



School News



The last major new construction project at Yosemite High School was dedicated September 30 in front of the student body and visiting dignitaries.

Ansel Adams Hall, which will house English, mathematics, social science and some foreign language classes, should be finished and ready for classes before the October break begins October 24.

The 26,500 square-foot building includes work areas for teachers, classrooms and restrooms.

Special guests for the dedication were Anne Adams Helms and her husband, Ken. Mrs. Helms is the daughter of famed Yosemite photographer Ansel Adams for whom the building was named.

She presented YHS Principal Steve Raupp with a framed photograph taken by her father.

She told the students they had an opportunity her father did not have -- to graduate from high school.

Helms said her father would be pleased to have a school classroom facility named for him.

"He would tell you to have a goal and to find something that really excites you," she said.

Also participating in the ceremony were Harry Baker, the first Yosemite Union High School District Board president. He was instrumental in

the formation of the Yosemite district and has been a benefactor to schools in the district throughout the 23 years the district has been open.

He told the students they were fortunate not to be riding a bus to Tollhouse to attend high school as students had to do prior to the opening of YHS.

Luisa Park from the Office of Public School Construction in Sacramento praised District Superintendent Bill McCabe for his perseverance during the school's construction project which started in 1999. "He never gave up," she said, noting that he was on the phone or in her office in Sacramento frequently to keep the project on track. Assemblyman David Cogdill presented a resolution to Raupp signed by himself and State Senator Charles Poochigian.

Three more projects are scheduled and that will complete the expansion and renovation work that started after an \$11.76 million bond was passed in 1998.

The home economics and art building will be renovated later this year; a soccer field will be put in and a riding arena will be added to the agriculture farm.

All of the projects total approximately \$39 million. The funds came from the local bond, state bond, state matching funds, developer fees, grants and private donations.



Judy Durr

Anne Adams Helms, the daughter of Ansel Adams, cut the ribbon to dedicate Ansel Adams Hall at Yosemite High School September 30. Mathematics, English, social science and foreign language classes will be held in the 23-classroom building. Shown with Helms are, left to right, Yosemite Joint Union High School District Superintendent Bill McCabe; Luisa Park of the Office of Public School Construction; Harry Baker, the first board president for the YJUHSD; Helms; current YJUHSD Board President Linda Olson and Assemblyman Dave Cogdill.

Yosemite Joint Union High School District met all criteria for Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind for the 2004-05 school year. The district met the required 95 percent participation rate for the English /Language Arts and mathematics tests and it met the required proficiency rate.

All of the schools in the district met AYP requirements except Mountain View High School which did not meet its Academic Performance Index (API), therefore it did not meet AYP.

Coarsegold Union School District did not meet its AYP because only 92 percent of students with disabilities tested in mathematics, leaving the district short of the 95 percent requirement.

Each school in the CUSD met their individual AYPs.

The NCLB goal is that all schools have an API of 800 by 2013-14. Yosemite High School earned an API of 775 in 2004-05, up 22 points from the year before.

Glacier High School Charter gained 71 points for an API of 744; Evergreen High School gained 67 points for an API of 650. Mountain View's API was 430 which is below the minimum of 590 required for this year. The district API is 746, up 13 points from the prior year.

Results were not made public for Ahwahnee High School, Foothill High School and Raymond Granite High School because there were fewer than 11 students testing in each grade.

Yosemite High School's API of 775 is the highest of any high school in Madera or Mariposa counties.

Rivergold Elementary had an API of 817, up 18 points from the year before; Coarsegold posted an API of 785, up 14 points. Districtwide, the API was 790, up 11 points from the year before.

Bill McCabe, superintendent of both districts, said he is extremely pleased with the schools' performances.

Voters within the Yosemite Joint Union High School District boundaries, including the communities of Ahwahnee, Bass Lake, Coarsegold, Fish Camp, Oakhurst, Raymond and Wawona, will decide November 8 whether YJUHSD and Coarsegold Union School District should unify into one district. This is Measure P on the ballot.

At the same time, voters will select five out of 11 candidates for trustees who would serve the new district if unification passes. These candidates will be elected at-large. This means that they do not have to be elected by community.

Currently, YJUHSD trustees are elected by community, guaranteeing Ahwahnee, Bass Lake, Coarsegold, Oakhurst and Raymond each one board member.

Candidates for trustees are: Tom Alcock, Ron Bucheger, Dan Burrow, Karen Hutchings, Bert McSwain, Monika Moutlin, Linda Olson, Priscilla Pike, John Reynolds, Greg Schoonard and Christine Wilder.

The question on the ballot

will be: "Should the Yosemite Joint Union High School District and the Coarsegold Union School District be reorganized to form a new unified school district?" Voters will vote "yes" or "no." A simple majority, 50 percent plus one vote, is required for the measure to pass.

If the measure passes, the five trustee candidates with the most votes will serve on the new, unified board.

The three candidates receiving the highest number of votes will be elected to three-year terms and the two receiving the next highest number of votes will be elected to one-year terms.

In the event of a tie vote or votes, the winners would be determined by lot before the appropriate officer or board. The next trustee election after unification would be November 2006.

If the unification vote is successful, the new district would begin July 1, 2006.

Between December 2005 and June 30, 2006, three boards would be seated -- the current YJUHSD board, the current CUSD board and the

unified board. If Measure P fails, the two districts would continue to operate as separate districts and the current trustees would serve out their terms as if the unification vote had not happened.

The two districts have shared several administrative positions and district office space for the past three years.

The unification process started with a fact-finding committee in 2003. That committee recommended to each of the district boards that they prepare a petition to unify. Both boards voted to go forward with the proposal.

The County Commission on District Reorganization approved the districts' petition and forwarded it to the state. The state conducted a study to determine if the districts met the nine required criteria for unification. It determined that they did and the petition went to the State Board of Education for approval. In July, the SBE approved the petition, allowing it to be placed on the November 8 ballot.



The combined Rivergold and Coarsegold schools' band won first place in the Heritage Days parade held during September.

Students in the Coarsegold and Yosemite school districts raised \$3232.56 for hurricane relief.

Students in the Rivergold Leadership Class raised \$1,682.96 in two weeks. The money was given to the Red Cross.

Money was donated at the school's annual Hawk Festival and students also brought change to school.

"Students in our Leadership Class did a fantastic job collecting money and showing their support for our fellow Americans," a spokes-

man for the class said.

Foothill High School students held a car wash and back sale in Yosemite Lakes Park and turned over \$978 to the Red Cross.

The Yosemite High School Interact Club donated \$500 to Sierra Vista Presbyterian Church to buy backpacks for Katrina evacuees attending school in Houston.

Susan Nobles, wife of YHS science teacher Rob Nobles, recently returned from the area hit by hurricanes. She and other local residents had gone there to assist evacuees

and deliver supplies. Interact donated the \$500 to that group.

Students at Mountain View High School held a penny drive and collected \$71.60. They donated paper, pencils, pens, crayons and glue to be sent to a school that was destroyed.

"We are all so proud of these students and their ability to move from concern to action," commented Roberta Tackett, principal of Foothill and Mountain View high schools.

Ninety-three percent of the 10th grade students (class of 2007) at Yosemite High School passed the mathematics portion of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) in 2005 and 91 percent passed the English/Language Arts portion.

Beginning with the class of 2006, students must pass the CAHSEE to graduate. There is discussion at the state level about exempting special education students from this requirement for 2006.

Yosemite High School's class of 2006 has a pass rate of 95 percent in math and 95

percent in English/Language Arts at this time; students will have additional opportunities to take the exam before the end of the school year.

District-wide, 34 students in the class of 2006, or 11 percent, have not passed the CAHSEE. Of those who have not passed, 12 are students with disabilities who may be exempted from the test this year.

Last year's sophomores, the class of 2007, had an 88 percent pass rate district-wide in math and an 87 percent pass rate in English/Language Arts.

Yosemite High School won the Ginsburg Award for the 2004-05 school year for the 10th time in its history.

This annual award goes to the school that accumulates the most points in varsity athletics throughout the year. The school last won the award during the 1993-94 school year.

YHS beat its closest competition by 58 points. The Badgers added up 308 points during the 2004-05 year, followed by Kingsburg with 250 points.

"This is just awesome," said YHS Athletic Director Tom Fiorimonti when he was notified last spring. "It's a tribute to our coaches and athletes."

"The key was that we always finished close to the top, even if we didn't win," he said.

For each boys' and girls' varsity sport, schools get points depending on where they place in league, ranging from 24 points for first place to one point for eighth place.

YHS led the North Sequoia League at the end of each season.

In the fall season, YHS tied for first in football, girls' cross country was first, volleyball was second, girls' golf was second, girls' tennis tied for fourth and boys' cross country was sixth.

In the winter, girls' basketball finished first, girls' soccer tied for first for the first time in the school's history, boys' soccer was third, wrestling was fourth and boys' basketball was seventh.

During the spring season, baseball tied for first, boys' track was first, softball was second, girls' track was second, boys' swimming tied for second, girls' swimming was third, boys' tennis was fifth and boys' golf was fifth.

Yosemite High School will present a Fall Concert, Tuesday, October 18, that will feature choral, band and percussion performances. It begins at 7:30 p.m. in the YHS Performing Arts Center.

Admission is \$5 for adults, \$3 for students and senior citizens or \$15 for families.

For more information, call 683-4667.

The Yosemite High School Theater Arts Department will present The Diary of Anne Frank November 3-5 in the YHS Performing Arts Center.

The play will be presented at 7 p.m. each of the three days and also at 2 p.m. Saturday, November 5.

Admission is \$7 for adults and \$3 for children. This play will include multimedia elements and music.

Lars Thorson, drama teacher, says it is not appropriate for children under 10 years old.

For more information, call 683-4667 ext. 256.



Riesie Hernandez, left, president of the Yosemite High School Interact Club, presents a \$500 check to Susan Nobles of Sierra Vista Presbyterian Church to buy backpacks for Hurricane Katrina evacuees who are now attending school in Houston, Texas. Nobles and several others recently returned from there after spending a week assisting evacuees and delivering supplies.



The YHS freshman football team visited Children's Hospital of Central California in September. They visited with the young patients and then held a scrimmage on the back lawn at the hospital. Among those who came out to watch the scrimmage was eight-year-old Roberto Arevalos who is shown with team captains, front row left to right, Jesse Lownsbury and Cody Shahan. Back row left to right, Hunter Clark, Robert Rainey and Greg Smith. The team has also adopted a school in Louisiana and will be sending a box of supplies to students at the school. The school's mascot is a gator so the YHS team has a gator on the back of their helmets.



Students at Raymond Granite High School spend time with such special projects as culinary arts and woodshop.

Among the woodshop projects are nest boxes for blue birds and Kestral. These may be purchased through the school. Call Jerry Lebovitz at 689-3490.

Students are also making Shaker benches which are also for sale. All wood projects are made with recycled lumber.

Cindy Happ-Jett teaches the culinary arts program. She is pictured at left with student Chelsea Harlow.



Evan Bielanski
Aquatics Director



Deena Boortz
Home Economics



Maria Cepero
Cafeteria



Diane Christian
Campus Supervisor



Clyde Derickson
Bus Driver/Custodian



Mike Durr
Campus Supervisor



Sheryl Gregory
Instructional Aide



Laurie Kenyon
Cafeteria



Scott Males
Business



Roger Mercier, Jr.
Utility/Bus Driver



Louise Peterson
Instructional Aide



Kerrie Rich
Campus Supervisor



Shannon Simonelli
Paraeducator



Mark Siverly
Mathematics

PHOTOS BY JUDY DURR



Mountain View students and staff who raised money for hurricane victims through a penny drive.



As I begin my 10th year as superintendent of Yosemite Joint Union High School District and my fourth year as superintendent of Coarsegold Union School District it is interesting to look back to see what we have accomplished and to look forward to what we have planned.

September 30 we dedicated Ansel Adams Hall at Yosemite High School. This is a 23-classroom building named in memory of the famed Yosemite photographer. It was a real pleasure to have his daughter, Anne Adams Helms, and her husband, Ken, at the ceremony to cut the ribbon. We were also pleased that officials from the Office of Public School Construction in Sacramento attended along with county dignitaries.

This is the final new construction of our \$30 million renovation and expansion project that started in 1999 after local voters passed an \$11.76 million bond in 1998. With a great deal of teamwork, we were able to leverage an additional almost-\$20 million for the projects, including state bond funds, state matching funds, developer fees, grants and private donations.

Thanks to these funds, YHS now has a cafeteria / multi-purpose room, swim complex, music classrooms, all-weather track, new roofs on many of the buildings, a student parking area with access bridges, expanded locker rooms, upgraded football stadium, new baseball fields, fencing and infrastructure. Original buildings were renovated to become the library / media center, administration building, science classrooms and laboratories, performing arts center and self-contained shop buildings for auto, wood and welding.

Very soon, we will begin remodeling the art / home economics building and we will put in new soccer fields and a riding arena at the school farm.

Within a year, we anticipate all of the construction will be complete and we will have fulfilled every promise we made to voters at the time of the bond election. I look to this achievement with a great deal of pride and gratitude to the numerous people who have worked hard to make this a reality. We have one of the finest campuses in the central valley for the benefit of our students and staff.

We have outstanding programs to go along with the physical plant. YHS has been named a California Distinguished School for the second four-year cycle and we are one of 12 schools in California with an Exemplary Career Technical Program. We strive to offer programs for all of our students, ranging from top level academic programs (International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement) to an extensive career technical program and fine arts program. We offer a variety of programs to assist students who are having academic challenges.

Last year we added the Cadet Corp program and it has been a tremendous success. We added the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program four years ago and it has met a great need for students.

Within the Coarsegold Union School

District, both Coarsegold and Rivergold schools are potentially eligible to apply for Distinguished School status this year. Rivergold has held that distinction for the past four years.

Over the past four years we have done about \$4.5 million worth of improvements at Coarsegold and Rivergold schools. We are currently doing a \$2 million modernization project at Coarsegold. Work has included a computer lab and library at Rivergold, necessary security sensing at Rivergold, ground improvements at both sites, asphalt at the bus service yard, parking lot and frontage improvements and there is a proposed new performing arts center for Coarsegold. We have received about \$2 million in state funding for these projects.

We have done some field expansions at Rivergold and expanded the Rivergold site to a kindergarten - eighth grade. Previously it had been K-sixth grade.

Education has faced significant challenges over the past few years including the state budget crisis that has filtered down to our level and required many school districts to make some painful decisions. We have, fortunately, not had to cut programs yet and we are hopeful that will not happen.

The federal No Child Left Behind legislation has added a tremendous workload to districts. While accountability is essential, I question the wisdom of much of this legislation and I anticipate sweeping changes before it plays out in 2013-14. By that date, all children in the United States are supposed to be proficient or above in English / Language Arts and mathematics. Experts tell us that once a school hits 70 percent proficiency they will be in trouble because it will be almost impossible to exceed that level.

The penalties for schools and districts that don't meet their Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) over a period of years are very stringent and will create havoc within the educational system. We are following the progress of NCLB with great interest and wonder how they will finally decide to deal with the children with disabilities and the non-English speaking students.

November 8 voters will decide whether YIUHSD and CUSD will unify.

We eagerly await the outcome of the election so we will know our direction in the future. People have been studying this and working on it for over three years and we are very pleased that it is now at the point for voters to decide. Whichever way the vote goes, it will make a big difference in how we proceed.

I am proud of the staff at both districts and feel fortunate to have such dedicated people working with me. Every person at the school makes a difference in the students' lives and our students are fortunate to have caring people who truly do want what is best for them.

My years as district administrator have been rewarding and challenging. I look forward to the challenges ahead and I know that together we will help our students become the best they can be.



Our theme this year is "One Pride-Heart and Mind." Our goal is to foster a positive environment at Coarsegold School where we have Cougar Pride, but we also work together well in a family atmosphere of cooperation. We are implementing a wonderful new program this year called Second Step which focuses on the development of positive social skills.

We are so proud of our students' achievement at Coarsegold School! Our Academic Performance Index (API) was released and showed a growth of 14 points to 785!

Improvement results also demonstrated that we met all the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. The hard work by students, staff and parents is reflected in these results, and we will continue to pursue higher achievement at Coarsegold School.

Good attendance is directly related to student success, so we have established a goal to achieve over 95 percent attendance this year. It is important that students are in class each day unless they are ill. If your child is absent, please call the school atten-

dance line at 683-4842, extension 300 for your convenience in communicating with us about student absences. All absences must be cleared in this way, so please keep us informed.

We are looking forward to a great year filled with rich learning experiences for children. If you would like to help in any way, or if you have ideas about how we can improve at Coarsegold School, please contact me at 683-4842, ext. 254 or rhaggard@coarsegoldusd.com. District information may be accessed on the Web site at www.coarsegoldusd.com.



Among this country's presidents, no one can come close to Ronald Reagan's humor. He once said the nine most terrifying words are "I'm from the government and I'm here to help." He followed with his witty sarcasm: "Help or complicate?"

School funding is the most complicated in our state funding system. For those of us who worked in private companies and came to work for school systems, it was a steep learning curve. It took a considerable amount of time before understanding the nitty-gritty of revenue generation calculation. There are property taxes and state funding, federal and local revenues. The main revenue source that is related to student enrollment and attendance has two parts: Local school district taxes and state funding.

Allow me to quote British Vicar John Gaule (circa 1660): "A complex system that works is invariably found to have evolved from a simple system that works."

Educational funding is one system that needs to go back to its simple origin. Let me explain why and in detail. Computation of total revenue has 30-plus components which go

into the computation of school district funding. Computation of local school district taxes has its own multiple components. The state department of education takes the above two computations and adds another 12 components to come up with its own share of funding. Want to read about the entire funding mechanism? It has been captured in its minute details in a book called Revenues and Limits - 174 pages in total.

For every action, there is an equal and opposite government program. To make the business manager's life challenging, there is another funding mechanism. It is called the categorical. You may recognize some of those categorical: Class Size Reduction, Title I, GATE (funding for Gifted and Talented), School Improvement (SIP), transportation, California public school library, special education, and school safety, just to name a few.

And then there are other state programs such as the lottery. Did you know that for every dollar spent on lottery products, 34 cents is returned to the classroom? Seventy-seven percent of lottery funds are spent on

instruction that includes instructional materials, salaries, classroom supplies, computers and software. In 2003-2004, the lottery had \$3 billion in sales and returned \$1 billion to education.

In the 19 years of its operation, the California State Lottery has sold \$43 billion, gave away \$22 billion in prizes and gave education \$15 billion.

The point to remember is what the government gives, it must first take away. Lottery money to school districts is based on their Average Daily Attendance and split into two components - restricted and unrestricted. The restricted lottery component has restricted uses meaning it can be spent only for certain things. The unrestricted portion is discretionary but most school districts spend it on salaries. Some districts also spend it on transportation since it is not funded in full. And, with fuel prices going up, there is no stopping of transportation expenses.

Stop by one of these days at the business office sit with us and we will show you how we juggle our budget and finances between the wants and the needs.



Alternative education students frequently astound me with their compassion and passion for justice, fairness and equality.

Like many others in our nation, students at two of the alternative schools in Eastern Madera County were moved by the plight of the hurricane victims.

On September 7, the students at Foothill High School held a car wash and bake sale to aid victims of Hurricane Katrina.

In preparation, the students contacted Hillside Market for permission to use one side of the shopping center parking lot. They baked muffins, cookies and brownies to sell.

For their efforts, the students raised \$978 which was donated to the Red Cross for hurricane relief.

The students at Mountain View were motivated during the current events class when they learned about a school that had been destroyed so they students and teachers were meeting in a condemned building without any books or school supplies.

The students organized a penny drive that raised \$71.60

for the Red Cross and donated paper, pens, pencils, crayons and glue to be sent to the school.

We all are so proud of these students and their ability to move from concern to action.

Raymond Granite High School's vocational program is up and running.

In the woodshop class the students are building blue bird nesting boxes and they have added Kestral boxes this year.

These nest boxes come with instructions for locating them for the best results.

The students are also building Shaker benches which make beautiful, comfortable seating on front porches or in hallways.

The benches are built to order and painted any color the buyer chooses.

All of these projects are made with recycled wood. To order any of these, contact Jerry Lebovitz at 689-3490.

The RGHS also has a culinary program for students interested in cooking for their families or professionally.

Brandy Johnson, a 2005 graduate, participated in the culinary program for three years and is now attending

Columbia College's culinary school with a full scholarship.

RGHS may be a small school, but it provides a night program. The personalized hands-on approach to learning provided by staff prepares RGHS students for success in many areas.

Seniors in all the alternative schools are excitedly preparing for life after high school. Many are starting senior projects and all are looking at options for the future: jobs, college or vocational schools.

To aid them, teachers and paraprofessionals are helping with college applications and interview skills.

Ahwahnee High School students attended College Night in Fresno and a Fresno City College Day at the career center at Yosemite High School.

Several students will be taking the ACT and SAT this month. Those interested in military careers took the ASVAB test earlier this month.

It's exciting to watch the students mature and blossom as they go through the alternative programs.



A California Distinguished School



Rivergold has not lost its marbles!

If you have been following the series of letters to the editor over the past few weeks in the Fresno Bee, I would like to set the record straight. Everyone at Rivergold (the "authorities" included) believes in Mom, apple pie and Chevrolet. We have not lost our

marbles; in fact we highlighted our fifth grade marble champs in the Sierra Star last year after reading the story the Marble Champ.

The only reason that kids are not allowed to play 'keepers' is because dads and grandpas get upset when kids lose their marbles.

The lesson to be learned is

appropriate for the beginning of a new school year. Parents, teachers, and administrators need to communicate with each other so that everyone is working together. Parents will be proud to know that we still play jump rope, we have a chess class, and we encourage healthy competition in all areas of life.

A publication of the Yosemite Joint Union High School District and the Coarsegold Union School District

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