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School News

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Covering the Fullerton School District

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Congressional App Challenge

By Dr. Robert Pletka, Superintendent

Fullerton School District was well represented in the 2017 Congressional App Challenge, and it was standing room only at the 2017 Exhibit and Awards Ceremony held December 4, 2017 at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum.



Edgar Alaniz, David Santiago, Rahul Shah, and Jeffrey Tran

In total, 138 teams—comprised of 407 students from 17 schools—competed in this year’s competition, making it the largest in the county. Fullerton School District students represented six schools— Beechwood, Fisler, Laguna Road, Nicolas, Pacific Drive, and Parks Schools—and accounted for over 76 percent of the participants.

Fullerton School District parents and staff showed up in force and quickly filled up the 700 plus seats at the venue, with students filling in spots on the floor. A panel of independent judges determined the winners of the competition, which featured mobile applications created by students. Judging was based on factors such as quality of the application’s operations, implementation of the application’s concept, and demonstrated excellence of coding and programming skills.

Although Fullerton School District students did not walk away with the grand prize, they walked away with smiles, a great sense of pride, and some amazing accomplishments. Students from Fisler School placed first and second in the Elementary Division, with teams from Pacific Drive, Valencia Park, Beechwood, Fisler, and Laguna Road Schools receiving honorable-mention certificates. In the Middle School Division, a team from Nicolas Junior High School won first place, and a student from Parks Junior High School won second place. Two teams from

Beechwood School rounded out that category with honorable-mention certificates. With an app called CORE, a Nicolas Junior High School team consisting of Jacob Kim, Roger Magallon, Moses Amador, and Alexis Nila were awarded second place overall. This group of students created an app that was ranked by an outside panel as second out of 138 submissions.

“We are so proud of all of our students and look forward to our continued participation in the Congressional App Challenge,” stated Dr. Robert Pletka, Superintendent of the Fullerton School District. “Look for our students to take the top place overall next year,” he added.

Happy, Healthy Hearts

By Nancy Wikes MS, RDN
Nutritional Services

Many of us associate February with Valentine’s Day, but did you know that February is American Heart Month? Heart disease is the No. 1 cause of death in this country, so it’s important to teach our children healthy habits early in life. Here in Nutrition Services, we are doing our part by working diligently to make healthy changes to school meals.

Starting in November, we began providing elementary schools with three additional cold entrées. This gives students four entrée choices



every day. Currently, we’re in the process of adding salad bars to all elementary schools. The salad bars will include romaine lettuce along with a variety of seasonal vegetables and fruits. The plan is to have a salad bar at each school by the end of February. Encouraging students to eat more fruits and vegetables teaches them healthy habits and will hopefully help them build happy and healthy hearts.

Follow us on twitter @myfsdnutrition for further updates and current events.



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Kay Coop
Founder/Publisher



Happy New Year!

The new year is well underway for students as they focus on testing and their year end goals.

This issue is very informative starting with Superintendent Pletka's message on the front page about the Congressional App Challenge. Inside you will read about a Research Experience Program, Project Impact, After School Crew, Coding, STEAM, Literacy Night and so much more. Enjoy!

Our next issue is April 11, 2018.



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Acacia *Elementary*

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Liz Leon
Principal

Professional Development

Acacia's dedication to academic excellence is clearly evident in the collaborative spirit and dedication of our teachers. During professional learning community (PLC) meeting time, our teachers look over data, student work, plan and prepare lessons tailored to meet the needs of all of our students. Also, as a part of Response to Intervention, our intervention teacher plans with classroom teachers to ensure continuity of skills and to progress monitoring academic growth. During professional development staff meetings and because we are a community of

life long learners, we review instructional videos to identify the best teaching practices we can replicate with our students as well as plan across grade levels for continuity of skills. Acacia teachers take great pride in enhancing their teaching expertise to provide our students with an enriching and engaging learning experience.



Beechwood

780 Beechwood Ave., Fullerton, CA 92835 • 714/447-2850 • www.fullertonsd.org



Julie Graham
Principal

Learning Opportunities

At Beechwood School, our staff and community partner together to provide rich learning opportunities for all students. The performing arts are an important part of providing a well-rounded education. Through resources provided by our Beechwood Foundation and PTSA, we are able to showcase our students' talents in an annual musical theatre performance.

This year over 200 students participated in The Wiz. Through this unique experience, students develop confidence, poise,



and improve their public speaking abilities. They dance, sing, act, and come together with students across all grade levels. The beautiful costuming, staging, and music are a treat for the audiences of 6 sold-out performances at The Curtis Theater in Brea. We are so thankful for all of the volunteers that make this happen each year! Our community is committed to developing capable, confident learners!

Counselors Unlock True Potential

Tony Morrow has one goal for the students of Fallbrook High School—graduate ready for what comes next. With his guidance, young scholars and families put their plans for the future into action.



Fallbrook High School, College and Career Counselor: Tony Morrow '11, M.A.Ed. '12

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Commonwealth *Elementary*

2200 E. Commonwealth Ave., Fullerton, CA 92831 • 714/447-7705 • www.fullertonsd.org



Anita Lomeli
Principal

A ROAR-ing Blast!

Winter Break was a blast at Camp iROAR 2018, thanks to our partners and friends from a community church! This year, our “campers” chose to be honorable in their deeds by adopting a second-grade classroom in Ventura County. The Thomas Wildfire affected the students from this particular area. Not only were the students and their families evacuated from their homes but they were also not able to return to school for about two weeks. Our CW Tigers created beautiful cards and wrote inspiring messages of hope to the students. We also assembled “goodie bags” full of school supplies.



In addition to our honorable deed, iROAR campers had a blast learning how to bake, conducting science experiments, programming robots, creating beautiful art, and learning about cultures from around the world. Camp iROAR concluded with a pancake breakfast, bingo, visits from community partners, and Zumba for campers and their parents!

Robert C. Fisler

1350 Starbuck St., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-2890 • www.fullertonsd.org



Julienne Lee
Principal

MinecraftEdu After School Crew

As one of the most popular classes, MinecraftEdu After School Crew has 57 students participating. Led by Kim Bass, the fall of 2017 marks the third year Fisler's Foundation hosted the after school program. Whether a student is new to Minecraft or have been playing for a while, when the After School Crew joins together, it's loud, exuberant and thrilling! The students begin each session with the Minecraft Pledge, which covers rules of being digitally responsible. Minecraft offers unlimited ideas the students come up with to create worlds, which are boundless. Some build worlds such as a golf course or island with unique structures. The learning stretches and grows as each group builds, creates, and challenges each other with mini-games. Minecraft is a miraculous learning platform for crafters, builders, miners, teachers, and scientists.



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Fern Drive *Elementary*

1400 W. Fern Dr., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-7710 • www.fullertonsd.org



Dr. Julie Brandon
Principal

Making Strides in Learning

Transitional Kindergarten (TK) is a wonderful environment where students explore and learn in a hands-on, discovery based classroom setting.

Here at Fern Drive, our TK classroom is embedded in the Reggio Emilia approach. This educational method believes that learning occurs best through an enriching and student-interest based, student-led curriculum. Our four-year-olds are encouraged and guided through the principles of community, responsibility, and respect, all while learning a developmentally appropriate curriculum.

Students are encouraged to work together when tackling projects that range in scope from arts, technology, drawing, and coding. Using an app, they can record their successes, take pictures and narrate them, and then share with their families each and every day! Parents can also interact in real-time, and provide their Falcon feedback throughout the day via the students' blogs.

We are proud of our TK students as they make great strides with their learning and creativity, while also providing engaging experiences for them!



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Golden Hill *Elementary*

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Jaime Ann Hopton
Principal

Day of Creative Careers

An architect, a radio DJ, and a choreographer—what do these three people have in common? They are all creative people who have used their talents to build careers! We invited 24 professionals to showcase their work as part of the first annual Day of Creative Careers.

At Golden Hill Elementary School, most of our activities and events are focused around the visual and performing arts, so it only made sense that our version of a career day would be creative as well. Each student had the opportunity to learn from four different professionals, thanks to a rotating schedule of speakers. These inspiring individuals answered a variety of questions, such as how much time they spent practicing and honing their craft and what their favorite parts of their jobs were.



Mr. Tony Lange from Disneyland Operations explains how it all works

We are thankful to those who came and inspired our students to reach for the stars and make careers out of the areas that interest them.

Hermosa Drive *Elementary*

400 E. Hermosa Dr., Fullerton, CA 92835 • 714/447-7720 • www.fullertonsd.org



Danielle Ramirez
Principal

Partners in Growth!

Hermosa Drive is excited to partner with Cal State Fullerton's urban-agriculture-community-based Research Experience (U-ACRE) Program to assist us with our gardening ventures! In December, our students, teachers and parents planted a school garden with vegetables, fruits and herbs. In January, we installed a wall garden that is absolutely eye-catching! In addition, our kindergarteners were able to plant a small garden of their own. All of the produce grown is used in our daily salad bar.



We are beyond excited to offer our students fresh and healthy food that is grown directly on campus. Every Tuesday, CSUF's U-ACRE offers a gardening club for our students in all grade levels. Students learn about every aspect of the trade, from seed to harvest. Our students absolutely love getting their hands dirty, working in the soil, and learning the science of gardening! We are so appreciative of our partnership with the university and their terrific students!



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Laguna Road *Elementary*

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Dr. Ryan Weiss-Wright
Principal

Project Impact

The Laguna Road community has been hard at work helping students find unique ways to impact the world around them through a new initiative called, "Project Impact."

Project Impact seeks to provide a space for every student at Laguna Road to discover, build, and create so that they can find their way to impact the world through acts of service and social responsibility. As you walk the classrooms at Laguna Road you will see students exploring current issues that affect our community and the world. This cross-curricular learning synthesizes Language Arts, Math, History, and STEM in an effort to help each student find their impact.



Maple *Elementary*

244 E. Valencia Dr., Fullerton, CA 92832 • 714/447-7590 • www.fullertonsd.org



Anthony Abney
Principal

The Maple Experience

Maple School's new emphasis on experiential learning (#TheMapleExperience) is receiving wide-spread support! Two of our generous community partners committed \$18,000 for our fifth-grade students to attend Catalina Island Marine Science Institute this spring.

#TheMapleExperience encompasses the vision that all students, not just those who grow up in affluent areas, learn and grow most meaningfully when they experience learning through multiple and varied life experiences. As part of this vision, all fifth-grade students will experience marine science and ecology firsthand for three days at the Catalina Island Marine Institute. In addition, all sixth-grade students will experience life, physical, and earth science and California history firsthand as they spend four days at the Irvine Ranch Outdoor Education Center. Plans are in the works to extend these marquis field trips to fourth grade next year.



On campus, all Maple students will be participating in experiential learning through our new Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) Lab and Makerspace, which was completed in January. All classrooms will be participating in STEAM-integrated activities for three hours per week in our new space!

Ladera Vista *Junior High School*

1700 E. Wilshire Ave., Fullerton, CA 92831 • 714/447-7765 • www.fullertonsd.org



Randa Schmalfeld
Principal

Creative Projects

At Ladera Vista Junior High School of the Arts, our focus is on academic excellence and creativity. Our school improvement projects reflect that focus. Teachers recently submitted their favorite inspirational quotes on Creativity. Digital Design Students transformed these quotes into works of art through a fun graphic design project. These colorful and cheerful new signs are displayed on exterior walls. In addition, a beautiful new mural, which was funded by our ASB Students was recently completed. This new mural is a centerpiece on our campus and the quote by Albert Einstein serves as an inspiration to our entire school community!



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Nicolas *Junior High School*

1100 W. Olive Ave., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-7775 • www.fullertonsd.org



Robyn Clemente
Principal

League Champions

This year Nicolas Junior High has been able to add Fullerton Sports League Champions to our list of achievements not only once, but three times. Nicolas teams have competed in three of

the four championship games coming in victorious with 1st place wins for Volleyball and Boys Soccer, and a 2nd place win for Football. Under the leadership of Mr. Myers, athletics at Nicolas is thriving. The Sports Program at Nicolas has provided the opportunity to build community, sportsmanship and pride within our students and staff. At any given game spectators are given the chance to see not only our athletes play, but to see our Nicolas Cheerleaders pump up the crowd, Digital Media photographers capturing the action, and a large fan base of students and staff cheering loudly.



Orangethorpe *Elementary*

1400 S. Brookhurst Rd., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-7730 • www.fullertonsd.org



Dr. Erlinda Soltero-Ruiz
Principal

Culture of Caring and Learning

Orangethorpe School has embarked on a new venture this year to meet the social and emotional needs of students and to help parents with a quality afterschool club designed and led by teachers. Our Orca All Stars Program, led by second-grade teacher Ms. Larnerd, was created to meet the needs of parents who expressed interest in opportunities for afterschool involvement and students share that they would like to participate in clubs to foster new skills and have fun at school.

This trimester, Orangethorpe held its first-ever session of Orca All Stars Club, with eight clubs and approximately 180 students participating. Students were able to choose various from a variety of options, including Workshop, Spirit Squad, Basic Drawing, Basketball Club, Let's Yarn Craft and Crochet Club, Math Club, and Robotics.

This experience has motivated students to continue working toward their academic goals and following the Orca Way, helping to create a meaningful and caring culture.



Pacific Drive *Elementary*

1501 W. Valencia Dr., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-7735 • www.fullertonsd.org



Dr. Kelly Castillo
Principal

Round of App-lause!

Congratulations to our Pacific Drive app! In December, Mrs. Chow's third-grade class shared their latest creations in the Congressional App Challenge. Students worked collaboratively in the weeks leading up to the competition to design apps that would solve common problems in the community. Our students were the youngest at the competition and competed against students as old as sixth grade.

This team received an honorable-mention award for their app designed to helping drivers find parking in Fullerton. Other teams worked to design apps that address the problems of homelessness by helping the public in donating to shelters. All of our students' apps reflect their dedication to the Fullerton community.

We would also like to extend a very special thank-you to all of the friends and family members who came to support our students at the App Challenge. We had a great turnout, and the event was a memorable experience for all.



Congrats to Pacific Drive third graders who received Honorable Mention in the Congressional App Challenge

Parks *Junior High School*

1710 Rosecrans Ave., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-7785 • www.fullertonsd.org



Laura Makely
Principal

Parks' Best

Our Parks Panthers enjoyed an action-packed season of academics, sports, and performing arts that showcased the talents and abilities of our student body.

In November, eighth-grader Nolan Clement was honored at the recent Congressional App Challenge Awards held at the Richard Nixon Library. Nolan placed second in the middle school category for the Integer Practice app that he created for the competition. In the fall, we also had a record number of Panthers try out for the flag football team, with over 100 students vying for a chance to represent Parks on the gridiron. The football team also displayed great sportsmanship both in victory and defeat as they finished the season 3-2.

In volleyball, our Panther athletes demonstrated great teamwork and sportsmanship. Their serving skills were impressive, and their communication improved throughout the season. Our boys soccer team also demonstrated great sportsmanship by playing tough at every game and improving each time on the pitch. Girls soccer showed strength in defense, with phenomenal goalkeeping. Midfield play improved dramatically, and our forwards were always ready for the challenge.

Parks's vocal and instrumental music programs ushered in the holiday season with two concerts under the direction of our amazing choir teacher, Melissa Martinez. Choir students showcased their talents for a standing-room-only crowd at Troy High School auditorium. Their Peace on Earth concert was filled with traditional and contemporary holiday songs performed by soloists and ensembles, and brought a feeling of cheer and good will to all.

The Wilshire Avenue Community Church provided a beautiful backdrop for our beginning/advanced band and orchestra's holiday concert. With our fabulous instrumental music teacher Doug Boughter conducting, our students wowed the audience with their musical talents and spread the holiday spirit to all.

Raymond *Elementary*

517 N. Raymond Ave., Fullerton, CA 92831 • 714/447-7740 • www.fullertonsd.org



Yolanda McComb
Principal

Raymond Celebrates!

Raymond students, teachers, board members, district administrators, and principal cut the ribbon in a school-wide assembly to commemorate our beautiful front of school remodel and the addition of two stunning mosaic murals. One mural faces Raymond Ave, and the other is on the front of the school building to commemorate the first Dual Language Program in the district. Front of school upgrades consists of parent plaza, multicolored cushioned rubber surface walkways, benches, and inspirational words such as success, goals, dreams, hope, respect, courage, honor and compassion. During the celebration, students express passionately what these words mean to them.



Richman *Elementary*

700 S. Richman Ave., Fullerton, CA 92832 • 714/447-7745 • www.fullertonsd.org



Kristen Holm
Principal

Full STEAM Ahead!

Richman Elementary School is proud to provide a strong foundation in literacy and communications skills by integrating the disciplines of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM).

The excitement is evident when you walk into our Reggio-Inspired Primary STEAM Lab and our STEAM and Dream Center for Creativity and Innovation. Students participate in 21st-century hands-on experiences, including robotics,

coding, three-dimensional printing, green-screen projects, and engineering challenges. Students engage in lessons that incorporate three dimensions: science and engineering practices, crosscutting concepts, and disciplinary core ideas.

What's the best part of having a STEAM lab? Just ask our Richman students. Sixth-grader Alyze Mondragon said, "I love the STEAM Lab. I used to think science was boring and just for boys, but now I love science, and I want to be a

scientist when I grow up." Third-grader Michael Renderos said, "Not everybody gets a STEAM Lab. I have been waiting forever to use a 3D printer, and now I can. I want to be a scientist, so I can create and build new things to make the world a better place."



Sixth grade students using TinkerCad to design 3D coins for their ancient civilizations

Rolling Hills *Elementary*

1460 E. Rolling Hills Dr., Fullerton, CA 92835 • 714/447-7795 • www.fullertonsd.org



Juleen Faur
Principal

Technology Jumps Aboard!

Rolling Hills continues to delight its families by providing opportunities for our students to learn. This year, we have added two new technology programs in addition to our long-standing art and music classes.

The Roadrunner News program made its official debut at Rolling Hills this year. This after-school club has been busy learning the fine art of interviewing, filming, editing and publishing of short informational news broadcasts. The club is led by Mr. Petris and Mrs. Hodge, and will be utilizing the iMovie and Touchcast programs to present current events across the campus. The club meets Tuesdays after school and utilizes lunch and recess times to interview and film students, teachers and administration. The newscasts will focus on upcoming and current events and will be published monthly on the Rolling Hills website.



Additionally, Rolling Hills has officially launched a robotics club. This club meets on Mondays after school and will focus on teaching coding, building and knowledge of the Lego Mindstorms robots. This will be the first year that Rolling Hills will have a team of students entering the Robot Nation contest later this year. Go Roadrunners!

Sunset Lane *Elementary*

2030 Sunset Ln., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-7750 • www.fullertonsd.org



Sharing Our Learning

Sunset Lane prides itself in the positive community of learners that we have cultivated. Routinely, our big and little buddies can be found working together to achieve a common goal.

Students and teachers alike have embraced collaboration across grade levels, which provides opportunities for children of all ages to demonstrate leadership and responsibility, while also creating a deeper sense of connection to our campus. Our students are able to learn along side one another while pushing the envelop of innovation.

For example, the fourth-graders in Ms. Spero's classroom have partnered with the TK students in Mrs. Chung's class to integrate technology with grade-level curriculum. Most recently, the students used Bloxels to design their own characters, thus demonstrating their knowledge of number sense and fractions.

The TK students then extended their learning by retelling a story via ChatterPix, while our fourth-graders went on to design their own video games. We are proud of our students' creativity, and are looking forward to sharing our learning with a wider community!



Big and little buddies collaborating to create characters using Bloxels.

Valencia Park *Elementary*

3441 W. Valencia Dr., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-7755 • www.fullertonsd.org



Books and Chocolate!

At Valencia Park Elementary School, we strive to foster a love for reading and writing in our students.

This year we hosted a successful Family Literacy Night that filled our multipurpose room with students and their families. The students dressed in cozy pajamas, sipped on hot cocoa, and rotated through read-alouds provided by our teachers, administrators, and very own children's librarian from the Fullerton Public Library.



We also invited a renowned author and storyteller, Antonio Sacre, to launch our Family Literacy Night with a storytelling activity. There were even parent workshops on how to support reading, writing, and storytelling at home.

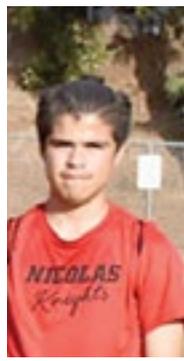
The event ended with an opportunity drawing, a book signing with Antonio Sacre, and free books for every student who attended. To learn more about special programs at Valencia Park School, please visit us on our school website, Facebook, and Twitter.

Contest!

These students are in pictures in this publication. When you find them, add up the total of the page numbers and email the **total** to:

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Please put Fullerton in the subject line.



Page #

Page #

Page #

=

Total

Your entry must be received by March 15, 2018.

From the correct entries, we will draw a winner to receive a GAZUMP card/dice game — fun for all ages!

Congratulations **Katelyn Phan Ly**
Winner of Our October Contest

Woodcrest *Elementary*

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After-School STEM!

In an effort to give our students more engaging learning opportunities, we are proud to announce our new STEM Club! Our STEM Club meets weekly to engage in hands-on activities in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and math, under the guidance of Mr. Roman. Students in both primary and upper grades can participate in this after-school extracurricular activity.

To date, students have learned about the physics of roller coasters. Applying what they learned, students created models of their own to test the coasters' loops. Students also tested the balance between



gravity and tension by building catapults. They utilized math skills by measuring the distance their catapults traveled and collaborated with peers to increase their distance. While building and creating, students communicated, problem-solved, and used crucial critical-thinking skills, all in a fun environment.

Through this club, we hope to inspire our students to be the innovators of tomorrow!

April Fools' Day: Measuring Time and Dates

By D.H. Coop

The early Romans had an eight-day week. The German tribes used a five-day week and recorded the passage of time by night, not day. Thus, the term *fortnight* for 14 nights is a holdover from the older times. Later, the Romans began using the seven-day week, and as their empire spread, so did the seven-day-week calendar.

Seven was a number that the early civilizations had a natural leaning toward. Seven even today seems to be the optimum number that one can memorize easily. Examples are the seven-digit phone numbers, the Seven Hills of Rome and the Seven Wonders of the World.

When the Roman Church adopted the Julian calendar, the year ended and started on March 25 around the vernal equinox, which falls on March 20–21, and the Feast of Annunciation signaled the beginning of the new year. This all seems to have changed with the shift to the Gregorian calendar and the new year starting on the first of January. The story goes that some refused or did not hear of the change of the new date and continued to celebrate the old date. These traditionalists were made fun of, and the first of April became the day for fools.

Many different cultures also had a day of fools—Purim in the Jewish culture and Holi in the Hindu. The Romans had Hilaria—the cheerful ones—to celebrate Cybele, the mother of the gods. In France, the day is known as *Poisson d'Avril*, or “April Fish,” which is a time when individuals play pranks on the young, or “fools.”

The practical jokes made their way into popular culture when a Professor Joseph Boskin decided to set the history of the day straight in an interview with a reporter for the AP News Network. The reporter wrote an article on the origins of the day as told by the professor that started in ancient Rome with Emperor Constantine and the jester Kugel, who told Emperor Constantine he could govern as well as the Emperor. He was given one day to govern. Emperor Kugel then ordered the day to be celebrated every year. The story was reported by Fred Bayles for the AP news and sent over the airways only to discover they were the victims of a prank!

In some cultures, the prank must be done before noon. However, it is best to check all stories told on April first!

D.H.Coop is a retired fire/paramedic and retired teacher having taught IB and AP World History 30 years. He continues to substitute, tutor and consult. www.HistoryDepot.com

Lucy's Book Review

Soldier Boy



Lucy Davis

Author: Keely Hutton

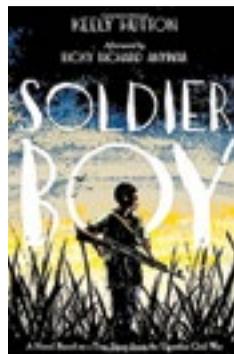
“Can we go and watch the road?”

One simple request will change Ricky Anywar's entire world. What was an innocent wish soon turns into a journey as he and his brother and friends are forced to join the Lord's Resistance Army, a rebel force fighting in the Ugandan civil war. They fight to stay alive on the battlefield, witnessing death, destruction, and enduring hundreds of kilometers of land on foot. Many are lost and all abductees carry the burden of being a child soldier.

In this true story, Keely Hutton works closely with Ricky himself to shed light on what it is like to be a child soldier, telling his story that are like hundreds of others. Although the subject matter is dark and at times highly disturbing, the final message of hope and forgiveness is truly one to admire.

Five out of five bookworms well earned!

Lucy is a 6th grade student. When she isn't immersed in a book, she loves musical theater, ballet, and singing. She enjoys stretching her imagination by writing short stories of her own. Lucy will rate the books 1 to 5 bookworms with 5 being the best.



Note-ables

Owl Singalong



Kate Karp

Adult Beluga Grads whose younger lives were enriched by Raffi's music will be very happy, particularly if they're parents, teachers or involved in any way with children. The beloved artist and children's advocate emerged from a 12-year hiatus in 2014 with his collection *Love Bug*, and he's following up with another planet- and child-centered theme in *Owl Singalong*.

The album was inspired by Raffi's little grandniece, Lucie, and her owl stuffed toy and also by the chorus of live hooting critters in his backyard. Those birds open the title song, a jaunty little melody inviting us to sing along. Choruses of human children and one or two adults join in on standards such as “The More We Sing Together” and other beloved songs that he's monkeyed—or verb-formed other animal species—with: “The Lion Pokey” and “The Dog on the Bus” are rendered with Raffi's brand of gentle silliness that has always endeared him to children.

Raffi presents his versatile voice in so many different ways, whether it's imitating a gruff lion, crooning like Rudy Vallee on “See the Moon,” or entertaining with Pete Seeger's celebrated retelling of the South African folktale “Abiyoyo.”

And as always, Raffi will leave gentle lessons for little Belugas and Grads of any age: “Green Dream” is his wish for the future for all his young listeners. And from “I'm Not Small”: “I carry the world on my back. When it turns, I'll turn, too.”

So simple, so wise, and so very Raffi.

Kate Karp is an editor for *School News Roll Call* and a freelance writer and editor.



Christina's Book Review

A Fun Read



Christina J.

Chomp is a fun story about a boy named Wahoo Cray and his father who is an animal wrangler. The Cray's Family backyard is a zoo full of rescued animals - boas, raccoons, turtles, monkeys, a crocodile, and an alligator. The family doesn't have much money as most of it goes to animal care, so they jump at the offer to let a reality show called Expedition Survival shoot some scenes with the domesticated giant alligator named Alice. As the crew arrives, Wahoo realizes how staged the show is, with the main star Derek, a supposedly strong rugged man actually being a foolish, clumsy, egotistical spray-tanned fake, who constantly does something dumb and causes troubles left and right. After provoking Alice the alligator Derek nearly got ripped to shreds, but thinks he looked good taking on an alligator, and demands to do the rest of the episode with wild animals instead of the domesticated ones. More troubles... I liked that the main character is a calm, likable kid who is trying to earn money to save their house and is willing to tough out the ridiculous calamities. I give this book 5 out of 5 stars.

Christina J. is an 8th grader. Christina is a hard-working student who did a community service project “Quilts for the cold” last school year. She is an avid reader, who enjoys some peace and quiet with a good book about some great adventure. Christina is a young author herself. In 5th grade she wrote a book *Melody's Stories: I Am a Spy Now*, published by Studenttreasures Publishing (PIN #3582798).



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