



# San Pasqual Academy

Home of the Mighty Dragons!

*Bulletin*

January 2008

## Facts-At-A-Glance

As of this writing...

- 136 youth are living at the Academy.
- Over 20 students are working on- and off-campus in internships and paid employment.
- Despite the loss of some alumni homes on campus due to the firestorm, 20 graduates are still participating in the on- and off-campus Alumni Housing Program.
- 13 grandparents are part of the San Pasqual Academy

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## Back on Campus after the Firestorm

On November 5th, students returned to the Academy after Firestorm 2007 displaced them to Green Oak Ranch in Vista for two weeks. Students, along with alumni, grandparents and program staff, were safely evacuated on the evening of October 21st in response to the quick-moving Witch Creek Fire.

Although several buildings were completely destroyed, no buildings on the main campus were damaged. The main campus includes the students' homes, classrooms, administrative offices, gymnasium, Cyber Café, auditorium, Health and Wellness Center, Day Rehabilitation Clinic, and Technology and Career Information Center.

While efforts to re-build the affected areas on campus are underway, students, alumni, grandparents and program staff are demonstrating flexibility in regards to their daily activities and living space. For instance, the grandparents, who were given the opportunity to live off-campus until their homes could be re-built, chose live on-campus in fifth-wheel trailers to maintain the sense of community that is so unique to the Academy.

## Academy Senior Wins Playwrights Honors

Academy senior, James M., will have his original script, *Step by Step*, professionally produced at the Lyceum Theatre in Horton Plaza from January 31 to February 10, 2008 by Playwrights Project. James entered his work about a teenager in the foster care system, along with 288 other writers, in the California Young Playwrights Contest. He was selected as one of four new artists featured in the 23rd season of *Plays by Young Writers*.



In addition to being a talented writer, James is an honors student, captain of the 2007 league champion Academy Dragons football team, Class of 2007 San Diego Chargers Champions Scholarship winner,

2007 Homecoming King, and a respected student leader on campus.

For a performance schedule of *Plays by Young Writers* and information on purchasing tickets, please visit: <http://www.playwrightsproject.org/PBYW.htm>.

## Big Animals for Little Kids

Academy students "dressed up" this past holiday season, as they volunteered with Big Animals for Little Kids for the seventh year in a row. Big Animals for Little Kids, an all-volunteer organization, is dedicated to bringing joy to at-risk children in San Diego.

Volunteers dress up in animal costumes and visit

with children in homeless shelters, hospitals, convalescent homes and residential facilities.

In November, five "Big Animals" from the Academy painted faces at Take Wing, a transitional living program in San Diego, and also collected donated toys to hand-out at the annual Christmas Eve event

In December, seven "Big Animals" assisted with a holiday party for foster children living with their grandparents and fifteen shared the holiday spirit with children at a local YMCA!

A winter nap might be in order to get the Academy's Big Animal ready for the next event in 2008!

## Holiday Happenings On- and Off-Campus

- Students enjoyed Thanksgiving Dinner in the Cyber Café with staff and their significant others on November 22<sup>nd</sup>.
- The Friends of San Pasqual Academy hosted a wonderful Christmas party on December 6<sup>th</sup> in the auditorium for the students and showered them with holiday gifts. Students had a great time decorating cookies and getting into the holiday spirit!
- On December 21<sup>st</sup>, San Diego Chargers Quentin Jammer and Shaun Phillips hosted eight students at Peohe's in Coronado for a holiday dinner.
- Sixteen students joined thousands of Chargers' fans at Qualcomm Stadium on December 24<sup>th</sup> and rooted for a Bolts' victory. Much to the students' delight, the Chargers defeated the Denver Broncos, 23-3, moving them another game closer to the Playoffs.
- A delicious Christmas Dinner was served for all students and staff on campus .
- Students enjoyed a New Year's Eve party in the auditorium, complete with dancing, a movie, great food and sparkling cider to ring-in 2008!
- Other activities students enjoyed during the holiday season included: creating Christmas wreaths and baking holiday treats; visiting the Whaley House in Old Town; tubing, sledding, and ice skating around the County; strolling around Dixon Lake; seeing the Nutcracker Ballet in San Diego; and enjoying the Festival of Lights at the Wild Animal Park.

### Campus Residents and Staff Thank Volunteer Fire Department

On December 12th, the Academy hosted a banquet in honor of the San Pasqual Volunteer Fire Department for helping to protect the campus from the Witch Creek Fire. Though the fire destroyed several buildings, including the homes of Academy staff, grandparents, and alumni and private residents, the main campus and homes of the 136 foster youth were spared from damage.

The banquet was held in the Cyber Café on campus, and students escorted one to two fire fighters to their table. The cafeteria staff prepared the main entrees, while students and their houseparents brought side dishes and dessert to share. Over 200 individuals were in attendance.

A video documentary of Firestorm 2007, created by Academy Clinical Social Worker Todd Myers and Academy students, was shown at the banquet. Each of the firefighters was acknowledged by name, and those who specifically fought the fire on campus received extra recognition. Students gave each firefighter a home-made card and presented the fire department with a personalized banner. The Dragons football team signed a group photo for the firefighters, who are often on the sidelines rooting for the home team.

For those who wanted to express their thoughts and gratitude verbally, a microphone was passed through the crowd. Students, staff and grandparents spoke, and poems composed by the students were read as well. In return for the kind gesture from the Academy, the Fire Chief shared his thoughts about the recent event, and the firefighters offered a fire helmet with their signatures to the campus.

The evening was a time of appreciation and of healing for those affected by the Firestorm.

### A Place of Healing

During Firestorm 2007, Academy students, alumni, grandparents and staff residing on the campus were evacuated to Green Oak Ranch in Vista. The grandparents, who are part of the San Pasqual Academy Neighbors program, remained with the students at the Ranch for two weeks, although they were offered other housing options.

When it was time to return to campus on November 5, 2007, the thirteen grandparents who had lost their homes and personal belongings in the fire opted to live in fifth-wheel trailers at the Academy to maintain their connection with the students. The grandparents' commitment to the students is indescribable; they continue to give despite their significant loss.

As part of the healing process, Grandpa Ben and Grandma Joan have been creating a Hummingbird Garden. The garden, which contains water fountains, a lighted path, and plants rescued from the grandparents' homes, is a special place for healing and restoration. Located near the grandparents' temporary residence, the garden will be a peaceful place for the generations to spend time.



## Ag Program Harvests Talent From Near and Far

As the Academy's 20-acre farm continues to grow, additional staff and support have been brought on to teach and mentor the students. Lori Bain, joined the school's teaching staff, as the new Agriculture (Ag) teacher. She has taught "Ag" in Apple Valley, CA for eight years and has worked with special education students, too. Most recently, Ms. Bain owned and operated a floral business in Colorado; her entrepreneurial skills are sure to be an asset to the Ag Program, as fresh produce becomes ready to market to the public. Ms. Bain states that she has a tendency to think and work "outside the box," making the unique Academy program a perfect fit!

To complement Ms. Bain's work in the classroom and in the garden, interns from the Multinational Exchange for Sustainable Agriculture (MESA) are on-board to help plant and harvest the farm. MESA, a non-profit organization, "sponsors ecological on-the-farm training programs in the United States and abroad for agriculturists seeking to learn alternate farming techniques and share cross-cultural experiences." This is the Academy's second year hosting students from around the world. This year's interns are Michelle Cardenas from Ecuador, Claudia Sweet from Ecuador, and Juan Pineda from Peru. Each of the interns' area of interest is Agricultural Engineering. In their homeland, they have obtained the following degrees: Ms. Cardenas has a Masters Degree; Ms. Sweet has completed her Bachelor's degree and is presently working on her Masters degree; and Mr. Pineda has completed a two-year technical degree and is working on his Bachelors degree. The interns add a new dimension to the Ag Program and to the campus.

The interns enjoy lunch in the Cyber Café with the students, and have even traded recipes with one another. Helping one another with language skills has been another plus of having the interns on campus.

### Gearing Up for College

Late fall, early winter...the time of year when high school seniors are in the throes of college applications, financial aid packets and scholarship opportunities. Fortunately, Academy students have ample assistance available on campus to submit quality applications in a timely and thorough manner.

Workshops geared towards understanding the overall college application process, developing well-written essays and completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) are offered through the Career Center. One-on-one support to address individual questions and situations is also provided by the Youth Empowerment Services (YES) Program, New Alternatives' College Coordinator, and the school's Counseling Center. Resources for college acceptance are within arm's reach at the Academy!

### iPod...X-Box...IRCs?

Foster youth can add IRCs (Independence Readiness Conferences) to their list of must-haves as they get closer to their 18th birthday and leaving the foster care system. IRCs are meetings held for seniors (and some juniors) as they turn 17-1/2 years old and prepare to transition out of the foster care system.

The foster youth and significant adults in their lives, including campus staff, are invited to participate in the IRC hosted by two facilitators, HHSA social worker Eric Warner and Youth Employment Services (YES) Program staff Brett Litoff. They provide resources to educate youth about housing, education, employment, transportation and health coverage options after leaving the Academy. At the conclusion of the conference, youth are provided with an individualized binder, containing helpful information on housing, employment, post-secondary education, health care and more. Since September 2007, 25 youth have participated in the conferences and report the service as positive and helpful!

### Dragons' First Quarter Awards Ceremony

On November 28th, Academy students were recognized for their academic, citizenship and attendance efforts during the first quarter of the school year. Eighteen students received a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.0 - 3.4, twelve received a GPA of 3.5 - 3.9, and eleven received a perfect GPA of 4.0 for the first quarter!

Additionally, twenty students received outstanding citizenship awards and four students posted perfect attendance. Each teacher recognized the most improved student in their class, and two students, Dachuray D. and Jesus B., were honored as Students of the Quarter! Keep up the great work, Dragons!

### Did You Know?

Over 120 youth have graduated from the Academy since the program's inception in 2001! They have gone on to attend local community colleges, four-year universities throughout the nation and vocational programs, to serve in the United States Military, and to join the workforce.

While the alumni have traveled varied paths in their transition to independence pursuing individual interests and goals, many have found the Academy to be a source of continued support and camaraderie. It's not uncommon to spot an alumni on campus for athletic events, graduation, or just because!

For more information about how you can help the Academy with donations or volunteer opportunities, please call Debby Syverson at (619) 435-4557.

# San Pasqual Academy

**A Bridge to Knowledge, Support and Hope**

**Check out the Academy website at:  
www.sanpasqualacademy.org**

## Dragons Heat Up the Court

As November came to a close, the Dragons and Lady Dragons started basketball season with non-league games and tournaments around the County. Citrus League games kicked off at the beginning of January, and both teams continue to give it their all as the season winds down!

Listed below are the remaining games for the season. Come out and support the Academy's athletes!

### Boys Basketball

### Head Coach Bryan Moore

Feb. 5	8:00 PM	@Calvary Christian (Vista, CA)
Feb. 6	4:00 PM	Calvin Christian (Escondido, CA)
Feb. 7	4:00 PM	San Diego Jewish Academy (San Diego, CA)
Feb. 12	6:30 PM	@Guajome Park Academy (Vista, CA)
Feb. 14	7:00 PM	Southern California Yeshiva (La Jolla, CA)

### Girls Basketball

### Head Coach Tia Moore

Feb. 5	5:30 PM	@Calvary Christian (Vista, CA)
Feb. 7	5:30 PM	San Diego Jewish Academy (San Diego, CA)
Feb. 12	5:00 PM	@Guajome Park Academy (Vista, CA)



**Go Dragons!**



## Dragons Capture Division Title Three Years in a Row



For the third straight year, the Dragons football team clinched the San Diego Section 8-Man Football Championship title. The Dragons defeated Warner Springs, 46-6, at Bulldog Stadium in Ramona on November 10th.

Just a month before the title match, the Dragons faced the Warner Springs Wildcats and logged their first loss, 22-14, to an 8-man team in three years. However, the Dragons were not daunted in this re-match, as they worked together and made their championship win against the Wildcats look easy! Senior quarterback, Josh C., was instrumental in six of the seven touchdowns scored!

Wearing red and yellow socks, the football team dedicated this championship game to the fire fighters who helped defend the campus against the Witch Creek Fire. Dragons fans, including several fire fighters, cheered the team on to victory.

The Dragons, who have had a very successful run in 8-man football, will compete in the 11-man division in fall.

**Keep up the winning tradition, Dragons!**



## Heads Up... Dragon Baseball Coming Soon!

It looks like San Pasqual Academy is ready to field a baseball team! With the Academy well established in football, boys and girls basketball, volleyball and softball, students are anxious to try their hand at baseball!



Stay tuned for more baseball news in the weeks to come!

## Counseling Center

The school's Counseling staff have a new home on campus! Room 302 is headquarters to Counselor, Juan Orozco, and Support Specialist, Francisco Romero. College guidance, financial aid assistance and a multitude of other support services are available in the Center.