



The Foundation Focus

Spring 2025
Volume 18, Issue 1

The Newsletter of the Catalina High School Foundation

CHS Shines with New eSports Lab

by Stephen Gin '83

Catalina boldly took a step forward, becoming the first high school in TUSD to offer a state-of-the-art eSports Lab.

With major support from the Educational Enrichment Foundation and Marshall Foundation, Catalina transformed one of its ordinary North Wing classrooms into a computer technology space with 20 gaming stations. CHS administration led the Jan. 17 ribbon-cutting ceremony, which included dignitaries from the foundations, TUSD and the CHS Foundation. TV and newspaper reporters covered the event.

"It is my great pleasure to welcome you to this exciting occasion: the inauguration of the Catalina Trojans eSports Lab," greeted Principal Norma Gonzalez. "Today marks the beginning of a new chapter for Catalina High School as we open the doors to an innovative space designed to empower our students and prepare them for success in the fast evolving world of eSports and technology."

The fast-growing eSports industry not only is creating gaming celebrities, but also opportunities for programmers, artists and marketers. Hopes are high that eSports and computer technology offerings will help

draw students who are considering CHS. TUSD already has eSports programs at Magee and Utterback middle schools. Now Catalina can be the next section of the eSports pipeline.

Students are really enjoying the inaugural semester of the eSports Lab.



The games are Rocket League, Super Smash Bros. Ultimate and League of Legends, and the first Trojan team will compete next school year. But the learning extends well beyond eSports.

"It is a hub for learning, growth and opportunity," Dr. Gonzalez explains. "The classroom will serve as a foundation for an elective course in instructional technology, where students explore topics such as networking, cyber security and social media content creation. In addition it will serve as the training center for Catalina's AIA eSports team."

Foundation Awards \$13,000

by Jo Riester '66

2025 Catalina High School Foundation scholarships and grants were awarded at the May 9 Honors Assembly. Over 2½ days of interviews, it was a joy to repeatedly hear how much the students appreciated their teachers, staff, and their education and the sense of community at Catalina. They are on fire to make a difference in careers such as teaching, nursing, housing, engineering, surgery, zoology, biology and more.

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A Year of Achievement & Growth at Catalina High School

by Dr. Norma Gonzalez, Principal

As the year draws to a close, it's the perfect time to reflect on a truly productive and eventful season at Catalina High School—one filled with meaningful accomplishments, memorable experiences and powerful moments of student success.

From the thrill of our boys soccer team making it to the state semifinals to the continued excellence of our thriving CTE programs, our students and staff have worked hard to make this a year to remember. Inside our classrooms, educators continue to provide culturally relevant instruction that empowers every student. Plus, we're celebrating an exciting addition to our campus: the brand-new Catalina Trojans eSports Lab!

This cutting-edge facility, made possible through the generous support of The Educational Enrichment Foundation and the Marshall Foundation, stands as the only high school eSports lab within TUSD. More than a space for gaming, the lab will be the foundation for an Instructional Technology elective where students will explore key topics like networking, cyber security and

social media content creation. It will also serve as the training hub for Catalina's new AIA eSports team, set to compete in the upcoming school year. Through these innovative experiences, students will build essential skills—teamwork, leadership, problem-solving and professional communication—that will prepare them for future success in college, career and beyond.

We are also incredibly proud to announce that several of our students will be participating in the CRIA (Collaborative Research in Action) Symposium this spring at the U of A. This prestigious event, in partnership with TUSD's Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Instruction Department, the UA College of Education, Mexican American Student Services and the Guerrero Student Center, provides a platform for students to share their original academic research with fellow scholars and educators.



Dr. Norma Gonzalez

Looking ahead, the Bond Dollars at Work Summer Project will include a complete replacement of domestic and sewer waterlines on our campus. During this project, Catalina High School will be closed, and administration and summer programs will temporarily relocate to Rincon/UHS High School and Doolen Middle School. We sincerely thank our taxpayers for making this vital infrastructure update possible.

Many of the special projects and programs we celebrate wouldn't be possible without the ongoing generosity of the CHS Foundation. Thanks to its continued support, our library boasts up-to-date, high-interest literature, and our science department has received new compost bins, among many other impactful upgrades. Thank you, CHS Foundation, for your steadfast investment in our students and school!

Finally, we send a heartfelt congratulations to our 2024–25 graduates. You've made us proud, and we can't wait to see the amazing things you'll accomplish next.

From all of us at Catalina High School: thank you for an incredible year. With your continued support, we look forward to even greater things to come!



CHS Rises to a State Letter Grade of 'B'

by Dr. Kelly Bristow, Assistant Principal

We are proud to announce that Catalina High School has earned a state letter grade of B, a testament to the dedication, resilience and academic growth demonstrated by our entire school community.

This remarkable achievement reflects the collective effort of our hardworking students, devoted staff and supportive leadership. This is the school's highest letter grade and was made possible by an increase in points earned in two categories: academic growth on the ACT test and graduation rate.

Our growth score bested previous years as we earned a 19.29 out of 20 points. Growth points compare student scores from their 9th grade ACT Aspire test to their 11th grade ACT scores. The results show clear academic progress and a commitment to long-term learning.

Another key is Catalina's rising graduation rate. More students are not only staying in school but graduating in 4 years prepared for their futures, whether in college, careers or other post-secondary pathways. We earned an extra 10 points for significantly improving our 4-year graduation rate.

Catalina's staff—comprised of fabulous, passionate educators—played a critical role, too. Their commitment to academic excellence and their belief in the potential of every student set the foundation for success. From classroom instruction to after-school support, our teachers consistently go above and beyond.

As the year winds down and we prepare to celebrate our Class of 2025, please keep in mind that these graduates raised the bar and outscored prior classes on the ACT. These students exemplify the values of perseverance and growth, making the most of the opportunities presented to them and pushing themselves toward their goals. Our Class of 2025 will graduate this month, but will not be forgotten. They are the reason we have the B letter grade banner hanging proudly on the front gate for the first time!

At Catalina High School, we believe in the power of hard work, high expectations and strong relationships. Earning a "B" is a milestone we are proud of, but it's also a stepping stone. We are more motivated than ever to continue this upward trend and strive for even greater academic achievement.

CHS Foundation Names its Two Centurion Awardees

by Stephen Gin '83

Foundation Co-presidents Jenni Bond and Stephen Gin surprised two very deserving Trojans on April 2. Near the end of every school year, the Foundation selects an outstanding graduating senior and faculty or staff member for its Centurion Award.

Seniors are nominated by form. But the student award is not based on grade point average. The Foundation tries to recognize a top-notch Trojan who strengthens Catalina. "Back in 2017, the Board created a new award based on outstanding contributions made by a graduating student during the person's time at CHS. It's awarded to a Trojan who makes the school better," Gin says.

More specifically, the Centurion Award goes to a student who exemplifies CHS school spirit, leadership, service, participation and who encourages others.

For the first time, two teachers and a counselor nominated the same student—Trivene Magar. Not only is Magar sharp, the faculty appreciates her positive attitude. And when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, she



showed her leadership skills by helping to create a supportive classroom environment. Whether it's competing in sports, earning certifications in Future Business Leaders of America, participating in student government or taking advance coursework, Magar maintains a high level of excellence. In college, she wants to pursue her interests in healthcare/medicine.

Another first—the faculty 2025 Centurion Award goes to Catalina's principal, Dr. Norma Gonzalez. Her leadership and exceptional team-building have helped lift the school to a B letter grade from the state. Catalina also enjoys an amazing teacher and staff retention rate. Dr. Gonzalez's approach and energy have made a major difference at the school.

A Special Thank You to George Cunningham and the Class of '63

by Jennifer Bond, '66

The Foundation thanks the mighty class of 1963, who were state basketball champs, for their donation of \$2,156, which was used for two \$1,000 scholarships to worthy seniors this past May. Special acknowledgment and thanks to George Cunningham, who was the senior class president, for his service on their reunion committee and for organizing this donation. He recently passed away after an incredible career of service to Arizona in many roles.

CHS Drama Shines with Spoon River

May 1 was Catalina Drama's time to shine once again, as students put on two performances of "Spoon River" in the Little Theater. The stage, lighting and seating area needed significant work before it could reopen its doors.

"Spoon River" is a collection of monologues told by characters who had died in the town. For the past couple of months, the young actors went to work memorizing their monologues. It is a great confluence of theater and language arts learning. Each had to audition for those roles, and their lines were updated by drama teacher Matt Lai, who also designed and built the sets. He brought in David Darland, lighting designer for the Gaslight Theatre, to fix and update the lighting. Both are '83 Trojan grads. The matinee performance had a full house of a couple of classes plus teachers. The audience was lively and impressed. That evening, the Little Theater's doors were opened to families, faculty and supporters from the community.



Donations

\$1000 – 2500

College Success Arizona

Romanishin, Janet

Tobey, Gene & Marylyn '57

Tofel, Steven

Vertlieb, Arthur

Anonymous

\$250 – 999

Elers, Sandy '57

Sakrison, James

Messner, Thomas

Carol Ameling Dietz

Van Ort, Emily Suzanne

Butner, Joe

Carlson, Patti

\$100 – 249

Hurtado, Nancy

Downer-Joyner, Wallace

Davis, Chuck

Derby Helmke, Lyn

Ervin, Jerry

Kerru Ervom

Scott, Marjorie Ann '66

Mouer, James '57

\$1 – 99

Boling, Douglas

Klein, James

Klein, John

Jones, Doug

Lunpkin, Anita

Newman, Ken

TAX CREDITS

If you make a \$200 donation for those filing singly (\$400 for those filing jointly) to Catalina High School, the amount of your donation can be deducted from your Arizona State Tax Return Taxes Payable. This is a big help to Catalina High School which essentially costs you nothing. (Otherwise, you would pay it in taxes.)

Information on this great deal can be found at: catalinahs.tusd1.org and then choosing "Make a Tax Credit Donation" from the list on the left. These donations can be made any time before April 15, 2026, to receive the credit on your 2025 Arizona State taxes.

See <https://azdor.gov/tax-credits>.

Foundation Invested \$10,293 to Support a Wide Variety of Projects for Catalina Teachers and Students

by Jennifer Bond, '66

Karin Bernal, \$400 to provide books for the students by the author speaking at Catalina after the Tucson Festival of Books.

Samantha Lyons, \$500 for posters, charts, books and games for the English Learners Department to help teach basic phonics and math concepts.

Jennifer O'Dell and Megan Baum, \$211 to purchase materials to remove excess algae and nutrients to balance the aquaponics lab.

Wendy McFeely, \$250 for gift cards for English Language Learner of the month program.

Taylor Pacheco, \$98 for materials for math students to make individual abaci (numerous abacuses).

Karin Bernal, \$739 to purchase various foreign language books (part of this was from a donation honoring former French teacher Eva Royce).

Mathew Lai, \$425 to purchase materials to make a haunted house for the CHS Halloween celebration for students and the community.

Jonathan Levy, \$500 to support the chess club in organizing and hosting a TUSD wide chess tournament.

Lori Encinas, \$114 for honors award dinner.

Sean Gishi, \$500 for 50 \$10 gift cards to those students who have completed their FASFA applications

Karin Bernal, \$200 to provide prizes for a design competition with the Art Department for those students submitting the best bookmark designs.

Melissa Kornmuller, \$700 to provide breakfast and snacks for 150 juniors before and during their taking the ACT test and pizza as a reward after the test.

Trinidad Tester, \$450 to pay for a TUSD bus for Senior Day to go to Golf N' Stuff.

Chelsea Duran, \$500 admission fee for the CHS track team to attend Saunders Montague Desert Classic competition.

Lori Encinas, \$229 for needed materials to set-up the new eSports Lab. The new e-gaming lab with 20

stations was underwritten by the Educational Enrichment Foundation and the Marshall Foundation.

Taylor Harrington, \$403 first aid supplies the for the athletic trainer to use.

Karl Oxnam, \$493 to fund a student -teacher bowling retreat.

Marie Skeggs, \$500 to purchase new yoga mats.

Sam Lopez, \$500 to purchase supplies for the Positive Behavior Incentive Store.

Natalie Gonzalez, \$250 to buy second-hand dolls and materials for an art project.

Jonathan Chibasa, \$500 to purchase soccer socks and practice t-shirts for the team.

Jennifer Basandre, \$600 for food for Culinary Arts students to cook food for the Honors Dinner.

Karin Bernal, \$481 for a green screen and iPad to develop a digital media center in the library to teach students to do video announcements.

Sam Lopez, \$250 to purchase items to help put students at ease and help with restorative practice facilitator counseling.

Melissa Kornmuller, \$500 to provide gift cards to teachers participating in CHS-wide initiatives.

Foundations Awards continued from page 1

Terry Anderson '57, Jo Riester '66, and former CHS College Counselor and financial aid guru Mark Hanna, were inspired by their stories, and celebrate this investment in the future.

Seven \$1,000 scholarships, underwritten by generous CHS alumni and friends, were presented to Zxavier Dallman, Trivene Magar, Daniela Morales, Salomon Nkurunziza, Angel Reilly and Madix Taylor. A \$1,000 grant from McCraren Compliance underwrote another \$1,000 to Dylan Frias, in the building trades.

Eleven laptops were awarded to Tianna Baker, Viviana Coronado, David Garcia, Lindsay Ekonomo, Mariela Gonzalez, Ayman Kuku, Nicole Ocejo, Pen Peralta-Romo, Haita Saeed, Cheyanne Sturges and Jose Valencia.

A special thank you to CHS College Counselor Sean Gishi, who worked hard to encourage the applications of 30 graduates and to assist us in this program. This was our largest applicant group ever, and we were moved by each visit.

Congratulations and best wishes to all!

Website:

www.catalinahighschoolfoundation.org

Email Contact:

catalina.hs.foundation@gmail.com

CHS Foundation FOCUS newsletters:

www.catalinahighschoolfoundation.org/foundation-efforts/foundation-newsletters/



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CHS Foundation Supported Trojan Events

Clockwise from top: 2/25 Littlest Competitor? Construction CTE teacher Mishari Otaibi brought his daughter to the Skills USA Competition at Catalina.

12-24 Shirley Maddox leads the CHS Alumni Carolers at its Winterhaven concert.

9-24 Future Business Leaders of America Trojans enjoy some spirit building at Lucky Strike.

10-24 Spooktacular! Drama Teacher Matt Lai organized a haunted house night at Catalina. The event was open to Trojans and the community.

3-25 Young adult author Soman Chainani speaks and signs at Catalina. His series The School for Good and Evil became a Netflix movie.



Trojan Boys Soccer Team Makes it to State Semis

by Stephen Gin '83

The '24-25 boys soccer team managed to thrive despite all the obstacles thrown at it this season, making it one of the best Trojan squads fielded in recent years.

On Feb. 11, Catalina beat Tanque Verde 3-1 in 3A competition to make it to the state quarterfinals. The team was thrilled to learn that it would host and not have to travel to Thatcher. The visiting Eagles were bigger and played a very physical game. But the Trojans used their speed and finesse to control the game, easily winning 4-1.

Initially, a lot of players tried out for the varsity team and new Head Coach Jonathan Chibasa. Amazingly, Chibasa played for Catalina in 2011 and 2012! Twenty players made the

squad, combining for 17 different languages.

"Coming into the season, we didn't have a field for the first two months—and the whole team couldn't fit in the back (practice) area," Coach Chibasa recalls. The team didn't get uniforms until they made it to the state playoffs! To play during the regular season "We had to go back in storage and had to use the uniforms from back in my day," he says. "There were just so many adversities—some had no shin guards, no socks, no cleats. So I asked my former teammates to donate."

Still, they only lost a single game for the first part of the season. A few more games were dropped during the holiday tournament because several of the players were out of



town or not available. After that came a big win streak.

But the Trojans couldn't get things going in the state semifinals against Gilbert Christian and lost 3-1. The Gilbert team went on to win the state championship.

Coach Chibasa admires his first Trojan team, which has 12 seniors graduating. "We were always the smaller team, but we were tough and had a mental toughness," he says. "I believe we're going to accomplish something special next season with the support of the community and the school."

Catalina High School Foundation Membership Form

Send completed form to: CHS Foundation • P.O. Box 42016 • Tucson AZ 85733

Name _____ Class Year _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Annual Dues \$25.00 ____

I would like my donation to go to:

Founders' Club Dues \$57.00 ____

General Fund _____

Construction Trades _____

Life Membership \$250.00 ____

Mini-Grants _____

Future Business Leaders _____

Total Donation \$ _____

Music/Dramatic Arts _____

Culinary Arts _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Scholarship/Dramatic Arts _____

Athletics _____

This donation is **IN HONOR OF** or **IN MEMORY OF** (circle one): _____

Person to notify _____ Class _____ (If different from above)

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

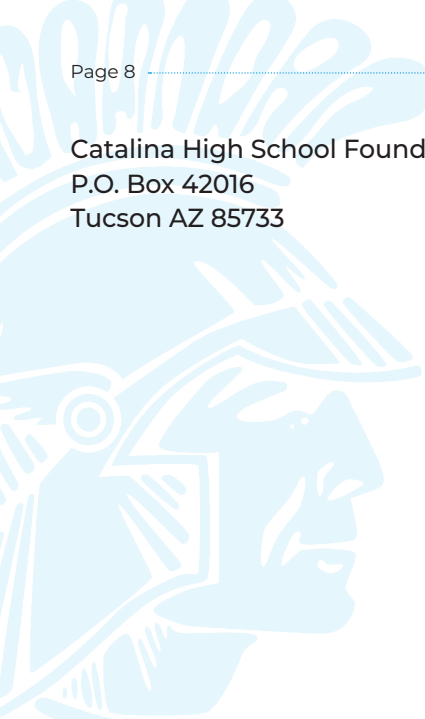
Please do not publish my name – Initial here _____

Questions? Ask Liz at lizwhit@gmail.com.

Annual and Founder's Club Dues run from November 1 to October 31

Life Membership Payment Plan: Pay \$100 per year for two years and a final payment of \$50 in the third year, and become a Life Member. Put Life Member PP on the "For" line of your check.

Catalina High School Foundation
P.O. Box 42016
Tucson AZ 85733



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CHS Reunions

Class of '60

65th Reunion. Oct. 17 4–7 p.m.
at Racquet Club.

Class of '75

50th Reunion, Oct. 25,
Details TBD. Marti Kurtz-Aniba,
Kathy (Deir) Ogden,
Deb Van Sant,
Diane (Munsel) Gerrettie,
Tom & Emmeline Hill

Class of '73

70th Birthday Party,
Nov. 1, 4:30–7:30 p.m.

www.chs73.com

Or email Info@Chs73.com for
password or details

Class of '85

40th Reunion, Oct. 18,
Details TBD. Message
Stacy Iveson on Facebook.

