



PRESIDIO POST

Going to High School in a National Park Site: Bay School Students Get Involved in the Presidio

By Peter Olrich, Bay School College Counselor

This fall, on the heels of our school's move to 35 Keyes Avenue, 18 Bay School of San Francisco students took a new course entitled Research and the Community. A sophomore elective, the course was designed to accomplish two central tasks: to teach important academic skills around research, and to learn how to identify and then meet community needs. Thanks to a group of mentors in the Presidio community, our students were able to work weekly with individuals and agencies in the Presidio, and to produce some final projects which we hope may have a lasting impact on the Park.



The Bay School of San Francisco has moved into Building 35 on the Presidio's Main Post.

Bay School students Ignacio Martinez, Jay Arellano, David Rodriguez, and Francisco Ochoa worked with Brian Hildebidle of the Trust on the renovation of Landfill 6A, across the street from our school. They met weekly at the site, learning about the makeup of the landfill and the benefits of the restoration effort, and also pulled weeds, moved rocks, and shoveled soil. They produced a website detailing the process and benefits of the restoration, and also created an educational videogame for kids, including educationally narrated battle scenes with creatures made of stone, incorrigible weeds, and invasive plants. The game's four protagonists are given orders for each mission by suit-wearing mentors, and are even sent home on rainy days while the newly planted native plants get a chance to grow.



Bay School students, faculty and staff from the NPS and Presidio Trust, collaborated on educational programs in the park.

Emma Mallonee, David Arslanian, Spencer Stamats, and Cara Vennari worked with the Crissy Field Center's Lynn Sanderson every Wednesday, pulling weeds, shoveling sand, cleaning benches, and generally keeping Crissy Field looking its best. They produced a volunteer recruiting flyer to be distributed to area high schools, and a website designed to inform and recruit volunteers for the Center. Five students (Emma Maas, Elliot Bamberger, Gaby Gucho-Oliva, Danny Idzkowski, and Morgan McQuown) conducted interviews in the Park every Wednesday, trying to learn how the Presidio's signage was reaching its intended audience. In an effort to echo their findings, they produced a three-poster kiosk in our school, which provides detailed Muni maps, a history of the School, and a Presidio map which includes restaurants, park services, parking, and locations where coffee is available. They will present their interview findings to the Trust. Henry Wettersten and Skipper Sommers produced a brochure for the visitor center commemorating NIKE missile site 89, located during the Cold War near Battery Caulfield. Working with NPS Ranger Marcus Combs, the boys pored through archives, visited the NIKE site in Marin, and researched San Francisco's coastal defenses and use of the NIKE program. They hope the brochure will provide insight into a piece of the Park's history that has been explored very little since the site was decommissioned in the 1970s.



Two of our students, Milli Harris and Annie Obermeyer, produced a documentary comparing the Clay Theater on Fillmore with the Metreon, hoping to highlight the value and impact an independent theater can have on its neighborhood. The short film may actually play at the Clay as a preview, and the students are continuing to work on it though the project has been graded and the course has been completed.

Our school's commitment to service learning can only be met with the assistance and commitment of mentors in the

community. Our students (and Lori Cohen and I, who taught the course) are eternally grateful to Brian, Marcus, Lynn, and Jody Sanford and Damien Raffa from the Trust for working with us to coordinate our efforts. We recognize what a privilege it is to be able to attend school in this National Park, and were honored to have the opportunity to use the park as a larger classroom. We're looking forward to collaborating further with the Trust and the NPS, and to contributing in every way we can to the health and development of the Presidio.

Lessons From the Past: People and History Come Together

Together at Bay School Building 35 is one of the largest and most historic buildings on the Presidio's Main Post. Built in 1912 as cavalry barracks, the building was later used as an administrative center, and then stood empty for many years. Beginning in 2004, it was extensively rehabilitated over 14 months into a fully-equipped and advanced educational facility, the permanent campus of San Francisco's newest independent, collegepreparatory high school called the Bay School of San Francisco.

In September, the school welcomed guest speaker author Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, as speaker for its first all-school assembly. Houston wrote *Farewell to Manzanar*, a personal chronicle of three years of her early childhood

spent as one of 10,000 Japanese and Japanese-American internees sent to Manzanar following the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Houston's personal story has a special and direct connection to Building 35. It was here, on the second floor, that Lt. General John L. DeWitt signed Public Proclamation No. 1 on March 2, 1942, which created military areas and zones on the coast from which people might be excluded. Ultimately, DeWitt's headquarters ordered and carried out the evacuation of persons of Japanese ancestry over the course of 1942.

The entire Bay School community was deeply engaged and affected by Houston's presence, as well as her story and its link to the school. They were left with a new understanding of the connections between the past and present in the lives of people and the buildings they inhabit.



Bay School students welcome author Jeanne Wakatsuki