

the newspaper by and about teens

L.A. youth

LAYOUTH.COM

OCTOBER 2006



PHOTO BY LIBBY HARTIGAN, MANAGING EDITOR

COLLEGE: HOW WE GOT ACCEPTED

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About L.A. Youth

How did L.A. Youth start?

Former teacher Donna Myrow founded the nonprofit teen newspaper in 1988 after the Supreme Court Hazelwood decision, which struck down student press rights. Myrow saw a need for an independent, uncensored forum for youth expression. L.A. Youth is now celebrating its 18th year of publishing.

How is L.A. Youth doing today?

L.A. Youth now has a readership of 400,000 in Los Angeles County. Hundreds of students have benefited from L.A. Youth's journalism training. Many have graduated from college and have built on their experiences at L.A. Youth to pursue careers in journalism, teaching, research and other fields.

Our Foster Youth Writing Project has brought the stories of teens in foster care to the newspaper. For more info, see www.layouth.com.

How do teens get involved with L.A. Youth?

Teens usually join the staff of L.A. Youth when they read the newspaper and see a notice inviting them to a Newcomer's Orientation. They also get involved through our summer workshop for writers. Sometimes a teacher or parent will encourage them to get involved.

Newcomer's Orientations are held every other month on Saturday mornings. Call for info at (323) 938-9194. Regular staff meetings are held every Saturday from 1 to 3 p.m.

Where is L.A. Youth distributed?

L.A. Youth is distributed free to teachers at public and private schools throughout Los Angeles County. It can also be picked up for free at many public libraries and agencies that provide services to teens.

How is L.A. Youth funded?

L.A. Youth is a nonprofit charitable organization funded by grants from foundations and corporations, donations and advertising.

What's L.A. Youth's mission?

We will provide teens with the highest level of journalism education, civic literacy and job skills. We will strengthen and build our relationships with more teachers to bring relevant issues into the classroom and improve the quality of education. We will reach out to the community to better educate policy makers about teen issues; create a more positive image of teens in the mainstream media; and raise the credibility and awareness of L.A. Youth.

Free copies of L.A. Youth for Los Angeles teachers

L.A. Youth is distributed six times a year free to high school or middle school teachers in most of Los Angeles County. Teachers also can look

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L.A. youth

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L.A. Youth is published by Youth News Service (YNS), a not-for-profit corporation. Editorial offices are at 5967 W. Third St. Suite 301, Los Angeles CA 90036. Phone (323) 938-9194. Web site: www.layouth.com; E-mail: editor@layouth.com

L.A. Youth would like to express its gratitude to the following individuals, who donate their time, patience and expertise to our writers:

L.A. YOUTH BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Gail Boyle - Union Bank of California

Drew Combs - Los Angeles Daily Journal (L.A. Youth alumnus)

Eva Semple Davis - Warner Brothers Home Video

Fred Freeman - Writer/Producer

Martin Z. N. Katz, Esq.

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Nancy Padberg - Navigate Consulting, LLC

Ken Preston - Countrywide Financial Corporation

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The Los Angeles Times donates the printing of L.A. Youth.

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Stephen Clark, HUD; Noel Greenwood, Los Angeles Times (retired); Bill Leider, Leider, Murphy and Assoc.; Lucille Polachek; Tom Trapnell, Los Angeles Times; Zeek Interactive, Inc. *Many thanks to our friends who made this issue possible:*

Bank of America Foundation, Bing Family Foundation, Brinson Foundation, The California Endowment, The California Wellness Foundation, Marcy Carsey, Coca-Cola Inc., Carol and James Collins Foundation, Compton Foundation, Brad and Grace Ellis, Endeavor Foundation, Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation, The Ford Foundation, The James Irvine Foundation, Kaiser Permanente, Los Angeles Times, Majestic Realty, McCormick Tribune Foundation, Northrup Grumman, Ogilvy Public Relations, Open Society Institute, Pacific Life Foundation, Parsons Foundation, Paul Foundation, The Rose Hills Foundation, Roth Family Foundation, Robert Ellis Simon Foundation, Helen and Jeff Sperber, Dwight Stuart Youth Foundation, Stuart Foundation, Surdna Foundation, Union Bank, Weingart Foundation.

Also: David Hernandez, Mark Kurtich, Jan Langer, Dave Novotney, Mike Sergieff, Leonard Simon, PhD., Rick Terry.

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mail

These are letters we received about stories in the September issue of L.A. Youth.

DIFFERENT VIEWS ABOUT TUPAC

Tupac is my favorite artist because he always inspires me. He was not just a rapper, he's a legend. He may have done drugs and fought, but later he tried to teach kids not to follow in his footsteps. When Tupac gave interviews he said that he made mistakes. He was better than any other writer because he got it from his heart and his eyes. He is not like new rappers, who just rap about girls, parties, jewelry, killing thugs and cars.

Vale Galoyan, Wilson MS
(Glendale)

I agree that Tupac was talented and he was great at writing lyrics. But I disagree that he's inspirational, because he was just a gangster from the streets. When he was alive people hated him and since he has died people have felt sad for him so they glorify him.

Alfred Martinez, Wilson MS

TAMING MY ANGER

Reading "Taming my anger" was very inspirational. There are times when I feel hopeless, and learning about a boy who has had it so much worse, but who learned to control his anger and pain, made me feel so optimistic. My anger isn't as severe as his, but I know people who are very hot-tempered and it gives me hope for them.

This article gave me hope

for a happier, less violent world and has helped me believe that people can change.

Rachel Sanoff, Taft HS
(Woodland Hills)

A BOY WILL NEVER FORGET HIS FRIEND WHO DIED

I think this article, about a boy whose friend died of cancer, is really cool, because in junior high and high school most people make fun of disabled people. Some students just ignore them and don't even want to be seen with disabled people, but some people are nice. The writer liked this girl and didn't care what people thought. I think that this is a great article because it shows that some people do care about others and how that can have a great impact on your and other people's lives.

Natalie Jimenez, Wilson MS

IS IT OK TO BURN THE AMERICAN FLAG?

Flag burning should not be illegal because it's a person's choice to do it or not. I would never do it, but no one wants a stupid law like that. It's a free country and people should choose what they want to do. They shouldn't make a silly law like that. Laws are meant for good reasons and this isn't one of them.

Elin Mardirosian, Wilson MS

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Send your letters to L.A. Youth

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Los Angeles CA 90036
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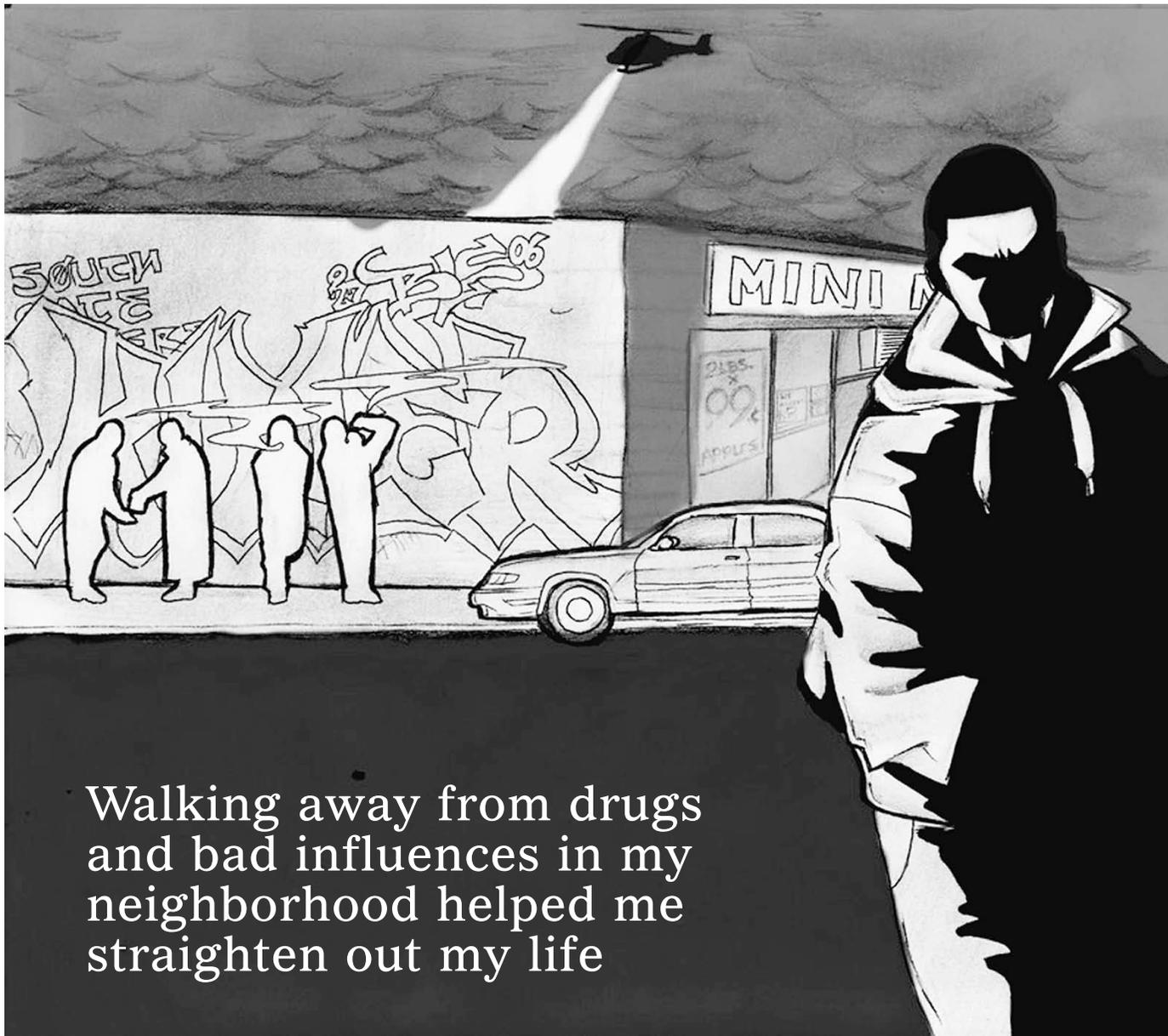


ILLUSTRATION BY BRIAN LOPEZ-SANTOS, 15, MARSHALL HS

Walking away from drugs and bad influences in my neighborhood helped me straighten out my life

By Joel Muñoz, 18

My whole life has been messed up, but the worst was when I did drugs. That life was leading me to a bad place. But I have been clean for 10 months and turned my life around.

I started doing drugs when I was 15, but my problems started when I was younger because I lived with my aunt and uncle. There were good times, like when the Lakers won and my uncle let me take the Suburban and people were going crazy in the street. But most of the time I felt like I wasn't part of the family.

I went to live with my aunt and uncle when I was 6. The police had taken custody of me and my six siblings because they said there were too many reports about my mom and stepdad being abusive and fighting. I was crying because I thought I was being taken away from my mom for no reason. Sure, they argued and my stepdad drank, but I didn't feel it was a big deal.

My aunt took me and one of my sisters, my grandma took four kids and my other aunt took one. My aunt and uncle put me in elementary school but I was behind. I'd missed a lot of school because my mom and stepdad hadn't taken me. The teacher would help me, but by fifth grade I was frustrated because I was the only kid

who didn't know how to read or write, add or divide. I flunked fifth grade and in sixth grade I only passed PE. I wanted my aunt and uncle to help me with my homework, but they couldn't because they worked at night.

In seventh grade at South Gate Middle School I took the same classes over again. I'd get frustrated and cuss my teachers out. Sometimes kids made fun of me because of the way I dressed, with my shirt tucked in. I would get mad and talk back and get in fights. I ditched and hung out with my girlfriend behind the gym. Things were going so badly, I wished I could start my life over with my mom. I missed how she would spend time with me, which made me feel like she cared about me.

My aunt and uncle weren't happy with the way things were going. When I brought home Fs, they wouldn't let me watch TV, go outside anymore or go out to eat with my uncle. They'd take my stuff away, like my Spanish rap CDs. I started running away to a friend's house because I wanted to have fun.

At the end of seventh grade, when I was 15, I got kicked out of South Gate for fighting and ditching. I went to an alternative school in Compton. People would do drugs at school and I wanted to try them. I started with weed, then I tried speed and crack, which got me hyped up.

DRUGS WERE AN ESCAPE

I knew drugs don't take you anywhere. I knew I could end up in jail because I'd see cops when I was walking down the street high. But I liked being hyped up because my family couldn't control me. I'd be acting a fool and cussing out my aunt's kids. They'd yell at me to stop but I wouldn't listen. At school when I was mad because I had been arguing with my aunt and uncle, I'd go to the bathroom to do drugs, which got my anger out and made me forget about everything. Looking back at that time, I feel bad about who I was. I wasn't being the person I really was. I was trying to be someone else, a bad kid, instead of a nice person.

When I was about to turn 16, my aunt threatened to send me to boot camp and started calling places. I said, "I'm not going" and ran away. When the police picked me up after a few days and I went home, I was still mad at her.

The next day I went to the house of a friend's friend, who was in a gang. They had guns stacked in a dresser. I asked them for a .22-caliber gun. I was drunk and high on speed. I walked back to my house and saw my uncle working on his car. I pulled out the gun and threatened to kill him. My sister's husband tried to stop me. "Just put the gun down," he said. "All I want to do is talk to you." I didn't believe it so I shot the gun into the car window. Neighbors called the police and I took off running into an alley. I heard a police helicopter announcing there was a person in the street with a weapon and to be careful.

I was going to turn myself in. Without thinking, I fired another bullet into the air and the helicopter shined light in my face. I ran but cop cars trapped me. I was scared. They told me to drop the gun and get on the ground, then they took me into custody. I was thinking, "Why did I do that?" Luckily the shots I fired didn't hit anyone, but I knew I could have hurt somebody. Sometimes when I get angry I do something that I later regret.

They sent me to juvenile hall for six months. When I got out I was scared of getting sent back to juvenile hall because I saw kids get beat up by other kids all the time. So after school I stayed in my aunt's house. If someone called I wouldn't answer. I sometimes unplugged the phone because the ringing would get on my nerves. I was doing good for a couple months. But then I got tired of being inside the house doing nothing but watching TV. I saw dealers sell drugs from their car by my house and wanted to buy some.

Everything started all over. I started running away again. I got caught selling drugs and was put on house arrest for six months. So many bad things were happening. One day when I got in an argument with my aunt, I grabbed my pills for depression and took off running

to the park. I didn't feel like being alive no more so I took 15-20 of them. I felt dizzy and tired and fell to the ground. The police found me and took me to an emergency room. I was shaking. It scared my whole family.

I woke up in a mental hospital, thankful to be alive. My uncle came every day to visit. He said, "We want you to come back home."

But I couldn't change at my aunt's house. At night I'd go outside and smell weed and see people drinking. Finally my aunt told a social worker she couldn't control me anymore and put me in a group home. I was devastated. I felt like she was giving up on me. I was losing another person in my life, another mom. I didn't realize it at the time, but if it wasn't for her, I'd still be doing drugs and probably be involved in a gang.

At my group home in the San Fernando Valley, the other kids would smoke weed and cigarettes in the backyard, and I did too. I'd go to a house and get weed from someone the other kids knew, while the staff thought I was just going to the park. I'd come back high and

I want to show my family that I'm a different person.

cuss out the staff or play my music loud. Then I'd get in trouble and couldn't visit my family or go out by myself.

I was tired of doing drugs so I got into some positive things. I asked the staff to take me to a park and I'd do laps. Another staff liked to run too, so me and her used to run. She'd take me to eat and on Sundays she'd take me to church. I'd read the Bible. I thought, Jesus gave his life for us, I'm going to respect him. Every night when I went to sleep I read the Bible.

Even though things were going better, I still had times when I got upset, like when my cousin told me he would visit but never came. I told the staff I was going to kill myself, so they took me to the hospital for a week and put me back on medication for depression.

THE JUDGE SENT ME TO A STRICT FACILITY

When I went to court last December the judge said I needed to be in a stricter group home because I had been leaving my group home without permission and was still doing drugs.

I went to my new group home on December 7, but this time it wasn't hard to stop using drugs. I knew I was going to do good because it was a lockdown facility so you can't go out by yourself and the other kids couldn't go out and bring back drugs or alcohol.

The staff would talk to me and I immediately felt I could trust them. When I got to know them better, I played around with them. I hit them on the shoulder

and they'd jokingly smack me in the back of the head. The staff told me, when you're mad at your family or depressed, you can write it down and rip it up. I would write in my journal and rip the page up so I didn't have to look at it and go off.

I went to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. At one meeting they showed the movie *Losing Isaiah*, about a mom who was using drugs and left her kid in a dumpster. Someone found him and the kid lived at another house while the mom fought to get him back. It was saying not to go back to drugs.

In the spring I joined the baseball team. Running laps, practicing and doing sit-ups would take my anger out over not being with my family and missing family events like funerals and birthdays. I lost weight and looked better. My team made it to the semi-finals and they had a barbeque for the team after the last game.

OTHERS SAID I COULD MAKE IT

I was doing good and following the staff's directions.

In June the judge told me he had seen changes. He said that when I turned 18, I could go to transitional living, which is like a group home but you have more freedom. I wanted to go because I had nowhere else to stay when I turned 18. A lot of the staff said, "I know you can do good when you leave here. You're a nice kid."

But my family didn't believe I had changed. One day my aunt picked up the phone when I called my cousin and said, "Why are you calling us? You're going to go back to that person you were. Don't keep calling the house." I felt mad. I hung up the phone and went to my room. I saw a bottle of cologne. I wanted to stop the pain so I drank it. I immediately told one of the staff and they had a nurse talk to me. She told me I could have found a better way to deal with my emotions. I regretted it.

I didn't talk to my aunt again until right before I left for transitional living in September. I wanted to talk to her because I want her in my life. I want to show my family that I'm a different person.

I feel much better about my future. I'm in a transitional living house in Van Nuys. It's like you're on your own but they pay for your rent and food and there is still staff in the house. We're learning how to pay bills on time, cook and budget money when we go grocery shopping.

I go to AA meetings every Monday. I'm going to finish school and get my GED, then try to enroll in college so I can take automotive classes and get a job repairing or rebuilding cars. I've wanted to be a mechanic ever since I was a kid and my stepdad let me help him at his job, sweeping and passing tools to him.

I'm going to visit my family on the weekends and go to church with them on Sundays. My family moved to a house next to a police station so there are no more drive-bys or people selling drugs.

Writing this story has helped me a lot. Now I know I did wrong at my aunt's house and I've gotten my past out of my mind. It's better to admit your mistakes. You'll always have a second chance to do good. I started doing good because God was watching me and giving me chances. Now I respect everything—my family and God. I'm not going to get back into drugs.



No more LABELS for me

I'm both black AND white, but there's more to me than my race

By Melanie Boysaw

15, SHERMAN OAKS CENTER FOR ENRICHED STUDIES

I am half black and half white and race has been a big part of my life.

I was in seventh grade when people started to get curious about what I was. Most kids assumed I was mostly white with some other race. I didn't mind that they asked me about my race, it was only when people didn't believe me that it bothered me. They'd say, "Seriously?" or "No, you're not really black." I'd answer with "Why would I lie about that?" But when people did believe me, it gave me a sense of pride. It was as though knowing I was part black made them see me as more than just that 5-foot-11 girl. It made me more complex.

That year, I made friends with a diverse group in my PE class. There was a Hispanic girl, an Armenian, another girl who was half black and half white, and two black girls. The two black girls were what everyone considered typically black—they listened to rap and dressed "ghetto" in baggy pants and tight tops.

Our teacher didn't make us do anything so we'd sit around for most of the two-hour class. At least once a week, my two black friends were upset about their parents. One of them hated her dad and the other one didn't like her mom's strict rules. If I said I was sorry or tried to help, they'd say "You wouldn't get it. You're so lucky, you get everything you want." I didn't understand why they said those things because outside of class, they knew very little about me. I wasn't rich and I didn't get everything I wanted.

They would talk about artists like 50 Cent and Eminem, but left me out of the conversation. They also said "You're such a nice little white girl" because I didn't cuss and followed the class rules, like running all four laps instead of one. I never understood why being nice made me white, but after a few months it seemed as though anything I did

ILLUSTRATION BY LIZA ESCOBEDO, 17,
WASHINGTON PREPARATORY HS

was automatically not the black way.

I was being judged by people who knew very little about the real me, once again. But this time because I wasn't black enough instead of when I was younger and I was considered too black.

MY GRANDFATHER DIDN'T WANT TO MEET ME

Growing up, my brother and I never saw our grandparents from our mom's side. We knew that our grandmother had died of leukemia before I was born, but our grandfather was still alive in Dallas. Once or twice my mother, who is white, explained that my grandfather grew up in the South in the early 1900s when most white kids were taught to be racist. She said he didn't want to meet us because my brother and I were half black.

One day when I was 7 or 8, my mom told us that our grandfather was very sick. She said he wanted to meet us before he died. I asked her if we could go, but she said no. Later that night, I was watching TV when my mother called me into the dining room. She had me sit down at the table with a lit candle and dimmed the lights. I was confused. What was this candle for?

She said that her father cut her off after she married my father, who is black, and she had to work for everything she had. He didn't even come to her wedding. That taught my mom that you have to depend on yourself before all others. She said the candle symbolized her father and everything he had put her through, and that going back to Texas now would be like touching the flame of the candle. She asked me if I really wanted to touch the candle's flame.

I was lost. I understood that my grandfather was raised a certain way and I couldn't completely blame him because of that. But I couldn't understand how something as trivial as skin color could make someone not want to meet their own grandchildren. How could he know he didn't want to meet me, without knowing anything about me?

Shortly after that, my grandfather passed away. I was a little sad because it finalized that I would never meet him, but I didn't cry. My mom attended her father's funeral in Dallas, but we weren't allowed to go.

My parents got divorced shortly after my grandfather's death. We saw each parent an equal amount, switching houses every day and trading off weekends.

In the beginning of eighth grade, I changed a lot. I went from wearing basketball clothes to jeans and T-shirts and from listening to whatever was on the radio to listening only to rock. I changed the way I dressed because my mom made me stop wearing basketball clothes. She said "Don't you want to dress more feminine?" Also, my friend questioned why I listened to rap so one day I listened to the lyrics in rap music. They were singing about partying, drinking and women. Everything was so pointless. My friend introduced me to new bands, like Green Day and The Killers. I couldn't believe the difference. They sang about love, loss and finding themselves. I had never listened to music where I could feel the artist's emotion and I loved it.

I was still the same person, but people started as-

suming I didn't want to be black. Kids began to call me names like whitewashed and Oreo. I didn't know what those meant, so I didn't care. But after being called whitewashed a couple times, someone finally explained that it was "When someone is black but acts white." I laughed it off because I knew they were kidding.

But when it got to the point where I'd hear those words almost every day, it started to bother me. Whitewashed was just a word, but it suggested I was ashamed of my black heritage. I would get a little angry inside, but I never went off on them. I didn't see the point in arguing with them because it would only cause problems. But at the end of eighth grade, I couldn't take it anymore.

I was talking to my Asian friend, who is really into rap and wearing Rocawear and Baby Phat, and she brought up, once again, my race.

Whitewashed was just a word, but it suggested I was ashamed of my black heritage.

"Melanie, why do you act so white? Are you ashamed of being black or something?" she said.

"No. I don't act white or black," I said. "You can't say that every black person should act one way and every white person should act another. Just because I don't act 'ghetto' doesn't mean I'm not as black as someone who does."

"OK, but most black people act that way."

"How do you know? And even if that is true, it doesn't mean that because a majority of black people act that way, that I have to. There's no 'acting white' or 'acting black.'"

"Whatever, you know you're whitewashed."

"How can I be whitewashed if I'm half white?"

She shook her head and walked away.

I felt proud that I stood up to my friend. She stopped calling me whitewashed for a while and opted for Oreo instead until I asked her how I could be black on the outside but white on the inside if I was half white. Then she ran out of names and stopped for a while.

In ninth grade, kids made fewer comments directly toward me, but began to make jokes about race. Every day someone made a dumb joke about race. It wasn't uncommon to hear the n-word being thrown around or someone joking about how all black people steal, how Asians can't drive or how Mexicans are alcoholics.

One day, I was sitting on a low wall with my friends before class when two of our guy friends started to jokingly argue with each other. One was Mexican and the

other was from Bangladesh, next to India. "Why don't you go blow up a building?" my Mexican friend said to my Bengali friend, even though he's not even Middle Eastern.

"Why don't you go mow a lawn?"

"Are you going to blow up the school next, Al Qaeda?"

"Go sell some oranges."

Hearing others turn racism into a joke when it has been such a real thing to me, just isn't funny. Instead of just making fun of me for not being black enough, they were making fun of an entire race for something stereotypical.

What's bad about stereotypes is that they limit people. Even if a person makes fun of their own race, it just makes it more acceptable for anyone else to say something. It makes it difficult for people to break out of what they are supposed to act like and just be themselves.

MY FAMILY GIVES ME A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE

Even though being biracial hasn't been easy, I would never want to be one race. It's interesting to see the contrast between the two sides of my family. My mom's family is small—it's just her brother and my mom's friends, who I call my "aunts." I know they care about me because they take me to basketball games and help me with school work and any other problems I'm having. My mom got re-married about three years ago. My step-dad's family is a lot bigger and they put a lot of importance on being a big, happy Irish family.

I don't get to see my dad's family that much because they live on the East Coast, but when we get together it's always fun. They are really loud and talk a lot and there are a lot of them. I last saw them for my dad's wedding in July. A lot of people I never met from my step-mom's family came up and talked to me. Being with people who were so friendly made me feel at home.

I like who I am. I'm not just half black and half white. I am Melanie. I play basketball on my high school team and a club team. My friends and family are important to me. Music is important to me too because it helps me deal with things. I listen to mostly rock or "screamo." One of my favorite artists is the Christian band Underoath because as a Christian, they help me lead a clean life. But if you just see me as half black and half white, you're missing everything else that makes up me.



Melanie wishes people would try to see her for who she is inside.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

A TEEN HELPS OUT IN NEW ORLEANS

I thought the article "Helping in New Orleans" was very inspiring. It was tragic to see what happened there. [Melissa and her church youth group] went to New Orleans and helped people rebuild their houses. They are everybody's role models. Too many people in the world are going through too much sadness right now. I think it's important to have shelter, a family and happiness. I hope people are cured from sadness and that hole is replaced with happiness.

*Kaitlin Dunlevy, Los Angeles Center
for Enriched Studies*

SENDING AID TO LEBANON WAS THE RIGHT THING

Reading the article "Sending aid to Lebanon" made me realize that if everyone works together our world would be a better place. I admire that teens my age are willing to give up their time and effort for the refugees involved in the conflict with Hezbollah. I've given aid and donated supplies to crises like Hur-

ricane Katrina or aid drives for troops in Iraq. My family also supported other families in 1988 when an earthquake hit Armenia. I completely support whoever is involved in this inspiring project and encourage others because there is no other feeling that makes you feel so great as knowing you brightened someone's day.

Michelle Uluchyan, Wilson MS

A BOY TRIED TO BECOME LIKE THE CHARACTERS IN A BOOK

I really like Brett Hicks's story about how a book by S.E. Hinton was turning him into a rebel. You shouldn't let a book or movie control your life. If you do, then you lose your personality and what makes you, you. I felt like Brett when I read *The Catcher in the Rye*. I wanted to live alone and try to find myself. Something weird came over me and I wanted to act like the character in the book. After a while I thought to myself, why would I want to be like a book character? I have my own life, friends and personality. So I've learned to just be yourself. It's the best you can be.

Joseph Flores, Wilson MS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR NEEDED

Hey L.A. Youth readers,

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Tricks and treats

FUNNY HALLOWEEN STORIES

Best costume ever: iPod commercial

By Fred Scarf
16, BIRMINGHAM HS (LAKE BALBOA)

Last Halloween I dressed up as an iPod commercial. I was so excited about being an iPod commercial that it was the only thing I talked about during October. I was determined to win the costume contest at Montclair Prep, where I attended last year. How did I transform myself? By painting myself black from head to toe and attaching myself to a giant blue board, so I looked like the iPod commercials with the silhouetted figure dancing against a brightly colored screen.

I started by going to a local costume shop and asking if they had any black paint.

"Yes," the woman said, "we have black face paint."

I told her that I would like to buy enough face paint to cover my body. The look she gave me—a mix of scared and confused—was priceless.

On Halloween, I woke my sister up at 4:30 a.m. to help paint me black from head to toe, which took three hours.

At first the paint felt warm and slimy on my skin, but it dried quickly. The paint kept cracking, especially around my knees and arms. By the end of the day, 10 people had repainted me. During lunch I didn't eat because my hands were so gross looking. Instead I posed for pictures for the foreign exchange students who were in awe of a skinny dancing boy painted black. One of my teachers asked me why there was black paint on the homework I turned in while I in costume. I started laughing because the teacher was so serious and didn't make the connection.

I won the costume contest. The prize was some candy, nothing that I couldn't buy at the 99¢ Only store. Honestly, I don't know why I went through all the trouble. I couldn't get the black paint out of my ears for two weeks and my pores took one for the team. Also, I had to compete in Mock Trial with black bits of paint in my ears.

This year I am going to be MySpace. I plan to wear a big board and decorate it as if it were someone's profile, and attach a piece of cardboard to my left arm as the bulletin board. I just hope it works.



PHOTO BY ALEXANDRA SCARF, 16, MONTCLAIR PREP

Fred's iPod commercial costume won first place in his school's contest.

A Halloween tree?

By Katherine Lam
17, RAMONA CONVENT (ALHAMBRA)

As I sifted through my e-mails earlier this month, I opened an advertisement from the fancy food and cookware company Williams-Sonoma. Surprise, surprise, they sent me an advertisement for some Halloween gift items. Since commercialization of a holiday is a given, I figured these were probably some everlasting, titanium witch-shaped cookie cutters.

To my disgust, they were advertising the new Williams-Sonoma "Halloween Tree," which seemed way over the top. How in the world could someone love Halloween so much to come up with *this*—a dead-looking "spooky" tree with gnarly wire and smiling ghosts and baby bats, which seemed to defy the eerie feelings normally associated with Halloween. The wires twisted out to form long branches, which were, according to the Web site, covered in "ribbon."

As I started to move onto my daily e-mail readings, my mind fixated on the tree. My days of pumpkin carving are long since gone, and the concept of hanging miniature bats on a tree started to appeal to me. I was being sucked into the com-

mercialization, and there was no way out.

As I thought about it, I felt that the tree almost resembled a shrine in a way; if you worship ghosts—caramel popcorn ghosts that can be attached to the branches. As I crowned myself the best online window-shopper of the day, I decided that on Halloween, the only chocolates and s'mores I could eat were Williams-Sonoma's smiling pumpkin truffles and bat-shaped s'mores.

In our consumerist culture it's un-American not to celebrate Halloween! Williams-Sonoma's advertising tempted me to rush out and buy a tree like a good American consumer. But since I'm a poor teenager, I'm going to save my \$49 (and instead spend it on some nice new stockings in December).



No, not my candy!

By Stephanie Deutsch
16, HARVARD-WESTLAKE SCHOOL (NORTH HOLLYWOOD)

I hate candy. It's too sugary, it inflicts cavities and transforms into unwanted pounds. But somehow, the atmosphere of Halloween triggers a sense of childhood nostalgia that forces me to give in to the candy high.

Last Halloween I stepped out in my go-go girl costume with only one goal in mind: to get as much candy as possible. I set out with my friends, tackling one house at a time. I got so into the moment that at one point I ran ahead of the pack and yelled back to my friends, "I'm going to beat you all to the good candy!" As I was racing to the next house, barely able to steadily secure my bag, I heard a loud thump. Two seconds later, a noise shattered the neighborhood like the piercing cry of a baby. My bag of candy was so full, the impact of it hitting a car had caused the alarm to go off.

My immediate response was to run as fast as my 4-inch-heeled, white go-go boots would let me—bad idea.

I tripped, but was able to stop myself from falling flat-faced on the concrete. Unfortunately, my bag of candy didn't



have such good reflexes. Every piece of candy flew out of the bag and scattered on the street. But it was OK, most of the candy had wrappers and I could simply pick it up and everything would be fine, right?

Wrong.

While regaining my balance, I noticed a flash of light coming my way. Before I could scream, "Stop!" a car ran over my candy. Chocolate oozed out of Hershey wrappers, lollipops crackled and licorice flattened.

My friends were laughing so hard they fell to the ground holding their stomachs. I just stood frozen. I was like the kid who got her ice cream taken away.

But now that I look back on it, I never really liked candy that much anyway.

COLLEGE: HOW WE GOT ACCEPTED



Students from Ms. Pike's English class at San Fernando High are now attending the following colleges (listed from left to right):

Cesar Martinez,
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Rosina Guzman,
Mount St. Mary's (in Los Angeles)
Jay Paraz,
UC Irvine
Edgar Flores,
UC Irvine
Randy Dominguez,
Dickinson College (in Pennsylvania)
Christina Nguyen,
UC Santa Cruz
Elizabeth Rodriguez,
California State University, Northridge (CSUN)
Teacher Lori Pike,
Jose Gutierrez,
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Andrea Guzman,
California State University, Northridge (CSUN)

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS AND TEACHER

By Cesar Martinez, 18

During the first semester of my senior year I was so depressed that I caught the senioritis virus and my grades slipped. My family was breaking apart; I had to deal with school work and manage to keep a job. There were times when I felt like I couldn't go on since I had no one to give me moral support and I really felt empty inside.



Luckily I had good friends who were there for me like a second family. I was able to rely on them to help me out.

When it came to applying to college, I was worn out and frustrated. I am one of those students who isn't good with paperwork and being organized, but every day my friends told me to fill out a small part of the application and not try to do everything in one day. My teacher believed in me and pushed me to continue in my studies and apply to college—that gave me hope that there will be a better tomorrow.

My senioritis disappeared when I received a scholarship through the Posse Foundation, which my teacher nominated me for. This is a special program which forms multicultural teams of high school students called "posses." You get to know everyone in your posse, and

then you attend the same school and support each other. Through Posse, my best friend Jose and I are going to the University of Wisconsin-Madison with our four-year tuition all paid for.

In the end I realized that I have to take charge of my future, and I want to go to college so I can live a better life than the one I live today. I will be the first in my family to go to college. It is a lot of pressure knowing that everybody is looking up to me to succeed and carve a path for my brother and sister to follow. My other motivation is myself—I always remind myself that I can do it and I am capable of making it in college.

ME—AT A PRIVATE COLLEGE?

By Blanca Valdes, 18

When I entered high school, I did not have a clue where I wanted to attend college. I was reluctant to leave my family, especially my younger brother because he was born prematurely and had many problems. I also wanted to go to a school that I had seen before, and I was very familiar with California State University, Northridge (CSUN) after many long years of visiting with clubs and classes. I would not feel like an outcast there because many of my friends would be attending.

Yet the more I thought about it, the more I wondered if CSUN was the right school for me. It's a very large school with a high student-to-teacher ratio, something I dislike. I wanted to find a college where I could have

a chance to meet everyone and get the opportunity to talk to my professors, not their assistants. I was not sure what to do—I did not know of any school that had this but was located in an area that I felt comfortable with.

Luckily, I have a great English teacher, Ms. Pike, who encourages the class to venture out into the world and explore new things. She planned a class trip to the University of Redlands east of Los Angeles County. I was not very interested in the school but thought it would not hurt to at least look at it. As soon as I saw the campus, I fell in love with it. It was everything I wanted; a beautiful school in a great location, with a small number of students but with enough clubs, sports and organizations to keep busy. I could play against more competitive soccer teams from different regions of California. Everyone was friendly and interesting, so I decided that the University of Redlands was a very good option, if I got accepted.

During my senior year, it was difficult keeping up with application deadlines especially since they were all hitting at the same time. I could tell I was not going to complete all of my applications so I had to narrow down my choices to a few UC's and the University of Redlands. It was a challenge, yet I put all of my time and effort into applying on time so I could receive scholarships.

Last spring, I received the best news in my life. I got accepted to Redlands and was nominated for a scholarship. Who knew a girl from San Fernando High, a Mexican girl, could get accepted to Redlands? I was ecstatic—the time and effort I put into this was worthwhile.



One step at a time

A teacher's system for getting her kids into four-year colleges

By **Lori E. Pike**

ENGLISH TEACHER, SAN FERNANDO HS

When I started teaching English 13 years ago at San Fernando High, I never thought I'd immerse myself in teaching my seniors how to apply to college. But in the summer of 2002, I sensed a need and developed a program to fill it.

My college prep unit was born when a bunch of girls in my AP Literature class weren't ready for an interview with Mount St. Mary's admissions officers. The reason was they weren't sure how to fill out the application, and didn't know how to write their personal statements. The irony was, in this "college-level" AP course, I had a bunch of students who didn't know how to navigate the paperwork to actually get into a college.

These girls had excellent GPAs, were active in a variety of campus activities, were outspoken in my class, and obviously, quite intelligent. I, like every other teacher, had assumed up to that point that those qualities guaranteed that the young ladies would apply to a number of colleges, win admission and smoothly sail into their freshman year on a university campus.

But my assumptions were incorrect. Because, as I soon learned, the road to college admission is long, arduous and filled with twists and turns—paperwork, deadlines, knowing how to confidently package oneself, and even learning how to defend one's college goals in the face of parental opposition. Applying and going on to a four-year university takes guts and an incredible amount of organization.

So I developed a special college "unit," a collection of research and writing exercises that I cram into my AP curriculum from July through March (I teach at a year-round school). I realized that students can manage applications for college, financial aid and scholarships, if they are taught step-by-step how to do so.

In researching a wide variety of universities and their application processes, I came across statistics showing how first-generation students have an extremely poor transfer rate from community colleges to four-year institutions. So, I require my students to research 12 four-year universities and apply to six, including two private colleges as well as the UCs and Cal States. In these competitive times, many of my first-generation students get better financial aid at some private schools.

There's no genius to what I do. I just carefully break all the steps of the process into smaller steps. Then I turn every piece into an assignment, with a deadline AND A GRADE. My students tell me that the incentive of points earned or lost gives them just the boost they need to confront scary and overwhelming tasks.



LOTS OF REMINDERS

Two other facets of my program seem to make a big difference. First, I nag the students frequently about deadlines. "I am your college mother," I intone, and they all laugh. But the reality is, many of my students' parents have not graduated high school, much less college, and they're

not sure how best to guide their teens through this process. Secondly, these young people really bond as they write and revise personal statements, complete complex applications and share financial aid tips. When peers and even adults in their lives sneer at their college plans—which unfortunately does sometimes happen—these teens keep marching toward their goals. Peer support in the college application process is vitally important.

We do have excellent college counselors. We also have a great college preparation organization on campus called Project Grad. And certainly, a number of our students successfully apply to multiple universities on their own. But the momentum of my college-related assignments, and the moral support of classmates, is what seem to keep my students pressing toward their goal when some of their peers fade.

Some of my colleagues ask why I spend so much time during an AP English class guiding my students through applying to college. The answer: as vital as it is for me to teach reading and writing skills, I feel that completing a four-year college degree is so important to student lives that I'm willing to do whatever I need to do to help them, cajole them, and inspire them to achieve that goal.

I wish the state of California would mandate a "College Prep Seminar" for all seniors in their fall semester, so that they could research college options and apply. Even those only eligible for community college admission could begin to strategize for a university future. Such a course would definitively assert to students, parents and the general public that our state not only values higher education—it actually takes tangible steps to make sure more students benefit from a college degree.

But until that happens, I'll just keep on slotting my college exercises into my AP course.

At graduation in June, I ran into a few students from my "guinea pig" senior class from four years ago. They proudly told me they had just graduated from college, and that everyone else they could think of from that group of pioneers had graduated too. I felt happy that what I began as a great experiment has become an annual tradition, which helps propel at least a segment of San Fernando High students toward college success.

Ms. Pike's college deadlines

1. Research 12 universities, including four privates. Deadline: End of August.
2. Rough draft of one of three required essays for UC application. Deadline: Nov. 1
3. Research 20 scholarships. Deadline: Nov. 1.
4. UC application—final draft of three essays. Deadline: First two weeks of November.
5. UC and Cal State applications submitted online. Deadline: Wednesday before Thanksgiving.
6. First five scholarship applications completed. Deadline: Dec. 15.
7. Three drafts of private university personal statements completed. Deadline: First two weeks of December.
8. Two private university applications submitted. Deadline: Last week of school before winter break.
9. Secure Personal Identification Number (PIN) for students and their parents from Federal Student Aid at pin.ed.gov and fill out a rough draft of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by Jan. 15.
10. FAFSA submitted online. Deadline: Feb. 1.
11. Five more scholarship applications completed. Deadline: Feb. 1
12. FAFSA Student Aid Report (SAR) form updated. Deadline: Feb. 15

Not many San Fernando High grads attend four-year schools

72% will not attend four-year schools:

- 55% Community college
- 12% The military, work or "other"
- 5% Vocational school

19% will attend four-year schools:

- 11% California State University
- 5% UC school
- 3% Private university

(Numbers do not add up to 100% because 9% are not accounted for.)

Source: School survey of 588 graduates of the Class of 2006, San Fernando HS. There were 695 graduates, but not all were surveyed.

College freak out

After sweating through college applications, I found out what really mattered to me

By Geraldo Raygoza, 18

Whoever said junior year is the toughest is on crack. It's the senior year, by far. During my senior year, I bit off more than I could chew, just for a spot at a school with a great name and reputation.

The summer before my senior year at Sierra Vista High in Baldwin Park, I wanted to get a head start on the college admissions process. I began reading through a mountain of college brochures. The bold, white letters jumped out at me from the solid blue cover of the Yale brochure. The ivy-covered stone buildings reminded me of old European castles—the perfect environment to become a scholar. Looking at all the brochures with their pictures of unusually cheery students studying in their dorms, playing Frisbee on the green lawns, and having intense bonding experiences, I could not tell one school from another. It was frustrating. How could I find out which school would be a good fit for me?

Searching for more information, I began to look on the colleges' Web sites. I checked out all the Ivy League schools and schools I've never heard of, like Northwestern and the University of Chicago. Then I found a Web site called www.collegeconfidential.com, which had a message board. To my shock, there were hundreds of messages from perfect overachievers stressing about how to get into elite schools. I learned that one of the reasons these kids wanted to go to those top schools was so they could network with successful people, so they could become part of the elite and have a good life. They posted their incredible GPAs, class ranks, SAT scores, and lists of AP courses, extracurricular activities and awards.

I WAS SO FAR BEHIND

I felt so ignorant and clueless. How could my measly 3.5 GPA compete with all of the 4.0s? I was involved in music, but I never won any national awards. I didn't even know what "All-State Band" was. These kids were doing 10 times what I was doing. At the rate I was going, I had no chance of getting into Yale. I would be shut out from that world and would never have a chance again of attaining that kind of success.

I told my dad I was worried about getting into college. He told me I could definitely get into college, and that I would be fine. To my dad, who didn't go to college, any college is good. That was one thing we disagreed about. He thought I had an arrogant attitude because I considered myself better than a Cal State. I was mad at him for not pushing me harder, to achieve the best, like some kids' parents do. The reality, however, was that we were both nervous because neither of us knew what this whole college thing was all about.

As I began my senior year at Sierra Vista High, I was determined to do so well that I would get into any col-



ILLUSTRATION BY GRADY WILLIAMS III, L.A. YOUTH ARCHIVES

lege I wanted. I was taking four Advanced Placement classes—English, government, physics and calculus. I also was the drum major of my school marching band, played saxophone in the wind ensemble and jazz band, and was a reporter with my school newspaper.

I thought I was going to be Superman, but I was lost from the very start. In government we had daily quizzes on the reading. In English, we wrote an analysis every other day. I would start my homework by doing calculus problems, but I often came across problems I couldn't solve. It didn't help that calculus was held during zero period at 6:30 a.m., and my teacher had never taught the subject before. He would write on the board, but it was so messy we couldn't read it. My mind would drift away, and when I got back on track, I couldn't understand what he was talking about.

FROM BAND PRACTICE TO HOMEWORK, I WAS EXHAUSTED

Three times a week, I had marching band practice, with performances at football games every Friday. Right from the start, there were problems with the band. People showed up late, talked during practice, didn't know the songs and couldn't keep the beat. The trumpet section was always joking, and the other sections would laugh with them. As drum major, I was supposed to bring them to attention, but they wouldn't listen to me.

I'd be dead tired when I got home, and I couldn't keep a clear head to do my homework. I also had to write some newspaper articles, and start working on my college applications.

I wished I had a friend, someone who I could call any time and who would understand what I was going through. Instead, most of the kids at school didn't care about their education, period. They cared about their cell phones and iPods and could quote from TV shows all day long. I didn't connect with my AP classmates either. Most wanted to get the perfect score by just "playing the game," which included cheating and brown-nosing tactics. They didn't care about learning something new and beneficial; they just wanted to nab that A for their soaring GPAs. Worse, they wouldn't finish—or start—their homework until the period before it was due. Without giving a thought to the given tasks, they would rush to finish the homework in the middle of another class. As long as it was turned in, they would get the credit.

I could feel my motivation plummeting. Why should I try when no one around me did?

By the end of September, I had dropped out of the newspaper and had a D in calculus. It was a total shock. I had never gotten a D in my life. School had always been easy for me, without much studying. I began doubting my abilities. If I couldn't do this now, how would I manage in college?

My counselor called me in for a meeting. She knew how much time I was spending with the band. Since I had already completed the required three years of math, why didn't I drop calculus? In my heart I agreed with her completely. But instead of admitting that I couldn't do it, I told her that it was no problem. I insisted I was going to turn my grade around, and I would have more time once marching band season was over.

In October, I caught a bad cold, missed some school and fell even further behind. Then I got sick again. By the end of December, I had gotten sick three times in two months—a personal record.

With such difficult classes, there was little hope that

I could get back on track. My classes demanded a lot of abstract thinking. I was not used to learning this way because my past classes involved mere memorization. I felt so frustrated that, as a senior, I didn't have the skills I would need in college. Why hadn't my teachers taught me to do these things before?

In physics, even though I did the reading, took notes in class and did the homework, I was only getting Bs and Cs on the tests. I couldn't remember all the formulas and the problems were devastatingly complicated. I was worried that I would fail the AP exam at the end of the year, and that I wouldn't get an A in the class. To go to the best schools, you have to have straight As.

One day during physics, we had to grade each other's tests. My classmate noticed that I had gotten a few answers wrong. He encouraged me to let him change some of the answers so I would get a higher score. No, I told him, that's wrong. If I cheated, would it boost my chances at getting into a prestigious college? Wasn't it better to do the work, and actually prepare myself for college-level coursework and thinking—for any college? It made me feel good that, even with all that pressure, I didn't resort to cheating.

I wish I could have been a little easier on myself.

After I submitted the UC application at the end of November, I began to debate with myself over whether to apply to Yale. Should I go for the "Big Time?" Or stop lying to myself and accept the cold hard truth—that I wasn't ready for that yet. That I probably wouldn't survive even one semester at Yale. With my grades—two Bs and two Cs—maybe I wasn't smart enough.

It was a tough decision. I felt like I was giving up my only chance at bonding with some of the smartest, hardest-working people; at being one of them. They would encourage me to push myself harder. I would have someone to study with or go to a museum with, instead of being surrounded by kids whose first priority is their cell phone ringtone. Plus, my physics teacher, English teacher, and counselor had already written recommendations for me to go to Yale. Wouldn't they be disappointed if I didn't apply?

Part of me felt like a loser and I was really depressed to give up my dream of Yale. But I told myself I could get a great experience anywhere, not just at the elite, East Coast colleges. Maybe I could catch up on everything I had missed somewhere else and, if I really wanted to, give Yale another shot as a transfer student or go to grad school there.

Looking around me, I noticed that many adults I admired had never applied to elite schools, and they were

happy and successful.

My physics teacher, Mr. Bray, had not followed a standard path to success. He first attended Citrus College in Glendora, but did not do well there. After a stint in Vietnam, he earned a B.A. in psychology at Cal Poly Pomona with a 4.0 GPA.

Ms. Dunn, my career counselor, had studied at various community colleges before finishing her B.A. at Brigham Young University.

When I talked to her about not applying to Yale, she said it didn't matter. She reminded me of my accomplishments, like marching in the Rose Parade, performing in the school's jazz band, and attaining a 3.5 GPA. Maybe I hadn't done better than students on College Confidential, but I had done better than most students at Sierra Vista.

YES, I WAS GOING TO COLLEGE

Later in the spring, I accepted admission to UC Irvine. I was offered a good financial aid package that I couldn't resist. Ms. Dunn was astounded by the award; no UC had offered that much aid to a Sierra Vista student before. Although my heart ached at first because I wasn't going to a finer school, I got over it quickly, realizing that it was still a UC—a school from the best public university system in the nation—and that it offered many superb opportunities for me to catch up on what I'd missed and to continue progressing from there.

At the end of the year, many people signed my yearbook. Most of them wrote that they thought I would be successful in life, that I would go places, that I was talented. One classmate said that I seemed like the kind of person who would never give up, no matter what the circumstance. My friend Ryan, who knew I hadn't done as well academically as in past years, wrote that he hadn't lost respect for me, and nonetheless I was still a good person.

My notion of success had changed as the year went by. Maybe I couldn't get an A in calculus, maybe I couldn't organize the band, and maybe I couldn't get into Yale. But I could be a positive influence on the people around me. I could take my classes seriously and even become friends with some of my teachers. I could balance academic studies with fun, like joking around with the jazz band and going to Disneyland on grad night.

Looking back on my senior year, I can see why I drove myself crazy with such a big workload. I don't regret having worked hard, but I wish I could have been a little easier on myself. I wish I had known I didn't have to prove anything and there are many ways to be successful. I think that if you're a good student, you're going to get somewhere. That should be plenty of relief for all seniors.



Geraldo advises teens to take school seriously, but not to let it affect their self-esteem.

Drumroll, please

After 18 years without a marching band, Fairfax High students are proud to have their spirit back



The new Fairfax High band marches into a lunchtime pep rally before the opening football game, where they pumped up the crowd.

By **Manuela Yim**
17, FAIRFAX HS

At other schools, they are labeled “band geeks.” But at Fairfax High, because the school hasn’t had one in almost 20 years, being part of the new band carries a sense of respect.

During its debut at the school’s opening football game in September, the new band got more cheers from the crowd than the football team. They played the fight song and when the cheerleaders yelled “Hey band, how do you feel?” they cheered back “We feel good, oh we feel so good!” The drums and trumpets pumped up the crowd, even for those who had no idea what was going on in the game. The team was losing, but at least the entertainment was good.

The bleachers were filled with more than just the usual crowd of friends of football players, a couple parents and a few stragglers with nothing better to do. It was hard to find a seat because so many people had turned out for the band.

The pep rally at lunch got everyone hyped up. Even a news crew from NBC Channel 4 was there. Like any big event at the school, everyone was talking about it and saying how good the band sounded. The teachers were saying the band was sensational and “explosive.” Everyone wanted to see how the band would do that night. They also had high expectations that the team would win.

“I feel like we’re making history! This is big,” Josh Kwon, a senior in the marching band, said.

Another senior, Yvette Moreira, said the band “brings a lot of school spirit that we’ve been lacking,” and that

“it’s going to make my senior year an even greater experience.”

THE MUSIC PROGRAM WAS CUT IN THE 80S

So why was the band missing for almost 20 years? As is common with public schools in Los Angeles, Fairfax lost funding for many extracurricular activities, including the band, in 1988. This led the school to sell its instruments and close the doors to the music department.

Then last year, an anonymous alumnus donated money to the school’s music department, which paid for the hiring of two new music teachers and gave back something that had been denied Fairfax for a long time.

But not everyone had heard of the new band. Over the summer, some of the drummers would practice in the parking lot, and the students getting out of summer school would stop in their tracks to watch. Some people thought we were getting a drum line. Some thought it was the Korean drumming class. They weren’t expecting a full band, color guard and all.

Mr. Vizcarra, the new music teacher who re-started the band, said “I feel very excited and proud. I could never have imagined it would have been this big.”

The faculty was supportive as well. Mr. Zubiarte, our new principal, said, “The [marching band] shows extreme dedication on everyone’s part. It’s also a good story and we’re at a high school that is put together by effort. The kids and teachers worked so hard.”

Since the majority of the students in the marching band are freshmen, the band offered a way for them to get involved with their new school. Angela Avila, a

ninth grader who plays the xylophone in the band, said she joined because she felt it would be an “interesting experience.”

“It’s fun and I like the school better now,” Angela said.

Even the parents at the game were excited. Penny Horseman, Fairfax alumnus and mom of basketball player Chris Horseman, said, “I am absolutely astounded. I’ve always known Fairfax had someone who can play music. Now finally, a band!”

What’s even more astounding is that 80 percent of the students in the band didn’t know how to play an instrument before the summer. But they were quick to learn. During the summer, they all had to go to band camp for 11 hours a day, six days a week for two weeks and practice, practice, practice.

THEY PRACTICE DAILY TO IMPROVE THEIR SOUND

This doesn’t mean they magically transformed after their first game into an experienced band. A month after the game, they still had to put in extra work. Mr. Vizcarra said one of the challenges has been “getting them in here to practice” every day after school until six.

Also, as all good marching bands must march in style, another challenge for them is raising enough money for uniforms. For now, they have to stick with plain red T-shirts.

Despite the varsity football team’s 37-6 loss to Locke High opening night, the Lions can hold their heads, or rather, their instruments up high, for the first time in two decades.

A day that made a difference

Helping Mexican orphans was rewarding for us volunteers, too

By Mel Shin
15, WHITNEY HS (CERRITOS)

From volunteering at a local food bank to tutoring kids, my school's 230 Key Club members do a lot to help the community. But by far our biggest and most popular activity is our annual one-day trip to help orphans in Tijuana.

As soon as I heard about it, I signed up, and the other 50 spots filled quickly. The day began at 6:30 a.m. last semester in the parking lot at Whitney High. My classmates and I loaded the bus full of food, diapers, toys, blankets, and school, cleaning and medical supplies for the children. We had raised \$1,268 to buy all these supplies through bake sales, car washes and getting an \$800 grant from Key Club International. We were on our way by 7:30.

Our club teamed up with a nonprofit organization called Corazón de Vida, which means "Heart of Life." The group raises \$25,000 a month to feed kids at 14 Mexican orphanages. As we drove to Mexico, one of the Corazón de Vida volunteers, Larry Fox, told us one of the things he liked about the organization: "If I got involved with Corazón de Vida, I knew where my money was going."

We listened as Fox and other volunteers talked about the history of Corazón de Vida. What was more interesting to me, as a passenger with a window seat, was the city of Tijuana.

ANOTHER WORLD

As soon as we had crossed the border from the United States into Mexico, everything changed. I saw thicker graffiti, rockier roads, more homeless people and people working in the streets. I saw women holding a baby in one arm and a plastic cup in the other begging for change at each intersection. If only this were the bad part of Tijuana.

Riding our bus through downtown Tijuana, we found that at every stop, a different worker on the street would come up to the bus asking for change. I saw one man juggling flaming torches atop his partner's shoulders at an intersection in central Tijuana. After his juggling feat, he leaped down, catching all of the torches and collecting money in a plastic cup.

As we made our way to the orphanage we were visiting, Hacienda de la Imaculada, we passed through Cuauhtemoc or Avenue Industrial, a road right along the border between Tijuana and San Diego. This solemn road was surrounded by walls lined with crosses and names for all the people who had failed in their attempt to cross into the U.S. We passed by crosses and decorated coffins as we observed a moment of silence for those people.

Riding along the bumpy dirt road in the Matamas region we entered the poorer part of Tijuana. Many children and people were living on the streets and most suffered under the hot sun along the dusty roads. In the rainy seasons, they would struggle in the deep mud of the dirt roads.

As soon as we entered the gates of the orphanage, we were greeted by the Mother of the orphanage, Madre Virginia. Volunteers quickly unloaded the supplies and food, carrying it inside. It was satisfying to see all the



PHOTO BY KEVIN SHIN, 18

Sunny Kim, 17, colored with the kids as part of Whitney High's outreach to an orphanage in Mexico.

supplies filling up an empty storeroom. After unloading, we each set about the activities we had been assigned.

Inside the main building, some of my classmates were reading or just talking with orphans. Outside under a gazebo, others drew with the children and blew bubbles with them. In a small play area, volunteers played soccer, basketball and football with more children. In another isolated building, a few volunteers were assigned the job of watching the babies in the nursery.

And some, like me, walked around, playing with any child who seemed lonely. With a few of the kids, I kicked around a soccer ball and threw a football. I drew with some of the kids with chalk and colored with some of them with crayons and markers.

Halfway through the day, with the hot sun beating down on our backs, we were called in for the lunch break. We had turkey and cheese sandwiches on white bread with a bag of chips and water, Sprite or Coke. The line of children to get their plates of food grew shorter as they began to take their seats and eat. Volunteers were surrounded by mobs of children holding up their empty cups for another pour of Sprite.

The big surprise of the day for the orphans and the best part of the day for me was the *piñata de payaso*. All of the children seemed to light up at the sight of the clown made of tissue paper, waiting to be beat apart so that its belly could burst with candy raining down on the chaotically scrambling children. Afterward, all the kids were bright with smiles with their stashes of candy hidden away in their pockets.

After an hour more of play with the orphans, it was time for us to leave. We all slowly filed into the bus waving goodbye and giving quick hugs to the orphans we had spent the day with.

We passed through all that we had seen in the morning and the city of Tijuana amazed and saddened me all

over again. The state of the city was horrible. The streets were dirty and most of Tijuana's population seemed to work on the streets selling, performing or just begging. After passing the Cuauhtemoc again, everyone on the bus was quiet with exhaustion and solemnity.

The trip left me with a new appreciation for how much I have in life. The Monday after the trip, as I was eating breakfast before going to school, I thought about how much the orphans would have needed the food. Every time I thought about what we had done for the orphans, I felt better, but I wish there was something that could be permanently done to improve their lives. The poverty I had seen not only gave me a greater sense of gratitude for what I had, but allowed me to understand why illegal immigrants want to come to America so much. They are so desperate for a better life.

My experience made me want to go next year and the year after that. I feel like every time I go, I can make a direct, positive impact on someone's life. And that's very special.

For more information on Corazón de Vida go to www.corazondevida.org or www.friendsofelfaro.com



Mel loved visiting Tijuana so much that he is helping organize his Key Club's next trip to the orphanage.

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PHOTOS BY BRIAN STEIDLE (A FORMER AID WORKER IN SUDAN)

These images show a Sudanese man who was shot by a government soldier, a village that was bombed and attacked by militia, and refugees who have fled the violence.

Horror in Sudan: Why is the world standing by?

Sarah Evans
16, TEMPLE CITY HS

I didn't know until last year that there was genocide happening in Africa, when I heard my parents talking about how several hundred thousand people had been killed in the Darfur region of western Sudan. I was so upset that I didn't want to talk about it. Instead, I cried in my room feeling angry and hopeless. As a teenager on the other side of the world, I didn't think there was anything I could do. My dark moments scared me. I thought I could avoid them if I pushed Darfur to the back of my mind. But my conscience wouldn't let me ignore the brutality jeopardizing the lives of more than 2.7 million people.

Being Jewish had a lot to do with my fear, as well as my desire to do something. Jews endured their own genocide in World War II. During the Holocaust, the Nazis organized the mass murder of 6 million Jews, so generally we feel strongly about stopping "ethnic cleansing." Unfortunately, this is usually because we've had the Holocaust shoved down our throats from the minute we could read. I was so horrified by descriptions of children burning to ashes, of death trains and gas chambers that they entered my thoughts and invaded my dreams, sometimes making me feel as if I'd been there myself. Worst of all, I knew if I'd been there, I would have died the same way.

That's why hearing about the genocide in Darfur paralyzed me with terror. I always try to put myself in other people's shoes, but relating to someone in Darfur was too painful. Blocking my emotions was my way of dealing with the genocide without breaking down. But I soon realized that the only way to get rid of my despair was through action.

In April, my synagogue offered a chance for a group of teens to go to Washington, D.C. and represent Reform Jewish values at a conference. I'm not very fond of politics, but the conference gave me a wake-up call. There were seminars about Darfur among other moral, social and economic issues. I didn't go to the ones about

Darfur because they sounded too depressing. But my group toured the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, where I received a handout about the Darfur genocide. One quote from a refugee stuck in my mind: "The Arabs want to get rid of anyone with black skin. ... There are no blacks left." Seeing the genocide in such plain terms made me resolve to stop moping and do something.

My first thought was to raise awareness by writing this article. Soon I found myself digging into every nasty account I came across.

I learned from SaveDarfur.org that in 2003, two rebel groups, mainly composed of African peasants, attacked government buildings as a way to speak out against their racism-fueled oppression. Sudan's government dealt with the rebels by sending a brutal militia called the Janjaweed, mostly from nomadic Arab tribes, to "clear ... areas considered disloyal to the Sudanese government." Basically, the Janjaweed (meaning "devil on horseback") are paid by the government to wipe out an entire race of people. The United Nations has labeled it "the worst humanitarian crisis of our time," yet few leaders of major countries have done much to help.

THOUSANDS DIE EACH MONTH

While you won't hear much about this in the media, New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof has written many horrifying accounts of how the Janjaweed raid villages, murder the men, rape the women and enslave the children. In one column, he wrote about two young women who were "forced to cook for the Janjaweed troops" and even "accept being raped by them." And when their father begged the Janjaweed commander to set his daughters free, the commander beheaded him right before their eyes. He quoted an aid worker who said: "They told me they just wanted to die."

In May, my synagogue joined the Jewish World Watch, an organization that promotes awareness about and provides aid in Darfur. A speaker from Jewish World Watch talked to our synagogue about the genocide. He said that since 2003, 15,000 people a month

have been killed. He compared it to "filling up the Hollywood Bowl once a month, and suddenly having them all disappear."

Estimates of the number of people killed vary from 200,000 to more than 400,000, because it's difficult to get a precise count. More than 2.5 million others have been pushed out of their homes into refugee camps where many starve because of inadequate rations.

Everyone who heard this news was very grave, helplessly shaking their heads. I was shocked. I've been to the Hollywood Bowl before, and had this image of a packed audience getting swept away by a huge gust of wind—although what happens in Darfur is obviously so much worse than wind. This forced me to face the awful reality: these people aren't just statistics, but individuals who are being murdered.

You may be really upset over this, too. But don't get discouraged—steps are being taken to stop the genocide. On Sept. 17, hundreds of thousands of people rallied across the world to draw attention to the ongoing conflict in Sudan and the need for the United Nations to send in armed forces. This is especially important because the Darfur Peace Agreement, signed in May between the government and the largest rebel group in the Sudan, has not stopped the violence.

I used to think nothing I did mattered, and still do sometimes, but there are things we can do. Visit the Web site SaveDarfur.org to send an e-mail postcard to President Bush, asking him not to turn a blind eye. Wear a green wristband or sell them at your school. (You can order them from SaveDarfur.org.) Ask people to make donations to humanitarian organizations (see list).

My synagogue is selling green wristbands to raise money and awareness. I saved up my allowance and donated \$200 to Jewish World Watch. One of its projects is to purchase solar ovens for the women of Darfur, which could spare them the danger of having to leave the protection of their villages to collect firewood. Two hundred dollars bought 10 solar ovens. When I learned this I felt like crying, to know that my contribution could make the lives of 10 families a little easier.

TO LEARN MORE

SaveDarfur.org

Genocide Intervention Network
www.genocideintervention.net

International Crisis Group
www.crisisgroup.org

Human Rights Watch
www.hrw.org/doc?pt=africa&c=darfur

BBC
news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/africa/2004/sudan/default.stm

Sleepless in Sudan (a former aid worker's blog)
sleeplessinsudan.blogspot.com



Sarah says that even though we live thousands of miles away, teens in Los Angeles can make a difference around the world.

It's just not funny anymore

I could really live without my classmates' constant interruptions

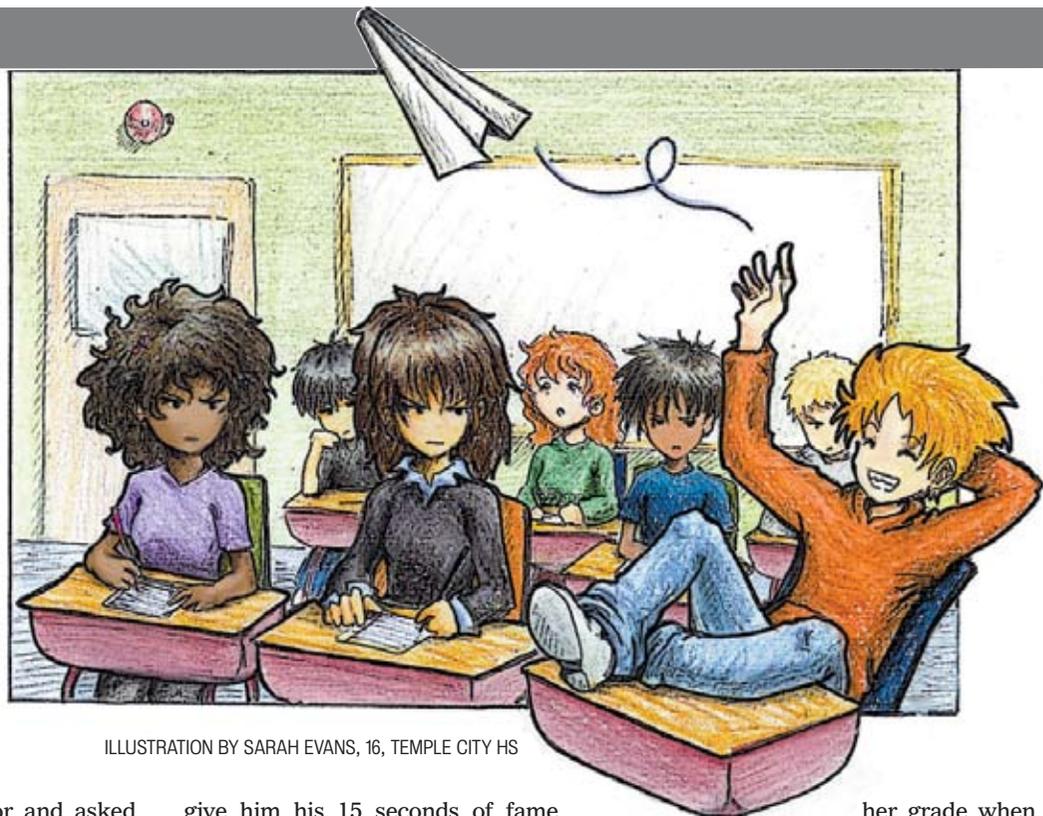


ILLUSTRATION BY SARAH EVANS, 16, TEMPLE CITY HS

By Shannon Matloob
16, BEVERLY HILLS HS

Every class has that person who makes witty comments to the teacher—comments that really have no point but that make the class laugh.

“Do you have any children?” asked a girl in my chemistry class early last year.

“Yes. And I have grandchildren,” the teacher replied. He seemed pleased to see that one of his students was actually concerned about his family.

“Can I marry your grandson?” When she asked this I thought that she had met his grandson before and thought he was attractive.

“Well, he’s 3.”

“That’s OK. It’s very Demi Moore-Ashton Kutcher.”

I’ll admit, that was a tad funny. By mid-October, she was the girl who said funny things that broke the silence of a boring class.

But by November, these comments were five times a class and my friends and I (the ones who paid attention to the teacher) were getting annoyed. She wasn’t funny. (Like the time my teacher said something about carbohydrates and then she blurted out, “Carbs are bad for you, Mr. K.”) She would take away time that we needed for review to tell the class another story. I wished there were an off button.

THEY’RE STARVING FOR ATTENTION

At my school these people are called “attention whores.” It’s like that girl on MySpace who has so many pictures of herself that it’s obvious she was in the bathroom taking the pictures until her

mom knocked on the door and asked her what she was doing. That’s a “camera whore.” Same with the person who posts these pathetic bulletins: “I just took a ton more pictures of myself! Feel free to leave a comment ... or a hundred! Thanks a bunch!” That’s a “comment whore.” An attention whore will do anything for attention—interrupt class, a meal or any conversation anywhere to say something absolutely stupid.

And I’m not the only one annoyed with attention whores. In my friend’s chemistry class this past summer, this one girl would say “uh-oh, hot dog” to EVERYTHING the teacher said. After he said, “This is a covalent bond,” she would say “uh-oh, hot dog.”

“This is an ionic bond.”

“Uh-oh, hot dog.”

My friend eventually got angry and told her to shut up. “Hot dog” girl did ... but only for the rest of that period. Attention whores never quit.

You may know attention whores by another name—class clowns. Class clowns do the same thing as attention whores, except class clowns are usually guys. The class clown in my chemistry class once tried to “fix the fan” by putting his finger in it. The cover of the fan was off, and I don’t know how sticking his finger inside it while it was moving was fixing it, but he did it anyway. When he realized having his finger in the midst of extremely fast-moving blades wasn’t as harmless as he thought, he let out a high-pitched scream and his face turned purple. The funny thing is, he wasn’t hurt. He got a minor electric shock. Naturally, we all turned around to see what was going on. He was either really, really stupid and actually thought he wouldn’t get hurt or he knew that we’d all turn around if he screamed and we’d

give him his 15 seconds of fame for being an idiot. Nobody is stupid enough to put his finger in a moving fan, so I’m going with the second one.

The worst thing about attention whores is that they’re not creative or original. They have their basic 10 stories that they use every year. They’re that person who keeps complaining about how much his/her accomplishments (varsity sports, AP classes or community service) created extra responsibilities for him/her that the rest of us couldn’t understand. After a while, it’s like copy and paste every single day.

WE NEED MORE STRICT TEACHERS

Despite my objections, I never say anything to an attention whore’s face. I’m too scared they’ll take it the wrong way and become my enemy. I can’t just go up to someone and tell her to shut up. She probably has a lot of friends who could make my high school career hell. Not only that, but after I made her the enemy, she’d only want to bother me more.

Attention whores mostly exist in classrooms with the type of teacher who won’t notice your bathroom break was 47 minutes. I had one teacher who was the epitome of a teacher who didn’t care. One day in the middle of the year, that teacher decided that all the “delinquents” who spoke out for no reason would have two points taken off their participation grade for every interruption. I thought, finally the most disruptive student would shut up and let us go through a lesson without hearing her voice. Boy, was I wrong.

She kept interrupting and the teacher did nothing. So I said to my friends, “I love how he doesn’t take points off

her grade when he just said he would.” Next thing I know, I have my name up on the overhead with a “-2” next to it. I was furious. After class I spoke with the teacher and explained to him I was only complaining about his hypocrisy. He said he’d add back the two points this time, but next time I’d have to speak with him if I had a problem. I agreed. Sometimes, the teacher is too oblivious to realize what’s going on and needs a little hint from a student to do something about it.

Thankfully, there are those teachers who know exactly what an attention whore is and they squash them in the beginning of the year. My math teacher sophomore year had a very good technique that I noticed some other teachers use. When someone would talk she’d stop everything and just wait for that person to stop talking. After a few cold stares the first few months, we all learned that her class was not one to use for attention seeking.

I’d much rather have the scary teacher with the class that doesn’t dare make a noise than the laid-back teacher with multiple attention whores. I guess silence in a boring class really isn’t that bad.



Shannon is going to try forgiving and hugging disruptive students this year.

What's the best way to deal with disruptive students?



I think a teacher should definitely not punish the whole class. But if it's one or two students that constantly do it, they should single out those students. The teachers should make them stay after class or do standards [writing sentences over and over] after class or during recess.

Daniel McKinney
15, LOYOLA HS



Some teachers like to yell a lot and that's not really effective. I have some teachers that like to humiliate students. People cry because of this one teacher. If you're passing notes in class she'll read it aloud and make up stuff.

Jisu Yoo
13, WILSON MS (GLENDALE)



If people talk in my math teacher's class, he picks on them and makes them answer math problems on the board. This makes you not want to talk anymore since the problems are hard. But mostly, people respect him enough not to talk. They can tell that he's passionate about his subject and that he truly wants us to learn what he's teaching.

Leira Marte
17, NOTRE DAME ACADEMY



I'm usually the one who makes the [disruptive] comments. It usually makes me stop if the teacher lets the class laugh and then moves on.

Poonam Mantha
16, ARCADIA HS



One time our Spanish teacher was so irritated by the behavior of a sarcastic kid in class that he put him in a box with holes in it so he could breathe and see but wouldn't talk. It was hilarious. It worked for about five seconds.

Angela Mang
16, ARCADIA HS



There's nothing you can do because he's going to do it every day. That's his personality. You should just ignore him.

Jovan Dillon
18, DUKE ELLINGTON CONTINUATION HS



My math teacher is very lenient. We have 36 kids in the classroom, so some students choose to sleep or listen to their iPods (because they know he can't slow down to yell at them), but the rest of the class chooses to pay attention because we respect him. He comes to school an hour early and stays an hour after in case we need help, and works out our homework himself so he can show us the steps on his computer.

Charlotte Toumanoff
15, MARSHALL HS



The teacher with the quietest class is a 5-foot-tall woman, who will scream at you or point you out. If you talk, she'll stop teaching. Everyone's afraid of her and no one says anything. She has a reputation for discipline, so no one even thinks about messing around in class.

Marcus Kazazian
17, DANIEL MURPHY CATHOLIC HS

Flu fighters

What you need to know about bird flu



PHOTO BY LIBBY HARTIGAN, MANAGING EDITOR

Nurses Sylvia Walker and Donna Chartrand of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health said a global outbreak of a dangerous strain of the flu is a concern.

By Alex Key

14, LOS ANGELES CENTER FOR ENRICHED STUDIES

and by Gabe Andreen

14, PILGRIM SCHOOL

Some media reports about bird flu make it sound like this huge epidemic that will take over the world. It's enough to make you feel like running and hiding. We are just entering the flu season now, and most of us don't know what to do to protect ourselves.

The first step is to learn what bird flu really is—and how it's different from the regular flu that comes every year. Bird flu is scary, but once you learn about it, it doesn't sound as bad. There are some simple steps you can take to protect yourself if this nasty flu comes to the United States. Below are our answers to common questions about bird flu based on our interview with Donna Chartrand and Sylvia Walker, two nurses from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. We also checked statistics from the World Health Organization.

What is bird flu?

Bird flu, which is also known as avian flu, is caused by a group of viruses that occur naturally among wild birds. Though wild birds can carry the flu without getting sick, if they pass it to domestic fowl like farm chickens, they can die. On rare occasions, the flu has been transmitted from birds to humans. This has only happened when there is

close contact between birds and humans, such as when people who are raising chickens allow them in the house.

The reason people are worried about bird flu is because scientists think that at some point, it could change into a strain that is contagious among people. At that point, the disease will spread easily from person to person, because people have little natural immunity. It could become "pandemic," meaning it would be a global outbreak of serious illness involving tens of thousands or millions of people.

The media sometimes confuses bird flu with pandemic flu. They are two different things. At this point in the game, bird flu cannot be classified as pandemic.

How close is bird flu to the U.S.?

So far, no Americans have been infected.

What are the symptoms of bird flu?

The symptoms of bird flu are similar to those of the seasonal flu—the type we normally think of when we think of the flu. Cough, sore throat, fever and fatigue are on the list. You may also experience some vomiting and diarrhea. "It will hit like a ton of bricks," said Donna Chartrand, a nurse from the L.A. County Department of Public Health.

How many people have died from bird flu?

There have been 252 cases of people getting bird flu since 2003, and of those, 148 people died, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Most of the cases were in Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and China, where many people raise birds.

Though flu shots offer some protection from the regular flu, there is no bird flu vaccine available for humans at this time.

How can I get the bird flu?

At the moment the only way you can contract the flu is from close contact with infected poultry like chickens, turkeys and ducks. This has not yet happened in the U.S. and is unlikely to happen because the U.S. poultry industry does not allow its birds outside where they might have contact with wild birds.

What will cause bird flu to become "pandemic"?

Right now wild birds can give the flu to each other. Because the flu occurs naturally in birds it does not hurt them. Wild birds can infect domestic birds like chickens, ducks or geese. The domestic birds may infect people or pigs.

For the flu to become pandemic, meaning it will spread throughout the world, it would have to mutate, and scientists think this is likely to happen at some point. If a person is infected with different strains of the virus at the same time, the viruses might trade genetic information in a process called "re-assortment." This could produce a new strain of the virus which can be transferred from human to human who are in close contact.

What effect would the pandemic flu have on L.A.?

Many people would be out of work or school because they're sick or they're taking care of a sick family member. Experts estimate that between 15 to 35 percent of the population would become ill. Medical facilities may not be able to accommodate all the people in need. Schools might be closed and public events might be cancelled to prevent transmission.

When will the pandemic flu come?

Scientists don't have exact dates for a pandemic flu but they believe it's inevitable. Like an earthquake, it's hard to predict.

What can I do to prevent getting sick?

You should get an annual flu shot, avoid people who are coughing and sneezing and wash your hands frequently. Once a pandemic flu comes in a big way, public events should be avoided. If you are exposed to a person with the flu, you should take antivirals which decrease the impact of the flu virus. If you get sick, avoid close contact with people and wear a mask to keep from passing the flu on to others.

Can chickens get the bird flu?

Yes, but they can only give the flu to you if you come into close contact with them.

Can I still eat poultry?

Yes, as long as you cook the meat or eggs well.

FOR MORE INFO

www.pandemicflu.gov
www.lapublichealth.org

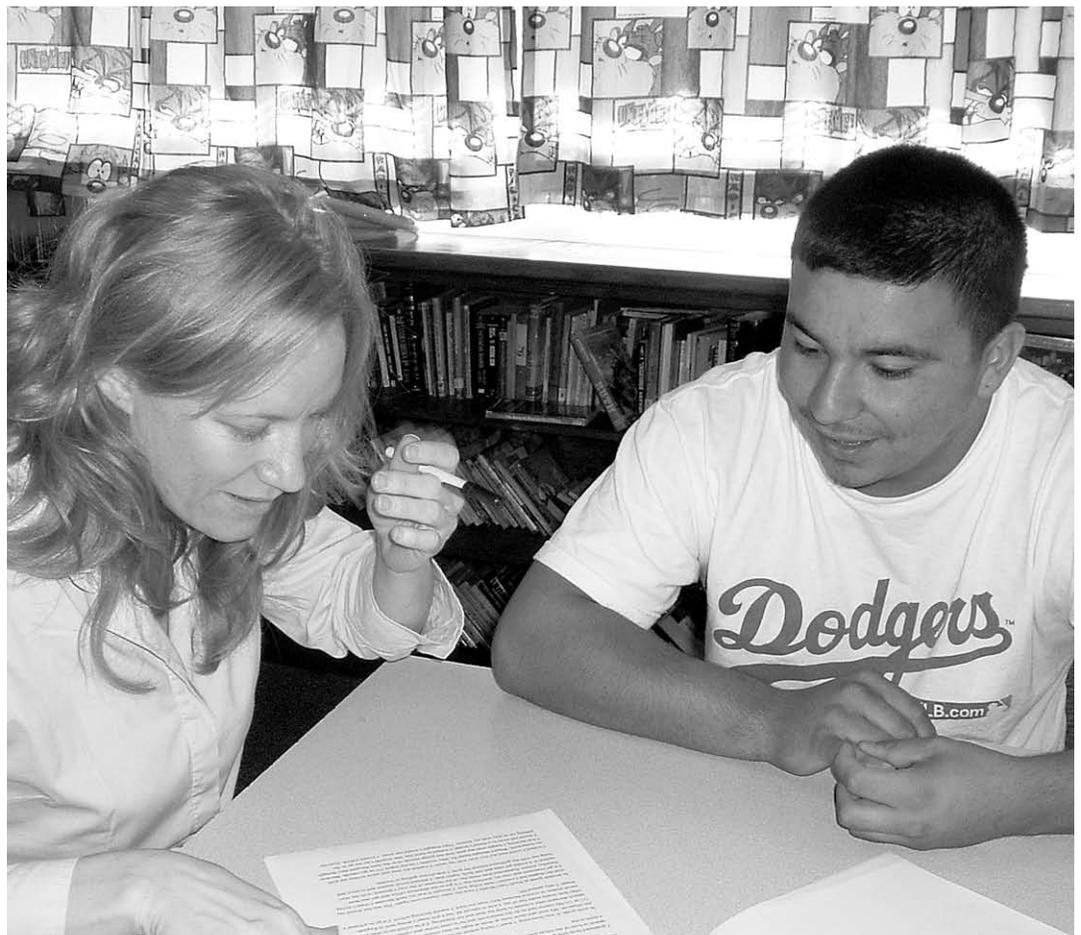
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Foster Youth Editor Amanda Riddle works with a writer on his story.

They got me through

My foster family gave me a stable home and a chance for a better future

By Teresa Hidalgo
18, SIERRA VISTA HS

Before I entered the foster care system, I thought that I would walk in the same footsteps as my cousin. I would live in poverty and probably get pregnant at the age of 15 or be addicted to drugs. But everything changed when I met my foster parents. I experienced the support of a caring family and learned about college. At the age of 11, I moved into my foster parents' home with two of my five siblings. It was my third foster home in one year. I thought, "Oh man, here we go again. I need to start all over again, new school, new friends and a new family." I was nervous, but as soon as we moved in, my foster dad made jokes. I saw that my brothers David and Ray were laughing and relaxed. Their house was beautiful and I had my own room. My foster dad helped my brothers unpack, and my foster mother helped me unpack, which is something my previous foster mothers did not do. This made me feel welcome. While my foster mother and I unpacked my clothes, she talked about her family and asked me questions about my family and what things I liked to do. It was important for me to live with a married couple because my parents never married, and it was something I wished they had done. I guess I thought that if they were married, there could have been more stability and maybe we could have been a cheer family. Before we went into foster care, my siblings and I had been living with my grandmother. How come we didn't live with my parents? Well, let me inform you. My mother

PHOTO BY THOMAS HICKEY, © DON BOSCO TECHNICAL INSTITUTE
Teresa's foster family was proud to watch her graduate from Sierra Vista High School. They are, from left, her foster father Armando González, Teresa, her foster mother Rosa González, and her foster sister, Diana Medina.



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Invite Amanda to speak at your school, group home or foster agency about writing for L.A. Youth.

Got questions?
Go to www.layouth.com and click on the Foster Youth link to learn more and read stories written by foster youth.

Go to
page 4
to read about a
boy who got help
at a group home.

Nursing offers plenty of jobs and a chance to help others

By **Selina MacLaren**
17, WEST VALLEY CHRISTIAN JR./SR. HS

Christi Hamilton is chairwoman of the Nursing Department at Pierce College, a community college in Woodland Hills. In this interview, she spoke about why teens should consider a career in nursing.

For high school students who will be entering the work force in five to 10 years, what's the outlook for nursing jobs?

Right now there is a huge nursing shortage so there's lots of jobs available. I would predict that we'll still have a nursing shortage because there are so many people retiring. The prediction is that there will still be a shortage in five years.

What kind of education is required for those interested in becoming nurses?

We have classes they have to take before they can apply to the nursing program. They can call Pierce and ask for the admission requirements for nursing. It depends on the student, how many units they take per semester. It can take two years. Then they submit an application to the nursing program—right now we have a two-year waiting time, but you can't submit the application until you've completed your prerequisites. The waiting list time varies and the amount of time it takes for the classes varies, too. Some go to summer school to speed the process up.

Pierce College's nursing program has a good reputation—what do you think has given the program this reputation?

I think it's the faculty. The nursing faculty tries very hard to teach the students to the best of their ability. Also, we have access to good hospitals. Nursing students have classes in the classroom and also in the hospital. We go to hospitals all over the [San Fernando] Valley. There are quite a few.

What do nursing students do while they are learning in the hospital?

We have four semesters for nursing—it's a two-year program—and in the beginning they learn how to be around

patients. They might help with a bath, or help a patient with eating, and then later they start giving treatments, so as they go through the nursing program, they learn how to be a nurse.

What is a nurse's income?

It's good money, but it varies quite a bit. Some work "per diem" without benefits and make more money—it's kind of an "as needed" program that pays well because nurses are in such a shortage. Pay varies a lot from hospital to hospital. Most nurses work three 12-hour shifts or five eight-hour shifts and this is considered full-time in most hospitals so they get full benefits, but that varies from hospital to hospital.

Please explain a day as a nurse.

It depends on what unit they're working on. For those that work in the medical/surgical unit, they go in, get an assignment of patients, assess the patients, give medications or treatments, might give tests—blood tests, x-rays, CAT scans. The nurse basically keeps an eye on the patient and sees if they need anything else and if there is anything the doctor needs to be aware of. A nurse can work in clinics, too, where they basically just work with a doctor.

What is the main difference between working in a hospital and working in a clinic?

Hospitals are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, so nurses work weekends, holidays, day, night, and most are given an assignment of patients and work with them. In a clinic they don't have those hours so they might not make as much money. If you work an evening or night shift you can make a "differential" (a higher amount of money). Clinic nurses might just be assisting a doctor.

If teenagers are squeamish about blood, how can they overcome that fear in order to become a nurse? Or do you think that they should evaluate that in their personality and realize that nursing isn't the right job for them?

We recommend that our nursing students become certified nursing assistants and work in the hospital. It gives them a lot of insight into what nurses and doctors actually do. While they are getting their prerequisites, I recommend that they work in a hospital, because there



Christi Hamilton, head of the nursing program at Pierce College, became a nurse because she wanted to help people.

is blood, and there is a lot more in some areas than in others. Some people might be able to overcome that but some might not.

What personality traits are important for a nurse to have?

A nurse has to be caring. A nurse has to want to take care of other people. They also have to be intelligent and have critical thinking so they can look at a patient assessment and decide what to do. Common sense is also important so a nurse can look at a situation and decide whether or not to call the doctor. We try to teach that through the classes.

What kind of college courses would a nursing student take?

Medical/surgical classes, since that's the backbone of nursing. Then there are what we call specialties—psychiatric, obstetrical, pediatric, and some hospitals have geriatric too, which is working with elderly. Pharmacology is huge because nurses give so many medications.

What should a student look for when researching nursing programs?

Some place close to their house, since they will be going to lectures and the hospitals. And because there are such long waiting lists, many students put their names into many schools and go to where they get in first.

What should a high school student do to prepare for the nursing program?

Just do well in their classes. Some of their nursing classes they can take while they take prerequisites. Medical terminology is a good class to take to understand medical terms. Physical assessment classes can help too. There are some people that I have met that take these classes while they are in high school. What students want to be aware of is that different schools have different admissions requirements. We've had students take psychology classes that aren't the ones we use for prerequisites, so they had to start over. Be sure of where you want to go and make sure you take the right classes.

Why and when did you decide to go into nursing?

I wanted to be able to help people. I decided when I was a teenager. I would see friends and family and wanted to know how to help them.

What was the most rewarding aspect of your nursing experiences?

Working in the emergency room, we were able to save people's lives.

How beneficial is the nursing field in the long-term? Is it a stable job that can be kept even as the nurses get older?

The one thing about nursing is that there are lots of places and areas to work in. Nursing is physically difficult, and as people get older it's hard to work long hours on the floor sometimes. Many people do work their entire lives in nursing because there are so many areas they can work in.

What are the most popular and least popular areas of the hospital to work in?

Well, it really depends on the person. If you don't like blood, don't work in the emergency room, where there is a lot of blood. I also worked in labor and delivery, and there is a lot of blood there too. Instead, try something like [working in a] clinic. Some people love working with kids, but some people hate to work with kids because they don't like sticking them with needles or they want to work with adults, who they can talk to more openly. The nice thing about nursing is that you can do nursing wherever you are. Anywhere in the United States, there are nurses, so you can get a job anywhere.

Community college info



PHOTO BY LIBBY HARTIGAN,
MANAGING EDITOR

Student nurse Miguel Gutierrez, 24, demonstrates the bandaging technique he learned from clinical instructor Charles Pierson at Pierce College. Gutierrez is a graduate of Chatsworth High.

How to become a nurse at a community college program

1. Select the community college where you'd like to study, and which program you want to pursue.

2. Complete the prerequisites (the classes you need to be eligible for the program you have chosen). The prerequisites may vary depending on the college you have selected. You may be required to achieve a certain grade point average.

As an example, before applying for admission to the Pierce College nursing program, students must complete the following prerequisites:

- Anatomy 1 and Physiology 1 or Physiology 8 and Physiology 9
- English 101
- Psychology 1 or Psychology 6
- Microbiology 1 or Microbiology 20
- Psychology 41
- Sociology 1 or Sociology 2 or Anthropology 102
- Speech 101
- Math competency
- Be trained in fire safety and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)

3. Apply to the program and wait to be accepted. Many local nursing programs have a two-year waiting list. Some students apply to more than one program to increase their chances.

4. Upon admission, complete the classes in the program along with clinical experience in a hospital. Though the required classes vary at each college, most nursing programs take two years.

Classes in the Pierce College nursing program include:

- Adult Health
- Pharmacology (medications and drug interactions)
- Geriatric Health (care of the elderly)
- Psychosocial Aspects
- Psychiatric Health
- Pediatric Health (care of children)
- Clinical experience

These Los Angeles-area community colleges offer degree programs in nursing, and many offer training for other medical professions as well.

CERRITOS COLLEGE

11110 Alondra Blvd.
Norwalk, CA 90650
(562) 860-2451
www.cerritos.edu
Training offered:
Dental assistant
Dental hygienist
Emergency medical technician
Medical assistant
Nurse
Pharmacy clerk
Pharmacy technician
Physical therapist assistant
Speech language pathology assistant

CITRUS COLLEGE

1000 W. Foothill Blvd.
Glendora, CA 91741-1899
(626) 963-0323
www.citruscollege.edu
Training offered:
Dental assistant
Nurse

COLLEGE OF THE CANYONS

26455 Rockwell Canyon Road
Santa Clarita, CA 91355
(661) 259-7800
www.canyons.edu
Training offered:
Emergency medical technician
Home health aide
Medical assistant
Nurse

EAST LOS ANGELES COLLEGE

1301 Avenida Cesar Chavez
Monterey Park, CA 91754
(323) 265-8650
www.elac.edu
Training offered:
Community health worker
Medical assistant
Medical secretary
Nurse
Respiratory therapist (Program offered in partnership with SMC)

EL CAMINO COLLEGE

16007 Crenshaw Blvd.
Torrance, CA 90506
(310) 532-3670 or (866) ELCAMINO (352-2646)
www.elcamino.edu
Training offered:
Nurse

Paramedical technician
Radiographer
Respiratory care assistant

EL CAMINO COLLEGE COMPTON CENTER (formerly Compton College)

1111 E. Artesia Blvd.
Compton, CA 90221
(310) 900-1600
www.compton.edu
Training offered:
Nurse

GLENDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

1500 N. Verdugo Road
Glendale, CA 91208-2894
(818) 240-1000
www.glendale.edu
Training offered:
Emergency medical technician
Nurse

LONG BEACH CITY COLLEGE

4901 E. Carson St.
Long Beach, CA 90808
(562) 938-4353
www.lbcc.edu
Training offered:
Nurse

LOS ANGELES CITY COLLEGE

855 N. Vermont Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90029
(323) 953-4000
www.lacitycollege.edu
Training offered:
Certified nursing assistant
Dental technician
Home health aide
Nurse
Radiographer

LOS ANGELES HARBOR COLLEGE

1111 Figueroa Place
Wilmington, CA 90744
(310) 233-4000
www.lahc.edu
Training offered:
Certified nursing assistant
Home health aide
Nurse

LOS ANGELES SOUTHWEST COLLEGE

1600 W. Imperial Highway
Los Angeles, CA 90047
(323) 241-5225
www.lasc.edu
Training offered:
Nurse

LOS ANGELES TRADE-TECHNICAL COLLEGE

400 W. Washington Blvd.

Los Angeles, CA 90015
(213) 763-7000
www.lattc.edu/
Training offered:
Nurse

LOS ANGELES VALLEY COLLEGE

5800 Fulton Ave.
Valley Glen, CA 91401
(818) 781-1200
www.lavc.edu/
Training offered:
Nurse
Respiratory therapist

MOORPARK COLLEGE

7075 Campus Road
Moorpark, CA 93021
(805) 378-1400
www.moorparkcollege.edu
Training offered:
Nurse
Radiologic technologist

PASADENA CITY COLLEGE

1570 E. Colorado Blvd.
Pasadena, CA 91106
(626) 585-7123
www.pasadena.edu
Training offered:
Dental assistant
Dental hygienist
Dental lab technician
Emergency medical technician
Medical assistant
Nurse
Radiologic technologist

PIERCE COLLEGE

6201 Winnetka Ave.
Woodland Hills, CA 91371
(818) 347-0551
www.piercecollege.edu
Training offered:
Drug and alcohol counselor
Nurse
Veterinary technician

RIO HONDO COLLEGE

3600 Workman Mill Road
Whittier, CA 90601
(562) 692-0921
www.riohondo.edu
Training offered:
Nurse

SANTA MONICA COLLEGE

1900 Pico Blvd.
Santa Monica, CA 90405
(310) 434-4000
www.smc.edu
Training offered:
Drug and alcohol counselor
Medical/dental front office assistant
Nurse's assistant
Nurse
Respiratory therapist

reviews:books

Teenage drama with a twist

By Charlene Lee
13, WALNUT HS

Despite its original and clever title, *Sloppy Firsts*, I looked at the girl with a magazine and phone on the cover and immediately anticipated another clichéd, teenage love story. Fortunately, I was proven wrong.

This novel by Megan McCafferty is not about a typical girl who wants to fit in. Not so aptly named Jessica Darling has the feisty personality that few girls yearn for and even fewer boys appreciate. Although well-liked and admired, no one ever made sense of the real Jessica Darling—the one who reworded yearbook titles from “Biggest Flirt” to “Most Likely to End Up on Jerry Springer.”

The story opens the day after her best friend, Hope, moves away, and 16-year-old Jessica is shattered. Now she is left to face the materialistic girls at school,

her father’s obsession with her high school running career, and an infatuation with a senior who doesn’t know she exists. Making references to pop culture from television shows like *The Real World* to magazines such as *Vogue*, Jessica relays her sophomore and junior year through her cynical thoughts in her journal and letters to Hope.

But Jess’s sarcasm can’t seem to escape her even during ordinary events, such as visiting the school shrink. She looks at the nameplate, “Professional Counselor,” and decides that the psychiatrist was “a few credits short of a legit PhD and probably couldn’t find enough evidence for her doctoral thesis to prove that hugs are indeed better than drugs.”

However, parts of her seem all too Disney: she has a GPA of 99.66 out of 100, is a track star with an unbreakable mile time, and has the champion jock’s undying love. But she still sees him as

her eighth grade boyfriend who would “blow his nose and point out all the colors in the tissue.”

Nevertheless, *Sloppy Firsts* is a brilliant example of how sincere a girl can be when not pressured by society. It also shows that revealing your emotions can have a positive impact. When Jess wrote an editorial that expressed what students were too timid to say about the constant lies and backstabbing, she unintentionally encouraged the student body to state their true feelings, which stopped the fake smiles and fished-for compliments.

After being “introduced” to Jessica, I am more honest with friends when they ask for my opinions. Jessica Darling is a perfect guide to understanding how true to herself and others a girl can be.



SLOPPY FIRSTS
By Megan McCafferty

A boy breaks out of his shell

By Brandy Hernandez
15, HAWTHORNE ACADEMY

This book is crazy good. There’s a lot of drama. Typical teenage things happen to the main character Charlie, a 15-year-old boy who keeps to himself until he meets two new friends.

You’ll really like this book because the characters are like people you meet every day. In the beginning Charlie’s a wallflower. He’s starting high school and he’s nervous. But then he meets Patrick and Sam, who are a brother and sister in 12th grade. He goes to parties with them and meets new people. He starts becoming more OK with who he is and he isn’t as shy. Before, the only friend he had was Michael, who had just died. Throughout the book, he’s wondering why Michael killed himself.

At one party Patrick gets high and Charlie finds Patrick and a football

player, Brad, making out. Another time, Charlie’s older brother and sister throw a party while their parents are away and a boy named Dave rapes a girl.

Charlie tells Sam he had a dream about her, but she says “I don’t want you to waste your time thinking of me that way.”

**The characters
are like people
you meet
every day.**

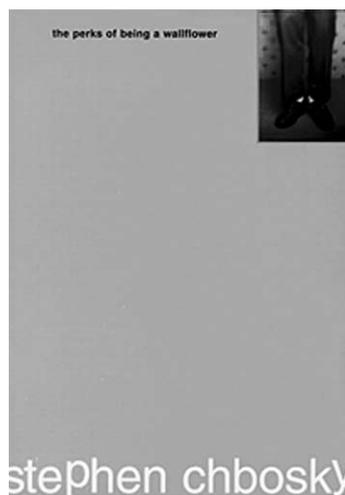
The book is letters written by Charlie to “Dear Friend.” I wondered who this person was, but he never says who he’s writing to and he doesn’t include a return address. I liked that he was writing to somebody and they couldn’t write

back. He just wants somebody to listen to him.

Charlie’s English teacher, Bill, believes in him. Bill gives him extra assignments and books to read because he thinks he’s really smart. Bill also gives him good advice. One time Charlie tells a story to Bill about his sister’s relationship with her boyfriend. He says the boyfriend slapped her. Bill tells Charlie the boyfriend shouldn’t have done that and calls his parents. He says, “Charlie, we accept the love we think we deserve.”

The one thing I wished was different was the ending. I feel there should be a second part because I was left wondering, what happened with him and Sam? What happened in school and with his family?

If you like books about teens in high school, then you’ll like this book. It’s really what goes on in people’s lives.



**THE PERKS OF BEING
A WALLFLOWER**
By Stephen Chbosky

reviews: music



CD: THE PIXIES Bossanova

By Katie Havard
16, BEVERLY HILLS HS

Now that they've dragged you back into class, and the shock of a new school year has worn off, the lazy days of summer seem both ancient history and impossibly distant future. If you find the bleak classroom walls closing in, call on the Pixies' 2003 album, *Bossanova*. It transports you back into an endless summer of SPF, chlorine, Otter Pops and sleeping until four in the afternoon.

With guitar that flows like a lazy, dreamy river, the song "Ana" is enough to take you back to July. "She's my fave/ Undressing in the sun/ Return to sea—bye/ Forgetting everyone/ Eleven high/ Ride a wave." The song "Allison" is reminiscent of a summer fling—dizzily intense and head-spinningly short. Something in the drums makes your heart start pounding in your throat. "All Over the World," "Blown Away" and "Dig for Fire" could be the soundtrack to a trip you took to any number of various beachy locales. They strike up sand-in-your-shoes memories, barbecue and climbing lifeguard towers at night.

The good thing about summer is that everything is hot and slow and unrushed, so even if you went to the beach and there was "Stormy Weather" (track 13) chances are you'd have a good time anyway. "Velouria" sums up this philosophy excellently. "We will wade in the shine of the ever/ We will wade in the tides of the summer/ Every summer/ Every summer."

Sigh, hit the books and wait it out. *Bossanova* can be your electric guitar seashell-to-the-ear until June comes around. Check it out, you can hear the ocean.

The song 'Allison' is reminiscent of a summer fling—dizzily intense and head-spinningly short.



CD: WITHIN TEMPTATION The Silent Force

By Tanya Vazquez
17, DOWNTOWN MAGNETS HS

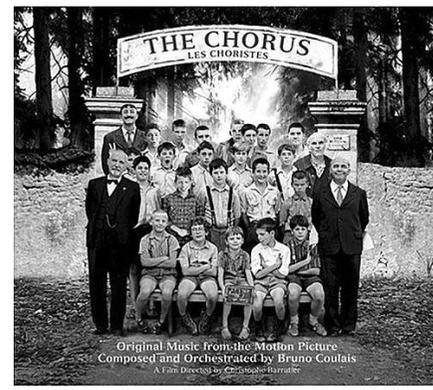
Within Temptation's *The Silent Force* is a definite must-have in anyone's collection no matter what your taste is. The Dutch sextet combines Goth, metal and a little bit of 14th Century Renaissance music. That mix goes perfectly with singer Sharon Den Adel's voice. Den Adel's voice is similar to Amy Lee, of Evanescence, but it has a higher pitched, angelic feel to it. The background choir gives the music kind of a church feel, unlike most bands which are all about screaming and yelling so loudly that you can't understand what they are saying.

This CD is filled with songs that express how a person is feeling deep inside, even love songs like "Angels," "Aquarius" and "See Who I Am."

The single "Stand My Ground," which was a hit in Europe, makes the album shine. Lyrics like, "Stand my ground, I won't give in/ No more denying, I've got to face it/ Won't close my eyes and hide the truth inside/ If I don't make it, someone else will/ Stand my ground," make the listener feel like they are a part of the song because they can relate.

When I listen to these lyrics, it reminds me of all those challenges that I've had to face. Den Adel's voice and lyrics bring out what you couldn't say yourself into words, expressing the way you feel perfectly. It makes me feel very triumphant, like I overcame it all.

This CD is filled with songs that express how a person is feeling deep inside.



CD: BRUNO COLAIS Les Choristes (The Chorus) Soundtrack

By Chris Lee
16, WALNUT HS

If you hate the classical music your dad turns on in the car, you might like something more contemporary. The soundtrack to *Les Choristes* (The Chorus) is a good example of nontraditional classical music that is appealing even to a KROQ junkie like me.

Les Choristes is a 2004 movie about a music teacher who touches the lives of troubled kids at a boarding school in post-World War II France. The soundtrack isn't hardcore choral or symphonic music; rather, it's a contemporary combination of the two, creating a gentle, unique melody. I don't understand a word of French, but there's no need to learn. Music translates and I can appreciate captivating music.

Bruno Coulais's music paints a classical landscape; an oboe roaming in solitude, interrupted by a dancing piano, contrasted by the bold lyrics of a boys' chorus and accompanied by soothing strings.

"Vois sur ton Chemin" (Look to Your Path), my favorite song, is the theme from the movie and it summarizes all the movie's suspense and emotions. At first, the simplicity of the song seems unimpressive, but underneath, complementary tenor and soprano lines produce richness and complexity. Unlike club songs where a heavy bass sets the rhythmic beat, the chorus sets the rhythmic syncopation, which lets the orchestra guide the melody to a peaceful glide.

Discovering new music opens ears to a new world, and this soundtrack took mine to a cha-teau in pastoral France.

Coulais's music paints a classical landscape; an oboe roaming in solitude, interrupted by a dancing piano.

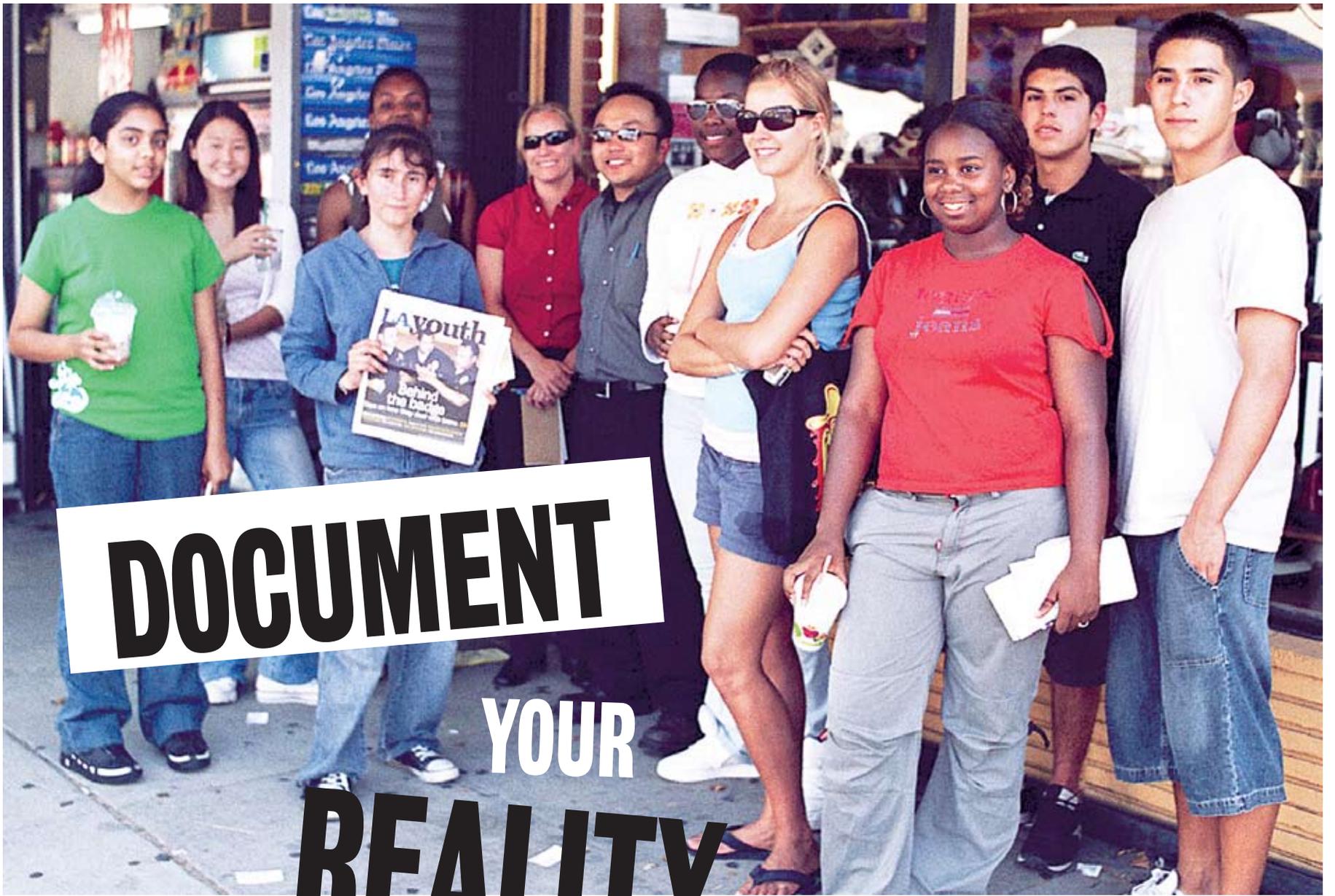
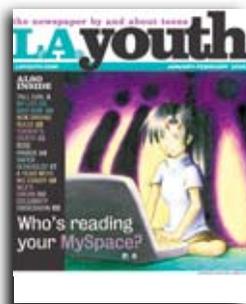


PHOTO BY LIBBY HARTIGAN, MANAGING EDITOR

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