

# Pine Valley Middle School - A California Distinguished School



## PUMA NEWS

# December

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*A publication of Pine Valley PTA*

Jason Law, Principal

Collette Ricks, PTA President

Rachel Hurd, Editor

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### Dates to Note:

Date	Event
Dec. 1	PTA Meeting, 7 pm in the Library
Dec. 1-12	Canned Food Drive - donations collected in 1 <sup>st</sup> period
Dec. 9	Deadline for reduced price on Yearbook Dedications for 8 <sup>th</sup> graders
Dec. 9-19	Toys for Tots Collection
Dec. 22- Jan. 2	Holiday Break
Jan. 5	School resumes
Jan. 5-9	Recycle old cell phones
Jan. 9	7 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup> grade Dance, 7-9 pm in the MPR
Feb. 7	She's All That conference, 9 am-3pm at Gale Ranch Middle School

## President's Message - by Collette Ricks & Lani Bari

We hope everyone enjoyed their Thanksgiving week off. There are just 3 more weeks of school until winter break. With the holiday season upon us, we would like to share one of our favorite websites with you. Please check out [www.commonsemmedia.org](http://www.commonsemmedia.org). Common Sense Media is a national organization led by concerned parents and individuals with experience in child advocacy, public policy, education, media and entertainment. We like to use this website when we have questions about various media. The website gives in-depth reviews, ratings, and useful information, on books, movies, video games, TV, music, & websites. We hope you find this website particularly useful, as you enter the holiday shopping season. This website is also an excellent source to check before sending your child(ren) out to a movie during the holiday break. The reviews are extremely detailed as to why the movie has its particular rating. It just gives us more information to draw from when we make movie going decisions.

We have decided to continue our cell phone recycling drive through the 1<sup>st</sup> week of January. Perhaps after the holiday break, there may be more unused phones that can be turned in. The PTA is working with Pace Butler Corporation ([www.pacebutler.com](http://www.pacebutler.com)) on this project. We will send them the cell phones (working or not), and they will look them up on a list and compensate our PTA for the phones accordingly. You have nothing to lose! You'll

feel good about disposing of your old cell phones properly and helping to keep toxic chemicals out of our landfills, and you can help raise some funds for the Pine Valley PTA. Turn in those unused phones to the Pine Valley office before January 9<sup>th</sup>!

Our next PTA meeting will be held on Monday December 1<sup>st</sup> at 7pm in the Pine Valley library. Winter break is from Monday December 22<sup>nd</sup> - January 2<sup>nd</sup>. School resumes on Monday, January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Our next dance for 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> graders will be on Friday, January 9<sup>th</sup>. Enjoy the time spent with family & friends this holiday season.

Collette Ricks  
[collettericks@comcast.net](mailto:collettericks@comcast.net)

Lani Bari  
[lanibari@comcast.net](mailto:lanibari@comcast.net)

## Principal's Message - by Jason Law

I sincerely hope that the Thanksgiving holiday served as an opportunity for students to spend time with family and get some much-needed rest. I know some teachers had some projects for students to work on. Regarding "homework" over holidays and vacations, I always have mixed feelings. Keeping students in an academic frame of mind is important, but kids need time to be kids. The concept of responsibility is not going anywhere.

As we move closer towards the end of the semester (January 27), something that has been on my mind lately is the Honor Roll. When I began here last summer, something that struck me was the fact that two-thirds of the students here at Pine Valley were on the Honor Roll. Part of me was impressed by the many students who were fulfilling their academic responsibilities to such an impressive degree. However, another part of me was, and still is concerned that with so many students making the list, the list itself may be losing some of its status and reputation. Therefore, I have been talking with the other middle school principals in the district and with Pine Valley parent groups, and gathering their thoughts. Based on the fact that students have seven courses in their day, getting a grade of C or lower does not have as much of an impact on the overall GPA. In an effort to reinstate what it means to be on the Honor Roll and to acknowledge the hard work those students do, I would like your input. Please let me know if you like the current tiered system of bronze, silver and gold that starts at 3.0. Perhaps we start it at a higher minimum? Please give it some thought as I discuss with staff my concerns of grade inflation and the number of teacher assistants on campus. My goal here is to develop a new system that acknowledges hard work and motivates students to reach higher goals.

Another concern currently on campus has to do with the issue of cheating and academic fraud. Now trust me, this is an issue that many other districts and school sites deal with daily. Unfortunately, as you know, from time to time students make errors in judgment. These are teachable moments where students must be held accountable for their actions, but at the same time, they can safely learn a lesson so mistakes are not repeated. The wonderful thing about middle school is that these mistakes do not necessarily have to have the same repercussions as these errors in judgment do at the high school level. In an effort to support the school, please discuss this character issue with your child. Reputations are fragile things and the trust between individuals take time to build, but can disintegrate quickly. School staff will be discussing this issue with students, as well, and revisiting the school's Academic Integrity Policy.

Finally, I just want to personally wish everyone an enjoyable holiday season. No matter what your religious affiliation may be, this time is meant to be spent and celebrated with family. So from the Pine Valley family... Enjoy yourselves! Happy Holidays!

## Counselors' Corner - by Julie Damgen

The holiday season is right around the corner, and the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> semester is fast approaching. Parents, please monitor your student's grades throughout the quarter (at [www.schoolloop.com](http://www.schoolloop.com)), and specifically at progress report time. Once grades go out (week of 12/8/08), students only have 5 more weeks of school to

ensure that they do not have any failing marks on their 1<sup>st</sup> semester report card (1/23/09). This is a critical time of year, with a lot of distractions, but the semester grades are the ones that really count!

I would like to wish every family a safe, healthy, and happy holiday season. If there is anything Pine Valley can do to support your student, please let me know! Seasons' Greetings!

## Legislative News – by Kristen Holbrook, VP of Legislative Advocacy

### State Budget

As you have probably read, the State of California is facing the largest budget deficit in its history (over \$27 billion), and the San Ramon Valley Unified School District is expecting at least \$8 million in cuts as a result. This is on top of the \$3 million already trimmed from the budget this year and the potential loss of the \$4 million in parcel tax monies when this local funding measure expires in June of 2009.

PTA will be advocating legislators for revenue increases, so look for more information on this soon. Our newly-elected state legislators are Senator Mark DeSaulnier and Assemblymember Joan Buchanan, who is retiring from the SRVUSD school board after nearly 20 years of service.

### Local School Funding Measure Renewal

The SRVUSD school board recently approved exploring putting a local school funding measure on the ballot for an April mail-in ballot election. Community meetings will be held in January to discuss the measure and gather input. A final decision on the measure will be made by early February. The current measure expires in June.

*Citizens for Quality Schools* is the organization that will run the campaign for a parcel tax election, and PTA will partner with this organization. Monetary donations and volunteers are needed if the campaign is to be successful. If you have experience in fundraising or are interested in helping with the parcel tax campaign, please let me know. My email address is [k10holbrook@hotmail.com](mailto:k10holbrook@hotmail.com) and my phone number is 833-1744.

For other information on PTA legislative advocacy, please visit the PTA Council website, [www.srvcouncilpta.org](http://www.srvcouncilpta.org) or the California State PTA website, [www.capta.org](http://www.capta.org).

## Pine Valley Students Helping Others – from Leadership Class

Pine Valley is participating in two drives during the month of December.

- **Canned Food Drive:** As you may have heard, food bank stores are particularly low this year. Please help fight hunger in our local community by donating non-perishable food between now and December 12. Suggestions: tuna, peanut butter, beans, pasta. (No glass containers, please.) Donations are being collected in 1<sup>st</sup> period classes.
- **Toys for Tots:** Each year the U.S. Marine Corp sponsors the Toys for Tots drive to collect toys for needy children. If you wish to participate, please bring a new, unwrapped toy and place it in the collection containers between December 9 and 19.

## Yearbook Dedication Deadline Approaching – by Bettie

### Waggener

This is a special reminder for parents of Pine Valley Middle School 8th graders. The special "discounted" deadline for submitting your child's 8th grade yearbook dedication is coming up soon, on December 9th. Don't miss out on this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. For more information, please visit [www.theyearbookcompany.com](http://www.theyearbookcompany.com) or call 951-351-9561.

## Box Tops for Education – by Melinna Gershik, Box Tops Coordinator

Remember collecting Box Tops for your elementary schools? Well, we're collecting them again at Pine Valley. This is a great way to earn free money for our school and all you have to do is cut out the Box Tops from products you already buy and use at home. Schools can earn up to \$20,000 per year through Box Tops for Education -- wouldn't it be great if we were one of them?



If you have some Box Tops to donate, there is already a box in the library for collecting them. After the beginning of the year, we will be having a contest to see which core class can collect the most Box Tops.

For a list of products that are involved in the program, please go to the following link:

<http://www.boxtops4education.com/Downloads/Coordinator/Clip/ParticipatingProductsFlyer2008.pdf>

Each Box Top is equal to ten cents for our school. Although it may not seem like much...if each family collected ten Box Tops each month, our school would earn almost one thousand dollars each month!

If you have any questions about the program, please contact Melinna Gershik at [pinevalleyboxtops@yahoo.com](mailto:pinevalleyboxtops@yahoo.com) or at 828-9290. Thanks in advance for your support of this program!

## Save those Holiday Lights!!! – by Lori Cade, Promotion Committee

The theme for this year's promotion party is "Las Vegas," and we need your help! We can use your old lights (in working order) and anything else "Vegas" themed. "Loaners" are welcome to - just please label them with your name and phone number. Please contact Lori Cade at 556-3578 or [iblorbo@hotmail.com](mailto:iblorbo@hotmail.com), and we'll pick them up.

Also, we need you to start thinking about collecting donation items for prizes for the students and cases of water. Please contact Vicki Suoja, at 828-6081 or [vspink@sbcglobal.net](mailto:vspink@sbcglobal.net), if you can help in any way with donations. We hope to get an early start on things this year and make this a promotion to remember! Thank you for your help!

## 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Dance January 9

The next dance will be January 9, 2009, 7:00 – 9:00 pm, with the theme, "Night in the Big Apple." Tickets are \$6 and include foods and drinks. Tickets will be on sale during lunch Tuesday – Thursday the week of the dance. NO tickets will be sold at the door. Glow items will be sold at the dance for \$2-3.

PTA is looking for parent chaperones and refreshment donations. If you'd like to chaperone, please contact Amy White, [semedo08@yahoo.com](mailto:semedo08@yahoo.com) and if you can help with refreshments, please contact Chris Brady, [Chrissymae@comcast.net](mailto:Chrissymae@comcast.net).

## She's All That Conference

"She's All That" is an exciting annual conference for middle school-aged girls and their parents. It is presented by Soroptimist International, San Ramon Valley, a local service club. The conference includes an inspirational keynote presentation and a choice of three of the seventeen available workshops for girls. Our popular "Live Your Dream!" Expo will include numerous informational exhibits again this year. The parent workshop offerings have been expanded, and parents may attend two of the four offered. [See the full flyer](#) to see the list of workshops for students and for parents. This year's conference is

Saturday, February 7, 2009  
Gale Ranch Middle School, San Ramon  
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
Pre-registration is required

\$25 before January 15, 2009, \$30 after January 15, 2009

For more information and registration visit [www.soroptimist-sr.org](http://www.soroptimist-sr.org) or call 925-355-2442

## Programs for Teens – by Adam Chow, City of San Ramon

The City of San Ramon Parks & Community Services Department offers a variety of programs and classes. Visit [www.SRTeen.org](http://www.SRTeen.org) for a complete listing of what's going on for teens in San Ramon. To register for classes or other programs stop by the San Ramon or Dougherty Station Community Centers or you can register online at [www.SanRamonRecGuide.com](http://www.SanRamonRecGuide.com). If you have questions or need more information please call 973-3200.

### Teen Centers

The City of San Ramon is pleased at the success of the Teen Centers for students at Pine Valley, Gale Ranch, and Windemere Ranch. The Teen Centers provide supervised and structured academic and recreational activities from after school until 6:00 p.m. every school day. For more information on registration, fees and policies please visit [www.SRTeen.org](http://www.SRTeen.org) or call Adam Chow at 973-3362. Registration is now open!

### Upcoming Events

#### **Middle School Overnight Lock-In (Friday, December 5 – Saturday, December 6)**

Attention all 6-8 graders! The Overnight Lock-In is just around the corner. On December 5th the City of San Ramon is inviting you to an all-night party that starts at 8:00 pm and we will take over the entire San Ramon Community Center until 8:00 the next morning. There will be exciting activities planned all night, food, video games, movies, contests, and much more! The cost of the event is \$35 per person. You can buy tickets at any Teen Center after school or at any of our Community Centers. No tickets will be sold at the door. For more information or questions call Adam Chow at 973-3362.

#### **Acoustic Music Night (Friday, December 12)**

Check out our Acoustic Music Night @ The Loft. Performers include Jon Williams, Danny Siuba featuring Matt Rosen and Lizzy Szabo, Acoustic Carlos, Mike Sallstrom, Blaine, Gabe Miranda, Oatmeal, and Jeremy Moera. Don't miss one of the best shows of the year! Doors open at 6:30 p.m. \$5 general admission. Visit [www.SRTeen.org](http://www.SRTeen.org) for more information.

### Upcoming Trips

#### ***Snowboarding (Monday, January 26<sup>th</sup>)***

Join us for an awesome day of snowboarding or skiing at Sugar Bowl. We'll provide transportation and your lift ticket. Breakfast is included as an added perk. Rent your own equipment prior to the trip. Mandatory parent/participant meeting at 6:00 p.m. on 1/21/09 at the San Ramon Community Center. Registration must be completed by 5:00 p.m. on Thursday 1/22/09. Cost is \$85 for San Ramon residents. Contact Adam Chow at 973-3362 for more info.

## Student of the Month – by Shannon Maser & Wendy Pomeroy

We've combined the months of November and December and will be announcing the students recognized for exhibiting the life skill of Respect in the next newsletter.