

Wagner Ranch Elementary 4th-graders head to Odyssey of the Mind World Finals



Photo Scott Campbell

Team with costumes and set at state competition, from left: Connor Volk, Anya Parikh, coach Leslie Volk, Ryan Gibson, Drew Alameda, Elise Nguyen, coach Maggie Wang, Stella Schmitt, Gianna Campbell.

Submitted by Jill Gibson

May we serve you a bacon pie? Sounds delicious and creative, as seven Wagner Ranch fourth-graders will be serving bacon pies in the jungle at the May 2022 World Finals Odyssey of the Mind competition in Ames, Iowa. What do pies have to do with the jungle? As one of two

parts in the competition, the team must solve a long-term problem with the following requirements: create an environment with a climate change threat (bacon pies) and an unsuspecting hero who is a solution to the threat. Two environmental scene changes are required and when the hero eliminates the threat, the scene returns to its natural state. The

team met for more than 80 group work hours (560 hours collectively) over five months to complete this production.

The creative process includes brainstorming and teamwork to build the various pieces of an environmental scene. They hand painted boxes to built the jungle. As animals are an essential part of a jungle, the team created monkeys, a polar bear, penguins, a flamingo, a squirrel, and a worm, some with hand-made 3-D paper masks. They sing! While flamingos, penguins, and polar bears are not usual in the jungle, it's all part of the creative process and to meet additional requirements of at least two animal characters, original songs, and the use of Arm & Hammer Baking Soda.

Drew Alameda, Gianna Campbell, Ryan Gibson, Elise Nguyen, Anya Parikh, Stella Schmitt, and Connor Volk, also worked together in the second part of the competition, spontaneous problem-solving. Based on scores from both parts, the team placed first in their division at San Francisco Bay Regional, and third in the

Northern California state competition, where the top three in the state continue to the World Finals. The team's coaches, Leslie Volk (Wagner's Innovation Lab leader) and Maggie Wang said, "There is a unique chemistry among this team and we coach them to bring their individual strengths to collectively make the teamwork creative, think outside the box, and have fun!" This helps to foster the pace during the competitive elements of problem solving.

When asked what has been interesting about the process, Connor Volk said, "I like how our Odyssey team works together to compromise

on a solution that is both funny and creative." The final production will yield a scientific chemical transformation of baking soda, kept secret until the team competes May 26-28.

To get the students to the World Finals from California to Iowa, the team needs to raise approximately \$18,000 to register, ship all life-size, student-built props, and cover transportation and housing. To donate, visit www.oneorinda.org/donate-community under Community Giving, and note in the comments, "Donation for Wagner Ranch Odyssey of the Mind."

Saklan students help rebuild homes destroyed by Hurricane Maria



Saklan students help rebuild homes in Puerto Rico. Photos provided



Submitted by Emily Williamson

At the end of March, The Saklan School's eighth-grade students traveled to Puerto Rico for a meaningful service-learning experience. The task at hand for the students while on the trip was to help rebuild houses destroyed by Hurricane Maria. To say the students' experience was purposeful would be an understatement.

After arriving in San Juan and taking a day to tour and acclimate to Puerto Rico, the Saklan students started their home-building work. While Hurricane Maria was over four years ago, there is still much evidence of its destruction. Through the bus windows, the students saw the lush jungle

taking over cars that had been swept up and dumped into ditches, houses without roofs, foundations where there used to be homes. And also new construction.

Over three days, the Saklan students added to the new construction. They worked side-by-side with local community members prepping a worksite, using rebar to create reinforced walls and support beams, and then mixing and pouring 10 tons of concrete in two days, under the hot Caribbean sun.

During this hard work, the students bonded with the families they were helping, interviewed community members about the impact of the hurricane and how it changed their lives, learned more about the Puerto Rican people and culture, and gained a tremendous sense of purpose.

The students thoroughly enjoyed their trip to Puerto Rico, and the opportunity to help out families in need. When asked about the trip, students Ryan and Anessa shared that "Puerto Rico was a blast that we will never forget." To learn more about The Saklan School visit www.saklan.org.

'You Will Remember Me'

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No one in his family is willing or able to take care of a man who is becoming increasingly a danger to himself, so his care is given to young Bérénice, the daughter of his daughter's new partner. The meeting of these two people who have so little in common open new doors for the two of them and Édouard will have to face again a part of his past that he had decided to bury forever.

In an interview for the Québécois media lesartsze.com, film director Eric Tessier said that his purpose was to create a bright movie even if the topic was rather dark. Even if a per-

son is in fact gradually disappearing, Tessier wanted to show a way toward light, as those surrounding the sick person start accepting his fate.

But as Édouard indeed progresses toward a kind of peace, alongside Bérénice, other members of the family just cannot cope. The film shows without any judgment that taking care of someone with Alzheimer's might not be for everyone and that recognizing the impossibility to care for a sick member of the family should not be a source of shame or guilt.

Rémy Girard who plays Édouard deserves accolades for creating a character at times arrogant and insufferable and at

times vulnerable and touching. The actor said that while playing Édouard, he remembered his own father who suffered from that same disease and how sometimes his gaze seemed to be lost in the void, as if the whole person was gone.

The film received two Canadian Screen Award nominations at the 10th Canadian Screen Awards in 2022, for Best Adapted Screenplay and Best Cinematography. "You Will Remember Me" will be presented in Orinda as a USA Premiere starting May 13 for at least one week. Tickets, dates and times can be found on the International Film Showcase website at: www.internationalshowcase.org

Happy Mother's Day to my mom, Renata Sos

When I was little, I thought you were special because you were my mom; I didn't yet understand who you were beyond that.

At some point, I recognized that your life doesn't orbit around mine. I began to see you as a person, not only as my mother. I was scared when I first realized that no ultimate authority guaranteed your love and care to me. I worried that I would lose my exclusive claim to you. Raising me took so much thankless work - why would anyone in her right mind put up with that while also working, serving her community, and caring for other family members, friends and strangers?

I know what your "why" is, Mama. You chose me and you choose me for the same reason you choose to be kind to everyone in your life. The same reason you choose to help and guide the community. The same reason you prioritize your friends and family no matter how busy you are.

Nothing external compels any of your choices. Every day, you embody kindness because of your own compassion and strength. You know that how you treat people is the only thing you can't take back.

When I recognized this, you became more special to me than ever. My love, which I once experienced as a desire to be the center of your world, has morphed into a sea of gratitude for the exceptional person you have always been.

Happy Mother's Day.

Love, Jamie

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