa SELPA, La Londe acts as the special education expert, trouble shooter, peace-maker and administrator of coordinated services provided to member districts, which include the Lafayette, Moraga, Orinda and Acalanes school districts.

With federal and state funding woefully below what is needed to serve this diverse student population, La Londe and her colleagues have a tough job ahead. "Every child should receive an appropriate education," she said. "Hopefully, with a very organized campaign, we can get some funding to continue the wonderful work we do."

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