

Ramtracks

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From the Desk of the Principal

We are rapidly approaching the very busiest time of the school year! Our third trimester has already started and thus we begin to look forward to the end of the year activities such as the multi-cultural fair, music concerts and 8th grade promotion. We are also in the midst of planning for the 2010-2011 school year. Warm weather, high school counselor visits, spring break, and any other number of distractions has made the idea of focusing fairly difficult. After spring break, we will be visiting 8th grade classrooms to encourage students to stay focused. It is never too late to push a little harder to improve study skills and complete projects and assignments.

On March 9th, we were fortunate to have Helen Farkas, a Holocaust survivor, speak to our entire 8th grade class about her courageous story. I want to thank our English teacher, Angela Sveda and student Daniel Meier for coordinating this memorable student assembly. A huge thank you, also, to Mrs. Paula Meier for coordinating all of the logistics. Please read the news article (see page 7) written by Neil Gonzales, reporter for the *San Mateo County Times*, for details about the assembly.

Last month Donna Sims, Matt Pavao, and I visited all the elementary schools to discuss their upcoming enrollment at Ralston. There were many questions from the 5th graders! Hopefully we have reduced any anxiety they might have about entering middle school. We will be hosting incoming 5th grade parents at an informational evening on April 21st at 6:30 p.m. in the Ralston multi-purpose room.

During the past few weeks our music department prepared and finalized plans for the exciting and much-anticipated trip to Disneyland. They went just before the break and a great time was had by all. Many thanks to our music parents and our teachers, Peter Thielen and Jordan Webster, for all their behind-the-scenes work to make the trip possible for our students!

As you have already heard, on March 4th the Board took action to lay off staff due to loss of funding and the need to adjust expenses. The budget cuts facing Ralston this coming year are devastating. Sadly, as of March 15th, nine of our staff members have been given layoff notices. These layoffs include our Counselor, our Dean of Students, our Librarian and six of our teachers. Parents and students are rallying to support our staff and they are doing everything they can to raise money for School Force. As always we appreciate all of your support. It has been so overwhelmingly positive to witness all of the ways our community is responding to this budgetary crisis. Thank you for all you have done and continue to do to support our students, staff and programs!

Sincerely,
Jennifer J. Kollmann
Principal

Mark Your Calendar:

- PTA Meeting
Apr 8th, 7:00 p.m.
- Multi-cultural Fair
Apr 17th, 1:00 p.m.
- Information Night for 5th grade Parents
Apr 21st, 6:30 p.m.
- Memorial Day holiday
May 31st
- Last Day of School
June 11th

Congratulations on an awesome season to the 6A and 6B Gold girls!

News from Student Government...

This past month, Student Government has been working on various projects. We have also planned and executed many student events.

Toward the beginning of the month, we donated money to help repaint one of the Ralston Middle School signs. On March 16th, we hosted a Student vs. Staff Basketball game with the final score 30 to 16- staff. Also, on the 19th, we had our Electric Fusion Dance which was very successful.

Our **upcoming events include a School-Force Week, April 12th through the 16th**. The days are as follows:
Mon, 4/12: Yellow Day
Tues, 4/13: School-Force Button / Sticker Day
Wed, 4/14: School-Force Donation Day
Thurs, 4/15: Rams Wristband Day
Fri, 4/16: Pink Day

Our goal for the School-Force Week is to raise as much money for School-Force as possible in order to keep important positions and programs in place at Ralston. If you would like to donate to School Force, please make checks payable to School Force. Thank you for your support.

Memo from the PTA President

One of issues we are working on is how to most effectively communicate with our parents. Presently, we are using a variety of methods. We send out periodic announcements via email about various events at Ralston, district budget issues, PTA, School-Force, etc. Every month, we produce Ramtracks, our newsletter, which is sent out via email and is posted on the website. In addition, the school's daily announcements are posted on the website.

As we are trying to improve our communications, we would value your input on whether you are getting the information you need/want in a timely manner. To that end, **we would appreciate it if you could fill out the following online survey: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/X59ZQVN>. It takes less than 2 minutes to complete and will help us in our efforts to improve communications.** In addition, we are looking for volunteers to help us strategize/design a more timely, concise and comprehensive parent communication using email. Please contact me and we will include you in our next meeting.

As you are painfully aware, the proposed state budget will make devastating cuts to our schools. School-Force has been working tirelessly in an effort to raise the desperately needed funds to help reinstate critical programs that are likely to be cut. There is a letter-writing campaign underway at all of the schools in the district. Please consider how you can make a difference – financially, writing letters, volunteering. Your contributions, regardless of size, can make a huge difference to the Ralston community. If we all work together, it is remarkable what progress we can make!

Upcoming Events/Opportunities to Volunteer

April 8th PTA meeting, 7:00pm, Ralston Library
April 17th Multicultural Fair (contact Marjorie Krauss if you can help)
April 21st Evening tours of Ralston (contact Keiko Smith if you can help)
May 5th PTA sponsored orientation for 5th Grade parents (contact Geri Crane if you can help)

Once again, thank you to all of you who are working hard to make a difference in our children's education. We are fortunate to have so many dedicated and talented parents at Ralston, who help in so many ways!

Please contact me with any questions or comments. As always, I look forward to hearing your ideas and suggestions (and your offers to volunteer!)

Geri Crane
2009-10 PTA President
gericrane@yahoo.com.

PTA Honorary Service Awards – Nominations Needed

Each year the PTA recognizes and honors teachers, school staff, and volunteers for their countless hours, outstanding efforts, and priceless contributions to making Ralston a wonderful place to learn. While we know that many people, working together, make this place a terrific school, the nominating committee would like your help in selecting these very special recipients.

If you have any recommendations for this award, please email your nomination and the reasons supporting your nomination by April 15th to lesliemarks@comcast.net.

Thank you,
Leslie Marks, Honorary Service Award Committee Member

LETTERS to LEGISLATORS

A District-Wide Campaign

Dear Ralston School Families:

Please join us in the district-wide letter writing campaign to speak up on behalf of our children and schools to influence the Governor and our state legislators as they negotiate the upcoming State budget. **Our focus at this time is to send as many letters as possible prior to the issuance of the Governor's "May Revise" budget.**

What Can You Do?

We have form letters addressed to the appropriate legislators available on the school website under the Parents directory (<http://ralston.brssd.org/parents.html>). The Letter to the Governor may be signed by everyone, regardless of their address; however the Letter to the Legislator should reflect the district you live in. Please choose the two correct letters to the legislators that correspond with your address, as follows:

- For Belmont – the area legislators are Hill and Yee
- For Redwood Shores - the area legislators are Ruskin and Simitian

Please:

1. **Sign the letters**, being sure to include your street address, and
2. **Drop them off in the Ralston office** or send them in via your child's backpack/homeroom.

We plan to hand deliver the letters that are collected district-wide. Of course if you would prefer to mail your letters directly, that is fine too.

Due Date

Monday, April 19th

Important to Remember

Legislators will not consider unsigned letters or letters that do not include a street address.

For More Information or Questions

Please contact Keiko Smith, via e-mail at keikosmith@yahoo.com or Kim Beauchamp via email at kim@beauchampfamily.org.

On the Effectiveness of Letter Writing Campaigns – from the California State PTA

*"Legislators tell us that the most effective method of communicating our positions is through letters. Letters can be mailed or faxed. In a time crunch, phone calls are necessary and helpful, but **letters from constituents make the most difference**. E-mails are less effective because it is difficult to verify that the sender is a constituent."*

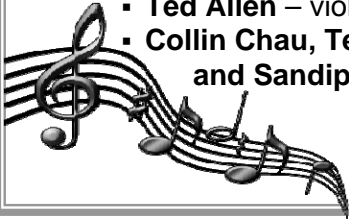
"When organizing a letter campaign, keep in mind that volume beats originality...."

ARTS and MUSIC

Ralston Music News

Kudos to our Ralston musicians who participated in the recent California Music Educator's Association (CMEA) Solo and Ensemble Festival. All three entries earned the highest rating (superior) from the judges!

- **Mitchell Wright** – alto saxophone solo
- **Ted Allen** – viola solo
- **Collin Chau, Ted Allen, Mason Holman and Sandip Srinivas** – string quartet



Carlmont Performing Arts Events

Come support former Ralston students at these upcoming events:

- Carlmont annual Dance Show – May 6, 7 & 8.
- Carlmont Spring Instrumental Music Concerts – May 13 & 14.
- Carlmont Spring Choir Concert – May 20 & 21

All shows held in the new Carlmont Performing Arts Center. For tickets, visit: <http://www.carlmontperformingarts.com>

The Ralston Multicultural Fair is Here!

Saturday, April 17th, 1:00-4:00

Ralston Gym



Make the World a Better Place

Sponsored by the Ralston Middle School PTA

Learn about different cultures around the world!
16 countries will be represented this year. Performances include music from the Music Mentors program, a Kung fu demo, and Irish tin whistles.

General help is still needed for the day of the event! Please contact Marjorie Krauss, mykrauss@yahoo.com by April 9th to volunteer.

THIS & THAT

Send in Your Box Tops!

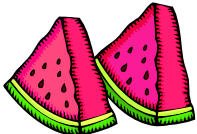
As we wind down the school year, please remember to send in your box tops before the summer break! **Box Tops have expiration dates** and we don't want to miss out on your 10 cents.

You can help by following these 3 easy steps:

1. Check all your grocery packaging for Box Tops.
2. Clip the Box Tops, making sure you don't cut off the expiration date or that it isn't expired.
3. Send them in with your child to their homeroom.

Don't forget to ask your relatives, friends, and co-workers to save them too!
Thank you for your continued support of the Ralston PTA!

For any questions, please contact the Ralston Box Tops Coordinator,
Kristen Wright at Kristen.L.Wright@gmail.com



Food for Grads!

We'll be providing a light snack for the 8th graders on graduation day. If you'd like to donate 2 cases of water, grapes (Costco sized package), sliced melon, or pretzels, please contact Kim Beauchamp at 596-9228 or

kim@beauchampfamily.org



Ramtracks Survey

Do you like *Ramtracks* as is? Would you like to see changes? Let us know!

Please take 2 minutes to answer an on-line survey at:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/X59ZQVN>

Your opinion counts!

Photos Needed!

The 8th Grade Promotion Committee is producing a slideshow for the graduating class of 2010. It will highlight the students and their Ralston experience! The slideshow will be shown at the 8th grade promotion dance on June 11th, 2010.

We need help with photos.

If you have taken photos of the graduating students between their 6th-8th grade years, we could use them!

Here's what we need:

1. Photos in **digital format (jpeg files)** on a CD only.
2. **Group pictures**, preferred.
3. Submit 5-10 photos that are **clear and in focus**.
4. Photos that highlight the students participating in activities, such as after school clubs, after school sports, spirit days, Multicultural Fair, Science Fair, classroom activities, field trips, etc.
5. Deadline: **FRIDAY, APRIL 30th, 2010**. CDs can be dropped off in the Ralston Office anytime during school hours.
6. **Please do NOT send photos via email.**

Your assistance with photos is greatly appreciated!
If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Terri Murai at ryley8@gmail.com or (650) 637- 8551.

LIBRARY NEWS

Adopt-a-Book is still going strong! To date the library has received 107 books at a cost of approximately \$1358.00 and checks worth \$140.00 for a total donation of \$1,498.00 for the first 60 days! Thank you very much for your donations to the Ralston library, which enable us to purchase the latest titles throughout the year. The program will continue until the end of the school year and every donation is welcome.

The library has added a few South American and Caribbean individual country books to the geography collection. In addition, Claudette Colvin : Twice Towards Justice by Phillip Hoose was added last month. It tells a first hand, in-depth account of a little known teenage civil rights figure, Claudette Colvin. It is a fresh perspective on the Montgomery bus protest of 1955-56, and was granted a Newberry Medal book award plus eight more awards that were given to it this year. Check it out!

The Battle of the Books is Back! Ka-Pow! The 7th grade classes of Mr. Saldivar and Mr. Colt will compete to answer facts about each book. These 4 titles are on the reading list: House of Scorpion by Nancy Farmer, Chicken Boy by Frances O'Roark Dowell, The Watsons go to Birmingham 1963 by Christopher Paul Curtis, and Freak the Mighty by Rodman Philbrick.

Check out the Ralston Library Website at:
<http://ralston.brssd.org/page110.html>.

New Friends of the Library

Allen	Anonymous	Hopkins	King
Magaline – Presotto		Maganaris	Rudger
Singer	So	Valbusa	

Library Wish List (excerpt)

- 10,000 Days of Thunder: A History of the Vietnam War
- Philip Caputo
- Airball: My Life in Briefs
- Lisa Harkrader
- Cracker!: The Best Dog in Vietnam
- Cynthia Kadohata
- Filipinos in the East Bay (CA) (Images of America)
- Evangeline Canonizado, et al.
- Fish (DK Eyewitness Books)
- Steve Parker
- The Gecko and Sticky: Villain's Lair
- Wendelin Van Draanen
- Iran (Creation of the Modern Middle East)
- Heather Lehr Wagner
- Israel (Creation of the Modern Middle East)
- Louise Slavicek
- The Legend of Sleepy Hollow
- Washington Irving
- More Award-Winning Science Fair Projects
- Julianne Bochinski
- Starclimber
- Kenneth Oppel
- Sweethearts: A Novel
- Sara Zarr
- The Underneath
- Kathi Appelt
- When Is a Planet Not a Planet?: The Story of Pluto
- Elaine Scott
- White Sands, Red Menace
- Ellen Klages

RALSTON ASSEMBLY IN THE NEWS

Holocaust survivor shares story with Belmont students

By Neil Gonzales
San Mateo County Times

Posted: 03/09/2010 08:01:44 PM PST

Helen Farkas had a story to tell. But she warned, "It's not a pretty story."

Still, it's a story "that's very important for you to know," she told an assembly of students at Ralston Middle School.

Farkas, 90, of Burlingame, visited the school Tuesday to share her painful but inspiring real-life story as a Holocaust survivor during World War II.

Eighth-grader Daniel Meier, 14, helped set up the visit at a time when his English class is studying that horrific chapter in world history in which about 6 million Jews were killed by Nazi Germany.

"Her motto is, 'Live another day,'" Daniel said. "She's a big inspiration to me. It's great having her here."

Farkas, a silver-haired woman with a distinct East European accent, recalled how the Nazis turned her hometown in Romania from a place of tolerance into a place of prejudice.

"Hatred started against the Jews," she told the students. "We started having to wear the yellow Star of David sewn on our clothes. Life as a Jew was getting harder by the day."

The Nazis then uprooted and relocated her family into a ghetto, or a designated area for the Jewish population.

Ralston Middle School

"We lost our rights," Farkas said. "You were nobody. You were a prisoner. We felt more shame than the need for food."

The Nazis later loaded her family and others onto trains headed for the notorious Auschwitz concentration camp.

"We were pushed into these cattle cars," she said. "They pushed 80 to 90 people in. It was very hot. No toilets. No water. No food. That trip, I will not tell you anymore, just that hell must've been better than the three days and three nights of travel in that cattle car."

She endured several months at Auschwitz before managing to escape with some relatives.

After recounting her ordeals, Farkas told the students to not allow prejudice in their lives.

"Be a good citizen," said Farkas, who wrote the 1995 memoir "Remember the Holocaust."

"Be a good neighbor and friend. Only love and understanding can save the world."

Eighth-grader Katherine Green, 13, found Farkas' talk powerful.

"It was kind of intense," Katherine said. "I've heard stories (about the Holocaust), but hearing someone who lived it and tell it made it more real for me."

Ralston Principal Jennifer Kollmann hoped students gained valuable lessons from Farkas' visit.

"This is an amazing opportunity for them to hear and witness a story of courage," Kollmann said. "We want our students to really understand her message so that these types of experiences never happen again."



Holocaust survivor Helen Farkas, 90, of Burlingame, is presented flowers by student Daniel Meier. (John Green/Staff)

More photos at:

http://www.mercurynews.com/menlo-park/ci_14643974



If you have questions about events for middle school families and students, please contact Paula Meier psmeier@pacbell.net

Visit Carlmont's website – get the facts about Carlmont High School!!
www.carlmont.seq.org

8th Grade Transition Team: 595-0210 ext. 8400

CALENDAR ALERT

Please plan your summer vacations so they will not conflict with these important events.

- **Wednesday, August 18, 8:53 a.m. is the first day of school for Carlmont Students**
- **Freshman Parent Information Night**
Tuesday, August 10, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.
- **Early Bird Picture Day**
Wed., August 11, 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- **Student / Parent Mandatory Check-In Day (all students)**
Thursday, August 12, 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- **Freshman Orientation and Barbecue**
Tuesday, August 17, 8:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

HIGH SCHOOL UPDATE

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE REQUESTED FROM 8TH GRADE PARENTS

If your child is currently registered at Carlmont for fall 2010 and has decided to attend a private high school instead, please let the Carlmont Guidance Office (595-0210 ext. 3206) and your middle school office know.

6th & 7th Grade Parent & Student Event

A “Meet Carlmont” night for 6th and 7th grade students and parents will be held on **Tuesday, May 4th, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m., in Carlmont’s Student Union** (located up the hill from the swimming pool). This casual evening with Principal Raul Zamora and current Carlmont freshmen and sophomore students, is designed to provide families with an introduction to life at Carlmont, and to answer questions and address concerns that you may have about the high school years. **Please RSVP for this event by contacting Paula Meier at: psmeier@pacbell.net.**

Proof of Residency Needed for ALL Students Entering Sequoia High School District This Fall

PRIOR to admission into district schools, students must provide proof of address. The parents of all entering students (**including students currently at Ralston and those that have siblings already at Carlmont**) are required to provide documents to verify their address at the Sequoia Union High School District, at 480 James Avenue, Redwood City, CA 94062. Post office boxes do not meet residency requirements. Only street addresses are accepted. Complete instructions and a list of required documents are available at:

<http://www.sequoiadistrict.org/20441082420334833/site/default.asp>.

Attention All Incoming Freshmen

- Summer Reading List – The summer reading list for Carlmont is not optional. The reading list was distributed to the middle schools last month, and is available on the Carlmont website at:
<http://www.sequoiadistrict.org/2143201123162018427/site/default.asp>.
- Physical Exam - All students entering Carlmont should have a physical exam during the summer months.

Carlmont Athletics

- Fall Sports – Information regarding fall sports will be available soon on the Carlmont website at:
<http://www.sequoiadistrict.org/214320113143044937/site/default.asp>
- Athletic/Activity Clearance Packet – Students engaged in sports must submit a completed physician’s form in order to participate in any try-out or practice. If your student is thinking of participating in a fall sport, please pick up the Athletic/Activity Clearance Packet from the Carlmont Administration office. Packets will be available for pick up from the end of May to the end of June. Completed packets should be returned by early August. The Carlmont Administration office is closed for the month of July.



School-Force!

THE BELMONT-REDWOOD SHORES
PUBLIC SCHOOL FOUNDATION

“I’M IN” – ARE YOU?

April, 2010, is the month when everyone in our district will have to open their wallets, dig deep and **GIVE generously to School-Force!**

As of this writing, School-Force has raised \$650,000 for next school year. But we need to raise \$3,000,000 before the end of this school year in order to maintain programs and positions that were in place this year.

Why April? The staff and teachers that received lay-off notices in March can be reinstated before May 15th. In order for the district administration to reinstate them by that date, we need to raise most of our fundraising goal in April. That means raising over \$2,000,000 in one month!

I’m in! This is the name of our campaign for April. If you’re **IN**, then you are donating generously and you are part of the solution! If you’re not in, then we simply won’t reach our goal and won’t be able to retain the staff and teachers that were laid off.

I’m in, because I choose to make my child’s education a priority. I donate \$100 a month for 10 months every year. Do you spend \$100 a month on Cable TV? \$100 a month on a combination of gym classes, music classes, etc.? Why not \$100 a month for your child’s education? It’s a priority!


The current suggested tax-deductible donation to School-Force is \$900 per student. That is the magic number that will get us close to our goal. If you have donated less than \$900 this school year, please do what you can to get close to that amount (or hopefully exceed it). If you have not donated yet this year, **now is the time!**

Please donate online at, www.schoolforce.org or mail your checks to: School-Force, P.O. Box 5196, Belmont CA 94002.

Please donate and help bring our staff and teachers back. It is up to each and every one of us to do our part! **ARE YOU IN?**

Janet Leist
Ralston School-Force Liaison
theleists@mindspring.com

April 2010

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p style="text-align: center;">TAKE ACTION TODAY to help save teachers and staff at Ralston!</p> <p>→ Download and sign your Letters to Legislators (see p. 3) and send them in to the school office</p> <p>→ Give to School-Force. Donations are critically needed <u>this month</u>.</p>				1 Spring Break	2 Spring Break	3
4	5 <i>Sandwiches/ Bagels</i> Clubs: ▪ Homework	6 <i>Burger/Wrap/ /Salad/CA rolls</i> Clubs: ▪ Homework	7 Minimum Day	8 <i>Tacos</i> Clubs: ▪ Homework PTA Meeting 7:00 pm, Library	9 <i>Pizza</i>	10
11	12 <i>Sandwiches/ Bagels</i> Clubs: ▪ Homework ▪ Ping Pong YELLOW DAY	13 <i>Burger/Wrap/ /Salad/CA rolls</i> Clubs: ▪ Homework ▪ Animation I SCHOOL FORCE BUTTON / STICKER DAY	14 Minimum Day SCHOOL-FORCE DONATION DAY	15 <i>Burritos</i> Clubs: ▪ Homework ▪ Animation II ▪ Guitar RAMS WRISTBAND DAY Nomination deadline for PTA Service Awards	16 <i>Pizza</i> Clubs: ▪ Games PINK DAY	17  Multi-cultural Fair 1:00-4:00
18	19 <i>Sandwiches/ Bagels</i> Clubs: ▪ Homework ▪ Ping Pong Deadline for <i>Letters to Legislators</i>	20 <i>Burger/Wrap/ /Salad/CA rolls</i> Clubs: ▪ Homework ▪ Animation I	21 Minimum Day 5th Grade Parent Info. Night 6:30, Multi-use Rm	22 <i>Tacos</i> Clubs: ▪ Homework ▪ Animation II ▪ Guitar	23 <i>Pizza</i> Clubs: ▪ Games	24 Ramtracks deadline
25	26 <i>Sandwiches/ Bagels</i> Clubs: ▪ Homework ▪ Ping Pong	27 <i>Burger/Wrap/ /Salad/CA rolls</i> Clubs: ▪ Homework ▪ Animation I	28 Minimum Day	29 <i>Burritos</i> Clubs: ▪ Homework ▪ Animation II ▪ Guitar	30 <i>Pizza</i> Clubs: ▪ Games Deadline to turn in photos for 8 th grade promotion	

LOOKING AHEAD

- **“Meet Carlmont” night** for 6th and 7th grade students and parents, Tuesday, May 4th, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m., in Carlmont’s Student Union
- **Ralston Spring Concerts**
Wed May 26 - 7:00 PM: 6th Grade Chorus, 7th/8th Grade Chorus (3rd pd.), Jazz Ensemble, 6th Grade Orchestra, 6th Grade Band
Thurs May 27 - 7:00 PM: Honors Band, Symphonic Band, Advanced Orchestra, 7th/8th Grade Chorus (4th pd.)
- **Carlmont Spring Performances:** Dance Show – May 6, 7 & 8, Instrumental Music Concerts – May 13 & 14, Spring Choir Concerts – May 20 & 21



Ramtracks



Ralston Ramtracks

PTA Newsletter
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