San Pasqual Academy Bulletin

Home of the Mighty Dragons!

February 2012

Facts-At-A-Glance

As of this writing…

- 134 youth are living at the Academy.
- Approximately 25 youth participated in on- and off-campus work experience opportunities over the summer.
- 27 houseparents are part of the Academy's residential program.
- 10 grandparents are part of the San Pasqual Academy Neighbors Program.

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Visit the Academy website at:
www.sanpasqualacademy.org

Something for Everyone at the Academy

Academy youth have countless recreational activities and events to choose from thanks to the coordination of New Alternatives, Inc.'s (NAI) Recreational Therapy Program.

If a youth is interested in performing arts, then lessons abound...guitar, bass, voice, and piano. Dance? A 1-1/2 hour cardio hip-hop class, open to all students and all skill levels, is offered by Groovz: A Dance Gym every Sunday on campus. This is a fun, high energy workout that gets the Academy teens exercising without even realizing it! For more serious dancers, KRUCIAAL Element Hip Hop Dance provides lessons in contemporary, jazz, salsa, ballet and more! Acting classes are also available for youth to develop their stage skills.

For youth who enjoy the outdoors, the San Diego Sport Fishing Council provides five 1/2 day deep sea fishing trips per year to five Academy youth. Participants have a great time (though sometimes queasy), and have caught a variety of fish! Sailing, surfing, paddling, sea kayaking and sea tri-cycling activities are offered by Urban Surf 4 Kids about once a month for up to 12 youth of all skill levels. This organization has been taking Academy youth on ocean adventures along the San Diego coast for the past three years.

Hiking the trails on and around campus has been particularly popular lately, getting the kids outdoors and active! Up to 10 youth participate on the hikes with program staff. This breathtaking photo of the San Pasqual Valley was taken on a recent hike.

Winter activities are also available through collaboration with County Parks and Recreation, Outdoor Adventures and NAI. In January 2012, nine youth went on a snowboarding day trip to Snow Valley. For one teen, it was the first time he had ever seen snow!

Class of 2011 Grads ~ Home for the Holidays

For most college students, winter break means going home to visit with family and friends. The same is true for Academy alumni, except many don't head to their family home, they head to San Pasqual Academy, their "home for the holidays."

This past holiday season, ten Class of 2011 graduates returned to the Academy for housing, temporary employment and time to catch up with campus staff and friends. They found respite on campus, where they could wind down from the past semester and refresh for the spring. All ten youth were reported to be doing well in school—receiving good grades and adjusting well to independent living. The visit provided an opportunity for alumni to share their college successes and challenges with current students, as well as receive support and on-going encouragement from staff. During their stay, the youth worked on campus in the cafeteria or administrative office.

Two youth traveled all the way from Mayville State University in North Dakota to come home. Others returned from California State University (CSU) - Los Angeles, CSU - Sacramento, CSU - Stanislaus, San Francisco State University, San Jose State University, and Shasta College in Redding. One youth enrolled locally at Mesa College also found comfort in returning to the Academy for the holidays!

School News

Academy youth attending the on-site high school and local middle school enjoyed a two-week winter break from their studies, December 19th - January 2nd. As January disappeared in a wink, students finished up their 1st semester assignments and finals.

Spring semester began on January 30th with an Orientation featuring seven informational stations, lunch and team building activities. The seven stations provided information on the following subjects and resources: Academy grandparents, Building Effective Schools Together (BEST), Career Center, Associated Student Body (ASB), Tech Center Use, What AB12 Means to You, and How to Effectively Use a Planner. Students, grouped by grade level, rotated through each of the stations. The day concluded with an all campus lunch in the Cyber Café and "Minute to Win It" games involving students and staff!

As spring semester gets under way, students are participating in Senior Meetings to ensure that they are on track for graduation and have plans in place for independent living. Since planning ahead is a good thing, juniors and sophomores are also meeting with campus partners to review their academic standing and future plans. The Class of 2012 commencement exercises are scheduled for Thursday, June 21st, at 10 a.m. Staff and students alike are involved in the planning of this exciting event!

The School Site Council (SSC) meets monthly to discuss the school's operations. The SSC has really taken off this year, with school staff, students and campus partners working together to ensure the Academy has an effective instructional program in which all students may attain higher levels of academic competence. All students are using planners beginning this semester, which teaches them organizational skills and facilitates the communication loop between the student, residential program and school. In addition, the BEST committee has implemented a school-wide, positive behavior recognition system; school staff recognize students demonstrating good behavior that is safe, responsible and respectful with Dragon Dough to be used in the ASB store and Dragons' concessions.

Dragons Sports Center

The Dragons Football team outplayed the Julian High School Eagles (12-2) to earn the 2011 Citrus League Championship title. Unfortunately, their CIF San Diego Section - Division V playoff run ended in the first round against the La Jolla County Day Torreys, losing 43-14 despite their best efforts to stay in the game. The Dragons had a great season overall, and hosted several opponents on their new football field, "Field of Hope," including their Friday Night Lights playoff game! The field was made possible by a grant from the San Diego Chargers through the NFL Grassroots Program, support from the Rivers of Hope Foundation and Jammer Family Foundation, as well as local citizens and community groups.

Although the Lady Dragons Volleyball team did not post many wins in 2011, they had a chance to develop their athletic abilities and camaraderie! 2012 could be their year to showcase their skills!

The Fall Sports Banquet to celebrate the football and volleyball teams was held in the campus Auditorium on December 14th.

The Dragons and Lady Dragons Basketball teams have closed out their regular season, and playoffs are here! The boys played Round 1 against the San Diego Jewish Academy Lions on February 21st and lost 58-35. The Lady Dragons play the Vincent Memorial Scots in Calexico on February 22nd in Round 1 of playoffs. Dragon fans are hoping for a win! For a little extra playoff practice, the Lady Dragons matched up with HHSA campus staff on the court. Not only did this fun activity allow staff to support our youth's athletic pursuits, it also gave them a hands-on opportunity to promote the Live Well, San Diego! Initiative.

WAY TO GO DRAGONS!

Move Over, Top Chef . . .

Academy youth are not strangers in the kitchen...they cook and bake regularly in their homes, with the grandparents, and through their internships in the Cyber Café. However, a formalized, on-campus Culinary Arts Program is now available through the Regional Occupational Program (ROP), with oversight by an Advisory Committee which meets quarterly. Academy Food Services Manager and Chef, Johnny Ellison, is certified to instruct the class, and students will receive a ROP Certificate of Completion after meeting class requirements.

The course, which takes place at the end of the school day, offers an introduction to the food service industry. Instruction includes safety in the workplace, sanitation, customer service relations, culinary tools and equipment, weights and measures, and standardized recipes and menu management. Students will be exposed to food shows, local farm tours, professional chef demonstrations, and tours of commercial distribution centers.

The Work Readiness Front

The Youth Empowerment Services (YES) Program on campus provides unique opportunities to prepare Academy youth for the world of work and expose them to different career paths.

A year-long Entrepreneur Class, funded in part by the Walmart Foundation, is being taught jointly by Leonard Vargas (Academy Farm Manager), Sandy Bauler (Instructor) and Brett Litoff (Financial Literacy Instructor). In addition to teaching the youth about running a profitable, organic farm, the course allows the youth to complete the financial portion of the Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) certificate, and explore traditional and non-traditional jobs/careers.

As part of the class, the youth developed a business plan and made a presentation to campus staff. Two students accompanied Ms. Bauler to the California Workforce Association (CWA) Annual Youth Conference held in Long Beach, CA, in January 2012 to present their class as a best practice model. It was a rewarding experience for the students!

Unfortunately, frost from the recent cold temperatures affected the class's potato crop and provided the youth a valuable lesson in the farming business. Although disappointing, the class overall is proving to be a worthwhile experience for the students!

Walmart Thank you, Walmart Foundation! Walmart

Academy Key Club

San Pasqual Academy's Key Club, approximately 20 members strong, continues to exemplify the international organization's mission to provide service, build character and develop leadership. The Academy's members are actively involved with their regional cohorts, attending meetings and participating in community service activities around the county.

Currently, Key Club members are coordinating fundraising efforts to attend the 66th Annual California-Nevada-Hawaii District Convention in the city of Santa Clara from April 13 - 15. Attending the conference is a tremendous experience for Academy youth, as they meet other high school students and enhance their leadership skills!

Dragon Organics Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

The Dragon Organics CSA Program currently serves an average of 50 customers a month. Developed as a student-run enterprise that offers Academy youth academic and work readiness experience, the CSA Program delivers campus-grown, organic produce to four County facilities and the Museum School in downtown San Diego.

The fresh, seasonal produce supports the County's ten-year initiative, Live Well, San Diego! and contributes to the self-sufficiency skills of the Academy's foster youth.

For more information on Dragon Organics' CSA Program, visit:

Dragonorganics.blogspot.com

FYMP + SPA = Good Match

Numerous studies have shown that mentoring has a positive impact on youth. Having a mentor significantly reduces drug and alcohol usage, improves school attendance, increases academic performance, decreases adolescent violence, and teaches life and independent living skills. The County's Foster Youth Mentor Program (FYMP) provides just that kind of support by matching volunteers, 18 years and older, who can make a one year commitment for a minimum of 2 hours per week to a youth in the foster care system. The mentor is screened and trained before engaging the youth in a variety of activities such as helping with homework, attending cultural events, participating in social outings, and more. Mentors provide a stable, consistent and genuine relationship with the youth, and help promote the youth's self-sufficiency and confidence in themselves.

Over twenty youth placed at San Pasqual Academy are matched with a mentor. One youth has had the same mentor for over four years! While there are many supportive individuals available to the youth at the Academy, it is nice for the youth to have one person, a mentor, dedicated to spending one-on-one time with them on activities they enjoy or perhaps have never experienced. For example, mentors for Academy youth provide tutoring, attend Dragons' athletic events, go to dinner and the movies, take the youth to museums and sporting events, attend cultural activities and more! Pairing the Foster Youth Mentor Program with San Pasqual Academy youth equals a good match!

For inquiries on how to become a Foster Youth Mentor, please contact Noreen Harmelink at (619) 767-5466 or Ross Ramos at (619) 767-5211 or email: Rostum.Ramos@sdcounty.ca.gov.

International BMX rider, Dale Holmes, presented three Academy youth with BMX bicycles on February 15th, following their training and licensure by the American Bicycling Association. This generous gift was made possible through a collaborative effort with Mr. Holmes' wife, Adrienne, who is working with the Academy to create internships at the Blue Apple Ranch, a non-profit organization dedicated to rehabilitating abused, neglected and abandoned horses. The three youth were very grateful and excited to receive the new bikes, and eagerly took them out for a ride!

What to do when a youth appropriate for the Academy isn't sure if the campus is the right fit for them? Have them participate in a Pre-Placement Visit (PPV)! A PPV gives the youth an opportunity to visit the campus over night, attend classes on campus for a day and engage in the Academy's daily routine in order to make a better decision about their placement. Additionally, prospective Academy youth now visit California State University at San Marcos for a tour to see all that college has to offer former foster youth, including SPA graduates.

The next PPV is scheduled for February 23rd to the 25th! Case-carrying social workers should contact Joelle Grove, HHSA Academy Screener, at (760) 233-6283 for more information.

You've Got Mail

The mailboxes of Academy seniors are filling up with college acceptance letters. Thus far, seniors have received letters from the University of California - Riverside, California State University (CSU) - San Marcos, CSU - Chico, Humboldt State University and Montana State University.

Referrals...Easy as 1 - 2 - 3

Do you have a youth, 12 - 18 years old, on your caseload who is:

- not likely to find legal/emotional permanency with a specific family,
- experiencing a Change of Placement,
- being considered for an FFA placement OR
- stepping-down from a level 12 group home placement?

Then consider referring the youth to San Pasqual Academy, which offers a stable, long-term placement, an individualized academic plan and intensive independent living skills training. ***Keep in mind, youth can be referred prior to disposition too***. The referral process is easy—just three simple steps:

1. The Child Welfare Services (CWS) social worker submits a completed San Pasqual Academy Assessment Form (04-304; CWS/CMS Template) via **FAX** to Tim Farley, New Alternatives, Inc. (NAI) Academy Screener, at (619) 543-9401 **and** Michael Halloran, HHSA Academy Office Assistant, at (760) 233-6280. *Be sure to provide detailed information on the Assessment Form, and if the youth has an IEP, please submit it along with the Assessment Form to expedite the review process.*
2. Once the referral is reviewed by NAI, an interview with the Academy Director and a campus tour are coordinated for the youth.
3. Following the youth's interview and tour, the CWS social worker is notified of the referral status.

Referrals are also accepted from the youth's collaterals such as the assigned judge, attorney, Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), etc. PLUS the referral form is now only 2 pages in length.

The Academy has a licensed capacity for 184 youth, and spots are currently available for appropriate youth.

For more information on the referral process, please contact your Regional Academy Liaison or the HHSA Academy Screener, Joelle Grove, at (760) 233-6283.

San Pasqual Academy Neighbors Program

The San Pasqual Academy Neighbors (SPAN), also known as the Academy Grandparents, have been exceptionally busy the past several months. The grandparents were able to move into the re-built homes on campus at the end of 2011. They had been living in modular homes at the Academy following the 2007 Witch Creek Fire, and are currently enjoying the opportunity to settle into their new spaces.

On New Year's Eve, Grandpa Jeff and Grandma Jean exchanged wedding vows in the Academy Clinic (formerly used as a church when the property was owned by the Seventh Day Adventist). The celebration included their personal family and friends, as well as their Academy family. Many of the Academy youth in attendance had never been to a wedding before, and they were welcomed at this extra special ceremony!

With the start of a new year, SPAN welcomed two new grandparents, Grandma Barbara and Grandma Charlene, to the program. They have jumped right in with the seasoned grandparents! On any given day, the grandparents can be found alongside the Academy youth mentoring, cooking/baking, creating arts/crafts, playing checkers and chess, having breakfast and lunch in the Cyber Café, celebrating birthdays, working in the garden, attending the high school athletic events, watching movies, reading poetry and much, much more! The grandparents are all over campus interacting with the Academy youth through their unique, intergenerational relationship! If you would like to learn more about becoming a grandparent with the Academy's SPAN Program, please contact Yvonne Campbell at (760) 233-6000.

Did You Know...

Over 80 Academy youth have a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)? After a thorough interview and screening, volunteers complete Advocate University to learn the tools necessary to become successful CASAs.

CASAs advocate for foster youth, who are in out-of-home care, in court to ensure their placement, academic, health and mental health needs are being met. CASAs also help adolescent foster youth prepare for independent living, by supporting them with college and career exploration.

At the Academy, CASAs and campus staff meet quarterly to discuss relevant issues.