

Pursuing Educational Excellence in a Caring, Positive Environment.

Helix Charter High School PTSA

Helix Hi-Lites

Volume LIII, Issue 3
Principal: Douglas D. Smith

Foothills Secondary Council, Ninth District, Inc., CCPTS
PTSA President: Robin Peterson

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Editor: Pam Davis

Helix PTSA is working on presenting a series of Parent Education workshops and Town Hall meetings on a variety of topics. These informative sessions will begin after the first of the year and will include Financial Responsibility for Students, Mastering the Maze of College Testing, Teen Driver Responsibilities and Laws, Senior Projects, Formal Lab Reports, and the High School Exit Exam. If you have a suggestion for additional topics, please let me know at petersontalk@juno.com or send a note to the school. Watch the newsletter and webpage for information on dates and times. We will also be bringing you information on the School Bond Initiative on the March 2004 ballot, which was approved by the Grossmont Union High School District Board.

Important Notes

- ♦ Our Promoting Voting program which sends a birthday card and voter information to all of our students on their 18th birthday is underwritten by a generous donation from California Coast Credit Union. We would like to thank them for their support of Helix Charter High School.
- ♦ As a member of the Foothills Council PTA, Helix PTSA and our parents have been represented at Grossmont Union High School District Board meetings by

President's Message

the Council President. As of the November GUHSD Board meeting, the Foothills Council has been removed as a standing agenda item at School Board meetings. We feel it is important that our parents be informed of this change.

♦ The San Diego Domestic Violence Council has a new county-wide 24-Hour Domestic Violence Hotline. The number is 1-888-DVLINKS (385-4657).

On a Personal Note: By the time you receive this newsletter, many of the East County families displaced by the fires will be working to rebuild their lives. Our thoughts are with the students of East County and their families. With the end of the first semester in sight and the holidays just around the corner, I wish you all happiness, peace and joyful new beginnings.

Robin S. Peterson, PTSA President

School Health Index

The School Health Index Meeting will be held on Thursday, 12/04/03. At that time groups that met and answered questions about school health policies, nutrition services on campus, physical education programs, and family and community involvement will present recommendations on those subjects. These recommendations will then be presented to the Helix Charter Governing Board. You will be kept informed through upcoming newsletters.

Also, consider looking on the Monica.Buhlig@sdcounty.ca.gov website before the holiday festivities. You will be able to find information on nutrition and physical activity for teens, weight problems and diabetes. Plan the holidays and the treats that go along with them with this in mind. There are some great tasting food ideas out there that are nutritious and, with a bit of moderation, will help keep a person healthy. Be SMART and ENJOY the HOLIDAYS!

SAT Prep

The Helix SAT Prep Course is one of the oldest continuously offered SAT preparation opportunities in San Diego County. The course is co-sponsored by Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) and PTSA, and has been offered to students at Helix in both the Fall and Spring for the past fourteen years. Four Thursday evening sessions, twice a year, provide students with strategies and practice in all aspects of both the mathematics and verbal sections of the SAT-1, plus guidance and information about other testing venues and college admissions requirements. The low cost of the course, \$35, makes the Helix SAT Prep course affordable by any student who desires to maximize his or her test-scoring potential. Any remaining funds after paying for SAT-1 manuals and other course costs benefits the AVID scholarship fund.

A record 68 students took advantage of SAT Prep classes in October. The course will be offered again on four consecutive Thursday evenings beginning February 19th. Information and registration materials will be available in the career center and in room 1470 after winter break.

"Girls Only"

Any women (mom's, daughter's, aunt's, grandma's, girlfriends) wishing to participate in a "Girls Only" trip to the Italian Riviera and Northern Italy during Spring Break of 2005 - contact Paula Ann Trevino 644-1940 x394 or

Helix Adult Center

would like to offer all the parents and those who are adults in your family to please come and join us. We have many classes to offer this community and some may be free.

English As a Second Language
Aerobics
High School Diploma/GED
Computer Classes

Some of these classes are offered during the day and many are available at night. Please call our office anytime for registration information. **Helix Adult Center 644-3555.**

CALENDAR UPDATES

Nov.26-28.....Thanksgiving Break, No School
Students Return December 1st
Dec. 10.....Assoc. Meeting 6 p.m. Library
Dec. 18,19.....Final Exam Schedule
Dec. 22 to Jan. 2...Winter Break—No School
Jan. 5, 6.....Intersession
Jan. 12.....First day of Quarter 3



Please visit these parent-friendly and informative web sites.
<http://www.foothillscouncil.org> • **Helix High School: helixcharter.net**



School to Career

This is the second installment of tips to help you and your family navigate this ever-changing world as you prepare for your student's post secondary adventure.

Tip #4. Expose your student to as many career opportunities as possible.

- Job Shadow for one or more days.
- Mentor by discussing with family, friends and neighbors various careers and opportunities for employment.
- Internships (paid or unpaid) - The opportunity to work in a job with an employer for a few weeks or longer to learn more about a career field.
- Youth Apprenticeships - Work experience in a technical field.
- Part time work - After school if time permits.

School holidays and intercession offer opportunities for students to accompany adults to work. For example: My husband is a mechanic. My children have no desire to enter his field of work. My next door neighbor works for the Police Department. Consider a "student swap" with friends. Your friends' kids are probably much more interested in what you do for a living than your own children are. (At least mine are!)

Tip #5. Provide as many opportunities for your child to learn technology as possible.



In 1950 less than 20% of jobs required skills. Currently, well over 70% of jobs require skills. This knowledge is essential for success in the workplace. If you don't have a

computer, the School and Public Libraries have them for your student's use.

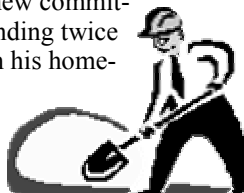
CAREER FOCUS - Finding a career focus has a big payoff. If your teen is doing well, a career focus can make selecting a college or choosing a major more productive.

If your teen is struggling in school, a career focus can add purpose to his or her studies, give grades a lift and improves attendance.

Tip #7. Talk to your teen about a career as a goal of education. It's OK that teens usually don't know what they want to do with the rest of their lives. What's NOT OK is avoiding thinking about future goals altogether. Preparing for a career is part of what education is about.

Thought for the month: My older son attends college and for the past year has done so with a minimum of enthusiasm. This past summer he teamed up with a neighbor for a summer job as a landscape contractor's assistant. After two months of digging ditches and pounding rock he returned to college this fall with a new commitment and is spending twice as much time on his homework.

Lori Free-Trout



Legislation News

Senator Alpert met with the 9th district PTA at the San Diego County Office of Education on Oct. 16. Senator Alpert discussed the state's Master Plan for Education, budget concerns, No Child Left Behind and Universal Preschool. Senator Alpert is the eloquent Chairwomen of the CA State Senate's Education and Appropriations Committees. She was hopeful that things might not be so bad with the budget and we may overcome our financial struggles. But in the near future there will be additional cuts and she wonders where the state will get funds for the Presidents *No Child Left Behind* act and find teachers that meet the strict guidelines, especially in rural areas. The Master Plan For Education is about unifying school districts. There are hundreds of school districts in California-some that have only one school. Unification will save money in the long run but the implementation of this plan is years off. With term limits it's hard to get reform legislation pushed through.

If you have concerns about the collegial scoring of student work to rubrics, common assessments and examining the US History standards at Helix please contact Pam de la Torre at pamdl@cox.net

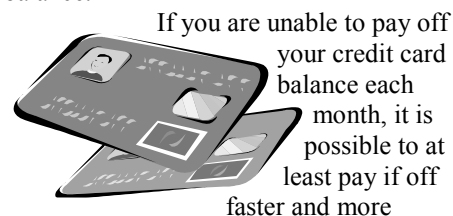
Thank You

Thanks to California Coast Credit Union for making it possible to continue the PTSA's Promoting Voting Program. Their generous donation enables us to mail a birthday card to each Helix student on their 18th birthday with a voter registration card enclosed. Thanks Cal-Coast for your continued support!

Did You Know?

What were you doing 25 years ago? It was 1978 and Jimmy Carter was president. Some of you, I am sure, weren't even born yet. But for a minute, let's assume you were alive in 1978 and had charged \$5,000 on a credit card with a 14 percent annual percentage rate. If you made minimum payments on that credit card each month, you would almost have it paid off today. *Almost.*

It would take more than 25 years to pay off a \$5,000 credit card balance by simply sending in the minimum payment each month, which is typically 2 percent to 3 percent of the card's outstanding balance. What's more is not only would you have spent more than a quarter of a century paying down that \$5,000 balance, but you also would have paid more than \$6,000 in interest. That means you would have paid *more than double* your original balance.



If you are unable to pay off your credit card balance each month, it is possible to at least pay it off faster and more cheaply. Instead of simply paying the ever-decreasing minimum amount each month, let's say you continuously made a monthly payment of \$100. By sticking to a \$100 monthly payment, you would have paid off the balance in just over six years, with a total interest cost of just more than \$2,500. And instead of making payments in 2003 on debt you incurred in 1978, you would have paid it off in 1984.

By paying \$100 a month instead of the minimum monthly payments, both 1978 and your debt would be just faded memories.

Submitted by Michael Davis,
Community Relations Manager for
California Coast Credit Union.

Do You and Your Family Need Health Insurance?

If so, you will want to attend a parent meeting on Wednesday, the 23rd of December in Room 1300 at 6:30 p.m. at Helix Charter High School.

San Diego County Health Services Personnel will present health information and taking applications for affordable Health Coverage.

Changes in Science

The Science Department is making a change (this change will not affect this year's senior class) to the traditional Helix course offerings in a response to changes that the UC system is placing on the high schools and in an effort to keep pace with the state testing system. The UC admission requirement now requires that a coordinated science program must be taken for at least three years. Thus, we are eliminating our two year Coordinated Science program and replacing it with the following:

Year One: Biology 1,2 or Honors Biology 1,2 (these will be open to 9th graders)

Year Two: Honors Chemistry 1,2 or Honors Physics 1,2 (next year we will also offer Chemistry 1,2 and Physics 1,2)

Year Three: (for motivated science students, these courses are encouraged)

Marine Science*

Environmental Science*

Physiology

AP Chemistry

Forensic Science

Science Research Seminar

Chemistry* and/or Physics* can be

taken as a third year option if not taken previously

UC requires two years of science but you should know that to be competitive for admission to the UC system it is recommended that students take three years of science. It is also important to note that in order to graduate from Helix the two year science requirement can be completed by passing Biology and any of the year two or the Starred(*) year three courses.

For questions, please contact the Sci-



Social Studies Spotlight



Special thanks to all the veterans of our community who spoke to Helix social studies classes for Veteran's Day. This would not have been possible without the hard work of Su Hamano (Helix Charter High School Intergenerational Coordinator) for recruiting and scheduling the veterans to speak to students. Having students learn history from those who created the history is a true learning experience.

Also in Social Studies –

Helix is a College Prep school and the Social Studies department believes that many of our students are capable of completing college level work while in high school. Our Honors/Advanced Placement program has continued to grow over recent years. This month we spotlight A.P. European History.

A.P. European History is a challenging course taken by many 10th graders at Helix. Although most schools offer this course to 12th grade students and some 11th grade students, Helix has found that many 10th grade students are able to meet the challenges of this rigorous course. Students who are successful on the A.P. European History Exam in May can earn college credit. Below is a comparison of Helix with other top schools in the county as well as other Grossmont Union High School District schools. Congratulations to all students who earned college credit last year! For more information about this course contact rberg@helixcharter.net or bstone@helixcharter.net (Mr. Berg or Mr. Stone).

A more comprehensive list is available by contacting patrevi@helixcharter.net (Mrs. Trevino). We are very proud that the number of students passing this exam has increased over the past three years. In addition, the "percentage" of students taking this exam and passing has also increased from 54% to 79%. Over the past three years, the Helix A.P. European History results have placed Helix in the top 10 for San Diego County (based on number of exams passed). Great job!

High School Name	# of Exams Passed	# of Exams Given	Pass Percentage
1. Rancho Bernardo	94	119	79
2. Mount Carmel	93	112	83
3. Rancho BuenaVista	78	123	63
4. Vista	66	165	40
5. La Jolla	65	71	92
6. Westview	62	87	71
7. Patrick Henry	57	85	67
8. Helix	55	70	79
9. Scripps	54	60	90
10. Carlsbad	53	64	83
Other Schools			
14. Granite Hills	36	51	71
19. Monte Vista	23	94	25
19. West Hills	23	94	25
24. Grossmont	20	85	24
32. El Cajon Valley	5	32	16

Junior Corner

Winter Formal 2004

The 2004 Winter Formal will be held on Saturday, January 24th along beautiful Mission Bay in Marina Village. Please mark your calendars for what is sure to be one of the most memorable nights of the school year.

Jr. Class President: Breannah Bandrowsky

Jr. Class VP: Antoinette Flores

Jr. Class Treasurer: Andrea Newell

Jr. Class Secretary: Jessica Krueger

New Jr. Class Advisors: **Michelle**

Mosteller and Katie Barger.

Thank you to former 2005 class advisor, **Jeffrey Babbitt**, for your leadership and support the past 2 years.

Do You Have A Plan?

In case of emergency parents need to plan ahead with their students for emergencies (such as the fires last month). We all need to have a place outside of this area that you can call to check-in, just in case there is an emergency. If the whole family has someone to check in with outside the area, they can call in and report their whereabouts. This is important when cell phones may not be working in the local area. A good way to protect our families is to plan ahead.

Attention Senior Parents

The senior team hopes this year is running smoothly for your student and you



EMAILS

We have sent home several emails to parents/guardians regarding reminders about the start of school, Back to School Night, On-line

Grade Posting and more. If you are not receiving these emails, then I do not have your accurate email address. If you are not receiving the emails, but would like to, email me now at csinger@helixcharter.net. I will add (or correct) your email to my address book.

SENIOR PROJECT

If your student's proposal is still NOT approved, there may be a problem with a June 2004 graduation. Immediately talk with your student and find out what seems to be the problem. Currently most students have not found a consultant, are trying to propose ideas that are NOT a stretch and therefore are NOT a project and/or are missing some of the signatures they need. If after speaking with your student you still have concerns, please contact Ms. Elena Christian at echrist@helixcharter.net or phone 644-1940 ext 359.

If your student IS approved, the winter break/Intercession days are a perfect time to get it done. If they do it then, with no homework over their head, they will alleviate some of the stress that mounts in the spring of the senior year.

To help stay on top of the senior project, please visit the senior project web page at www.helixcharter.net/seniorprojects. Your student is required to keep 5 progress reports throughout their project. They have been advised to look at the project steps they listed in the proposal and divide it into 5 equal parts. Each time they reach the end of a section, they need to write a progress report. Sample progress reports are in their manual as well as on the website. They MUST have 5 pro-

gress reports in their portfolio upon submission. The portfolio of the completed project is due April 27th. (This date is pending the state testing dates.)

BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHT is Wednesday, January 21st. Please plan on attending as most students will have new classes with new teachers. It is important to open the lines of communication early with all of his/her teachers.

Rescheduled Show

Due to the missed week of school, The Highland Players have rescheduled their 2003-2004 season opener, Agatha Christie mystery "Ten Little Indians". Show dates are now Tuesday Dec. 2 - Friday Dec. 5 at 7 pm. Tickets are \$8, or \$6 for each student with an ASB card. For more information, log onto the Highland Players' website at members.cox.net/highlandplayers



Opening night will feature a dinner, catered by supporters of the program. For \$20, patrons will receive a ticket to that evening's performance, a carne asada dinner, a beverage and dessert. All proceeds benefit the Highland Players. Number of dinners is limited - please purchase early! For more information, contact Jennifer Osborn at ext. 450.

Homecoming Game

The Highlander football team thrilled the home crowd with a 26-2 win against Mt. Miguel on Friday, November 7th to cap a memorable 2003 Homecoming evening. The Scotties took an early lead and never looked back. The night, began with a spectacular performance by the Helix band and drill teams and a fire truck full of spirited cheerleaders jumpstarted the crowd without a moment's hesitation. Halftime festivities focused on this year's Oz theme and included the announcement of the Homecoming Court, performances by Guys and Dolls and the Helix Dance Team and, finally, the announcement of the 2003 Homecoming King and Queen... congratulations to **Kirsten Schmidt** and **Marlon Pierce** on this special recognition! Kudos to **Kelsey Morante** and her team who were able to put together a great show in spite of delays and cancellations necessitated by the recent wildfires.

Side Note 1: Special thanks to the following individuals and organizations who volunteered both time and resources toward making this night happen: Lon Schmidt (backdrop construction), United Rentals and Alan Jones (lift), Lori Free-Trout and her army of parents (concessions), La Mesa Fire Department, San Diego Corvette Club and, as always, the always reliable Custodial Crew....

Side Note 2: Given the obvious sensitivity toward fire victims, the Helix Charter High ASB decided to eliminate the fireworks portion of the program this year. Instead, they made the decision to donate the \$2500 originally allocated toward fireworks to students of local high schools who lost their homes in the fires. The donations will be made in the form of gift cards that can be used to purchase new clothing and school supplies.

Winter Concert

The Helix Instrumental Music Department presents its Winter Concert on Tuesday, December 16 at 7 p.m. in the

Helix Gym. Tickets are

\$6 and are available through the Instrumental Music Department. Contact

Mr. Sperling at ext. 351.



Helix Charter High School Students and Staff Show Support for Fire Victims

Contact: Jennifer Osborn – (619) 840-6067

The students, faculty and staff of Helix Charter High School in La Mesa, CA, combined to raise \$5200 in a show of support for fire victims at three schools in the Grossmont Union High School District. The faculty and staff contributed \$2700 in an informal relief effort, coordinated by staff member Sharon Church. The Helix student body voted to give \$2500, originally earmarked for fireworks at the Homecoming football game scheduled for Oct. 31. The game was cancelled, due to the fires. Upon returning to school, the Associated Student Body voted to put the money toward helping the people from the area schools most affected.

The money will be used to purchase pre-paid Visa cards to be distributed to fire victims at El Capitan, Steele Canyon and Granite Hills. "Just when I think Helix can't get any better, I am proven wrong," said Cathy Singer, a counselor at Helix and a graduate of El Capitan. "Every year I work here I become more proud to be a Scottie."

Helix Charter High School is a non-profit, public school serving students from all over the state. It is one of the only comprehensive charter high schools in California.



Budget Committee Highlights

As an attempt to better inform parents and the community about the "Benefits" of being a charter school, the Helix Charter High School Budget Committee will be using the PTSA Newsletter as an avenue to demonstrate some of the positive fiscal benefits of a charter. For this issue we would like to highlight the Library and Performing Arts Department.

The Helix Charter High School Library is used by hundreds of students every day. No other room on campus has more activity on a daily basis. In addition, before school, during breaks, lunch, and after school, the Helix Library is bustling with students and staff. In an attempt to improve the quality of service and aesthetics to the library the following improvements have occurred as a result of charter funding:

- Painting of the entire library
- Building of new oak checkout counter
- Carpet for entire library
- Movement of media services from renting media to purchasing/developing a Helix Media collection/resources
- Building Media collection room
- Building of a media storage room (by the "This Old School" class)



Despite the many improvements charter funding has provided, the current library was built to help 1500 students check out books. Today, our library services over 2400 students and staff members and is also a computer lab. On a regular basis, students and classes are turned away from using the library because it is overcrowded. The library has no heating or air conditioning making it extremely uncomfortable for students and staff. It is in dire need of expansion to deal with the growing needs of students. Charter funding has made some superficial changes to help the library, however, modernization of the library is desperately needed.

The Helix Charter High School Performing Arts department services over 400 students in Vocal Music, Instrumental Music and Drama. The Performing Arts Program is one of the jewels of Helix. Although these programs raised a significant amount of funding for their programs through a variety of fund raising mechanisms, the Helix Budget Committee and Helix Governing Board have further committed funds to helping these programs. Specifically, funding for Performing Arts includes:

- \$14,000 yearly towards replacement, refurbishing of musical instruments
- \$85,000 towards the purchase of new band uniforms (the old uniforms had been in use since 1979)
- Funding for some transportation to Performing Arts events
- New music stands
- Departmental printer, digital projector
- Lighting and wireless microphones
- Storage shed
- Theatrical assistant



Helix Charter High School has the premier Performing Arts program in the East County and charter funding has allowed the Performing Arts programs to subsidize some of their purchases. With a student body of 2400+ students, the Helix Charter High School Performing Arts program is tapped to capacity. There are limited spaces available for additional students and the facilities were not constructed to house a band the size of the Helix band. In addition, these rooms lack air conditioning, heat, and proper storage facilities. Although there is interest to expand the Performing Arts program, there are not enough classrooms to available to facilitate an expansion. Charter funding will be able to address the minor needs of this program, however, modernization is key to future expansion of this important program.

Dear Friends,

I can't thank you all enough for giving so freely of your time to work the concession stands and ticket booths for the Homecoming Game.

Special thanks to the ticket sellers Robin Peterson, Sandy Rosenthal, Debbie Smith, Suzanne Koppman Gue, Barbara Spagnola and Beth Saltzman, who cheerfully and tirelessly sold tickets and explained over and over to parents that, "YES, you do have to purchase a ticket to watch your student play football or march in the Band!".

THANKS to all of you who were up to your elbows in Nacho Cheese Sauce, baked potatoes, hot dogs, chili, candy bars, hot chocolate, soda and more. They are: Jackie Crow, Julia Meier, Tammy and Mark Beach, Aprell Bradford, Marianne Cleveland, Patty Ortiz, Tawana Stanford, Brenda Henderson, Bill Pendarvis, Caitie Ulle, Joann Villoria, Carly Robinson, Diane Correia, Becky Lopez, Denise Diaz, Melissa Diaz and Stacey Warren, Pat Feldman, Nadine Boyce, Becky Lopez, Diane Correia, Pat Feldman, John & Teresa Markey, Jeff & Laurie Buffington and Lisa Hamann.

My Bar B Q Buddies - Kim & Caroline Ulle, Elaine Winchell, Mary Kennedy and the man of my dreams, Rainbow Trout, thanks, thanks, thanks!

A HUGE thanks to Bonnie Riggins, our "buyer". Kelsey Peterson who showed up at every Home Game with a smile, ready to work a double shift, thanks so much!

My unending gratitude to Pat Feldman, Suzanne Koppman-Gue and Caroline Ulle who gave up their whole day to help set up the stands and get them running and then worked their shifts!

Thanks to everyone who volunteered their time this Football season to support the students, community and PTSA of Helix. Good Job! If I've left anyone out I am truly sorry.

Lori Free-Trout



Laughter is the Best Medicine



Dear Dad,
School i\$ really \$well. I am making lot\$ of friend\$ and \$tudying very hard. I have \$o much Stuff, I \$imply can't think of anything I need. \$o if you like, \$end me a card, a\$ I would love to hear from you.
Love, You \$on

Dear son,
I kNOw astroNOMy, ecoNOMics, and oceaNOgraphy are eNOugh to keep an hoNOrs student busy. Do NOt forget that the pursuit of kNOwledge is a NOble task, and you can't study eNOugh.
Love, Dad