



THE CASA GRANDE TIMES

IT'S A GREAT DAY TO BE A GAUCHO

September Issue, 2015

VISION IN ACTION

message from the Principal



Casa football players raise their helmets at the close of the National Anthem at a recent preseason game against Analy High School.

“It’s a great day to be a Gaucho!” is a phrase that was first coined in the mid-1990s by Casa teacher and Athletic Director, Rick O’Brien. More recently, it has had a resurgence and has become a mantra of sorts on campus. Walking through campus on any given day, one can hear the phrase uttered between staff members and increasingly among students. Casa’s ASB leadership class has even printed the phrase on the back of this year’s Casa t-shirt.

At a recent football game, I asked Mr. O’Brien about the origin of the phrase. It was on a bus filled with exuberant Casa football players who had just won their first game in two years, Coach O’Brien declared to the raucous and gleeful players, “It’s a great day to be a Gaucho!” This was twenty years ago, back in 1995, after the Gauchos had won a

preseason game against Novato High School 32-12. Casa had gone 0-10 the previous season and was a big underdog in the game. Casa had a string of losing season records that went back for years. The statement, "It's a great day to be a Gaucho!" Mr. O'Brien explained, was meant to celebrate the day's victory, but it actually had more to do with rejoicing in how far the team had come. It is a pronouncement of appreciation for the moment, and also an acknowledgement of the commitment and hard work necessary to achieve excellence. Mr. O'Brien told me that that victory put the program on a road to success. Just three years later, the Gauchos went to the playoffs for the first time and upset the number one seed, Cardinal Newman, 21-0. "Since that game," he said, "we have always believed that we are winners."

"It's a great day to be a Gaucho!" is a phrase that captures the spirit of Casa Grande High School as we embark on a new school year. Each day there is so much to appreciate: incredible and innovative teachers and staff who build strong relationships with their students, exceptional academic and athletic programs, award-winning music and drama departments, a student body that is diverse, friendly, creative, and motivated to succeed. Casa Grande is also on a path toward continued improvement. Casa's academic trends continue to show strong growth. Last year, Casa was recognized by the California Department of Education as a Gold Ribbon Distinguished High School, the first time Casa had ever received such an award. This year we will see exciting new developments as a result of the generosity of Petaluma voters, who passed educational bond measures last year totalling \$89 million. Petaluma City Schools has begun a series of much needed construction projects, including Casa's soon-to-be completed new all-weather track and field. To promote greater collaboration and creativity in the classroom, new modern and mobile furniture has been installed in over half of Casa's classrooms. By the end of September, all Casa students and teachers will have Apple iPads, so that every student has the learning tools necessary to be successful in the education, workplace, and community environments of the new century. Indeed, it is a great day to be a Gaucho! --Eric Backman

Teacher of the Year - Rick O'Brien



Rick O'Brien was Casa Grande's nominee for Sonoma County's Teacher of the Year Award 2014. He was selected for this award because he is an excellent teacher, a master of course content and instructional methods, and also an exceptional collaborator.

O'Brien was selected as Teacher of the Year because he embodies what it means to be a teacher at Casa and to belong to such an incredible school community.

What's Going On?

Stay Informed and Get Involved

IPad Update

Casa Grande students will soon have iPads to enhance their learning experience this school year. We are very excited to be able to provide this opportunity to all of Casa's students. iPads will help students learn in ways that they learn best, as well as sharpen their technology skills, an essential skill in today's classroom, workplace and communities. Distribution of iPads is scheduled for September 25, and September 28-30.

IPad Handbook <http://casagrandehighschool.weebly.com/ipad-handbook.html>

Check out Casa's New Website

At the beginning of the 2015-16 school year, Casa launched its new website. Designed for convenient and user-friendly access to information, the website is the central hub for all things Casa Grande. Visit the site for everything from schedules and calendars to information about programs, Aeries portal access, regulations and policies, work permits, teacher and counselor contact information, college and career updates, and much more. Please visit the Casa Grande High School homepage at <http://casagrandehighschool.weebly.com/>

Join the Team

One of the best ways parents and community members can support Casa teachers and students is to become a member of PTSA and Boosters. Both organizations play an essential role in supporting the incredible work being done at Casa by funding our athletes, academics and artists and the teachers and staff who support and educate them. Please visit:

[PTSA like us on Facebook](#)

[Boosters](#)

[Project Graduation](#)

Eastside Friends of Music

Friends of Drama

United Anglers

PTSA fundraiser at Mary's Pizza Shack in East Petaluma

Please join **Mary's Pizza Shack** in supporting the Casa Grande PTSA this **Tuesday, September 22** at a Dine & Donate Fundraiser. 20% of all Dine-In, Take-Out & Delivery orders will be donated to the PTSA. [Lisa Allen](#) can email you a flyer to print up and present to Mary's Pizza in East Petaluma on N. McDowell. Thanks for supporting your

community!

Town Hall Meeting with Petaluma Police Department for Casa families and neighbors in Casa Grande attendance area

Please join community members and members of the Petaluma Police Department in an annual discussion about crime trends and concerns impacting your neighborhood and quality of life. The Town Hall Meeting is on October 7 from 6:00-7:00pm at Casa Grande High School in the Old Multi-Use Room. RSVP by calling Sergeant Brian Miller at 707-778-4372 or emailing bmiller@ci.petaluma.ca.us

Casa Grande Music Program fundraising event

Join us for a Dine & Donate fundraiser to support the Casa Grande Music Program at **Chipotle**, 401 Kenilworth Dr, Petaluma, on **Thursday, October 8th, 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm**. Mention the Casa Grande Music Program to the cashier BEFORE you pay and Casa Grande Music will receive 50% of your order. Contact CGHSBandEmails@gmail.com if you would like a copy of the flyer. Thanks for your support!

Casa in the News

Check out this recent story in the Argus Courier about Casa's new Link Crew Leadership and Mentoring Program, initiated to support successful 9th grade transition into high school and to develop strong leadership skills in upperclassmen.

[**Mentors Help Casa Grande Freshmen**](#)

A Successful Beginning:

A few images during our first weeks back



Casa's Marching Band at the close of band camp, 2015.



English 11 students in Mr. Greg Raiewski's class engage in Slam Poetry in the amphitheatre in the new Outdoor Learning Environment (OLE).



Calculus BC students enjoy a summer morning break from their studies in Mr. Pillsbury's class.

Achievement

Casa Grande Goes Gold



Casa Grande's principal, Eric Backman, and mathteacher, Scot Wigert, accept the Gold Ribbon Distinguished High School Award from CA State Superintendent Tom Torlakson in Sacramento last Spring. The award, which was given to just 350 schools statewide, recognizes the exceptional work at Casa being done to prepare students for post-secondary education and for initiating practices to better support second language learners and students who are socio-economically disadvantaged.

[Casa Grande High School](#) • [333 Casa Grande Road](#) • [Petaluma](#) • [CA Website](#)

The Casa Grande Times is published monthly to inform parents of important news and updates related to our school community, and to unify our parents and community stakeholders in support of Casa students, teachers and staff.

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This is the first issue of our email newsletter -- if you have suggestions for us, please email them to limelogic@yahoo.com.