

The Student Union

A compilation of news by and about young people in the Ojai Valley

In cooperation with: Besant Hill School, Nordhoff High School, Oak Grove School, Ojai Valley School, The Thacher School and Villanova Preparatory School

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OVS Lauded for Environmental Work

By Emma Gustafson

Ojai Valley School

In recognition of its long-standing commitment to environmental conservation, preservation and sustainability, Ojai Valley School (OVS) has been named a California Green Ribbon School, the state's top honor for environmental excellence in education.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson announced the Green Ribbon awards earlier this month, lauding more than two dozen California schools and school districts for reducing their environmental footprints and engaging students in environmental literacy.

"Through their environmental practices, the schools and districts we honor today are teaching students to be responsible stewards of our precious resources," Torlakson said at the awards ceremony, held at Redondo Union High School. "I commend their commitment to instill policies and habits that will continue our forward progress in establishing healthy campuses and communities."

OVS was one of three schools in the Ojai Valley, and one of seven independent schools statewide, to earn the Green Ribbon title, receiving gold-level recognition for the award, the state's highest designation.

The award — the result of a lengthy application process spearheaded by OVS Director of Technology and Sustainability John Wickenhaeuser



Fourth grade Ojai Valley School student perform restoration work on Anacapa Island.

— acknowledges efforts at OVS in recent years to reduce environmental impacts and costs, improve the health and wellness of students and staff, and promote environmental and sustainability education.

"I feel very, very gratified that somebody has recognized our school initiatives of the past several years," OVS President and CEO Michael J. Hall-Mounsey said. "And, I was very grateful to Mr. Wickenhaeuser for leading our efforts and for submitting the very detailed application on our behalf."

Earlier this school year, Wickenhaeuser put together a 48-page application that show-

caused a host of environmental initiatives launched at both the Upper and Lower campuses

For example, in response to California's ongoing drought and keeping with OVS' commitment to sustainable practices, the school set out several years ago to reduce water usage on its campuses and facilities, replacing grassy areas with mulch and drought-tolerant plants, installing weather-based controllers and optimizing irrigation.

In addition, the school installed a state-of-the-art irrigation system in its equestrian riding arenas on both campuses, and replaced the fine dusty sand in those arenas with a new

Photo courtesy of Ojai Valley School

footing made from a mixture of quartz sand, polyester and synthetic materials. The move drastically reduced the need to water the arenas to reduce dust.

Taken together, those conservation measures have saved nearly 10 million gallons of water since 2013.

In other areas, OVS four years ago installed a 1,001-panel, 274-kilowatt solar array that produces more than 95 percent of the electricity used at the Upper Campus. The solar panel project has reduced electricity use and green house emissions by 56 percent, and OVS hasn't had to pay an electric bill at the Upper Campus in more than three years.

Another important part of OVS, and an important criterion for Green Ribbon School recognition, is environmental education.

Outdoor education starts in pre-kindergarten and continues through the 12th grade at OVS, featuring multiple camp trips each year to national and state parks, mountain ranges and campsites close and far.

Those trips are meant to be fun, for sure. But they also are in keeping with the school's fundamental commitment to use the outdoors as extended classrooms to teach students the importance of conservation, preservation and good stewardship of the land.

"One of the areas in which we [OVS] are most successful in and where we truly stand out from any other school is in our outdoor education program," Wickenhaeuser said. "The breadth of it is pretty extraordinary."

Over the past two years, OVS has partnered with the National Parks Service on its "Hands on the Land" initiative, that brings restoration work to the Channel Islands.

Funded by the National Environmental Education Foundation and the Environmental Protection Agency, the grant has been used by students and teachers on both campuses to access the islands and use them as living laboratories, tackling projects including working on-site in nurseries, removing invasive vegetation and gathering and compiling plant restoration data.

Students in grades four to

12 participate in those excursions, taking trips to the islands throughout the year. So far this school year, fourth grade students and AP Environmental Science students have taken trips out to the islands to remove non-native species.

Even as the Green Ribbon awards were being announced this month, OVS fifth graders were on a trip to Anacapa Island to continue the restoration work as part of the federal Hands on the Land grant.

OVS is hardly done. The school plans, in coming years, to continue with water and energy conservation, recycling and develop more partnerships such as the Hands on the Land effort.

"I think the thing that really pleases me about this is to have a third party recognize and validate what we've been doing as a school, and it's broad based," Wickenhaeuser said. "It's not just one person who was doing this. This is something integrated into the experience at Ojai Valley School for a long time."

In providing that validation, Torlakson told the educators gathered for the awards ceremony that there could not be a more important time for environmental education. He cited the threats of deregulation of environmental protections and the need for inspiring future generations of innovators to protect our resources.

"What better messengers than our students, our youth," said Torlakson, who taught environmental science. "It's their future."

Young Musicians Are Jazzed Over Visit From Famous Duo

By Emily Kuhn

Besant Hill School

Ojai had the privilege of hosting jazz duo Tuck and Patti April 21.

Charles "Tuck" Andress and Patricia "Patti" Cathcart are a married couple who have been performing together for nearly 40 years. The duo drew a crowd when they played at Caravan Outpost during a fundraising event for the Besant Hill School Music Department.

Student guitar players and singers from Besant Hill opened the show with performances from Emmy Hilgers,

Emily Kuhn and Cate Steward.

The following day, these students and a few others participated in a workshop with Tuck and Patti. The duo gave personalized feedback to each of the students.

"When you've been doing something you love for such a long time, how do you keep things fresh and continue to learn new things?" one student asked.

"I play as if my life depended on each string" answered Tuck

A recurring piece of advice the pair gave was to take risks onstage and allow for

incredible vulnerability. They emphasized the importance of connecting with the song and the audience.

"As musicians, we have the ability to reach out and take someone's heart in our hands and make people feel what we are feeling," Tuck explained, who added the ability is strengthened by knowing the meaning of the song and its original intention.

Patti encouraged the singers to strip down their songs to acapella in order for them to gain a better understanding of the song's essence.

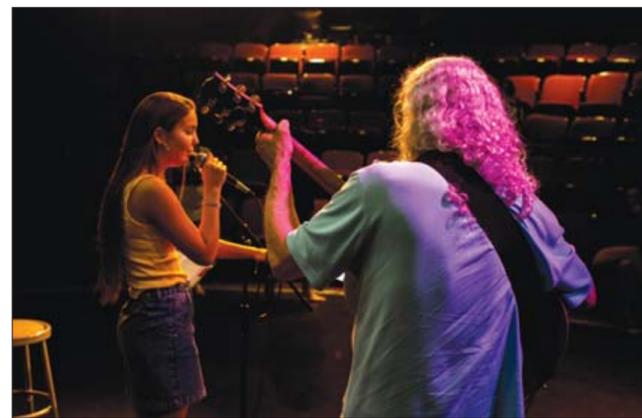
They reminded students to

make eye contact onstage and to mean the words they were singing. They emphasized the importance of being willing to make mistakes and challenged the singers in the workshop to reach outside of their comfort zones. They challenged the students to change the lyrics and rhythm of their songs as they performed.

"The definition of accompany is to be with, not to follow," Patti noted.

As a duo, they also had a lot to say about the relationship between a singer and accompaniment. They talked about the importance of supporting one another and of

being intensely present with each other onstage.



Student Emmy Hilgers (left) performs with Tuck Andress during a workshop at Besant Hill School.

Photo by Marek Froyda

Students are the judge when it comes to writing book reports

By Joy Campbell

Ojai Valley School

"[It was] a small rebellion against the regime because they weren't allowed to wear color, and they weren't allowed to be beautiful," said junior Clara Addison, her eyes alight with interest as she presented the book "Reading Lolita in Tehran."

Recently, Addison and her fellow AP English 11 classmates were assigned to give book reports. However, these were no regular book reports. Each student chose his or her reading from a list of books originally assembled for the sake of a juvenile court sentencing.

Ojai Valley School English teacher Terry Wilson's interest was piqued when she read a "New York Times" article about five teens who vandalized Virginia's historic Ashburn Colored School, and, as their sentence, were handed a reading list. The court's disposition required the students to read and give monthly reports on 12 books from a list of 35 that address "some of history's most divisive and tragic periods."

Wilson said she found this situation fascinating, and so decided to bring the court to her classroom, in the form of the judge's book list. She asked her students to choose one book from the list to read

over the week-long winter break.

"I thought, you know, I should get the students to read these books," Wilson said. "I just wanted everyone to read something — I think it is important that you guys keep reading. These just seemed like really good books to suggest."

The goal was for students, upon returning to school, to present reports on their books. They were to give their thoughts on why the court chose that book for the list, as well as to share personal opinions and hopefully interest their classmates, and thus encourage more reading.

"I thought the list of

books given to us was fascinating," said junior Jacob Tadlock, an avid reader. "There are several books [on the list] I'd love to read once I get enough time."

The books all follow a common theme of prejudice, and they cover a broad range of subjects, from the pain and horrors of the Jim Crow South, to moments of hope and color for the women of Iran during revolutionary times, to images of a bleak future with no women's rights and an extremely stratified society.

"Each one of these books has similar themes, in terms of discrimination and the

ways people have dealt with it," Wilson explained.

As word of her assignment spread among the faculty, an idea began swirling.

Each year, all OVS students are assigned the same book, or couple of books, to read over the summer. What if a few books from this list were chosen for the all-school reading? Aside from being well-written, the books all cover topics growing in relevance, and teachers began realizing that it would make sense to choose the summer reading from this list.

"Anytime I would mention it to anyone around campus, they would say 'woah

what a wonderful idea,'" Wilson said. "And then, when we started talking about using that whole idea to create our summer reading, everybody got into it."

The AP English 11 students also are embracing this plan. It allows the topic of history to be more tangible outside of the classroom, and it helps the class, as rising seniors, contribute to the school community.

"I think a lot of the books would be more than adequate," Jacob said. "Despite them being heavy, the information in them is very important to the modern generation."

School is Treating its Monarchs Like Royalty

Emma Gustafson

Ojai Valley School

Spring has sprung, and so have the monarch butterflies at Ojai Valley School (OVS).

Once again, the Upper Campus is experiencing a surge of monarch caterpillars, which feed on milkweed planted around the school, anchor their chrysalises to buildings and bushes and eventually emerge as butterflies.

OVS has been home to a sizeable monarch population over the past decade, prompting teachers and students to take measures to protect this endangered species.

According to a petition filed with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, monarch numbers have dropped more than 80 percent over the past 20 years for a variety of reasons, chief among those the loss of habitat and the use of the herbicide glyphosate, a key ingredient in Roundup®.

A number of environmental groups filed the petition in 2014, and last year the Fish and Wildlife Service agreed to study whether monarchs should receive federal protection under the Endangered Species Act, a move that would limit destruction of milkweed plants — the monarch's sole food source and habitat.

"It's important to protect monarch habitat because we can!" said English teacher Crystal Davis, who as the school's director of outdoor education took on the responsibility years ago of identifying the milkweed locations on campus and creat-



After feeding on milkweed at the Upper Campus, this caterpillar will move into chrysalis and emerge as a monarch butterfly.

Photo by Josh Han

ing an education program to protect the habitat.

"The tragedy and beauty of our environment is that once you start looking closely you learn these kinds of relationships are more the rule than the exception," Davis explained. "We, humans, are thoughtlessly tinkering with, disrupting and obstructing them all the time."

The school's monarch preservation project started more than 10 years ago, coinciding with the arrival of the Upper Campus' science and technology building in the mid-2000s.

At that time, Davis discovered the emergence of milkweed plants around the new building, and launched an awareness campaign that included creation of signs aimed at educating people about the milkweed habitat and preventing it from being uprooted.

Over the years, Davis has had students help with this effort by selectively weeding out invasive plants and replacing the sun-faded signs designed to encourage conservation and protection of the species.

Within a few years, monarch

caterpillars had found the milkweed and eventually a thriving butterfly habitat was created.

Once Davis realized the amount of butterflies on campus had grown exponentially, she started increasing these preservation efforts, such as enlisting summer camp students enrolled in the environmental studies camp to help her create additional signage.

In the spring of 2015, a flood of caterpillars and monarchs emerged on campus, resulting in even more intense preservation efforts.

One day, Assistant Head of School Laurel Colborn noticed that many monarch caterpillars were being unintentionally stepped on near the science and technology building, prompting an all-out push to use traffic cones and caution tape to keep the monarch population from being trampled.

"I like butterflies and I want to see more of them in the world," Colborn said about her efforts to create the butterfly barrier. "We should care about all creatures large and small, and these in particular have chosen

our campus as their home, so I feel like we should help them as best we can."

The race to protect these monarch butterflies have increased over the years, as the number of monarchs are decreasing.

According to a World Wildlife report, "The latest survey of monarch butterfly's winter habitat in Mexico is a stark reminder that these butterflies are in need of protection: The area occupied by the butterfly colonies has decreased 27 percent compared to last year's survey."

One of the main reasons for the intense decrease of monarchs is loss of habitat. Many farmers use herbicide on milkweed, killing off the monarch's main food source and habitat. Also, the country's rapid urbanization of wild areas — such as cutting down trees, construction and pollution — ruin the habitat monarchs need.

Davis encourages the school community, and others, to advocate for the monarchs, and other endangered species, as it is a challenge in which everyone can participate.

"By encouraging wildlife habitat and conservation projects at Upper, it transforms our campus into a living laboratory," Davis said. "Students stop by to look at and follow the progress of chrysalises, marvel as they watch the butterflies unfold their wings for the first time. As teachers we can shape our spring projects around scientific and philosophical notions that are concretely demonstrated in our monarch habitat."

Nordhoff student is chomping at the bit for all things horse-related

Julian Kimura

Nordhoff High School

Marcus Johansson saddles up daily to enter into an equestrian prayer of jumps, gaits and airs with his horse, Indie.

"To me, horseback riding is extremely spiritual. It is very therapeutic and helps me forget everything that went wrong in my day," Johansson said.

Johansson has been riding for eight years and taking it seriously for five years.

"For the first three years, before I owned a horse, I mostly did showings where the horses were already broke. So when I first got my horse as a baby, it wasn't broken so I took it on as a personal challenge," said Johansson. "I worked my horse, Indie, up and now she is almost 9."

More recently, Johansson has started a business breaking in untamed horses.

"My friend and I train babies that need to be broken, school-

masters, everyday horses for our clients," Johansson said.

Johansson also has spent much of his eight years horseback riding taking part in the numerous types of equestrian competitions.

"Over the years that I have been riding, I've competed in western style which is on the flat as well as English style and dressage which is the type of competition they do in the Olympics," Johansson explained. "Western competitions are in the western saddle where they say walk, jog and low which are just shortened strides of a regular trot, while in the English competitions, the gates are more elongated. They're more fluid, graceful and balanced."

Johansson has many medals and ribbons from the different types of competitions he has been in.

"For things that are more equitation-based competitions, it's all about how the horse con-



Marcus Johansson sits atop his horse, Indie.

Photo submitted

nects with the rider," Johansson noted. "For example, dressage, which means training in French,

is about how well the horse performs with the rider giving very subtle cues. It's supposed to be the fine details and not evident that you are asking the

horse to do what it is doing. So practice and repetition are very important."

Johansson has found that after a while, a "connection" builds between a horse and its rider.

"It may sound weird, but once my horse and I understand a concept together, it's like we are one," he said. "Sometimes I am teaching my horse something new and it can be incredibly frustrating, but when we both get in the right frame of mind it's like we aren't two separate beings. Like, we become one. And that is just such an amazing feeling."

Johansson and Indie's connection has been strengthened largely by equitation training and competitions because in such competitions, verbal commands aren't allowed.

"Horses show that they are content and at ease if they are gently chewing on the bit or if have a little froth in the mouth and they sort of become relaxed in their whole body. No matter what you are doing, you always want that relaxation and content-

ment in your horse," he added. "My horse and I have gotten to a point where I can tell when she is happy and feels good. I can even tell when it wants to try something again."

Indie and Johansson have competed together for many years and have grown together as a result.

"I was in a show for jumping last year, which I had experience with, but for my mare, Indie, it was completely new. She stayed completely chill and sort of said to me, 'It's OK. I've got this mom,'" Johansson said. "There were two jumps set up on the course, and we had only really practiced jumping two weeks before that, but she stayed supple with a nice round in her back and by the end we had done better than we had ever done in practice."

"We ended up not doing to well in rankings but I wasn't really mad or disappointed," Johansson said. "I personally believe that Indie did great."

Johansson hopes to continue to ride in college along with Indie.

Education grants help NHS several ways

Grace Berg

Nordhoff High School

The Ojai Education Foundation (OEF) recently gave grants to several departments at Nordhoff High School.

"Once again the OEF comes through," explained ceramics teacher Gray Duncan. "We needed new kiln shelves which are really expensive, so we asked the OEF and they helped. Simple

as that. They are very responsive to us and are very supportive of the art programs."

The OEF grants included \$750 given to the library, \$250 to Chris Bohney's history classes for new teleconferencing technology, \$1,250 to the music department for cellos, \$750 to Lisa Porto's French class, \$1,000 to Duncan's ceramics class, \$750 for jewelry for Kate Thomas' art class and grants for \$1,000 and

\$2,500 to the science department.

"This grant is fantastic because it'll support our new program in a way we wouldn't be able to afford otherwise. It'll allow us to purchase materials such as posters, games, films, readers and all sorts of things that'll engage students and enrich their study of the language," Porto said about the grant she received for the new French class.

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Student Opinions

If it's Not Saving Anything, Why Keep it?

Isabella Xiong

Oak Grove School

Only 23 percent of the people in the U.S. support daylight saving time (DST). DST was made during WWI to save the fuel and increase

crop production, but as we all know, the United States is no longer in war and it is not heavily based on agriculture anymore, so daylight saving time seems a bit unnecessary. Not only unnecessary, it is also bad for your health, it drops productivity, and be-

sides that, it does not benefit the economy as it is suppose to do.

So first of all, it is bad for your health. I believe everyone has experienced jet lag before and you all know how miserable that is. Even though it is only an hour difference, it still changes your sleeping pattern completely.

Sure, it does allow people to go out and do more activities during the fall time change, but it also gives you 10 percent higher rate on getting a heart attack on Monday and Tuesday after the spring DST according to the study by University of Alabama Birmingham.

Because the changing of sleeping patterns, cancer victims were 25 percent more likely to have a stroke during that time, and people older

than 65 were 20 percent more likely to have a stroke. These are all potential dangers that DST will bring to us.

Furthermore, it drops productivity. People describe the Monday after spring DST as "sleepy Monday" to indicate people cannot focus on work effectively. This will for sure decrease the efficiency and therefore drops productivity.

Another word, "cyberloafing," means people will spend more time on the internet doing irrelevant stuff because they cannot take too much heavy work after spring DST. So instead of emailing their clients and writing reports, people will just go on Amazon or watch YouTube videos.

Some people may say that daylight saving time is good for the economy because it saves electricity. But actually,

studies shows there are negligible effects on the economy. When the Austrian government tried to extend daylight saving time in 2000 for the Sydney Olympic Games, a study at UC Berkeley showed this move failed to reduce electricity demand at all.

Another study of homes in Indiana also showed that the savings from electricity use were negated after Indiana adopted DST in 2006.

DST not only has little effect on improving the economy, it actually costs a lot to maintain. A study by Utah State University showed \$1.7 billion was wasted by simply moving the electronic devices back and forth twice a year. It is also hard for the U.S. to communicate with other countries. Since not all countries are doing DST and

countries which do DST do not do it at the same time, it costs the U.S. a great amount of money to communicate universally. For example, it cost the Air Transport Association \$147 million a year because of the hardship to work with other countries. Imagine how many people will benefit from this if we spend all this extra money on education or health care.

I came from China, a country that does not have daylight saving time and we are doing just perfectly fine. If DST is not good for your health, it reduces work efficiency and it does not benefit the economy much as it suppose to do, maybe it is time for us to think about the issue again and revalue its necessity.

Maybe it's time for a change.



An Oak Grove student speaks during a controversial speech gathering. Photo courtesy of Oak Grove School

Panel Talks Are Important During This Time

Dolly Tong

Oak Grove School

The Ojai Chautauqua will present its eighth panel May 6, titled "An Unconventional Presidency - Donald Trump's First 100 Days in Office."

The talk will take place from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. in the Matilija Junior High School Auditorium.

From the group's website www.ojaichat.org the description of the event follows:

"Donald Trump promised he would change Washington. Are these changes for the better or for the worse? Opinions remain polarized. Trump has not disappointed his core supporters but he was unable to win over people who opposed him in the last campaign. What have supporters and opponents learned about the new President and how he plans to govern? Join a panel of political experts and analysts to discuss this unique and important time in our nation's history."

"Civil discourse is dangerously absent from many

aspects of contemporary life," explained Ojai Chautauqua committee member Andy Gilman. "The result of this failing is not only sad... it is dangerous. If we can develop this essential ability, we can begin to affect a positive change to many aspects of life that can extend far and wide. The purpose of the Ojai Chautauqua is to engage Ventura County in civil discourse about controversial and highly passionate subjects."

He also mentioned that support from donors in the community have allowed sponsorships for students, teachers, veterans and employees of non-profit organizations. "We really want people to see what great conversations can be, especially about important and difficult subjects, and we don't want price to be a barrier," Gilman added.

I attended the Oct. 8 event "The 2016 Presidential Election - What Happens Next?" and I felt really honored to be in the presence of journalists who worked for organiza-

tions including New York Times, Los Angeles Times and the Los Angeles Daily News. It was great to hear their differing opinions about the coming election and their thoughts about how we got to a place to have such unusual candidates like Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders. Some of them predicted that Trump would win, others did not. But in general, their conversation with each other was enlightening and they seemed to really listen to each other. Also, toward the end of the evening the audience had a chance to ask questions and that was also interesting. One of the panelists asked how many people in the audience listened to the Rush Limbaugh radio show. Only a couple of people out of 250 raised their hands. The panelist then said that Rush Limbaugh was the third-most popular talk radio show in the United States. That was news to me! It illustrated one of the panelist's points: we listen and watch the news we already agree with, and that

this is a recent phenomenon. Especially in Ojai where most people tend to be liberal, our surrounding environment greatly effects the information we receive. It will be interesting to hear these different points of view.

I'm eager to hear about what people think about Donald Trump's for 100 days as president. Some of the panelists seem like they would be supporters of Trump and some do not. Having many sides to the conversation seems to be key to what the Ojai Chautauqua is trying to do.

Here is the list of panelists:

Moderator:
Dan Schnur - Director, Jesse M. Unruh Institute of Politics at USC

Panelists:
Claudia Cowan - Fox News Channel
Henry "C.J." Jackson - Writer and editor for POLITICO
Mike Madrid - Principal at GrassrootsLab
Johanna Maska - Former White House aide



Panelists during a recent Ojai Chautauqua discuss the election.

Photo by Simone Noble

Seema Mehta - Los Angeles Times political writer

At the last two events, there were high school students from four different schools, which was really great. Engaging in this kind of event will help them to develop more comprehensive worldviews, since young people are the future of the country. It also is beneficial for the community.

Isaac Newton said: "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." These young people are standing on the shoulders of the people who are mainstay of the society. But one

day they will be the giants. Not only students, anyone interested in politics or just community involvement should attend.

The Ojai Chautauqua website has videos from all of the past events for anyone interested in fracking, water, immigration, income inequality and more.

I'm glad the Ojai Chautauqua is putting these panels on so we have a chance to think about important and complicated issues, which helps us all to be better community members and citizens of not just our country but the world.

New Bike Lanes, sidewalks will be a good thing for everyone

Aidan Pasco

Nordhoff High School

Ojai is a town that should be safe to drive, ride and walk. It is very small and quiet town. There has been some accidents that have happened; people getting hit on their bikes and other bad things. In 2016, there were 10 traffic accidents that involved bikers and pedestrians.

For those reasons, the city will build in new crosswalks.

For example there will be one on the 900 block of East Ojai Avenue. The crosswalk will have pedestrian-activated rectangular rapid flashing beacons. More sidewalks also are going to be put in so it will be safer for pedestrians. There also will be more bike lanes installed which is massive for the town and Nordhoff High School students and other students who ride their bike.

This big plan helps basically everyone who goes to school. It helps drivers, bicy-

clists and people who walk. I think the big one is adding in the bike lanes. There are a lot of students who bike to school and they have to ride on the street or sidewalk which are both not that safe.

Think of the students who are walking on the sidewalk listening to music and are totally oblivious on what is going on behind them and a biker accidentally hits them or the biker has to go around and hits a fence or something. I am sure that has happened some-

time.

Some drivers are totally insane here. Pedestrians and bicyclists are open to getting hit by those people in gigantic pick-up trucks who think they own the road. But not all truck people are bad. We also need to protect the drivers who are sometimes confused when to go on the crosswalks.

I think that Ojai is a place where accidents with cars, pedestrians and bicyclists do not have to happen because it's such a small town and they can

be prevented.

For the drivers this is good too. The new rapid flashing beacons will alert the drivers that a pedestrian is coming through the crosswalk. I have seen a crazy kid running through the crosswalk and a car had to do an instant stop on the brakes. We need to keep the drivers happy too. Also, the bike lanes will give more space to the drivers too.

This plan helps everybody. Coming from a person who rides their bike a lot, I have

had some scares sometimes. The more bike lanes the better. Biking is so big in Ojai. I have had situations where the car almost scrapes me because I have no space to ride on the road. I think with adding stuff we will see more people ride because they will feel safer and be safer. That will be great for the environment and will help Ojai continue to be a nice fresh place.

I hope these new additions to the town will come soon and then everybody will be happy.

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Students complete second year of robotics program

Nearly two dozen Ojai Valley School students recently completed another robotics season, competing in four league matches as part of the Greater Los Angeles FIRST Tech Challenge. The high school robotics competition aims to teach students the value of hard work, innovation and creativity through the use of science, technology, engineering and math. This is the second year that OVS has fielded a robotics team.

Photo by Sunny Chang

Math Career Adding up to Fun

Grace Bergmann

Nordhoff High School

March's male teacher of the month at Nordhoff High School (NHS) describes himself as dedicated, competitive and kind. Shawn Jackson is in his second year of teaching at Nordhoff, and has become an important part of the Nordhoff staff and one of Nordhoff's favorite math teachers.

"Mr. Jackson is a great teacher because he makes sure you fully understand what you're learning in class," one of his students said. "He is very supportive and enthusiastic about math which makes his students more appreciative about the subject."

This year, Jackson is teaching math III, statistics and math analysis.

Jackson was born and raised in Palmdale. He attended Quartz Hill High School, then went to California Lutheran University.

He said his favorite college experience was being a part of the cross-country team.

"Being part of a college cross-country team was definitely the best decision I made in

college," Jackson stated.

What made him want to be a teacher? "I worked in summer camps every summer that I was in college. It was so fun, and it really made me sure I wanted to be a teacher," Jackson said.

Before coming to work at NHS, Jackson worked as a student teacher in Calabasas for a year, at a school larger than Nordhoff. There he learned to manage his time well.

"I was still a student athlete at CLU at the time on track and field while making lessons each night," Jackson continued. "I don't know if I would be able to coach here if I hadn't learn how to manage my time while I was there."

After working in Calabasas, Jackson moved to Ventura, to work here at Nordhoff.

"I like the collaborative culture among teachers here," Jackson said. "They always help each other out."

This year, Jackson's favorite class to teach is math III.

"I like to teach Math III because there is a variety of topics throughout the year. No two days are the same," he explained.

Jackson has learned a lot

since coming to teach at Nordhoff.

"One big thing thing I've learned is how to work with my coworkers. I really feel like part of a team in the math department, and I've learned how to collaborate and share ideas with other math teachers to make our lessons go smoother," Jackson stated.

In addition to teaching, Jackson also helps coach the cross country and track teams.

"Coaching track really adds something to my teaching experience. I love to see students do things in the sport that they did not know they could do. Everyone can have success in track and show improvement, and nothing makes me happier than seeing students beat their past marks and improve," Jackson added.

When Jackson isn't teaching math, he can be found doing one of his hobbies.

"I like to run, play guitar, watch superhero shows and try to surf on occasion," he said.

When asked how he felt about being male teacher of the month, he replied, "It makes me feel really good about the work I've done at NHS."

Packages Plentiful in Waste Study

Han Sung

Besant Hill School

In Besant Hill School's Zalk Theater April 12, the School's Environmental Sustainability Director Tod Cossairt introduced a presentation about "Waste Free April" followed by Willa Janszen presentation titled "The Amazing Stupid Gift."

The "Waste Free April" presentation started with outlining many environmental impacts on our lives that are related to consuming. In the presentation, Cossairt talked about his project about consuming and dining

waste on campus.

The goal was to find out how much dining waste students and faculty members produced and how many packages were ordered from Amazon.

"For lunch it is pretty good," Cossairt explained. "The first week we composted 14 pounds and the second week we increased to 15 pounds. We are tracking the number of Amazon packages coming in to campus and from April 12 to April 19, the total packages was 126."

Janszen's presentation highlighted products consumed by people. It shows how products are processed in the factory and the environmental impacts of the

process. From this presentation, students learned environmental impacts of products, are which are processed in a lineal life cycle.

"I hope students learn the environmental impact of every product they buy, and hope students are aware of what they buy," Janszen said.

The goal of "Waste Free April," according to Cossairt is to "create conversation about consuming, waste, recycling and composting," he added. "The idea is to visualize no waste like nature does. The concept of this project and presentation is zero waste."

Spring Musical was a Monster to Stage

Sophia Pelaez

Villanova Preparatory School

Villanova Preparatory School's 's production of "Shrek the Musical" was a product of passion and hard work; students not only practiced their roles, but dedicate hours to create sets, props and costumes.

Under time constraints, students found themselves needing to work harder than ever; to prepare for the spring production.

Unlike other schools, Villanova's spring production takes place on an outdoor stage. Such a stage can be a double edged sword for students, as the creation of the set this year had to be hastened in order to avoid rain and wind.

Props were all handmade; from crowns to dragons. With such an extravagant and whimsical musical as "Shrek," costumes were bound to be complex, as they must reflect



Villanova students perform during a rehearsal for this year's spring production "Shrek the Musical."

Photo by Emily Mam

the unique cast of the musical. Despite this and the given time constraint, students still found a way to compliment each character's distinct personality.

The driving force behind it all was Villanova's performing

arts educator Dr. Sloan Hoffman. Under his guidance students were able to perfect their roles and create an authentic musical encapsulating the fun and whimsical tones of the original "Shrek."



Shawn Jackson was named Nordhoff High School's male teacher of the month for April.

Photo by Aliyah Zweig



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