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Campolindo Orchestra Going to China

Submitted by Carola Ziermann



Photo submitted

The Campolindo High School Orchestra has been afforded a tremendous musical and educational experience with an invite from the Chinese Ministry of Culture and the International Fine Arts Institute to perform in Beijing, China during Spring Break 2011.

The Orchestra will perform at three different venues in Beijing, with an audience of up to 1800 people. Music Director Harvey Benstein is going to

prepare a selected western program with his students.

"I'm sure any parent whose student went on the St. Petersburg, Russia trip with our Symphonic Band in 2007 will agree what a great opportunity this is for our young musicians. This promises to be another musical and cultural experience of a lifetime," says Benstein.

Fund raising activities will be established by student committees and the Campolindo

Music Boosters organization. Students are already exploring options like Rent-A-Student and playing at the Farmers Market among other places. The Music Boosters are approaching foundations and companies with ties to China who may be willing to sponsor a student or to help cover some of the other costs associated with the trip. They are also looking for support from the community.

"The challenge here is

also the logistics of the instruments. Students who play cello or bass can't possibly take their instrument on an airplane, so we need to rent these large instruments in Beijing and get them on-site," says Sue Carlson, who heads the Music Boosters' fundraising committee for this trip.

For more information on the Campolindo Orchestra and their China trip, visit the website www.campomusic.org.

Submit stories to schooldesk@lamorindaweekly.com

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Continued School Success in Lamorinda

By Cathy Tyson

It's that time of year again, time for the annual Academic Performance Index (API) scores prepared by the California Department of Education. Continuing Lamorinda's usual excellent educational tradition, the numbers document the quality of schools in the area, among the best in the state.

API numbers can range from 200 to 1,000 - with a California target level of 800, the Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) scored 899. Of the three area high schools, Miramonte racked up 930, Cam-

polindo 920 and Acalanes 898.

"The Acalanes Union High School District remains the highest performing high school district in California," said AUHSD Superintendent John Stockton. "The continued academic success of the students of the Acalanes Union High School District is a great reflection of the commitment to a quality comprehensive instructional program by our educational community. Dedicated students, committed staff, caring parents, forward-thinking civic leaders, and our supportive communities continue to make our

district a special place for students."

Academic Performance Index numbers are compiled based primarily on the performance of public school students in grades 2 - 11 that take the California Standards Test each spring. Keep in mind these stellar scores were made against a backdrop of serious budget challenges in the 2009- 2010 school year. Educational foundations and community support helped bridge the gap.

Check out all the California test scores at www.cde.ca.gov/ta.

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Olive Festival and Auction Coming Up

Wagner Ranch Nature Area Turns Olive

By Sophie Braccini



Toris Jaeger inspects young olives

Photo Ohlen Alexander

An ancient fruit: Olive oil has been used throughout history for everything from ensuring good health to religious and cultural ceremonies, including the anointing of Olympic athletes, babies and dead people; a well-rounded fruit, the olive. Olive tree cultivation is said to predate the written language. Although native to Asia Minor, mythology has it that the goddess Athena gifted the olive to the Greeks. Franciscan missionaries brought the olive to California, planting not only missions but olive orchards as they made their way northward. Move over, California wine - California olive oil is the new hot topic. Get ready for all

things olive!

"The Wagner Ranch Nature Area's heritage olive grove was planted by California's first Surveyor General, Theodore Wagner, in the 1880s," says Kathy Barrett of the Friends of the Wagner Ranch Nature Area (FWRNA), which will host the first annual Olive Festival at Orinda's Wagner Ranch Nature Area on Sunday, October 10th from 1:00-4:00 p.m. The festival is free and will offer fun for all ages, including a silent auction to benefit FWRNA's educational program.

FWRNA has a fundraising goal of \$15,000 for this event, which will be used to preserve the 40-year tradition of offering hands-on

activities to teach Orinda children about our environment and how early residents lived in harmony with nature. Several local artists are donating enchanting works to the auction, including a hand-painted silk art quilt by well-known quilter Grace Kaplan; a Susan Kendall landscape painted exclusively for the Olive Festival; and a giant snail - a whimsical garden sculpture by Eileen Fitz-Faulkner and Susie Parr.

Brentwood's McCauley Brothers Olive Grove will bring different olives and olive oils for tasting at the festival. Cooks can enjoy demonstrations by local restaurateur Mariam Lavecchia, of Trattoria Lupetti, and Savory Affairs. For the younger audience, there will be games, olive-tasting, tree-planting, music and art, Living History skits and more.

"We will give away little olive trees to those who want to take one home," says Nature Area naturalist Toris Jaeger, who has admired the grove for years and knew of its historical value. She asked olive expert Sean McCauley (of McCauley Brothers) to take a look at the orchard. "Sean was quite impressed with the trees," she said, "he estimated they were worth a lot of money, and once pruned, the bigger ones could produce 2000 to 3000 pounds of olives a year." FWRNA's hope is to one day produce award-winning olive oil, just as the Wagner family made more than a hundred years ago.

Why an olive festival? "Olive trees are symbols of peace and prosperity, but they are also a growing agriculture resource here in California and it is time we celebrate the tree, its crop and its local history," concludes Barrett.

The Wagner Ranch Nature Area is at the southeast corner of the intersection of Bear Creek Road and Camino Pablo. For more information go to www.fwrna.org.

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