

# Meridianian

## News

**Pursue Excellence**

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### WINTER WONDERLAND

Snow, hot chocolate, soups, sandwiches and French crepes, Christmas Boutique, train rides, Christmas tree lighting, picture taking with Santa, all replaced books and homework, to turn our campus into a real Winter Wonderland on December 17.



The event was organized by the PTO with the help of many volunteer parents and following several weeks of hard work and dedication. The students, parents, teachers, and guests were elated with this much anticipated event. The class that sold the highest number of tickets was the 7th grade, and as appreciation, they received a free dress day and movie tickets. Thank you, PTO for your hard work and dedication!



### PRINCIPALS' CONFERENCE

A three-day conference was held at UCLA on January 11-13. The meeting was on Educational Leadership and Language Acquisition in the Armenian Diaspora Schools. Our principal Lina Arslanian attended the conference with 29 other Armenian school principals and directors from

North and South Americas as well as overseas. Some of the topics discussed at the meeting were *Unlocking Thinking Skills in Armenian Language Acquisition*, *Bringing Philosophy into schools: Asking and Thinking Critically with Students* as well as *Collaborative School Cultures*. Mrs. Arslanian had the pleasure of sharing some of the highlights with her faculty with the anticipation to be able to implement the various techniques that were learned during the presentations.



### TOY DRIVE

Meridianian students collected toys to participate in the Nataline Sarkisyan Foundation Toy Drive benefiting Children's Hospital of Los Angeles. Thank you to all who participated and donated!



## PRESCHOOL

Excited preschoolers and kindergartners had their first field trip to the Taline Christmas Concert on December 19. Parents, teachers, and students had a memorable time.



Preschool teachers worked together to spread Christmas spirit by changing the preschool hallway into Santa's workshop with reindeer, snowflakes, and Santa. Preschoolers were excited to meet Santa after their Christmas performance where they sang Christmas songs. At the end of the performance, the preschoolers received their gifts from Santa.



## "MAGIC VIOLIN"

The after-school violin class students were awarded with certificates of participation by their instructor, Ruben Aghyian on the last day of the first semester. The students participated in the violin class session I for 8 weeks during the first semester. Session II started on January 10.



## ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY

Our Board of Directors hosted the annual Christmas party on December 1 for the faculty, staff, PTO, and Women's Auxiliary in the school hall. All attendees enjoyed the wonderful evening. The guests were treated to a delightful musical performance by Zeva Joulhayan who played the flute. The evening celebrations were concluded by singing of Christmas carols led by Reverend Vatche and Mrs. Lena Ekmekjian. Thank you very much, Board of Directors for a glorious evening!



## PTO

• PTO's fourth and fifth parent breakfasts took place on December 1 and January 13, respectively. These meetings attract many parents who come to get informed about upcoming events and about general matters of the school. During the January meeting, the highlight was the PTO's Annual Gala.



• The PTO awarded a free dress day to First and Second grade classes for their See's Candies sale. The First grade was able to sell \$1,500 worth of chocolate boxes, while both sections of second grades sold \$1,379 worth of chocolate boxes in total.

• We thank our dedicated and hardworking PTO members for allocating funds to make our school a better place to learn. Through PTO's efforts, we have additional sports and playground equipment, mirrors for the parking exits, a freezer, tents to be used during different events and functions, a ladder for our handyman, and a revamped website.

• On behalf of the faculty and staff, we thank our parents for all the Christmas gifts and beautiful cards.

## CHRISTMAS ACTIVITIES

Students, parents, and teachers gathered in the Aram & Anahis D. Boolghoorjian Hall for the Christmas assembly on December 22. Pastor Razmig Minassian delivered



the opening prayer, played the guitar, and sang special Christmas songs with the students. Third graders entertained us with delightful performances by acting, singing, and dancing. A gift exchange was held in each classroom after the assembly. The students then had an extended recess.



Preschool had its own program when Santa visited the children and brought nice gifts. Another successful undertaking by the school PTO was the traditional Christmas Bake Sale on December 22. The

PTO was able to raise funds through the sale of Christmas cookies, pastries, and other delicious food items donated by our parents.



The faculty and staff had their traditional Christmas luncheon in the hall before they took off for their Christmas break. They exchanged gifts and played games creating a jolly atmosphere. They also received Christmas gifts on behalf of our parents. The teachers and staff expressed their appreciation for the generosity and gratitude of the parents.



## DOOR DECORATION CONTEST

The 6th grade class was the winner of the December door decoration contest.

The students from the winning class received ice cream. The theme of December was Christmas and the criteria included originality, students' work, and creativity. Great job sixth grade and all the classes for having school spirit!

## ARMENIAN CULTURE CORNER

We like to introduce a new corner in our newsletter, where we would like to highlight tidbits from our culture. This month, we like to share our former teacher and author, Mrs. Jeannette Kassouny's famous "Eech" Salad recipe.

### Ingredients:

- 2 cups cracked wheat (#1)
- 2 onions, chopped
- 1 can tomato sauce (small)
- 1 tbsp. red pepper paste
- 2 tbsp. tomato paste
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 1 green pepper chopped
- 1 red pepper, chopped
- 2 green onions, chopped
- 1 bunch parsley, chopped
- Lemon juice
- Salt
- Red pepper powder (optional)

In half cup canola oil, heat the chopped onions until tender. Pour over the cracked wheat. Add the tomato sauce, pastes, and lemon juice. Mix well. Add the tomatoes, green and red peppers, green onions, and parsley. Mix well. Anoushner!



## FACULTY CORNER

- Mrs. Aline Bezdikian was invited as an author to Vahan and Anoush Chamlian Armenian Elementary School in Glendale on December 15 for the opening ceremony of their renovated library. Mrs. Bezdikian made a 30-minute presentation reading to the students two of her books, *Lori and Nareg's Forget-Me-Not* and *Vartenin ou Yeghevnin*. She highlighted the many aspects of the Armenian identity emphasizing the importance of the preservation of the Armenian language and culture.



- Mrs. Mary Mekikian participated in a webinar titled "Top 5 School Safety Risks and How to Avoid Them" on January 10 by Raptor See Something and Say Something. The webinar focused on taking steps to keep school environments safe. She also attended the "Classroom Resources to Support Blended Learning" webinar on January 31. Through blended learning, schools and classrooms mix traditional face-to-face teaching with online instruction and interaction.

- On January 18, Mrs. Lusine Safaryan and Mrs. Sossie Mahseredjian attended the "Increase Your Students' Learning with Practical Timesaving Work Stations" workshop, provided by BER (Bureau of Education and Research). This workshop

successfully demonstrated how to implement teaching strategies and practical methods to further engage students in a cross curricular approach, in a kindergarten and preschool setting. The focus was on investing in practical ways of teaching students how to learn different concepts in an engaging and meaningful way, where in most instances students themselves, are in control of their own learning and are encouraged to think critically. Both teachers were excited about further implementing these strategies within their classrooms.

- Mrs. Armine Nalbantian and Mrs. Tania Avakian participated in a webinar on January 31. The webinar was about a school that was introduced to a new Common Core Assessment program. The school administrators met with the Assessment Committee to adopt a new curriculum and focus on "MAP Growth" assessment. The process was a 3-year plan and included 40 trainings. MAP Growth assessment had shorter tests and several methods to make teacher/student interaction matter. The results were noteworthy.

## FIELD TRIPS

- The Kindergarten along with Preschool classes, teachers, and parents attended the Taline and Friends Christmas Show on December 20 at the Alex Theatre in Glendale. It was an exciting event with lots of singing and dancing. Taline performed Armenian Christmas songs and some of her children's hits. The show was later accompanied by Santa Claus who put a huge smile on our students' faces. It was a very fun experience for all!



- Our First and Second graders, along with their teachers and parents, had the wonderful opportunity to go on a field trip to Kids Space Museum in Pasadena, on December 21. It was a great time for the second graders because they were learning about the different animals, their life cycles, and their habitats. Students were able to explore the wonderful hands-on museum for a few hours. They participated in a group discovery program where they examined the life cycle of a butterfly. The students had a fulfilling and educating time on this field trip.

- Our 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders went on a field trip on January 30 to the Science Center in Los Angeles. The students had a blast at the Exhibit of Body Works. They had the opportunity to explore with real human-body specimens, including whole bodies as well as translucent slices of body parts and organs. They discovered what makes you move, what makes you think, and what makes you unique. The students were accompanied by their parents and teachers. It was a wonderful experience for our students!



## SPIRIT DAYS

• Students participated in a "Spirit Day" and came to school wearing Christmas colors on December 15. The students, as always, were excited and enjoyed the day with their colorful Christmas outfits. Teachers also participated in the "Spirit" wearing a different Christmas color assigned on each day of December!



• On January 26, the students and even some teachers came to school wearing their pajamas. Pictures were taken in each classroom to show the fun spirit in the school.



• The following Monday, on January 29, there was another spirit day on campus. This one was a patriotic one, when the majority of the student body, faculty, and staff came to school wearing army color, camouflage, and Armenian themed outfits to celebrate Armenia's Army Day. That morning the students listened to a few patriotic Armenian

songs. Following the video clips, Mrs. Aline Bezdikian, in her message, told the students to always remember, thank, and appreciate the Armenian soldiers who are defending our borders in preservation of our homeland under tough circumstances.



## OPEN HOUSE

Our annual Open House was held on January 27. Parents, faculty, and staff participated in setting up the event. Student projects were displayed in the hall. Following messages by Principal Lina Arslanian, PTO Chairlady Azniv Ghazanian, and Student Council President Ani Kossoyan, Student Council members and 8th grade representatives helped escort prospective parents to tour our campus. A raffle drawing was held. Three parents won free registration for the 2018-2019 academic year. It was a great turnout. Thank you to everyone who participated!



## PEP RALLY

Merdinian had another exciting Pep Rally for our Volleyball athletes on January 19. Parent and MAC member Mrs. Beth Chatalyan, our Mascot, students, and teachers enthusiastically cheered for and encouraged our amazing athletes. Thank you Mrs. Chatalyan! The 7th and 8th grade girls took 3rd place in the KAHAM games! Great job!



## UPCOMING EVENTS

February 18  
**Women's Auxiliary Valentine's Day Luncheon**

February 23  
**Free Dress Day**

March 2  
**Parent Breakfast**

March 4  
**AESA Science Olympiad**

March 9  
**Movie Night by PTO**

March 14  
**In-N-Out Lunch**

March 17  
**Michink by PTO**

March 18  
**KAHAM Closing Ceremonies**

March 23  
**Easter Assembly**

**ALUMNI CORNER**

Ani Balmanoukian, MD, is proud to be an alumna of Merdinian School. She enrolled in Merdinian in 5th grade when her family moved to the United States. She attended Merdinian until her graduation from 9th grade in 1992. She went on to attend Herbert Hoover High School in Glendale. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Physiological Science and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Art History from UCLA in 1999. She was on the Provost's Honor list and graduated Cum Laude. She received her medical degree from New York Medical College School of Medicine graduating Alpha Omega Alpha in 2005. She

thereafter completed a residency in internal medicine at Johns Hopkins Hospital. She subsequently completed a fellowship in hematology and medical oncology at Johns Hopkins Hospital. Dr. Balmanoukian currently leads the Lung Cancer Program at The Angeles Clinic and Research Institute. She is the director of Thoracic Oncology and Associate Director of the phase I Immuno-Oncology program. Her work involves clinical research with immunotherapeutics and early drug development. She has been involved in various trials leading to approval of new immunotherapy agents. Ani looks upon her years at Merdinian with fondness. It

was during those years she established strong lifelong friendships. She also learned the important learning habits, which helped her through her years of schooling. She is grateful for the supportive teachers who laid the foundation of her knowledge. Not only was academics fostered during those years, but also the importance of becoming a kind and compassionate individual.

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