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# CC Spin

March 2015

News & Views From Contra Costa County High Schools

Volume 8 Issue 2

## Gay students receive support for coming out from local community

By JOSH WILLIAMS

Northgate High School

In our modern society, the stress of “coming out” creates a lot of pressure for anybody who has kept their sexual identity secret. The biggest fear is the fear of rejection, say those who have faced such conflict.

Four in 10 youth who associate themselves with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning (LGBTQ+) community say that they live in areas where their lifestyles are not accepted, according to Human Rights Campaign, a national civil rights organization with the goal of seeking equal rights for people who identify as LGBTQ+.

Teenage years can be incredibly hard for someone dealing with such personal issues. That rejection could be from family members, friends, or even peers.

However, just by living in the Bay Area, the pressure is reduced because of the diverse nature of the community, local students say.

“It was easy to come out, because I already knew who I was, so others should too,” senior Max Ragland stated. He has been out since his freshman year, and he told how he has been a strong believer in equality rights since before he can remember. “My friends were not at all shocked,” Ragland added.

Many cite living in accepting areas that surround the Northgate community with providing unexpected support.

A trend among LGBTQ+ youth too afraid or worried to come out to others verbally is use social media to proclaim their sexuality, according the Human Rights Campaign.

According to the group, 73 percent of teenagers who keep their identity secret say they feel much more comfortable being honest about themselves online, as opposed to in the real world. They say this might be an easier option for those who have trouble expressing their feelings to family, friends or peers.

“One of my closest friends came out to me sophomore year. It was really hard for him to tell his parents and peers. However the struggle he went through made him the strong confident individual he is today,” senior Maria Krasilnikov said.

Nine in 10 LGBTQ+ youth say that they are open to

See GAY STUDENTS Page 5



Photo by Jessica Thang, Hercules High School

## Hercules fights bullying, declares 'No place for hate'

By SUBHIKSHA MANI

Hercules High School

In the face of constant bullying concerns at Hercules High, the administration adopted a campaign named “No Place for Hate.”

Last fall administrators and the Health Center staff gave a presentation to students regarding the new efforts to prevent bullying. Students were asked why they think bullying occurs and the effects of bullying. To inspire students, the presenters quoted Malcolm X: “If you don’t stand for something, you will fall for anything.” Students also saw a social activist video explaining how bullying is something worth standing against.

The campaign is an attempt to maintain a safe school environment so that students can focus on their education rather than worrying about their safety.

“For a student to reach their maximum academic potential, they must first feel safe in their surroundings,” Assistant Principal Dingane Newson said.

To encourage student participation, the staff passed out stickers and pins labeled “No Place for Hate” and asked all students to sign a pledge to help resolve bullying. When asked about bullying, AP Government and Economics teacher John Franz said.

“It’s important to address it because the data indicates that it has been something of a problem.”

Hercules hopes to eliminate the root of bullying through the campaign. Administrators want to ensure the safety and security of every student and the “No Place for Hate” campaign is definitely no different.

“I think the school is heading in the right direction,” Franz said.

## Outreach helps middle schoolers

By ROYA DOWLATI

Monte Vista High School

A Monte Vista Club is reaching out to middle school students to help them better their musical abilities.

Music Outreach is a club where Monte Vista students are paired with middle school students, who are given free music tutoring sessions once a week.

The program allows band members from Stone Valley, Los Cerros and Diablo Vista middle schools to learn musical skills from more experienced high school band members to help prepare them for the more competitive band team in high school.

High school members involved in the Music Out

See MUSIC OUTREACH Page 5



IN TUNE Monte Vista High junior Olivia Addis teaches seventh grader Andrew Hui techniques during a tutoring session hosted by Music Outreach. Photo courtesy the Monte Vista Stampede.

## Acalanes Sex Ed program draws heated debate

By MEGAN YEE

Acalanes High School

The typical Acalanes Union School District board meeting is a relatively quiet affair, where the gallery seats are empty or occupied by a few district teachers or community members. However, over 25 attendees packed the December 10 meeting to vocalize wide ranging opinions about the ongoing controversy surrounding Acalanes High School’s sexual health education program.

The 19 passionate speeches that dominated the public comment session showed layers of stances on the issue, ranging from demanding the removal of Planned Parenthood programs from campus, to criticizing the district’s transparency and communication with parents, to voicing strong support for the current sex ed curriculum.

Acalanes senior Sam Fraser spoke first in support of Planned Parenthood, emphasizing the importance of scientific and comprehensive sexual education.

“This is debate is not just about what is sound educational policy, but what is sound health policy,” Fraser said. “Comprehensive sex education provides for a healthier society, and it must be preserved.”

A number of other student and alumni speakers echoed Fraser’s comments, while others stood in the audience holding signs in support of Planned Parenthood. However, Acalanes parent Robin Longchamps took the stand third to advocate for the immediate removal of Planned Parenthood from classrooms.

“The district needs to find a new, more responsible program immediately or use your own teachers. Planned Parenthood is a conflict of interest at Acalanes, a company that offers health services, including abortion, and offers products and drugs to 14-year-olds,” Longchamps said. “For instance, would you be OK

if one of your teachers offered an Acalanes student their business such as piercings, supplements, or when legal, marijuana sales?”

Camille Giglio, a member of the local No to Irresponsible Sex Education (NOISE) coalition, spoke at an earlier board meeting but took the stand again to reiterate her point.

“I feel very sad for most of these students who are merely mouthing everything Planned Parenthood has taught them, and even some of the parents who seem to think Planned Parenthood is next to God and there is nothing else more important,” Giglio said.

Acalanes parents Christina Lyons, John Lyons, and Cathy Holt voiced opinions that fell in between the two extremes and asked for more transparency from the district.

“We believe that comprehensive sexual education is critical for all of our kids,” Christina Lyons said at the board meeting. “What we’re asking for is that we get to see the program so we can have more accurate and comprehensive discussions with our students around the dinner table. What we’re asking for is a closer look at the way material is delivered.”

After the speeches concluded, district Superintendent John Nickerson addressed the public, saying that the board would discuss the subject further at a board meeting in the spring.

Acalanes Principal Allison Silvestri, who was present at the meeting, is well aware of the range of perspectives in the controversy.

“There is a large spectrum. The goals are a moving target. People have different belief systems, ethical systems, perspectives, different understandings of what has taken place,” Silvestri said. “There is so much misinformation all over the place, and there are so many requests. It’s hard to wade through all the waters of what is being asked for.”

The controversy first received local news

See PLANNED PARENTHOOD Page 3

## Assassins event roils California administration

By ERIN FOX

California High School

It’s was only a few days after the annual game Assassins began for more than 200 California High School seniors, but controversy was swirling on campus between school administrators and among the game’s participants.

Principal Sarah Wondolowski sent an email out to parents referring to the game as “very dangerous” and “frightening.”

Wondolowski stressed that the game was not affiliated with the school and shouldn’t be played on campus. She discouraged students from participating in the game, which has been an unofficial tradition at California High for at least a decade.

In Assassins students are assigned targets to “assassinate” by shooting them with foam darts from Nerf guns. Each team of two students pays \$20 to participate. They are eliminated from the game if they are shot, or fail to shoot their targets within a specified time. There is a cash prize for those placing first, second or third.

Assassins is a popular game that is played in high school and college campuses in California and across the country.

According to Wondolowski’s email, the San Ramon police department had been called twice earlier in the week by California students “who were frightened by other participants in the game.”

School administrators were not available for further comment.

Since Wondolowski’s email to parents on, police have been contacted at least once more. Senior Greg Light announced to his first period statistics class that he was hiding behind his target’s car earlier that morning and someone called the police on him. He said he didn’t get into trouble after speaking to the officer.

According to the Cal Assassins 2015 Twitter account – @calassassins, which is run by the game’s organizers who are known as “godfathers,” seniors playing the game shouldn’t call police because it “draws way too much unwanted attention to the game.”

The godfathers warned that “[The police] are already planning on going to [Wondolowski on Thursday].”

“I just made it a very strict rule to not get the cops involved ‘cause, I mean, I feel like cops have better things to do than to worry about people complaining about this game,” said senior Ian Lillard, the game godfather. “Plus it gives negative attention to this game that is just for fun.”

Police involvement is nothing new to the game of Assassins.

San Ramon police became involved in the game when they were called twice the first week the game was played at California High. Senior Shalaka Phadnis called police Wednesday afternoon when some students blocked her car with their vehicles, and then sat on the hood of her car so she couldn’t drive away.

Phadnis said she was harassed by a group of students, including the two who were trying to “assassinate” her, and they wouldn’t let her drive away, so she called police.

“It had gone too far,” Phadnis said. “It’s a game, so you don’t need to harass me.”

“The officer was pissed because

See ASSASSINS Page 11





Photo illustration by Camille Cruz, Hercules High School

## Hercules splits its middle, high schools

By C. CHUNG, C. CRUZI, TAN

Hercules High School

Hercules Middle High School is now two schools: Hercules Middle School and Hercules High School.

After the reassignment of principal Jen Bender as an English Language Arts coach, the school was on the hunt for not just one replacement, but two.

In deciding the future for Hercules Middle High School, the school board decided last May 2014 that the two halves didn't necessarily fit. The board's answer was to separate the school into two, effective this school year.

"The decision from the board was to split the two schools because of conflicts in the student day, conflicts in the schedule, conflicts in the ability for the staff to follow the same day — (we were) two totally different structures trying to operate as one," new High School principal Paul Mansingh said.

The two schools have their own respective principals, the high school with Mansingh and the middle school with L. Renee Lama, who was formerly an assistant principal at Kennedy High School in Richmond.

With different schools come different age groups, focuses, priorities and teaching practices.

To make sure these issues are addressed, the middle and high school administrations hold monthly meetings to discuss overall campus safety, as well as climate and transportation arrangements.

The primary focus of Hercules High is graduation — academic — whereas the primary focus of Hercules Middle is behavioral. Rather than having to account for kids ranging in age from 11 to 18, each school now has a narrower age group to look after.

Though the schools are officially separate, Mansingh said, "we're still one campus, but with instruction, teaching and learning separate."

## Charges dismissed for student arrested in lockdown incident

By ADAM BLAKE

Acalanes High School

The Contra Costa District Attorney's office opted, on Jan. 8, not to file criminal charges for a student's online posting of words and images that Acalanes administration and law enforcement officials perceived as a potentially lethal threat against Acalanes by the former student, Alex Andrews.

In June 2014 police arrested Andrews, a class of 2014 senior, and charged him with making illegal threats that resulted in a lockdown earlier that day.

After being held in jail and making bail hours after his arrest, Andrews awaited a decision for months from the district attorney's office as to whether or not he would be prosecuted.

"It's a giant weight off my back now that it's finally over," Andrews said.

The administration reached the decision to shutter the school and make students shelter in place after a former student who wishes to remain unnamed, a classmate of Andrews', expressed concern to Acalanes administration regarding comments he said he overheard while in a brief, casual conversation in a classroom with Andrews.

Andrews asked when the senior picnic was going to be held and allegedly uttered the statement that the event would be where he would "exact his revenge."

The former student also claims that he saw other, earlier threats posted by Andrews on Facebook, at least one directed at former Acalanes Principal Aida Glimme specifically, which he says have since been deleted.

An image Andrews posted on Facebook and Instagram with the caption "I AM DEATH" at around 2 a.m. on June 6 also weighed heavily with site administrators' minds that the school could be in danger. The posting came just two weeks after the Isla Vista massacre next to UC Santa Barbara and in the wake of

other school shootings.

This situation and others similar have made administration increasingly more wary of potential dangers, such as this, that concern student safety.

"The shootings bring heightened awareness of the issue," Glimme said. "We learn from every story nationwide, what to do and what not to do. All of those schools' stories influence how we react in a situation as we learn from their experiences and want to prevent the same event at our school."

After administrators were unable to contact Andrews, they initiated a lockdown that lasted nearly four hours.

"[It] wasn't any one of those things separately that caused us to go into a lockdown," Glimme said. "It was a lot of the pieces of the puzzle seemed to fit at that moment together that gave us the reason to react the way we reacted."

With Acalanes secured under lockdown, Lafayette police arrested Andrews citing California Penal Code section 422 which "is a section called terrorist threats," according to Lafayette Chief of Police Eric Christensen. "It talks about people who make threats or people who make implied threats with the intent to essentially terrorize other people."

While the code does not contain any explicit mention of "terrorist" or "terrorism," it does say a threat can be a crime when it causes a person "reasonably to be in sustained fear for his or her own safety" even if there is no intent to carry it out.

The section also requires that the words have to be "unequivocal, unconditional, immediate and specific," which puts a high burden of proof on authorities.

Deputy district attorney John Yamaguchi commented that the decision not to press charges was reached because, "There was a lack of sufficient evidence to establish any specific intent to threaten anyone or the school. The remark was rather ambiguous, and I didn't see anything directed at anybody."

# News

CC Spin

## Tribute tweet to grandmother goes viral

By SPENCER JUDD

Northgate High School

What started out as a loving shout out to her grandma turned into a tweet heard around the world for a Northgate High senior.

The student's simple message was re-tweeted a few times, then a little more, then a lot more; before she knew it, the tweet had reached tens of thousands of people.

Megan Shone had a rare and unusual experience that all started Oct. 19 when she tweeted a picture her grandma had posted on her own Facebook to family and friends. The picture was of Shone's grandma, Rosemary Capitulo, a cancer victim who was going through chemotherapy.

Capitulo, a hardcore Giants fan, had knit some yarn in orange Giants' colors to be used as hair in support of the Giants and their entrance into the World Series. Capitulo donned a Giants cap and snapped the selfie as she headed out on a cold morning.

"Girls golf this morning. Halloween theme and my own knitted 'hair'. Felt lousy this week, but I know the girls will give me renewed energy," read her post.

Enter Shone with a tweet.

"I saw my grandma's post on Facebook and was very touched and inspired by it," she said. "I wanted to share it with my friends."

And she did. "I checked my phone later in the day and everything had spiraled out of control into something I would never imagine. The irony of it all was that my grandma joked about it going viral before it happened."

The message gained momentum with a snowball effect, and it soon became a Twitter sensation with over 15,000 retweets and 71,000 favorites within two days.

It was even seen by a friend of Shone's in Egypt, a

Northgate graduate from last year who contacted Shone.

Within the next few days, big time websites, networks, and magazines such as the Huffington Post, Cosmopolitan, Buzz Feed, Fox News Houston, Fox Sports, and Chat Magazine would hear the sweet story and publish articles about it on their sites. Capitulo would even have an interview on the Channel 5 news.

Some of the comments from these articles include the following: From Huffington Post:

"The 71-year-old's granddaughter, Megan Shone, tweeted this inspiring picture, showing exactly how Capitulo is coping. We'd say she's taking it in stride." From Cosmopolitan, "Best Person of the Day award goes straight to this brilliant and extremely cool grandma from San Jose in California, who's currently fighting a brave battle against cancer and undergoing chemotherapy for the disease. Best Nan ever?"

To cap a crazy week, Shone and her grandma were surprised by her dad with tickets to Game 3 of the World Series on Oct. 24. As they walked into the stadium they were greeted with hugs by fans and admirers of Grandma Capitulo, people who approached them and said they were touched by her courage and optimism.

"It was so fun," commented Shone. "Perfect way to cap off the week."

This special event has spread a message of hope to those struggling with cancer across the world and it all came from one of Northgate's students with a simple tap on a screen. Many said they were touched by the tweet and the optimistic approach that Capitulo was showing in the face of cancer and chemotherapy.

When asked what message she hoped would come across through all of this, Capitulo said, "If anything, I would hope that people feel inspired to have a positive attitude everyday and to live your life."



MOTIVATION The Stang Gang of Monte Vista High cheers in the crowd during a basketball game. Decked out in MVHS apparel and face paint, this group supports teams during all of their games. Photo by Ariel Chen, Monte Vista High School.

## Stang Gang sparks support for Monte Vista athletes

By ARIEL CHEN

Monte Vista High School

One high school sports game at a time, Stang Gang strives to make the world - or at least Monte Vista - into a better place.

The concept of Stang Gang is quite simple. It's a group of Monte Vista students who bring spirit to less recognized sports teams. They dress up, paint themselves red and black all over and raise the spirit through the roof.

"Sports like volleyball, soccer, and water polo never have enough fans. Basketball and football have roaring crowds that cheer and give the team a boost. (We) wanted to create Stang Gang to give those teams a chance to experience what a student crowd is," said senior Jordan Weil, one of Stang Gang's founding members.

Stang Gang began with a water polo game, and the 10 members really boosted team morale. The game went into double overtime and Monte Vista won.

"That's when [we] knew we had something," Weil said. "Stang Gang is for anyone with spirit and heart who wants a fun group to cheer with."

Stang Gang really blossomed when they brought up their idea to leadership. Social studies and leadership teacher Andrea Greco and the rest of leadership loved the idea of cheering on sports with less of a follower base.

Stang Gang tries to show up for as many games as possible, for all sports and grades. They plan on having more tailgates and events. Weil, along with two other members, seniors Daniel Reget and Chad Hously, were asked to be spirit leaders for the San Ramon football game.

The efforts of this spirited group of students greatly raises the morale of MV's sports teams and is appreciated by other students.

"Stang Gang is easily one of the coolest groups of people. [I] love you all so much, I can't tell you enough how great you have made my senior year," said senior Natalie Brooker, a senior varsity volleyball player said in a tweet.

Jenyth Utchen, volleyball coach and English teacher, agrees that Stang Gang was "instrumental in my volleyball team's success."

Students increasingly showed up to volleyball games in their "Mustang Wall" T-shirts. More than 50 students

were at the San Ramon Valley away game, then more than 75 at the second round play-off against Mission San Jose, and finally a full house for the NCS championship against San Ramon.

"It was the first time we put both halves of the bleachers down for a women's volleyball game," Utchen said. "Our fans were loud, organized and fun to watch. They really gave us a home court advantage, and intimidated the other teams."

Hously helped create Stang Gang. "I love that when we go to games I'm able to be with all my friends in one place, and do something different before we all go away to college," he said. "We're one big happy family."

## Re-bell-ion!



REBELLION! Monte Vista High students chant "MVR" or "Monte Vista Rebellion" in the large gym where they gathered for safety in case there was an actual emergency during a rash of false fire alarms on campus on Dec. 11. Photo courtesy of the Monte Vista Stampede.

CC Spin

# News

March 2015

By HALLEY PASCOE

Clayton Valley Charter High School

In the past, Clayton Valley students have been criticized for their lack of school pride and the nonexistent student section at athletic events. Seniors Hela Ahmadi and Daisy Agers



both decided to put an end to that stereotype by revamping the Blue Crew organization at our school.

"I thought it was really lame that no one had spirit at schools so I wanted to change that," Agers said when asked why she became so passionate about Blue Crew.

The change at sporting events has been remarkable; there is actually a student section at the games now, and students are excited to participate and show pride in their school.

"I wanted to bring back school spirit because my brother would always tell me stories about Blue Crew when he was in high school and I used to go to the basketball games and sit with my brother and the Blue Crew section," Ahmadi said.

Both Agers and Ahmadi are extremely happy with the enthusiasm they have received from the student body, and they hope that the Blue Crew will only continue to grow. They want athletes to be encouraged to join Blue

Senior Hela Ahmadi appreciates all student support in Blue Crew. Photo by Halley Pascoe, Clayton Valley Charter High School.

Crew after seeing what a huge difference the support makes at their own games.

Both girls want to be a part of something that they can look back on after high school and have fun, positive memories of. When asked what effect the Blue Crew has made on the environment at games this year, senior football player Ricky Helena said, "It's great because we have a huge crowd cheering for us, which is a great feeling, and it intimidates the other team."

Overall, it seems that the Blue Crew has brought our student body together and united us as a school. It makes the school more unified, and the various sports teams play better knowing that they have a loyal fan base cheering them on.

"I think that we definitely have got the students to have school pride, and know that it'll only get better from here because more people are hearing about it and want to participate," said Ahmadi.

These two girls are dedicated to their cause and have turned their vision into a reality, with what seems to be only more success in the future.



Senior Daisy Agers encourages all students to come out to games. Photo by Halley Pascoe, Clayton Valley Charter High School.

## Planned Parenthood link raises ire of conservative organizations

From ACALANES SEX ED Page 1

coverage in late October, when NOISE members accused the district of allowing Planned Parenthood to indoctrinate students and encourage them to have sex.

"Planned Parenthood is an inappropriate outside organization that is taking advantage of this opportunity to find future clients for themselves," Giglio said to *The Blueprint* before the board meeting began. "This is taking young lives and encouraging them to merely think of their bodies as playgrounds."

Griffin Holt, an Acalanes junior who spoke at the meeting, felt that instructors delivered the material in a way that implied students were sexually active. He emphasized that he is not opposed to Planned Parent-

"This is taking young lives and encouraging them to merely think of their bodies as playgrounds."

hood curriculum itself, just the way the material is delivered.

"They addressed the class as if everyone was having sex," Holt said. "There were a lot of hypotheticals but they implied that they were true."

However, other students who have taken the course disagreed and never felt like Planned Parenthood instructors were encouraging them to have sex.

"The instructors were very friendly and didn't seem to be pressuring us to have sex or insinuate anything of a sexual nature further than their lectures required them to," freshman Andrew Che said.

Hously helped create Stang Gang. "I love that when we go to games I'm able to be with all my friends in one place, and do something different before we all go away to college," he said. "We're one big happy family."

California state law mandates that comprehensive sexual education programs teach about abstinence, but abstinence-only education is illegal.

"It's encouraged as the only way to prevent pregnancy and prevent STIs. You don't have to teach sexual health education. You have to HIV/AIDS prevention," Nickerson said. "There's some overlap, but if you do teach sexual health education, it cannot be abstinence only education."

Some critics challenged whether Acalanes could contract Planned Parenthood to teach the program. However, California State Education Code section 51938 states that districts may allow outside consultants to teach comprehensive sex education as long as the district notifies parents ahead of time.

Education Code section 51938 also mandates that parents and guardians be able to excuse their students from the program, so Acalanes sends an opt-out form that explicitly states that Planned Parenthood teaches the program.

Although Planned Parent edu-

cators teach the courses, students' regular certified physical education teachers are present in the classroom at all times.

The California Department of Education recommends Planned Parenthood as a provider, and public schools across the state use it, according to Nickerson. Acalanes has used Planned Parenthood for over a decade, and the Acalanes Parent Club began funding the program when Planned Parenthood started having to charge schools because they lost some funds from the government.

"The district and the board are committed to providing strong sexual health and HIV/AIDS prevention education in our schools," district board president Susie Epstein said. "Planned Parenthood has an excellent reputation for providing age-appropriate instruction using objective and medically accurate information within the requirements and parameters of the Education Code."

However, the Pacific Justice Institute (PJI), a non-profit conservative legal defense organization, published a press release on December 8 questioning the legality of certain aspects of the curriculum, specifically a document titled "Sex Check!" that lists criteria for being ready to have sex and a chart of a "Genderbread Person."

PJI says that the checklist suggests that teens are ready for sex if they can check off all the criteria. PJI also challenges the check-list's legality because Ed Code Section 51938 states that any evaluation tools, including surveys, questionnaires, and tests concerning students' attitudes or practices relating to sex can only be administered with parent consent.

The district does not consider the checklist to be a survey, test, or questionnaire because students are not required to fill it out, no data is collected, and teachers nor administrators look at anything the student does choose to fill out. Instructors use the handouts as a warm-up to get students thinking about the topic.

"The point of these checklists is not to show that you are ready for sex. The point of them is to show frankly the opposite," said sophomore Jonah Kallen, who took the course. "It's to show you that it's very difficult to check off everything on that list and that it is just the same very difficult to show you are ready."

PJI also questions the use of the "genderbread person" illustration to teach the gender spectrum, saying that it encourages students to "choose their gender."

According to Nickerson, California State law mandates that schools teach about gender identity. Students at the board meeting discussed the importance of learning about gender identity and how they believe it pertains to supporting a healthy school environment.

"Planned Parenthood's lessons don't instruct high school freshmen to define themselves with unconventional gender identities," senior Chris

Mickas said. "The lessons teach students to be more comfortable with themselves and with other students who might not conform to traditional roles," Mickas added.

The press release also claims that "students reported that instructors threw a model of female reproductive organs at students." According to Silvestri, no students reported this directly, but a parent brought it to her attention. She asked the certified teachers who sat in on every class, and none of them said they witnessed the behavior.

Brad Dacus, president of the PJI, attended the board meeting but was hesitant to talk specifically about the controversy because PJI is currently providing counsel for several parents. However, he did comment broadly on the situation.

"The district and the board are committed to providing strong sexual health and HIV/AIDS prevention education in our schools,"

"A school district that has a proper process in place, does not reach this point," Dacus said. "Parents have voiced their concerns for quite some time and when you have proper notice, when you have proper respect for the state and federal statutes regarding not only opting out but also consent, then you have a proper foundation that can help prevent this kind of a confrontation."

Giglio also stated in her speech to the board that news of the issue has circulated nationwide. While this statement is accurate, the national publicity is largely due to an article published on Fox News' website that claiming that Acalanes is encouraging students to have sex and choose their gender.

The Fox News story was originally posted on Dec. 9 and shares key similarities with the PJI press release. The Fox article and Lamorinda Patch's posting of the PJI press release prompted a group of around 15 students and alumni to attend, and in some cases speak, at the board meeting in support of Planned Parenthood. In addition, alumni sounded off on social media to show support.

The district plans to address the issue further in spring 2015, and a parent petition will be considered when making plans for the future to improve the program and communication with parents.

Both Silvestri and Nickerson said that they are considering changes to the vendor selection process and thinking about what a parent preview night would look like and how they could execute one in the future.

"We're in general looking at our board policies regarding sexual health," Nickerson said. "We'll think about instructional delivery."

There has been some really positive outcomes of this process."

## Missing teacher, pizza feed puzzles Cal High students

By JEREMY MONITZ

Northgate High School

Class began normally on Dec. 5 for teacher Chris Doherty's third period senior American Government class—until students realized they had no teacher.

A substitute, who was supposed to be there, never arrived. After an hour, students said a female staff member notified Principal Sarah Wondolowski.

When Wondolowski entered the classroom, she noticed she was being video recorded by several students. She said she requested they delete any photos and recordings of her on their phones and to not post them to social media.

Some students believed this was meant to cover up any evidence that the class went unsupervised for such a long period of time, especially since Superintendent Mary Shelton was on campus that morning observing classrooms.

"[Wondolowski] wanted to protect herself," said senior Mason Friedman, a student in the class.

Wondolowski said her statement was directed toward the students who were filming her on their phones when she entered the classroom. "I don't think it's right I should be on social media without my consent," said Wondolowski.

Senior Kailey Counts said she thought Wondolowski made it seem like the class should delete everything on their phones that showed them not being supervised during the period.

But others disagree. "[Wondolowski] asked us nicely to delete any photos or videos and all our tweets," senior Alli Lepere said. "[She] wasn't rude to us at all."

Added senior Smita Balaji, "She never told us not to tell people about it."

After expressing her pride in the students for not leaving campus or causing problems, students said Wondolowski told the class she would order them pizza for lunch that day.

Wondolowski said the pizza for students was meant as a "positive thing," intended as a reward for their good behavior. She said it is "completely false" that she gave students pizza so they would not tell others they did not have a substitute, as some students believe.

"I think Wondolowski giving us pizza was her way of bribing [us] so we wouldn't spread it around," said Counts. "I think she was scared about people finding out."

But Balaji saw the pizza as a more innocent reward. "It was nice of [Wondolowski] to offer us pizza," said Balaji. "She told us we were very well-behaved."

Added Friedman, "She gave us pizza to say, 'OK, good job' for staying in class. Knowing seniors, it could've been a lot worse. A lot more [students] were planning on leaving [the classroom]."

The class was left unsupervised because the substitute who was scheduled to watch the class covered another history class whose teacher had to leave because of an emergency.

Administrators learned students were unsupervised after someone in the front office called the classroom, asked to speak with the substitute and the student who answered the phone hung up.

Doherty said he was informed of the situation the next Monday, Dec. 8, when a student told him.

Doherty said he was not surprised that a mistake like this happened and that there was no substitute to cover his classroom.

"There's a shortage [of substitutes]," Doherty said. "A lot of times there are no subs in the district."

Wondolowski said it is the district and school's obligation to provide substitute teachers. But if the district is unable to find a substitute, Cal teachers are often asked by administrators to cover for their colleagues. Doherty believed his students handled the situation appropriately. "[Third period] is a really, really, good class," said Doherty.

Once they realized they were unsupervised, students said they began to set rules for the classroom, such as only one person at a time could leave the classroom with the hall pass, and the door must remain completely closed.

Since district Superintendent Mary Shelton was on campus visiting classrooms that morning, students devised a plan to start discussing gun control if an adult entered the classroom.

Many students said they were unsupervised for as long as 80 minutes, while administrators said it was closer to an hour.

Math teacher Ghazala Niazi, who substituted for Doherty during A and fifth periods that day said, "Mistakes happen, we have to learn from this one. Clearly in this situation, there was a lack of communication... leaving students unsupervised for a length of time."



# News

■ By MADELEINE HELVEY

Acalanes High School

Many students, whether in 1st, 6th, or 11th grade, dread going to class because of dull, boring teachers. No student is eager to take notes for a whole period, or to listen to a 45-minute lecture.

In order to avoid putting kids through this excruciating experience, Michael Meneghetti, Paul Verbanszky, and Karen Kreider have all found ways to make their classrooms fun and appealing for their students, earning them the Eukel Teacher Trust award.

In order to recognize these excellent teachers, as well as many others who are significant influences in the lives of kids in the Contra Costa County, the Warren E. Eukel Teacher Trust was introduced. The organization raises money to award teachers with monetary grants that they may use in any way they please. Teachers often use a portion of the money to improve their classrooms and to buy supplies that extend their school's budget.

Warren E. Eukel served as an educator for more than three decades, and in recognition of his influential character on students, this award was introduced. The organization first began honoring teachers in 1992.

Due to its prestigious reputation, this award is considered a great honor to all. Teachers who have been recognized by the trust have previously been recognized by even higher powers, including former presidents of the United States.

"Teaching can be such a thankless job, but receiving an award such as this means a lot in validating our efforts as teachers," said Paul Verbanszky, an AP Psychology and Government and Economics teacher at Campolindo High School said.

These teachers share the ability to make class fun and exciting, as well as a productive learning environment. With hands-on projects and experiments, class becomes a place for students to learn and interact with other students.

Michael Meneghetti is considered a legend in Lafayette. Brand new sixth graders are always anxious to find his name on their schedule on the first day of school. Few fifth graders graduate elementary school without hearing rumors about that one "really cool science teacher at Stanley who lights his thumb on fire."

Even his former students still remember projects and moments that originally sparked their interest in science.

"I always loved the monthly challenges. They were so much fun and I looked forward to them every month," said Grace

Baer, a sophomore at Acalanes who had Meneghetti for 6th grade science.

Baer has not had a science teacher since sixth grade that she believes was quite like Meneghetti.

"The hands-on aspect makes learning science a little less painful," said Meneghetti said, who teaches sixth grade science and Robotics and Engineering at Stanley Middle School.

He prepares two to three hands-on projects for his students every week, and even makes his tests interactive, which he believes do a better job of demonstrating how much the students have learned.

As a middle school student himself, he once had a teacher who only had his students copy down notes all period. After having this teacher, he decided he would never have his students take notes all class for the sole purpose of taking notes, and he has carried out this promise to himself.

Karen Kreider, another winner of the Eukel Award, is a first grade teacher at St. Francis School of Assisi. She believes that having a positive, caring, patient, and fun attitude is the only way to have a successful teaching career.

"I think I was chosen for this award because the students responded positively to my teaching style and appreciated the way they were treated. I think parents saw

that I tried to do my very best to meet the educational and emotional needs of every child," said Kreider.

She tries hard to bring out the best in her students and to make their learning experience a positive one.

Verbanszky, the final winner of the Eukel Award, is another excellent teacher. Verbanszky has had a big impact in the Acalanes Union High School District both in and out of his classroom. As advisor for the Academic Decathlon team, Campolindo has won the National championship title in their division these past two years. Verbanszky is also the co-coordinator of the Acalanes Gifted And Talented Education (AGATE) program, a district-wide program for a select group of students that educates through research and hands-on projects. His input has helped the AGATE program grow.

"I love waking up and going to work as an educator. I found something I really love to do and that is very important to have in your professional life," Verbanszky said.

These three teachers have all had a huge impact on their students and at their schools. The Warren E. Eukel Trust chose them as winners of the award because of their exceptional teaching skills and their commitment to outstanding education.

## Acalanes student wins nationally televised fashion competition

■ By ANNIKA WALKER

Acalanes High School

Few people can say that they've won a competition broadcast on national television. However, when Acalanes junior Julia Husch was told that she was one of the three contestants competing on an episode of P'roject Runway: Threads," that seemingly faraway dream became a tangible reality.

Husch started out as a local fashionista who made clothes for her dolls. What started out as a hobby quickly grew into a passion and eventually became a lifelong dream.

She took one huge step towards this dream when she was asked to be on Lifetime's Project Runway: Threads, a spin off of Project Runway that is designed specifically for younger participants.

Husch had never expected to get the opportunity to be on national television, but she was very thankful for the opportunity.

"I never thought this was going to happen until it did, but once the interview process started, it was really exciting," Husch said. "The whole thing just fell into place."

The filming took place over the course of one week in Los Angeles. Husch competed against two other participants her age. Their task was to create two looks: one inspired by Seventeen Magazine and another using mismatched fabrics and accessories.

At the end of the show, the contestants found out who had won the competition. Winning came with a grand prize of \$10,000 worth of fabric from JoAnn's, \$10,000 worth of Brother sewing equipment, a feature in Seventeen magazine, and the privilege to attend a summer program at the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandise in Los Angeles.

When Husch's yellow crop top and turquoise skirt ensemble secured her the winning position, her first reaction was surprise.

"At first I was kind of stunned, but then I realized that it was really happening. It was kind of surreal," Husch said.

Unfortunately for Husch, she had to keep her first place finish a secret until her episode aired. Keeping her success quiet proved to be one of the hardest parts of the competition.

"After I won, I had to go home and keep it a secret for a whole bunch of months," Husch said.

Her piece for Seventeen Magazine was featured in the January/February 2015 issue and included a DIY project and a quote explaining how the project was made.

"Seventeen sent all the winners a basic garment and we got to reinvent or decorate it however we wanted," Husch said. "I was sent a backpack, which I embellished with beads and lace. I think what they did was really cool because it gets to show each designer's creativity and exemplifies a different piece of what we can do."

"Julia has always been herself. She has never cared what other people think about what she makes. She is proud and is so confident, and she genuinely loves what she does. She is 100 percent herself 100 percent of the time," said junior Norah Haughian, Husch's friend.

Ever since she picked up fashion, Husch has spent countless hours working on her projects, and her devotion has not gone unnoticed by those around her.

"She is honestly one of the most hardworking and determined people I know. This has always been her dream and she has worked every day to accomplish it," Haughian said.

Husch is planning to attend fashion school once she graduates high school, and she looks forward to further refining her fashion design skills.

"I'm just breaking the surface. There's so much that I don't know and that I can't do, so I want to go and learn all the skills that I need to be able to do what I want to do," Husch said.

The next couple of years will no doubt be filled with a balance of schoolwork and designing, but Husch has a set goal for her future.

"I want to keep making clothes," Husch said. "It's what I've done and it's what I'm going to keep doing. One day I want people walking down the street wearing Julia Husch."

## Women, education and Islam



Saleh Basee, left, spoke at Monte Vista High on Nov. 7 regarding Malala Yousafzai and women's education in Islam. Shyaan Khan, right, is the president of Muslim Student Association. Photo from The Stampede, Monte Vista High School

## Student publishes a scientific study

■ By JOYCE HO

California High

Publishing a scientific study is no easy feat. Publishing a scientific study while in high school is even more remarkable.

But that's exactly what senior Radhika Balagopal is about to accomplish.

After reading a study published in February 2014 by Dr. Anne Sereno, a professor of neurobiology and anatomy at University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, Balagopal contacted the professor with the hope of combining her two passions: soccer and science.

Sereno's study, conducted with a group of high school soccer players and a group of non-soccer players, was one of the first to attribute short-term brain damage, in terms of reflexes, to heading the soccer ball, motivating Balagopal to research the long-term effects.

"In soccer, heading the ball is a mandatory thing in the game," said Balagopal, who has played for Cal's varsity team since her sophomore year. "But heading the ball hurts a lot. I've seen so many of my teammates have concussions and erratic moods, often causing their grades to drop.

"A header is painful, disorienting, and a ticking concussion time-bomb," she said.

Cal's women's varsity soccer coach Lee Munson also testifies to the unfortunate necessity of heading the soccer ball during games for both defensive and offensive strategy.

"Heading the ball is a huge factor," said Munson. "If you don't head the ball at the varsity level, you won't be able to play. For the guys, some players can kick the ball up 50 to 60 miles an hour. Think about what that's doing to your head, and your brain."

But no study has conclusively linked heading the ball to lasting brain damage.

Sereno's previous study, however, found that while soccer players, as opposed to non-soccer players, displayed similar results on direct, stimulus-driven, or reflexive point responses, heading the ball does have

noticeable short-term effects.

"[The soccer players] showed small but significant slowing compared to controls on indirect, goal-driven, or voluntary point responses, and [the study found] that this performance slowing was correlated or marginally correlated to number of headers, number of hours of soccer per week, and years of soccer experience," said Sereno.

Balagopal's study therefore seeks to compare soccer players to their own baseline to study further, lasting effects.

"Concussions are one way to measure [damage], but the question is if there is a long term-effect," said Balagopal.

Balagopal has worked with Sereno and PhD graduate Stuart Red to study these effects through an iPad application developed by Sereno and her team at the university. The study has yet to be published, but Balagopal is hopeful that it will be by June. Where the study will be published also has yet to be determined. Preliminary analysis suggests that heading the ball is highly significant.

Balagopal conducted the study with Sereno and Red by monitoring her teammates' reflexes. With her teammates' consent, as well as Munson's and assistant coach Amanda Heinz's support, the iPad application was instrumental in testing pro-point, or voluntary, reflexes, and anti-point, involuntary reflexes before and after practice.

"It tested cognitive skills," said senior Kara Guse, a former Cal soccer player who participated in the study. "It was simple, but it could generate a lot of information about how the brain reacts."

Senior Rachelle Herring also found the study very relevant. "I got a concussion during the study, so it was interesting," said Herring.

The study is particularly significant because of the high rate of concussions in girls' soccer. In America, concussion rates in girls' soccer are second only to football, which begs the question, what are the actual effects? The study also resonates

with Balagopal personally.

When she was younger, her father, who used to be her coach, had always advised her against headers in a game setting.

"I told her not to head the ball based on what I had read on the dangers of heading the ball [at a young age]," said her father Balagopal Mayampurath.

If headers are not done correctly, underdeveloped neck and skull muscles could leave the brain susceptible to injury, said Mayampurath.

The topic of the study itself, soccer, is also highly important to Balagopal.

"Soccer is my life," said Balagopal. "I've been living and breathing it."

Balagopal has played soccer for 13 years but he stresses that the study was a team effort. "None of this would have been possible if it weren't for Coach Lee and Coach Amanda who really pushed my teammates to participate," said Balagopal. "They both gave me tremendous support in my project."

She is also appreciative of Red, Sereno and her teammates, who came early to practice and stayed late to take the test.

"It was a huge learning experience just talking to someone so qualified and learning from [Sereno] and Stuart," said Balagopal.

Statisticians, scientists, and many others also collaborated to compile and analyze data.

"It's a team effort where different people from different fields work together," said Balagopal. "It's so interdisciplinary."

Balagopal would like to continue her research in the future to further study the long-term effects, but hopes that her most recent study can highlight the dangers of heading the ball for many others. She will also continue to test her teammates this year.

"To be a part of something this big is a real honor, especially because it has so much to do with my life," said Balagopal. "On the field, we say, 'I got your back,' but now off the field I can help them too."

# News

■ By K. FLORES, G. WENSLEY, B. DESCHANE

Monte Vista High School

After Monte Vista students and families heard the news of the theft of the Adopt-A-Family donations at Christmas time, they responded generously by donating more gifts.

"We probably received just a little over half of what we donated which is really awesome," senior Sophia Tomei said.

The gifts were stored at the Salvation Army Church in Concord. The thieves stole 14 of the 48 families' gifts, or approximately \$4,000 worth of presents, that were donated by Monte Vista for families in need.

"Whoever stole the Adopt-A-Family gifts is the ultimate Grinch," sophomore Max Miller said.

While a large amount of the gifts do-

nated by Monte Vista students and faculty were stolen, some still remain with the Salvation Army Church. Adopt-A-Family is made possible by the MV staff and students. Without these contributions this holiday season wouldn't be possible for these families.

Natalie Kendall, math and yoga teacher, has been participating in Adopt-A-Family all twelve years that she has been teaching at Monte Vista. In order to get all of her students involved in this charitable event, Kendall assigns each of her table groups to one family member. They are responsible for providing all the gifts for that specific person.

"What I like about it is everyone is involved and the groups know that if they don't follow through, that person in the family doesn't get anything, so it makes them more likely to step up because they don't want to disappoint

someone in the family," Kendall said.

Many MV organizations like Cheer & Pom took on the responsibility of four families.

Classes which take on the Adopt-A-Family go through the time to prepare, shop and wrap the gifts.

Monte Vista and leadership help almost 50 families each year in the holiday season.

Families range from two up to eight people. Gifts range from bikes for kids to tool chests for fathers.

In addition to Adopt-a-Family, the leadership class also organizes the Adopt-a-Student program. Classes bring in all the items a child might like to find in a stocking and the leadership class delivers the stockings to the children of Verde Elementary in Richmond.

Maddy Serpa, a junior at MV, participated in the Adopt-a-Student event with her third

period class.

"I definitely think we should have something like this more than once a year, not just at Christmas time," she said. "It makes me feel really good that I'm giving back to people that don't have as much as I do."

Ten classes and several staff members, including the office staff, helped contribute to create individual stockings for the Verde Elementary school students, which were delivered on Dec. 12.

"At Verde we use the Adopt-A-Student stockings, and give them out to the kids who would usually not be able to receive gifts like these," Junior Spencer Nishihira said. "My favorite part was making a new best friend named Juan. We spent the whole day screaming and looking for Santa, and we both had a lot of fun."

## Community supports their gay students



LGBTQ: Northgate High senior and Dance Production member Andy Perales, showing off his talent, says friends are supportive of him. Photo by Jackson McDonough, Northgate High School.

From GAY STUDENTS Page 1

their close friends, which is a less stressful option due to how comfortable they are with their friends. More than three quarters of all youth say that their peers do not have any problem with how they identify themselves.

Ellen Friedrichs, a health and sexuality educator with extensive experience working with teens, says that "coming out, or openly declaring that you are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender is a big step for a teen and while you might have known that you were LGBTQ+ for a long time, in many cases, it will big news for the people you choose to tell," in her article "Coming Out When (and If) the Time is Right"

Friedrichs, a health education coordinator in Brooklyn where she works with students from 4th through 12th grade, is a mom and also teaches human sexuality at Brooklyn College. She adds that in making the decision to come out, someone must "feel like the positives outweigh the negatives, and that you can handle possible negative reactions from friends and family."

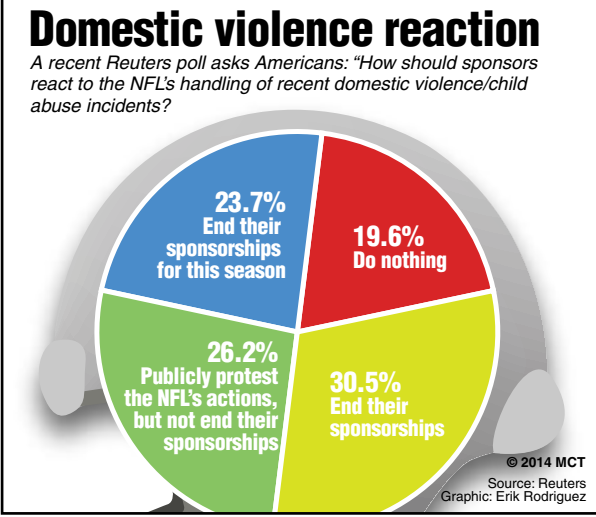
Senior Andy Perales recalls how he came out to his best friend while in sixth grade at Foothill Middle School. He says that from there, more and more people were starting to learn of his orientation, which he became comfortable with as time went on. His friends are still really supportive to this day.

"None of my friends were surprised," said Perales. "I got a lot of 'I'm not surprised' and I knew this the whole time" from most of them," the senior added.

It is hard for anyone to come out, regardless of gender.

However, for girls, it is a whole other experience. Sophomore Sami Cooperman, who refers to herself as "openly lesbian," has quite recently learned that honesty to one's self is a necessity for a happy life. She said she has never had an issue expressing who she really is, regardless if it made others uncomfortable.

"My advice for anyone in the closet is to come out when you are comfortable," Cooperman said. "Have a good support system. You may not know they are out there, but they are."



■ By JOSH WILLIAMS

Northgate High School

On May 17, 2011, I took a big step in a direction I never thought I would take, and it wasn't a straight one.

I confided that I was bisexual to my favorite middle school teacher.

Then, I told the rest of my 6th grade class, whose members welcomed me with open arms, a reaction I was not expecting. I called my mom the same day to tell her the news, and was greeted by a loving remark about how she "already knew," based partly on the fact that I would play with Barbies instead of basketballs and sing ABBA with her ever since I was in elementary school.

In 7th grade, I moved schools, a change that I was really upset about. I was not upset because I had to make new friends, but because I felt like I had to come out all over again. The scary part about the new school was that it was a Catholic school, and I was nervous about coming out again. In the end, I didn't.

After two years of hiding my sexuality, I finally felt relieved to enter Northgate High School. As the start of school approached, I never once felt the need to go "back into the closet" because public schools are famous for having a diverse student body.

Since I didn't know anybody but my own brother, Liam, I felt more wiggle room to be open. I didn't have to impress anyone or hold up my reputation because I didn't even have one yet.

## New Monte Vista parking lot raises controversy

■ By CHRISTIAN BERGER &amp; MADDIE DAILEY

Monte Vista High School

Monte Vista High School's new parking lot is now in working order, ready to serve students and faculty. Many, however, have mixed feelings about its effectiveness and practicality.

The \$1.1 million project was in the making for more than five years and was funded by the district from deferred maintenance accounts and money remaining at the end of the previous year.

It was intended to make entering and exiting a more seamless and productive process, and it has recently been outfitted with many new features including medians, detailed lane markings and a new exit.

The design came from many careful decisions and a lot of hard work. The district and the Town of Danville came together and talked about what was needed. Cameras and personal observation were used to collect information and data about the old parking lot and what would need to be improved.

This was then turned over to designers and traffic engineers to pick the perfect layout and keep it within the budget.

## Music outreach improves music opportunities

See MUSIC OUTREACH Page 5

reach program are given the opportunity to develop and improve their teaching skills.

President and founder of Music Outreach, Isabella Ordaz, thinks highly of the benefits for middle schoolers are involved in the program.

"Private tutoring is unquestionably beneficial to any musician who desires to improve their repertoire," she said. "Although our tutors aren't professionals, the mentorship they provide for their students is a great free opportunity."

Ordaz also takes time to recognize the effort the tutors put in every week to ensure their students get as much out of the sessions as they potentially can.

"All of our tutors are very talented and provide plenty of advice to their students,"

she said. "The tutors help their students master assigned pieces and improve their instrumental technique."

Junior Olivia Addis, a new member of Music Outreach, is enjoying being a part of the club, as she knows it will benefit the incoming high school band team members.

"It's a great opportunity for the middle schoolers to learn more about instrumental music at Monte Vista," she said. "They also get to improve at their instrument."

A majority of the middle school students who participate in their schools' band teams are interested in carrying their musical skills into high school.

Adam Ferguson, seventh grader at Stone Valley and member of Music Outreach, has plans for continuing to be a part of band through high school.

"It [Music Outreach] benefits us



Josh Williams. Photo by Jackson McDonough, Northgate High School

made me really upset, but at the same time quite proud that I inspired these friends to be themselves.

Over the next few days, a total of 11 people came out to me personally, which was a really great feeling to know that I helped even one person—knowing I helped 11 was mind-blowing.

Since as far back as I can remember, I knew that I was different. I didn't know why or in what way, but I just felt it. In a three-year span, I found my peace and comfort with who I am. I am openly gay to everyone who knows my name, and I couldn't be happier. I am very lucky that I had the support from my family and close friends to get me as comfortable with myself as I am today.



## Time for Clayton Valley to 'soap up' for students

By KAYLEIGH ROHRBACH  
Clayton Valley Charter High School

Germs: they're everywhere. They're in our bathrooms, on our door handles, even on our classroom desks. Germs spread faster than gossip in schools, but the solution is simple. Washing your hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds will kill most germs on your hands.

Unfortunately for students at Clayton Valley Charter High School, often there is no soap.

Last fall, a small group of investigative journalists patrolled the school in order to assess the availability of soap. What they found was disturbing.

Only two of the five girls' bathrooms had soap, and even those bathrooms with soap had some empty dispensers. In fact, the lack of soap has become so prevalent it is now common knowledge that if you use one of the school's bath-

rooms, you can expect to walk around with germ-infested hands for the rest of the day -- and the germs don't stop there. They spread, infecting everything you touch. These germs then infect other people, leaving a trail of sickness in their wake.

Although the girls' bathrooms lack soap, the boys' bathrooms are fully stocked. Every soap dispenser in every boys' bathroom had soap when surveyed. Why is there soap in the boys' bathrooms, but not the girls'?

A study aired by MSNBC determined that one in three men don't wash their hands after using the bathroom, whereas only one in 10 women don't. This could explain the lack of soap in the girls' bathrooms compared to the boys', but this leads to an even larger issue: hygiene.

According to CNN's Jen Christensen, high school students get about four to six colds or cases of the flu each

school year. Diet, exercise, and a healthy amount of sleep can help reduce this amount, but the number one germ repellent is washing hands with soap and water.

Students' attendance is necessary in order for the school to receive state funding. Therefore, every time a student is absent, the school loses much needed funding. How are students supposed to stay healthy enough to come to school without soap to wash their hands?

"Either I get sick, I come to school, and I spread my germs so other people have to miss school, or I miss and everyone gets mad because I'm absent," said senior Cambria Rojas.

The lack of soap in the bathrooms at school is a major problem, but it is easy to fix. By refilling the soap dispensers frequently, the spread of germs throughout Clayton Valley will greatly diminish, leaving its student body healthier, happier, and ready to learn.



Senior Cambria Rojas struggles to get soap out of the dispenser in a girls' bathroom at Clayton Valley Charter High School. Photo by Kayleigh Rohrbach, Clayton Valley Charter High School.

## Northgate bathrooms are full of it: litter, used tampons etc.

By JUSTUS KASPER  
Northgate High School

We have all had to use the bathroom at some point here at Northgate High School. However, quite a few students at Northgate High School cringe at the idea of just going into the bathrooms.

Smelly, stained, and slippery, the bathrooms at Northgate are in a state of ruin.

If you are a man, you walk in with garbage, usually wet, thrown on the floor. Then you see the state of the stalls. Scratched, with a choice of toilet paper or none at all. As you walk out, you wash your hands with the sand-like soap rather than proper gel or foam soap. Finally, watch your step, because again the floor is littered with paper towels, waiting for you to step on and get stuck

onto your shoe.

With an environment like this, Northgate teens say they are afraid to go into the bathrooms at all. Many claim they would rather wait and use the bathrooms in their own homes. But even then, we do not have full control on how our bodies work. But sometimes we need to use the bathrooms at Northgate, and afterwards, some of us wish for a quick shower. To go to the bathroom in current conditions is shameful and embarrassing.

"The bathrooms are absolutely disgusting," Senior Austin Garcia said about the men's restroom.

"No one flushes the toilets and there are always used paper towels in the sink and on the floor. I wish that the administration would fix the bathrooms and repair them because there's stalls that won't close and sinks that won't turn off," Garcia said.

What punishment should be given to people who violate the bathroom?

"They should have the violators clean the entire bathroom," he said.

"They are grosser than most public bathrooms," senior Jace Cropper said. "What really annoys me is the trash on the ground. People who thrash the bathrooms should face a referral. Right now, I prefer to wait till I get home to use the bathroom."

Some people however, are able to tolerate the bathrooms -- mostly boys.

"The boys' bathroom here is not too bad to me," senior Chris Biglen said. "If I have to use the urinal, that's fine, but I refuse the stalls."

The stalls are one of the major problems with the bathrooms. Most of the time, they are found in a disgusting state, leaving horrifying images in the mind. This is mostly the fault of the students, but there should be an em-

phasis on cleanliness, especially in the restrooms.

A solution is clearly laid out for the girls' bathrooms. "Clean them!" exclaimed seniors Jamie Cowan and Alison Rae.

According to Cowan and Rae, the girl's bathrooms are in a really bad state. "Not only do we have broken sinks, but we also have used tampons all over the floor," said Cowan.

"The administration should repair it because I believe that there's always a leak. We also quickly run out of soap, toilet paper, and paper towels," she said. Rae chimed in: "I also don't respect the writing on the walls."

Students use Northgate restrooms only with extreme disgust. A regimen of keeping the bathrooms clean and in working order must be put into effect. For now, students will just have to wallow in the filth.

## Don't prohibit cellphones in class

By KATIE RANGEL  
Clayton Valley Charter High School

If you were to walk down any street in America or go through the halls at any school, you would see at least one person on their phone.

It's 2015, and the rapid pace of technological development shows no signs of slowing down. Every day new products are being made that are changing our lives.

Technology such as phones, computers, and tablets have begun to integrate into classrooms across the country and world.

I believe that teachers should allow the responsible use of technology and phones in the classroom. There should be designated times for when it is appropriate to have your phone out during class.

Obviously, you aren't going to be allowed to use it during a test, but during work time or study hall, we should be able to have them out in order to have quicker access to information.

Ninth grader Sarah Gallagher stated, "I think we should have phones in class because it's easier and faster than looking something in a book."

Here at Clayton Valley, some teachers have embraced new technology in the classroom, while others have remained stuck in their old ways. Biology teacher Elizabeth Hawkes has embraced new teaching methods by allowing the use of phones at designated times in the classroom.

"Technology in the future is key," she said. "If you're going to want to compete for a spot in college or for a job, you're going to need to be able to use technology efficiently."

With all of this technology around us, it's hard to imagine why teachers wouldn't embrace it. With the Internet, learning is not limited to only what can be found in a book. Phones and tablets make it more convenient to find the answer to a question in real time. Developers have designed many applications to help facilitate the learning process.

Many teachers believe technology-less classrooms force students to focus and achieve success without distraction.

But for a generation of students whose lives revolve around constant updates of social media and entertainment, withholding access to such technology can often become more distracting than using the technology.

Studies have shown that 44 percent of students will go on their phone during class whether it is prohibited or not. The problem is putting it away. Students are going to want to keep their phones out for as long as possible.

If students know that they are going to have the opportunity to use their phones in, say, 15 minutes, they are going to put them away.

It's about time that teachers accept the fact that technology is a pivotal point in the evolution of contemporary life. In the modern world, all jobs require the use of technology.

Even in schools today, we use new and innovative products every day,



whether it is to type and research a paper or to create a presentation. The advances of our generation continue, and teachers have to realize that our generation and future generations are going to have to use technology every day. We need to start now.

## CC Spin

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## Flag spurs controversy over student rights

By AUSTIN HILLE  
California High School

Is it within a student's First Amendment rights to display a Confederate flag on a public school campus?

Controversy swirled around this subject last month when two senior boys, both of whom are not being named for fear of retaliation, drove onto the Cal High campus with Confederate flags mounted on their trucks.

Because this was the flag of the Confederacy when the south was fighting for the right to keep slavery, it is commonly accepted that these flags are a symbol of racism.

The flags were displayed on the students' vehicles in the back parking lot until lunch on Oct. 30, when Principal Sarah Wondolowski confiscated them, violating the students' First Amendment rights of free speech and expression, according to Jim Ewert, an attorney for the California Newspaper Publishers Association.

Ewert said the removal of these flags was a clear violation of both the First Amendment and the California educational code.

"I think, under [these] circumstances, the students who brought the flags to the school, you know, their right to expression was violated," said Ewert in a phone interview.

But Wondolowski said the reason for removing these flags was because the offensive message these flags convey was causing a significant disruption to the orderly operation of the school.

"It caused a disruption on campus,"

said Wondolowski. "If there are any matters of speech that cause a disruption to the learning environment, then the school has a right to step in."

When asked for specific examples of disruption, Wondolowski cited the multiple phone calls she received regarding students noticing the flags in the parking lot.

"If it's something that might incite violence or hate or make someone feel physically threatened, then the administration has an absolutely right to remove it," said Tasneem Khan, a government and history teacher.

School district spokeswoman Elizabeth Graswich supports Wondolowski's decision to remove the flags and also firmly believes it was within the school's right to do so.

The First Amendment states that the government, which includes public schools, cannot abridge an individual's right to freedom of speech, which extends to all types of expression including that which is symbolic or literal.

Public school students are restricted in their freedom of speech on campus according to certain guidelines which are outlined in California State Education Code Section 48907.

According to this law, the only forms of restricted speech for students are if it is obscene, libelous or slanderous.

Speech or expression also cannot disrupt the orderly operation of the school or incite imminent lawless or violent action.

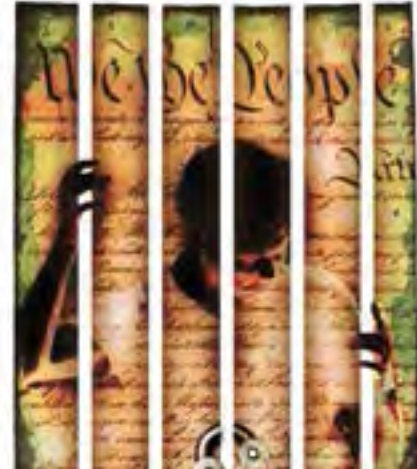
Ewert, who is an expert in the field of students' First Amendment rights, explained the importance of determining whether the speech in question disrupts the orderly operation of the school or will incite imminent violent action.

"Without [an] imminent threat of violence that is likely to occur, it is protected expression," said Ewert. "As offensive as it might be...that's the reason that the First Amendment exists. There is no need for a First Amendment protection of speech that is popular."

The students who brought the flags on campus said they planned to drive to school on the same day with Confederate flags flying from their trucks. They were upset when the flags were confiscated.

After learning about his flag being confiscated, one of the boys went to retrieve his flag from assistant principal Bob Spain, who took the flag from Wondolowski's office and returned it.

One confiscated flag was just a regular Confederate flag, while the other also displayed a skeleton holding a knife covered in blood with text that read, "The South Will Rise Again."



## A wrong-headed commercial take on feminism

By JULIE JUNG  
Northgate High School

On a recent Saturday night, I spent my time watching a group of eight-year-old girls swear more in a three-minute video than I ever have in my 17 years of life

FCKH8, a clothing retailer, released a video that posed the question of which is worse: male supremacy or young girls swearing and using profane words.

Of course, FCKH8 framed the video around the idea that if society is allowed to suppress women's rights, then the world shouldn't be surprised to hear young girls freely curse.

The video begins with two innocent-looking girls in princess dresses acting cute and sweet. The video then shifts to a young girl in a pink, frilly dress blatantly saying, "What the f\*\*\*?"

The video soon gets to the facts of how women are paid less, are forced to look "socially acceptable", and are unjustly accused of causing rape and domestic violence.

Although I agree with the message

the company is trying to send, FCKH8 certainly sends it in the wrong manner. By having young girls curse, swear, and use vulgar language throughout the video, FCKH8 only emphasizes an erroneous definition of feminism.

The wrong view of feminism is that it consists of a bunch of angry women who fight for girl power; in reality, feminism is equality taking on a different form.

Because the video has children using curse words and even referring to the male genitalia, the video loses its focus on the real issue: a male-favored society.

For example, when the video focuses on the popular issue of unequal pay, it has a young girl talk about how women make only 23 percent of what men make doing the same job. The video could have ended on that note, but it continues the scene by having the young girl state, "I shouldn't need a p\*\*\*\* to get paid!"

Another aspect of the video that seriously irks me is why the girls were completely allowed to say these words.

## Feminism needs to be acknowledged by all

By CAMBRIA ROJAS  
Clayton Valley Charter High School

Beyoncé, Queen B, Bey, Sasha Fierce. Whatever name you know her by, you know exactly who she is. You know her songs, her dance moves, her husband. However, you may not know that she is a self-proclaimed modern-day feminist.

The famed pop singer caused controversy with her performance at the 2014 MTV Video Music Awards in which she had the word "feminist" displayed on the screen behind her.

The performance, seen by millions of young people around the world, made the concept of feminism relevant to the rising generation.

Hearing that word, feminism, may put a sour taste in your mouth, which is OK ... for now. Some in our society and culture are ignorant about what feminism actually is. They want us to believe that feminists today are just man-haters. This is not true whatsoever.

Webster's dictionary defines feminism as "the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes." Equality for men and women.

That's it. It's not the belief that men are terrible, or that women are the superior gender. It's the simple belief that males and females should be given the same rights and presented the same opportunities.

Now that you understand what feminism is, we have to ask: Why is feminism even necessary anymore? Aren't men and women equal?

Many may say, "Yes, men and women are equal, and no, feminism is no longer necessary." I'm here to say, "Yes, women can vote, work, and own land. However, did you know, on average, women earn 77 cents to a man's dollar?" Sexism is still very prominent in the modern world we live in, and it needs to come to an end.

Feminism is not men vs. women, it's men and women vs. society's bad habits.

In some versions of the video, the curse words are censored, but in the original version, the words are not censored, meaning that these young ladies were encouraged to say curse words at the age of eight.

Sure, I'm all for provoking a crowd into action, but that doesn't mean you should support cursing at an age where young girls should be playing with their new doll houses.

Not only do the young actors in this video come out of this experience believing that cursing is justified, but the viewers, both old and young, are led to believe that cursing is justified when sexism is allowed.

The last point that I have to make is that FCKH8 isn't even an advocacy group; they're a clothing company. Within the last 30 seconds of the video, an adult actress states how FCKH8 has clothing that supports women's rights for only \$15 a shirt.

Basically, they made young girls swear and curse for three minutes just to get a little bit more business.

However, FCKH8 does mention that

"I just went into the office and asked for it back, and then they just told me I couldn't do it again," one of the boys said.

The other boy never confronted administrators about the confiscation of his flag.

The students who brought these flags on campus disagree with this perspective, stating that they are simply a symbol of Southern pride.

"Well, I'm from Texas," said the one boy who retrieved his flag. "I just want to show that I'm proud of where I came from."

Neither boy believes that a Confederate flag is a symbol of racism.

In regard to the First Amendment, some students agree that a student should have the right to display such a flag on campus.

"Who am I to demean what [the boys want] to do with [their] piece of property?" said senior Thomas Brehm. "If it's [their] property, why not? The school shouldn't have taken what's [theirs]."

Other students disagree because they believe it's within the school's right to remove this offensive symbol.

"I feel like that flag shouldn't be displayed because it's offensive to certain people, and [they] were doing it for attention," said senior Allison Morris.

As for the students involved, there is no question in their minds that their rights were violated.

"I passed cops flying the flag, and they didn't pull me over," said one of the boys. "If that law doesn't mind, then why should this law, or authority, mind as well?"



\$5 of the \$15 would go to women's rights groups.

This retail store has good intentions, but what its advertising people need to know is that two wrongs do not make a right.



A FEMINIST Clayton Valley Charter High Senior Cambria Rojas proudly declares herself a feminist. Photo by Kayla Conger, Clayton Valley Charter High School.



## Students' gratitude should continue all year long

By JILLIAN ARGENTO

Clayton Valley Charter High School

In the United States, Americans celebrate traditional holidays in order to show gratitude for the privileges they have received. Yet with the hustle and bustle of today's modern world, does anyone actually sit down and take the time to realize all of the things they have to be grateful for?

With the distractions of work, technology, and expectations constantly surrounding the average person, it seems as if the definition of holidays such as "Thanksgiving" have lost their meaning.

Perhaps every day, not just holidays, is the time to remember the importance of being thankful to instill an attitude of gratitude within our society.

Students should consider the different options they have in order to give back to society. There are opportunities all around the Bay Area for people to serve others and they should be taken



**SIGN UP!** Students should volunteer more often as it could benefit their lives and many others in their community, across the nation, and around the world. People tend to volunteer and offer service during the holiday season, but many people require assistance all of the time.

advantage of. Food banks, soup kitchens, and homeless shelters are always deserving of volunteers and donations. They tend to be overwhelmed with help during the holiday season, but not so

much at other times of the year.

Here are some other ways to serve in appreciation.

Students along with the assistance of their families, friends, or group orga-

nizations can adopt a family in need. Another opportunity is through the U.S. military.

Students can recognize not only troops who are currently stationed away from home, but also veterans in the local area. Care packages are always needed overseas and those in veterans' hospitals will always appreciate a visit.

Service can be done in small ways as well. Clayton Valley seniors Ana Chena Dávila and Naame Kelete ran a book drive through "Books for Barrios" in December.

All students were encouraged to donate books in good condition, which were sent to children in the Philippines.

Gratitude is more than just doing service during the holiday season. Thankfulness can be and should be exhibited year round, not just during a particular time.

Remember that the recognition of appreciation should be a daily occurrence.

## Are you really volunteering if it's a mandatory activity?

By EMILY WRIGHT

Northgate High School

Senior year in comes with a variety of experiences, but beyond the college applications and infamous picnic, I found out that seniors are required to volunteer for a political campaign.

All seniors at Northgate take a U.S. government class during their first semester. I wasn't expecting, however, a class requirement to do volunteer work for a candidate who is running in the November election. It doesn't matter which candidate, but one had to be found and the assignment accomplished before November 4.

I volunteered for current Concord Vice Mayor Ron Leone, who had students put up flyers around a neighborhood to advertise his campaign.

At first, I was a bit uncertain about what might happen. Although I was traveling with a friend, and fellow government student, we had never participated in an election before.

I was glad that we didn't actually have to knock on doors and talk to people, but we were still uneasy.

Would dogs bark at us? Yes.

Would we run across other candidates? No.

Would there be confrontations with random homeowners, if they happened to be outside? This turned out not to be a huge problem.

Finally, after serving our three hours,



my friend and I drove back to have our forms signed. We realized that it wasn't so bad walking around and putting small flyers up.

I decided that being involved in the campaign was actually an intriguing experience.

As a kid, it seemed as if a candidate's signs would appear magically overnight. One day there wouldn't be any signs, and the next day the neighborhood would be filled with them; no one ever seemed to actually see it happen.

Now, though, I realize how much work goes into creating a successful campaign; people really do walk around putting up signs, among many other methods of advertising.

I'm now glad that students are given the opportunity to see how it works in the 'real world'.

After all, by the time the next election rolls around, people who are currently seniors will be voting.

## College isn't our only post-graduation option

By DANA PETERSON

Northgate High School

From a young age, I was told by my parents that after high school I would attend college, where I would earn a degree, and that afterwards I would find a steady job to support myself. I think I can speak for a large number of teens who have experienced their parents telling them the same thing.

For as long as I can remember, this has always been the plan. There has never been an alternate path for me. Attending college has been set in stone for a long time.

However, come the beginning of this school year when college applications became a priority and stress a familiar friend, I've been asking myself, is college really necessary? Is it true that college is the singular option once graduated from high school? The truth is I've never stopped to think otherwise.

It's no secret that college costs a lot of money. This not only puts stress on our lives when, in the future, we'll be stuck paying off student loans, but it also puts stress on our parents who are trying to save enough money to put us through college in the first place. CNN.com reported that in 2011, college graduates were faced with, on average, \$27,000 in debt.

If we do make it to college, we assume that immediately following our graduation we will find a high-paying job to support ourselves. So it will probably come as a surprise to most of us that we won't find a job right away, or if we do, it won't be in our desired field. This is a harsh reality to the majority of us students who currently think that all it takes to be successful in life are straight A's. The New York Times reveals that more than 44 percent of college graduates under 25 who majored in fields such as political science and literature were unemployed in 2009 or working in a job that did not require their degree.

Additionally, with the increasingly advancing technology, it's becoming much easier for society to educate themselves from their own homes. The Internet holds a plethora of facts and opportunities to learn; logically, wouldn't this mean we could master new skills without the help of a college or university?

There is no set answer as to whether it is better to attend college or not. Perhaps, then, it's a matter of opinion and preference.

Next time our parents bring up life after high school, let's think for ourselves and realize that our paths are not set in stone, that it is possible to be successful no matter what we choose.

## Lessons in free speech from Charlie Hebdo in France

By SAM FRASER

Acalanes High School

When heavily armed gunmen stormed the offices of the French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo in January, killing 12 people, both newspaper staff and police, France and the international community was stunned.

At first, the French people, world leaders and internet users everywhere seemed united, joining together behind the slogan and Twitter hashtag "Je suis Charlie" (I am Charlie). Millions gathered in Paris on the Sunday after the attack, marching in solidarity with the victims and in support of free expression. More than 40 world leaders joined in the march, including leaders of France, Britain, Germany, Israel and Turkey.

Unfortunately these may not be the grand gestures they appear to be.

While it may sound counterintuitive, it is easy to stand up for freedom of expression in the face of terrorists. As a Western politician, demonstrating your opposition to terrorism is not brave. It is simply natural, and politically expedient. And unfortunately, while clearly aligning themselves against the terrorists in France and claiming to stand on the side of free expression, many of these leaders

are far too slow to defend free speech day to day in their own nations.

For the rest of us, it is easy to align ourselves with free speech in an abstract sense. We want to declare solidarity with Charlie Hebdo, or with Raif Badawi, the Saudi blogger who has been sentenced to receive 1,000 lashes for starting a liberal political discussion website. However, living in America, or in most Western countries, very few of us will ever have to worry about being killed or facing any kind of punishment for what we say.

As we declare our unequivocal support for free speech overseas, or especially in the loosely described Muslim world, where in many nations "blasphemy" is punishable by corporal or capital punishment, it has become increasingly acceptable at home to let free expression go by the wayside in favor of political correctness.

Political correctness is acceptable to a point. Society should not condone pointless bigotry, and people like Donald Sterling who express hateful views should be held accountable, not in court or by the government, but informally as Sterling was.

Political correctness becomes a problem, however, once it begins to shut down free discourse and obscure reality.

Thanks in part to social media this is happening more than ever. Just as people took to Twitter and Facebook to stand for free speech following the Charlie Hebdo attacks, they take to these same platforms to crush the exact kind of expression that defined Charlie Hebdo.

For decades, the legal limit to free speech has been defined by doctrines like "fighting words" and "incitement of imminent lawless action." However, many today have decided that the threshold for suppressing speech is much lower. These people, who are increasingly concentrated among the progressive left, have effectively made the decision that free speech does not truly protect things that are offensive to any group of people.

Dubbed "The But Brigade" by British author Salman Rushdie – who himself was subjected to a fatwa, an assassination order from the Iranian government following his publication of *The Satanic Verses* in 1988 – this group offers qualified support for free speech, declaring "I believe in free speech, but..." This is usually followed by "not if it offends people" or "you can't insult people's religion."

This attitude represents a fundamental misunderstanding of what free

speech is. Why do we have constitutionally protected free speech? It is certainly not to protect statements or opinions that no one objects to. The very reason we have the First Amendment is to protect speech that any party, no matter who that is, would rather not be said at all.

This is the fundamental fact that the so-called progressives who so stringently enforce political correctness fail to understand. The 1st Amendment does not come with qualifications.

Nowhere is this failure more apparent than on our nation's college campuses.

I wrote a column last spring about a series of commencement speakers who were disinvented after small student groups objected to these speakers' comments and views. One such speaker was Ayaan Hirsi Ali, who criticizes the treatment of women under fundamentalist Islam. In this column I addressed the fact that I would be going to college in little over a year, and said "I can only hope that my destination will be a place where the value of free and open discourse has not been lost."

My hope for this is waning. Let me be clear: our institutions of

See [FREE SPEECH](#) Page 10

## Refs blow call, end Don's water polo run

By MEGAN YEE

Acalanes High School

The North Coast Section (NCS) Division 1 boys' water polo semifinals pitted the Acalanes Dons against the Campolindo Cougars on Nov. 12 in what some spectators described as one of the craziest, most incredible sports games they had ever witnessed.

Both teams' accomplishments in the pool were overshadowed by the emotionally heated aftermath of a referee's blown call during overtime that led to a confusing series of decision reversals by officials regarding the game's outcome.

After reviewing the game and NFHS rules, NCS declared Campolindo the winner due to a technicality in a delayed and highly controversial final decision on November 14.

The chaotic series of events left Acalanes players and coaches devastated and inflamed the existing rivalry between the Dons and the Cougars to a level that called sportsmanship into question.

"All of us were so upset, and we were trying hold back our tears," senior and Acalanes team captain Charlie Rogers said. "We sat together and cried because this meant a lot to us."

Although regulation time during the game was intense, it was relatively void of controversy with neither team leading by more than 1 point at any time, and the fourth quarter ended with the teams tied 8-8. The first period of sudden death overtime was uncontroversial as well, with neither team scoring.

It was during the last seconds of the second period of overtime that the controversy erupted. The Dons were ahead 11-10 with 23 seconds remaining, so they attempted to run out the clock by passing the ball and drawing fouls.

With less than a second left on the clock, Campolindo intercepted a pass. The player attempted to score but missed as the clock ran down to zero. Believing themselves victorious, the Dons exited the pool and prepared to shake hands with their opponents.

However, Campolindo head coach Miles Price kept his players in the water and approached referee Jeff Roy, insisting that he had called a timeout during the second overtime period that officials had failed to recognize. Roy had not personally heard an air horn or seen Price signal for a time out, but he conferred with the other referee, Brian Snapp, who said he had seen a signal.

"In conversation between the two officials, one official said he thought it was between four and six seconds," NCS Commissioner of Athletics Gil Lemmon said. "Ultimately the officials decided that they should put five seconds back on the clock."

Acalanes head coach Clarke Tamariki protested the decision, but the referees dismissed the protest and awarded Campolindo a time out and additional five seconds on the clock. The teams resumed play with Campolindo in possession of the ball. A Campolindo player scored at the buzzer, evening the score and forcing a period of sudden-death overtime.

During the third period of sudden death overtime, Campolindo won the sprint and scored what appeared to be the game-winning point. Campolindo players left the pool believing they had advanced to the finals.

Spectators describe the atmosphere after the game as "chaotic," but nothing got out of control.

However, both Acalanes coaches and Principal Allison Silvestri approached the referees after the game to file another protest regarding the additional five seconds of time.

At the time, the referees told them that they could not file a protest on a judgement call. Later in the parking lot, the referees were discussing the case and Snapp admitted that he didn't remember seeing Price call a time out, according to Acalanes mens water polo assistant coach Russ Stryker.

This prompted the referees to call NCS to inform them that Acalanes was the actual winner.

In an email obtained by *The Acalanes Blueprint*, Snapp expressed deep sorrow and apologized to one of the Acalanes coaches for the events that led to Acalanes' loss in the semifinals.

However, Campolindo sent a letter to NCS saying that Acalanes' protest after the game was not legal, which prompted NCS to put the game under review. NCS

officials reviewed information submitted by both teams and consulted a California Interscholastic Section (CIF) rules interpreter and the National Federation of High School Associations (NFHS) rulebook. They ultimately ruled in favor of Campolindo based on the technicality that Campolindo had cited.

NCS Assistant Commissioner Karen Smith explained NCS' decision in a statement sent to both schools:

"Due to the fact that the protest by Acalanes during the game was dismissed; that the end of the game protest was not within the rules of protest; and that both teams continued play through not only 1 overtime but 3 overtime periods and the outcome was decided in the pool. The ruling stands that Campolindo won by the score of 12-11."

"We're pretty disappointed," Stryker said. "They put their hearts into that game. They took it hard, they wanted to play for the championship. We told them to act like champions and we truly believe that they won."

Much of the Acalanes community's frustration comes from the fact that the referees awarded Campolindo an additional five seconds which allowed them to tie the game, when video of the game makes it clear that it was impossible for the Price to legally call a time out with five seconds left in the game.

Acalanes varsity womens water polo coach Misha Buchel walked Blueprint through video footage of the final seconds of the second overtime period. Buchel and a number of other sources who viewed the video estimate that Campolindo gained possession of the ball when the clock was at zero or possibly one second. Therefore, the earliest that Price could have called a timeout was one second before time ran out.

Drawing on his own coaching experience, Buchel said it wouldn't have made sense for Price to call a timeout with less than a second left because his player had the best chance of scoring at that time.

NCS officials are not allowed to review video of the game by NFHS rules. Technology allows people to replay and scrutinize actions, but referees don't have that option during games. They have to make their calls based on what they see at the moment.

"I'm not saying that whatever decision they made, if you were to view video tape, you wouldn't come to a different decision, but they're the ones at the game, and we have to live with their judgement," Lemmon said.

Even if NCS officials had been allowed to use video in their review of the game, it would not have changed their final decision. They had to overturn the referees' decision to award Acalanes the win after the game because their protest was not legal, as Campolindo had suggested.

"They are not contesting the timeout or the time added on to the game. Whether it was right or wrong is irrelevant. What they looked at is the protest procedure and if it was carried out correctly," Takahashi said.

"The protest was lodged by our coach. The officials heard the protest and they denied it at that point. The officials put the five seconds back on and played through. The decision after the game to change the outcome was beyond the authority of what the officials could actually do."

NFHS rules state that protests about situations that occur during the end of the game must be filed within five minutes of the end of the game. The referees incorrectly applied this rule to the Acalanes' coaches' second protest after the game and allowed them to file it.

However, this does not follow the rules because Acalanes was protesting an event in the second quarter of overtime. The referees had already overturned their first protest about the same event and the players had resumed play.

Acalanes players and coaches are disappointed by the outcome, especially because the video clearly shows that they won the game. However, they didn't feel that NCS was completely to blame because they had to follow the rulebook. "I definitely feel cheated, but I don't know if I would blame it on NCS," Acalanes mens water polo player Nathan Brickman said. "I just feel bad for all the other kids on our team. The refs' jobs were to officiate a fair game, which they did until they added the five seconds to the clock for whatever reason."

The Miramonte Matadors defeated the Campolindo Cougars 10-8 in the NCS finals.



**CHALLENGING** The Monte Vista High School mens' varsity basketball team for 2014/2015 has a lot ahead of them this year in hopes of attaining a championships again. They plan on working much harder with Coach Nick Jones to lead them.

## Mustangs seek to repeat as Division I champions

By KATRINA FLORES

Monte Vista High School

Last year's win over Centennial-Corona for the state Division I championship, 66-55, put the Monte Vista varsity basketball team in the history books. But with all the starters from last year's team in college, the coaches must look for players who can repeat what some doubted what the team could ever do: win the state championship.

Although it will take time for the returning and new players to adjust to competing at a championship level, the team will have a key factor that contributed to the success of last year's team: Coach Nick Jones.

His high level of expertise has led his teams to be successful, whether he be coaching the junior varsity or varsity level teams.

The seven seniors on the team are hoping to end their last year at Monte Vista with a bang. But do they have what it takes? Coach Jones hopes so.

"The expectations are high this year," Jones said. "We lost five starters so it's gonna be different. Those guys are not going to be easy to replace. Right now we're trying to figure out what our identity is going to be and working towards getting where we need to be to compete again for a championship."

In high school basketball, the state championship at Sleep Train Arena in Sacramento is the ultimate destination and winning there would be a great end to a magical season, just

as it was for Monte Vista last year.

Many high school basketball teams are highly competitive and put days and hours of work into their effort to achieve a state title. But the boys' team won't have an easy road as they have to defeat some very competitive teams such as De La Salle, who won the state title in 2006, and San Ramon.

"We practice two hours, six days a week," Jones said. "Plus two games each week."

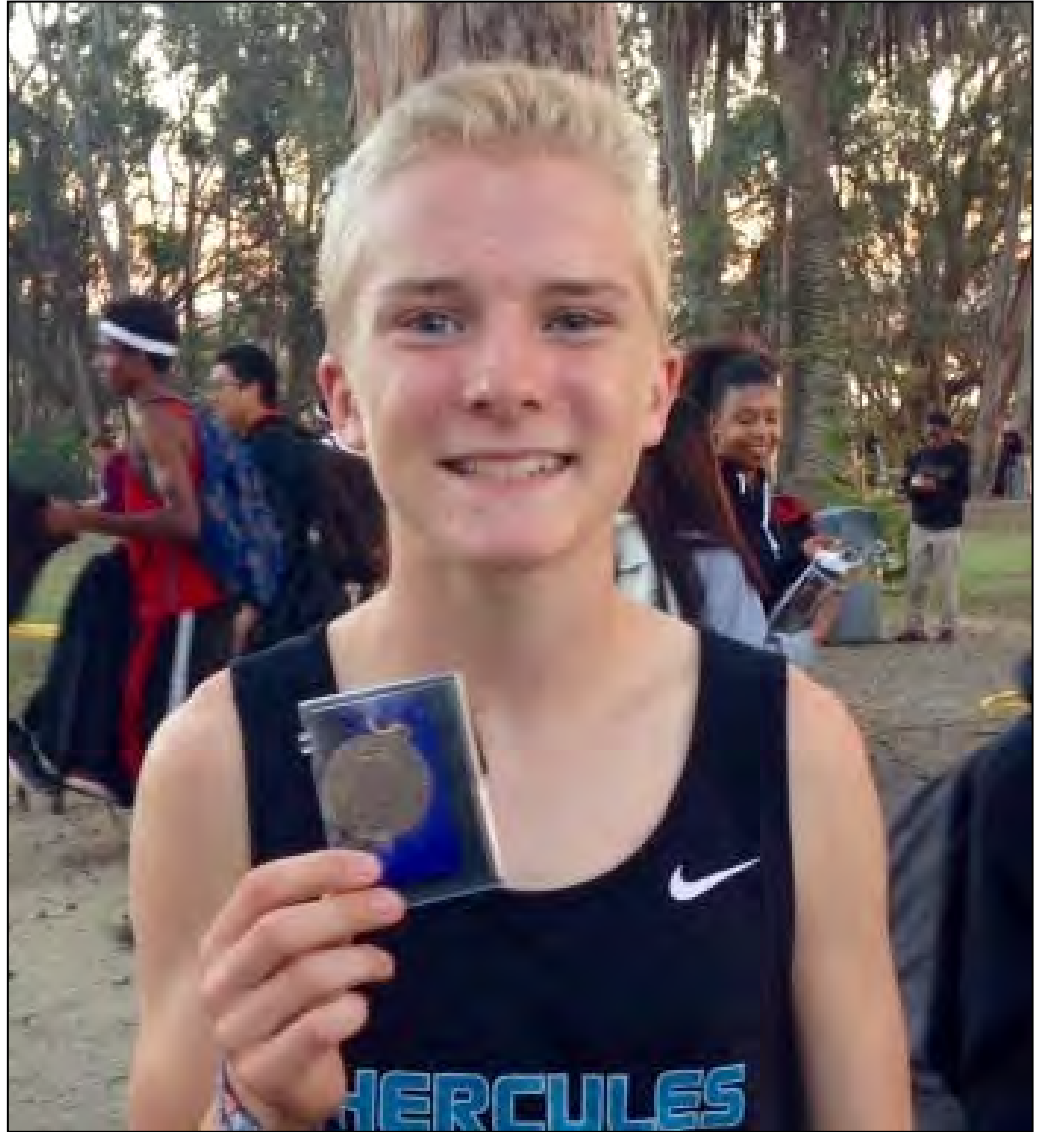
The six returning players, all juniors or seniors, have some big shoes to fill. These upperclassmen have been asked to step up and take a leadership role. Returners will get the opportunity to show their skills this year as some of them probably didn't get as much playing time with the starting five being all seniors last year.

After losing to San Ramon in the regular season last year, the Monte Vista varsity basketball team was determined to beat SR the second time around. And that's just what they did.

Defeating its rival allowed the team to win East Bay Athletic League and eventually North Coast Section. And most importantly there were no more losses in their future. They went on a 14-0 winning streak after that lone loss which led to their state title.

Coach Jones believes that with hard work the team can still reach that destination this year.

"It would be great to do it again."



## Cutter qualifies for CIF meet

**SWIFT!** Hercules High runner Ryan Cutter was the first runner from his school to qualify for the CIF cross country state championship. Photo by Juan Pablo Palabrica, Hercules High School.

By JUSTICE DELOS SANTOS

Hercules High School

Hercules High sophomore cross country runner Ryan Cutter made history by becoming the first school runner to qualify for the California Interscholastic Federation Cross Country State Championship in Fresno.

Cutter's journey to State came on Nov. 22, when he ran the course in 16 minutes, 58 seconds at NCS (North Coast Section) in Hayward, ranking 11th out of more than 100 runners.

"It felt pretty awesome to go and represent

Hercules on such an elite level with so many great runners," Cutter said.

The next week, Cutter went to Fresno, running 17:15 in his first race at the course.

"The course felt pretty hard," he said. "I had no idea what it would be like and it was a pretty challenging course."

His goal is to keep improving and qualify for State next year.

"For next year, I want to just get my times down and also make State again. Just keep improving and placing better each year," Cutter said.



## Is playing Destiny your destiny?

By BAILEY LUTTRELL  
Northgate High School

Last fall, my two siblings and I stood for four hours outside of GameStop awaiting the arrival of one of the most hyped games of the year: Destiny.

The game is Bungie's newest creation. With the help of Activision, Sony Computer Entertainment, and ND Games, Destiny was developed for four platforms: Playstation 3, Playstation 4, Xbox 360, and the Xbox One.

This online first-person shooter contains some elements of RPG (role playing games) and MMO (massively multiplayer online).

Following in the footsteps of Bungie's previous innovation, the Halo series, Destiny

contains similar features such as matchmaking and the ability to play solo, cooperative, and competitive multiplayer modes.

Finally, after four grueling hours in the cold, we were invited inside the store to purchase the game. With three copies in hand, we stormed out of the store and back home to embark on an adventure.

At the beginning of the game, you are prompted to create a character. Because this is my favorite part of the entire game, I spent several minutes making my character as awesome as possible.

Destiny's character customization is phenomenal. You have three options of race: Awoken, Human, or Exo. Awoken is a mysterious species with dark blue and white skin.

Humans are well... humans.

And lastly, there are Exos, a machine-like race that is powerful and ruthless.

Once you pick a race, you are prompted to choose a class. This class will determine your fighting style, different powers, and clothing. The classes are titans, warlocks, and hunters.

Titans are Destiny's combat-based unit. Hunters are an agile class of warrior, similar to rogues in fantasy games.

Lastly, warlocks are fragile mages. With an ability to do immense damage, this class serves as the main damage dealer.

Destiny is pretty well balanced in the sense that you can enjoy the game on your own or co-op. With all of the different play types, there is something to suit everyone. Destiny takes

place all over the Milky Way galaxy, and that's really all I can say without spoiling it.

"Destiny is a game that's many things to many people, in large part because Bungie marries so many inspirations into one," a New York Daily News review said:

"It's Halo's shooting and the role-playing and looting of Borderlands and a design palette that borrows from Mass Effect and Star Wars all rolled into one, with a few MMO features and plenty of community built into the background."

With those being some of the most profitable games in history, as well as my all-time favorites, Destiny is well on its way to earning even more records.

## 'Swift effect' is hard for admirers to shake off

By BRANDON GARNSEY  
San Ramon Valley High School

I was never really that much into Taylor Swift and surely would not have called myself a "Swiftie." But that all changed with the hype and frenzy surrounding the release of her newest album, "1989"

Taylor Swift is a major star. She used to fit under the country-pop genre but with her newest work, she went completely pop.

Scrolling my Facebook feed in advance of the release, I began to notice comments from teens to 20-somethings and beyond expressing their anticipation. I found myself joining in and shelling out cold hard cash for a piece of the phenomenon.

So, like countless others, I've fallen under the sway of the "Swift effect," the influence she has over the culture of her fandom and her fellow performers.

Here is a breakdown of her impact:

### Pop Culture

The power she has on pop culture and her fans is amazing. "Holiday 2014" was one like no other for a group of adoring "Swifties". With the success of her "1989" album she wanted to share her joy and sent out personalized gifts to fans around the country.

A six-minute video, admittedly most likely produced by her PR people, went viral as scene

after scenes showed unsuspecting fans opening gifts including hand-written messages penned by the superstar herself.

Her charitable work is impressive as well. For the third year in a row, in 2014, Swift was named No. 1 on the 20 "celebrities gone good list" put out by DoSomething.org.

### Positivity

You can look long and hard, but will not find one swear word in her new album, which lies in stark contrast to most popular music today. Her music is based on the concept that a positive attitude can get you through even the worst of times.

She is proving that marketing her albums doesn't require the use of vulgar terms and suggestive themes.

### Friendship

Judging by her posts on social media, her relationships with such artists as Lorde, HAIM, and Selena Gomez are built on mutual respect. On the red carpet at the Golden Globes last month, Lorde talked about how much she admired Swift and commented, "I just think she's very wise."

As far as the HAIM sisters are concerned, their friendship has only grown stronger. Taylor recently took to Twitter to announce that she would be "touring with the SQUAD," adding HAIM to her already promising tour line-up and celebrating their Grammy nomination for Best New Artist. As for Selena Gomez, she has

said in an interview with the UK's Daily Mail.

"Every single problem I ever have is healed by Taylor Swift! If I ever I have an issue, Taylor has gone through it, because she's older than me, and she gives the most thought-out answers."

### Politics

In the 2014 congressional election, Swift's name even pops up in the political campaign. A retiring Democratic senator from Iowa, Tom Harkin, mentioned her in a comment about a female Republican candidate, inferring that even if she was as "good looking as Taylor Swift, she would not be right for Iowa."

In response, candidate Joni Ernst fired back, answering a reporter's question about the comment by saying, "We're just gonna shake this off and keep going." In the end, although it may not be because of Taylor, Ernst is now the newly elected senator from Iowa.

This is a prime example of the effect that one artist can have on someone or something completely out of their normal target audience.

Swift, 25, though no longer a teen, has had a far-reaching effect on those of us living the teenage experience. Her first single from this new album, "Shake it off", has proved to be a massive hit.

I've often heard students at San Ramon Valley High School humming or singing "to this sick beat," a line from the record. With the release of the complete album, it is no wonder



IMPACT ARTIST Taylor Swift arrives at the 2013 American Music Awards at the Nokia Theatre L.A. Live in Los Angeles on Sunday, November 24, 2013. (Adam Orchon/Sipa USA/MCT)

that "1989" sold more copies opening week than any other album in the past 12 years.

Her music is everywhere. The Swift effect is not something you can't easily... shake off.

## Free speech needs the right advocacy

From FREE SPEECH Page 8

me be clear: our institutions of higher education, with notable exceptions, are not the bastions of free discourse they should be, or once were.

Rather than existing as pockets of free thought, they exist as pockets of restricted expression and enforced political correctness.

Colleges and universities have increasingly shown themselves to be unwilling to protect free expression in the face of PC bullying. Following the Ferguson incidents and ensuing controversy, the President of Smith College was forced to apologize for writing that "all lives matter."

A UCLA professor was compelled to apologize for posing a question to his law students about whether a Ferguson protester's yelling of "burn this bitch down" after which riots ensued. That legally constituted incitement.

At UC Berkeley, another student group tried (albeit unsuccessfully) to prevent comedian Bill Maher from delivering the December commencement address because of his criticism of certain practices of Islam, and their broad-based support in many Muslim countries.

Don't get me wrong, these are touchy subjects. Race issues and Islamophobia are massive problems that must be addressed. However, to address these issues we need to discuss them, and if we allow ourselves to be forced to walk on eggshells while doing so we do ourselves a great disservice.

So yes, while few of us will ever have to fear death for making a statement or drawing a picture, we can all learn a lesson from Charlie Hebdo:

If you are a person who thinks critically, and has views of any significance, there will be people who object to those views. They may want to stop you from expressing them. They may try very hard to do so. But you cannot let them. In that sense, we are all Charlie.

## WE DON'T SAVE KIDS FROM STARVING



## WE SAVE THEM FROM SMOTHERING

High school students are the ultimate "embedded journalists." We need them more than ever to tell truthful, fearless stories about what's going on in their schools. Too often, their journalistic work is met with threats and retaliation. Great teachers get fired, great kids get bullied, great programs get shut down. That's when the Student Press Law Center steps in, to confront the bullies and stand up for honest discussion of what kids care about and parents need to know.

Our name says "Press," but the SPLC is at the forefront of keeping online speech free, by fighting to overturn a wave of frightening court rulings that suggest the pervasiveness of the Internet justifies greater government control over what is said online.

The SPLC is leading the charge to reform out-of-control federal secrecy laws that block reporters and parents alike from getting information about school performance and campus violence.

At the SPLC, we aren't just saving the future of journalism - we're helping create journalism worth saving.

JOIN become a member today at [www.splc.org](http://www.splc.org)

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## Samantha Dumalig is a woman 'for all seasons'

By DALIA ANWAR  
Clayton Valley Charter High School

Have you ever thought of enrolling in four Advanced Placement courses and an additional community college course while being Associated Student Body President and tutoring other students? Not to mention being involved in more than five organizations on campus?

Well, Clayton Valley Charter High School enior Samantha Dumalig has achieved all of these things and more over her four years at the school.

Being elected student body president

was the pinnacle of Dumalig's high school career after being a member of Leadership all four years. Her responsibilities as president include running official meetings and organizing committees for school events.

Dumalig is also involved in the Multi-cultural club, the Senior Women organization, the California Scholarship Federation, French club, the Blue Crew organization, and the Badminton club.

"It took me a long time to find a balance between academics and extracurriculars. I had to be disciplined and manage my time to the minute," said Dumalig.

Her motivation behind all of her hard

work? She enjoys the opportunity to help her fellow students.

"It feels great to be a part of an event that students look forward to, or helping them to improve their grades," Dumalig said.

In the future she plans to attend college and majoring in engineering.

"If I finish college and I'm half as much a math genius as (math teacher Mitch) McDuff is, I could basically do anything!" said Dumalig.

BUSY WOMAN In addition to serving as student body President, Dumalig also belongs to several other campus organizations. Photo by Dalia Anwar, Clayton Valley Charter High School.



## Acalanes administration considers new lockdown protocol

### June lockdown raises questions about the benefits, drawbacks of open communication

By ANNIKA WALKER  
Acalanes High School

Although school lockdown procedures are meant to prevent students from entering or exiting campus, they do not stop the constant communication that has become standard amongst teenagers. Students exchanged floods of text messages, emails, Facebook messages, and Snapchats with parents and friends during Acalanes' lockdown in June 2014.

As a result, Acalanes administrators are now examining the school's virtually nonexistent policies on students' use of technology during emergency situations. Because there was no uniform policy, some teachers allowed students to use phones during the lockdown, which calmed parents' worries but also facilitated the spread of rumors and other information that was harmful to the already serious situation.

"There was no mandate about how we were to ask students to interface with technology during a lockdown and there was no specific guideline that we had to follow regarding that," English teacher Natalie Moore said.

During the June lockdown, some students used their phones to assure parents and friends that they were OK, which helped reduce the initial stress and panic that arose in some cases.

"People talked to parents to assure that everyone was okay, and also accessed a show, which helped calm students," junior Cole Gotelli said.

Although administrators send out a blast email to parents if the school goes on lockdown, it can be more reassuring for loved ones to hear directly from their students.

"I think that initially [technology] can help to reduce stress for those not in the locale of the emergency. Students being able to notify their parents to let them know that they are safe is really important" Acalanes principal Allison Silvestri said.

In addition to communication between students and parents, technology had another positive effect on the way kids and teachers dealt with the stress of the situation. As informative emails came in,

some teachers shared these details with their classes, letting students know that there was nothing huge to worry about at the moment.

"Any information that came through about how long the situation might last or information that people felt would help us stay calm and not exacerbate the situation was shared, and I shared the same with the students," English and French teacher Ann Rasmussen said. "It helped me stay calm. It's hard to not know what's going on."

While portable devices allow many students to safely communicate with loved ones during these situations, they also provide an opportunity to receive or send out incorrect information, which is the root of rumors and unnecessary worry.

"They decrease stress in the moment, but they can increase stress levels in the long term," Vice Principal Zach Pinkerton said.

Many rumors were rooted in messages sent between students and were then spread and exaggerated as the day went on. Social media sites such as Facebook provided a place for kids to look into the threats and then to jump to wild conclusions.

"During the lockdown last year, we had a substitute teacher who let us use our phones," sophomore Julia Stedman said. "Everyone was on their phones and rumors were flying about what was happening, which caused students to worry more than necessary."

A number of teachers recognized that students using their devices could potentially be a problem and strictly enforced no-electronics rules because they believed that students would be better off without all the rumors circulating.

"I had freshmen, so I really was conscious of the fact that they were young and impressionable, and that this was probably the first time they'd been in a situation like this," Moore said.

This accessibility of electronic communication also may have other more dangerous effects than the mental ones, according to school safety expert and executive director of Safe Havens International Michael Dorn.

For example, when many people in a certain area are on devices, explosives or

other things may be programmed by more sophisticated terrorists to go off when many cell signals are in the air.

Another scenario that is more likely to impact a school lockdown would be when numerous calls are made to 911 reporting information inaccurately.

"Students have frequently panicked during crisis events and made numerous calls to parents, friends, the media, and 911, greatly exaggerating the situation and causing considerable confusion. I have seen this dynamic many times in school shootings, bomb threats and other situations I have worked," Dorn said.

Despite the negative consequences that can result from misuse of technology during emergency situations, the benefits can outweigh some of the risks as long as schools have clear policies regarding the use of communication, according to former Acalanes Principal Aida Glimme.

"There is a certain calmness when you check in with your friends or when you check in with your family. We should be very clear about what you shouldn't do with your social media or your electronics" said Glimme.

This level of calm was well maintained by many Acalanes teachers last year, but not because of a clear set of guidelines set by the school. Teachers had to decide for themselves how to let student use or not use their electronics during the situation.

There have not been significant changes to procedures for emergency situations regarding electronics use, but Pinkerton believes that there should be more limits on it for the future, especially after the initial text to parents saying that the student is okay.

"At that point, I would limit cell phone use, because cell phones can actually give away details that we don't want shared," he said. "But cell phones enable us to tweet, text, or give others information, which wasn't possible fifteen years ago. Having everybody have a cell phone can do a whole lot to spread safety information faster than before."

To make these limits tangible, a uniform set of policies and rules must be created to restrict certain types of communication.

"During emergencies, I think students

should have the ability to contact parents and loved ones but should not be given enough time to work up a storm and panic over a situation. If the school could figure out a way to find an equal balance between these two mediums, I think that would be the way to go," Stedman said.

If students' electronics use were to be limited, both students and parents would have to acknowledge and recognize this limitation. Last year's lockdown situation should be examined in the process of creating guidelines.

"The first is that we do need to debrief that experience. I think that there's still a lot to be learned from it. The second is that we need to hear through that debriefing," Moore said. "I know the parent community wants communication with their kids, but also as a teacher, I am responsible for the students in my classroom at that time, so I'm the decision maker, and that also has to be communicated."

Along with examining the events of last year's lockdown, Acalanes administration is looking to make sure that teachers are more informed with correct information during these types of situations.

They are starting to train teachers for future incidents like this one and are working on a more organized reunification program, according to Pinkerton. This would help ensure that all students are safe and accounted for when parents come to pick their children up after school emergencies.

Many of the protocols and standard policies that the Acalanes administration is using come from "I love u guys," a foundation started after a gunman in Colorado held seven students hostage, and one of the girls sent text messages to her parents reading "I love you guys" before she was shot and killed.

The organization hopes to help schools to create better policies to avoid danger for students.

In the future, Acalanes will be gravitating towards a safer set of rules and policies for emergency situations to make sure that students are as safe as they can be.

"Guidelines would be really helpful. That would actually be a very positive outcome that would help in these times,"

## Assassins game draws police involvement

From ASSASSINS Page 1

on Tuesday night."

Phadnis said the students damaged her car when several of them sat on her hood.

"Later on that evening, my car broke down," Phadnis said. "I called AAA to open my hood and fix the battery. He couldn't open the hood. He had to pry it open, because it was damaged, 'cause they sat on it."

Senior Ashton Lubarsky, who was trying to assassinate Phadnis when her car was blocked, felt it was an overreaction to have the police involved.

"[The police officer] just like told us how since we boxed her in, that we could've been charged with a misdemeanor or a felony if she felt threatened and that we should find a safer way of letting off stress our senior year."

It is not just the San Ramon police that discourages Assassins. Seniors at Granada High in the

"The police told us how since we boxed her in, we could've been charged with a misdemeanor or a felony."

neighborhood town of Livermore played the game during December 2014. According to [contracostatimes.com](http://contracostatimes.com), Livermore police say that "the game has gotten out of hand" due to the increase of phone calls and student injuries over the past few years.

According to [abc7news.com](http://abc7news.com), Livermore police "received 911 calls regarding reckless driving, prowlers and armed people in the community" during Assassins.

In 2013, Livermore police also responded to a female student crashed her car into a house while being pursued by her assailant. Though the rules may vary from school to school land state to state, the concept is the same: stay alert, and don't get shot.

The godfathers usually keep about 25 percent of the pot, which is about \$2,000 this year, according to the Cal Assassins 2015 Twitter account.

Bribery has been apparent within the game, with assassins offering to pay cash to both players and non-players for information about their targets.

"One of my assassins skipped his fifth period class to find out where I was parked," said senior participant Jack Mermod. "I also heard that they paid someone for my partner's address."

Senior Ruby Boyle, who is not

playing assassins, said that a male classmate offered her money to help him assassinate his targets.

"He just wanted information in general about where the houses were located... didn't want to get involved," said Boyle, noting the player offered her upwards of \$30.

When asked if there will be a future rule clarification regarding the prohibition of monetary transaction between two players, Lillard said that he was unaware that bribery was apparent within the game until that moment.

"I feel like paying someone for something should not be allowed," he said.

There have been some students that have voiced their dissatisfaction with the game.

Lubarsky and her partner, Darrah Cooper, are unsure if they want to continue playing the game if they advance to the second round.

"I don't know if we're going to play," Lubarsky said, "But hopefully the ones that make it to the second round, [do] not call the cops."

Mermod also shares these feelings. "I've been looking forward to playing assassins since freshman year, but I was disappointed once I actually got to play," said Mermod. "My partner and I basically paid \$20 to sit in our cars and stare at a house for six hours."

## Construction creates driving dangers

By CHRISTOPHER BORTOLON  
Monte Vista High School



The current construction Stone Valley Road, combined with some students participating in leapfrogging, or passing each other on the narrow road, has created dangerous conditions for Monte Vista High School students on their way to and from the school.

Leapfrogging sometimes involves passing across the double yellow line into oncoming traffic. Monte Vista junior Nick Thakar and his sister were driving home from school in October when he was rear-ended on Stone Valley Road.

The events surrounding Nick Thakar's incident did not stem from mere haste or negligence, rather, it came from a blatant breach in roadway safety.

On Oct. 21, Thakar was driving when a leapfrogger crossed over the yellow line to pass. Forced to come back into proper lane because of oncoming traffic, the speedster collided with the car in front of him.

This accident prompted Thakar to slam on his brakes to avoid an impact. A second later, Thakar felt a smash from behind.

"I see this crash in front of me,

so I slam on my brakes, and a second later, there is a truck where my trunk should be," Thakar said.

The impact was significant enough to shatter the rear window of Thakar's 2001 Lexus, and resulted in the entire deformation of the rear of the car. The truck, belonging to Spencer Tubs, sustained less damage.

In total, the accident encompassed four cars, and caused significant delay on the road. The accident was a result of poor judgment on the part of certain students.

This accident comes on top of several other recent crashes. One accident in the beginning of the October involved a Mercedes and a truck.

This string of crashes prompted an email from administration, reminding students to be careful on the way to and from school.

"This is something that could have been avoided, but at the end of the day I'm glad that nobody is hurt," Thakar said.



## San Ramon grad builds consumer electronics firm

By SHILPA RAO

San Ramon Valley High School

Maybe he didn't obtain top grades or a perfect SAT score. Maybe he didn't get accepted to UC Davis on his first try. But Jason Lucash had something else - an entrepreneurial spirit - that led to success.

The 2002 San Ramon Valley High School graduate is the founder and a partner at OrigAudio, a consumer electronics company now worth several million dollars that has won numerous awards.

Lucash, 31, attended Sycamore Valley Elementary School from 1993-1995 and Charlotte Wood Middle School from 1995-1998. From 1998-2002, he attended San Ramon. He says he was a decent student in high school.

"I think my GPA was a 3.5, which was pretty good back in the day," he says, "though now many kids get above 4.0s." He had an affinity for math and "numbers-based" classes but describes himself as a "terrible" writer and cites his SAT scores - 760 on math but 400-something on writing. Outside of the classroom, he was involved in sports such as football and track-and-field.

Living in Danville has shaped Lucash's desire to be an entrepreneur and has taught him a lot about being in business. His first venture was a candy stand that he ran in elementary school. His parents lived on "prime real estate" near his school, and he realized he could benefit from his classmates' love for candy. So, he purchased candy from Safeway and Costco and marked it up and sold it, making as much as \$700 as a fourth-grader, he said on his website, <http://www.jasonlucash.com/#!about/c1enr>.

He says on the website that the primary reason the candy stand flourished was its location, and he emphasizes that "it's all about location, location, location."

In high school, Lucash had a variety of odd jobs around Danville: He worked as a golf cart boy at the Crow Canyon Country Club for three years and ran a Town of Danville summer camp for one year. While he made a decent income, Lucash learned that he was the type of

person who cared more about enjoying a job than pursuing one just because it was lucrative.

"I've always had fun jobs," he explained. "For me, it's more important to have a job that is entertaining and not make as much than to have a job that I hate but make more." But more than anything, these jobs ultimately taught Lucash that he wanted to be his own boss and work for himself.

It took Lucash three tries to be admitted to UC Davis after high school (he thinks that this is because his grades weren't good enough), but he is glad he persisted. He majored in managerial economics and took Jacquie Bowman's economics class, which furthered his desire to go into business because, as San Ramon High *Wolfprint* reporter Amanda Nguyen said in a 2010 story, "economics allowed him to transform his dream into reality." In February 2014, Lucash was named UC Davis' "Young Alumnus of the Year."

Lucash says that his experiences in college outside class were equally influential in teaching him about business. He landed an internship with the Oakland A's in which he learned about sports marketing, a field he thought he wanted to pursue.

Out of college, Lucash landed a job at JanSport where he worked in marketing and promotions. He worked closely with JanSport founder Skip Yowell, who he describes as a "mentor." At JanSport, Lucash learned to take his business seriously but not to take himself too seriously.

Lucash and partner Mike Szymczak came up with the idea for their initial product while working at JanSport. The two traveled often and were sick of using bulky speakers, so they thought of creating speakers that could fold for easy transport and eventually named the product Fold N' Play. Thus, OrigAudio was born. The company was initially funded with \$10,000 Lucash borrowed from his mom and other money he and Szymczak had from prior jobs. Lucash says the process of starting a company today is radically different than what it was when he started his company.

"Now, a lot of people launch their brands and products on Kickstarter, Indiegogo and other crowdfunding sites like that," he says, "but five years ago, that didn't exist. We were scrappy - we had to try and get friends to help spread the word."

According to [entrepreneur.com](http://entrepreneur.com), the company got its big break when U.S. Marines ordered 50,000 speakers from the OrigAudio website.

Lucash and OrigAudio have won numerous awards. In 2009, OrigAudio's Fold N' Play speaker was chosen to be part of *Time Magazine's* 50 Best Inventions of the Year; in 2012, Lucash was selected as *Entrepreneur Magazine's* Entrepreneur of the Year; in 2013, OrigAudio made Inc's list of 500 Fastest Growing Companies.

Lucash has been on the television shopping network QVC approximately 20 times, which he describes as an exciting but stressful experience because "you only have eight minutes to sell so you're scrambling. You also never know what time you're going to be put on until 48 hours before. You can get placed on at prime time at 8 at night or 5 in the morning or midday."

Lucash gained publicity on ABC's TV show *Shark Tank*, on which aspiring entrepreneurs pitch their companies to a panel of multi-millionaire and billionaire investors ("sharks") who decide whether to invest in them. For Lucash, getting on *Shark Tank* was simple: *Shark Tank* producers saw OrigAudio's name on the Time Magazine list and invited Szymczak and him to participate on the show.

To prepare for *Shark Tank*, Lucash and Szymczak watched every episode from the previous season and came up with answers to questions the sharks had asked previous contestants. Lucash describes the experience as "nerve-racking" but also "kind of cool." He says, "It was instant validation from multi-billionaires that your ideas aren't so crazy."

On the episode, Lucash and Szymczak were offered deals by four sharks but ultimately agreed to one proposed by Robert Herjavec; in real life, however, the deal fell through. The rule on *Shark Tank* is that the deal made on the show does



ENTREPRENEUR Jason Lukash. Photo by Shilpa Rao, San Ramon Valley High School.

not go into effect until the episode airs. Lucash and Szymczak filmed in October and their episode aired in May.

"During those months, we didn't just sit around waiting for our episode to air," Lucash says. "We kept doing what we did and grew the company from almost a million dollar to a two million dollar company." So when Herjavec sent them paperwork for the deal, Lucash and Szymczak chose not to take it. They do not regret the decision. Lucash explains: "From an entrepreneur's perspective, you want to hold on to equity for as long as possible because once you give it away, it is very, very hard to get it back."

Currently, OrigAudio is based out of Orange County and has 14 employees. Initially retail-heavy, OrigAudio was sold in stores such as Francesca's, Nordstrom, Bed, Bath & Beyond and Urban Outfitters. Now OrigAudio focuses more on online retail and has a large percentage of sales that come from its own website and from Amazon, with which it partners. Lucash describes the company's niche as being "portable and affordable," and the company sells products in 60 different countries. Lucash sums up the company with the fish and pond analogy: "We're that cool-looking fish with an afro. When people notice us, they ask, 'What fish is that?'"

## WILKOMMEN! Two students, two countries

By ABBY VOGEELEY

Monte Vista High School

Meredith Corda traveled to Germany as a foreign exchange student in 2013 and lived with a German family for three weeks.

Corda not only had an incredible time, but also encouraged a student she met there, Paula Broetzmann, to travel to California to attend Monte Vista High School for a semester. This semester Broetzmann is living with Corda and attending Monte Vista High.

"I wanted to go to Germany to do an exchange because I had done one before in 4th grade and really enjoyed it," Corda said.

Corda chose Germany specifically because she has had "au pairs", or nannies, originating from there since she was little. She is fluent in German, as she has gone to German school every Saturday for 10 years and continues to learn the language online.

"My au pair's dad worked at Paula's school and that's how we first came in contact with Paula's family," Corda said.

Without even knowing the family personally, Corda set off on an adventure of a lifetime and created a great friendship with Broetzmann, a sophomore.

Influenced by Corda's visit and

"My expectation of Monte Vista was actually like High School Musical and it is a lot like that with all of the school spirit, which is very good," Broetzmann said. "It's nice to have all this school spirit and all of the rallies."

stories of America, Broetzmann, talked frequently with Corda about visiting the United States as an exchange student.

"When Meredith came to Germany, she told me about her school and I really liked what she told me about America," said Broetzmann.

At first, it was only talk, but later when Broetzmann found an organization called International Experience that would allow her to be placed with the Cordas, it became a reality.

"I have always wanted to do an exchange experience because I have been to Spain to live with my family for two years, and really enjoyed that," Broetzmann said. "I have always wanted to have another experience like that."

With bags packed and excitement in hand, Broetzmann arrived in the United States last summer and prepared for a semester at Monte Vista.

Although she was nervous, she was excited to meet students at Monte Vista. Never having been to America, she had some expectations.

"My expectation of Monte Vista was actually like 'High School Musical' and it is a lot like that with all of the school spirit, which is very good," Broetzmann said. "It's nice to have all this school spirit and all of the rallies."

After a few weeks of school, Broetzmann has gotten used to Monte

Vista and all of its spirit and activities. After studying at two different schools in two countries, she can see the differences between them.

"I'm in leadership at my school, and

Corda and her family have shown Broetzmann several California attractions, such as Yosemite, Los Angeles, Berkeley, and Stanford.

Overall, it has been an incredible



I was the school president, so I was really interested in how leadership works here," Broetzmann said. "Here it is more about fun and my school is more about politics, for example how to present our school in the town. Here they are more open for students, and more about fun for students."

Broetzmann said she has enjoyed her classes at Monte Vista, which include Dance and Culinary Arts. She is also enrolled in AP French, and excels in foreign languages (four of them to be precise), as in Germany several languages are taught at an early age.

VISITOR FROM AFAR - Monte Vista student Meredith Corda, left, welcomes her good friend from Germany, Paula Broetzmann, to America. After meeting Broetzmann on her own exchange trip to Germany, Corda brought her to Monte Vista High School for a semester. Photo by Abbey Vogeley, Monte Vista High

experience for both Broetzmann and Corda.

"Having an exchange student at my house is really fun, because I've gone to Germany, but I've never had someone here," Corda said.

"It's just really cool seeing something that I did and seeing how it is the other way around."