



April 2006

The Acorn

A Fond Farewell to Farmer Hokit

It is with mixed emotions that we bid our Farmer Hokit a fond farewell . . . grateful that his 17 month battle with cancer is over, but saddened by the loss of a great man. Each of us has memories of him as a teacher, a colleague, a farmer, a rancher, a mentor, a friend. And each of us will remember the characteristic that most touched our own life. Perhaps it was his humility, maybe his intellect, or his practicality that influenced us. For some, it may have been his spirituality, his steadfastness, his loyalty, for others his love of the farm. His integrity, his work ethic, and his dependability are all

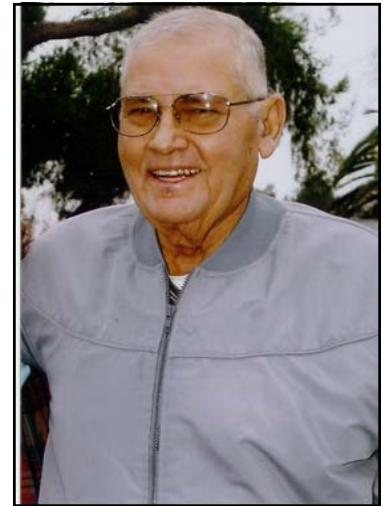
traits for which some may remember Farmer Hokit. Whichever the trait, it was truly the touch of a man who had mastered much.

He had an incredible intellect and freely passed his knowledge to his students. His college students recount the high academic standards he set for them. High school students remember his quizzes about advanced chemistry concepts and Farmer Hokit expected his younger students to be able to expound on both aerobic and anaerobic bacteria contained in a compost pile.

A dictionary or thesaurus...Who needed either when Mr.

Hokit was around? He could tell you the definition, the root, the derivatives, and the conjugation of any word in the English language. He knew the scientific name (genus and species) of any given plant, animal, or insect and used them frequently. (Oops, now we need that dictionary to interpret what he said!)

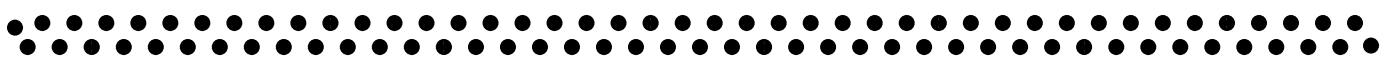
A trip to the fair was a particular delight to him as he was trained to teach about and judge animals and he did so often. A trip out to the farm was equally pleasant and he often was caught leaving



the paper work inside to get outside amongst the sheep, the chickens, the vegetables, and the flowers where there was "real" work to be done.

At Valley Oaks there was not a student, a parent, or a staff member he did not love or who did not love him. He knew each person intimately and all were influenced by his great leadership. His time was your time and nothing was ever more important than the student, the parent, or the colleague who needed his expertise.

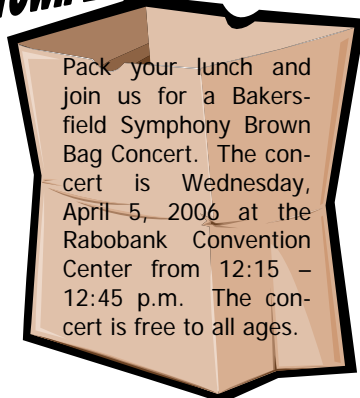
And although he will be missed, we are comforted in knowing that he has left his legacy in the roots of our fruit trees, in the switch of the cow's tail, in the minds of the youth, and in the hearts of all he served. So a fond farewell to Farmer Hokit and a sincere and heartfelt thank you for leaving all of us at Valley Oaks with the touch of a master's hand.



We're Off...



Brown Bagin' It



Pack your lunch and join us for a Bakersfield Symphony Brown Bag Concert. The concert is Wednesday, April 5, 2006 at the Rabobank Convention Center from 12:15 – 12:45 p.m. The concert is free to all ages.



Register for classes with CALM, by calling Debby at 872-2256 ext. 12 or Kim at 872-2256 ext. 14. Students will not be allowed to attend without registering by the Friday prior to the class they wish to take. In order to accommodate Spring Break, the next CALM class is scheduled for April 4th at 1:00 p.m. at CALM. Scheduled classes are:
April 4 Rodents
May 9 Native Americans

The What Four? Quartet concert has been rescheduled for Thursday, March 30th at 1:00 p.m. Concert is free and will be held at the Chester Avenue location.

Stay Tuned....

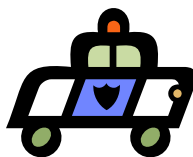
Students will have the opportunity to take a tour of KGTV News Station and hopefully view a portion of the noon broadcast on Monday, April 17, 2006. Tour is for 6th-8th grade students only. If you are unable to accompany your student, you may drop him/her to be supervised by a VOCS teacher. Students must arrive at 2120 L Street by 11:45 a.m. for the noon time tour. Tour is limited to 18 students so sign up early and pay your \$2.00 refundable deposit to save a space. Appropriate school dress required.

CAMP KEEP registra-

tion closes on April 3rd. Fifth and sixth grade students will enjoy a week long (May 1-5) environmental program at Montana de Oro State Park. The trip requires a \$50.00 non-refundable deposit at the time of sign up. For more information visit <http://www.campkeep.org/> or contact Resource teacher Stacy Culbertson.

Come Out With Your Hands Up

Kindergarten and first grade students will want to join the April 18, 2006 trip to the Police Department from 10:00—11:00 a.m. Tour is limited to 20 (including parents) so don't be left out. Sign up and pay your \$2.00 refundable deposit. Children will tour the Communication Center, Property Room, Crime Scene Investigation Room, and meet with a Police Canine and Officer!



Kern County Museum Curator Tour is scheduled for Thursday, April 27 from 1-2 p.m. A behind the scenes look at the museum will be the focus of the tour. Curator Jeff Nichols will show students the ins and outs of running a historical museum. A \$2.00 refundable deposit will hold your place.

Knott's Berry Farm Gold Rush

There are still places available for students grades 4-8 to join the trip scheduled for Tuesday, May 9th. Reservation deadline has been extended to no later than April 4th. \$11.75 and sign up at the front desk will hold your spot. No children under 5 will be permitted.

Case Dismissed....

Sixth – eighth grade students only may take a tour of the County Courthouse on Thursday, May 4, 2006. Tour is limited to 20 students and parents. Students may be dropped off to be supervised by a VOCS teacher. Students will have the opportunity to hear cases being tried. Tour begins promptly at 9:30 a.m. and will last until noon. A strict dress code is enforced so be sure to pick up the information packet in the Parent Place. A \$2.00 refundable deposit will reserve your space.



Take Me Out to the Ballgame
The Bakersfield Blaze present Baseball in Education at Sam Lynn Ballpark. Students interested may sign up at the front desk and purchase a \$3.00 ticket which includes entrance, hot dog, soda, and chips lunch and an opportunity to collect autographs and run the bases after the game. Pre-game activities begin at 9:30 a.m. and game begins at 10:30 on Thursday, May 25, 2006. Only 50 tickets available so don't miss your chance for a fun afternoon at the old-ball-game!!



VOCS SPOKES

The April 28th ride will meet at the Bike Path parking lot on Manor Street at 9:00 a.m.. You must provide your own bike, helmet, and water. Students must be accompanied by a parent rider. Sign up at the front desk for our next bike trek. The last ride of the year will be



April 2006

Dear Valley Oaks Parents:

School testing for 2nd through 11th grade will begin on April 19th. Schedules are included in this mailing. Please mark your calendars so that you do not miss the test times.

Charter schools were created to give parents some choices in how they could "school" their children. In return, the charter school movement basically said, "For some added freedoms given to charter schools, we are willing to be held accountable for the success or failure of the children enrolled at the school." In other words, "Let us try it our way and we can show that our methods are effective." We have seen evidence that, for dedicated families, homeschooling is a dynamic, effective way for children to learn. Now we must prove that our observations are accurate. The state testing is the method established to make that verification. We must test 95% of our enrollment in order to have a valid score. We have increased our percentage each year but still fall a little short of a required number. Valley Oaks can only survive if they meet the minimum state requirements which, for us, means having 95% of the students tested which we feel is a reasonable expectation in order for us to continue to provide the many and varied services you currently enjoy.

There are many reasons that the homeschooling community is resistant to testing. Many of the reasons are valid.

1. Schools are becoming test-prep centers instead of real learning centers.
2. The test often dictates what happens on a day-to-day basis in class.
3. When there is a preoccupation with performance, real learning is compromised.
4. Every test ever developed is limited in its scope of effectiveness and is conditioned by the testing situation and the health and demeanor of the child on test day.
5. Your child may be bright but may not test well.

The list of objections is long. However, many of the stated objections do not pertain to our situation. You are in the driver's seat on a day-to-day basis. We have faith in what you do at home and are not afraid of what the test scores will look like regardless of the materials and methods you have been using. Test scores for VOCS in the past few years have been good.

There are some very good reasons why you would want to make sure your child/ren test.

1. It is an excellent way for you to get some usable results that show where your child is strong and where he/she need additional instruction.
2. It prepares your child for the reality of testing which is part of most human experiences – to graduate from 8th grade and high school, to receive college prep credit for high school and college courses, to be admitted into college, to get a driver's license, to obtain a job, to get a promotion, and the list goes on.
3. It lets you know if your child's work is age and grade appropriate.
4. Keeping your child from the test may send a message to him/her that he/she is not capable.

The master agreement you signed stated that you agreed to have your child evaluated. That evaluation must be the state test or an alternative test that will be administered at the same time and will be very similar in time commitment and difficulty. To make the testing easier and more convenient, we have taken the following steps:

1. Each student has been supplied with a math and language arts test prep booklet to let you know what will be tested. If there are things in those books that you have not taught, don't stress over it. Teach it if you can, get assistance from your resource teacher if you need it, and relax and don't worry if you can't cover the material.
2. Some testing will be conducted at the satellite offices so that families do not have to drive long distances.
3. The resource teachers have been instructed to work with you regarding any special needs your child may have including transportation.
4. The test has been shortened for some grades.
5. Test scores do not need to be placed in your student's permanent file if you request that they not be entered. Nobody but you needs to know the scores of individual students. The school is concerned only with the scores of groups of students.

You are an important part of Valley Oaks Charter School. We need your help to reach our objective of getting **all** the students tested. It is in your child's best interest to have them test. Don't be afraid of it. It is a tool for you to use to be more effective as you teach. Let's work together to make this happen. Call your resource teacher (633-5288 or 636-4467 for the high school) if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Shirley Oesch, Principal

Tidbits from Taft

Hello from the Westside. We finally finished our production of "The Sound of Music". Our students did a great job of memorizing lines and songs. Wyatt Hukins (2nd grade) commented, " I played Kurt and was in a lot of scenes and sang a lot of songs. I had a good time at practice, but felt a little scared because of all the people who came to watch us. I would like to be in a play again...it was mostly fun." We had a great turnout with over 200 people in the audience at Friday night's performance. Congratulations to everyone! A special thanks to the parents for helping with costumes and practices. It was a lot of hard work, but it was worth it. The students are already talking about next year's play.

Our last enrichment period was so much fun. Students were able to learn about springtime, fundamentals of art, character building, and careers. We even had a leadership class where students organized crazy sock day, nerd day, and created a yearbook.

We are also going to have visits from docents for CALM and the Bakersfield Planetarium this spring.



Taft cast of "The Sound of Music" poses for pictures on opening night!

The Presidential Fitness and Nutrition March enrichment class for fourth through eighth grades included presentations by parent Lisa Carnes (a nutritionist) on how to have a healthy life style and how to avoid present-day food fads. The awards for Presidential, National, and Participation will be given at a special class in April. The competition included sit-ups, pull-ups, the shuttle run, the sit and reach event, and the mile run. Congratulations to all participants!

"In the Garden" was the topic for K-3rd students and projects included a written and oral report on "Birds of Frazier Park", making a bird feeder, reading about the wind and assembling some wind chimes, focusing on parts of plants and painting flower pots, making stepping stones, and planting flowers in front of our office. In spite of snow, rain, and cold, all was accomplished with a lot of fun and energy. A field trip to a local ranger station will be a follow-up activity led by Frazier Park parents (time/place to be announced).

We want to thank the Greens for opening their home for CAT6 testing and for also doing so during the March Writing Test for fourth and seventh graders. Thank you to all parents for their participation at Frazier Park VOCS!

Tehachapi Talk

We are pleased to announce that our classroom will be available for a 'study spot' every Monday and Tuesday from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Chris Wilson, one of our parents, is now working part-time to assist with managing the classroom and developing a library. Since many of our students are participating in gymnastics, dance, and guitar on those days, parents can utilize the classroom for a quiet teaching area rather than traveling home. It will be important that families straighten their area of use so that Chris is not acting as a custodian. Children must be accompanied by a parent at all times.

We are in the process of setting up a second classroom directly across from our current classroom. The new space will be primarily used for hands-on art and science classes.

FRAZIER PARK



Younger Frazier Park students have been studying birds and recently got together to create bird feeders.



Nutritionist, Lisa Carnes, gives Frazier Park students tips on a variety of ways to eat and stay healthy.

Oak Leaves Submissions Now Due

Now is the time to prepare your submission for the Valley Oaks Yearbook, *Oak Leaves*. If you would like to have your family page included in the 2005-2006 school yearbook, you must have your page submitted no later than Friday, April 14, 2006, to the front desk or to Mrs. Roberts. Guidelines may be picked up at the front desk.

Smile and Say . . .

School pictures will be taken on Tuesday, May 25, 2006 from nine until noon at the Chester Avenue site. Students K-12 are invited to have spring pictures taken in an outdoor setting. Pictures may be individuals or group family shots. A variety of picture packets will be available at reasonable price points. All proceeds



Congratulations to VOCS students Ali Bishop (5th), Jacob Rogers (7th), and Drew Francis (4th), who represented our school well at the annual Kern Country History Day. Ali received an Excellence of Exhibit award in the Poster Division. Jacob Rogers entered the documentary division and won state alternate and Drew Francis took first place in the 4th Grade Poster Division as well as state alternate for the overall Poster Division.

Young Authors' Fair

Saturday, May 13, 2006
8:30 AM to 12:30 PM
Standard Middle School Gym
1200 North Chester

It's not too late to start your submission for the fair. **All book submissions must be turned in to Valley Oaks no later than THURSDAY, MAY 11th!** Each book needs to include the **Author's Name, Grade, Resource Teacher, and School**. Books will be returned to VOCS on Monday, May 15th for you to pick up or will be placed in the Extravaganza display in the warehouse. For more information, contact Juli Bishop at 835-8411.



CAHSEE Workshops Offered to High School Students

Attention! All high school students who have not passed the English portion of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)! Plan to attend the workshops being offered to help you prepare for this test. Workshop sessions are held on Mondays, 10-11:00 a.m. in the 3rd floor classroom at University Square. (March 20th & 27th, April 3rd & 17th, and May 8th) The next CAHSEE exam will be given on May 9th and 10th to all 10th-12th grade students who have not taken and/or passed the Eng-



Sailing, Sailing Over the Deep Blue Sea....

Tall Ship Sailing

If you are interested in sailing aboard the Tole Mour this autumn, it is important that you attend an informational meeting. We need to know how many students are interested so that we can reserve trips accordingly. We will also discuss fund raising opportunities. Email Linda Smith at calms@sbcglobal.net if you have any questions. Informational meetings will be:

Monday, April 3 at 6:00 p.m. VOCS on Chester Avenue for grades 5-12

Tuesday, April 4 at 6:30 p.m. in Tehachapi classroom for grades 5-12

Love Tennis?

Due to bad weather, the March 17th tennis clinic was cancelled. However, resource teacher Bev Wetterholm is not giving up. The next clinic will be on April 28th. It will be held at Jastro Park Tennis Courts from 1:00-2:00 p.m. This is open to students from grades 3-8 and is for beginner level. She will give drills targeted at beginning tennis skills, such as the forehand stroke. Please sign up at the front desk with your phone number by March 16th to participate. Be sure to let us know you will need a racquet.



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Three Cheers for Three Man Tournament
Congratulations to all who made the Valley Oaks First Annual Basketball Tournament a huge success! I'd like to thank all the volunteer scorekeepers, coaches, referees, and parents who contributed to a fun-filled day for our students. The winning team of the 3rd-5th grade division consisted of Rick Johnson, Ulysses Giumarra, and Daniel Trujillo. The winning team in the 6th-8th grade divi-

Right: William Paulovitz (7th) races to catch a pass at the first annual VOCS Basketball Tournament.

PE Testing

All 5th, 7th, and 9th grade students are required to take the California Physical Fitness Test. This exam will assess the student's Cardiovascular, Flexibility, Body Composition, and Strength levels. The test will begin at 9:00 for 5th grade, 10:30 for 7th grade, and 12:30 9th grade on Wednesday, May 3rd. Meet at the Chester Avenue site. Make-up will be May 10th (time to be announced.) Please contact Mr. Shelton or Mr. Martinez if you have any questions.

VOCS Forms Track Team

Sign-up now to get a spot on Valley Oaks inaugural track team. The team will be limited to students born between 1990 and 1996. Valley Oaks will be allowed four entries in the 100, 200, and 400 meter dashes and unlimited entries in the 800, 1600, and 3200 meter runs. Other events include: long jump, triple jump, high jump, shot put, discus, and hurdles. Students can sign up for a maximum of three events for the open track meet to be held on Saturday, April 22nd at Centennial High School. Practice sessions will be required for participation with the times for these practices to be announced once the team has been set. Please contact Mr. Shelton at 631-5559 for more information.



VOPAC

A BIG Thank You to Erin Rogers for two successful book fairs. We appreciate her time in chairing this event. We put a lot of books on our library shelves as a result of the Spring Book Fair.



School pictures will be taken on April 25th. Students may have individual pictures or family shots. Siblings not attending Valley Oaks are welcome. Watch for flyers or contact resource teacher, Lorrie Roberts, for more information.

Help....Volunteers Needed!

VOPAC still needs more volunteers for the May 18th Extravaganza. Help is needed for a variety of jobs: set up, clean up, booth building, decorating, and booth manning. If you are willing to give us a hand, please contact a member of the VOPAC board or resource teacher, Lorrie Roberts.

Scholarship Fund Established

In memory of Farmer Hokit, VOPAC has established a scholarship fund in his name. Anyone wishing to make contributions to the fund may do so through the front desk, through a VOPAC representative, or by a direct donation to the scholarship account.

The savings account (#4189700-69) has been established through Kern Schools Federal Credit Union. Individuals wishing to make a donation should make checks payable to Lloyd Hokit Scholarship Fund or to VOPAC with a memo designating the check as scholarship funds.

VOPAC meetings are held at 1:00 p.m. at the Chester Avenue site. All are welcome to attend. Please mark your calendars for the following upcoming meetings:

April 5, 2006

April 26, 2006

Additional dates may be added as Extravaganza nears!



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