



PRESS RELEASE

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Dulles Elementary Students Win Golden Ticket with Production of the Musical “Willy Wonka, Jr.”

Adorned by top hats, green wigs and golden tickets, Dulles Elementary School students heralded the arrival of the “Candy Man” and brought to life the timeless characters of Charlie Bucket and the Oompa-Loompas during two performances of the musical “Roald Dahl’s Willy Wonka, Jr.” held at Benton Middle School on Jan. 27 and 28.

The two-act musical, adapted from Dahl’s beloved children’s book “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory” and the 1971 film starring Gene Wilder, highlighted the talents of 60 Dulles Elementary K-5 students and incorporated musical numbers, choreography, elaborate set changes and star turns for its featured players.

“This is a very exciting night for the Norwalk-La Mirada community,” Dulles Principal Shanti Gallegos said. “This is an opportunity for all Dulles Dolphins to participate in a musical and it has been an extraordinary learning experience for our students as they develop skills in leadership and the arts. This was a total community effort, and I would like to thank the District, the Dulles school staff and PTA, the Center Stage Theater and all of our Dulles families for their hard work and dedication.”

“Willy Wonka, Jr.” is Dulles’ inaugural music production, designed to give all students, from kindergarten to fifth-grade, an opportunity to enhance their appreciation of art, as part of Dulles’ science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics (STEAM) curriculum.

“The musical production of ‘Willy Wonka’ perfectly encapsulates all of the positive qualities of the Norwalk-La Mirada educational experience, providing a rich cultural climate for our students to excel in, while engaging parent and community participation,” NLMUSD Superintendent Dr. Hasmik Danielian said. “Congratulations to Shanti Gallegos, the Dulles PTA and our budding thespians for putting together such a wonderful show.”

Dulles students auditioned for one of 20 speaking roles in “Wonka,” but all students who desired to be in the play were cast in one of the musical’s ensemble groups, as a Candy Kid, one of Charlie’s school chums, or as a mysterious Oompa-Loompa.

The direction of the play was overseen by artistic director of the Center Stage Theater, Harrison Zierer, who spent every Thursday afternoon for six weeks teaching and directing the cast and handled all technical duties of the production, cueing up the house lights and pre-recorded music.

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But once on stage, it was all up to the Dulles students to tell the story of the world-famous candy man and his quest to find an heir.

“This is a good learning experience for the students,” Zierer said. “They are not only learning the basics of stage production and how to project to a live audience, but also thinking independently while working together in groups. If someone forgets their line, the others are prepared to help them out. It is a joy to watch.”

The Dulles Elementary PTA provided support for the musical, designing the programs and golden admission tickets, supervising the students during rehearsals, operating the concession stand and assisting costume changes during the performances. Eager to pitch in, Dulles staff brought their own family members on show night to work as ushers.

“We have a very supportive community at Dulles. Our parents will do anything to help their children and the school,” Dulles PTA President Jodi Carter said. “There has been an overwhelmingly positive response to staging musical performances here, with so many students wanting to get involved. They are so adorable. We can’t wait for the next show.”

In February, Dulles students will team with the Los Angeles Opera for a performance of “The Legend of Cannery Row” as part of a five-week performance residency that will bring professional artists to the school for weekly workshops, as they work toward staging an opera based on Puccini’s “Turandot.”

Those in attendance at the performances included a representative from State Senator Tony Mendoza’s office and members of the Norwalk-La Mirada Unified Board of Education.

PHOTOS:

WONKA1: Dulles Elementary students held two performances of the musical “Roald Dahl’s Willy Wonka, Jr.” at Benton Middle School on Jan. 27 and 28.

WONKA2: The two-act musical highlighted the talents of 60 Dulles Elementary K-5 students and incorporated musical numbers, choreography, elaborate set changes and star turns for its featured players.

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