

JUNE 2009

sanpedro

TO



CLASS ACT

PORT OF LOS ANGELES CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL
CELEBRATES THEIR FIRST GRADUATING CLASS

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JUNE



West Side Story Comes to the South Bay

by Leona June Christensen

More than 50 years after *West Side Story* debuted on Broadway, the themes – gang rivalry, hatred and forbidden love – are still in tune with the musical's beloved vocal and dancing numbers. The mature themes are relevant for the 80 kids at Dodson Middle School, whose performance takes the stage this June.

"There is nothing in the show that the kids have not experienced," says director Marcia Barryte. "The play opens discussions about bullying, gangs and love."

Some schools shy away from producing *West Side Story* because it has mature themes like gang violence and peer pressure. But Barryte says the play has become a safe venue for kids to discuss issues they face.

West Side Story is based on Shakespeare's classic play, *Romeo and Juliet*. Set in New York City's West Side during the in 1950s, it tells the struggles of rival gangs, the Jets and the Sharks. The plot escalates when Tony, the former leader of the Jets, falls in love with Maria, sister to Shark's leader, Bernardo. Tragedy escalates when the gangs fight for dominance.

"This play pulls out the best in the kids," says Michelle Rowan, a parent volunteer whose daughter appears in the play. "It's been amazing to watch the kids grow and develop. The kids have more confidence and are more comfortable with public speaking. The experience has been life-changing."

West Side Story includes 80 actors from Barryte's drama classes, with the leads of Maria and Tony double cast. **spt**

West Side Story at Dodson Middle School (28014 Monterey Dr., Rancho Palos Verdes) performs Fridays June 5 & 12 at 7p, Saturdays June 6 & 13 at 2p and 7:30p. Tickets are \$10 for reserved, \$8 general admission or \$5 for students and can be purchased day of the performance.

Email event info to events@sanpedrotoday.com | Deadline for July issue is Friday, June 12.

*All locations in San Pedro unless otherwise noted.

June 11- Aug. 8 – Shakespeare by the Sea presents *As You Like It* (opens June 11) & *Love's Labour's Lost* (opens June 18) at Point Fermin Park (807 Paseo del Mar). Thurs, Fri, & Sat at 8p; Pre-show starts at 7:30p. *As You Like It*: June 11, 12, 13, 25, 27; July 3, 9, 11; Aug 8. *Love's Labour's Lost*: June 18, 19, 20, 26; July 2, 10; Aug 7. Closing Weekend: *Love's Labour's Lost* – Fri, Aug. 7; *As You Like It* – Sat, Aug. 8. Very Chilly being right on the ocean; bench seating available or set up chairs or blankets on the side. Bring your friends, pack a picnic and settle in under the stars this summer for Shakespeare's classic comedies!

JUNE

Every Wednesday – Bingo open to the Public sponsored by San Pedro Elks Lodge No. 966 (1748 Cumbre Drive). Doors at 5p; early bird starts at 6:30p. \$20 a pack and more. For more info call (310) 831-0624 or e-mail bingo@sanpedroelks.org.

Every Friday – SAN PEDRO FARMERS MARKET (6th Street between Pacific and Mesa Streets). 9a-2p.

4 – FIRST THURSDAY ARTWALK in Downtown San Pedro. 6-10p.

4 – Port of Los Angeles High School Blood Drive supporting Providence Little Company of Mary Medical Center San Pedro at the POLA weight room (250 W. Fifth Street). Please bring a valid form of identification. For more information and questions please contact Maria Pettyjohn, (310) 832-9201 Ext. 252.

6 – San Pedro Bay Historical Society Rummage Sale at the Muller House (1542 Beacon Street). 8a-1p. Consisting of clothes, house wares, small appliances, boutique items, collectibles, tools, toys, archival material, plus much more. Early Bird 7:30a, \$5 entrance fee.

12 – 14 – LAPD Harbor Area Youth Programs Carnival at Daniels Field (12th St. & Cabrillo Ave.) Fri. 5-11p. Sat. Noon-11p. Sun. Noon-11p. Pre-sale ride tickets \$15 available at LAPD Harbor Station (2175 John S. Gibson Blvd.) Wed. & Thurs. 3-6p. Sat. 8-11a. through June 11. Save \$8 on a page of ride tickets!

14 – Spring for White Point Home Tour, Art Auction & Reception to benefit the White Point Nature Preserve in San Pedro. Self-guided tour: 1-5p.; Auction & Reception: 4:30p-7p. Tickets \$50. Tickets and information at www.pvplc.org or call (310) 541-7613.

17 – Point Fermin Neighborhood Watch Bi-Monthly Meeting at the auditorium of Point Fermin Elementary School (3333 Kerckhoff Ave.) 6:30p. For more info, contact Carol Anne Schmidt at (310) 701-2486 or Jennifer Maldonado at (310) 519-7307.

JULY/AUGUST

July 2 – Port of Los Angeles Cars & Stripes Forever at POLA Promenade (Harbor Blvd. from Vincent Thomas Bridge to 1st St.) 5-11p. Live bands, classic cars, Fanfare Fountain, children activities, food and beverages (including a Beer Garden). Activities/parking are FREE. Benefits local charities. For more info, call (310) 221-4717 or visit www.portoflosangeles.org.

August 1 – San Pedro High School Class of Spring 1969 40th Reunion at Crown Plaza Hotel (601 S. Palos Verdes St.) For more info, contact Jerryne (Gregg) Soto (310) 547-4509/spnanaj@aol.com or Patti Folsom (310) 521-0431/pattifolsom@msn.com.

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With a Little Help...

Croatian Boy Turns to San Pedro in Need of Life-Saving Surgery

by Leona June Christensen

Baby Franko needs our help.

The young boy, who turns two this September, needs an expensive operation to repair a dangerous birth defect that left a small hole at the base of his spine. Physicians in his homeland of Croatia have done all they could for him. Franko Fabijanovic's only hope is an outpouring of generosity.

Franko needs a miracle. Experts on staff at Children's Hospital of Los Angeles say he needs at least \$150,000 – that includes a 40 percent cash discount – for multiple surgeries to repair the three-millimeter by three-millimeter open wound on his back.

"The surgery will include removal of the bone infection and more than one surgery may be needed," says Marisstella Marinkovic, a relative of Franko who lives in San Pedro and is coordinating the child's health care and charity efforts in Los Angeles. "After the doctor stabilized the spine and surrounding areas, they would close the wound. If doctors don't close this wound, he could get meningitis and die. The family would return to Croatia for any follow-up treatment."

Franko was born with the most severe form of spina bifida, a condition that literally means "split spine." When Franko was in the womb, his spinal column did not close all the way. No one knows why a baby is born with spina bifida. During pregnancy, the ultrasound gave no indication that Franko would be born with it.

Two days after Franko was born, he was whisked away for the first of eight surgeries in less than 16 months that would hopefully repair the gaping wound in his back. The best physicians in Croatia have done all they could for the child, but it wasn't enough to heal his condition. The child's back is mangled from multiple surgeries. He still has an open wound



that could be come infected.

"Franko's open wound looks like a black hole in middle of his back," says Marinkovic. "The wound stays open for about a month, it heals and then a pus sac forms underneath and erupts. I have never seen anything like it. Doctors in Croatia don't know what else they can do. They have done their best with the technology and resources that they have."

In frustration, Franko's parents, Tomi and Fanika Fabijanovic, turned to their relatives in San Pedro to help their only child receive the medical attention he needs. At the present time, Franko and his father, Tomi, are in San Pedro visiting specialists who are creating a plan for his treatment. Children's Hospital of Los Angeles is the boy's best hope as the hospital is among the world's leading experts in spina bifida.

Franko's mother, Fanika, did not receive a visa to come to the United States. The American Consulate in Croatia say they

will give her a visa when they have a letter from the hospital stating that Franko's surgery is scheduled and paid in full. Until then, she is thousands of miles away from her baby.

"It's been devastating to Franko's parents," says Marinkovic whose husband, Ivica, is Franko's father's cousin.

In the meantime, Marinkovic is working against the clock to help raise funds for the toddler's surgeries. She has met with many Southern California hospitals and children's charities soliciting their help. At this time, hospitals and charities are not able to help children from overseas due to the downtrodden economy.

"The longer Franko goes without having surgery, the higher the chances he will get meningitis," says Marinkovic. "Doctors in Croatia say if Franko gets meningitis, he will not survive. He needs surgery as soon as possible."

Marinkovic partnered with the Breath and Gift of Life Foundation to accept tax-deductable donations on behalf of Baby Franko. To contribute to the child's surgery fund, mail a check payable to: Breath and Gift of Life Foundation located at 1368 W. 17th Street in San Pedro, CA. 90732.

Several of the organizations Marinkovic contacted suggested the possibility of Franko having surgery outside the United States.

"It is best for Franko to undergo surgery in Los Angeles because they have a support system in San Pedro – food, housing, transportation and language assistance – that they would not have elsewhere," she says. [spt](#)

For more information or to make a donation, visit the Help Baby Franko Facebook page or email Marinkovic at helpbabyfranko@gmail.com.

Sara Portillo Valencia designed her own wedding gown – a white Flamenco style dress with a princess's poufy skirt paired with a long-sleeved lace bolero jacket – to mesh perfectly with her theme of old world Spain with a modern twist. The ceremony and reception, like all other family events, was held in her parent's backyard – a lush garden encased by a canopy of magnolia and pepper trees.

Now, Valencia helps brides plan their wedding day at what has quickly become one of San Pedro's most sought after wedding venues – The Sepulveda Home – her childhood home and backyard garden.

Overlooking the Port of Los Angeles, The Sepulveda Home is a historic Louisiana French Colonial manor. Its proximity to cruise ships and the Los Angeles International Airport makes it an ideal location for newlyweds slipping away on their honeymoon. It seems fitting that The Sepulveda Home, designed and built as a wedding present for Charles Trousdale and his bride Florence Steffy, is now a venue for brides and other celebrations.

In 1929, Steffy asked her father, an architect, to design an antebellum home for her beloved husband who was brought up in the south. The couple happily raised two children in San Pedro. After their deaths, relatives put the home up for sale in 1985. More than 50 years later after its construction, The Sepulveda Home became the dream home of another San Pedro wife and mother. Even though the home desperately needed some TLC and repairs, Portillo immediately recognized the plantation-style manor as her dream home nestled behind overgrown trees and shrubbery. They bought the home later that year.

What's unique about The Sepulveda Home is that Valencia's parents, Carlos and Susan Portillo, still live there. On the walls are framed photographs of generations of the Portillo family. When Valencia takes brides and grooms on a tour of the facility, she points out the garden amphitheatre – the stage she played on as a child.

For decades, the Portillo's celebrated their growing family's baptisms, weddings and family parties in their backyard garden. Through the years, the parties became more elaborate and formal. Portillo and Valencia became known for their gracious hospitality. Friends started approaching them to plan their own celebrations at The Sepulveda Home.

"We became professional wedding and party planners by



Sepulveda Home Southern-Style Charm in San Pedro

by Leona Christensen // photo by Prince Productions

planning our own weddings and parties," says Valencia.

Portillo says she wants brides to feel like the universe revolves around them on their special day. The facility hosts only one event per day.

"I attended a beautiful wedding at a Glendale venue that is reserved just for weddings," said Portillo. "It was shocking to me that the venue had four weddings at the same time. How can a bride possibly feel special if she sees three other brides celebrating at the same venue?"

The Sepulveda is a full-service venue. Valencia and Portillo work with the brides from the planning stages to the final dance on the wedding day to ensure each detail is in line with the bride's vision of her perfect wedding.

"On her wedding day, the bride has a personal assistant just for her," says Valencia. "If she has a broken zipper, needs nylons or her makeup retouched, we have someone on site just for her. It is all about her."

The family prides itself on using all San Pedro vendors for the catering, florists and entertainment. In June, this month they will launch www.sanpedroweddings.com, a guide that will help brides plan every detail of their wedding without leaving the Port Town.

The menus range from Southern-inspired cuisine, including a Southern tea party luncheon with mint juleps and peach tea, to Italian and Mexican food. The outdoor facility also has bar and coffee service.

The Sepulveda Home décor fits the description of eclectic and old fashioned. Somehow the hodgepodge of international antiques blend together into Portillo's vision – a plantation home in the antebellum south, owned by a sea captain who travels the world. One of the chandeliers hanging in the parlor is one that Portillo's father found on the curb and refurbished. Often friends gave the family antiques, like their grandmother's piano, because they did not have the space for it and knew it would be well loved at The Sepulveda Home.

Guests say it's the warmth and homey feeling that makes The Sepulveda Home different from other venues.

"The Sepulveda house offers a nostalgic feel that you can't get anywhere else," says Valencia. "Once prospective brides visit The Sepulveda Home they realize it is a home and like anyone's home our home radiates love." **spt**

For more information, visit www.sepulvedahome.com or call (562) 464-7227.

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