FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Our school year has been humming with activity. As a new schoolwide initiative we are promoting a skill of the month, which thus far has included curiosity, grit, gratitude and self-control. In grades TK though 8, staff are encouraging students to demonstrate these traits and recognize them in literature, historical figures, scientists, volunteers and other role models. Curiosity translates to critical thinking and enthusiastic learning. Grit leads to overcoming adversity and meeting goals. Gratitude leads to consciousness and promotes our sense of community. Self control leads to steering away from the dessert platter at the next family gathering :-) Just kidding ... I mean self control leads to establishing priorities and making better choices.

This season, our staff-wide gratitude statement to you is thank you for entrusting us with your children, preparing them each day to arrive ready to learn, and partnering with us to support their learning at home. I hope you had a chance to participate in our Garden Work Party, International Potluck, Book Fair, and see our school production of La Boheme. If not, there will be many more exciting opportunities to join us at schoolwide events in 2015.

Best wishes for the new year!

— Juan Rodriguez

Spelling Bee Champions

In September, twenty-two of our 4th-6th grade students assembled in the multi-purpose room for the annual Venetia Valley Spelling Bee. Our school champion, 5th grader Mia Cortez, along with runner-ups Joshua Beckner (5th), Lucas Garcia (6th) and Bodhi Hornick (6th) went on to compete in the San Rafael Regional Bee, where Mia beat out contestants from all the other elementary schools in San Rafael to win 1st place! She recently placed 7th in the Marin County Bee. We are a proud school community.
WHERE THE WILD THINGS GROW

5th graders attended the Marin County Outdoor Education School in late November for four days/three nights of activities designed to develop scientific learning and social skills. Students let their curiosity run wild in observing adaptations of wildlife, elements of ecosystems, and in magnifying their understanding of microorganisms in the forest, pond, and grassland of Walker Creek Ranch in Petaluma. Teachers reported proudly that our students exhibited exemplary behavior in this first foray away from home and that they carried themselves with professionalism. Their self control was rewarded when a family of deer came quite close. With falling stars and dew drops glistening after the gentle rain it became hard to distinguish where the science ended and the magic began. A special thank you to Santa Venetia’s Neighbors Helping Neighbors for their generous donation which helped fund this trip for our families in need.

CARNIVAL SUCCESS

Ambitious and amazing, the VV Carnival sets the district bar for outstanding events. THANK YOU to the many neighbors, friends, and Venetia Valley families who made this year’s Fall Carnival a huge success. This year we raised over $11,000 for our school enrichment programs! Highlights included live music from student and parent bands and our middle school’s Brazilian Marching Band. There was fabulous food, including home-made papusas that sold out, the ever-popular cake walk, face painting, carnival rides and jumpie houses. And of course the “water challenge” made a huge splash!

Special thanks go out to our neighborhood sponsors: The Santa Venetia Market, Malugani Tire, ACE Hardware, and Steven Restivo Events. The contributions from these businesses made it possible for us to operate the Carnival at almost no cost. Please support these local companies as they have

A TASTE OF GLORY

10th grader Jerry Maldonado, a former Venetia Valley student, recently led the Terra Linda High School boys soccer team to a Division 1 Championship win! Jerry, who has two younger siblings still at Venetia Valley, made the winning goal in over time, after subbing for his team’s injured goalie and stopping three penalty kicks from the other team.

More than half the TL team is made up of Venetia Valley alumni. These former falcons epitomize our work here at VV. These kids were not the favorites. They did not have the best overall record in the season. Yet they defied the odds. Why? Because they persevered. Because people believed in them. And because they believed in themselves. That’s what we’re about at Venetia Valley School. That’s what we convey each and every day. A proud alma mater congratulates Jerry and the rest of the TLHS boys soccer team.
ENRICHMENT GETS RICHER

LA BOHEME
Our partnership with the San Francisco Opera Guild brought a new cultural and artistic experience to our students. Together we produced and performed a collaborative adaptation of Puccini's "La Boheme." Student performers acted with professional opera singers who brought passion and polish to the production. In addition to this once in a lifetime opportunity to work with professional role-models, students and audience members learned something of Parisian culture and history in 1830. Poignant scenes included the artist Marcelo and poet Rodolfo trying to keep warm by burning the pages of Rodofo's play. We recognized their passion for the arts, their sacrifice to survive, how banding together can bring solace and strength, and how stories can be told with words, body, song, and music.

AFTER SCHOOL EXCITEMENT
Our after school enrichment classes have never been more popular. 105 1st-8th graders participated in one or more of the fall offerings. Classes taught by faculty and guest teachers included Ceramics, Arts & Crafts, Choir, Technology, Hip-Hop Dance, Green Team, Theater, Yoga, Mathletes, STEM (Science/Technology/Engineering/Math) and Homework Club. At the rate of $50 per child per 10-week class, it is the best deal in town. Spring classes begin in January. If you haven’t registered your kids already you can get a registration form in the main office or email the Enrichment Coordinator Tess Lazzarini, tesarini@yahoo.com

MARIN SYMPHONY
Cellist Zuill Bailey, a featured Resident Artist with the Marin Symphony, performed and spoke with our 4th-8th grade students during a fall assembly. Zuill is one of the most recognized classical cellists in the world, travelling and performing year round, and playing a cello made in 1693 by a famous Venetian cello maker. We were fortunate to have such a master musician come to our school to play live classical music for our students. Thank you to the HeadsUp Foundation for encouraging and collaborating with the Marin Symphony to bring us this enrichment opportunity.
CAREER DAY SHOWED THE WAY
On Thursday, November 6th, Venetia Valley middle school students were treated to our second annual Career Day! Presenters included a former NFL professional athlete, an emergency room nurse, a post op nurse, a district attorney, a crime scene investigator, a chemist, a chiropractor, a professional musician, a new County Supervisor who was formerly a member of the City Council, and a travel consultant from AAA. They shared their personal histories, describing what it was like to be students, how they had to prioritize and focus to maximize their learning, and how they persevered and overcame obstacles to their success. They talked about cultures, people, and community connections that enriched their experience. And they expressed gratitude to teachers and other mentors for support along the way. The stories that these professionals shared from their lives really resonated with our kids and clearly illustrated the character traits we have been promoting throughout the fall of grit and gratitude. Our visiting Chemist shared how much of his work is about problem solving and how he has to have the GRIT to keep trying, and trying, and trying to work towards his goal of curing illnesses. Our visiting District Attorney said that he was not the brightest student. But he worked hard and tried to find healthy ways to occupy his time with studying, music, and family. And he expressed his profound GRATITUDE to his teachers and family, for supporting him all along the way. One of our visiting nurses shared her immigration story, her experience in American schools, interviewing for jobs, the logistics of her work and how her favorite part of her work is getting to know her patients. Our students conducted themselves as professionals throughout these presentations and have been a buzz since then, sharing their experiences and talking about their hopes for their own future careers. We are grateful for the outpouring of community interest in showing our students pathways to college and career. Mission accomplished!

HALLOWEEN & HEROES
Our community continues to thrive in many ways. Our Halloween costume parade is another way we come together to show our school spirit and creativity. Heroes large and small were in evidence, and not just those in costume. Our every day parent, staff, and community heroes were also on-hand to cheer on the elementary kids and party with the middle schoolers at their Monster Mash dance.
**CREATING COMMUNITY MEMORIES**

**HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?**
... with volunteer families, students, staff and community members, all in a row. Our teaching garden received twice the love this season thanks to our annual Garden Work Party and an event called Mitzvah Day (an act of kindness day) organized by our neighbors at Rodef Sholom. And the garden needed it after a long summer alone. Now the students are enjoying brand-new redwood raised flower and vegetable beds, and a garden cleared, pruned, and ready for class projects that grow student learning of life cycles and ecosystems. Thank you families and friends!

**INTERNATIONAL POTLUCK**
Our community continues to embody the spirit of sharing our heritage. It was heartwarming to see families from different cultures interacting for the first time. The food, entertainment, decor, and ambience were delightful. Our school bands, dance troupes, and songsters were in great tune, footing, and voice. VIP’s in attendance were Clifford the big red dog, next door in the library's Book Fair, and two rising stars at the district, Director of English Language Learning Oscar Medina and Director of Public Relations Christina Perrino. As Kay Starr sings, "[We've] got [our] love to keep [us] warm.”

**LOVING LITERACY**
The VV Book Fair was a huge success this year! Clifford came to visit our Kindy classes and everyone had a chance to come shop the fair. Our students purchased new books in the hundreds with Minecraft, Diary of a Wimpy Kid and Dork Diaries among our top sellers. We beat our goal of a 5% increase over last years sales and Mrs. Bosch was able to select over 100 new titles to add to the VV library. Go VV!