



# AIS News

Fall 2024 Q2 Edition

## Tree Lighting on Falcon Plaza

Editor



This year AIS welcomed the festive season with a first ever tree lighting ceremony on Falcon Plaza the evening of December 5th. This activity was the initiative of Ms. Rocio González, the Elementary Principal.

Students performed Christmas Carols for the crowd, the lights glittered, and attendees browsed the stands at the Christmas Village.

Preparation for the event began weeks in advance as parents from



the PTO worked with staff to decorate the plaza and trees with lights and decorations. Special thanks to our new Music Teacher Mr. Juan Manuel Ugalde for helping students learn their songs, and to Ms. Dahyana Zuñiga who prepared the Drama presentation.

A special highlight was when Meschi and Geffen Nieuchoicz along with their Grandfather, Ronny, shared their lighting of the Menorah ceremony with the community. Lighting the Menorah is a Jewish tradition to celebrate Hannukah. All told, a wonderful evening!

## New Student Government

Jun Young Park Lee



Enzo Arico, the new student president at AIS, is bringing fresh ideas to the school. He and his team, which are David Diez as the Treasurer, Leo Assiso as the Secretary, Fabiana Ramirez as the Vocal, and Camila Castro as Vice President, are promising more choic-

es and opportunities, looking forward to making school life better and more inclusive for all students.

The students that represent the party "MOE", Movement of Empowerment, are very happy to be part of the student council. They said in the debate that they will do their best to make the students' lives better and safer. They also said that the students can give options to the student council of what they wanted to do so they can try to make it happen.

Mr. Marco Guevara, the high school principal, says "The importance of the student government is that it gives students a voice in their education and their opportunity to develop leadership skills." According to Mr. Guevara, student governments have the ability to make improvements through developing a variety of activities such as team building exercises. It also helps other students to understand school issues, their responsibilities and their value of voices.

Enzo, the new student government leader, wants to make sure all students feel included and have a great experience. His goal is to create a community where everyone's voice matters.



# UNESCO Certification for AIS!

Editor

AIS is now an UNESCO school! The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization or UNESCO is widely recognized as one of the most important international organizations promoting peace and equity through education. On Tuesday November 26, Ms. Marcia Solano, Early Childhood Teacher, and Ms. Rocio González, Elementary Principal, attended the certification ceremony.

Ms. Marcia and Ms. Sofía Ibarra, also an Early Childhood teacher, have been the driving forces behind this project, and have worked tirelessly to see it through to completion. When asked what motivated her efforts, Ms. Marcia said, "I believe that sustainable education is one of the most important things I can teach my students".

The process of becoming an UNESCO certified school is quite rigorous. Schools must pass through a 2 year candidacy period. During this period, schools work to show that their focus is in line with UNESCO's pedagogical philosophy. An UNESCO school shines for its creative teaching, focus on the development of critical thinking skills, and a strong emphasis on self-confidence and mutual respect.

Being an UNESCO certified school means that the key ideas of sustainability, cultural diversity/appreciation, and non-violent global citizenship make it into AIS classrooms as part of our teaching prac-

tice. As an UNESCO school, AIS reaffirms its commitment to preparing students to thrive as compassionate, global citizens and its role as a leader in transformative, values-driven education in Costa Rica.



## AIS Participates in Math Olympics

Andres Edgardo Molina Rivera

The Math Olympics is not just a contest about math and numbers, it's a big competition between students all around the world pushing their thinking limits. The competitions usually have students take a test for hours with no calculators allowed. These events aim to improve the mathematical skills of participants through team competitions.

The American International School of Costa Rica has been participating in Math Olympics competitions for about one year. There are multiple competitions that the school has participated in with the most recent competition being Olcoma on August 30th. The next competitions will be AASCA, Nicaragua in March, Kangaroo, online during campus in June, and Olcoma, Heredia in September. The Math Department coordinates with these different organizations which hold the events in different places. The objective is to improve the ability and skill of talented students at AIS.

These types of activities require a lot of preparation from students since they are competing with at least 150 other students. "Study a lot before the test," said Paulo Lossley who has participated in the Math Olympics. Jorge Bravo, one of the teachers at AIS, prepares these students with tutoring lessons two times a week. This preparation process begins at least 3 months before the competition in order to cover all the material needed.





# CODED Trip a Success!

Carlos Jose Zumbado Jimenez

STEM education at Disneyworld? Yes it's true!

This year a group of 11 students from AIS traveled to Disney from October 27 to November 4th. These students were participating in a STEAM camp called CODED. The students were chaperoned by two staff members, Miss Dylana Vincente, our Curricular Coordinator, and Ms. Vero Alvarez, Marketing & Communications Officer. Every day students participated in workshops and STEM activities culminating in a final project.

The stem activities took place in the hotel or in Disney parks like Hollywood or Universal. As mentioned, Coded's final project was to create a website and slides for an amusement park you would create with people from your school. Students from AIS were divided into two groups for the competition.

The teams began by deciding their park's

main theme. After the theme was chosen you would have to think about rides, merchandise and other important infrastructure details like bathrooms, trash cans, and food courts.

We had to create an Icon for our park. Every park has an Icon, or symbol that can easily be associated with the park. For example, the icon for the Magic Kingdom is the Disney castle. Next, we created a mascot. During the workshops we were given assistance and we thought of all the details including the physics of the rides.

We also had to create a main ride. This main ride had a story it followed that linked with the icon previously created. Our theme was Jungle, so the ride followed our mascot MonkeyTony's backstory. This ride was recognized as the best attraction, an achievement which won my team best ride award.

So, was CODED worth it? I would like to

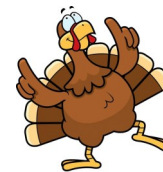
go again. The CODED facilities were very nice as we were staying at a Disney Hotel. Our first introductory workshop was in the hotel. Inside the hotel they had shops and provided breakfast and lunch. The food there was very good for a hotel.

Apart from the hotel we went to many of the parks like Hollywood or Universal during the day. Each day was divided in two parts, one of them was workshops and after that we had the day to spend and go to any rides we wanted. We couldn't leave the park before the assigned time however, normally between 8-10pm. Food was included.

Overall, I would say CODED was worth it and was a very enjoyable experience. The final project was pretty fun to work on with our groups. I would say if you can, go to CODED next time it's available.



# Thanksgiving Celebrations



Heidi Evelia Revaz Chacon

Our school's Thanksgiving Luncheon was a very nice celebration, bringing together students and staff for a day filled with delicious food and festive cheer. This year the luncheon was celebrated on Wednesday November 27. Our school celebrates a Thanksgiving luncheon because, as an American school, we honor this important tradition of giving thanks. It's a great time for the school community to come together.

The funds raised with the activity will go to benefit NHS and MUN. Food was served in the cafeteria and the gym was converted to a dining hall where we can all share a meal.

Students from these groups helped serve meals on this day, and students were encouraged to bring donations for food. As a method for getting people to collaborate, many emails were sent out. And in the end there was a very nice event that was put together. Brooke Johnston, a member from MUN says "Thanksgiving is a wonderful way to share time with friends and family!"

Thanksgiving is a national holiday in the United States and is celebrat-

ed the 4th Thursday in November. The Pilgrims and the Wampanoag people shared a feast in Plymouth, Massachusetts, to celebrate a successful harvest. This event was the origin of the celebration which became a national holiday in 1863 under president Abraham Lincoln. Thanksgiving has become a special time for family gatherings and for many people to come together and give thanks.

Here at AIS we are so grateful for our own blessings, and we remember those less fortunate. This year AIS donated Thanksgiving dinner to two families in need living in Alajuela. We donated various vegetables, rice, bread and many other foods. Ms. Andrea Barrantes, the Second Grade Teacher, has said "I'm very thankful for being able to help those in need".

At AIS we are very grateful for our community and the support it provides. It is incredibly important to recognize this holiday in our school because we are privileged to have these opportunities.

# Frightful Fun on Halloween

Victor Joel Pascal Genibre

It was a spooky celebration here at AIS! The seniors were responsible for setting up new activities for this year's Halloween celebration. Halloween is celebrated here at AIS because it is an American school. Halloween is very popular and is widely celebrated in the United States.

At American International School, students come with their costumes and activities are set up for the students like a haunted house and trick or treating around the school. This year, the activities were held on Thursday October 31st and went from 11am to 3pm. Students dressed up in costumes to celebrate Halloween and competed in the costume contest which the seniors held for a special prize. There were also many other activities held like the scary movie which was IT and also a haunted house where the seniors

scared people.

According to the Seniors, "Scare-o-grams and the costume competition prize were added as a way to get students to participate and to be engaged". Activities differed between high school and elementary. The elementary kids went trick or treating around the school and high school students watched scary movies inside the art room.

Before the activities the seniors sold Hallowgrams which students could buy in order to send or get a bag of candy. This tradition of Hallowgrams has been done for many years and is still quite popular at AIS. This year the seniors introduced something else along with the Hallowgrams called the Scare-o-gram which students could buy and put the name of someone and the seniors would scare that

person. The new addition of the Scare-o-grams was a success and sold out pretty quickly which pleasantly surprised many of the seniors.

Overall, according to the seniors the Halloween activities were a success. The seniors got very good feedback from many of the students, particularly about the new addition of the scare-o-grams. Many students said that the scare-o-grams added more Halloween spirit to the activities and made the overall Halloween experience more enjoyable. Holidays like Halloween and Christmas make the school experience more fun and enjoyable. Halloween in particular this year has made the second quarter a lot more fun with the activities that came with it.



# Monday December 9 - Hour of Code

Ava Maripaz Thomas

The hour of Code is a fun activity that has recently been implemented into the school's calendar. 2024 is the third year that AIS will participate.

Grades 1 - 6 participate in this activity which takes place in the gym. Though there is a large number of students in just one place, Ms. Eve Kolitsky, Information & Technology teacher, states that it is quite easy to manage all of them. They are free to dress down in pajamas and comfy clothes and bring pillows and blankets. Students spread out across the floor in the gym with their iPads and spend an hour having fun with code.

The purpose of this activity is to encourage students to engage with coding. This is important because coding is actually quite a valuable skill. Ms. Eve says, "Learning basic programming is considered a modern literacy. It's something that everyone should understand on some level."

Each grade has access to different activities according to their age and skill set. This is important because it sets students up for success. A good activity challenges, but is ultimately achievable.

The event starts with a welcome message followed by time for the different coding activities. The activity finishes as students get a chance to see what they will be able to do in a few short years. Students look at code projects created by 8th grade students and help select which projects will be submitted to a competition at Carnegie Mellon University.

The organization which founded this activity is called Code.org. Created in 2013, Code.org is one of the biggest educational coding platforms. Millions of people in over 180 countries participate in the Hour of Code activity. The organization prides itself as being very inclusive ; 45% of Code.org students are young women and 50% come from marginalized racial or ethnic groups.



## Christmas is Here!

Walter de Paula Welsh Romero

Ho Ho Ho! AIS transforms into a Winter Wonderland! Christmas is almost here, and AIS is preparing for some merry celebrations!

AIS has held its Christmas celebrations for many years. This year STUKO and its counselors have been placed in charge of organizing our holiday celebrations. They will be held on the last normal school week before the semestral exams.

On Monday, there was a Christmas classroom decoration competition, where different classes and grades will compete to be the best decorators. The winners of this competition were 12th grade with 7th being second, and 9th being third.

On Friday there were also three additional activities held exclusively for High school. These Christmas festivities included a classmate coming dressed as a popular Christmas character, a competition to make the best Christmas chocolate, a Christmas stocking decoration competition, and lastly a fun Christmas present unboxing. The activities were held all over High school grounds.

When asked about designing the activities, Mr. Bustos, a STUKO councilor, said "We want students to feel great about the holidays and the upcoming winter break." Additionally, he states that previous feedback influenced the creation of the upcoming celebrations.

At AIS we celebrate Christmas because it is such an important holiday for so many Americans. As an American School we partake in American culture, and Christmas is an integral part of it. AIS successfully was able to represent and express the joy and cheer of the Christmas

holiday season, and the STUKO council was able to put on a wonderful Christmas celebration, and students are hoping that next year's celebration is as good as this one!

Happy Holidays to everyone as we go into the winter break!





# AASCA MUN at AIS



Model United Nations (MUN) immerses students in a role-playing experience where they act as delegates representing different countries or organizations in a simulated UN environment. Participants actively engage in discussions and negotiations to tackle real-world issues, gaining insights into the complexities of diplomacy, international relations, and the functions of the United Nations. American Association of Schools in Central America Model United Nations (AASCAMUN) serves as a novelty in AASCA events.

national School). For the AIS community, this conference represents a significant milestone as the first event of its kind, bringing together over 20 schools from across Central America that are part of the AASCA network. We are excited and proud to be hosting this academic encounter, which provides an opportunity for students from Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama to engage in meaningful collaboration and develop essential skills.

This activity was an initiative by director Ms. Kattia Alvarado, thinking that there are many AASCA initiatives but none in MUN. More than half of AIS's middle school and high school students are participating as part of the secretariat, committee leaders, media team, crisis team, social impact team

or representing the school as delegates. Together with the faculty advisors and coordinators Mr. Julio Bustos, Ms. Fiorella Ramirez and Ms. Mileydi Montero. The entirety of the AIS community participating hopes for everyone to have a great experience in academic and social aspects of this conference.

The possibility of developing different skills among different cultures is emphasized. This conference faces expectations of having great guest speakers to create an impact during the opening ceremony, this would symbolize a significant start. As for the closing ceremony in Mr. Busto's words "Learning that the MUN experience is beyond awards".

AASCAMUN, just as other AASCA activities, aims to celebrate cultural diversity and create learning opportunities through an educational environment. MUN has become a popular extracurricular activity, the last few years, especially at AIS (American Inter-

## Honor Roll Assembly

Nicole Villalobos Brenes

Being your best is not just about excelling in school; it's about becoming a better person in all aspects of your life. While being an honor student often means achieving high grades, it also involves demonstrating qualities like responsibility, commitment, and perseverance. Honor students know that success doesn't come easily, and they put in the effort to stay focused on their goals, even when school work becomes overwhelming or difficult. Their ability to manage challenges and stay on track, even when the going gets tough, is a hallmark of what it means to truly be your best.

This quarter we are proud to recognize the following students for making Honor Roll:

### Elementary Honor Roll A

Santiago Alvarado Alvarez - Grade 4

### Elementary Honor Roll B

Richard Beriuallt Mendoza - Grade 4  
 Valentina Larios Corella - Grade 4  
 Leah Cristine Lysaght Bolaños - Grade 4  
 Mariano Ureña Aguilar - Grade 4  
 Luciana López Zúñiga - Grade 5  
 Felipe Salazar Rodriguez -Grade 5  
 Shanaya Utsav Gawde - Grade 6

### High School Honor Roll A

Fabiana de los Angeles Hernández Ramirez- 8th  
 Andrés Edgardo Molina Rivera - 9th  
 Walter de Paula Welsh Romero - 9th  
 Sebastian Quesada Brenes - 10th

### High School Honor Roll B

Mathias Christopher Borchgrevink Leiva - 7th  
 Daniela Cespedes Zamora - 7th  
 Jorge Luis Córdoba Trejos - 7th  
 Santiago Pérez Chanto - 7th  
 Sofia Salomé Forbes - 8th  
 Inoa Kuo Chaves - 8th  
 Delder Livier Lie Rodriguez - 8th  
 José Pablo Rojas Fernández - 8th  
 Alberto Ruiz Cruz - 8th  
 Victor Joel Pascal Genibre - 9th  
 Verónica Hernández Viera - 9th  
 Celeste Huang Wang - 9th  
 Katherine Brooke Johnston - 9th  
 Heidi Evelia Revaz Chacón - 9th  
 Camila Gabrielle Castro Aleman - 10th  
 Lucía Rodríguez Arce - 10th  
 Sebastián Vargas Cordero - 10th  
 Allain Daniela Zamora Loria - 10th  
 Megan Michelle Alfaro Valverde - 11th  
 Melissa Benavides Guerrero - 11th  
 Miranda Huertas Reyes - 11th  
 Alana Quo Chaves - 12th  
 Dafnee Lisette Ortiz Olaya - 12th  
 Dana Salazar Gamboa - 12th  
 Isabella Trejos Viquez - 12th

# Behind the Scenes at AIS

Katherine Brooke Johnston

Every parent who chooses AIS places a high value on their child's education. We all know that AIS is an excellent school and a great place to learn, but did you ever wonder who's in charge? AIS is what is known in Spanish as a Sociedad Anónima, which means that it has associates. Every parent who sends their child to AIS becomes a member of this association. The school board is made up of parent volunteers who get voted in every two years. The board members are elected by the associates in a General Assembly that occurs twice a year in November and May. Kelsey Johnston, the current president, has served the last 5 years as president of the school board.

The school board focuses on achieving the school's stated mission and vision, ensuring financial stability and growth, and managing the director. Ms. Johnston said "Many people don't know that AIS is one of only two parent-owned US diploma schools in Costa Rica."

The school board has meetings at school the second Tuesday of every month at 6:30 pm. They want to make sure the meetings are productive so they have an agenda to ensure that all topics are being covered. The agenda mainly talks about the Financials, Human resources, Enrollment (admissions), and Marketing of the

school. The school board has existed since the school has been around.



## 3 Star Recognition!

Editor

This year AIS is proud to announce that we have been recognized with 3 stars from the program Bandera Azul Ecológica. Bandera Azul, or "Blue Flag", is an initiative of the Costa Rican government designed to encourage sustainable development across society. AIS has been recognized in the category of Educational Institution.

Bandera Azul evaluates progress over the course of a year using multiple metrics including Use of Water, Use of Electricity, Management of Solid Waste, Mental Health, and Social Welfare. The initiative is incredibly broad in its reach. Projects include everything from creating a plan to increase community participation in voluntary recycling to physically weighing the solid waste to demonstrate that plan's effectiveness.

Ms. Gaby Murillo, head of the Science Department, has taken a leading role over



the past three years to organize committees and supervise the documentation of our progress toward meeting these goals. Ms. Gaby says that the most chal-

lenging and most important part of the process is documentation. For example, when construction was underway to remodel the High School Plazas, water use increased. Documentation provided a justification for this increase and allowed the school to maintain its 3 Star rating.

Institutions are reviewed on a yearly basis and each year evaluations start from 0. This methodology is important to retain the significance of the award. An institution which does not create a cultural change to embrace sustainability may lose stars if programs are not continued. The ability to maintain a 3 Star rating is an impressive indicator of AIS's commitment. Sustainability is a core value here, and it's a choice that each and every member of the AIS community makes every day. Congratulations to all for this recognition!



# Sports



## Women's Volleyball—Training

Celeste Huang Wang

The women's volleyball team started to create a strong team for the girls. Our coach, Alex Villegas has been very supportive and inspiring. Coach Villegas has won many championships in Costa Rica and is recognized as one of the country's best volleyball players. Coach Villegas was national champion at the Pérez Zeledón National Games in 1992, competing with the Belémita Colors, and was best player twice in the events. He participated in world beach volleyball championships with his brother Gilberto, where in Pan American Games, Central American and Caribbean Games and Norceca championships, the highest competition between men's volleyball teams from North America, Central America and the Caribbean.

Coach Villegas says that his main focus in friendly matches is the unity among the players, improving their game skills, and making

sure that they feel prepared and included in every match. The team participates in scrimmages with other schools as part of the preparation process beginning 2 weeks before the real game.

When it comes to maintaining the team positive minded, Coach Alex talks to the athletes with positivity and patience. He addresses mistakes made but is always supportive and encouraging for his players.

The girls on the volleyball team have made amazing progress this year, and their hard work has led to many victories, including several Action championships. Last year, the girls won 2nd place against the Panamerican School. This year we are all hoping for first place. Coach encourages us to go to practices consistently to be able to improve our skills

and get better.

The upcoming AASCA volleyball tournament in El Salvador in 2025 is an event the team is looking forward to. AASCA provides an opportunity for student-athletes from American schools across Central America to compete at a high level and be able to interact with different players from different countries. For the girls, participating in AASCA means showing off the skills they've built throughout the years while experiencing a more competitive environment that values sportsmanship, discipline, and connecting with other cultures.

The support from parents, teachers, and the school shows how proud everyone is of the team and has been very meaningful for the girls to prepare them for this upcoming event. The tournament will be both a result of their hard work and a step toward future success in sports.



# AIS Hosted Gymnastics Competition

Anthony Carnevale



Imagine a sport that combines grace with strength and style... that's AIS Gymnastics! This year AIS hosted the National Gymnastics competition in our Gym on Sunday October 20th. AIS has been hosted this event since 2009. Students have had competitions both in and outside the school. According to Ms. Dylana Vicente, our Cocurricular Coordinator, the only two years without participation were due to the Pandemic.

According to Ms. Dylana, a lot of schools from all around the country came. There were even groups from nearby countries, like Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and El Salvador.

Elementary students participate in this sport at our school. Thank you to miss Dylana and the girls of gymnastics who participate in the sport and represent the school so positively.



# AASCA Soccer Hopes

Daniel Andres Cassiosis Gabourel

Get ready for the competitive season! This year everyone is very excited because AIS was invited to participate in the AASCA tournament in Nicaragua. Middle School and high school are both hoping to compete in this annual tournament. The AASCA tournament will be in Managua, Nicaragua. Teams will play every day from Wednesday February 5th to Sunday February 9th.

According to Gerson Bagnarello, P.E. Teacher & Soccer Coach, "Countries from Central America, like Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Guatemala will all be participating in the tournament." This means that different schools from at least 5 countries' will be sending their very best students to Managua.

AASCA stands for the Association of American Schools of Central America. This organization gives competition across a range

of countries in Central America. It creates opportunities for students to grow in various areas. In the case of the upcoming tournament, AIS would be competing against schools from all across Central America.

It's important to take into consideration that for AIS to participate in this tournament, team members must not only be willing to attend but also have strong soccer skills and a competitive spirit. Everyone on this year's team is committed and prepared to put in their best effort. We all know this tournament will require a high level of dedication and performance from all participants. The students participating in this tournament will have to train and work twice as much as before.

I know that the team representing AIS is prepared to give all their effort in Managua.



## Action Soccer tournament

Santiago Moreira Granados

Soccer is back and better than ever!

This fall the AIS Falcons are participating in the Action Soccer tournament. Our players are very passionate about soccer and this tournament will help with developing team chemistry and to get us the sharpest.

We are competing against Pan-American School, Lincoln School, Country Day, St Jude and Blue Valley. The tournament will take place during the months of November, December, and January.

*Happy Holidays!*

**See you in January**

