

Athletes of the Month:

Check out the new athletes of the month in the sports section.



Entertainment:

Movie review on the provocative double feature, Grindhouse. See page 8.



Campus:

Photography teacher, Ms. Stewart leaves the Ranch to pursue her music career.



EL RODEO



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Got COLA? Not Yet, at Least

BY CHRIS GALIZZI
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

For the past month many El Rancho Unified School District teachers have picketed and rallied for a pay increase that was promised to them five years ago. A pay increase, to compensate for the rise in cost of living, is supposed to be awarded annually to the teachers.

The incident of decreased wages started in 2002 were El Rancho Unified School District business manager Dave Fuller 'miscalculated' millions of dollars in the budget; the business manager's miscalculation caused the district to go into debt. Once the El Rancho School Board explained the incident to the teachers, the teachers' union and the school board both came to an agreement. The agreement stated that when the district recovered the money, the teachers would be paid back in full.

The school board has regained the money to pay back the teachers, but the school board is yet to pay.

Recently over two hundred teachers attended a school board meeting where teachers from Rivera, Obregon, Durrfeys, North Park, and other schools from the district spoke out against the school board's unaccommodating actions.

Lil Carreon describes the event as "portraying a positive image on the teachers' part". Valerie Kiralla "expects some sort of positive feedback" during the upcoming school board meeting on April 12.

According to ERFT the school board might not budge. In the ERFT Union flyer that was just recently distributed quotes the director of the school board, who said "You may not want to hear this, but we are under direction.

The school board has said from the beginning that they don't want to guarantee COLA (Cost of Living Allowance).

Until the next board meeting tonight at seven o'clock in the El Rancho cafeteria, El Rancho Unified School District will just have to hope that their rallying has not been in vain.

School Board Meeting: District teachers crowd El Rancho High School's cafeteria seeking answers from the school board.

E.R Students 'Take it to The Bank'

BY BIANCA ORTIZ
AND
EILEEN CARABES
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

The Bank of America recently awarded several Seniors certificates and plaques. The awards varied on different subjects such as Science, Math, English, Foreign language and Liberal arts. Each department head nominated students for each category.

Plaque winners were determined by the number of AP courses they took in the area they were nominated for and had a higher GPA than those of the certificate winners. Certificate winners were the secondary choices in the category they were nominated for. Each plaque winner receives their award at a scholarship dessert and a chance to win \$5000-10,000 in scholarship money. Certificate winners are acknowledged for all their hard work, but sadly do not receive any money.

Thomas Medina won a plaque for his skills in Math and Science. Sandy Arias won in the category of Liberal Arts for all her hard work and dedication.



Award Winners: Bank of America award plaques and certificates to excelling students.

Nadia Dominguez won in the field of Fine Arts. Among the certificate winners were Jackie Morales for English, Steven Vega for Math, Coby Ling for music, Larry Carrera for Computer Technology and Aide Macias for Social Studies.

Some other students also won awards for art, drama, foreign language, English as a

second language, and computer studies. These students include Daniel Manjarrez, Oscar Medrano, Melissa Legaspi, Nancy Mendez and Carina Padilla. All of these students were greatly honored and many were pleased to hear about the great amount of money for the plaque winners.



The Few, The Proud, The E.R. JROTC

BY ROSARIO LOPEZ
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

“Aye, aye Sir!” The diminishing and harmonized echoes of cadets are heard through out the entire campus. You may ask yourself, “Who is yelling?” The voices you hear are of young students who are part of the Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (JROTC) program at El Rancho.

The United States JROTC program came into being with the passage of the National Defense Act of 1916. The act allowed high schools to borrow federal military equipment if they had an instructor who would effectively carry out a prescribed course of training for students.

For over thirty-nine years, El Rancho has offered the JROTC program as an elective class to students who wish to attain knowledge about the different branches of the military and experience first hand what it means to be a marine. First Sergeant Mick is fifty-six years old and has been the JROTC instructor for nine years. Mick, a Marine Corps veteran, served twenty-seven years in active duty in which, he fought in Vietnam and in Desert Storm.

ROTC is designed to teach high school students the value of citizenship, leadership, service to the community, personal responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment, while instilling in them self-esteem, teamwork, and discipline. Furthermore, JROTC prepares high school students for responsible leadership roles while making them aware of their privileges as American citizens.

Sophomore, Cadet Sergeant Stephen Joseph recalls, “while in JROTC, I’ve made many new friends, learned many things like the history of the Marines, how to handle weapons, how to march, and how to be more organized.” “In addition,” Joseph added, “it kept me out of trouble.”

Students in JROTC learn through a unique program that involves both classroom and life situations. Selected JROTC cadets have the opportunity to lead his/her classmates through training because of a hierarchical system that exists within the program. Cadets can be promoted to higher ranks for prominent excellence. Senior, Michael Herrera holds the one of the highest ranks as Cadet Second Lieutenant. He says, “It took a lot of commitment from my part, but it was worthwhile because it taught me discipline and leadership.”

Many students know minimal information about this elective class; at the same time, they are negligent to know because they assume JROTC is a vigorous program much like boot camp. On the contrary, although JROTC does demand respect and physical training, it does not get as demanding and challenging as boot camp.

What most students do not know about this program is that it can really benefit a student who is strongly considering pursuing a career in the military. Students who take JROTC while in high school go into the marines as Privates and receive a higher salary than the new incomer. If a cadet decides to go into the army, he/she can enter as a First Class Private and earn a much higher salary than a private.

Students of the Month

BY CARINA PADILLA, EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

Senior Thomas Medina

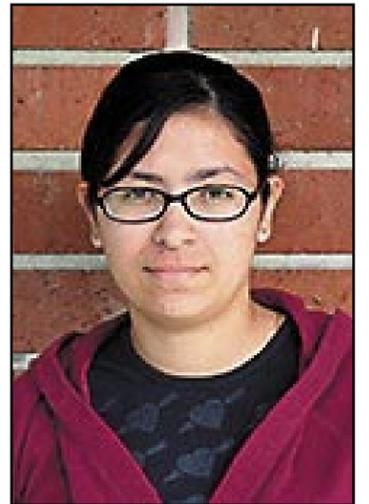
“It’s nice to be recognized by teachers for being an outstanding student,” says senior, Thomas Medina. This excelling student has the highest total GPA rank, 4.43, in his class and in the school. Besides his academic accomplishments, Medina is also involved in school activities like decathlon, math club, Model United Nations, MESA, and has volunteered for community service. Medina has also been admitted to the most prestigious universities of the country like



Harvard, Yale and UCLA. Medina has received other honorable awards such as A.P. Scholar, Christopher Whalen, and other subject awards. Like every student, Medina “like[s] to take some time off and listen to classic rock, workout, sleep, eat, or play video games.” Although Medina does not know what he wants to pursue, he wants to study business.

Junior Martha Franco

Although Martha Franco, junior, is a shy girl, she has proved that her “hard work paid off.” Franco is “proud of [her]self for being student of the month” and for being the 7th rank of her class, with an outstanding GPA of 4.2. Franco is also involved in school clubs like M.E.Ch.A. and the Gadabouts club. Franco was also recognized with the Jim Dyson award during her sophomore year. Franco plans to attend Boston University and major in journalism and law. “I want to go there because it is a great university and it is nice and cold,” says Franco about Boston University. On her free time, Franco “like[s] to play basketball, watch movies, read and listen to rock.” Franco is also very excited about her trip to Italy and Greece during the summer with the gadabouts club. “I can’t wait for it,” says Franco happily.



Sophomore Alejandra Perez

“I felt honored and very special when I received the Student of the Month Certificate,” says sophomore, Alejandra Perez. She currently ranks 13th in her class, with a GPA of 4.25. Although she studies a lot, she still manages to take time for herself. “I love to cook and listen to any kind of music,” says Perez. “In the future, I would like to go to USC and be a doctor,” plans Perez.



Freshman Mayra Gradilla

Freshmen, Mayra Gradilla, says that “being student of the month is an honor because receiving an award is a good achievement.” Gradilla has earned a 4.25 GPA which has placed her on the top 12 freshmen of her class. Although Gradilla is not involved in any extracurricular activities, she is enrolled in advanced courses such as Team and honors geometry. “Right now, I am just focusing on my studies,” explains Gradilla. “In the future, I plan to attend one of the top rank universities and major in a medical field,” says Gradilla excitedly.



Goodson’s Good Life

BY ROSARIO LOPEZ
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

A thrilling event for many students is getting his/her driver’s license. Who would think that a simple piece of plastic could make such an impact in a person’s life? Senior Jennifer Goodson shares her experiences about driving her own blue Toyota Matrix.

Although Goodson’s parents bought her the Matrix since her freshmen year, she did not have the legal privilege of driving her car until mid-last-year. Last summer, Goodson got her permit. This year, Goodson’s New Year’s present was her California driver’s license. After long hours of driving school and practice, she took her driving test and passed it although she was penalized few points for minor mistake. For three months now, Goodson has been legally driving up and down the streets of Pico Rivera. What is so unique about Goodson’s car selection is that she decided to learn how to drive a *manual* car instead of a practical automatic car. “Actually, I don’t think driving stick is much harder than driving automatic. It’s just like learning anything else; the hardest part is learning it. I had a difficult time with learning to use the clutch and chang-



ing gears. Oh, and driving up hills!” says Goodson.

Having a car has definitely made her commuting life easier. “Farewell to public transportation!” says Goodson with much relief. No longer does she need to scavenge her house for loose change. “Getting a car has made my life much easier, mainly because I’m able to go where I want when I want,” says Goodson. The ability of transporting herself is important, especially when it comes to school. Taking three AP classes means she is more involved thus her car comes in handy when she needs to stay after school to work on a project or meet up with classmates to study for tests.

“I love driving stick because it is so much fun and I feel as though I’ve learned to appreciate the car,” added Goodson.

As for paying for gas and paying for insurance, her parents have lent a helping hand. “My parents have been a huge help in paying for gas and insurance. They tell me that they don’t mind as long as I help them run errands. However, I do plan on getting a job so that I can pay for everything,” Goodson added.

Apr. 12, 2007

Getting Into a UC is Not So Easy

BY EILEEN CARABES
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

It's that time of the year. A time when Seniors go home and look through the mail feeling hopeful, excited, scared, and about a dozen other emotions. A time when students realize they've never been so excited to see mail with their name on it.

From March 1 to May 1, students from all over the nation receive their college acceptance or rejection letters in the mail. There are two types of letters that are sent out regarding admission to universities. Usually, the large thick letters that exclaim "Congratulations!" mean you've been accepted and the small thin letters that politely "Thank You" for applying to their school...well you get the picture. With a single glance at the mail, a student's dreams will either be crushed or be fulfilled.

College counselor Mr. Herb Ortiz, predicts that about 60-80 seniors (about 10% of the senior class) here at El Rancho have applied to at least one University of California, that is a "UC." Now I understand that many people want to study in California, and most of them are probably highly qualified for admission, but my question is-what does it really take for an El



Seniors, Carina Padilla (top), Gus Cordova (left), and Rosie Lopez celebrate beating the odds and getting accepted into UC system.

Rancho student to get into a UC?

For example, according to the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) 2006 freshman profile (a document that gives statistics on the present freshman class at UCLA), being a California resident helps score points in the admissions process. Last year, UCLA was bombarded with 40,560 applications from high school students living in California and only 10,577 were admitted. The Univer-

sity also received 4,549 applications from out-of-state students and only 1,233 were admitted. That's about 12,000 admissions out of about 45,000 applicants.

In regards to grade point averages, the UCLA freshman profile shows that applicants must have a G.P.A. over 3.00 to be considered for admission. 86.68% of last year's admitted applicants had a weighted G.P.A. of a 4.00 and above, almost 10% had averages ranging from 3.7

to 3.99 and less than 4% had averages from 3.00 to 3.7. The average G.P.A. for the admitted freshman class is 4.25. The last time I checked, about less than 15 Seniors had G.P.A.'s over or at a 4.00- Fifteen out of a Senior class of almost 700. What does this mean for those students who don't have 4.00's? It means they better have luck on their side.

But despite these harsh statistics, Ortiz still has faith in our seniors. "The students have a better chance of acceptance this year because UCLA has a new approach at admitting students." He hopes that there are more admissions to universities, including UCLA, for El Rancho seniors this year than last year. However, the history of the admittance rate to UCLA for El Rancho students shows that admission to universities is getting harder. "The number of admitted students to UCLA last year was only about 8 or 9," recalls Ortiz, "but before that, we had admittance numbers in the high 20's."

Personal statements, SAT scores and other extra tidbits given in applications may be the key to admission not just to UCLA but any other UC or private college. GPA's and someone's place of residence can only make a student stand out so much from the other 50,000 applicants that have the same qualifications. What colleges really need to know is who the student is as a person and what the student will contribute to their institution. And despite everything, the bottom line is that UC's will get the students they want, whether El Rancho students fall into their criteria or not.

Teachers Take to the Streets



BY YAHAIRA GONZLEZ
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

El Rancho Unified School District teachers decided to picket at the different open houses offered in Pico Rivera's elementary schools.

The gave out flyers to the parents, sending the school board the message that if they do not receive their Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) the district will continue to lose great teachers. "If you work at the Whittier School District you will earn \$500 more per month; if you work at the La Habra School District you earn \$1000 more compared to the ERUSD," said kindergarten teacher Margaret Martinez-Ingle. "This is ridiculous" she added. All teachers want is to go up in the ranking at least to the middle considering ERUSD is second to last.

As inflation increases so should the COLA provided by the district; yet for the past four years the district has asked the teachers to forego a raise and allow the district to use those funds to pay ERUSD's multimillionaire debt. "We can't get the past years raise, so we want this year's. All we want is the district to give us respect. We helped in time of need and now it is time for them to show their appreciation" said El Rancho High School teachers Lilia Carreon.

This problem has been going on since last September, and it has concerned parents who believe that teachers have been helping their kids outraged. In the flyers that were given to the parents teachers asked for their support by asking to attend the board meetings every other Tuesday and Thursday. "(This situation) really concerns me, I don't have time to go their meetings, but I understand what's going on since my company is going through the same situation. If there is more money, there is better education. Quality teachers should be paid better because they deserve it" said parent Patrick Tanner, father of a high school and elementary school student.

The COLA expected for the '07-'08 school year is 4.04% which is what the teachers will be asking for at the next board meeting on April 12. All attempts to reach members of the school board were useless because they never answered our calls.

Word on the Street: Do you agree with the need for guaranteed COLA for district teachers?



"I think it's good to have a raise because they work hard for us to graduate, they're people too."

- Steve Calvillo



"Its really tragic that teachers that have been here so long aren't being compensated for all of their hard work, and its impossible for them to go to another workplace."

- Justin Diaz



"If the teachers are strong about this they have the right to fight about it and get what they deserve."

- April Guizar



"We want the district to be fair in negotiations."

-Lil Carreon



"We love it here, we are far behind and need to secure our futures as teachers and in life."

(left to right) - April Leal, Dawn Lam, Jazmin Chavez

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Awarded Athletes

A few of E.R.'s finest athletes get recognition

Cindy Cortez



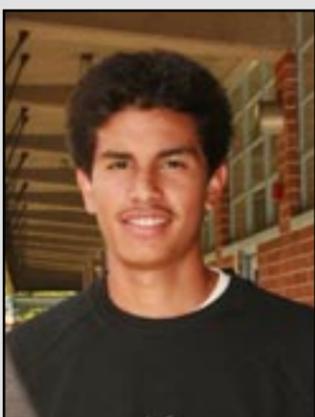
"It is an honor to be selected for athlete of the month for Track and Field"
-Cindy Cortez

David Salinas



"Hard work pays off, it is and it is"
-David Salinas

James Valdivia



"It is an exciting experience to be athlete of the month, do work!"
-James Valdivia

Melony's Finds Success as a Swimmer



By JAZMIN DIAZ,
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

Senior Melony Rodriguez is quickly coming to the end of her high school swimming and water polo career as June vastly approaches. After swimming

for four years, three of them on the varsity squad, the future of her swimming career looks bittersweet.

Rodriguez was introduced to the sport of water polo by her uncle Danny Nunez, at the age of

9. Rodriguez's uncle also played water polo when he attended El Rancho. After her uncle's continuous persuasion, Rodriguez decided to embark her water polo career.

Soon after came the obviously easy decision to continue her athletic career by participating in swimming. Most if not all water polo players compete during swim season to improve their swim techniques and increase their speed. Along with learning new swimming techniques Rodriguez has learned a great sense of responsibility.

"Getting up in the morning to show up to practice makes you more responsible," said Rodriguez. Rodriguez has managed to increase her speed year after year. "My most memorable moment

was when I broke my personal record on the 100 back; I finished in about 1.12 minutes." She still hopes on improving that time and clinch a spot in C.I.F. Thankfully, coach John Pringle's endless effort is getting across to his swimmers. "He pushes us to work hard," said Rodriguez; she just hopes the team will continue to improve and work hard as a team. As students anticipate the end of the school year Rodriguez admits that she is "going to miss swimming with [her] team,"

As for the future, Rodriguez plans on attending Cal State Fullerton, where she will continue to swim. For now, Rodriguez is just trying to keep her head above the water as the team sets off to face some of their toughest competitors.

Golf Team Tee's off to a Good Start

By JAZMIN DIAZ, EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

Every sport team relies on their veteran players for leadership, guidance and motivation. This year's golf team is no exception. With only two returning players, Joseph Lapierre and R.J. Marquiz the golfers have many expectations to live up to. Hopefully, their skills can provide the new golfers with a boost of confidence.

"The good thing about this year's team is that the team is made of under classmen so they are able to play for two years and can improve on their technique," said coach May. Many previous golf members were unable to participate in this year's season because they could not meet the minimum 2.0 GPA requirement.

This is not the only obstacle the golf team faces this year. Junior Captain Joseph Lapierre said they have to start "working as a team," in order to have a successful season. Although golf can be an individual sport, it is crucial for all golfers to be able to communicate effectively and get the lowest score possible. Unlike other sports, golfers shoot for the lowest strokes possible. The team combines five of the six lowest scores together to get a combine total; this score is then used in comparison with the other team.

Lapierre has played golf since his freshman year. Golf however, is not his only responsibility. In fact, you can see Lapierre participating in El Rancho's very own ASB. Fortunately, this junior has figured out how to manage his time. "I like to follow a schedule and stick to it," stated Lapierre.

With a league record of indisputed talent and some of the toughest competitors such as Santa Fe and La Serna still to come, Lapierre along with the other golfers have a lot to work hard for.



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Competitive Swimming-More Than a Splash in the Pool

By JAZMIN DIAZ
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

When most people think about swimming, they think nice hot days at the beach or lounging around at the pool in eighty degree summer heat. The swim team knows the difference between competitive swimming and swimming just for fun. While most Dons are still dreaming away, the boys have morning practice from 5:30 A.M to 7:30 every other day.

"Morning practice is tough," says Juan Lopez. "It is really physically draining."

"It's very hard getting up so early but it's something you have to do," added Senior Jose Navarro.

Like many other sport teams, the swim team endures many hours of weight lifting along with swimming and other helpful tactics to improve both their shape and time. Although constant practice can take a toll on your stamina, it seems coach Pringle mixes up other sports like soccer to keep the boys occupied and in shape. Staying in shape is so important in swimming some swimmers have not stopped training for swim season since their water polo seasons ended.

"We kind of train year around, we used swimming to stay in shape for polo and vice versa," recalls Lopez.

Senior Braulio Olivarez is one of the swimmers who joined the commerce club swim team. "I



joined the club team to keep me in shape and gain experience," admitted Olivarez. It seems the boys swim team is slowly progressing because of their will and want to become a top notch team.

Lopez, Navarro and Olivarez all participate in the swim relay competition. In this event the boys do compete against themselves, however there seems to be no holding of grudges. "We

do not hold grudges because we are still working as a team to get a faster time then the other school," stated Olivarez. "By having an A and B relay team its easier to get more points since we have a lot of swimmers and we have a back up team." The relay teams are made up of the fastest swimmers on the team. The fastest go on the A team and the others go on the B team. Sometimes the time difference be-

tween swimmers can be seconds.

"This team is very competitive and capable of so much," said Navarro "we just have to stay focused."

Despite their continuous efforts, the boys are off to a 0-2 league record.

But that does not mean their whole season is down the drain just yet. Their next meet is on Wednesday April eleventh

against Whittier. Last year the swim team was able to conquer the Cardinals, but this year they realize that the loss of some prestigious swimmers can cost them the meet if they do not stay focused. Hopefully the swim team will be able to surpass their previous downfalls and come out victorious.

**Sports results were not available at time of publication*

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'The Best Has Yet to Come'

By: JESUS RAMIREZ, EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

El Rancho's Baseball team has been victorious against rival teams in recent games. Santa Fe High and Cal High are a couple of teams to be noted on the Dons defeated list. On Wednesday, the 21st, El Rancho faced off against Santa Fe and ended with a score of 1-0, with a walk-in, and no errors. A huge benefactor was Junior pitcher Chris Villalobos, with a whopping strikeout streak of eight. The following Wednesday, the Dons were pitted against the Condors, which finished 2-1. The biggest contributor was fellow player Aaron Flores, who hit a 2 run homerun.

El Rancho is currently tied for 1st in league with Santa Fe with a record of 3-1, and a record of 7-5 overall. Coach Frank Llanes and the whole team have been doing a remarkable job to date.

"We're doing well so far, we have good gloves and good batting. The coach is keeping everyone in line," said Senior pitcher and left outfielder Jeremy Vasquez. Vasquez is currently the second best batter and a valuable asset to the team.

"The team is really focused and we're concentrating on our opponents. We need to get better on the bases and we need to excel overall as a team," said Senior center outfielder Erick Garcia. "The team is united and the coach really keeps us in line." Garcia is currently batting a .518, which is superb.

Gabriel Gonzales, a former Florida Marlin, and the team's pitching coach has contributed a lot. Senior pitcher Eddie Carrillo said, "He's been helping a lot. This is exactly what the team needs."

Coach Llanes has been working hard to make sure his team prevails. He and the other coaches are doing their part for the benefit of the team as a whole. The coach is modest in saying, "We're playing alright, but the best is yet to come."



Stewart Plans to Continue Music Career

BY JESSICA JENNINGS
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

Ms. Stewart is the photography and digital animation teacher here at El Rancho. She has been teaching for the past three years and is now celebrating her last year at this school. Ms. Stewart has different plans when she leaves El Rancho. "I plan on returning to the music industry," said Ms. Stewart.

Before becoming a teacher, she attended the University of California Irvine in hopes of pursuing her interest in Bio-Technologies and video productions. "Since I was 18, I had these scoring jobs that were falling into my lap. All of a sudden I found myself getting paid to write music for pictures." After, Ms. Stewart went for her teaching credentials where she first started off as an Art and Animation teacher. Last year, she got the opportunity to teach the photography class. This class involves many different projects. Ms. Stewart's favorite projects



are the "landscapes and portraits."

"Seeing the student's ability to be creative was the best part about teaching photography," said Ms. Stewart. She hopes that her students will continue to be creative and never doubt their abilities. Leaving the students is the hardest part for her. She has many great memories with her students. "One of my most memorable moments was during my first year teaching," remembers Ms. Stewart, "my students planned a surprise party for my birthday."

Ms. Stewart's plans for the future are to return to the music industry and spend time with her band "Ren Stewart" to produce a record. Her band is somewhat of "indie" or alternative rock. However, Ms. Stewart will not say good-bye to teaching forever. She plans on teaching again. Ms. Stewart loves teaching because the students make the job "entertaining and indelible."

Song Leaders Take Third in National Competition

BY EILEEN CARABES,
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

On Friday March 23, the El Rancho Song leaders competed in the USA National Spirits competition. The group, which consists of eight girls, including two seniors and six juniors, competed against 10 other schools at the Anaheim Convention

Center in Anaheim, California.

The competition consisted of two days of events. Friday was the preliminary competition. Those teams who made it through the day were invited to compete in the finals on Sunday, March 25.

Excited that the group made it to the finals, the Song leaders decided to celebrate at

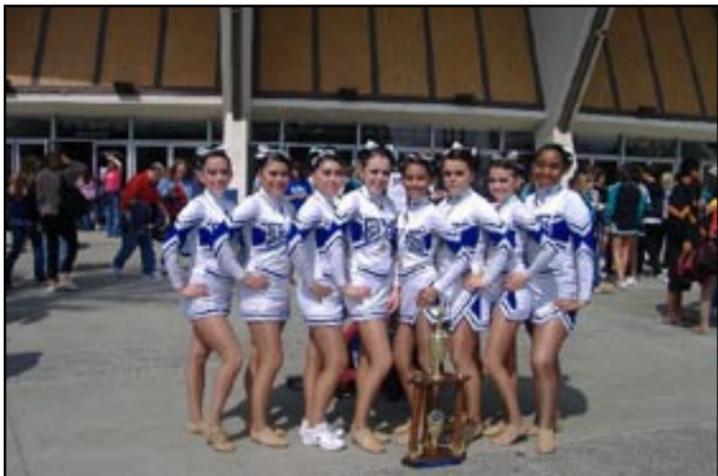
Disneyland and California Adventure after the preliminary round. "We had a lot of fun," said Senior leader Ashley Ramirez.

Ramirez said the group had practiced "a lot" for this event in recent weeks, "almost every day after school until six at night."

Overall, the Song leaders placed third nationally. "We were really shocked and surprised at our score. Yet, we were also excited," says Ramirez.

The group received a trophy and medals for their high standing and great work in the competition. Ramirez hopes that the team will "win the banner next year." She is referring to the first place award which not only includes a trophy and medals but also a banner.

Ramirez also hopes that this year's triumph will be the start of a new trend for the Song leaders. "I'm proud of how far we got this year because we didn't make it last year. So this year's win is like a stepping stone for the future."



Song Leaders stand proudly after winning third place in the USA National Spirits competition.

E.R. Alumnus Gives Back to Community

BY CARINA PADILLA &
ROSIE LOPEZ
EL RODEO STAFF WRITERS



Maritza Ruiz, class of '98, gives advice to AP team students about doing well school and how to succeed in college.

"Coming back to El Rancho is like coming home; it brings a lot of memories," says Maritza Ruiz, who graduated in 1998. Ruiz has accomplished much in her educational and personal life ever since she attended El Rancho. Today, her long and laborious academic achievements have rewarded her with a remarkable career as a pediatrician.

After graduating from El Rancho, Ruiz enrolled at Loyola Marymount University where she finished the credits required for pre-medicine and earned a bachelor's degree in bio-chemistry. "I was very excited about going to Loyola Marymount because it is a beautiful, small campus, and it is not too far nor too close from home," says Ruiz.

Although college was challenging, Ruiz was prepared for the exigent course work because she took various AP and honors classes in high school. Not only did these classes prepare her for college, but also helped her become a cultured and giving student. "I am thankful for the education I received here," says Ruiz, "because it was the best I could have received here at El Rancho."

In addition to being an outstanding scholar, Ruiz enjoys helping others. Her benevolence toward the needy steered her decision to become a pediatrician. "I always remember where I come from and that's why I want to help my community," she says. Because of this compassionate aspiration, Ruiz will be going to Guatemala for volunteer work. "Mr. Salcido once told me that I should never forget my roots. I took that into consideration and that's why I chose to do something to help underprivileged people, especially children, who live in poverty and are in need of a healthy life," adds Ruiz.

Ruiz hopes that her grand accomplishment will inspire El Rancho students to reach their goals and set high standards. "Work hard, study hard, do something that you love and are passionate about," says Ruiz proudly, "and remember where you come from."

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A.P. Biology Students Visit San Diego Zoo

BY JESSICA JENNINGS
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

For the past two years, Ms. Katsumura, the AP Biology teacher, has taken her students to the San Diego Zoo. This year they went on Friday March 23. The Biology class consists mostly of seniors and juniors. Fellow science teachers also went on the field trip, including Mr. Zook and Mrs. Tanigawa.

Ms. Katsumura takes her students so that "they are able to relate what they learned inside the classroom to the outside world." The teachers pick the San Diego Zoo for its "vast diversity of different exhibits from ocean life to insects."

In the AP Biology class, the students learn a variety of different subjects from the basics of atoms and cells, to the complexity of evolution. During the trip, the students are given an assignment, which is to find certain animals that have traits that the students have studied in the class. "The assignment helped us to use our knowledge about animals and their functions," said last years AP Biology student Rudy Flores. "It was one of the best field trips I have ever been on."

The most important part about this trip is that the students are able to see what they want to see. The teachers give the students the opportunity to go off and explore independently. Ms. Katsumura enjoys teaching the student about biology, but she also wants them to be able to experience this interesting subject by themselves.

The AP Biology test is considered to be one of the most difficult AP test to pass. However, Ms. Katsumura was recognized as one of the best AP biology teachers in the local school districts. Ms. Katsumura hopes that this trip to the zoo will make biology fun to learn and helpful for the AP test.



Junior, Christina Ceballos, takes a moment to pose next to a panda bear's picture at the San Diego Zoo.



A sweet picture of a sleeping polar bear at the San Diego Zoo.



Seniors, Adriana Jaime-Trejo, Aide Macias, Nicole Campos, Diana Gutierrez, and Jennifer Goodson, rest after walking around the San Diego Zoo.

ER's Very Own Pizza Guy



BY MARLENE BARRAGAN
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

Imagine balancing school, family, friends, and a job all at once. Senior, Rudy Flores, knows exactly how that feels. Flores got a job at Pizza Hut at the beginning of his senior year. "I decided to get a job because my parents bought me a car and gas is expensive." Flores' duties at work consist of taking orders, cutting pizzas, making wings, prepping dough, and cleaning. The pay is minimum wage, \$7.50. "I spend my money on food, clothes, gas, and tongue rings," says Flores.

Flores enjoys his job at Pizza Hut. There are some perks to working at Pizza Hut, like receiving free meals every shift and getting 20% discounts for friends and family. "What I really like about Pizza Hut," says Flores, "is working with my co-workers; my manager Alfred is cool, and I like working with my friend Marlene."

However, like every job, it has its flaws. "What I don't like about my job is that some customers can be rude and I also don't like working weekends." Well, all of Rudy's hard work will payoff. He is saving up money for college and to move and live in New York.

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A Sinister Masterpiece

By CHRIS GALLIZZI
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

Anyone that loves movies would understand that Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez are arguably two of the best directors in American film. Well, imagine the two biggest action directors in Hollywood merging their two new films together to make a 3 1/2 hour movie filled with fountains of gore, non-stop violence, beautiful women, and enough profanity to make your grandmother cry! That sums up *Grindhouse*. A "grindhouse" is a 70's term to describe a double feature of underground movies full of shocking sex and violence.

Rodriguez's *Planet Terror* is so utterly ridiculous and so over the top that it makes the *Mariachi Trilogy* seem as serious as *Casablanca*. Gory, hilarious, and plain old fun-everyone has a blast in their roles, and Rose McGowan

really stands out because she does the entire thing with a straight face. She acts her role as if she's playing a bad actress trying to give her best performance in a piece of crap film. This works great toward achieving the film's "don't take any of this seriously" goal. The one element that really turns this movie upside down is when Rose McGowan loses her leg because a zombie eats it, but gets a miraculous update with a fully automatic rifle strapped to her leg, *Planet Terror* offers something most movies don't, and that's a fun time at the movies.

Tarantino's *Death Proof* is up next and while completely different in tone to PT, it's still a fun

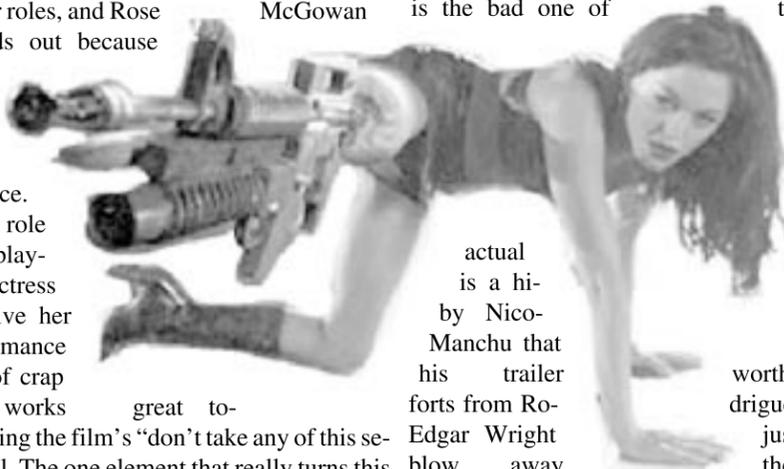
time. This film is much more dialogue heavy and if you're not a fan of Tarantino's dialogue, you're not going like his segment at all. It's long-winded, indulgent, and the plot, is about 90% pointless. I'm a Tarantino fan so I enjoyed it. When the action finally does come in *Death Proof* it's white knuckle, edge of your seat, gory, unpredictable stuff. And Kurt Russell can now add another great performance to his resume because with his sinister humor in this film. His performance alone is worth the price of admission. His character goes from empathetic, to menacing, and ultimately to hilariously pathetic. Probably one thing that made *Death Proof* stand out is the actors and actresses, not because of their performance but because they all did their own stunts.

Finally, there are the much talked-about trailers which are all great. Well, except for one. Rob Zombie's "Werewolf Women of the S.S." is the bad one of

the bunch. It just doesn't feel like much effort was put into it where the other ones feel like they're parts of an movie. There are a few cameos like Cage as Full Metal Jacket's T. G. "The Terminator" Murnighan, which is a hilarious trailer worth while. The efforts from Rodriguez, Eli Roth, and Edgar Wright just completely blow away the other trailers just because of their creativity.

All in all, *Grindhouse* is exactly what I wanted it to be-a great three and a half hour time at the movies, enjoying two films from guys that know how to create movies full of strange dialogue and gore.

I highly recommend this movie to anyone that loved *Pulp Fiction*, *Kill Bill*, and *Sin City*.



Wahlberg Does it Again

By BIANCA ORTIZ
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

The Shooter is a great action packed, thrilling, hot movie. Mark Wahlberg is sensational as an ex-sniper for the army who is recruited by Col. Issac Johnson (Danny Glover) to help stop the president of the United States from being assassinated. Bob Lee Swagger (Wahlberg) is double-crossed from corrupt government officials who used Swagger

to kill a prime minister of a foreign country. The whole nation is looking for Swagger thinking he tried to kill the president, but with the help of a heroic FBI agent Swagger tries to take down the people that are chasing after him.

Overall, *Shooter* is an enthralling movie filled with government conspiracies and a hot-bodied Wahlberg. Although the only thing that bored me was the dialogue that was a little too much for my taste. This movie had a great dose of

special effects and some very bloody scenes, which makes it a great guy movie.

Although this is a very guy movie, there is also something for the ladies. Apart from having the very sexy Wahlberg shirtless in half of the movie there is also a little love story between Wahlberg and the widow of his ex-sniper partner. Wahlberg does a great job capturing the audience, especially the girls, with his piercing dark eyes and his rippling muscles.

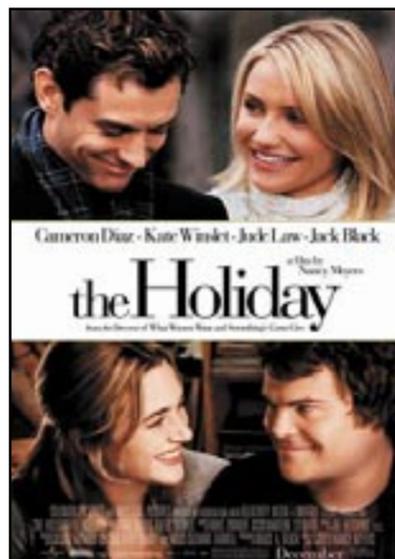
A Movie to Enjoy For All Seasons

By LEONARDO OLGUIN
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

In *The Holiday*, Amanda (Cameron Diaz) and Iris (Kate Winslet) live in two different countries yet their love lives seem to be the same. Both women have been left for someone or been cheated on. Now for holiday break, both women come up with the same solution: Go on a trip to spend time by themselves. Switching houses and cars, both ladies trade places as

from L.A. to L.A. Think-be spending alone, Amanda meets Graham (Jude in L.A., Iris music com- (Jack Black). sudden, both ing they are on quickly turns of romance. was directed Meyers whose films include *Want* and *Got To Give*.

The Holiday is a romantic movie but it surprisingly turned out to be a good one. Both Kate Winslet and Cameron Diaz are likable as the two leading roles, and by adding Jude Law and Jack Black into the mix made the movie more enjoyable. Although the movie is long, 138 minutes, and some scenes are can be a bit silly and unrealistic, the whole theme of it and the actors make you actually like the film a lot. *The Holiday* is a nice romantic date movie worth watching.



Amanda heads London and London to ing she will Christmas da unexpect- Iris' brother Law). Back meets film poser Miles And all of the women think- holiday break to a vacation The movie by Nancy other directed *What Women Something's* Obviously

Blood Diamond Hits the Stands

By FRANCO MANFREDI
EL RODEO STAFF WRITER

The film *Blood Diamond* is based upon The Sierra Leone Civil War that occurred in Africa in 1999. The movie tells the tale of a fisherman named Solomon Vandy whose main goal in life is to keep his family together and make sure his son Dia gets an education and makes something of himself. Everything starts to go wrong because of the civil war going on in that region, and pretty soon Solomon starts to see his dream turn into a complete nightmare as his village is torn apart by the rebels. The RUF (Revolutionary United Front) rebels capture Solomon and separate him from his family. Solomon is enslaved and is forced to work in the diamond fields for the rebels. The rebels use the diamonds to fund their war and they take the villagers as their slaves. While working in the diamond fields Solomon finds a large, rare, pink diamond, which is of incredible value. Solomon hides it fearfully, knowing that if it is discovered that he tried to conceal the diamond he will be killed. While he is digging the diamond in a secret hole the rebels' field is attacked by the government soldiers. Solomon and other slaves are taken to a prison. There, a white mercenary who was taken prisoner

for smuggling diamonds, learns that Solomon has in fact hidden a diamond of extraordinary value. The man's name is Danny Archer and his only intention is to get his hands on the treasure. Solomon's objective is to find his family and get out of Africa with the diamond. Now, if these two men want to make it out alive they must work together to fight their way past the rebels, find Solomon's family, get the diamond, and get out. With the help of an American journalist, Maddy, their only chance to make it out is to get to get a hold of the diamond. Their journey is a perilous one, filled with many mishaps and obstacles that will test their determination, and trust in each other. The movie has received five Oscar Nominations and it is as to no surprise why. It is a great film that will keep you glued to the screen from the moment it begins. According to the critics, the film captivates the feel of the real events that occurred in the civil war and Djimon Hounsou, the actor who played Solomon, gives a spectacular performance. Djimon Hounsou has received four awards worldwide for best supporting actor for his impeccable performance. This is a truly a substantial, inspirational film and in my opinion should have won all five of their Oscar Nominations.