One day in December, the small town of Colonia 89, Ensenada was visited by a group of angels. During Christmas time, these kind angels make constant trips to celebrate the holiday with the underprivileged families. Each year, the Honors Program hosts a toy drive at Mesa College and many students help fundraise to buy the necessary items for this trip. This year, they brought with them a bundle of gift bags filled with a variety of daily necessities and toys such as toothpaste, toothbrushes, shampoo, stuffed animals, toy cars, and crayons, among other items. Sixteen angels met up with local pastors down in the neighborhood and collaborated in putting together the goody bags for the kids. They finished the bags, bought food for a barbecue, and headed down to Colonia 89.

Upon their arrival, the angels were greeted with a big crowd. While some of the angels hung out with the children, others were setting up the barbecues and getting things organized. Pastors Roberto and Marisela even had a short skit, performed by the children, programmed for the angels. After the show and a prayer, gifts were distributed. The kids lined up by age and were given their goody bag while the mothers lined up in a separate line and received a blanket for the family. While the gift distribution took place, other angels were preparing the hamburgers and French fries. Everyone received a gift and plenty of food to eat. As the sun began to fall, the angels realized it was time to say goodbye. They cleaned up, said their heartfelt goodbye, and made their way back home.
Typically January is a month when the climate tends to be cooler, making hot cocoa and cookies a perfect snack for the honors orientation. Since we live in San Diego, January 21st was actually a warm day. The weather, however, didn’t stop the prospective honors students from enjoying the delicious treats provided by the Honors Program that day. Familiar faces were also present, accompanying their friends in their quest for ways to make the most of their academic lives. Seats were difficult to find due to the number of people, but that didn’t seem to matter, as people were too busy having a good time conversing among their peers and forming new friendships.

As fun as social time was, business still had to be taken care of. The honors coordinators began to discuss the in’s and out’s of the program. They touched on topics such as honors contracts and how they differ from honors courses offered, scholarship opportunities, the HTCC conference, transfer opportunities including UCLA TAP and the many other advantages of being part of the honors program. After each presenter had their turn to talk, the coordinators set up various Q&A tables regarding various topics regarding further elaboration of the Honors Program, transfer opportunities, HTCC, and UCLA TAP. The majority of the people in the room took advantage of learning more from the Honors Coordinators while enjoying warm cocoa and cookies in the process.

Good deeds can be done anywhere and there are plenty of people who need the help here and across the US-Mexico border. We should all be grateful for the wonderful opportunities we’ve been blessed with and look to help out those in need anywhere we may find ourselves, just as Jeff Barry and his Angels did on December 21, 2013.

- Carlos Galindo
Beach BBQ by JL Villanueva

On Saturday, February 8th members of the Honors Club, along with International Students Club, Phi Theta Kappa, Psi Beta, and Student Veterans Organization, gathered together for the second annual bonfire and beach BBQ at Mission Bay. The day was colder than the first BBQ, so volleyball wasn’t on the agenda, nor were any other sports, even though some people brought soccer balls, footballs, and Frisbee discs with them. Instead, we decided to sit down and play cards and enjoy the cookies and other snacks that members brought for the potluck style BBQ. When the sunset came and the weather became even colder, we decided to start the bonfire and grill some hotdogs. We took pictures and socialized with new friends while making a few new ones, and at one point we even sang a few songs. Since the temperature was dropping as the hours went on, we had to cut the fun short. Although not all of us will be here next year, the friendships these events have created will be everlasting.

Club Rush by Christina Torres

On a sunny day in the heart of the Mesa College campus, white canopy tents and tables lined the Mesa Promenade. The set-up attracted curious students, and many found themselves perusing the tables while on their way to class. At each table, Mesa College club representatives stood ready to inform their fellow peers about campus clubs. This event, known as Club Rush, was held on February 11-13th. San Diego Mesa College currently has over thirty-five active students clubs and organizations. Many of those clubs had tables present at the event. Club Rush is an effort to get Mesa College students actively involved in some of these clubs. A club's success is dependent on the participation and enthusiasm of its members. With student participation, the clubs and organizations at Mesa College help to transform the campus into a community.

The Honors Club had its very own table at Club Rush, with Honors Club representatives manning the tables to answer any questions of passersby. With an Honors Club table present at Club Rush, it was a fantastic way to inform students of all that the club has to offer. Many students had questions about the process of completing an honors contract. Others were curious as to how difficult it was to become an honors student. Those interested in joining the club were invited to attend our monthly meetings and join the emailing list. There were even students who were completely unaware of the Honors Club or the existence of an Honors Program. That's exactly why Club Rush is such a great event. It gives the students an opportunity to be involved on campus.
Waking up early on a Saturday doesn't appeal to most people. College students would rather get a few extra hours of sleep while they have the time to relax, myself included. But on April 6, 2014, I was up by 4:30am and preparing for a full day at the University of California, Irvine campus for the Honors Transfer Council of California Research Conference. My mother and sister were almost as excited as I was and came along for support. Once we met up with Sarah Farmer at the Mesa College parking lot, we piled in my car and headed up the coast to Irvine. We arrived at the parking garage just in time to make registration, snack on breakfast pastries, and peruse the various posters that other honors students from all over the region made regarding their research in fields varying from chemistry to comic books.

I spoke with Abraham Ibanez regarding Nonstandard Analysis. He is one of the few students throughout the conference that chose mathematics as his subject for research. I am no stranger to calculus myself but transferring information regarding this subject into a cohesive explanation that can be easily described to anyone passing by is no simple feat. Another interesting poster presentation was regarding a subject that I thoroughly enjoy, Archaeology. The Kennewick Man Controversy is well known to Anthropology majors because it’s so engrained in everything the study is about. Interestingly, the presenter, Fern Wilson, isn’t even an Anthropology major, herself, but still chose to do research on the ethics and controversy, which, to me, shows how engaging these topics can be for everyone.
Our very own Sara Yogi was the recipient of the 2nd place award for her poster presentation. Congrats to Sara and the hard work that she put into the research regarding the female conditions throughout the world. Her poster was informative and when I walked up to view it, was being thoroughly evaluated by one of the HTCC Directors. Her ability to answer all questions with precise and captivating information must have been deciding factors for her well deserved win!

Shortly after the breakfast and poster presentations the opening ceremonies began with a pep talk from The HTCC President Jodi Balma and VP Chris Sleeper. The crowd was entranced by the speech given by guest speaker, Dr. Michael Leon, Professor of Neurobiology and Behavior, regarding the importance of science and progress for continuing betterment of mankind and the planet itself. Once the opening speeches were given and the caffeine from the breakfast bar kicked in, we anxiously filed into various rooms throughout the conference center to begin presenting our research.

After lunch with my family, I made my way to the room where I would give my presentation on Pseudoscientific Archaeology in the Media. As the first one up after lunch I was more focused on keeping my group awake than anything. A few well-placed jokes and entertaining PowerPoint slides (or at least I like to think they were) kept my audience captivated and inquisitive after my 12 minutes were up. The only glitch was when a video depicting how ancient people would have moved the giant statues from Easter Island to their final resting place failed to show. But I was able to reenact the movements of the rope and balance system that caused the statues to “walk”. I may have made a bit of a fool of myself with these ridiculous actions, but it was in the name of science, so it was worth it. Two Mesa students, Sarah Farmer and Sarah Yesil, were recipients of the HTCC Exemplary Achievement Scholarship!
After the final block of presentations, we all met back in the main conference hall for closing ceremonies and awards. It seems that the name Sarah is synonymous with achievement for two Mesa students, Sarah Farmer and Sarah Yesil, were recipients for the HTCC Exemplary Achievement Scholarship!

Once the conference was completed, we all shuffled back to my car, ready for the drive back home to San Diego. I was exhausted after the early start to the day and the drop of the adrenaline after my presentation, so home and sleep were on the top of my list of important things to do once I was home. Exhaustion aside, I had a fantastic day spent with my fellow honors students and I urge any future students to take the opportunity to participate next year.
I hike a lot. It's always been a favorite past time of mine. Growing up in Arizona, my family and friends and I were always excited when the weather allowed for days on the mountain or in the woods. Once I moved here to California those days went from scarce to overabundant due to the amazing weather we have here in San Diego. The ability to be outdoors more also means that more people are going to be outdoors. This wouldn't be such a bad concept, but unfortunately, many of those people don't have the respect for nature that should be given. And so, clean ups become necessary.

On Saturday, April 12, 2014, I arose early to get to Mesa College at around 9 am. I was given water and my very own Canyon Day Cleanup shirt once I made it to the area where the coordinators would be assigning projects. My group of 5 headed out down Genesee and onto the trail, heading down towards the creek. We gathered as much as we could along the way, but the majority of trash was collected at the water or near by it. The three hours that I was there passed by quickly and by the end we had over five bags of garbage just in our group! Many were still in the canyon and on the trails collecting trash, but by the time we returned there were at least 25 bags piled high for collection.

Though these volunteer groups are frequent in their cleanups and the amount of garbage
When I walk around campus, I usually see my fellow honors colleagues dressed casually. Today, however, things were quite different. On May 7, 2014 the honors students attended the 26th annual Honors Reception held at the lavish Prado Restaurant in Balboa Park. Every one was dressed up to the nines, dashing, and beautiful. Surprisingly, it was a casual ambiance and very down to earth. All the smiling faces and beautifully dressed people in attendance enhanced the mood of the event, preluding a wonderful luncheon.

Most people were fashionably early, arriving well before 11 in the morning, conversing and socializing with their friends. Other students were engaging in conversation with the Board of Trustees and the heads of the Honors Program in the district.

When it was time for the luncheon to begin we were led into the great ballroom and allowed to take seats wherever we chose. At every place setting delicious spring salads and mini ciabatta breads were given as an appetizer before the main course along with fruit tarts with a big chocolate garnish. Around noon the main course, two kinds provided to accommodate for dietary restrictions, were served. That is when the program officially began.

Mesa College’s very own Dr. Leticia Lopez and Ms. Wendy Smith opened up the event by acknowledging all the people who made the Honors Program possible: the District and school officials, honors directors, and financial backers of the district Honors Program.
That was followed by a heartfelt speech by the SDCCD Chancellor, Dr. Constance M. Carroll. She touched upon the impact the honors program has on college students by pushing them to strive for more than just the bare minimum to graduate. The Honors Program has aided students in achieving goals they never dreamed possible, and the student speakers that were next proved that to be true. One person from every school took center stage and shared their experiences in life.

They made it clear how the Honors Program pushed them past their barriers, helping them achieve success. Gulya Tlegenova was the presenter from Mesa College. She outlined her struggle of being a foreign student, loss of her family, and her rough experience switching from school to school. Regardless of what obstacle life put in her path, she kept moving. According to her, the feelings of worthlessness and desolation she experienced ended when she signed her first Honors contract at Mesa College. She had gained a sense of her full potential with the help of the Mesa Honors’ staff. Her hard work got her accepted to some of her first choice universities including UCLA, UCI, and Columbia University, and the Honors Program was the basis for her path to success.

These weren’t the only students who had their efforts recognized at this event. Drs. Naomi Grisham and Alison Primoza finished the event by acknowledging all the students who were accepted for transfer. This was the perfect ending to a heartwarming experience.
Annual Scholarship Awards Banquet  
by Christina Torres

It is truly an honor to be recognized at the Annual Scholarship Awards Banquet hosted by San Diego Mesa College. This year, I joined many other scholarship recipients for the 21st Annual Banquet at the Doubletree Hotel on Friday, April 25th. The excitement that filled the hotel's banquet hall was contagious and invigorating. Beginning at 5:30, the students-along with their proud parents and families enjoyed a no host social hour. Guests, recipients, and scholarship donors were able to check-in at specified tables. Drinks were available for purchase through the hotel. But by far the most populated area of the social hour was the raffle area. Tables that stretched halfway across the room were filled with donated gift baskets available for raffle, and all went to Mesa College's scholarship foundation. Many swarmed the gift basket area and placed their raffle tickets in drawing bins, each person hopeful of winning any of the eye-catching prizes valued at over $100.

After the social hour, scholarship donors, faculty, recipients, and their families seated themselves inside the banquet hall. The walls of the room were decorated with Mesa College's school colors. Blue-tinted lights and projector screens helped give the banquet hall an atmosphere suitable for Mesa's Olympians. Music played by a live band drifted across the room and set the celebratory atmosphere of the event. A short welcome by the President and Vice President of ASG officially opened the event, followed by a video presentation. Once dinner began at 6:30pm, the clatter of utensils against glass and the buzz of conversation filled the room.

The Scholarship Awards Program began at 7:30 with congratulatory remarks by Dean of Student Affairs Ashanti Hands and President Pamela T. Luster. Each recipient was called to the stage and was presented with a certificate by the scholarship donor. Among the scholarship winners was our very own Honors Club President Sarah Farmer. Sarah went home with three scholarship awards, including the most prestigious award at the President's Award for Academic Excellence and Service. The President of Mesa College herself commended Sarah's hard work with a congratulatory speech. The winners of the Honors Club Scholarship were also revealed; congratulations to Calvin Handoko, Ziwei Khor, and Gulya Tlegenova! Other scholarship recipients included Honors Program students, members of Psi Beta, and members of Phi Theta Kappa Honors Societies.

A sense of pride and emotion filled the faces of the majority of the recipients. It's so gratifying to go up on stage and get recognized for all the hard work you've done. After the award ceremony, the banquet concluded with raffle drawing and dancing. The banquet was a success, and each and every one of the recipients should feel proud of themselves for their dedication and overcoming any obstacles they've faced. A huge thank you to all the staff and scholarship donors that helped make this special night possible!
My Quest to Go to UCLA
by José Villanueva

The Honors Program has played an incredible role in my life and helped me in many ways. I started attending Mesa College in the fall of 2011. I wanted to major in Psychology at UCLA; however, I wasn’t sure I would get accepted there. One of my counselors told me about the Honors Program and how it could help me get into UCLA through the Transfer Alliance Program (TAP) with the only cost of having a more demanding curriculum in my regular courses. My English was poor at the time and I was very introverted. I was afraid that those extra assignments could work against me, especially since I had the disadvantage of living in Mexico due to economic difficulties.

I knew that if I wanted to succeed I had to take greater risks; so I registered for the Honors Program in the spring of 2012. Nonetheless, I couldn’t begin taking honors classes until the following year, because none of my professors did honors contracts, which would have allowed me to take courses as honors. The following semester, I performed poorly academically and felt that Psychology was not for me, since the requirements were far too many for me to complete. I fell into a depressive moment where I did not know what to major in or where to transfer. Later, I decided to try majoring in History since it is something I enjoy studying. I received an email invitation to go to UCLA to attend the yearly TAP Conference that takes place in November. I thought it would be nonsense for me to go; however, I told to myself I had nothing to lose and I just went. I met different people like me, with the same goals of transferring to UCLA. While I knew it was a highly competitive school for my major, I also knew there was hope for me to achieve that dream. I also met students who had already transferred from Mesa, who talked about their experiences in both community college and at UCLA. The first thing I thought when I saw them was that one day I wanted to be like them, advising Mesa students.

After that trip I was really motivated. The following semester I sought honors courses because I wanted to complete the 15 unit requirement as soon as possible. I found a Spanish 102 Honors core course and I registered for it because I needed to take a course for the requirement. It was a 5-unit course which helped me get the required 15 units. I also needed an easy course to boost my 2.8GPA. As a native Spanish speaker, I was able to obtain leadership skills in that class, one of the goals of the Honors Program. I performed very well that semester and decided to take summer classes at a different district to further improve my GPA.
By the fall of 2013, I increased my GPA dramatically to 3.4; which motivated me to keep taking honors courses. Since I only took 5 honors units the prior semester, I decided to go for 8 that semester. I took English 205 at City College and Italian 101 at Mesa. As I was becoming a class leader, I became more involved in campus activities and with faculty, who always helped me every time I went to their offices and bothered them with questions. I gained more confidence in myself and I started to help other students, as they had helped me. I enjoyed the first UCLA trip so much that I went again to get more motivation and I envision myself in the school where I would transfer. At the end of that month I applied for UCLA and I ended up with a 3.5 GPA, which is considered as competitive for the UCLA TAP Program.

I was exhausted my last semester but, at the same time, excited because I was about to complete community college and obtain an Associate’s degree. I was also nervous because decisions for university applicants were coming soon. I realized fulfilling the TAP requirements would not be enough for me to get accepted into one of the most competitive majors at UCLA and I had to be an overachiever. As a result, I decided to challenge myself and take 11 units of Honors. I was already living in San Diego, so I thought I would be able to deal with the additional work. However, those last courses I took focused on more challenging academics-rather than leadership.

Fortunately, I got my acceptance to UCLA, completed my Honors requirements, obtained my Associate’s in History; and most importantly, I changed as a person from being an under confident and introverted individual with indecisive goals, to a Mesa Honors student, a class leader, a confident person, and a UCLA transfer student. The Honors Program definitely does that to a person and I am proof of that. From my perspective, the main element a student needs in order to obtain so much from the program is motivation. The faculty is always there to assist students with anything they need, including their own space to study and make new friends; however, the student is the one who needs to put in all the effort, if he or she wants to get admitted into a school like UCLA through TAP.
Honors Program Completion Ceremony
by Tiffany Starkey

Recognizing the achievement of students who completed the Mesa College Honors Program, a ceremony was held on the sunny 16th of May, 2014. Along with other students who completed the program, I attended with loved ones. As pointed out in speeches given by Dr. Leticia Lopez, Professor Wendy Smith, and Mesa President, Dr. Pamela Luster, friends and family were an integral part of our journey and were also celebrated. (They also got to enjoy pastries!)

Speeches also emphasized that honors comprises personal and academic confidence. Student participants received the Mesa College Honors Program Completion Certificate, cords, and an engraved keychain.
Commencement: A Celebration of Goals Achieved
by Paula Posada

One year ago, I made the decision to strive for greater things and make the most of my life. I decided I wanted to transfer to one of the top universities in the country. Driven by that goal, I decided to join the Honors Program and become a club officer. During my time in the club, I made some valuable friendships with people who have pushed me at times when I felt burned out and just wanted to give up. In the past year, we have helped each other grow and become the people we wanted to be. The day of our commencement was the day we celebrated our accomplishments.

I was just putting on my blue Valedictorian cap when I was told there was a package in the mail for me. It was a thick envelope and it contained a red folder, “STANFORD — We applaud you…” My efforts had paid off! All those extra assignments, all those binge-studying nights, all those worries about maintaining a perfect GPA were NOT in vain! I had reached the goal I had set a year earlier and I am proud to be one of the 33 out of about 1700 applicants that were admitted to transfer into one of the greatest schools in the world. I was so excited, I took the folder with me to the ceremony and did not let go of it for one second. While I was walking around the USD campus trying to find some familiar faces, I ran into Dean Hands who flipped out in joy over the red folder I was holding. She hugged me several times and said, “Oh my God! This is just the best day! You have to take your package up on stage and wave it around like HEY,” which is exactly what I did.

I am normally the type of person, who wants to be in the front row at any event, but my friend’s car broke down and I saved a place for her, sitting in the very back, so she would see me. She arrived midway through the rehearsal and I laid out the facts for her. Then the ushers told us to get up in our rows and led us through a long narrow white tunnel. My heart began to race, and suddenly, I kind of felt as if we were cows being herded to a slaughter house. That would have been a truly villainous plot, but as we exited that scary white
tunnel, we were greeted by chanting crowds with banners and horns. We were the stars of our commencement!

Once we were comfortably seated, several speakers—including our very own All-California Academic Team Member and Coca-Cola New Century Scholar, Sarah Farmer—honored us students, Mesa College, and the individuals who helped shape our campus. The college president, Dr. Pamela Luster, decided to pioneer in Mesa history by taking a selfie with Sarah Farmer, Jay Walker, and the entire graduating class of 2014. It was all so exciting but the part of the commencement we could not wait for was THE WALK. When the students were called on stage, I immediately regretted sitting in the very back. The entire time, the anxiety bubbled up inside of me like carbon dioxide in a shaken bottle of champagne.

Eventually though, my name was called and the next 5 seconds are completely erased from my memory. It was as if my name was called and suddenly I stood in front of Dr. Luster who clasped her hands in excitement over my Stanford folder. What happened to my walk? When I watch the video footage I am clearly walking across that stage, waving, grinning from one ear to the other, and receiving a black folder to hold my degree. Following the walk I cannot remember, I was up for a photo shoot and I am sure, I looked somewhat insane with that exaggerated smile that I could not physically wipe off my face.

When I walked back to my seat, I trembled a bit but I DID IT! And I was happy. And I was ready to walk out of the pavilion through a tunnel of educators dressed in medieval robes, accompanied by an orchestra playing the theme of Darth Vader. What a way to go Hon-OUR Way!
From left to right:
Igor Maron, Sarah Farmer, Paula Posada, Marcelo Masur and Jesus Escudero