



Emotions Flare at School Board Meeting

By Brent Hecht and Lauren Nakasato

Amidst angry cheers of "recall" and "cowards," Albany School District School Board members voted to relocate Tuesday night's School Board meeting after the overflow crowd erupted when it was cut off from speaking in support of teachers. After the relocation, the meeting was closed to all members of the public except the press.

The crowd, which was comprised of students, parents, and teachers, attended the meeting to support teachers in their quest for a double-digit raise from the School Board.

At the beginning of the meeting, newly elected Board President Marsha Skinner announced that the allotted time for speakers would be one hour. Speakers expressing their support for the teachers took up almost the entire hour. About ten minutes after the hour was up, Ms. Skinner stopped the speakers. There were more than half a dozen students, parents, and teachers left waiting to speak. With this announcement, the audience burst into an uproar and demanded more speaking time.

At a November School Board



Photo by Brent Hecht

SUPERINTENDENT GARY MILLS, School Board President Marsha Skinner, and School Board Vice President David Farrell try to quiet the crowd at the December 12 school board meeting.

meeting, former Board President Bill Cain allowed teachers to speak almost an hour past the allotted time. Many in the audience demanded that community members, parents, and students be given the same treatment on Tuesday night.

Loud remarks and arguments immediately followed Ms. Skinner's decision, as teacher supporters resisted the time limit. The Board decided to recess for about five minutes and follow their original agenda once the meeting resumed. This caused uproar among teacher supporters, who yelled:

"This shows your priorities!" and "Recall!" (A recall, in this case, would be the removal of the Board members by a vote of the people.)

During the recess, students and teachers continued to speak, even though the Board turned off the microphone. AHS Senior Daphna Klugman reiterated her support for the teachers, thanking "all the teachers who ever had [her]" and AHS/MacGregor English teacher Susan Charlip urged the crowd to

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Does ASG Have Power?

By Quen Cheng and Jane He

Many students and parents are somewhat unaware that there exists a minority of students who have felt for a long time that the Administration at Albany High School is an oppressive, unresponsive body that only feigns at considering students' input. At the heart of this unpublicized battle stands the Leadership class.

Composed of the Associated Student Government (ASG) and elected officers from each class, the Leadership class supposedly exists to effect the desires of the student body. But some students believe otherwise.

"ASG is a puppet organization set up to administer school dances while the School Board, and other groups like it, control everything," said Senior Patrick Glenn. "The most ASG can ever do is state an opinion to those higher up, and even then, what the student body has to say is routinely ignored."

"ASG has no power to make any classes, decide how any school funds are spent, decide what policies are administered, and can only put money into dances and other superfluous activities (i.e. playing music at lunch)... They have no

control over what actually occurs at school."

Assistant Principal Randy Booker disagreed: "I think [Leadership] has an incredible amount of say in what goes on at AHS, more so than I've seen in any other school I've been at. ... There's a lot of dialogue that goes back and forth between the Administration and Leadership. We don't come in and say 'This is what you have to do.'"

For the most part, the Leadership class concurs. "Leadership does hold quite a bit of power," said Ms. Julie Ashley, the class' advisor. "The students make suggestions to the Administration and the Administration almost always supports and approves the suggestions and ideas created in Leadership class. The Administration is by no means trying to control the Leadership class."

Junior Class Historian Irene Chu thinks that Leadership does "have the power to make a real difference." Nearly everyone in the class disputes the idea that their only power lies in school dances. The class also points to Welcome Week, Homecoming, and Awareness weeks as events of which they are in charge.

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Photo provided by Sho Nakamuri

AHS SOPHOMORE SHO NAKAMURI Wins the 2000 Junior Olympics... See story on page 12

AHS Students Cheat "Because They Can"

By Brent Hecht

Glancing at the adjacent desk, downloading content from the Internet, stealing teachers' answer keys, buying answers, changing grades in grade books, writing answers on arms, storing answers in graphing calculators ... some students will do anything to cheat on a test, essay, or homework assignment.

Over the past few years, cheating at Albany High School has grown from a minor issue into an epidemic. In a recent survey taken by *The Cougar*, over 72 percent of students who responded said that they had cheated at least once in their academic careers. In fact, over 15 percent of respondents said that they had cheated on a final exam, SAT, AP exam, or other major test.

Why has cheating become such a problem at AHS and around the country? Many parents and teachers believe that the recent increase in the popularity of cheating can be blamed on a wide variety of pressures ranging from pressure to get into college to pressure from parents to excel in school.

The majority of AHS students who cheat, however, have a different reason for doing so. According to survey results, pressure from parents and adults to excel and

pressure to get into college were only the third and fourth most cited reasons for cheating, respectively. Instead, AHS students blamed not studying enough the most for their cheating.

This raises an interesting question: Do AHS students use cheating as a last resort in the face of unbearable pressure or has cheating simply become an easier way to take a test?

One teacher strongly believes that, at AHS at least, the latter is true. "Students at AHS seem to feel a right to cheat. I think this is despicable and should not be tolerated." Another teacher agreed. "I think students believe that they should be able to cheat. Students who get caught sometimes blame the teacher for catching them rather than taking responsibility for their own actions."

"It is sad when students have no personal values or [personal] honor code. The saddest part is that the students who cheat think that there is nothing wrong with it, but it is wrong," claimed another teacher.

Some students hold even stronger views on cheating. "Students have no moral fiber. Kids want rewards without working for them. They just don't see that there is anything wrong with cheating," suggested Senior Pat

What's Inside:



AHS students visited Washington D.C. on the Close Up Program. Get the low-down on their trip.

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Find out about the AHS Senior volleyball players' last year in AHS volleyball.

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AHS' Career Day was a hit! Read the full article to find out more!

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Campus Connection

* Welcome back from Winter Break! I hope you had a nice holiday and didn't eat TOO much!

* There is no school on Monday, January 15 due to MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY. Yay!

* DEAD WEEK, the week before finals, begins Monday, January 22. DEAD WEEK is devoted to "studies only", which means there should be no extracurricular activities.

* It would follow then, that FINALS WEEK begins Monday, January 29

* The SAT I & II will be proctored on Saturday, January 27... Be studious in your vocabulary and sagacious enough to eschew superfluous verbiage.

* Theater Ensemble will be performing its STUDENT PRODUCTIONS on the weekends of February 3 and February 10

* The WINTER BALL will be held on January 20

* The VALENTINE'S DANCE will be held on Friday, February 9 from 7p.m. - 11p.m.

Teachers, Board Members Spar at School Board Meeting

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call Board members and demand that they listen to the teachers' demands.

When the Board returned to the meeting room, AHS Social Studies teacher and Albany Teachers Association (ATA) President David DeHart, yelling from the back of the room, tried to convince them to let speakers continue as a way to "get the priorities straight." Indignant, Ms. Skinner refused to comply. The audience then began to clap in unison in support of Mr. DeHart and the other teachers.

The Board tried to resume their agenda, but the boisterous chanting, clapping and foot stomping of teacher supporters kept them from hearing one another. Board Member Bill Cain then moved that the Board take advantage of a rarely used section of the Brown Act (sec. 54957.7), which enables a School Board to "exclude all persons from a meeting where a disturbance has been created and where exclusion of the disruptive persons is not sufficient to allow the meeting to continue unimpeded."

Cain suggested that instead of removing attendees from the room, the meeting should be moved to a smaller room in the District Office, and that no members of the audience be allowed to attend.

Four of the six School Board members who were eligible to vote, Marsha Skinner, Bill Cain, David Farrell, and Owen T. Jones, voted to move. Mary Wallman, a former teacher herself, and Student Board Member Haili Mujadedy were the only members to dissent.

The audience was livid at the Board for its decision to move the meeting. Individual audience members screamed "Coward!", "Recall!", and "Show some respect!" as the board members filed out. Haili Mujadedy did not go. Ms. Skinner did not approve of Mujadedy's choice, "She should have come upstairs with the rest of the Board," she explained.

Because the Brown Act states, "Media personnel not involved in the disturbance must be permitted to attend the session as continued," *The Cougar* reporter was the only non-Board member to attend the rest of the meeting.

WALKOUT FALLOUT

As the tumult died down, teacher supporters got their emotions under control, and were able to comment on the evening's events.

"What we saw tonight was the most outrageous example of a School Board that doesn't want to listen to public opinion," said DeHart. "Because President Skinner didn't like the comments, she decided to cut off the speaking at one hour," he added. AHS Chemistry teacher Peggy Carlock added, "I just wish that they would have let the students speak, especially the middle school students. It takes a brave student to stand up in front of an audience and speak. They had prepared to make a speech."

Such parent and student support was just what the teachers were aiming for. "It was really great the

way parents came out tonight," said AHS math teacher Don DePasquale.

Mujadedy, when asked if it was hard to express to the Board the student position, said: "I saw how many teachers and parents were here and how much they support me. They've got my back."

Recall petitions also went around the room, and about six came back with 10-20 names each.

One Albany parent picked up Ms. Skinner's nameplate, blacked out some of the letters with a ballpoint pen, and wrote "RECALL" in capital letters across the top.

Later, Mr. DeHart stated that "Marsha Skinner showed her true colors to the community. When there's an opinion that doesn't fit hers, she doesn't want to hear it."

Ms. Skinner, however, has a different view, "It was clear to me that there was an effort to disrupt. I do not personally believe that giving the speakers fifteen more minutes would have solved the problem," she explained in an interview. In response to claims like Mr. DeHart's that Ms. Skinner and the rest of the Board went way overboard in moving the meeting, Ms. Skinner replied, "I could have called the police; I didn't do that."

WHAT HAPPENED BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

When the meeting reconvened, the first order of business was a report by Dr. Richard McCallum on the elementary schools' staggered reading program. The district is currently paying graduate students \$50 to conduct interviews with parents regarding the success of the program.

Teachers find this upsetting because they only could receive \$25 an hour for teaching an extra class. Mr. DeHart later summarized the situation, "Why are they paying graduate students \$50 an hour to conduct interviews when all a teacher could get is \$25?"

Dr. McCallum responded to the teachers' viewpoint, represented by Board Member Walman, by saying that it will actually take graduate students more than an hour to complete the work for which they are being paid.

He explained that the students spend time travelling and coding information as well as doing the interviews.

Next on the agenda was an update on AHS' new School Re-

source Officer (SRO). A report on the details of this update will be available in a future issue of *The Cougar*.

While the topic was only scheduled for twenty minutes, the Board spent more than 50 minutes discussing the SRO program and asking Assistant Principal Randy

cludes extra fourth and fifth grade prep-time, reading specialists to assist teachers with students who have difficulties reading, support for English language learners (ESL students), and paraprofessionals (instructional aides).

Ms. Skinner believes that when these "benefits" are figured in,

Albany teachers have a relatively good deal. "I am satisfied with what we provide our teachers based on research I have done on my own in relation to other districts," she explained. She cited lower student/counselor ratios, class sizes that "on average look pretty good," and a large number of support staff as her reasoning.

"If all they want is salary," she added, "we

could go after fourth and fifth grade prep time and other programs [to raise funding]. ... I don't want to characterize [the teachers] as unreasonable, but the things they want cost money."

The Board, however, was hard pressed to find a way to come up with enough money to even begin to make a new offer to the teachers.

One option might be for the district to tighten its belt, although Superintendent Gary Mills made it clear that this might not result in enough money for the requested 7.5% raise for this year. According to Ms. Skinner, the Board has already started to crack down on spending. "[The Board] has already done some nipping on service contracts and legal services and has sought advice from principals [about how to save money]."

Some other steps the district could take to save money include not filling vacancies in aide and janitorial jobs and limiting discretionary funding, which includes funding for supplies, travel, and new equipment.

Mr. Mills also admitted that laying people off "is an option that [the Board] will have to consider." Ms. Skinner later hinted that newly hired elementary school teachers may be the first to go. However, because of teacher contracts, Skinner explained, it is very difficult for the Board to lay off any staff in the middle of the year.

Once the school year ends, a whole new range of possibilities opens up. In addition to cutting staff, the Board can also cut programs.

Ms. Skinner is especially concerned about the latter option. She explained that in 1994, when the teachers and the Board were in a similar situation, the Board "cut [down on] the athletic program, shop, music programs, library programs, Advanced Placement classes, elective programs

in general, and reading specialists at the elementary schools."

She does not want to be forced to make a similar series of cuts again.

What about the new state funds that teachers say were intended to be used for teacher salary increases? Ms. Skinner explained that the Board was forced to use this money to pay for rising Health Net and Kaiser fees, the relatively large number of teachers moving up salary columns, increased contributions to the state teacher's retirement system, and some class size reduction costs.

The Superintendent is writing a report on the teacher salary negotiations for the district's website. The report will be posted soon.

STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS SOUND OFF

One of the issues brought up by teacher supporters at the meeting is the high cost of living in Albany. ATA Vice President Barbara Brunetti stated that "Teachers need to be treated like other professionals," and Albany parent David Kessler said that "when teachers cannot provide for their own children, how can they provide for our children in the classroom?"

Henry Reichman, an Albany parent as well as Chair of the Department of History at Cal State Hayward, stated that the Board "broke their promise" and that "promises must be kept."

Some parents, such as Andrew Schwartz, are willing to give up programs in exchange for a teacher raise. "I for one am willing to sacrifice other programs to keep these wonderful teachers," he said.

Bruce Rice, a member of the Superintendent's Budget Advisory Committee, voiced his belief that the School Board does respect the teachers and would like to give them a raise.

"I believe that the School Board has a great deal of respect for the teachers in this district...and recognizes that teachers are underpaid," he said. Rice, however, would like to see the Board make clear what exact financial reasons are keeping the Board from giving the raise.

"The community as a whole needs a public accounting of how the money was, or will be, spent," said parent Peggy Black.

Many parents made the comment that teachers in general are not paid enough. "It is appalling what we pay teachers here in America," said a disgusted parent, Larry Fitzsimmons.

Six students also voiced their concerns. Student Body President Jennifer Nejad said, "I support the teachers and I want it to be known. If you're not going to listen to the teachers," pleaded Nejad, "then listen to us, the students."

John Im, Eunji Kim, John Kim, and Amy Jin all expressed their support for the teachers because their teachers have always been there for them.

Matthew Madden-Smith, an AHS Junior, said through tears that "my binder is a mess, my room is a mess, my house is a mess, please don't make my education a mess."



Photo by Brent Hecht

THE OVERFLOW AUDIENCE prepares for the School Board meeting to begin as they begin to prepare their statements to the board.

Booker and Officer Mike Ayers questions.

Many teachers were upset to hear that the SRO program had been given more than two and a half times its time allotment while the speaking in support of the teachers was stopped at ten minutes past its allotment.

BUDGET TALK WITHOUT TEACHERS PRESENT

Next on the Board's agenda was the budget. Members of the Board reiterated that they do not have enough money for the raise the teachers say the Board had promised them. Nevertheless, the Board approved the "First Interim Financial Report," which did not include provisions for teacher raises.

Because the report is preliminary, however, it can easily be changed. David Farrell, the newly elected vice president of the Board was quick to point out that "We [the Board] are going to have to come up with



Photo by Brent Hecht

SUPERINTENDENT GARY MILLS LOOKS on as the School Board meeting goes past the midnight hour.

what we agreed to and that is 7% or even more." Mr. Cain added, "We do need an agreement. We value [the teachers]."

Ms. Skinner does "believe teachers deserve a raise, but [the Board] needs to look at the entire package." The "package" she referred to in-

Who Does Leadership Lead?

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However, all is not perfectly peachy in Leadership Land. Senior Vice President Amy Jin directly contradicted one of Mr. Booker's claims.

"I've noticed a few things that seem to have been decided solely by Administration," she said. "Some decisions or occurrences were just handed down to us, 'here,

make the best of it.' One example that is tired but still an issue was Homecoming; who

decided what week Homecoming was to be on? Well I've heard that it was supposedly ASG President, Vice President, and Mr. Booker, but I'm not sure."

ASG President Jennifer Nejad later said she was not part of the decision on setting the date.

"Also during Homecoming, or maybe it was Welcome Week," continued Jin, "we couldn't have music during lunch one day because the neighbors had been complaining. That was just like, 'Yeah, you can't have music today'—end of story; no chance to talk to anyone about it, just an already-made decision. But communication has always been terrible at this school—at least this administration tries."

Other students complain about past administrations refusing to increase funding for the arts programs and shunning the arts programs in general. One particular incident that brings back painful memories is the locker incident of two years ago.

The Administration at the time, headed by former principal Lois Woods-Green, felt that there was a need for more lockers, and that the old arts building would be the best place for them. Unfortunately, the walls of the arts building are covered with murals from past AHS art students.

When students arrived at school one day to find lockers partially erected, they held huge protests. Led by art teacher Ed Hill, students camped out in front of the lockers for an entire day, preventing the construction workers from fastening bolts to walls.

However, the following weekend, the Administration came in on a day when students were out of class and finished drilling in the lockers, in spite of the objections of students, parents, and faculty alike. To this day, the lockers still grace the walls of the arts building.

In response to this criticism, Mr. Booker accurately points out that none of the current administrators (Principal Gloria Galindo, Assistant Principal Amy Hanson, and himself) had any part in the locker decision.

"I wasn't here when lockers were put up against murals," he said. "I wasn't part of that decision. Bad decision.

"I can understand why there are some instances of hurt, but let's look at our art program. I think it's extremely successful. We have fac-

ulty members who are dedicated and passionate toward it. We have fall production, spring musical, student production, which is a new thing. ... We have digital recording studio, which is new.

"I think we have done everything in our power to support those programs. I would love to know, are they frustrated with *this* administration, or is it because of past practice?"

"ASG is a puppet organization set up to administer school dances while the School Board, and other groups like it, control everything."

— Senior Pat Glenn

Nejad, who has been involved with student government for six years, agrees that the current administration is doing better. "Past administrations haven't listened to student concerns," Nejad said. "But this administration tries."

It upsets Nejad to hear students complain that "ASG does nothing." Often, she says, people don't recognize that the events that *do* fall under the responsibility of Leadership are important and significant as well, and at the same time, people are quick to criticize them when something goes bad. "We take the rap for everything," she said.

But Nejad also said that, in a way, she understands the frustration of students who feel that the Administration doesn't listen to students. It is true, she said, that the *purpose* of ASG is not to decide on the school budget or to decide what new classes to make.

"Ultimately, that's not our job; we don't make the final decision on things like that," Nejad explained, "although it is our job to voice students' opinions."

Mr. Booker seconds that idea. "Theoretically, ASG is an advisory board," explained Mr. Booker. "They advise the principal. She's the boss. But we allow them to make decisions because we respect them and their judgements."

Ms. Hanson added that there are certain things that are out of the jurisdiction of the student council. For example, the student body has campaigned for years for students to be able to receive PE credit for participation in sports teams. But Ms. Hanson said that this issue is "not a student prerogative. Their opinions are listened to, but it's not open to vote."

One thing that both the Leadership class and the Administration agree on is that students need to let their opinions be known.

Ms. Ashley encourages students to drop in on the 5th period Leadership class if possible, or at least find a class representative to talk to if there is a concern. "We encourage all suggestions, comments, concerns, criticisms, and praise," she said.

"I encourage students to come knock on my door, which is always open," said Mr. Booker, "and let me know, because I can't make things better without knowing. And no one knows better than the students how things are going.

"We're working; we're trying to make the school better. Everything a student has to say is considered. It's their school."

Third Annual AHS Career Day a Success

By Ben Walker

Career Day - a great opportunity for students to get a taste of the "real world" right in the comfort of their own school, to meet interesting people and to hear their stories. Yeah, all that plus the fact that students get a break from some of their class periods. What more could a student ask for?

On Wednesday, Nov. 29, students got that taste. During periods three, four and five, they attended seminars based on their prior choices. These were arranged by PTA volunteers.

Nicole Berger and Will Douglas, both juniors, were very satisfied with their Career Day experiences. "It was helpful and informative; the PTA did a great job!" exclaimed Douglas. While Berger and Douglas got two of their top three choices, Zoe Griffith, a junior, got all three of hers.

Still Griffith was not satisfied. "The PTA should survey students about what they want to see," she suggested. In saying this, though, she was unaware that students can voice their opinions about Career Day by contacting the PTA.

In October, the members of the PTA Career Day committee got together and brainstormed. They tried to come up with a wide variety of professions for the seminars. Their choices were limited by the availability of the presenters. As a result, not every field of interest was represented.

In early November, Career Day seminar selection sheets were distributed to students in their homerooms. The students were instructed to pick six seminars, numbering them in order of their preference. After the forms were

turned in, they went to the PTA where 20 volunteers assigned students to seminars.

If students filled out their sheets completely, PTA volunteers were easily able to assign them to at least one of their top three choices. If students did not fill out their forms completely, volunteers tried their best to supplement with interesting choices. Unfortunately, if students did not fill out their forms at all, the PTA volunteers put them in whatever seminars had room left, giving those students last priority.

During the seminar assignment process, the senior class got first priority, while the freshman class got last. Within each class, forms were arranged by homeroom but in no particular order. Obviously not everyone received their first choice. It was difficult for the PTA to give everyone their top choices with a limited number of presenters and small classrooms.

The first Career Day was in the spring of the '98-'99 school year. Before the first Career Day, there was an event called Real World Seminars, during which students could either attend a seminar at lunch or get a pass to attend during class.

This event was organized both by the school staff and the PTA. Since not many students knew about the event and it was optional to attend, not many people attended and it was not as successful as the school staff had hoped. Thus Career Day was created, a collaboration of the ideas of the school staff and the PTA.

This year, after everything seemed to be ready for Career Day, Terry Landers, a director of intellectual property and technology as-

essment, had to cancel. The PTA was in a bind. They tried contacting Jonathan Safir, a freelance photographer, who previously said that he probably could not make a commitment.

Luckily, he was able to come after all, so everything worked out fine. The only problem for some students was that they did not get to see the original presenter they had wanted.

Another noteworthy instance involved music producer Steve Fontano, who has performed with groups such as Santana. Due to a traffic tie-up involving a jackknifed big-rig on the San Rafael Bridge, he was late and missed his first presentation.

During that period, he was quickly replaced with Frank Martin, a musician who worked with artists such as Sting. When Fontano finally arrived, he had brought with him the Grammy Award he had received. Students were astounded that they were actually able to touch a Grammy.

The PTA parents who were most involved with Career Day were Gale Williams and Ann Nutt, who organized the event all three years, and Janet Seltzer, who got involved this year.

The presenters were volunteers, as are the PTA members and others who work on Career Day. They help students, knowing how confusing it can be for them during this time of their lives.

There was a wide variety of career presentations, so kids were able to see what it could be like for anybody in most any situation. Gale Williams knows what it is all about: "There are lots of different ways to reach your goal; there are different paths to follow," she said.

Digital Recording Studio Gets Wired

By Jane He

While the theater ensemble was busy preparing for the fall plays, another part of the fine arts department was mixing up some creativity of its own. AHS officially has its very own digital recording studio this year, thanks to the hard work of Mr. Lilienthal and his students. Situated in room 20 in the fine arts building, the studio provides students with a perfect music-creation environment.

Complete with a 32-channel mixing board, two ADAT eight-channel recorders, one 26-channel DAT recorder, a Power Mac G3 computer, an assortment of microphones and mixing software, the digital recording studio is almost ready to go. The studio will be complete once some more equipment—a CD burner, an effects processor, headphone-mixing software—arrives.

Despite that fact, students in Mr. Lilienthal's seventh period digital recording studio class are already experimenting with the various equipment available. "We are finishing a hip-hop/rap track right now," explained Senior Alexander Burr.

Working with the equipment in

the digital recording studio is a great experience for students, explained Mr. Lilienthal. Whereas using outside recording facilities can cost a lot of money, a recording studio at AHS provides students with convenience in addition to work experience. "[The class] is really good because we learn

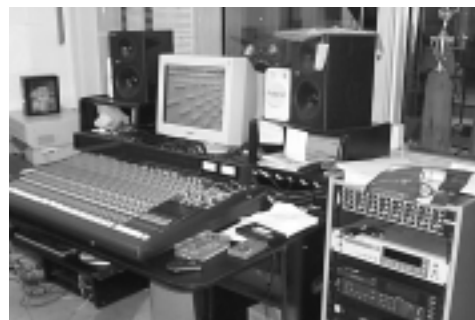


Photo by Peter Hsu

THE DIGITAL RECORDING STUDIO is almost ready to jam away.

skills we can use in jobs later on," said Junior Richard Michel.

When the rest of the equipment arrives, Mr. Lilienthal and his students will host a grand opening of the studio. Parents, patrons, students, and other members of the community will be invited to join in the celebration of the studio's completion. It will be a way of thanking all the people who contributed to the studio's creation.

Mr. Lilienthal concocted the idea for a recording studio three years ago during the search for a proper recording facility for the concert band. He read some books and took classes on how to set up a studio and use the equipment. Next, he asked friends in the music business and various associations for help in acquiring the equipment. Albany Ford and Mechanics Bank are two major local contributors who generously donated money to the cause.

A major breakthrough in Mr. Lilienthal's effort came when *The Journal* wrote a piece about his project. The article attracted the attention of KRON (Channel 4), which did a one minute segment on the story. Patrons from www.sfmusician.com saw the news segment and donated the proceeds from a fundraiser at Great American Music Hall to help fund the studio.

Even when the studio was still in its infantile stages, news drifted around the community and caused much excitement. There were 42 sign-ups for the 15 slots in the class.

Senior Stephanie Roybal had this to say about her class: "It's a lot of work and a lot of fun."

Give 'em a Break: Let Seniors Sleep

By Brent Hecht

Imagine yourself as a high school senior.... You only have a certain amount of time available each night.... Which do you do: fill out college applications or complete homework?

Every day, Albany High seniors are required to answer this highly rhetorical question.

Why? Because their teachers rarely reduce the workload during the height of "college application season," thus forcing seniors to make a definitive choice between "college stuff" and "high school stuff."

From writing essays to taking SAT practice tests to filling out financial aid forms, seniors are deluged with extra-curricular work on a scale many have not experienced before. At worst, college applications can add 10 or more hours of work per week to a senior's schedule.

In addition, filling out college applications and engaging in related responsibilities, such as trying to improve standardized test scores, are some of the most important tasks a college-bound student will ever have to tackle.

Understandably, students faced with this now infamous college/homework dilemma generally, but not without pause, pick "college stuff" over "high school stuff."

There are many reasons for this choice, the most significant of which is rooted in the immense importance of college applications. Inarguably, increasing the chance of getting into a university of choice is more beneficial to one's future than completing a math homework assignment, studying for an AP Biology test, or working on a US Government project.

At Albany High School, an overwhelming majority of seniors applies to college each year. In many high-level math, English, and AP science courses, more than half of the students are seniors. In all US Government/Economic classes, every single student is a senior.

If teachers of these classes want their seniors to perform at their best, they should lay off the homework, test and project workload a bit during the college application season. At the very least, they should offer extensions. If they continue to fail to do so, they won't be the only ones failing.

Is High School Dating Worth It?

By Quen Cheng

I feel like I ought to begin with a disclaimer. I am NOT trying to change the world. I am NOT seeking to disparage my peers. I only offer this opinion hoping that it will cause you to stop and think.

So why do I think dating in high school is unadvisable? Basically, it comes down to a choice between what will be better in the long term versus what is most pleasurable and most fun in the short term.

In any kind of relationship, there are two possible outcomes. Either the relationship continues happily, or it ends badly. In a dating relationship, the "good" outcome is that a couple will stay together forever, that is, they end up getting married and living together. The "bad" outcome is that the couple ends up separated in some kind of break-up.

There is very little in-between space. One could say that there is such a thing as a good break-up, but honestly, how often does that happen? The chance of having a friendly break-up is virtually none.

Further, I would venture to say that the chances of a high school relationship ending in marriage are perhaps even lower.

We often hear about stories like "Forrest Gump" where high school sweethearts end up together. Unfortunately, "Forrest Gump" is a movie, and I know only one or two couples in real life who were

sweethearts in high school. Essentially, engaging in high school relationships is only setting ourselves up to fall. And the deeper one gets involved, the harder one falls.

I've talked with people who have told me that I'm right, but they are *willing* to go through a bad break-up in exchange for the thrill of being in a relationship. If that is your choice, I honestly cannot say "you're wrong," and I respect your decision.

However, there are other reasons high school dating is not as great as it seems. As naive high schoolers, we often think that what we feel is "true love." But I would argue that the crushes we experience are not what marriages are based upon.

In a dating relationship, there is no commitment. When one person stops liking the other person, that is the end of the relationship. Lasting love *requires* a commitment. When a married couple argues, there is a necessary attempt to put things right.

In a dating relationship, that sense of commitment is significantly lessened. I recently overheard a conversation where one person said to the other, "They've been going out for nine months? That's *hella* long!" This is exactly the mindset of the non-committed high school dater.

Dating is also, ultimately, self-satisfying. High school students get involved in dating relationships

for selfish reasons. Too often, the focus is on "what can she do for me?" and not "what can I do for her?", which is the question that true love asks.

Finally, allow me to offer something slightly more abstract: whenever we attach ourselves emotionally to another person, only to be torn apart, it leaves an emotional scar, no matter how small, and it hurts.

If we try to heal this hurt by seeking another person to attach ourselves to, we are only exacerbating the situation because this new, temporarily comforting relationship is only going to leave another emotional scar.

Eventually, we obtain so many scars that we no longer feel the pain, like a burn victim who cannot sense anything on his burnt skin. We lose the genuine, pure, unscarred love that we had to offer in the beginning. We become jaded....

When people ask me why I don't date, I don't usually answer them with an essay. Usually, I simply tell them this: I want to be able to say to my future wife, "I've saved myself for you. I've waited for you my whole life."

I don't want my relationship with my wife to be just another romance that may or may not end like all of the other scar-inducing flings of the past. And hopefully, my wife will have taken the time to think about this, and to have made a wise choice knowing the dangers of high school dating.

In Defense of the Electoral College

By Peter Hsu

The results of the recent election have caused the Electoral College to come under heavy fire as people are understandably outraged that Vice President Gore won the popular vote yet lost the election.

The Electoral College wasn't put into place simply to make the process of electing the president as convoluted as possible (although it may seem that way).

The major purpose of instating the electoral college was to ensure that the voices of all states are heard.

Now that may sound like a rather outdated philosophy considering that federalism has basically broken down and most people consider themselves citizens of the United States as a whole rather than citizens of a particular state.

The argument has been made that the Electoral College should be abolished because it is not a completely democratic process. But before one makes such arguments it is wise to note that the founders equated pure democracy with mob rule.

The point of the Electoral College is twofold: to insure that the voices of small states are heard, and to allow a better informed group of people to choose the president.

But if the Electoral College was simply eliminated, candidates would largely ignore small states and would spend almost all of their campaign time in California, New York, and Texas. By attracting enough votes in those large states candidates could win the election because there are so many people in so few states.

If this happened the effect would be that even more people would be ignored, and by simply

concentrating on the problems of specific areas (yes, different parts of the country do think differently and have different problems) they could be elected president—all the while completely ignoring the worst problems as long as they occur in states with small populations.

All of this rests upon the principle of federalism. To some, it may be an outdated theory that is past its time.

But before advocates start demanding that everything be run from a vast Washington bureaucracy, it is wise to remember that the founders weren't stupid when they devised the idea of local control. If anything, business has shown us that bigger isn't always better.

Student Sings the Bathroom Blues

By Jamie Vislocky

It's 9:20 a.m. True, you've only been in school for two hours, but that cup of coffee you had earlier is already starting to take effect. While your teacher continues lecturing, you cross your legs to suppress the urge. Finally, the teacher concludes with, "Okay, it's 9:28. You're going to have to hustle to your next class." And hustle you do, forgoing the much needed bathroom break.

After 15 minutes of third period, you reach your maximum capacity. "Can I go to the bathroom?" "Not during class time. Hold it for another half-hour."

Unfortunately, that half-hour could be eternity. When break eventually rolls around, you waste the time scurrying to the restroom, on the other side of campus. To your dismay, all the stalls are full, and there are already six other students in front of you. You're next in line when you realize

The recent publication of The Cougar Special Newsletter brought fire from many sources — both Board members and members of the teacher's union. While some of the comments contested facts as reported by The Cougar, others were statements of disappointment of the perspective taken by the writers who covered the event.

While The Cougar isn't an entirely serious newspaper (we do try to listen to the voice of students who want something entertaining — see the Horoscopes) when we report and write about news we

Editor's Note

take our job very seriously.

The Cougar does not have an obligation to either side in any article. Our obligation is to our readers, who expect us to present a fair, unbiased report of what happened at an event.

To the best of their ability, that is what Brent Hecht and Lauren Nakasato did in their article on the board meeting. The article may not have satisfied the desire of either side for "positive" press, or have significantly advanced either cause. But that wasn't the goal.

While the article, as is the case with all articles contained imperfections. However, we are satisfied that it was generally up the standard of reporting The

Cougar takes pride in.

Here are a few points that persons involved in the meeting have brought up:

- ATA President and Social Studies teacher Mr. David DeHart said he did not lead the crowd in clapping after the School Board refused to give additional time for speaking.

- School Board President Marsha Skinner has informed The Cougar that she did not approve or disapprove of Haili Mujadedy's choice to not follow the school board to the new location where the meeting was continued.

- Ms. Skinner would like to clarify that she did not say that the teachers have a "sweet deal."

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Decent Pay Will Attract Decent Teachers

By Peter Hsu

If you believe the rhetoric, education was near the top of the list for both of the presidential candidates. Rallying cries of higher standards and better accountability were tossed around in the debates and in television advertisements.

But despite all of the talk about giving us minors a better education, neither candidate even touched on the method that studies show has the most success — decent wages for teachers.

Instead of trying to give kids a better education, Governor Gray Davis settled for multi-million dollar legislation that will give kids more education. The plan is to make four years of college accessible to anyone, but does nothing to ensure that students will be prepared for those four years.

The solution to the problem of low standards in high school and students not learning enough is not to simply extend the period of time spent in school. The solution is to increase the amount of information and the quality of the presentation of the information delivered to students.

For this to happen, students need qualified, competent teachers. For teachers to be competent and interested in teaching, they need to be paid well.

In Albany salaries start at slightly above \$31,000. With the same four-year degree, a math or science teacher could be earning \$15,000 more by working for a private company.

After about 10 years of teaching "tomorrow's leaders," a teacher will earn about \$43,000. (Of course, few of today's leaders

actually attended public schools.)

If the teacher holds a master's degree and has completed an additional 12 units their salary will be \$45,449. After 20 years of labor the teacher will rake in \$56,356, provided they hold a masters plus 24 units.

What type of teachers do these figures attract? There will always be teachers who teach because they love what they do and strive hard to give students the best possible education. Students know that such teachers are rare and

Obviously there is a clear problem with the quality of the education students are receiving in high school that giving students a college education won't fix.

value them greatly. It's a real gift to have a teacher who loves what they do and knows how to impart that love to their students.

But after that there are varying degrees of competency. In the United States only 41% of high school math teachers hold a degree in the subject they teach. But if school districts would pay competitive salaries then they would be able to hire more teachers who are experts in their discipline.

What scares me is when I think of what's going on in the classrooms of schools that aren't located in communities as affluent as upper middle-class Albany. With teachers like those schools must have, it's no wonder that learning is so rare.

Learning certainly isn't something that is going on as much as it should in any school. The failure rate for many of the new standardized tests is outrageous. For the pilot version of the soon to be implemented high school exit exam, the failure rate on some

sections was as high as 70%.

Everybody loves to talk of standards, but applying standards won't solve the problem of unqualified teachers. Teachers who don't know how to teach or who aren't interested in teaching won't magically get better because the legislature is hanging a test over their heads.

Obviously there is a clear problem with the quality of the education students are receiving in high school that giving students a college education won't fix.

High school should not just be considered a dead time, a step in a process where college is the final goal. In the minds of too many teenagers, high school is merely a time when you get accepted into college and go on to start actually learning.

To change this trend in thought schools need to be able to attract better teachers.

With the college admissions season in full swing I've had the opportunity to talk to a lot of my peers about future careers. While a few of them already have their entire careers planned out I am able to take comfort in the fact that there are not many among that number.

But despite the range of possibilities considered, going into the teaching profession is something that very few students I've talked to are considering. Each year several local teaching scholarships attract as few as two or three applicants.

If today's brightest young people are going to be among tomorrow's teachers, the pay must be competitive. Until then, not many will be attracted to the teaching profession.

I know that I'm not.

Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

In spite of pleas from low-lying Pacific Islands, the United States government recently vetoed a Global Warming solution. As temperatures and sea levels rise, island nations are starting to disappear under the waves.

We at Albany High School can play a positive part in this world drama by reducing our own reliance on automobiles and trucks. At least as a symbolic gesture, I propose that we change the homecoming parade next year to reduce our use of trucks.

Let's put the floats on pushcarts instead of on trucks. Students and teachers could push the carts in the parade. We could ask the fire department to substitute a clean air vehicle for their truck. Students and teachers could sign pledges to walk or bike to school as often as possible. These signed pledges could be carried at the front of the parade along with banners calling for the people and the government of the U.S. to do something about global warming.

It would be a small gesture, but perhaps a powerful one. I'm sure the news media would be eager to cover a story about American students sacrificing some of their own comfort in order to change the world.

Mr. Steve Brand
AHS Science Teacher

The Cougar welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should be emailed to ahscougar@mail.com. Letters may be edited for space, clarity, content, language, criticism of The Cougar or anything else that doesn't suit our fancy.



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Student Says 'Censorship Is Just [Censored] Wrong'

By Pat Glenn

Censorship? *beep* that!

Do we leave television, movies, video games and theater to raise our children for us?

It seems like the issue of censorship is a hot one in today's media and culture. People seem to think that violence and sex are a creation of the last 10 or so years, and that for the first time ever, children are being exposed to these horrific things.

Has there ever been a culture and a time period in which children did not play at killing each other? When I was a young lad, we played all sorts of make-believe games involving Ninja Turtles, Batman, or G.I. Joe beating, slashing, or shooting unseen enemies (or sometimes one of the kids would play the part of the bad guy, and then we'd just beat, slash, or shoot that poor kid).

Our parents played Cowboys and Indians, with the brave frontiersmen cavalry fighting the savage Indians (incidentally, I think the morals behind games like that are far more warped than any that we used in Ninja Turtles).

Today, kids play Quake. It will always continue. Shakespeare himself wrote one of the bloodiest

works in literature with *Titus Andronicus*, but nobody ever tries to cut out the human sacrifice in the first scene. See this play and then decide if *Clockwork Orange* deserved to be banned.

Violence has always been an aspect of human nature, and it will continue to be an aspect of human nature long after we pass away. Now, I'm not saying that we should all break down and relieve aggressive tendencies on one another. But I am

saying that the elimination of expression of these emotions in an effort to stop violence is ridiculous.

They are merely symptoms of the disease, and in many cases, help to vent these feelings that might bubble up in other ways should these expressions be repressed.

Violent film directors and video game producers don't brainwash innocent children into buying their products. They are like any other businessman: they're out to make some money, and they've discovered that violence and sex sell very well. And since the consumers aren't exactly mind-controlled, one must wonder what our buying trends say about us as humans.

The most frustrating statement I hear is "What sort of morals do these teach?" Some people have even hated movies like *Ferris Beuler's Day Off* because it teaches defiance to adults.

I don't know about anybody else, but I was taught morals by

I don't know about anybody else, but I was taught morals by my parents. I may have watched Pulp Fiction, but I certainly didn't tailor my life after it.

my parents. I may have watched *Pulp Fiction*, but I certainly didn't tailor my life after it.

I know the difference between killing somebody in virtual reality and murdering somebody in real life. Most rational people do too.

I remember last year during the student-directed one-act plays being put on by Theater Ensemble, the directors were told by the administration that they were to take out all profanities from the shows (there was a grand total of about four obscenities).

This understandably angered the three directors (of which I was one). After all, the administration never saw any of our plays, and now they were telling us how to run them? They never even read

the script or saw a rehearsal.

If they had, they would have seen that the profanity was minimal, and was not used in an offensive way. They were just words that normal people use, and were not in any way hateful or hurtful to others. And if the powers that be cannot even be bothered to see the student produced plays, then they have no right to tell the students what to put in and what to censor.

They didn't seem to mind that the spring musicals are sometimes filled with misogyny and raunch. They don't seem to mind that school dances play songs with titles like "Big Pimpin'" (they played "Shake That A--" twice), songs with lyrics such as "I smoke weed every day" and songs that advocate violence, misogyny, homophobia, and narcotic use. I've even heard many of these sorts of songs blasted from the school's stereo system by ASG during Music at Lunch.

I can understand where the administration is coming from on this issue. After all, they don't want to be sued by any parent who is livid that the awful language in the student shows twisted their poor child's mind. After all, the

school is strapped enough for cash as it is (take a look in the art classes if you don't believe me). But the last time that the school was sued, it wasn't over anything artistic. It was because a girl and her parents were furious that school didn't do anything to stop the harassment that the girl received at school.

It was the school's own fault that it was sued, and it has no right to project its own failure on artistically inclined students whose work might be deemed "edgy" by this supposedly liberal community.

If the people in our administration were in charge of other things, Elvis would have been taken off the air, and John Scopes would have been imprisoned for teaching evolution. For that matter, Galileo's work would have been burned. Anything challenging or heretical would've been destroyed.

Frankly, I think censorship is created either by neglectful parents who don't wish to take responsibility for the actions of their child, or by people who interpret their belief system as being challenged, and don't wish to hear anybody else's point of view... lest their beautiful fantasy come crashing down.

AHS Students Get "Close-Up" With Washington D.C.

Students Interact With Nation's Capital

By Lauren Nakasato and Curtis Steudeman

On the week of November 12th, 11 Albany High School juniors and seniors traveled across the country to Washington, D.C., to explore our Nation's history and government through the Close Up Program.

The Program, run by the Close Up Foundation, is a weeklong "total citizenship education experience." According to the Foundation, "Close Up Washington brings civic lessons to life by taking students behind the scenes and allowing them to witness their government in action."

On the first evening, all 130 Close Up participants from across the country gathered together for an orientation. During this orientation, the Close Up staff formed

workshop groups, teams of participants who were to work with each other over the course of the week.

The Close Up staff was careful not to put anyone in a workshop group with a lot of people that he or she knew, so the groups gave everyone a chance to get to know people from other schools. This gave participants a chance to share what their different ideas about government and politics were, as well as their opinions on current issues such as the Electoral College.

The AHS participants were assigned to a room with one other AHS student and a pair of students from a different school in a different state. Rooming with two people from an entirely different state was a learning experience. "One of the most interesting parts of the trip was meeting new people and sharing a room with them—it was funny to see how they responded to the way we did things," said Senior Close Up participant Amanda Fein.

Although AHS participants spent some time in their hotel rooms learning about the lifestyles of their roommates, they spent most of their hotel room time sleeping. Their daytime schedules were packed full of sightseeing, meetings, seminars, and other activities.

On the morning after the orientation, the entire Close Up group headed to the White House, and after a brief introduction from each workshop group's Program Instructor, everyone took

pictures and admired the beauty of the most well-known house in U.S. history.

During the rest of Monday, participants explored the Reflection Pool, the Lincoln Memorial, the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial, the

Day" by the participants. The 11 AHS students were "fortunate" works for Senator Barbara Boxer...in the mailroom. Albany students like Sophomore Christine Choy thought that "it was kind of disappointing" that the senator had

sent the mailroom guy and not someone more prominent. He had only worked in her office for three weeks and was thus rather vague in his answers to the students' questions.

AHS participants appreciated the meeting with Anne Im from the office of Senator Dianne Feinstein quite a bit more. She was very outspoken and direct and was extremely confident about what she said about the Senator. Albany students felt that their more important questions were

answered, as Im seemed to know more about the senator, because she actually interacted with the senator.

Lastly, the students got to Representative Barbara Lee, Albany's voice in the House of Representatives. Not a stranger to Albany, she was very interested in what Albany students had to say regarding Albany schools and other news in Albany.

Also on Wednesday's itinerary was a bus trip to Charlottesville, Virginia, where the group stopped to take a tour of the University of Virginia, the public university that Thomas Jefferson designed and founded. Close Up participants found a great deal of historic value in the small University, but also enjoyed getting a sense of what an East Coast University is like.

On their way back from Charlottesville, the groups stopped at Monticello and Montpelier, the homes of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, respectively. AHS participants were amazed at Monticello's atmosphere. "Just the feeling of being there made me feel like I was living in Jefferson's time. I was breathing the air that the President's breathed," said Fein.

Visiting the homes of the United States' founding fathers was a rare experience for many of the participants. Seeing

► *Close Up*, see Page 7



Photo by Curtis Steudeman

CLOSE-UP PARTICIPANTS (from left) Kelly Chin, Andrew Hirano, Ken Mimoto, and David Hernandez pose in front of the Washington Monument.

Korean War Memorial, the Library of Congress, and the National Archives, where they saw the original copies of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. To top the day off, the participants ate dinner at the Hard Rock Café.

On Tuesday, the groups visited Mount Vernon, the home of George Washington. While helpful tour guides escorted the groups through part of the estate, they were free to roam the majority of



Photo by Curtis Steudeman

AHS STUDENTS AMANDA FEIN AND LAUREN NAKASATO chill with their Close Up roommates.

it themselves.

One of the most beneficial portions of the trip was Wednesday, affectionately called "Capitol Hill

There Is No Place Like Home... Really

By Lauren Nakasato

When 11 Albany High School juniors and seniors traveled across the country for the Close-Up trip to Washington, D.C. this past month, they would never be fully prepared for the experiences they would have and the people they would meet.

The Close-Up Washington trip is for juniors and seniors who have taken or are currently enrolled in U.S. History. The trip is a one-week, in-depth exploration of the city of Washington, D.C., our nation's history, the U.S. government, as well as a chance to meet fellow students from across the country to compare and contrast views.

There was plenty of contrasting to do as these 11 students represented the only school from the West Coast. 119 other students from Colorado, North Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Alabama and Georgia also went and offered a whole different perspective on politics.

Of the 130 participants, the group of 11 from AHS represented nearly the only Democrats in attendance.

The breakdown by race, as well as by political party affiliation, amongst the other participants was completely unexpected. Besides being the only Democrats, the AHS students accounted for eight

of the 14 minority students in the entire group of 130, meaning the representation of minorities was six people distributed amongst the rest of the schools.

Most discouraging about the low minority participant turnout was the reality that minorities either do not have an interest in politics and government, or do not have the money to pay the expenses for the trip.

Living in California, let alone in the Bay Area, it is strange to us that other places in America do not know the meaning of diversity and are certainly not very liberal. However, this trip to Washington, D.C., opened the eyes of all 11 of the AHS students who attended.

They met students from schools that were 99% Caucasian, and students who could not believe how or why anyone would vote for Al Gore. It was amazing for them to see so many Republicans all at one place at one time, and the general feeling of the group from AHS was that they stood out because of belief and race.

Culture shock really began to hit hard when the AHS group came across a small shop inside the Post Office Pavilion in Washington, D.C. called "Flags of the Alamo," in which there were confederate flags and other confederate, deep south paraphernalia. What blew the group away, however, was the

T-shirt which said in big, bold letters: "The South Will Rise Again!" with a large confederate flag in the middle. Many could not believe that there, in the middle of our nation's capitol, was one of the most racially offending, inappropriate t-shirts for our day and age—in the year 2000—that they had ever seen.

It was interesting to see the kinds of stereotypes that students from Midwestern and Southern states had about the students from California, and the AHS students found that they had stereotypes of their own about people from less industrialized states like Georgia, Louisiana, and Nebraska.

AHS students were asked if they surfed all the time, if it was hot and sunny constantly, and if they used words like "cowabunga" and "rad." Many of the students from other schools were fairly religious and homophobic, and some even believed that nearly the entire population of California was homosexuals.

The AHS students, however, had their own set of stereotypes, some of which the students from other schools lived up to. Many of them said "ya'll" regularly, and there were students there from Kimball, Nebraska, a town of about 250 people with a food market, no McDonalds, and one movie theater, brand new.

It is no wonder Al Gore won all

of the more advanced, more densely populated states with major metropolitan areas. People growing up in places like Kimball, Nebraska do not

get the kind of exposure to things like minorities, liberal views, abortion or anything else that a Democrat would support but a Republican would not. How can these people support Gore, a man who supports government programs to help impoverished people, when they have never seen poverty themselves? They cannot, and do not.

Nebraska is the only state in United States history that has never voted Democratic. Of course they will vote Republican, and continue to vote Republican, because they live in such an enclosed society, and all they have ever known are their own views. They do not have the knowledge of things that their tax dollars would go to, so of course they will want their taxes cut, because their tax dollars do not help them. So why pay?

Thus they are Republicans, because they do not know, and therefore do not care, about how much the government helps people in need.

The entire week was an eye-opening learning experience for the whole group, and these 11 students have realized what a unique place the Bay Area really is, and why, in many areas of the U.S., Bush is actually getting votes.

What blew the group away was the T-shirt which said in big, bold letters: "The South Will Rise Again!"

What's Happenin' With the Class of 2000?

By Quen Cheng

It seems like just yesterday that we were saying our good-byes to the Class of 2000. So what has last year's graduating class been up to since then?

The Cougar was able to get in touch with a few members of the Class of '00, Amy Chen, Victor Tsai, Caitlin Fischer, Alice Zhang, and Moses Ip, and find out what they've been doing.

Amy Chen, last year's editor of *The Cougar*, is attending college at Northwestern University in Evanston, near Chicago. Chen raved that "college is like summer camp but ten times better because there is no curfew." Chen has been singing in the Women's Chorus and spending a lot of her free time at Lake Michigan.

"Sometimes I sit on the rocks and just stare at the water or the Chicago skyline. Autumn in Evanston is beyond beautiful," she said. "I used to always be in such a hurry to get to the next stage. Not anymore. Now I understand why people say college was the best time of their lives."

Chen also said that for now, "I don't feel like selling my soul to the newsroom...I've just about made up my mind that I don't want to be a journalist."

Down in Southern California, Victor Tsai is enjoying his first year at Cal Tech. However, his year didn't start too well.

"The Sunday night before classes started, I decided to play ultimate frisbee," Tsai recalled.

"Well, turned out to be a bad idea. While we were playing (it was around 11PM), I ran right into a tree, face first...smack into it."

Tsai had to go the emergency room and get a CAT scan, see an oral surgeon, and get braces on his teeth. However, true to his nature, Tsai took it all in good humor.

Closer to home UC Davis freshman Caitlin Fischer is also really enjoying college. "This is a great place to be," Fischer said. "I love it."

Fischer has been

actually 'succeed' in this system have got to be the most organized people," said Fischer. "I am slowly learning."

Alice Zhang, who joined the Cal Women's Varsity Crew team, is very busy at UC Berkeley. She practices with the team three hours a day. "Both my hands are ripped up and raw with blisters," said Zhang. "But I think it's definitely worth it."

Zhang is also busy playing the piano; she practices every day between classes. In the end she spends an exhausting 13-hours doing school related activities each day.

Zhang offered this advice for future college freshmen: "Go easy on your units during the first year because there will be so much to do and so little time and if you're not careful, you will be overwhelmed."

Moses Ip, who is attending Diablo Valley College, plans to transfer to UC Berkeley in two years.

When asked what advice he had for current high school seniors, Ip replied, "Know your deadlines. Doing your college apps and financial aid stuff at the last second is a pain. Check the counseling office for new local scholarships frequently."



Photo by Adan Gonzalez

ABOVE: Amy Chen at her home away from home. RIGHT: Alice Zhang dressed up for a dance. BELOW: Caitlin Fischer enjoys Flashback Day.

spending her time having a lot of fun, running around at parties and meeting great new people. Of course, she also realizes the importance of her academic life. "The people who make it through college and



Photo from The Cougar Archives

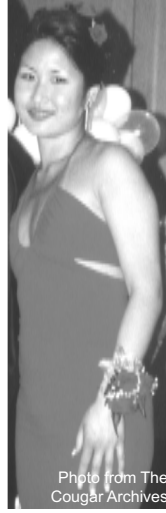


Photo from The Cougar Archives

Cheating Rampant at AHS

► *Cheating, from Page 1*

Junior Will Douglas agreed, "Cheating is like using the elevator instead of the stairs".

However, a sizeable portion of the AHS student body does cheat because of college and parental pressure. "There is an unreasonable amount of work. Sometimes I have three tests in a day. It is too much to handle. Also, with colleges expecting us to do after school activities, there is way too much pressure," said one junior, who wished to remain anonymous.

FALLOUT FROM CHEATING

With many students, as Junior Olivia Pisano puts it, cheating "because [they] can," and others cheating because they feel they have to, the ripple of distrust between teachers and students surrounding schoolwork and exams is beginning to widen into a suspicion-filled ravine.

One teacher related to this rapidly growing problem. "Cheating really bothers me because I feel as if I have created a classroom environment that fosters trust and respect. When a student cheats, he/she is disrespecting the work we have completed to make the classroom a safe and respectable place to learn. It is also very discouraging when a student cheats; I do take it rather personally."

Lost in this newfound suspicion and subsequent regulations are the students who do not cheat. Many third period AP Biology students who do not cheat, for instance, complain that the fifth period students' scores are included in their test curve. They claim a student in the fifth period class could easily ask a willing third period student about the content of the test, gain an unfair advantage, and raise the test curve for both classes.

Ms. Peterson, the teacher of both AP Biology classes, explained the reasoning behind her testing policy. "If students cheat, they may get an A on a single test, but they will not know the material. In order to do well on the AP test, they have to master the material through the whole year."

As teachers like Ms. Peterson beef up test security, some students are continuously conjuring up new ways to work around the new security measures. While the classic method of looking at another test is still commonly used, students are more and more frequently resorting to rather exotic measures. One student, for instance, wrote an answer key on a fingernail and another placed an answer key inside the brim of his hat.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

Since many students have little or no moral objection to cheating and are developing new methods of cheating every day, many teachers, administrators, and students alike have been trying to develop new ways to curb the increase in cheating. However, there has been no consensus on how to accomplish this complex task.

Ms. Dubravac, an English teacher, believes that "it is important for an academic institution to have a strict and evenly enforced cheating and plagiarism policy because plagiarism and cheating are serious academic offenses." Another teacher holds similar views, "Maybe cheating needs to be fully defined and understood by students."

Motivated by these types of suggestions, the administration adopted an honor code after the 1999-2000 school year, which clearly defines the administration's cheating policy. This honor code has failed to deter the majority of students from cheating. (See accompanying article, "Honor Code? What Honor Code?")

Helping students to, as one teacher put it, "develop and behave in compliance with personal codes of honor," is a possible way to rework the honor code idea.

Another teacher had a different suggestion, "Study guides for tests may be helpful. Ways to retake tests with tutorials for students whom really crash and burn might take the pressure off. With the institution of standards there have to be programs to help students who can't perform to the standards."

One teacher suggested a way to reduce cheating on homework assignments. "Students complain that even homework is held against them if they get it wrong. [They believe it should be] a learning tool to correct and get it right."

Regardless of the method used to reduce cheating at AHS or of the success of the chosen method(s), one thing is for certain: cheating has been and will always be a problem that high schools will have to deal with. After all, even some AHS teachers cheated when they were in high school.

"[I cheated] once on a French test. I knew the vocabulary and my friend knew the grammar so we 'shared.'" joked an AHS teacher, who chose to remain anonymous.

Students Visit D.C.

► *Close Up, from Page 7*

the beds in which they died and the places where they made important decisions that defined our nation put the students "close up" to what they had read about in their history and government books. "I was incorporating all of the things I've learned in history and government class into real life situations," said Senior Close Up participant Trina Nagakura.

Friday was somewhat of a free day. AHS Students visited sites that personally interested them such as The Capitol Building, The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the National Art Museum, and many of the separate museums of the Smithsonian Institution. These were some of the places that they had not seen while with the larger group. Many agreed that there was no way anyone could see everything in less than a day. "I would have liked it more if it was longer, and if there was more time to do stuff," said Choy.

The Princeton Review

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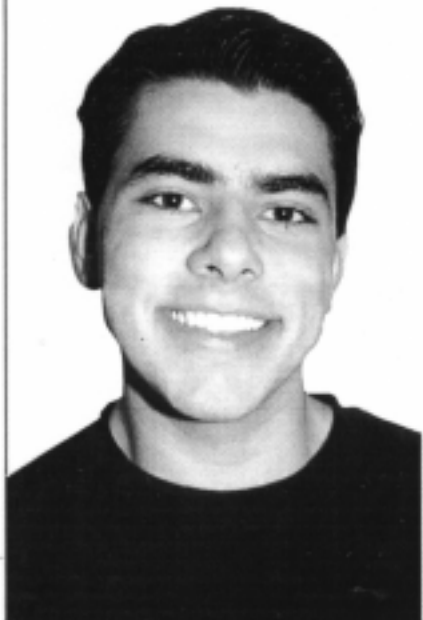
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AHS Student MADD About Youth Alcoholism

By Brent Hecht

AHS Senior Vivian Yeung is serious about preventing underage drinking – very serious. Several weeks ago, as a Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) representative for congressional district nine, she went to Washington D.C. to advocate her cause.

Along with 435 other youth representatives (one per congressional district), Yeung attended MADD's National Youth Summit. The purpose of the summit was to influence Congress to pass the national 0.08% blood alcohol level drunk-driving bill and to provide Congress with numerous recommendations about how to reduce underage drinking.

Each youth representative spent around fifteen minutes with his or her congressperson, during which time the youth representative lobbied for MADD's views.

Yeung had a particularly successful meeting. Barbara Lee, the representative from her district, voted for the 0.08 percent drunk driving bill, which later passed and was signed into law. She also listened attentively to Yeung about how to reduce underage drinking.

In addition, Congresswoman Lee invited Yeung to attend a tea party, which will be held in Lee's offices in the East Bay.

Yeung proposed to Lee that all states be required to have a magnetic strip and/or bar code on all drivers' licenses and ID cards to minimize the successful use of fake IDs.

She also recommended that the federal government increase the excise tax on alcoholic beverages,

fund a national media campaign for the prevention of underage drinking and prevent alcohol ads from airing before 10 p.m.

In addition, Yeung suggested that for every alcohol ad that airs, there be a "trendy" anti-alcohol ad paid for by the alcohol industry and excise taxes. These ads would air during primetime and would be equal in length to those promoting alcohol.

While the week-long youth summit, which took place at the National 4-H Center in Chevy Chase, MD, was designed mainly to prepare the youth representatives for their meetings with their congressperson, the representatives also spent time discussing issues related to underage drinking.

These issues included the availability of alcohol, the enforcement of existing alcohol laws, youth alcohol use and impaired driving, underage drinking in high school and college, and the media's influence on underage drinking.

Yeung was selected by MADD to represent her congressional district at the Summit over other potential representatives based on the quality of her application, which included several essays.

During the summit, Yeung spent most her time preparing for her meeting with Lee and discussing issues. "They made us get up at eight and wouldn't let us go to bed until ten," she recalled with a smile.

Despite the heavy workload, Yeung found time to socialize with the other representatives, whom she described as "great people."

Movie Teases Men With Long Asked Question

By David Kao

What do women really want? It's a question that has plagued all men alike, from the Pee-Wee Hermans to the Arnold Schwarzeneggers. Every time men think they've seen the light, they're hit with the cold, hard reality, "try again, buddy."

So how cool would it be if a man could actually read the very thoughts of women? True, it would be offensive and discourteous towards the women, but one can't deny the fact that there are advantages and benefits that it would provide.

Using this notion as inspiration, director Nancy Myers proceeds to create the truly entertaining film, *What Women Want*, starring Mel Gibson and Helen Hunt.

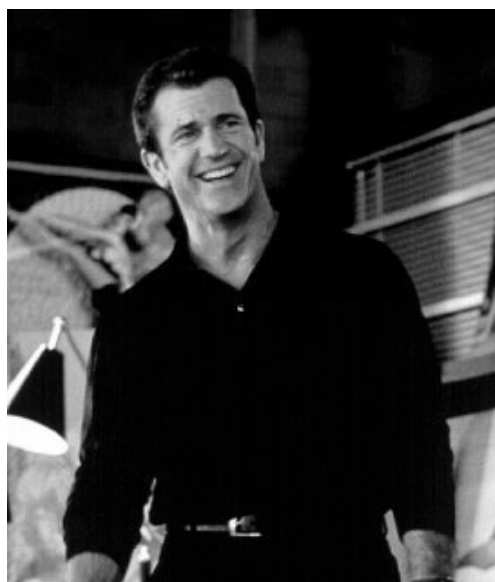


Photo Courtesy Paramount

What Women Want? Apparently, More Mel

Yet, before I go on, I must forewarn all the gentlemen out there not – and I repeat, *not* – to view this movie as the solution to that question wedged deep in the back of our minds. After all, a more appropriate title would have been something along the lines of *What Women Think*, but that's beside the point.

What I am saying simply is rather than viewing this movie for what women want, the audience should view it for what it actually is – a romantic comedy that is as entertaining as it is negligible and not-life-changing.

OK, enough babbling. Honestly, this was a brilliant idea for a movie and it makes for a whole lot of laughs.

Gibson plays Nick Marshall, a "man's man," a man who is looked up to by all the other men, but is thoroughly despised by all woman-kind due to his brash attitude, cockiness, crude remarks, and all those other traits that women hate. (Of course all the guys out there think these qualities are appealing, but that just goes to show how much we actually know, huh?)

When Gibson loses a large promotion to Darcy Maguire, an articulate manager played by Helen Hunt, he finds himself stuck with the first assign-

ment of appealing to the untapped women's market.

With no clue as to where to start, Gibson tries to find inspiration by experimenting with a line of female products and somehow, through a turn of events, gets electrocuted.

After surviving the freak accident, he magically develops the uncanny ability of hearing the thoughts of the opposite sex.

Initially, he sees this as a curse and desperately seeks a cure, especially after being bombarded by the thoughts of women who think he's a jerk.

However, with encouragement from a therapist, he realizes that this ability could be used to his advantage.

Aside from wooing women both in bed and in his office, he applies his newfound talent to much more serious causes.

Gibson sees his opportunity to steal his new boss's ideas and take credit for the rapid success. He figures that it's a no lose situation — he can look good and pick up that promotion he was denied.

What he doesn't expect is falling head-over-heels for his new boss, and in the process, developing a conscience.

Providing the perfect amount of humor and emotional display, the entire cast, led by Gibson and Hunt, turns in a splendid performance.

Though men may not get their deepest questions answered, this is one movie that is sure to charm men and women alike.

Hip-hop Is Taken to the Next Level

By Alex Song

Stepping forward into its third decade, Hip Hop finds itself at yet another crossroads. In the music industry, there are far too many fraudulent artists who talk about sex, money and drugs. Most songs today are about body counts, carat weight, expensive automobiles and clothing, and other material objects. They lack a positive message.

"There's almost a wholesale demoralization of Hip Hop, assuming the morals that Hip Hop claimed to have were real," Talib Kweli Greene said, a 24 year-old lyricist from Brooklyn, New York, in an interview conducted by the Source. Talib Kweli distinguishes the differences between an MC and an actor/entertainer through lyricism.

Talib is an Arab name that means "The seeker/student." Kweli is Akan, a Ghanaian name, which means "of truth and knowledge." When you put the name together it means "The Seeker of Truth and Knowledge."

Rapper Talib Kweli and producer DJ Hi-Tek have created a pure Hip Hop album called "Reflection Eternal: Train of Thought." Joined by Hip Hop visionaries like De La Soul ("Soul Rebels"), Mos Def ("This Means

You"), and Kool G Rap ("Ghetto Afterlife"), Reflection Eternal is packed with the mind-blowing verses and the heart-rending beats.

Not only does Kweli rap as a career, he works part time at Nkiru Books, Brooklyn's oldest Black book store. Whenever the legendary lyricist would write a rhyme at the book store, he would look up, see a fascinating title and incorporate it in his verses.

"My parents really reinforced reading and writing and being able to express myself when I was younger," he said in the interview conducted by the Source. "So I think that that more than anything, that is what led me to do what I'm doing now."

Kweli, a member of Rawkus duo Black Star, is known for his involvement in social and political issues, such as the "Hip-Hop For Respect" compilation he organized with Black Star mate Mos Def to speak out against police brutality.

Meanwhile, 24 year-old Tony Cottrell aka DJ Hi-Tek added to his production credits, producing the majority of Black Star's self-titled 1998 debut. Since the two have achieved so much as individuals, Rawkus decided it was best if it marketed Reflection Eternal by also showcasing Kweli and Hi-Tek's names.

Reflection Eternal, known for its

thought-provoking lyrical content, acquired its name from another industry source. "Alice Coltrane [widow of John Coltrane] wrote a book called 'Monument Eternal' in which she talks about astro-traveling," says Kweli, who's published by Pen Skills Music (BMI).

"I read it when I was 15 and liked what she had to say. We became 'Reflection Eternal' because we're a reflection of our ancestors. We're also a reflection of what's going on now."

Albany High is also witnessing the 'Eternal Reflection' from Kweli's new album. "I give mad love to Talib Kweli for coming out with his tight new album. Finally there's an underground cat representing the real Hip Hop," states Senior Luis Reeder.

"Train of Thought" is a masterpiece in the scope of modern Hip-Hop, packed with 20 amazing tracks; laced with the embodiment of hip-hop music from a higher and more positive view. The diversity on this album is worth the recognition of the review

With the passion to "rap" the crowd into another dimension, Kweli manages to attain respect from both the underground and the mainstream artists. If you're a Hip Hop head, hurry up and purchase Talib Kweli's new blazing hot album. Let your mind hop aboard and ride along the train of thought.

Pollock Inspires Students

By Curtis Steudman and Ben Walker

Motivational consultant Dwight Pollock has spent the last 18 years telling students around the nation reasons they should not smoke. Unlike many speakers, Pollock speaks from experience.

He started smoking cigarettes at age 11. He started smoking weed at age 15. He now regrets those decisions.

At age 31, Pollock was enjoying life working as a beauty product salesman. Around that time, doctors discovered that Pollock had throat cancer. Until then, he had been a habitual smoker.

Eventually Pollock ended up at the UCLA Medical Center. The cancer was concentrated in his voice box and the doctor thought they would have to completely remove it. Fortunately for Pollock, it ended up that the doctors only had to remove half of his voice box. He

was left with what he described as an "old-time gangster" voice. This was only the start of many operations and treatments.

Along with a strange new voice, Pollock now has a small hole in the front of his neck that allows him to breathe. The doctor told him that if he got one ounce of water in that hole he would drown. He now wears a plug in the hole all



the time, which allows him to breathe but does not allow liquid to pass through. Now he was forced to think he about what he would do next with his life. "What the hell am I gonna do for a living? A salesman with no voice?"

Over the next 17 years he made hundreds of visits to various doctors.

They discovered more and more problems, like tumors and a faulty aortic valve. More and more surgeries were performed. Up to this day Pollock has undergone a total of 39 operations that have amounted to nearly \$1,000,000.

While most people would let

► **Pollock, see Page 10**

Cliques Divide Albany High School

By Justin Nakano

What is a clique anyway?

According to Webster's dictionary, a clique is "a small, exclusive group of friends or associate connected by a common interest."

Are cliques at Albany High School a problem? Are there other meanings or slang terms for the word?

When you hear the word "clique," some movies may come to mind, such as the old but popular movie and television series *Clueless*. The show was filled with nothing but cliques — the rich, the jocks, and the nerds. Is this really what people see when they think of a typical high school?

Cliques are everywhere and in everyday life, both in and out of school. Many people don't notice

the major issues concerning cliques. Are they good or are they bad?

Some cliques are mainly composed of certain races, which brings up an important question: are cliques keeping racism alive in this country?

The word "clique" has been around even when Albany High was first constructed, which for some, was a very long time ago. The reason cliques or even the meaning of the word still exist is simple, there will and always have been groups of people brought together for one reason or another ever since the beginning of time.

"I think that cliques are all over Albany High School. Personally I don't think that cliques are a good

thing. They kind of just separate the school more than it already is," stated Junior Frank Lin.

What are the good and bad part of cliques existing in Albany High, and in general any typical American high school?

"Cliques keep people from interacting with people and they prevent people from getting to know people with different interests."

— Tony Wang

"I don't like to call them cliques, but if it means a small group of people then they're a good thing to have. My friends and I hang out all the time and we do all these things together, that's what makes having friends fun," said Freshman Eddie Izumizaki.

"Cliques keep people from interacting with other people and they prevent people from getting to know people with different interests," counters Freshman Tony Wang.

The whole issue of whether cliques are good or bad maybe never answered. The human race has lived this long with cliques, it may even be the reason of what's keeping the human race going. No one really knows, but in any case cliques are here to stay and maybe here for a very long time.

Some of the pros and cons of having cliques in schools were "having a close group of friends," said Junior Jeff Lin. "I think that having people that you can talk to and have them know what you're

talking about is cool." "However if you stay with the same group of people too long you never really get to meet or have a chance to meet anyone new," argued Wang.

Even though cliques exist at Albany High, many students no longer view them as being "Cliques" as defined in the Webster's dictionary. Many of the students feel that having a group of people is "a good thing," commented by Junior Jesse Dudas, and there really isn't much of a problem. It's only when race and other issues like that come into play that it may cause problems.

Either way, cliques or groups are here to stay whether they are good or if they are bad.

Bands Liven Things Up at AHS for Bored Students

By Peter Hsu

With an impressively professional sound, the bands of Albany High School delivered a stunning performance to students and supportive members of the community.

"It was phenomenal," said Concert Band member Alethia Danby. "We put a lot of hard work in and I'm glad to see that everyone did their part."

The concert included performances from all of the High School's bands: Symphonic Band, Concert Band, Jazz, Intro to Rock and Roll Class and Rhythm Bound.

This year Concert Band will be taking its Disneyland trip. The band, along with the choir, goes to Disneyland and performs there every other year.

While this concert was free, the band plans to hold several other pay concerts throughout the year to help pay for their trip.

Not including their lunch time performance earlier in the day, this was Rhythm Bound's stage debut this year. Rhythm Bound practices every Monday, Wednesday and

Friday as well as Thursday night from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

It was clear the that audience felt their hard work had paid off.

The singers in the band were Alex Burr, Natalie Spautz, Acacia Quen, and Catlin Appert.

When asked about the performance, Burr said "that part felt like we were really tight. That's what all the work is about."

He continued on to say that "we spend so much time together" that they learn to get along.

"It's a family atmosphere."



Photo by Peter Hsu

Above: Natalie Spautz; right, Concert band; below, Rhythm Bound.



Photo by Peter Hsu



Photo by Peter Hsu

Get Your Fortune Here! (Or Maybe Not)

By Emme Bruns

Aries:

The stars forecast that you will be lynched by a rampaging mob of respectable psychiatrists. You can avoid this horrible fate by donating money to the yodeling club.



Taurus:

You will waste a great deal of time writing snotty horoscopes for the chumps who read this tripe.



Gemini:

Your life is full of virtual chipmunks.



Cancer:

A rabid republican will attack and bite you. You will then have the curse of the republicans upon you and every time there is a full moon you will tear through the streets quoting Rush Limbaugh. Someone will finally put you out of misery with a roll of duck tape and a rolled up newspaper.



Leo:

You will fail to fit within the federal governments' standards on personal Hygiene and are shipped off to Australia where you will be forced to change your name to Bruce and eat spam for the rest of your life.



Virgo:

You will win an all expenses paid trip to France. Unfortunately you bring along a faulty guide book, which tells you that the translation for "where is the spam factory" is "Donnez-moi un lav(e)ment, s'il vous pl(a)it." The person will comply with your request and you will come creamed with creamed corn.



Libra:

Someone will slip a laxative in your drink. You will be walking around in a public area when you discover your desperate urge to defecate. You will finally end up taking a dump behind a vending machine and accidentally be taped by a security camera. Blackmail and embarrassment are imminent.



Scorpio:

Due to a strange disease, your daily food options will be narrowed to: egg, sausage and bacon; egg and spam; egg, bacon, and Spam; egg bacon, sausage, and Spam; Spam, bacon, sausage and Spam; Spam, egg, Spam, Spam, baked beans, Spam, Spam ,Spam, Spam, and Spam; or lobster thermido aux crettes with a mornay sauce garnished with truffle pate, brandy and a fried egg on top an Spam.



Sagittarius:

You will fall asleep while waiting in line in a hardware store. The manager of the store will then cram a lamp shade on you head and sell you as a lava lamp to a dumb politician.



Capricorn:

You will eat a rancid corn dog and mutate into a superhero. You will spend the rest of the month flying around in a spandex suit and fighting vegetarians with your corn dog sword.



Aquarius:

You will have your clock cleaned by Bjorn the Viking when you fail to pass him the lutefisk.



Pisces:

You will accidentally brush your teeth with preparation-H. When you go to the Hospital for medical attention, they will mistake you for dead and pump you full of embalming fluids.



Ms. Butsch Lives in the Memory of Albany Students

By Michelle Kim

Last October, the Albany community was deeply saddened by the loss of one of its most admired and dedicated teachers. Ms. Susan Butsch, a seventh grade teacher at Albany Middle, passed away after a two-year battle with non-Hodgkins lymphoma, a cancer of the white blood cells.

Ms. Butsch was a devoted member of the Albany School District for 16 years, during which time she made many positive contributions.

She passed away at the young age of 43, leaving behind many students, friends and family, including an eight-year-old son.

Ms. Butsch's memorial service was held at St. Joseph's Catholic Church on Nov. 6, where a packed cathedral seated the many people who came to honor her life. Ms. Janet Teel and Mr. Jack McFarland, two colleagues of Ms. Butsch, sang her favorite song, *Irish Blessing*.

In addition to teaching seventh grade homeroom, Ms. Butsch also taught eighth

grade math. During her tenure, she came up with many new ideas that would later change the math program at the Middle School.

"She was very instrumental in changing the school for the better," Mr. McFarland said. "She introduced the bulletin for parents during her first year here, and now many teachers, myself included, use the idea."

Although she had a reputation of being a hard grader, many students and teachers admired her fairness and high expectations. "She was an inspirational teacher, who prepared us really well for the future," said former student Sheri Leung.

Caring greatly for her students, Ms. Butsch put in extra time to help students in need. "It was just like Susan to drive a student home



if they had too big a load of See's Candy to deliver and had no ride, or it was late and she worried about the well-being of the child. Her caring and commitment for her students was unmatched," Ms. Robin Davis reflected at the memorial service.

In November 1999, over 250 people contributed to a blood drive held to find a bone marrow match for Ms. Butsch. "It was a momentous time," said one participant. "Teachers from every school and former students came to help."

Although the blood drive was not a success, Ms. Butsch kept fighting. According to Ms. Teel, a close friend of Ms. Butsch, her attitude remained one of determination and optimism throughout her illness.

"Despite the numerous setbacks she had, Susan continued to believe that she was going to get well, and her focus was always on living."

In her eulogy, Ms. Robin Davis summed up the emotions of all whose paths crossed with Ms. Butsch's: "There is someone missing today. Her name is Susan Butsch. She's a wife, a mother, and a teacher. A teacher of courage, a teacher of conviction, a colleague and a friend who leaves a legacy of loving memories. Her memory lives in all of us."

"It was just like Susan to drive a student home if they had too big a load of See's Candy to deliver... Her care and commitment for her students was unmatched."

— Robin Davis

other than that he is simply donating his time to students everywhere. Pollock likes the work he does. "I have never had as much fun as I am having now," he said.

Albany High students have seen many presentations about smoking and why they should not do it. Most presentations discuss facts and statistics. Pollock contributes a different element to his presentation.

Junior Shawn Saunders, put it literally when he said, "He has been through all that sh-- that everybody always talks about. He is not ashamed about it. He gets right out there and says what he means."

And it is his experiences that set Pollock's inspiring message apart from every other speaker.

No-Name All-Stars Grab Spotlight

By Evan Hiraga

Like a quiet storm, five seniors have silently emerged to form a talented hip-hop group, capturing their audience with meaningful lyrics and intriguing beats.

Despite being assembled in late August, the No-Name All-Stars have quickly reached great heights. They already had two performances and are on the verge of recording their first CD.

The group consists of seniors Ali Khandagabadi, Joe McGinnis, Robert Ledesma, Sean McKay, and Alex Burr.

Even before the No-Name All Stars began, Khandagabadi had a dream to become a hip-hop artist. He and Ledesma had worked on lyrics earlier, hoping to one day create a hip-hop album together.

Their dream began to come together on a Tuesday during late August when Khandagabadi was able to get a spot to play at the Gilman Club, during a festival called the Geek Fest. The Gilman performance was scheduled for the following Sunday, giving the No-Name All-Stars four days of practice time.

Although Khandagabadi and Ledesma had many songs written out, they realized that their music would be dull without a live band to play their beats. With a few phone calls to Burr, McGinnis, and McKay their group was brought to life.

Day in and day out they practiced hard until they got the right beats for five songs they wanted to play at their performance. McGinnis and Khandagabadi were the vocalists. Khandagabadi also assisted by playing beats on the guitar with Ledesma and Burr, who also played the bass. And McKay

added his fast handed drumming skills.

Four of the songs were titled, "Hidden Virtual Reality," "The Streets," "Big Balls," and "Fully Loaded." They also had freestyle with a reggae beat. Khandagabadi hoped to send different messages to others, through their music. He wanted each song to mean something to the listeners, as well as to himself.

"We have a meaning to each song, usually about struggling through life. I want to show the positives and sometimes the negatives of the different aspects of life.

"The purpose of our music is to show people true hip-hop and for those who already know, there's an added twist which will amaze the listeners," said Khandagabadi.

On Sunday, Khandagabadi and his band were well prepared, but uncertain of how the crowd would react to their music. Even though it was mainly a punk-rock club, half of the club enjoyed their hip-hop sound, making it a successful evening for the No-Name All-Stars.

"It was really weird, yet very exciting to play in front of such a crazy crowd," said Ledesma, "because all the punks started break dancing on the concrete."

After their positive performance at the Gilman Club, the band got a chance to perform their music at Café Eclectica. The show was scheduled for 8:00 p.m. on Oct. 25, giving the band some time to perfect their songs and write new ones.

With flyers created by Ledesma and senior Graham Vittum publicizing the performance, the No-Name All-Stars hoped for a good crowd. Surprisingly many

friends and fellow students showed up at the Café an hour earlier than the time scheduled, anxiously awaiting the free performance.

The showing tore the roof off as the No-Name All-Stars played an eight-song set, which included D.J. senior Michael Martin, who gave beats for the band on the turntables. Two guest D.J.'s also helped out in the showing.

Another group performed in the fun, festive evening too. The Anonymous Trio, another emerging hip-hop group from Albany High, consisting of Seniors Alex Song, John Lee, and Luis Reader, also gave the crowd something to cheer about.

Throughout the night, the Anonymous Trio and the No-Name All-Stars switched back and forth, giving people laid-back, mellow, and energetic beats with poetic lyrics, while people danced the night away.

Even though the No-Name All-Stars' performance ended, the night was still alive, as there was 20 minutes of freestyle from the two groups. They also had individual artists from the groups come up on the mike and freestyle to the D.J.'s beats. All in all it was another success for the No-Name All-Stars, bringing them even closer to fame.

Today, the No-Name All-Stars are recording newly written songs and their old songs at three different studios, which will help create their CD. They will also be put on Radio Free Berkeley at 104.1 sometime before January 2001.

"Whether you like rock n' roll or sick hip-hop you will enjoy our eclectic rhythms," exclaimed Burr.

Local DJs Mixin' It Up

By Elizabeth Pfeffer

In the heat of the beating music, flashing strobe lights, and dancing bodies, two familiar faces work the turntables.

Friendship brought AHS junior Dan Lawrence and St. Mary's junior Reese Bullen, also known as DJ D and DJ Pieces together. Just one boring Albany summer was what it took to transform them into the men behind the madness.

As the guys sat in Dan's room, fresh out of the eighth grade, a surge of creativity exploded between them. While flipping through a Guitar Center catalog the two realized their dream of becoming DJ's.

Fantasies of busting "phat" beats and "mixes" emerged. Dan and Reese decided on buying a turntable. Soon enough DJ D and DJ Pieces would be born. Reese was a drummer and Dan a trombonist, yet they combined their musical backgrounds to develop a new sound.

Cut to the year 2000 when the fledgling beats of summer '98 were forgotten travesties. They practiced, developed a reputation, and... BAM!

Class 1 Productions was their

name and rhythm was their game. They played all the hot spots: Bust-a-move, Bar-Mitzvah's, and dances. Nobody dared compete with the twosome.

Things haven't always gone smoothly for the guys. They were booed a little, blew a fuse at the St. Mary's homecoming, and have been caught accidentally muttering private comments into the microphone, but they're proud of where they are today.

DJ D and DJ Pieces are developing an impressive resumé. Still, the boys assure everyone that the fame isn't getting to their heads.

"It's like being in a zone, finding the groove," said Dan. Refusing to boast his talents Reese said, "I do it to get women."

"DJ Pieces is a man with a plan," said Pieces of himself. The guys know that college will eventually tear them apart, yet, they can't imagine playing alone or with different partners. "I can yell at him and he won't get pissed off," said DJ D of their brotherly relationship.

Being self-taught DJ's, and growing from know-nothings to know-it-all's in their field makes for a classic story.

Whether D and Pieces find their

lifelong callings as disc jockey's or not, they have made their mark in little old Albany as it is.

The guys don't look too far ahead in their careers, but enjoy living in the moment and taking opportunities as they come. They have to be fearless and keep playing no matter what the response, but aim to accommodate everyone's tastes.

DJ D and DJ Pieces are entertainers for their own enjoyment as much as others. Their style is professional while they continue to maintain a forever laid back ambience.

Being DJ's for the exhilaration of it rather than the money makes this dynamic duo inspirational.

As far as personal goals go, DJ D just wants the rush of performing. As for Pieces, "It's gotta be the women."

Their differences in personality and in musical style play off each other like the beats they conceive. The best perk may be "the women," as they both playfully affirmed, but what it really comes down to is that *Class 1 Productions* is all about the music.

Pollock Sends It Home

► *Pollock, Continued from page 8*

While most people would let that get them down, Pollock has used the results of his mistakes and misfortune for a worthy cause. He has talked to over 43,000 students and has changed many lives.

Pollock has been through a lot, but he maintains a positive attitude. "The only thing in life that is permanent is change," Pollock said. He still realizes that he is lucky to be living after all he has been through. In one word, Pollock describes his life as "phenomenal."

Despite how effectively he motivates students, Pollock does not get paid for his services. Most of the time he receives a small gift or token from the school, civic group, or church group he visits, but

Albany Volleyballers Finish Strong

By Michelle Kim

Although their attempt to repeat last year's historic record came up short when they fell to Notre Dame of Salinas during the first round of the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) Division IV championships, the varsity volleyball team nevertheless finished their impressive 27-9 season as the North Coast Section (NCS) champions.

Despite losing some key players last year, the Cougars, playing under new head coach Natalie Cabezud, again proved themselves to be winners, capitalizing on the experienced seniors as well as bringing up new talents.

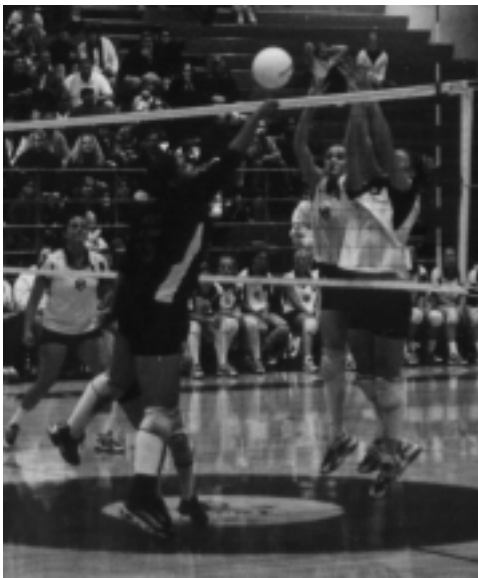
With dozens of fans cheering them on, the Cougars faced no. 2-seeded Marin Catholic Wildcats at the Berkeley High School gym on Nov. 18, for the NCS championships. Marin Catholic came to the games with a vengeance, after losing to Albany in two easy games during the Davis Tournament earlier in the season. But the Cougars exhibited superiority throughout the evening, overpowering the Wildcats in four games.

The Cougars wasted no time, gaining an insurmountable lead, taking advantage of Senior Jennifer Nejad's strong serves. They dominated the first game, winning 15-3.

After the first game, the Cougars seemed to lose their momentum, trailing the Wildcats almost the entire match. The Cougars almost rallied back with Sophomore Katie Jensen serving two consecutive points late in the game, but the gap was too large to close, and Albany

gave in to Marin Catholic, 7-15.

"We lost our focus after the exciting win," said Eunji Kim, a defensive specialist and outside hitter.



Game two might have slipped from their grasp, but the Cougars were determined to take back their lead. After playing a point-for-point match, the Cougars closed out the set 15-10.

Game four would determine whether Albany would take home the NCS trophy and advance to the CIF playoffs. The Cougars gained an early 7-0 advantage, never relinquishing their lead, taking the game 15-3 and the North Coast Section Championship.

With this win, the volleyball team has two consecutive NCS titles and its fourth in five years, being one of two teams in the Bay Area to win NCS championships.

On Nov. 21, just three days after the NCS championships, the Cougars went head to head with the Spirits from Notre Dame of Salinas.

The Cougars did not live up to

their expectations at the first round of the CIF Division IV championships. The Albany Middle School gym was packed with fans waiting to watch Albany rule the court once again, but this was not going to be their night.

The first two games went quickly, as the Spirits took control and stunned the Cougars, taking the games 8-15 then 6-15. "Our mental ability broke down in the first two games," said Coach Cabezud, "but in the third game, we really wanted it."

With Sophomore Kirsten Bender serving, the Cougars rallied off five straight points, taking a 5-1 lead in the game that would determine the fate of their season. The Cougars showed the Spirits what they could do, taking a 9-2 lead at one point with Senior Shannon Brazil gathering her teammates up.

However, Albany could not keep their momentum going as Notre Dame stormed back to take the game, 14-16.

"We fought really hard, but we didn't pull all the way through," said Coach Cabezud, "but it was a good way to end the season, and I have absolutely no regrets."

"Knowing it was my last year playing, it was my time to be a true leader on and off the court, in and out of practice," said Eunji Kim who, along with the other seniors, played on the team since freshmen year.

For Shannon Brazil, Allison West, Amy Jin, Eunji Kim, Margaret Manson, and Jennifer Nejad, this was their last high school game to wrap up a season they can all be proud of.

Senior Volleyball Spotlight

By Yaw Yaidom

"Our Mission is Tradition," is what is on the back of the Albany High School Volleyball players' shirts. This tradition is very apparent to all of those who have watched the Lady Cougars dominate year after year.

The tradition was kept alive by beating No. 2 ranked Marin Catholic 15-3, 7-15, 15-10, and 15-7 at Berkeley High School for the North Coast Section Championships. They then went on to lose to the Notre Dame Spirits of Salinas in the CIF tournament. This difficult match ended a great run for the Cougars.

Throughout this great season, the women endured a lot. They had to come together as a team after losing many seniors, and they also had to bond with their new head coach Natalie Cabezud. Leading the way this year were the senior class players: Margaret Manson, Amy Jin, Jennifer Nejad, Allison West, Eunji Kim and Shannon Brazil. Here is a little something



to thank those seniors.

Margaret Manson—Manson was one of the great middle hitters on

this year's squad. She was very influential early in the year when the Cougars were not playing their best. She kept the team together and continued to play well. Next year this volleyball player hopes to be attending UC Santa Barbara. She will not continue to play varsity volleyball, but she plans to play intramural volleyball.

Amy Jin—Jin was perhaps the most valuable of these core players. She was the team setter and did a fantastic job. In the North Coast Section Championship game, Jin recorded a game high 32 assists. This game dominance did not come from nowhere, however. She began her illustrious volleyball career at Albany Middle School in the 7th grade and has continued her success over her years at Albany High.

Jennifer Nejad—As the queen of the school, Nejad has a lot of responsibilities, and that's just on



the court. Nejad, who began playing volleyball in the 6th grade, is the inspirational leader of

the team. She brings a sense of camaraderie and leadership to the team. Next year, Nejad will be greatly missed for her "rah-rah" attitude and desire to win.

Alison West—"Bubba," as she is known to everyone around the school, is the type of player that makes things happen. When the Cougars lost the momentum in the NCS Championships, it was West who dug deep to bring the Cougars out of the abyss. Next season, Bubba hopes to play for the Wolfpack at North Carolina State.

Eunji Kim—This volleyballer began her career in 8th grade and has continued throughout high school. Kim has proven to be a great asset to the team by coming through in clutch performances time and time again. Kim had great practice ethics, and her hard work has rubbed off on some of the younger players on the team.

Soccer Teams Show Promise and Prepare for Rough Season

By Justin Samudio

The start of cold weather, and darkness coming earlier and earlier means the start of winter sports—soccer being one of them. This year, there are some new coaches, and old coaches with new positions.

Varsity Boys'

The new Varsity boy's coach is Jojo Mends. He is new to American soccer, but not soccer itself. "I have noticed that soccer is a lot more competitive and physical here," said Coach Mends. He expects the team to work hard, and work together. His goals for the season are to refine the skills of players, and get the players comfortable in the games.

The Varsity team is made up of some returning players, and also some new players. Sophomore Garin Hecht is one of the new players.

He has played soccer all his life. He says that enjoys playing at the varsity level because it is more competitive, and more fun.

Senior Julio Reyes has also played soccer since he was young. "I expect this year's team to do well in the league, and I would like to see us win the league title," Reyes said.



Photo by Justin Samudio

THE GAME WAS CANCELLED because of poor weather conditions so team members took the opportunity to "level the playing field" and do some much needed work on Cougar Field.

Varsity Girls'

Girl's Varsity soccer is starting as well. Julie Ashley, last year's JV coach, is now coaching varsity. "I'm very happy that I am the new varsity coach, it's fun. I had a chance to work with most of the girls before on JV," Coach Ashley said. She wants to prepare the team to work hard, work together, have fun, and enjoy soccer.

Ashley expects the team to make the playoffs, and to have a great season, no matter what. She isn't too sure how good the other teams in the league, but she is confident that her team will be competitive.

Amanda Fein, a senior, is playing soccer this year for the first time in her life. "In past years, I heard that soccer was fun, and de-

cid I wanted to be a part of it," Fein said. Fein wants to help the team as much as she can, and also stay in shape for track.

Elizabeth Carey, another senior, has played soccer for longer than Fein. Carey's experience has helped her to see how most of the opposing teams play. "My experience in playing has shown me what our team does well, and what we need to work on," Carey said. She sees that the team has the potential necessary to do well, and expects the team to come together and play good soccer.

JV Boys'

The only coach that has his original job this year is the JV boy's coach Mark Hutt. Hutt ex-

pects a winning season, if not becoming league champions. This year, like all previous, he is challenging each player, and is pushing them as hard as he can, so that the team can achieve more than last year.

One of the returning players, Sophomore Tony Chan, expects that the team will win league. He thinks this because he believes that the team is good this year. This year, he wants to improve his skills so he can play on varsity next year.

Jerry Cheung, a freshman, is playing soccer in high school after playing on a club team for a few years. He enjoys meeting new people on the team. He knew the coach already, and knows what the coach expects. This year in soc-

cer, he wants to refine his skills, get in better shape, and have fun with the team.

JV Girls'

The girl's JV team has a new coach, unlike the boy's team. Nikki Holt, an alumnus of Albany, is the new coach. She is very happy that she is the new coach, and wants to try and have the team win all of its games.

The team is made up of mostly new players, and only a few returning players.

One of the new players is Tammy Campbell, a freshman, who is playing soccer for her first time. She finds soccer a little hard, because she doesn't have experience with it, but wants to try it. "My goal for this season is to become a better overall player," Campbell said.

A returning player, Junior Kory Sutherland expects a good season from the JV team this year. "The team will be really good this year, once we all come together," said Sutherland. She believes it's frustrating being on a team of mostly new players, but that developing team closeness will solve that.

With teams adjusting to changes this season, players say there might be some problems, but in the end, it will be an enjoyable season for the soccer teams.

Super Gymnast

By Michelle Kim

Months have passed since the flames of the 2000 Summer Olympics have been extinguished and the Olympic torch returned to Athens. Athletes from all over the world have now returned to their home countries. Nevertheless, people are still awed by the unbelievable dedication and determination of the athletes who train for years to accomplish the seemingly unreachable goal of becoming Olympic champions.

Although this goal may seem unattainable to most people, Sho Nakamori, a sophomore gymnast here at Albany High, is taking giant steps toward that aspiration.

After winning four consecutive state and regional championships, placing second in the 1998 and 1999 Junior Nationals, winning the 2000 championship, and placing second in the Jr. Pan American Games, Nakamori, now an elite gymnast, is hard at work preparing for the 2004 Summer Olympics. Although not performing at Olympic level yet, he hopes to be physically as well as mentally developed by the time the next Summer Olympics roll around.



Photo courtesy Sho Nakamura

SHO NAKAMURA holding his 2nd place trophy at the Junior Olympics in Brazil.

Ever since his dad, a former gymnast, introduced Nakamori to the sport, he has been training towards his future goal of becoming an Olympian. "My dad, who is also my coach, took me to a competition when I was eight, and I won first place. After that, I told myself 'I can do this'."

For seven years, Nakamori has been training at the Ford Center at Stanford five hours a day, six days a week, living up to his commitment.

While winning regionals, nationals, and training for the upcoming Winter Cup in February, Nakamori manages to juggle gymnastics, social life, and academics, maintaining a 3.5+ G.P.A. After his five-period day, Nakamori devotes himself to homework before taking off for Stanford University at 2:00, squeezing in more studying during the hour-long ride. After five hours of strenuous practice, he heads home, resuming his schoolwork at 9:00.

College is also a top priority for Nakamori, who is working towards getting accepted into Stanford University where he would continue gymnastics. "I plan on attending college no matter what, whether it's before or after I finish competing."

Spending time with friends is difficult for Nakamori, who is constantly at the gym or studying. Hanging out with my friends or just having a social life is really hard." Luckily, most of his friends have known him since preschool and understand his commitment and love for gymnastics.

"Throughout our ten years of friendship, he's been really cool, and is a very hard worker," says Martin Weng, a close friend of Nakamori.

Although his future plans are still vague Nakamori is certain that he wants to continue gymnastics, and keep his eye set on the goal he has been pursuing for the past seven years.

"No matter what I do in the future, gymnastics will always be a part of me. That's something I'm not ever giving up."

Athlete of the Month

By Yaw Yiadom

The Cougar's pick for Athlete of the Month is mild-mannered Ms. Shannon Brazil. This outside hitter for the Albany Cougar Volleyball squad has recently helped her team reach the NorCal playoffs after they won the North Coast Section Championships.

In the NCS game, Brazil recorded team high 17 kills and 9 digs. In the NorCal game, which followed the NCS championships, our superhero capped off a fantastic season with 9 kills and 8 digs in the losing effort for her team.

Shannon started her illustrious career in the 5th grade playing with her sister. "My sister started playing middle school volleyball and would drag me outside to pepper with her every day after school," recalled Brazil. "The next year my sister and my mom encouraged me to try out for volleyball at the middle school."

Unfortunately there was no 6th grade team for her to play on. So

she played for the 7th grade squad.

Not only is our superhero a star on the court, but she is also a star in the classroom, where she



Shannon Brazil

Photo by Quen Cheng

currently has a 4.0 G.P.A. "She reminds me of Superman, she is a bookworm in the classroom, but on the court she is a stud," commented teammate and friend Eunji Kim.

Shannon's list of achievements also includes playing four straight years in the Junior Olympics. These past years, while playing for her club teams Golden Bear and the East Bay Elite, Brazil has

traveled to Colorado, Texas, New Orleans and Kentucky. When asked which city she enjoyed the most, she replied "New Orleans because it's crazy."

This season Shannon had large shoes to fill with the loss of key stars such as Theresa Esparrago, Lindsey Marshall and Laura Jensen. She also had to fill in as a leader on the team to help the Cougars play at a high level. Shannon filled these shoes day in and day out with no complaints. She adjusted to a new coaching staff, and still kept her cape on, her "S" on her chest, and had a great year.

Next year, Brazil hopes to be playing at a big time university, but she has yet to decide which one. One thing is for certain: with the talent that she possesses, Shannon will be playing volleyball for a long time to come. Now the only decision is where she will go next. So if you see Shannon walking down the halls, say hi, cause you never know, we may see her at the Olympics some day ... or else saving the world. .

Wrestling Team Tumbles to Victory

By Justin Samudio

Winter brings a new wrestling season to a start. The team has 35 members on JV and varsity combined. The head Coach is Kermit Bankson, with Josh Freeman assisting him. Tyrone Rose is the JV coach.

Coach Bankson expects his team to do the best they can, and hopes to see them repeat as league champions. However, Bankson did say that he wasn't too sure about the ability of the teams in the new league. Although the varsity team lost four of its senior wrestlers, it still has plenty of other wrestlers to step up in their place this year.

Freshmen Stephen Pressnall began practicing with the high school last year, when he was in 8th grade. He joined the high school team this

year and is on varsity. Practicing with some of the wrestlers last year doesn't make him feel as new to the team this year. He expects to "win some matches, and work hard this season." More experienced wrestlers on the team have helped him a little with a positive mind set.

Junior Dave Yeamen has been on the varsity team two years now, and has gained valuable experience from it. He has learned how to lose weight and still eat well. With learning how to lose weight came learning how to eat steadily, and eat certain things at certain times before and after practices, and during regular meal times.

Yeamen believes that the varsity team should be able to win league championships again because the teams in the ACCAL, which was

last year's league, were more competitive than the teams in the BSAL.

Coach Rose expects the team to work hard, and give their best efforts in practice and in matches. Coach Rose also coaches the middle

Sophomore Sam Khandagha-badi is wrestling on JV this year. He is doing wrestling because he likes it, and figures that you only get "one chance to play sports during your high school years, so you should take the opportunity." Wrestling to Khandaghabadi is fun, but also hard work that toughens one up. He was hurt for most of last season, but is back wrestling this year.

The success of the season is unpredictable, but there's no question that it will be fun.

Basketball Teams Prepare for Tough Season

By Justin Samudio

Thump thump thump, screech, swish. These are the sounds that fill the gym during AHS's basketball practices. The basketball season has finally started, and the players are excited. The coaches all have high expectations.

The varsity boy's basketball coach, Doug Kagawa, is preparing his players to do their best, and wants his team ready for every possible situation. He says this is as much as he can do, and that the end result is up to the players. Coach Kagawa wants his team to make the playoffs, and says, "There are 26 games, and we'll see what happens." He wants the team to go undefeated, but realizes that in a competitive league, that might not be possible.

One of the returning players, Senior David Hernandez, is the starting center for the Varsity team. Hernandez wants to create the

same chemistry the team had last year with the new players this year. He expects that the team will work hard and well as a team. His experience has taught him to stay in shape in the off-season, and practice shots that he would have to make in games.

Hernandez has helped some of the new members to adjust to the team, and learn the plays that they are having trouble with.

Matt Hansen, a new player to the Varsity team, played on JV last year and is playing because he has "always loved playing basketball." The team has made him and the other new members feel welcome and comfortable being there. He is going to play as hard as he can and try to help the team win.

Girl's varsity coach, Al Baker, expects that the girls on the team will work hard and improve every game. "We will improve based on

how hard we work in practice," Baker said.

This year, Baker wants to reinforce teamwork and set a team goal of the players giving their best effort. "The team is very motivated this year, and we are

"I expect the team to go undefeated as long we don't lose a game."

— Coach Richard Lew

taking steps to turn the negatives of the past into positives of the future," Baker said.

Trina Nagakura, a senior, has been playing since her freshman year. She has gained valuable knowledge and experience, "but there is always more I could learn," she said.

She has kept playing because she likes being part of the team and likes the excitement of the game when the team is doing well. Nagakura believes that the new

members on the team are an asset, and knows that the team will try to improve as the year progresses.

Last year's boys JV assistant coach Richard Lew is this year's JV head coach. His brother, Will Lew, has taken over as assistant coach. "I expect the team to go undefeated as long we don't lose a game," joked Coach Lew. Coach Lew was a little uncertain how well the team would work together, but he expects that will change as the season continues.

Ted Pickus, new to the team, joined the team because he likes to play, and it is the one sport he is actually okay at playing. He enjoys basketball, and thinks it's a good experience.

Pickus believes that the team will win "a good number of games." He believes this because the team is so deep with players who can play multiple positions.

Alex James coaches the JV girl's basketball team. "This year, I expect the team to work together, and work hard," said Coach James. He believes that the team shouldn't focus so much on wins and losses, but rather the principles he stated above.

His goals for the team are to prepare each player for success at the varsity level next season. "Although our team is small, it is quick, which makes up for a lack of height," according to Coach James. Also, he believes the team should be able to match up with the other teams. Coach James sees that his team is very motivated from what he has seen so far in their practices.

Jodi Nagakura, a freshman on the JV team, expects to help out in any way she can, and to see the team do well. "I joined because I love playing basketball, and meeting new people," Nagakura said.