



## Fulfilling the Needs of A Five

BY WENDY VAN DIVER,  
PRESIDENT OF PARENTS' AUXILIARY

This year, I have five children attending Laguna Blanca School. Usually when I tell people this they cross their eyes or step back in surprise—waiting for a wink or a punch line. But it's true.

Our kids are five unique individuals with five different sets of needs, interests and dreams. They don't all even share the same last name. So how does a school as intimate as Laguna Blanca manage to suit them all?

Our family currently has twin seniors, one junior, one freshman and a third grader. They swim, dance, and play soccer, basketball, lacrosse, and softball. We have comedians, quiet types and a future rock star. They have brown eyes, blue eyes, and hazel eyes. They're brunettes, blondes and somewhere in between.

I don't know what their futures hold. It's too early to say. But I do know that the time they're spending now at Laguna Blanca couldn't be spent more wisely.

At Laguna Blanca, each of our children has found caring faculty and staff—people who bother to get to know them as individuals. Their teachers celebrate their strengths and help them to overcome their weaknesses. Their coaches encourage them to strive for their personal best as student athletes. Their college counselor helps them to realistically set goals and fulfill their dreams. And their tight-knit peer group offers them the support and competition they need for personal growth.

This year, our oldest two will graduate and go on to the colleges of their choice. Although we're willing to take our share of the credit, we would be remiss to deny the important role Laguna Blanca has played in shaping their lives as individuals. Laguna Blanca fulfills the needs of every student, every step of the way. Our family is living proof of this—times five.

# Beyond the Thick or Thin Envelope

BY JOHN THURSTON,  
DIRECTOR OF COLLEGE COUNSELING

The college application process is in full swing, and as I write this in late January, some might argue that it is premature to congratulate the Laguna Class of 2005, given that the bulk of the admission decisions are yet to be made. I, however, feel that regardless of the news to come, Laguna's current crop of seniors deserves ample praise and a heartfelt thank you. Yes, there are the traditional touchstones used to measure student success in this process; that is, from the early decision/action round we know that there are students who will be headed off to highly selective schools next year. Admission to the likes of Penn, Princeton, and Stanford is, indeed, an accomplishment of which several of our students can and should be proud. I applaud, too, those students who, after careful consideration, applied to and were admitted to schools that may not bear the label "highly selective" but boast a tradition of successfully serving their undergraduate populations. All are wonderful institutions that will serve our students well. At the same time, I am confident that this group of young men and women will contribute as much as they receive.

College admissions officers routinely consider both the academic and personal potential of their candidates for admission. On both fronts, this class is especially accomplished. Beyond the admissions decisions, though, our students should be proud of how they have treated one another during this stressful time. They have been quick to celebrate each other's successes and have been supportive when one of their peers received less welcome news. In addition, they have remained actively engaged in both the classroom and their extracurricular endeavors.

Recently, I was chatting with one of Laguna's Upper School language teachers, and she commented on how impressed she has been with the seniors in her class. Several members of her

Advanced Placement section have already received admission to their top choice of schools, but rather than suffer from early bouts of the dreaded "senioritis," they have returned from winter break more eager than ever to learn new material. I know that this has been rewarding for her as a teacher, and it has also served as validation for all of those letters of reference that the faculty and I sent out this past fall. More than just accomplished students, these young scholars are just that, intellectually-minded young adults who revel in learning new and unfamiliar concepts while making connections across disciplines. This, to me, is the ultimate goal of education. The joys of learning and discovery must be celebrated as their own accomplishments, and I am hopeful that next year each of the 56 seniors in the Laguna's current graduating class will find themselves in a community of peers that share this perspective.

Finally, I remain impressed with the overall community-mindedness of the Class of 2005. In addition to treating one another with respect, it is a class with a tradition of social awareness, initiative, and activism. While it would be inaccurate to claim that every Laguna student has been able to devote countless hours to issues of social justice, I am heartened to see that those who have made this a priority enjoy the deep respect and admiration of their peers. I am confident, too, that members of this class will continue to act upon their optimism and idealism to produce positive changes in the wider community. So, while there has been ample good news with regard to college admissions at Laguna, I am even more thrilled that what I have seen in this class will endure beyond the letters that arrive this spring. The Laguna Class of 2005 is a collection of young men and women of substance who care deeply about learning and the world around them. I am confident in their success, optimistic regarding their continued good fortune, and thankful for the opportunity to work with them in this process.