

#WeAreCarmelUnified

From the Office of the Superintendent Barb Dill-Varga, Ed.D.

January - February, 2020



First Cup of Coffee with the Superintendent

Next Dates and Locations for Friday First Cup of Coffee meet-ups — 7:30am - 8:30 am

- **February 7** - Coffee Bank at 26135 Carmel Rancho Blvd.
- **March 20** - Big Sur Bakery, Big Sur
- **April 10** - Carmel Valley Roasting Company at the MidValley Shopping Center - "tentative"

California Dashboard Update

We are continuing to present the Dashboard data at a series of meetings for the community, staff, and stakeholders as part of our LCAP (Local Control Accountability Plan) process. Your input matters to us!

Site staff presentations have been occurring in January and will continue in February. Several community meetings as well as site parent group meetings have taken place during this time frame. A whole district community meeting will take place on February 26 at 6pm in Portable 1 next to the middle school. More information can be had by contacting Chief Academic Officer Blaise DiGirolamo at 831-624-1546 x2030.

Facilities Master Plan Update

Some of you may have received a communication from EMC Research, a research firm hired by the District to help us better understand what our community might know or need to know in order to support a bond initiative next November. They made 400 random phone calls or email contacts from our voter rolls.

If you have been following our Facilities Master Plan work, you know that we will need this kind of support to move forward and so these survey results will help the Board make that determination. There are some very small projects we can complete with existing budgets, but not very many.

The research company will provide their findings to the Board in March which will assist the Board in decisions not only about going forward with a bond in November,

but will give them insight as well to the size of the bond that might be supported.

Currently, the Board *has not* made a decision about whether to go forward with a bond question on the November ballot. Meanwhile we also are continuing to fine tune the possible projects to be sure we are focusing on *essentials* as opposed to those which are *nice to haves*.

Student Board Leadership Training

On January 15, about 60 student leaders from Monterey area school districts — plus their related Associated Student Body (ASB) directors and superintendents — met at Monterey County Office of Education to participate in a daylong workshop on leadership with an eye to enhancing student voice. Some of these future leaders already serve as student board members while many were underclassmen who might in the future assume those positions.

Sandra Kurland, the National Student Council California Executive Director led the workshop. It is our hope is to offer this each August, prior to student board members assuming seats on local school boards or beginning their roles as student leaders in a variety of school organizations.

Through some fun activities, this workshop taught students how to effectively gain insight from fellow students and create an action plan for success while also participating in conversations with people of differing opinions. The goal is to help them understand introductory board governance processes and to develop leadership skills necessary to participate.

In attendance were 10 Carmel High Students, ASB director Aubrey Powers, assistant principal Craig Tuana, and Supt. Dill-Varga. Board members Sara Hinds and Tess Arthur visited for part of the afternoon. The feedback from students across the county was very positive, and we are looking forward to next August's event.

Ethics Bowl at Carmel High



Congratulations to our Carmel High School Ethics Bowl team who placed 7th in the nation's largest regional competition

According to teacher and club sponsor history teacher Marc Stafford, the National High School Ethics Bowl (NHSEB) is an academic extracurricular program that seeks to engage students in "respectful, supportive and in-depth discussion" of nuanced ethical dilemmas. Students learn to recognize and evaluate the complexity of ethical problems straight from the front pages of today's newspapers all while working together towards solutions that can be justified through clear and systematic reasoning.

This year over 350 high schools from over 30 states participated in regional competitions, the largest of which was held at UC Santa Cruz. Winners of the regional competitions advance to a national competition at the University of North Carolina. Past topics have included teacher strikes, drone strikes, donor babies, forgiving student debt, punching Nazis, and our ethical responsibility to the environment.

Some sample questions students have discussed are:

- Is it immoral or unjust for states to make it illegal for teachers to strike?
- Do teacher strikes violate a fundamental duty to the students they serve?
- Is "making racists afraid" a morally worthy aim?
- Is violence ever an acceptable response to political views or beliefs one disagrees with?

In only its third year, the Carmel High School Ethics Bowl team placed 7th in the nation's largest regional competition. Over the past three years, the team has garnered the respect of the competition's organizers and their competitors alike with a record of 15 wins and 1 loss in preliminary rounds; the team has yet to advance from the quarter finals."

NatGeo Bee

On Friday, January 24, ten Carmel River School fifth grade students participated in *The National Geographic GeoBee* school championship. The competition has three different levels: school, state, and national championship. Schools conduct a *GeoBee* and name a school champion. The school champion then takes a proctored online qualifying test, and the top-100-ranked students in each state qualify to represent their school at the State *GeoBee* competition. State champions are then invited to compete in the national championship.

This is the second year Carmel River School has participated in the *GeoBee*. Since October, students have been studying states and capitals, the location of states, the continents and oceans of the world, state nicknames, major rivers, "Weird But True" facts, and major landmarks, cities, and capitals of countries throughout the world. Studying has taken place in the classroom, through homework packets, and online using the "Study Corner" on the *GeoBee* website.

The class competition took place on the afternoon of Friday, January 17th in all the fifth grade classrooms at River. There were six rounds, and it was then narrowed down to ten finalists representing all four classes. The school competition occurred on Friday, January 24th in the Ottertorium with school board member Tess Arthur and River ELD instructor Julie Larimer as judges.



River School fifth graders showed off their geography knowledge in the National Geographic Geo Bee

The school final was very competitive with Allen Klingel crowned champion. Allen prevailed through a series of questions that tested students' geographical knowledge pertaining to various features and characteristics of nations throughout the world. We're proud of Allen and his achievement and wish him well in his quest to qualify for the state *GeoBee* competition.

Wellness Committee

The Board of Trustees' Wellness Committee met on January 13. They reviewed four datasets from the Healthy Kids Survey that provided insight into levels of student anxiety and stress and use of illegal substances.

As a beneficial next step, the committee is inviting a panel of students to the next meeting to share with us

their perspectives on sources of student stress and what they would suggest as possible solutions. We will also be sending a small sub-committee to visit a local high school Wellness Center to learn about its value and use to its school district. The committee's next meeting will be on March 2 in the Carmel Middle School library.

Security Cameras

The Board approved the purchase and installation of security cameras in certain locations on all of our sites to improve the safety of our students. We already had some security cameras in place, and this project adds to that number, particularly in areas of need, especially entries, exits, parking lots, hallways, and other public areas.

These cameras are not going to be monitored in real time but will have video records that can be consulted when necessary for investigations. We are hopeful that these cameras will also serve as a deterrent to incidences of vandalism in parking lots and classroom buildings and will enhance the safety on all of our sites.

The Board is reviewing new board policies and administrative regulations that will govern the use of these cameras and which have been worked out in cooperation with our membership units. We will also be installing signage to alert the public to the presence of the cameras.

Carmel High Robotics Team

In 2007, industrial arts teacher Paul McFarlin (now retired) and current computer science teacher Tom Clifford saw a need to form an academic team for students who were passionate about STEM (science, technology, engineering and math). In 2007, the original club had seven students. That number has now become over 30, spread out among all four grade levels. There are 18 upperclassmen and 12 underclassmen, including 10 freshmen, many of whom learned about the team in the first annual summer camp last August.

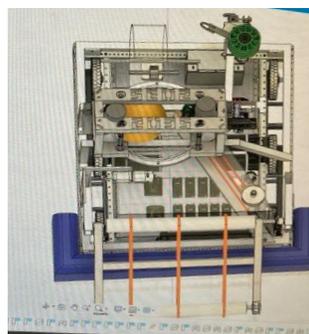
Of these 30, there are also six girls, and the team is constantly recruiting more female members by offering them a supportive and welcoming environment. "Student diversity is extremely valuable and important to our team," says team member Marcus Lo.



The Carmel High "Rockin' Bots" robotics team acquires skills in problem-solving, leadership, and technical skills through building and programming a robot.

The club engages students in acquiring skills in problem-solving, leadership, and technical skills through building and programming a robot. Though robots of the future will not replace the jobs requiring creativity, empathy, and strategic decision making, we do know that understanding them and being able to program them is becoming increasingly important to many industries and careers. We want our students to be ready for their futures and this club is certainly accomplishing that!

Dante Garderet, the president of the team, shared with me, "When someone joins the team, they don't need to have any prior knowledge of technical skills; they only need to bring with them a willingness to learn. We teach mechanical skills such as welding and milling, as well as electrical and programming skills. We encourage new students to try many different aspects of robotics to see what role they would be interested in playing on the



team. Our team does not only hone STEM-related skills, but it also teaches business and marketing education, which is a powerful asset when networking with local businesses and corporations. Artistic skills are also welcomed on our team because graphic design promotes our public image as a school club and competitive robotics team."

I was fascinated to learn from him that there are different groups within the team that focus on particular aspects. "The programming department is in charge of writing all the code necessary for the functionality and mobility of the robot. The fabrication/mechanical department of the team designs and builds the physical robot from scratch."

He continued, "We also have a business/outreach team that writes grants and reaches out to sponsors for support and mentorship. They are also in charge of the team website and social media. Finally, we have team artists that create the team brand, including logos for our t-shirts and swag like buttons and stickers to give out at competitions."

It's especially impressive that this is an extracurricular activity and not a class, because of the deep learning that goes on. I learned that the older students — usually juniors and seniors — help by teaching the new students skills. The local professional mentors, of whom there are several



from both mechanical and programming careers, also teach new students skills. For mechanical skills, for example, new members are taught to lathe, use the mill, weld, and basic fastening and tapping.

The fun and exciting part of this learning is that all of these students are part of a program called FIRST, which is a student-centered, STEM-based program where students build a competitive robot. The competitive season begins with a challenge consisting of multiple tasks, which robots must perform in a timely manner.

FIRST values learning and growth, intelligence, teamwork, and leadership, just like doing a sport. It gives a head start to anyone pursuing a career in technology or engineering and inspires those who have not considered it. In short, FIRST is an unrivaled opportunity to learn essential life and career skills.

One of the team mentors from the local Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) commented that he finds Carmel High students who participate on this team to be uniquely qualified for success in STEM careers and are often selected to participate in NPS's summer internships, too. After participating in FIRST at Carmel High, we find that about 75% of team members students have gone on to pursue engineering in college.

The CHS Robotics Club — fondly known as the *Rockin' Bots* — is looking forward to competing this spring in the *FIRST* robotics competitions with the state wide event occurring in early April!

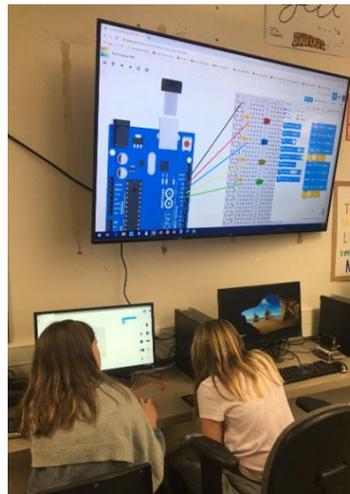


Coding Through the District

The future for Rockin' Robotics is bright as grades K-8 have differing levels of exposure as described below.

Carmel Middle School

All 6th graders at Carmel Middle school receive 6 weeks of coding and electronics using programs such as *Scratch*, *Tinkercad*, and *Arduino*.



Pictured here are 6th graders in teacher Stefan Mayer's classroom, wiring up an Arduino which they will then program. 7th and 8th grade computer electives are using LEGO EV3 and Vex robots. In addition the Carmel Middle School librarian Susan Thompson has just started a *Girls Who Code* club to have students start with learning the program Python.

Elementary Students and Coding

In our elementary schools, computer classes are using LEGO WeDo and EV3 robots, code.org, and Scratch across many grade levels. Students in Carmel Unified are exposed to 4-6 coding and robotics lessons from 3rd grade on. Grade K-2 has 1-2 lessons a year. These lessons are led at Tularcitos, Cooper, and River by teachers and technicians: Neva Peterson, Kirk Abbot, Jillian Tischio.

Captain Cooper Stunning Artwork

Our new Captain Cooper garden teacher Ruby Way, is multi-talented. While she has worked wonders in the school garden with students to understand the importance of our environment, she has also brought them to new levels of appreciation through her integration with the arts.

Ruby had the students paint plywood shapes of area birds and butterflies using acrylic paint. She next worked with artists in the community who added the details. These works of art --several which are pictured here --were on display in the community and then came back to Cooper for permanent installation around the school. The older students drew the birds, learning to enlarge drawings in proportion as part of a math lesson. Principal Tacconi related that they, the students "learned to draw local condors to scale using the grids. The younger students learned about wing spans and the size of local birds. They all learned about local butterflies and the parts of the butterfly."





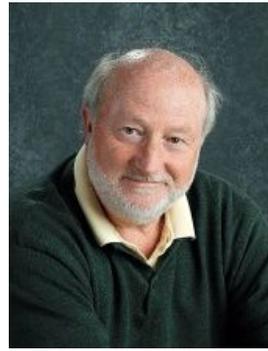
Annual Tularcitos Bobcat Family Dance

The first annual Tularcitos Bobcat Family Dance was held on Friday, January 10, from 6-9pm. Principal Peterson estimates that nearly 400 attended to enjoy the activity! From 6-7:30pm, kinder through grade second students performed demonstrations of their country square dancing routines learned in PE class and then danced with their families. Next up from 7:30-9pm were grades 3-5 demonstrating swing dancing and then inviting their families to join in the fun. Mr. Peterson said that he had received more positive feedback on this event than any other single event in recent memory! A taco truck was present for dinner, and families brought veggie trays, desserts, and beverages to share. A large shoutout to Mr. A (Caton Avilla) and Miss Di (Diane Whitesides) as well as parent volunteers from the Tular PTO!



Meet Our Board of Trustees

In recent #WeAreCarmelUnified newsletters, I introduced you to our newest Board Member Todd Weaver, then veteran board member Annette Yee Steck and newer board members Tess Arthur and Sara Hinds. In this newsletter, please meet our fifth board member **Karl Pallastrini**, our Board President who will share *in his third person voice* some details about his contributions to the district



Karl Pallastrini grew up in Carmel Valley in the 1950's and attended Tularcitos Elementary School when it was K-8, and its own school district — no middle school back in the day. Growing up in Carmel Valley in the early days was heaven on earth. It was a simple way of life where everyone knew everybody. Karl went on to graduate from Carmel High School (Class of 1964) and then Chico State with a

bachelor's degree in English and another in U.S. history. Karl received both elementary and secondary teaching credentials while at Chico, and also completed his master's degree in School Administration. Karl taught English and drama at the middle school level in San Jose, followed by teaching special education and U.S. history at Pacific Grove Middle School.

In 1985 Karl became principal of Carmel Middle School where he served in that role for 14 years. Following that Karl became principal at Carmel High School, retiring as an administrator in the district in the spring of 2009. Counting Tularcitos, Carmel High School, principal at both CMS and CHS, and now going into nine years on the CUSD Board of Education, that totals to a 44-year history and career in the Carmel Unified School District.

During the course of those years he has served on many Boards, including Start-Line Director for the Big Sur International Marathon; President, Carmel Youth Baseball; Board member of the Ventana Wilderness Sanctuary; President, MEarth; and now 9 years and current president of the CUSD Board of Education.

There are notable memories of those many years in the district and community. Hiring many of the faculty and staff at both CMS and CHS has been most rewarding. Most of those hired are on staff today at both schools. Being one of the founding "fathers" of the Hilton Bialek Habitat (MEarth) and initiating both the Lava Beds and Death Valley trips for CMS students are career highlights. At Carmel High School, Karl promoted Mock Trial and Robotics as additional options for students' involvement.

Named to the Monterey Peninsula College *Hall of Fame* for community involvement and educational excellence is a special footnote to Karl's career. Being elected to the CUSD Board of Education, as a write-in candidate in 2011 was the best reward he could receive, reflecting his work and career in the district. In return, Karl values the relationships developed with students, parents and staff over the years as priceless.

Karl is a Mustang (before Tularcitos became Bobcats), a CMS Cougar, and CHS Padre through and through. His four children attended Bay School, River School, CMS, and CHS. Karl has assumed the role of Institutional

Historian, and is most impressed with where we were, what we have become, and where we are headed.

Mark your calendar for these two events!

We have a special partnership with the Carmel Public Library Foundation. This year we are co-hosting two different events, both of which occur in Carmel High's *Center for the Performing Arts* (CPA), starting at 6:30 pm.

On February 10 at 6:30 pm - CHS CPA

Title: *Wired for Reward: How Teenage Brains are vulnerable to addiction and simple strategies to promote health.*

Presenters: A panel facilitated by Dr. Susan Swick, MD, MPH, Physician in Chief Ohana Center for Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health

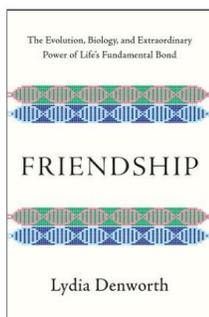
On March 16, at 6:30 pm - CHS CPA

Title: *Stanford's Challenge Success, A Well-Balanced Perspective on College Fit. What is "fit" and why does it matter?*

Presenter: Jennifer Cote, Program Director Stanford University's School of Education CHALLENGE SUCCESS

What are we reading now?

From the Superintendent:



Great magazine article in
The Atlantic - January 28, 2020

Friendship is Crucial to the Adolescent Brain
By Lydia Denworth

This article — derived from Denworth's book — is especially good for parents and educators who work with middle school students!

Important Upcoming Dates

- [First Cup of Coffee with Supt!](#) -February 7, 2020
- Next Board Meeting - February 12, 2020
- BOE Wellness Committee Meeting - Mar 2, 2020

How to Find Out What's Going On

- Before every board committee and regular board meeting, we send you an Invitation and Preview of Board Agenda Topics.
- Following every regular board meeting, we send you [#Board Connections](#), a 1-2 page summary of the board meeting, with links to Agenda Online documents.
- [#WeAreCarmelUnified](#) is our regular newsletter with updates on issues and work going on within our district.
- Your site principal's weekly email newsletter has important information on upcoming events and reminders.
- [Here is a link to our District Goals](#) and [This is a link to our LCAP plan.](#)
- Lastly, if you wish to share information anonymously with us about events being planned that we may be able to short circuit, we do have an anonymous tip line 1-(800-78-CRIME) that you can access. Our entire goal is to keep our children safe. Thank you in advance for taking this seriously!

We are always looking for *qualified bus drivers!* If you are interested in learning more about what it takes to join our stellar team of drivers, please contact Mr. Dan Paul, Director of Maintenance, Operations and Transportation at 831-624-6311!

Just a Reminder about break week!

February 17 (Monday) - All sites are closed
February 18-21 - School is not in session, though the District Office will be open.
February 24 - School sites reconvene.