

# Forestville Schools

News from the Superintendent - 707/887-9768

## Smooth Start for the New School

**Year** - School has been in session for six weeks now, and the academic program is operating smoothly. The performing and visual arts programs are in full swing, and the results this early in the year are impressive. We have new teachers in the elementary program, and at the upper grades as well. We are very happy to have Deborah Massachi sharing a teaching assignment with Jill Thompson at the 2nd grade. The combination of these two outstanding teachers has led to an exceptional opportunity for the students.

We have a "new" teacher for the 7th grade English Language Arts program. Diana Nelson comes to us from Lake County, and is a veteran teacher with a record of distinguished service and innovation. We are very excited about the skills and commitment she brings to Forestville. Skyler Timko is another veteran teacher new to the Forestville Family. His qualifications and passion for teaching mathematics is readily apparent inside and outside the classroom setting.

Our new part-time PE teacher, Kelly Wilbert, is from New York, and has brought a new perspective to our noteworthy physical education program. We are very fortunate to have her aboard this year. Additional PE sections are being established at this writing, enhancing opportunities for our students. Carolyn Jones is our new speech and language therapist; another outstanding veteran who brings a wealth of experience and time proven skills to serve our students.

The Board of Education and all our staff are committed to bringing the very best student instructional programs and experiences that we can offer by hiring and supporting a highly qualified and committed staff. Our goal is to provide top quality academic, visual/performing arts and extra-curricular programs to a deserving student body.

## Enrollment Update - There are Challenges Ahead

Statewide, data from the 2006/2007 school year demonstrate that 52.5% of the 977 school districts in California experienced a decline in average daily attendance (ADA).

Student enrollments at Forestville School District have declined over the last many years as well. In the 2004/2005 school year, for example, there were 617 students enrolled in the district. There were 535 students at the end of last school year and our current enrollment stands at 487 students, in spite of actively recruiting students to attend the school.

While there can be many causes for declining enrollment, it is normally the result of changing demographics; mostly caused by economic conditions associated with increasing housing costs (for more information on the

connection between housing prices and declining enrollment, go to [http://www.cbp.org/pdfs/2007/0704\\_sff\\_decliningenrollment.pdf](http://www.cbp.org/pdfs/2007/0704_sff_decliningenrollment.pdf).)

Declining enrollment also brings less funding from the State. Less funding forces adaptations, and can impact a small school district in terms of reductions in teaching and support staff, reductions and/or elimination of certain programs and/or services, the establishment of combination classes that include two grade levels, etc. The loss of funding this year is projected to be in the neighborhood of \$300,000, a significant loss to the district.

## The Good News

While these factors create difficult economic times, it is very important to know that the Forestville School Board continues to, 1) implement strategies to attract out of district students in order to increase enrollments, 2) identify ways to reduce and contain costs across all parts of the District's operations, and 3) explore new sources of additional funding to mitigate the impacts on student programs.

Creativity and innovation have become the watchwords of the year, and it is this kind of initiative that will sustain the district fiscally and support student services well into the future. As part of this initiative, it is most noteworthy that the Board and administrative staff have identified new and additional funding. For example, in August 2006, the Board authorized the establishment of the grades 4-8 Charter School Academy. This action provided several instructional program benefits in terms of flexibility, creation of new opportunities for students, etc., but also resulted in approximately \$200,000 in additional funding for last year and a similar amount for this year. This will be a source of ongoing funding, subject to student enrollments.

In addition, the administrative staff is currently pursuing another new and significant funding source from the State created by the charter school that is directly related to the reconfiguration of the Kindergarten through third grade program. If we are successful, there will be an additional funding source to offset the decline in funding due to the decline in enrollment. If you are interested in more information, please feel free to attend the next Forestville Parent Forums scheduled for January 17th, 6:00pm at the Forestville Auditorium.

## Thanks again for your continued and outstanding support!

As has been the long history of the Forestville School District, many parents and students spend untold hours volunteering their time and effort to make this the special place it is. We are unbelievably fortunate to have such a dedicated and supportive community.

# Oak Grove Messenger

Oak Grove Elementary School  
Willowside Middle School  
District Office @ Willowside  
707/545-0171



Oak Grove  
Union School District  
Growing Life-long Learners

## Congratulations on Another Year of Outstanding Test Scores

Once again, Oak Grove School students surpassed the state goal of a score of 800 in the STAR test given last spring. This year they were just 4 points shy of their highest score ever (876) that they achieved last year. When compared to other schools with similar ethnic and poverty levels, Oak Grove continues to rank 10 out of 10. They are scoring at the highest levels. Congratulations!

Willowside Middle School's test scores remained relatively stable. Their test score for this year was 789, up one point from last year's score of 788. After breaking the 800 barrier two years ago, the school has been focused on getting back into the 800's.

We are, of course, a learning community, trying to improve ourselves every day. Inside the data, we have noticed that the scores of our students who have been learning English lag significantly behind our students who only speak English. This trend has continued over the past four years despite our efforts to improve and increase instruction. We must close this achievement gap with our second language learners for them to be successful throughout their school careers. This will continue to be a major focus for our schools.

## District Purchases Willowside

On January 2nd, the district will take possession of Willowside Hall. This property is located on the corner of Hall Road and Willowside Road. We have been negotiating with the owner since the spring of last year in an effort to purchase the property and were successful in entering escrow and settling various inspection reports. This purchase solves one of our challenges of where to locate the district offices and the home school program. We will also be investigating other uses of the building in the near future. We are excited about the opportunity to add this property to our district and look forward to providing even better service to our students and the community.

## IN THE OAK GROVE GARDEN

Submitted by Sherry Kearney, Garden Coordinator

Thank You Thank You Thank You to all our garden volunteers! We have accomplished so much this last year. Last spring, Glen Fricker, along with Greg Murphy and Aaron Gutleben, built the fence structure that encloses the garden and gives us all that wonderful vertical

growing space. Kevin and Carol Boles attached the wire fencing, and helped create our entry arches. We have John Paneno to thank for taking on the messy task of applying sealer to the tool shed.

Have you been out to see our new greenhouse? John Nagle and Rob Brooks spent the better part of a weekend putting it together, and it looks great. The greenhouse will open up so many new learning opportunities for our students.

By the way, the fence and greenhouse were possible due to a generous donation from DuMol Winery and from Lowe's.

And let's not forget the hard-working volunteers who showed up over the summer to weed, shovel gravel, prune, dig, plant, water, and weed some more! Special thanks to Karen Smith, Jan Lochner, Carol Boles, Nicola Niedermair, Toni Hiner, An Baseman, and Cathy Bazzano.

Such devoted parent involvement in the school really lets the kids know that their education is important.

I will be scheduling parent work days throughout the year. If you would like to join the fun, please email me at SherryKny@aol.com, and I'll add you to the email list.

## Congratulations to Our 2006-2007 Student Body Officers:

President - Olivia Mora; Vice President - Jessica Reiter; Publicity Coordinators - Vallena Lipske and Cora Orme; Activity Coordinators - Natalie Fritz and Ashlin Neal; Secretary - Rachael Marracq; Treasurer - Angie Howard. Campaign, speeches and elections were held the week of September 3, 2007. The speeches were very impressive, and we're looking forward to a great year in student government!

**Safe School Ambassadors:** This year Willowside will institute the Safe School Ambassadors program. While Willowside takes great pride in its reputation as a safe, nurturing school, we also feel that there is always room for improvement. To that end, SSA trains a group of 40 students to become aware of harassment and bullying and how to take action when they see it happening. After the training, students continue to meet with trained, supportive adults to process the actions they take as ambassadors. The highly successful program is in place in over 500 schools nationwide - including both Anly and El Molino. We hope to conduct the training in November.