

PACIFIC VALLEY SCHOOL

Big Sur Unified School District

2016/17

Issue 38, 2 pages SEPTEMBER MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Written by, Tafay Wilson

A,B,C...THE FIRES BURNING AGAIN!



The Soberanes Fire rages to 80,000 acres to the North while the Chimney Fire approaches 35,000 acres to the South. Big Sur residents are no strangers to fire yet every time our backyard goes up in flames, it's still a shock.

Once again, Big Sur is suffering a tragedy of epic proportions; a continuing saga of fire, disaster and heroism that will become a part of local folklore and California history for years to come. With only two weeks of summer left before school begins for the Big Sur Unified School District, two fires, the Soberanes Fire to the North and the Chimney Fire to the South, continue to burn on either side of Pacific Valley School. The school is **not** in danger from either fire currently. Although the South coast is safe in-between the two fires at the moment, one can't help wondering what the next month will bring as both fires are expected to burn through the end of September.

Big Sur residents are no strangers to fire but every time our backyard goes up in flames, it's still a shock. As residents evacuate their homes and others' homes are lost, as childrens' schools are closed and parents scramble to adjust, as businesses close and employees can't go to work, as the fresh air turns to smoke and wilderness and wildlife succumb to fire, one has to wonder, "How did this happen?". The shock comes from learning how these fires start. The Soberanes Fire was started by an illegal campfire, not by natural causes. Illegal campfires are a big problem in Big Sur, especially on the South coast. It is a "hot" topic lately and rightly so.

Fire isn't the only problem on the rise in Big Sur. Trash and litter left on roadsides are also an issue. As visitors flock to Big Sur to admire its stunning beauty, many (not all) negligent and careless visitors destroy the very thing they came to enjoy, leaving behind a slough of problems for the people who live here. The tourist season isn't over yet. Actually, these days, it never ends. How will these stories end? What will be the lessons learned?

Unfortunately, these issues have become main chapters in Big Sur's story over the last decade. A story that the PV School community is familiar with. Students at PV are taking notes. In fact, scheduled this month, students and staff will take part in the California Coastal Clean-Up, an annual effort to collect trash and data at local beaches and parking lots for environmental scientist to analyze. But, it doesn't take a scientist to figure out that litter and illegal campfires are on the rise: growing problems that locals can't ignore.

As our backyard burns and our front yard is being littered with trash, what are the lessons we need to teach our children, our students, each other and most of all, the tourists and visitors? Kate Novoa's website (a local's favorite), www.bigsurkate.wordpress.com provides a forum for these topics. Kate works diligently to bring the important news from high atop her mountain to Big Sur residents who have come to rely on her detailed, current and relevant reporting.

Here is the good news. There are thousands of men and women, professionals and regular citizens helping to fight these fires, save lives, save homes, and help with recovery. Many locals are working to keep Big Sur safe and sound. Others are addressing these issues with state and local government officials on an ongoing basis. To all of these people and their efforts, we give abundant thanks. A different story with a new chapter is written as progress is made. As we reflect on the summer, gear up for a new school year, and look to the future, the story will unfold. Hopefully, there's a happy ending.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

TUESDAY 9/6

First Day of School

Welcome Back!

FRIDAY 9/9

School Day

THURSDAY 9/15

Coastal Clean-Up Day

TUESDAY 9/20

Birthday Celebrations

Olimar, Sarah, D.Z., Bunny

ABC's of the Month

"A" is for "Awareness," the knowledge and perception of a situation or fact.

"B" is for "Be Pro-active," create or control a situation for positive change rather than reacting to the problem.

C is for "Cooperation," working together toward the same goal.

MONDAY 9/26

Board Meeting 6:30 pm



WWW.BIGSURUNIFIED.COM



2015/16 PROMOTIONS CEREMONY & GRADUATION

Here they are; the entire Senior student body, Fiona, Martin and John Cruz, graduating from Pacific Valley School this past June, proudly receiving their diplomas. They should be proud. Their hard work was rewarded with new possibilities and a happy ending to a huge chapter in their lives, Kindergarten Through 12th Grade. Fiona heads for UCLA, Martin wants to continue his education and become an astronaut, and John Cruz aspires to be a film director and writer.

They weren't the only ones celebrating on June 16. All of the other students received recognitions and certificates for their individual accomplishments as they were promoted to their next grades. Approximately 180 community members attended the ceremonies. The ceremonies included highlighted speakers and performances. Fiona, John Cruz and Martin all gave poignant speeches to which many audience members cried. PV School kitchen staff prepared a delicious community buffet of spaghetti, Caesar salad and garlic bread for lunch. A huge chocolate cake sponsored by the PTO was offered for dessert. As children played in the lawn and families congratulated one another, the day was a very special ending to the school year.

WAVES OF FUN!



Every year the entire school, along with a professional lifeguard, pick one day during the final week of school to enjoy our local beach, Sanddollar. The end-of-the-year Beach Day

had perfect weather and surf conditions. Students, staff, family and friends, brought wetsuits, boogie boards, surfboards, and even their dogs, to the ocean: a place where all of the stress and hard work is forgotten and rewarded.

By ten o'clock in the morning everyone was playing in the sand, swimming in the surf, walking along the shore or simply relaxing by the waters edge. By three in the afternoon tired bodies were ready to trek back to the school, brush off the sand and call it a day.

PV School knows how to capitalize on its advantages and our location, location, location, certainly has some advantages.

NUTRITION NEWS

The Nutrition Program is excited about the coming school year. This year we would like to strongly encourage families and staff to pre-pay for their meals. As thanks, we are offering one Free Lunch gift certificate for every \$100 dollars that is pre-paid. All you have to do is present your gift certificate on the day you would like to receive your free lunch.

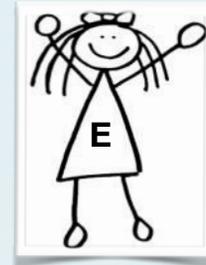
Don't forget, at the end of last year, every student received a "Bring A Parent to Lunch" gift certificate. We would love to see parents come and find out what their children are eating at school. So, students, please don't forget to invite your parent(s) to lunch.

Your pre-pay invitation will be in your school packets and sent via-email. Please visit the Nutrition Services Page on our website or contact the office or the [Nutrition Services Director](#) for more details.



WE WELCOME OUR NEW K-3 & SPANISH TEACHER

Miss Ellen Hall is the newest addition to the staff at Pacific Valley School. Ellen is familiar with Big Sur and is very excited to come back. Ellen grew up in Arroyo Grande, where she attended high school and her extended family still lives.



After attending Sonoma State, Miss Hall worked for years as a Behavioral Interventionist with Spanish speaking families, dealing with all kinds of behavioral issues. Then, she decided to pursue her teaching credential at Chapman University. Eventually Ellen moved to Morro Bay to be closer to her parents and ever-increasing extended family, including the addition of five nieces and nephews.

Ellen currently holds degrees in Special Education, Spanish, and Kindergarten through 8th grade education (all subjects). She's an audio book "junkie" and her current favorite is the Thirteenth Tale. Although she was teaching in Morro Bay, when she saw an opportunity to be a part of Pacific Valley School, she wanted to make a change.

Her former life in Big Sur was during the 1990s, when she spent much time working with children as a babysitter for working locals. It's obvious that working with children is something Ellen has a passion for.

Ellen happily states, "I'm so excited to teach Spanish. I've been speaking the language for twenty-two years. I began my career in challenging situations. Now, I feel I have matured as an educator and my confidence in my abilities, lesson plans and teaching methods has grown. I'm ready for this challenge and the opportunity to teach students who are very unique and learning in a very unique environment."

Pacific Valley School is as excited to have Miss Hall as she is to be here!