

CARDINAL CHATTER



NEWSLETTER OF THE WHITTIER HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION AND EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

WHSAAEF - PO BOX 65 - WHITTIER - 90608-0065

WHAT'S HAPPENING

- * **All-Class BBQ and Concert
October 18, 2026 12pm**
Annual All-class BBQ, campus tour, and organ concert
- * **Holiday Concert & Singalong
December 6, 2026 2pm**
FREE community concert and singalong to celebrate the holidays
- * **2027 Hall of Fame
April 18th, 2027 3pm**
27th Annual Hall of Fame Event and Scholarship Ceremony

WHSAAEF OFFICERS

President -

Sarah Peel ('06)

Vice President -

Matt Francev ('99)

Recording Secretary -

Susan Astarita ('72)

Membership/Corresponding Secretary -

Janice (Lanham) Zolnekoff ('70)

Treasurer/C.F.O. -

Ann Garrett ('75)

Directors of Banking -

Karen Boulter ('71)

Ben Meza ('67)

Directors of Marketing & Publicity -

Nadia Moya ('99)

Charles Bennett ('07)

Past President -

Rob West ('78)

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www.whittierhighalumni.org/



ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP INFO:
www.whittierhighalumni.org/join/
EIN: 95-4753005

Notes From the Southside

Welcome to the inaugural presentation of *Notes From the Southside* or, How One Alumni Got Hired and Has Taught at WHS for over 20 years. For those who do not know me, my name is Matt Francev, and I am a proud class of 1999 alumni who currently teaches English 3-Honors and AP English Literature, as well as being the president of the Whittier Secondary Education Association.

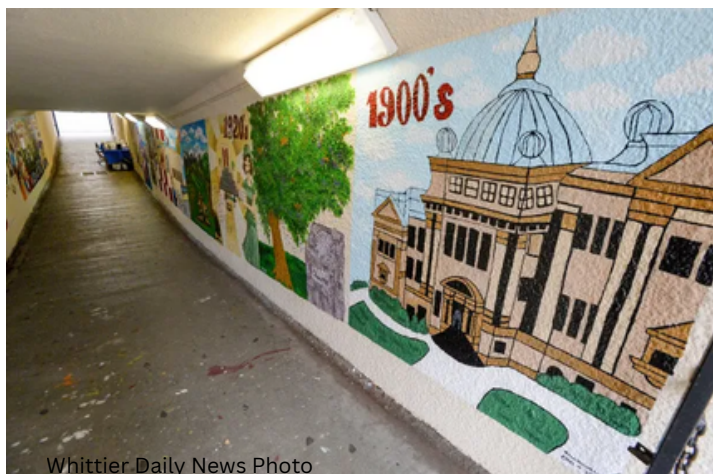
If you haven't had the opportunity to step foot back on campus, you might notice some changes. However, you'd notice that the tunnel still smells and floods during rain. Beyond the obvious shift to watching kids using technology as a lifeline, there's another shift that you might not know.

When I look at the work the association does, and how we help our students, the work never ends. I'd like to highlight one such item: what started as the *PEACE Pantry*. Coming out of COVID and distance learning, it became apparent that our students were in dire need of the basics.

Working with some friends who were connected, we established a food pantry and school supply closet that quickly added a clothing pantry. Whether you're aware of it or not, our students come from backgrounds where food insecurity is a real, daily issue. I don't write this to brag, but rather to make the members of our organization aware of the challenges our students (and as a result our staff) are working through.

When the association is running fundraisers or hosting events that support fundraising, know that your contributions are truly helping some of our neediest and most deserving students.

-Matt Francev '99



Whittier Daily News Photo

Becoming a Part of Whittier High

In March, I had the privilege of serving on the interview panel for the WHS Alumni Association Scholarship selection. A sentiment we heard over and over from these bright, hard-working, exceptional students was how much Whittier High School impacted their lives and how pivotal the connections that they made were to their success. Students talked about participating in clubs and activities, being mentored and then becoming mentors, close bonds with peers, and the support of all the amazing teachers and staff that were role models and helped them throughout their four years at WHS.

Listening to them made me think back to my own time at Whittier High School and the experiences that shaped me and who I would become. I started freshman year in 1995 as a shy kid with decent grades and a touch of social anxiety. I didn't talk much; just flew under the radar, did my work, and went home. I could have easily disappeared amongst my peers in such a big, bustling school. However, I didn't disappear because one person reached out and invited me in, made the connection to be part of something, to be a part of WHS.

Freshman year, I won the lucky lottery ticket and got P.E. first period. Not only was I new to the school, but the first class of my first year was P.E., changing clothes, running the track, getting sweaty, then spending the rest of the day looking like a wet dog. Ugh. It was not a fun way to start high school. A few weeks into my freshman year, we had to run the mile for P.E. Being the rule follower that I am, I actually ran all four laps. After we finished that morning, my P.E. teacher, Ms. Atkinson, pulled me aside and said, "You're pretty good at running, you should join cross-country. We meet right after school at the track." I had no idea what cross-country was, no idea that it was just running long distances, no idea what I was getting into, but I came that afternoon and was invited in with open arms to run.

Fast forward to 1999, by my senior year I had become the captain of the cross-country team, ran track, played soccer, served on the Senior Class Council and my grades weren't too bad either. I ended up playing sports in college, gained a life-long love of movement and physical activity, and eventually found my way into a career in Health Education. That one moment in freshman P.E. class changed the trajectory of my life, all because one person recognized something in me, invited me to belong, and made that pivotal connection for a lost kid.

It only takes one experience, one person, one kind gesture, one invitation to change the trajectory of a student's life. What was that one experience, who was that one person at Whittier High School that changed you?

-Nadia Moya '99

Remembering Mr. Wayne Werling

The Alumni Board was saddened to hear of the passing of Mr. Wayne Werling, an outstanding Social Studies teacher and coach. Mr. Werling was a great influence on my life, both during my high school years and even decades later. He never forgot my name or that I had played point guard for him. What made him special was the many life lessons he taught us, whether in the classroom or on the basketball court.

Even though he had moved to Hawaii, he was sometimes able to join us for the All-Class Bar-B-Que, held in October each year. He was a Cardinal through and through.

I would like to thank his family for sharing him with us, and I would like to thank Coach Werling for his mentorship, guidance, and friendship throughout the years.

Whittier High has truly lost a remarkable man. - Ben Meza '67



Wayne Werling & Ben Meza '67

Remembering Michele "Mikki" Elaine Barnett

The Whittier High School community mourns the passing of longtime educator Michele "Mikki" Elaine Barnett, whose remarkable dedication to Whittier High began in September 1970 when she joined the Cardinal family as a French teacher.

During her 33 years of service, Michele's impact extended far beyond the classroom. She served as a Mentor Teacher and Department Chair, providing steady leadership and guidance to her fellow educators while remaining deeply committed to the success of her students, colleagues, and school community. Even after her formal retirement, her love of teaching and Whittier High brought her back to campus as a substitute teacher.

Michele leaves behind a lasting legacy of compassion, excellence, and service. The countless students and educators whose lives she touched are a testament to her devotion to education and to the Cardinal community.

We extend our deepest condolences to Michele's family, friends, former students, and colleagues, and offer our heartfelt gratitude for her 33 years of service to Whittier High School.



Once a Cardinal, Always a Cardinal.

Alumni Association Celebrates America's 250th with concert

Over 240 people attended the Patriotic Concert on June 27 in the Auditorium.

* "Baritone Joe" Maldonado '07 sang rousing solos of "Ol' Man River" and the Carousel "Soliloquy"

* Robert York played Wurlitzer Organ solos of Sousa marches and other Americana music

* Members of the Alumni Association and Whittier community read the Declaration of Independence

* A positive audience reception has led to the decision to sponsor annual summer Wurlitzer Organ concerts in the future



UPCOMING CARDINAL REUNIONS

- 1971 55 yr reunion. **Sat. Oct 17, 2026.** Mission Square Restaurant, Uptown Whittier. Check out Facebook page (Whittier High School Class of 1971). Contact Carl Devore carldevore@gmail.com or Katie Rall katierall@gmail.com
- 1976 50 yr reunion. **Sat. Oct 17, 2026,** at Whittier Brewing Company, 13002 Philadelphia St., Uptown Whittier, 5-9pm. Email Timothy Keyes at tdkeyes1@verizon.net for more info. Facebook admin: Susan Tovar & Peggy Burgess Fleming. Join Facebook event: [Whittier High Class of 1976 FIFTIETH REUNION GROUP](#)
- 1977 50 yr reunion. **Sat. Oct 23, 2027.** Join Facebook group "Whittier High School Class of 1977 50th Reunion". Email: Whittierhigh1977@gmail.com Committee: Darren, Donnalisa, Iris, Kay, Laura, Lucy, Roxanne, Steve, Tracy & Cora.
- 1986 40 yr reunion. **Sat. Oct 17, 2026** at Rodeo72 (outdoor patio), 5-10pm, 7012 Walnut Grove Dr. Join Facebook Group: "Whittier High School Class of 1986 – 40 year Reunion" Committee Amy Robinson Burke 720-422-4255 & Melissa Lopez Chavez.
- 1996 30 yr reunion. **Sat. Sept 19, 2026,** Doubletree Hotel Uptown, 6-11pm. Contact Joan Santiago McFarland at 562-594-5656 or jmcfizzle@gmail.com or Meranda.delao@gmail.com Join the Facebook or Instagram https://www.instagram.com/whs_class_of_1996/
- 2006 20 yr reunion. **Sat. Oct 3, 2026.** at Rodeo 72, 5-9pm. Contact: Monique La Marr Instagram: [@whs.classof2006](#)
RSVP Link: <https://partiful.com/e/1zGi8yIRbpsRlooNtsFx>
- 2016 10 yr reunion? Senior Class President Ashlynn Marricino, ASB Pres Juan Heurta.



Keep us in the loop! To update reunion or class contact information, contact:

Janice Lanham Zolnekoff whittierhighalumni@gmail.com or 562-556-4000

INTERESTED IN DEDICATING AN AUDITORIUM SEAT?



Honor a loved one by dedicating an auditorium seat in their name.
Starting at just \$150.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, GO TO:

<https://www.whittierhighalumni.org/donate/>

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WHITTIER HIGH SCHOOL
Alumni Association &
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Alan & Sylvia Lippincot '79, Amy Balthaser Jenkins '77, Bill Welsh '70, Bill Wood '41*#, Billy Eordekian '75, Brian Beck '61#, Carlos Rodriguez '55#, Cathie Moon Brown '49#, Charlene (Peake) Sims '61, Collette Marcellin '77#, Cora Haussecker '77, Daniel Orr '68#, Dave Harris '60*#, Deborah Malchow McCarty '71, Don Dalis '75, Don L. Jenkins* '49 #, Doreen Albee Riddle Frank Riordan '46, Elizabeth Ann Carroll Snyder '48, Eloise Martinez Gonzales '70, Francine Hathaway Rippy '56, Frank Mckenna '73, Gordon Crocker '50, Heidi Frey Greenwald '78, Ivannia Soto-Hinman '94*#, Jack & Erlene Mele*#, Jan Slater Lopez Wood '47#, Jerome Montgomery '52, Joan Meister Everett, MD '60#, Joan Mcneilly Nay '47*, John & Robin Dewitt '53, John Law DDS '70, John L Richardson '52, John Peel '74, Joyce Wall Shilling '56, Julie Swisher Shields '65, Laurie Welsh Peel '80, Lee Willard '53, Louise Johnson Pascale '60, Maggie Williams Valdespino '60, Marjorie Johana Moon Garrison '48#, Julie Swisher Shields '60, Nadia Moya '99 , Patricia & George Engelage '54, Patricia Behnke Beck '61, Patti Oeh LaGrelus '75, Peter & Louise Kempf '54*, Ray & Joan Dezember '52*, Richard '45*# & Billie Deihl '46, Richard Lantz '48, Richard Welsh '74, Robert Brown West, PhD '78, Roderick Hills '48*#, Sandy Sanchez Thorstenson '73#, Stephanie Cuevas '08, Stephen Koelle '70*, Stuart Gothold '52#, Susan Garrett Astarita '72, Sylvia Guerra '83, Tom August '45*#, Tom Seminoff '51, Walter Garrett '51, William (Bill) Prentiss '72, William E. "Bill" Cole '66#, Yosh Nakamura (Faculty)*#.

* Deceased # Hall Of Fame Members

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

Dear WHSAAEF Members,

As we open another exciting chapter at Whittier High School, I am thrilled to report a seamless and energetic start to the new school year. Our classrooms are buzzing with academic focus, our campus spirit is alive, and our students continue to uphold the rich traditions that make being a Cardinal so special. Adding to our campus momentum, we are incredibly excited about our upcoming major athletic modernization project, which will break ground this January to bring state-of-the-art turf fields and lighting to our football, baseball, and softball facilities. Beyond our physical campus, we are deeply grateful to our alumni for your continued investment in our students' futures through generous donations to college scholarships. Thank you for continuing to stand with WHS and support the legacy you helped build—we look forward to making you proud throughout the year ahead!

Andres Favela
WHS Principal

All-Class Barbeque

OCTOBER 18, 2026 | 12PM



Join us for this **FUN-raiser** and **Fundraiser**!

Enjoy an afternoon connecting with WHS Alumni while supporting WHS students!

- ★ Performances by the WHS Band and WHS Cheer
- ★ BBQ Hamburgers and all the fixings
- ★ Campus Tour with WHS Alumni Historian Charles H. Bennett
- ★ Silent film accompanied by the Wurlitzer Organ

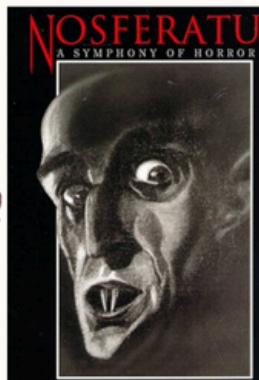
WHITTIER HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION PRESENTS

Join us for the silent film

NOSFERATU A SYMPHONY OF HORROR

accompanied by
David Marsh

on the Wurlitzer Organ



OCTOBER 18, 2026 | 3PM | Vic Lopez Auditorium

TICKETS: \$15.00

PURCHASE TICKETS AT: [WHITTIERHIGHALUMNI.ORG/BBQ/](https://whittierhighalumni.org/bbq/)

TICKET INFO

Adults	\$45.00
Children	\$30.00
Concert Only	\$15.00

PURCHASE TICKETS AT:

whittierhighalumni.org/bbq/

*Please indicate if you would like a plant-based burger for your meal.