James Meehan High awarded $25,000 from Schools First

JMHS has been rewarded a $25,000 Schools First Seed Funding Award in recognition of our outstanding initiative to develop a partnership with Macquarie Fields Police, TAFE, the Department of Employment, Education and Work Relations, Macarthur Workplace Learning Program and many others.

The partnership is designed to develop a Learner Driver Mentor Program allowing students to access qualified drivers and gain valuable experience behind the wheel along with increased knowledge of road safety and safe driving practice.

This award is part of $5.2 million in funding that Schools First will provide to 108 Australian schools in 2010 to support sustainable, effective school – community partnerships as a means of improving outcomes for young people.

Head of Schools First Jodi Cryan believes James Meehan HS is an impressive and worthy recipient.

“Schools First judges believe there is a well justified case for this partnership, and that it is a very worthwhile project that should enable better employment and social opportunities for young people in the region,” said Cryan. “This award is testimony to the vision and passion of James Meehan High School. Through this award we hope that they can fully realise their goal to help local students achieve their potential.”

Students will be able to apply for a spot in the program. They will have access to a qualified driving instructor for several lessons, and they will then be able to gain their hours required for the logbook with a volunteer mentor.

If you are interested in finding out more about the program, or if you can help us out with promoting the program or volunteering, or helping us get what we need (i.e. a dual-control car), then please contact the school on 9605 4395.

Ms R. Vujcic, Transition Adviser

Graduation evening farewells Year 12

Our graduating student leaders

Support Unit students celebrate their graduation with Ms Potter
Three Worlds,
One Landscape:
a unique art project

Over the past two terms, a group of Year 9 Visual Arts students have participated in a unique cultural and artistic experiment with Year 10 students from Lithgow High School and Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design.

Students from the three schools visited each other’s schools and communities. They made connections, built friendships and used these experiences as a starting point for artmaking activities. These culminated in an exhibition ‘Three Worlds, One Landscape’ at At The Vanishing Point Gallery in Newtown.

Gallery Director Brendan Penzer said the exhibition represented ‘the sharing and cross-pollination of ideas and creativity through three groups of art students from diverse communities and landscapes in NSW.’

‘The project has allowed students to explore and debunk stereotypes whilst forming new friendships and exploring worlds which were previously outside their own.’

Tiffany Sutcliffe from Year 9 says, ‘It has helped us meet new friends and learn that we are the same in many ways even though we live in different communities’.

James Meehan students created some exciting and contemporary artworks using digital photography and video technology. Students who participated and exhibited work were Jamie-Lee Batterson, Alicia Ellis, Kelvin Nicoll, Tiffany Sutcliffe, Bianca Treloar and Jo-Anne Willott.

The exhibition also gave the student artists real experiences of the art world, as they worked to put together an exhibition which was open to the public in a prominent shop front location.

Three Worlds, One Landscape was open from 28th October until 14 November.

N Plunkett, Creative Arts Head Teacher

VET courses help our students fast-track their HSC

Students at JMHS are able to access a VET (Vocational Education & Training) course in Year 10. This is known as Early Commencement of a Stage 6 VET course. VET courses provide opportunities for students to acquire skills valued in the workplace, receive a qualification awarded for the achievement of competencies recognised by industry, and allows students to make informed career choices and improve the transition from school to work. JMHS offers a wide range of VET courses, including Retail Services, Hospitality, Construction and Sport Coaching.

This year, some of our Year 11 students completed their VET course and chose to sit for the HSC examination. These students have made in-roads into their HSC examinations and it has given them an insight into what they will experience next year when they sit for the remainder of their examinations with the rest of Year 12. The advantage for these students is that they are already ahead!

One HSC exam done and dusted in Year 11! The following students are to be commended for their efforts:
Retail: Losehina Afu, Seine Lauina, Joyce Masima
Accounting (TAFE): Jenny Aphay, Shabnum Farooq, Tutai Matamaki, Nancy Sankari
Do you want to find out more? Contact me on 9605 4395.

R. Vujcic, Transition Adviser
Sports report

with Mr Dubey

Premier Sporting Challenge 2010 review

James Meehan High school students successfully participated during the 2010 Premiers Sporting Challenge program which encourages students to engage in sport and physical activity and to lead healthy, active lifestyles.

The Sporting Challenge involved students in a 10 week sport and physical activity program. This year’s challenge was targeted towards the current Year 7 students where they participated in a broad range of sports during their roll call time every Thursday and Friday. They also took part in organised competitions during recess and lunch time to improve their active sports time.

This was the third year in a row when students of James Meehan participated in the program. Being a part of the program, students also get an opportunity to meet with one of the brand ambassador who could be Nathan Hindmarsh or Brett Morris visiting the school this term.

Beep Test challenge 2010

Students at James Meehan High school always look up to challenge their teachers and especially their sports teacher. Once again the challenge was on, so was the pressure.

The beep test challenge to test one’s endurance ability was deservedly won by Sean Luttrell of Year 12 who outclassed his closest challengers Mr. Ewer and Miss Carney. Last year’s school champion Jared Gasu couldn’t repeat his feat and dropped out early. Sean reached a level 13.7 which is deemed to be a school record.

Mr Wawszkowicz who was the best of all the staff missed the challenge and eventually Mr Ewer stole the show and took the crown for the fittest staff member at James Meehan High. Miss Carney had to settle with a second spot.

In the junior section Amir Yawar from Year 8 was the best followed by Stefan and Jericho. In the girls junior section, Meaghan Chad finished 1st followed by Caitlan and Oliana. Compliments to all the teachers and students who took part and had a go.

Photo top: Amir Yawar enjoying a champions moment

Photo left: Sean Luttrell held up by Jared and Sakiusa.
7S Science takes flight

In Science this semester 7S have been learning about things that fly, space and space travel. We have conducted a number of experiments testing a variety of things that fly including whirly birds, helicopters, parachutes, balloon rockets, space shuttles and the cork rockets that you can see in the photograph. We have made, tested, modified, observed, taken notes and had many discussions. Our favourite would have to have been the cork rocket.

We added vinegar to carb soda in a plastic bottle and quickly put a cork into the top of the bottle - we stood back and watched the carbon dioxide (gas made from vinegar and carb soda) push the cork out of the bottle. One of the corks went up on the roof, another up onto the air conditioning unit! It was great fun and we learnt lots too.

Ms S Barrett

Nesian Kuttz Music Project

Macarthur Diversity Services Initiative has been running a Music Project at The Fields Neighbourhood Centre. Students have been learning about guitar, piano, music theory and recording. Robel and Lisa from MDSI have worked with Tianna Abbott, Karla Dobson and Chloe Micallef, guiding them through the process of writing a song, including the chorus and bridge, and what is needed to produce a track.

These girls are just about to record their song “Best Friends” in the studio. What a wonderful opportunity for our students!

Ms Vujcic

Year 9 receive new notebook computers

Year 9 students and their parents attended information meetings in October to learn about the features of the new notebook computers and to sign the ‘conditions of use’ agreements, before receiving their computers.

Teachers have been setting work in class to encourage students to explore the potential of these computers by exploring internet resources and preparing assignments using the huge range of software provided with them.

This handout of computers is the second year of the federally funded Digital Education Revolution program.
HOLIDAY IN SAMOA
by Leilani SIANIA

Back in my hometown in Samoa there are beautiful beaches for swimming and relaxing. It is also a place where you can feel the pleasant, cold breeze of fresh air from the swaying palm trees. You can experience a whole new lifestyle.

You can try some of the Samoan outfits like I did, such as a “pea”, which is a good piece of clothing material made into a nicely designed top in any kind of style you would like, together with an attractive long, or short, skirt of your choice, which could have some traditional Samoan-looking patterns on it.

If you want to wear some of your own clothes such as your “best”, or even just some casual outfit, this would be suitable to go to the “siva”, which is a party at which you can dance all night long where you can bust a couple of your best and new moves out on the dance floor with all the others. This is entirely awesome!

When the islanders sing, most of the groups or choirs as well as the solo singers sound very professional. This is because most of them actually started singing in the church or for their churches, and most of them still do, which makes the churches sound alive! There are many different sorts of churches in Samoa: Methodist churches, Mormon churches and AOG churches, which stands for the Assembly of God, and which is the church that I go to.


Wheelchairs give Year 11 an experience of sport with a difference

Year 11 Health students enjoyed a visit from a special guest from the ‘Arrive Alive Wheelchair Sports Roadshow’.

On Friday 23rd of September as part of the Crossroads Health Program students were treated to a sport with a difference. John from Arrive Alive visited allowing the students to receive a very important road safety talk. After John’s interesting speech the students played a very intense game of wheelchair basketball.

Despite looking quite easy, moving around in a wheelchair whilst trying to play basketball is really difficult. The students enjoyed the activity and gained an insight into what it must feel like to have to move around without the use of their legs.

Although the message was a serious one, the students had a great deal of fun on the day. Thanks must go to all our guest speakers over the two days and to all the Year 11 students who participated.

Mr V Frangipane, PDHPE Head Teacher

Handy in the garden? Need a little cash?

I have some gardening work that needs to be done - weeding, mulching and pruning. I’ll pay $10 per hour.

Call Mrs Peters on 96187499.
Tall tales and true win praise in our short story writing competition

Students entering our writing competition created some outstanding short stories. Congratulations to the very talented winners and thank you to Ms Lloyd our Librarian for coordinating the competition. Watch out early next year for the announcement of the 2011 short story competition.

On our school website you can read all the entries in full. Just follow the Library link on the homepage.

MISTER HAPPY
by Ashley RYAN
Winner of the Junior competition

In the holidays I met Alexia. I did not meet her the normal way though. I ran into her, literally. I was on the race track about to run one hundred metres. Not that I am fast. I just like to run. I like the freedom it gives me.

The gun goes off. Off I run. I am in front of everyone and I amaze even myself. Then, I see the finish line and I push on with speed; and almost finish before everything goes black.

When I wake up I have a lady looking over me, looking in my eyes with a flashlight.

“Girlie, are you all right?” she asks me and I try to answer but I find no will to speak. It is as if my tongue has been cut right off. I am trying and trying to speak. Then, I realise that I have a tube down my throat blocking my tongue. I am unable to speak. ….

Read the rest of Ashley’s story on our school website.

ANOTHER HOLIDAY
By Angel PABIONA
Winner of the Senior competition

The drowning sound of the familiar bell dispersed a cluster of uniformed kids, sprinting towards the soaring iron gates that had kept us confined. I glanced over my shoulder to the colossal, maroon brick building which restrained me for such an extended period of time. I was reminiscing about the afternoons I spent gazing through the translucent glass, staring at the picturesquely beautiful world around me. So close, yet so far. They were here, finally here. The Summer holidays.

The holidays had just begun and this was the start of another beautiful summer and the end of another year of school. With my iPod on loud I seated myself on the bus which would take me home. My shoulder leaned on the oversized, glass window. The changing displays of scenery amazed me. I had always caught this route home but had never noticed, until now, how much of Nature’s beauty had been unobserved.

It wasn’t the grandest of displays which amazed me, more the trivial and simple aspects of Nature, fluctuating, swaying and shining above and around us that caused me to believe we should not destroy any of the beauty we had been given. Or the beauty we had left.

Instead of walking straight home I made a small detour towards the brightly shining sun. The gravel underneath my feet made a distinctive crunching sound as my untied laces collected more dirt with each step I took. Then, I stood still.

It must have been around 4.00 in the afternoon but the view was mesmerizing. The tangy colour of the sun glistened on the lake’s surface revealing the mirror reflection of the skies’ twirl of faded blue and smooth white. The aged wooden boards of the pier creaked as I continued along.

Dropping my bag onto the boards I sat myself on the flimsy edge, wary for a moment, whether it was stable enough to hold me. Staring down at the water, at my reflection, my legs swayed side by side, in unison with the sound of the ripple waves hitting the support beam underneath, concealed by a thick layer of dark green.

The sun filtered down, giving everything a soft glow, striking my skin at just the right temperature. I smiled, my cheeks sore from the muscles’ little use. I had no idea where my phone was, nor did I care; and the iPod that usually adorned my ears was nowhere to be seen. I did not need it to escape. There was nothing to escape from here.

Silence used to bother me. Not anymore. I let it wash over me. I closed my eyes and listened to its symphony. Here, I had no worries, no pain or fear. Just an overwhelming ease.

Nobody else came here: no-one tainted any memory of this place. There was just me. Just me, the sun, the salty air, and, perhaps the soft echo of the ocean. I let my mind go blank. I would not even think of the fact that I was not thinking. The stress, school, exams, people, everything I was sick of and could not stand anymore was gone. I was happy. That is something I did not feel very often.

I watched, still smiling, as a tiny butterfly flapped its bright blue wings past me. Blue, and green, and pink, and yellow. Colours that had no association with anything else in my life all congregated here in a softened rainbow. Shimmering, glinting, calming. I would not let negativity come close to this place. No. I would savour the serenity.

A soft sigh escaped my lips, contentment radiating from the sound. My eyes observed everything, remembering the colours, the shapes, the feeling. There really was no other place like this in the world.

I would stay here forever if I could. I did not care if I was alone. People created conflict and destroyed peace. Peace was the reason this place existed. Peace was the reason I had come here. Peace was what I needed. This would be where I would spend my holidays.

Then, there was a loud beep. An engine running, a door opening. My mother’s voice called my name and I awoke. Serenity was shattered. Reality settled back in. My smile disappeared as I made my way into the car.

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Read Leilani’s story on page 5