



REDEEMER COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

South Los Angeles
Winter 2017 Update

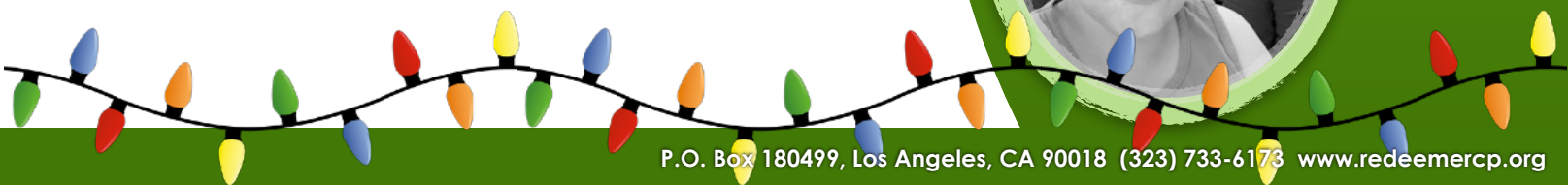
Christmas Greetings from Exposition Park!

On November 18th, our Robotics Team, the Robo-Ninjas, tied for FIRST out of 28 teams in a regional tournament. You will appreciate this more if we share their ranking from last year's tournament: 40th out of 40 teams. Robotics has gained world-wide recognition as an educational tool. For girls, children of color, and future first-generation college students, Robotics offers an inoculation against self-perceptions that keep these groups underrepresented in technology fields. But it is not a shot in the arm, passively received. It involves years of trying, failing and trying again. Early this season some veteran team members considered quitting. The assigned robot "missions" were hard, team brainstorming was sluggish, and they found themselves pursuing strategies no one really believed in... "the best bad ideas we have." They were also mindful of the frustrating role that luck plays in these tournaments. Sometimes (in their case last season) a really good plan, one that works perfectly during practice sessions, fails for no apparent reason during competitions.

Why do adults consider this torturous process so great? Because we know that life is full of impossible missions, flawed strategies, teammates we disagree with and inexplicable failures. So we tell our kids these are the things you will ALWAYS be up against, and the joy is in pressing on together. Having proclaimed this, we are now breathing private sighs of relief that the part about the joy came true.

It is a delicate task to equip kids for harsh realities, while also insisting that Grace and Unexpected Miracles outshine the harshness.

The day after this tournament we celebrated another victory that was both hard-earned and wondrously gifted. In October, the City issued an overwhelmingly favorable response to our demands for safety restrictions on a local oil drill site. Reversing decades of environmental racism, L.A. imposed all the same requirements here that drill sites in wealthy neighborhoods already comply with. These include replacing diesel machinery with electric, fully enclosing the site and 24-hour air quality monitoring. Since our campaign launched



in 2013, hundreds of people have contributed: USC film students, school principals, local pastors and health professionals, Adventures Ahead kids, and residents of adjacent properties who testified over and over and over again. Like the Robo-Ninjas we faced a difficult mission. Our team had to overcome disagreements, setbacks, bad ideas and many circumstances outside our control. But the part about the joy came true.

At our victory party, community members taped stars with their names on them along a giant timeline of events, marking when each of us joined the effort. A favorite local restaurant catered dinner while all the celebration classics played in the background. Our mascot for the evening, a friendly T-Rex promoting fossil fuel alternatives, ushered young and young-at-heart alike onto the dance floor. The oil company has appealed of course, and the fight may drag on for years, but that night we paused, gave thanks and joined T-Rex in the Cha Cha Slide.

The Christmas narrative is equal parts wonder and horror, dreams and disappointment, community and isolation, provision and uncertainty. Mary and Joseph had to plan, pack, navigate family drama, ask for help, keep a baby warm, adjust to a foreign culture, restart a business from scratch and forge new social support systems. This couple had practical skills in abundance. They had the mental and emotional toughness to face dark times. But they were also profoundly hopeful in things unseen, ready to listen to angels and eager to embrace mystery. Such is our prayer for the kids we work with, their families, ourselves, our volunteers and YOU this Christmas season!

As you celebrate this season, please consider a year-end gift to the work of building up our community.

It takes about \$200/month in donations to provide year-round academic programming for one child. Your gifts pay for rent, insurance, wi-fi, science materials, software, staff wages, snacks, accounting and more. While the bills are mundane, the impact is profound. Our two closest elementary schools are among the lowest-performing in the state, with just 11% scoring proficient on standardized tests. But students enrolled in our programs are beating these odds. Adventures Ahead is equipping them with skills and resilience on one hand...with wonder and dreams on the other. Please join us in seeing the part about the joy come true!

On behalf of RCP's Board and Staff,

Anna Parks

Board Member

STORIES FROM OUR READING BUDDIES

CARLOS' EXCITEMENT TO IMMERSE HIMSELF IN NEW STORIES AND SOUND-OUT UNFAMILIAR WORDS CONTINUALLY REMINDS ME OF MY OWN LOVE OF STORYTELLING. IN RECENT WEEKS, CARLOS HAS STARTED BRINGING A NEW TOY FROM HOME TO SHOW ME EACH TIME WE MEET. GODZILLA, SPIDERMAN, AND BUMBLEBEE HAVE EACH JOINED IN ON OUR READING TIME. THEY FIRST SIT QUIETLY AND LISTEN TO US READ TOGETHER, AND THEN THEY DEFEND ENTIRE CITIES OF BUILDING BLOCKS DURING FREE TIME.

— SARAH

I ALWAYS HAVE A GREAT TIME READING WITH BELIEN, BUT MY FAVORITE PART IS HOW ENTHUSIASTIC SHE IS TO PARTICIPATE EVERY WEEK. I VOLUNTEER AT THE 5-6PM TIME, SO IT IS THE END OF THE DAY, AND WOULD BE TOTALLY UNDERSTANDABLE FOR BELIEN TO BE BURNED OUT. HOWEVER, SHE NEVER IS. EVEN IF HER CLASSMATES ARE PLAYING INSIDE, SHE HOPS RIGHT UP TO COME READ WITH ME.

— DANIELLE

IT'S AWESOME WHEN GISSELLE FINALLY PRONOUNCES A WORD SHE'S STRUGGLING WITH OR WHEN SHE BREEZES THROUGH A PAGE OF THE BOOK WE'RE WORKING ON THAT DAY. SHE IS SMARTER THAN SHE KNOWS, AND WHENEVER SHE COMMITS TO A TEXT FULLY, SHE SUCCEEDS. I FEEL SO PROUD EVERY TIME WE FINISH A BOOK AND SHE SMILES. I REMEMBER ONE DAY WE FINISHED READING THE DESIGNATED TEXT AND IT WAS OFFICIALLY "FREE TIME," BUT GISSELLE DECIDED THAT SHE WANTED TO READ ME ANOTHER BOOK INSTEAD OF PLAYING FOR THOSE 15 MINUTES. JUST THIS SMALL GESTURE MADE MY HEART FEEL SO FULL!

AS A SUBSTITUTE READING BUDDY FOR MELANIE, I'VE GOTTEN TO KNOW ABOUT HER SCHOOL AND SOCIAL LIFE. IT AMAZES ME HOW OPEN KIDS ARE WITH THEIR EMOTIONS AND HOW BEAUTIFUL THEIR PERSPECTIVE IS ON EVERYDAY MATTERS. MELANIE RUNS TO HUG ME EVERY TIME SHE SEES ME, AND WE ALWAYS TALK ABOUT HOW IT IS BETTER TO BE THE BIGGER PERSON AND FORGIVE RATHER THAN TO GET IN FIGHTS AT SCHOOL.

— ISHA

