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The Lion's Roar

Wednesday April 29, 2009

Liberty High School, Brentwood CA



16th Annual Mr. Liberty

By Hailey Parish
Editor-in-Chief & Staff Writer

Congrats to the 2009 Mr. Liberty, Jake Tickner! (Pictured above left) Twelve Liberty boys planned, practiced, and strutted their stuff for this year's competition. With a number of categories, several of the contestants went home with awards in their hands. Junior Jake Tickner was chosen by the ten elected judges as Mr. Lib-

erty, and was awarded free tickets for his junior prom along with his title.

Mr. Liberty is one of Liberty's many traditions. The competition started in 1993 with the goal of raising money for Liberty students in the need of financial aid. Each year, funds from tickets and donations in

voting boxes (over \$3,500) are given to the Liberty Student Emergency Relief Fund. Students experiencing financial needs, loss, house fires, bereavement, etc. are helped greatly by the money raised from Mr. Liberty. All of this is made possible by Ms. Summer Rodriguez and our Liberty Leadership class, who put in hours of work to make this night and fundraising possible.

MC'd by Liberty English teachers Beth Decker and John Romies, Mr. Liberty was an event that kept the crowd laughing and entertained. As one of the most popular and most attended Liberty events, this year's



Mr. Liberty brought on a full house; the PAC was completely full!

To start, the boys performed a group "glowstick" dance with event coordinators and leadership students Emily Agudo, Maryssa Fraley, and Michelle Reinmuth and dance choreographers Morgan Wagner and Shelby Pastor. Following the introductory dance was an introduction to the night's MCs, Mr. Romies and Mrs. Decker, dressed as Bret Michaels from *Rock of Love* and a *Rock of Love* contestant. *Mr. Liberty contd. on pg. 2*

On The Boards: A Night of Student-Directed One Acts



If you enjoy the performing arts, you should come to this year's On the Boards, a night of one acts directed by several Liberty seniors.

This night includes performances from shows such as: *A Servant of Two Masters*, *The Cask of Amontillado*, and *Down Came the Rain*.

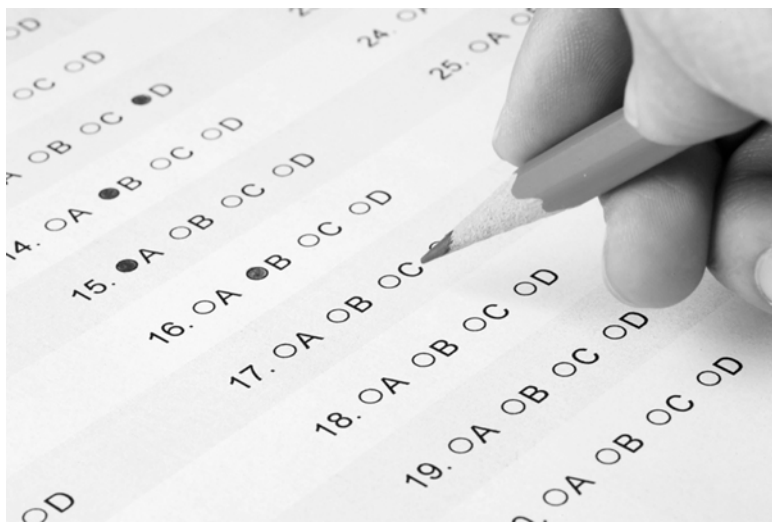


Time & Place
Friday May 1, 7:00 pm in the Liberty PAC

STAR Testing

By Brenda Duarte
Staff Writer

Some of the most important things that students have to do in school are take finals, exams, and state tests. One of those many exams is STAR testing,



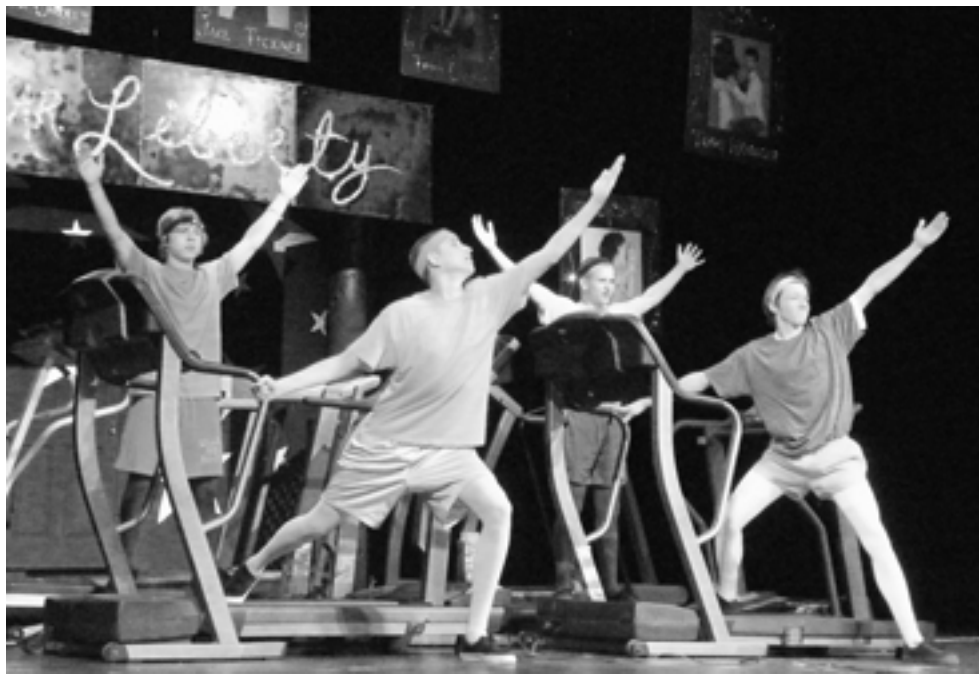
where students are challenged to show what they have learned in classes during the past years and what they know. STAR testing involves all the basic subjects, such as English, Math, Science, and History. Through this exam, schools are able to show the state what students learn from their teachers and themselves. These exams are taken once a year to evaluate students' progress as well as the teachers'. With what students'

results show, teachers have a better understanding of not only what the students need to improve on, but also how they may be able to improve their teaching methods for future students.

Mrs. Branstetter, who was kind enough to take some time away from her busy schedule, agreed on answering some of the following questions regarding the STAR testing system.

Star Testing contd. on pg. 3

Mr. Liberty contd. from pg. 1



Talent Winners: Dillon Richey, Jason Fancey, & Jake Tickner

tant. The MCs introduced contestants as they entered different parts of the competition, while keeping the crowd interested with their creative humor during transition times.

Each Mr. Liberty contestant entered the stage displaying their own creative style and giving the crowd a taste of what they're all about in their "intros." The boys all wore individually chosen tuxedos, donated by the local *His & Hers Formal Wear*. The winner for the intro/formal wear category was senior Jeremy Orkes, who performed a "nerd" dance with his escort and Liberty senior Veronica Rosa.

Following the boys' introductions were the interview and beachwear categories. Each contestant was to create a distinctive beach ensemble which had some significance to them and explain the significance while displaying their choices to the crowd and judges. The winner for the beachwear category was senior Wil McDonough, who used a motocross helmet with bull-horn handles as his "bathing suit," an appropriate choice for the professional motocross racer. While wearing their beachwear, each contestant was required to draw a random question from a hat in the "interview" category and come up with an answer to the question in a matter of only 10 seconds. Junior Jake Tickner was the winner of this category.

Once the intros, beachwear competition, and interviews were complete, the audience was given an intermission and a chance to cast their votes for the contestants of their choice. Each Mr. Liberty boy made a box which was to again reflect some aspect of their personality; audience members could cast their votes through money donations in these boxes. The people's choice award

winner, junior Dillon Richey, had the most money in his box at the end of intermission and was given the opportunity to keep his box's contents. The remaining money and votes were all donated to the SERF fund for Liberty.

Once intermission ended, the boys prepared to show the audience their greatest talent. The talents ranged from singing, dancing, and instrument-playing to acting, video-making, and criticism-taking. Winners for the talent category were: Jake Tickner, who performed the song *I'm Yours* by Jason Mraz while playing the piano and drums all at once, and Jason Fancey and Dillon Richey, who performed the treadmill-choreographed dance to *OK Go* in their neon tights and shorts.

The night ended with a final group dance, again choreographed and taught by Liberty students Morgan Wagner and Shelby Pastor. Special thanks were given out to Tech Crew members, Mr. Liberty coordinators, and businesses who helped with the production of this year's show before awards were given to the boys for each category.

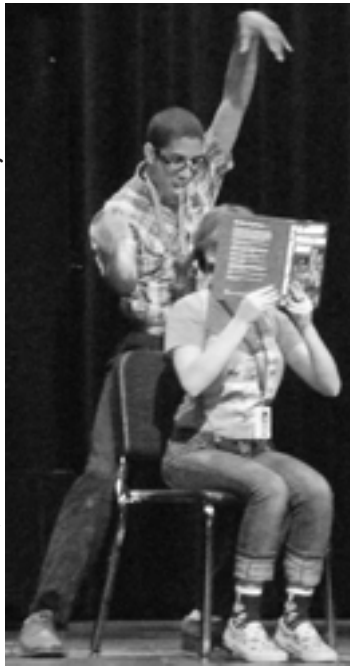
Junior Eric Promani was awarded Mr. Congeniality by his fellow contestants and the event coordinators. Senior Timmy Elwess was awarded 2nd runner-up, and Junior Dillon Richey was awarded 1st runner-up for Mr. Liberty by votes of the judges. The 2008 Mr. Liberty, Andrew Moore, was then brought up to the stage to give the final announcement that Jake Tickner was chosen as Mr. Liberty for 2009! Congrats to Jake and the rest of the contestants for putting on a hysterical show and helping raise money for the Liberty SERF fund.



Above, Mr. Liberty 2009 Jake Tickner and his mom & brother



Mr. Congeniality: Eric Promani



Intro/Formalwear Winner: Jeremy Orkes



Beachwear Winner: Wil McDonough



Mr. Liberty 1st Runner-up and People's Choice Award Winner: Dillon Richey



Mr. Liberty 2nd Runner-up: Timmy Elwess



Interview, Talent, & Mr. Liberty Winner: Jake Tickner



2009 Mr. Liberty Contestants:

- Cameron Banayat
- JJ Baczenas
- Christian Jenkins
- Travis Heninger
- Wil McDonough
- Dillon Richey

- Jason Fancey
- Timmy Elwess
- Jeremy Orkes
- Eric Promani
- Jake Tickner
- Spencer Newman

“What were you looking forward to about Star Testing week this year?”

“Just getting it over with. It’s my last year and I can’t wait.”

~Kelsi Ward

“The extra lunch time, I’m a slow eater.” ~Amanda Mathews



“Just enjoying the laid back feel of it all. If the weather is good, it’ll almost be like summer vacation!” ~ Bianca Colmenares



“All the cool doodles we can do after the test is over.” ~Beto Brakmo



“Not having to go to school in the morning!”

~ Cristy Hoggan



“Getting it over with.”
~ Simon Holmes



“I’m not looking forward to it. It’s just another test I have to take.”

~ Addy Painter

Star Testing contd. from pg. 1

Q&A:

Brenda Duarte: “Mrs. Branstetter, what would you say is the main reason that we students take the STAR Testing?”

Mrs. Branstetter: “The STAR testing is a message to academic achievements and to help evaluate how schools are teaching students.”

BD: “What is the most difficult part of STAR testing?”

Mrs. B: “The most difficult part of STAR testing varies from student to student. Each student has his/her own subject that they may not do so well in, and that subject could be the most difficult to them. There is no one right answer, because what can be easy for one student, can also be difficult for another.”

BD: “How are teacher’s affected by the student scores?”

Mrs. B: “The testing scores of the students really don’t affect the teachers specifically. It’s only a method of knowing what is needed to help improve the students academic test scores.”

BD: “What can a student do to prepare themselves for STAR testing?”

Mrs. B: “Well, there was a letter that was sent home to show students

and parents how they may be able to prepare for the STAR testing week.”

The letter has stated nine different things that a student could do to prepare for STAR testing. Those nine things were:

1. Getting a good night sleep.
2. Eating a healthy breakfast.
3. Getting to school a little earlier than usual.
4. Know what classroom to go to for your testing.
5. Finish any type of personal issues before entering the exam.
6. Pace yourself.
7. Remember test taking tips reviewed by teachers.
8. Think positive.
9. Lastly, relax and do your best!

These tips are a great way of preparing, so during April 28, 29, 30 through May 1, one may want to consider doing at least some of the tips listed above. There’s a good chance that it may help a student improve in some way on the tests.

As the STAR testing closes in, it is in all your benefit to prepare and try to keep in a positive mind, so the testing doesn’t seem so difficult. In reality, this test will not only judge students in their knowledge of various topics, but also what is needed to be learn to improve themselves.



Graduates of Distinction

By Karleigh Craig & Alex Belt
Staff Writers



Liberty District Superintendent Dan Smith with Liberty High Associate Principal Ilene Foster (on right)

On Friday April 3rd, while the majority of Liberty Students were in their 3rd period classes, there was a special assembly taking place in the Performing Arts Center. Three Liberty graduates were recognized for excelling in their field and being influential within the community. Our three special guests were Dr. Nancy DeGuire, Mr. Richard Mello, and Mr. Manuel Vilchez. Visiting La Paloma,

Freedom, and Heritage as well as Liberty High School, the Graduates of Distinction were able to share their stories with students and answer any question they may have regarding their futures. Overall the event was a huge success for both the students and the graduates. The following is a little detail of who the guests are, and a bit about their accomplishments.

Dr. Nancy (Gemetti) DeGuire: Recognized in the area of Education

Dr. DeGuire graduated from Liberty High School in 1982. She attended Los Medanos College and transferred to the University of the Pacific where she graduated with a pre-pharmacy major in 1986. She completed her Doctor of Pharmacy in 1989 after attending the University of the Pacific, Thomas J. Long School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. Over the course of her career she has

Graduates contd. on pg. 4

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Graduates contd. from pg. 3

worked in local community Long's Drug Stores and returned to the University of the Pacific as the Director of Postgraduate Professional Education at the Thomas J. Long school of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. Her work has included hundreds of hour of training and numerous contributions to pharmacy publications. She is a member of the California Pharmacists Association and the Pharmacy Foundation of California.

**Rick Mello:
Recognized in the area of Business**

Rick Mello graduated from Liberty High School in 1976. He graduated from Utah State University in 1980 with a Bachelor of Science, Journalism. He has spent 27 years working in intercollegiate athletics and is currently serving as the Associate Commissioner, Sports Administration and Championships Sun Belt Conference. Additionally, he is a member of the NCAA Division 1 Championship Cabinet and President of the Humane Society of Greater Miami. He has worked to provide private funding and implement new sports programs in several colleges and universities.

**Manuel Vilchez:
Recognized in the area of Public Service**

Manuel Vilchez graduated

from Liberty High School in 1949. He attended Modesto Junior College and joined the U.S. Navy in 1951. He served in combat during the Korean War. After returning to civilian life he graduated from Diablo Valley College. He began his career in the Brentwood Post Office as a part-time clerk in 1954; he worked his way up through the ranks and became De Facto Post Master in 1965. He was officially designated the Brentwood Postmaster in 1970. Mr. Vilchez has been an active community member and participates in the Brentwood Lions Club, American Legion and currently serves on the Redevelopment Agency Project Committee.

“It was interesting to hear about these people that have been in the same situation as us here at Liberty that have gone on to help their community,”

stated Alyssa Shepard, grade 11, about the assembly. All in all, the meeting turned out quite successful, even earning the students who went recognition for their good behavior, by the staff in attendance.

Whose Line is it, Anyway?

*By Jeremy Orkes
Staff Writer*



The laughter began at 7:00 PM on Thursday April 16th in the Liberty Performing Arts center when P.H.A.T. Chaos presented the year's second Improvapalooza, a “Whose Line Is It Anyway?” themed performance.

For weeks the improv team, including seniors Shaelie Schwiters, Travis Heninger, JJ Baczenas, Maryssa Fraley and Jeremy Orkes; juniors, Eric Promani, Harleigh Ford, and Trey McEachin; freshmen, Will Bennet, and Danny Arnott; and team captain and sophomore Alex Pierce, practiced intensely to ensure that every game was played to perfection.

Many of the games played were old favorites, such as the tra-

ditional “senior farewell” game, Mousetraps. In this game each senior team member must act out a scene

while having to walk blindfolded over a stage of mousetraps.

A newer game played was the team favorite: Brute Wayne. In this game, three players must act out a scene, one player saying only one word sentences, another saying only three word sentences, and the last being the moderator (able to speak freely).

It has been a good long year for P.H.A.T Chaos, with two successful Improvapaloozas, one along side The Heritage High Improv Team. If you love the art of improvisation, don't be afraid to try out for next year's team! Auditions will be held early next school year.

Varsity Baseball!!!!

*By Evan Dean &
Sarah Kellner
Business Manager & Staff Writer*

The long awaited season has begun! Yes, baseball has arrived. Cleats hit the field January of 2009 for the elimination process, resulting in 14 of Liberty's finest players creating the varsity baseball team.

“You have to be mentally tough to play Liberty High School baseball,” stated Colby Vis, senior and two-year veteran.

So far the boys have had three wins and eleven losses. “You have to be mentally tough to play Liberty High School baseball,” stated Colby Vis, senior and two-year veteran of the Varsity Baseball team. The team has practices every day starting at 3:30PM.

For some, being involved with high school baseball has played a major role in determining their future. “I want to play college baseball at Sacramento State College,” stated Cameron Juarez, senior. Juarez, who recently switched from Heritage High School to Liberty High School, mid year; he continues to add, “Liberty baseball is a lot different than Heritage.” For oth-



“I want to play college baseball at Sacramento State College,” stated Cameron Juarez, senior.

ers, it goes beyond the sport itself. Some like Vis, hope to pursue a sports-related career like “sport's marketing.”

The varsity team has worked very hard and continues to grow as a community of athletes, striving as one. New to the team, Logan McMahan, junior stated: “I feel really excited about playing on the varsity team and just being able to play the sport for another season.” Come out to the next game on April 30th at Deer Valley High school at 4 P.M, and support the Varsity Baseball team.



Junior Varsity Baseball

By Kelsi Ward
Staff Writer

For this year's season of Junior Varsity baseball, Liberty gained a coach who is new to the school, Paul McHenry. The new coach has been coaching baseball teams for ten years now, and has coached travel ball for four years, taking three teams to Nationals.

Although this is the coach's first year coaching a team for Liberty, coach Paul has been a coach to some players of the J.V team before, during the summer for a travel ball team called the Sharks. When asked how it's been moving from a traveling team, to a high school team, McHenry stated, "All players who play travel ball want to play at the highest level and their commitment to becoming the best they can be is much higher, whereas some

high school players are just happy to be playing with their friends."

As the season is drawing to it's end, which will be May 14th, coach explains that when the season started, his goal was to be a positive influence on his players lives.

Michael Alegria, a sophomore on the team, has a positive outlook on how they've done this season, saying, "I think we have started out alright, but as we have worked harder and longer, we have gotten better and will continue to get better."

"I think that at the end of the season this year, the players on the team will be prepared to surprise some other teams next year and challenge them for a league title," says Paul, when asked what he thinks the players will be like at the end of the season. Games for the rest of the season are on Tuesdays and Thursdays, until May 14th.

The Water Lions Have "No Limits"

Written By Brenna Dillman
Staff Writer and Co-editor



This years 2009 Liberty swim team has started off their season with a splash! The water lions first three dual meets against Antioch, Pittsburg, and Freedom were successes. All four Liberty teams: J.V. boys, Varsity boys, J.V. girls, and Varsity girls, blew away the competition. The teams most recent meet against Heritage resulted in a close win for the Varsity girls who beat Heritage by just 2 points.

Many people may not know the effort that these swimmers put into their sport everyday. The team proves to be hard working and dedicated, living up to there motto this year of: "No Limits." All four teams practice for 2 hours, Monday through Friday, spending 30 minutes doing "dry-

land" training, which includes: running, medicine balls, and jump ropes. The lions then hit the water, doing an average of over 3,000 yards a day. Practices are led by head coach, Erica

Pantle, and assistant coach, Cindi Coats. Both coaches are looking forward to a good season, and have high hopes for winning, despite the teams small numbers.

"The Varsity Girls are looking for a bval title, since they haven't had one since 2003, and I know all of us have our game face on," stated Mo Du-long, one of the teams captains.

This years four team captains are: Junior, Mo Du-long, Senior, Brenna Dillman, and Seniors, Ben Keisic and Jacob Boyer. The Captains lead "dry-land" excersices and help motivate the team to be well bonded and put in their best efforts. Mo Du-long said about the team, "This season has been like no other. Swimming for the most part is an individual sport, but with the goal to win league, we've all come together to win together." The captains seem to be successful in keeping the team close. The team stays well bonded by doing out of the water activities, such as a team

Varsity Softball

By Soledad Lopez
Staff Writer



Shelby Raposa throws a strike!

The girls' varsity softball season started at the beginning of March. There are thirteen girls on the team being led by coach Rich Barrios, whose thirty years of coaching has lead to a three and three season with twelve and three over all.

Shelbie, Donnielle, Kim, Marissa, Justine, Victoria, Chrissy, Brooke, Andy, Kayla, Lizzy, Brittney, Nicole, and Kelsey with team captains Shelbie and Donnelle make up this years varsity team.

This year will be the last year both captains will be playing for Liberty High being that they are seniors. "I have been playing softball since I was seven. I feel like I'm playing so much better because of my senior year. I am pitching every game!" said Shelby, one of the team captains.

The girls practice everyday after school from four to six. They work on their hitting, fielding, and running. Team captain Shelby says,

"Our goal at every game is to stay focused and to play to the best of our ability...that's what we strive for."

The team faces Deer Valley, Heritage, Antioch and Freedom. The girls won their first game against Deer Valley's team, two to one. Antioch High School was their first loss in an intense game that ended in a six to two loss. The season will be over at the end of May.

"I believe that we lost that game because we have already won ten games," says captain Shelby, "...if you lose at least you know you did your best."

"I plan on attending Cal State Hayward and hope to get a scholarship for softball. I would love to play for Loyal Mary Mort in So-Cal. If there's anyone I look up to in the softball, it would definitely be Jenny Finch. She is a pitcher for the U.S team... she is amazing and an inspiration," Shelby shares.

"This is the best year I've had had so far. I've been getting along with the team and coaches having had such a strong drive to win staying forced. The best advice I could give to next year's team would be to keep a strong mind up, we need to keep each other up because it's easier to win when we support each other. Even though Coach might yell and get mad, it's all for you're best because he knows your ability to play." The team is tight-knit and continuing with a great season.

breakfast, done during spring break, a team desert done after practice, and other out of practice activities. Jacob Boyer, another captain stated, "The team this year is really awesome, the

best group I've seen in my 4 years, everyone is motivated and wants to win."

The swim season started at the beginning of February, and will soon come to a close, with the teams last dual meet against Deer Valley at the Brentwood Family Aquatic Center (BFAC), this Friday May 1st. The team is pumped up and ready for a win, but needs the support of their classmates, so come out and cheer them on. The following Friday, May 8th, will be the first day of the BVAL League meet, followed by Finals the next day. The BVAL league meet will be held all day Friday and Saturday at Heritage High School, anyone is welcome to come cheer on

their fellow lions for free. The team is ready to go and is continuing to push themselves, remembering their motto: "No Limits."

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Track and Field

By Amanda Mathews; Staff Writer

With the track season in full bloom since March, student athletes have been working exceptionally hard in all their events. The 51 boys and 38 girls involved have been persevering since January when conditioning prepared them for the year and introduced them to the intensity of the sport. The recent heat has these students facing an even bigger challenge than normal, yet they come through with fair scores and great effort.

The Woody Wilson Invitational took place Friday, April 17th at UC Davis. Junior Erica Williams was the only student to qualify and did remarkably well at the event. With a 15'11.75" on the long jump and 34'8" on the triple jump, she represented Liberty proudly.

The most recent meet was the Pittsburgh Dual on Wednesday, April 22, 2009. At the meet at Heritage April 8th, Erica Williams placed 1st, with Alexa Holm in 2nd and Yessy Martinez in 3rd in both the long jump and triple jump. Derek Brown placed second in the long jump and Cam-

eron Banayat placed second in the triple jump. Pole vaulting was supported with Banayat placing fourth.

On the topic of the difficulties, sophomore Sara Weatherby simply says:

"Following through with the criticism I get from my coaches is difficult."

Paola Ramirez, freshman, stated: "As hard as track can be sometimes with the practices and meets, you make so many good friends and it really does a lot for you." The students who are doing the extracurricular activity for the first time feel that the sport is unlike anything else.

"You keep in shape, it's fun, you can do what you want, and it's a team sport, but... not." Sophomore Kelsie Provan answered with a smile when asked what she enjoyed about track. With the season ending for most in the 2nd week of May with League championships and June 5th for others with State championships, there's not much time left. Coach Ambrose commented on the season with: "It's going pretty rough right now for us because we have a lot of young kids and not very many returners, but we have some really talented people on board and we should have a good showing at league. Some people really stand out and hopefully that will show with League and possibly even State championships."

When I first saw the book's description it took me back a little and I wasn't quite sure I would want to read it; "The undead can really screw up your senior year... Marrying a vampire definitely doesn't fit into Jessica Packwood's senior year 'get-a-life' plan. But when a bizarre and incredibly hot new foreign exchange student named Lucius Vladescu shows up, claiming that Jessica is a Romanian vampire princess by birth—and he's her long-lost fiancé. Armed with newfound confidence and a copy of *Growing Up Undead: A Teen Vampire's Guide to Dating, Health, and Emotions*, Jessica makes a dramatic transition from average American teenager to glam European vampire princess. But when a devious cheerleader sets her sights on Lucius, Jess finds herself fighting to win back her wayward prince, stop a global vampire war—and save Lucius's soul from eternal destruction." The description wasn't very impressive but when I read it, it was actually a great book, filled with love and excitement, not at all what I was expecting. It just goes to prove don't judge a book by its cover or its description.

A Different Kind of Vampire

By Taylor Daugs

Staff Writer

Are you obsessed with vampires? Is Edward Cullen your true love? Well, there is a hot new vampire in town. In Beth Fantaskey's book, Jessica's guides to dating on the dark side, Jessica, who was adopted by an American, vegetarian, hippie couple from her Romanian family; never wants to be reminded of her past in Romania but when a stuck up, gorgeous, Romanian teen vampire comes to the U.S. to tell Jessica she is a vampire princess destined to marry him her past comes back fast into



her life. And she eventually learns that she needs to be in Romania to keep her vampire family alive.

This book is a wonderful depiction of a teen life, granted that Jessica is told that she is a vampire instead of something true teens relate to, it can still be related to teen's lives. She goes through difficult changes within her body, becomes jealous and has major relationship problems. Lucius, the Romanian teen vampire is dreamy, romantic and spectacular in every way.

Boys' Golf

By Corrine Allan

Staff Writer

This year's LHS boys' golf team tees off to a great start this season. The boys were undefeated for their first eight games, one of those being played against rivalry team Deer Valley. The team practices hard for two hours every Monday through Thursday at the Discovery Bay Country Club. This being his eighth season coaching, Coach Curtis Cun-



ningham has high hopes for his team, "We are 9-1 now and if we keep it up I think we will win league," says Cunningham.

"It's been a big step for our team..."

-Cody Robinson on the Lion's current record

a strong record of 12.-2. A few weeks of rough rain and strong winds didn't keep the boys off the course though: "We had an epic day at the Antioch tournament, hurricane-like rain was killin' us that day," says sophomore Paul Krey. During the season, an unexpected incident had occurred during practice time: "We were at practice in Discovery Bay and there were these kids in their backyard talking [crap] to us...we were going to do something about it but they came out with shovels!

It was hilarious," says Krey. With some abrupt weather and a small altercation, the boys have played hard to keep up the wins and advance on in their almost perfect season. Some say certain games were definitely easier than others, but everyone agreed that their biggest competition and most exciting matches were against Deer Valley High.

After all of last year's senior players left, the boys were forced to step it up this season and play to their fullest potential. "It's been a big step for our team because we only had one senior, and we had to build our skills all year long," says senior Cody Robinson. With only three losses, the boys played their final game on Tuesday, April 21 against Freedom High to wrap up their season with a final record of 12-3.

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Who Watches the Watchmen?

By Cameron Speer
Staff Writer

Hollywood has been trying to film Watchmen, often called the greatest graphic novel ever, for more than twenty-four years, when it first hit bookshelves. After switching film companies numerous times due to financial problems and a recently famous legal dispute between WB and Fox, it's finally leaped from it's colorful pages to the silver screen. Alan Moore, the writer most responsible for Watchmen's content, has vehemently disowned it, having a history of loathing his material's adaptations, including the disappointing flop "League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen" and the successful, but still inaccurate "V For Vendetta". So how has perhaps his best work, "Watchmen", fared at the cinemas, at the mercy of viewers not only unfamiliar with the source material but likely unprepared for it's highly unusual material? I'll recap.

The prized director's seat for "Watchmen" ended up landing in the hands of Zack Snyder, who has managed only two films so far; a remake of "Dawn Of The Dead", and the sword-and-saddle adaptation of Frank Miller's "300". So he's gotten his feet wet as a director, with a mild fanbase, but what, aside from being another avid fan, convinced him that he had the experience to successfully adapt what has long been claimed impossible to film? Is the nonlinear format meant not more for Quentin Tarantino, the complexity for Christopher Nolan, the darkness for Alex Proyas? Watchmen's readers know that everything about it is tackled with immeasurable intricacy, right down to every spoken phrase and each detail in the background, literally transcending forms of media with mastery while kept still to behold for hours of time. Keeping this in mind, Moore, and several fans of "Watchmen" (myself included), had plenty of reason to be doubtful in a film's potential to capture this artistry and keep the impact intact.

The film has kept undeniably faithful to the source material, much thanks to the screenplay penned by David Hayter (the first draft conceived over eight years ago, given Moore's personal blessing) and Alex Tse. There is still much that is left out or reduced to a cameo or easter egg, but the most important parts fully remain. "Watchmen" takes place in a large portion of the 20th century, interweaving American historical events with some interesting interpretations. It starts in 1985, when a government-sponsored superhero, The Comedian, is murdered in his own apartment. Rorschach, the only illegal vigilante who remains active, investigates his death, believing there may be a conspiracy to kill all retired superheroes. In the midst of all this, President Richard Nixon, re-elected

a couple times out of a turn of historical events, tries to negotiate the avoidance of nuclear war with Russia.

Over the past two decades, a few movies have challenged the superhero genre; "Darkman", "Unbreakable", "The Dark Knight" - but none of them have twisted the idea so far as this. Watchmen takes the depth and concept of last year's Batman spectacular and pushes them to the maximum limit. Unfortunately, "Watchmen" is so esoteric that it may not sit well with general audiences; superheroes usually appeal more to younger viewers, who not only are unfamiliar with the timeline this movie covers, but shouldn't be subjected to the alarming amount of sex, language and gory violence found here. The historical significance may sit well with an older crowd, but in this category the initial impression of the film's concept would raise more eyebrows than curiosities. Still, amidst the theoretical odyssey and downright strangeness, this film is definitely worth watching, even if just once.

Those who visit cinemas expecting an escape from reality will be very uncomfortable here. Sure, a glowing blue man with unbelievable powers is hardly realistic, but the topics usually avoided by films here are. Even the most incurable optimist may find themselves whimpering in their mind at the strong suggestions this film provides. The themes, messages and morals are present; they're just less obvious to notice than in several comic book brethren among the morbid symbolism and ambiguity. Though the mention of any superhero is usually a family household name, this unflinchingly faces rape, child abuse, population control, political corruption - and that's just barely scratching the surface. "Watchmen" fearlessly confronts many questions; what would life be like if superheroes were real, and what impact would they have on history? At what cost are the sacrifices for the greater good? Is it even possible to ever "save the world"? Only one of the six protagonists even have any powers, but they're all just as human as any of us.

The deceased Comedian is a nihilistic sociopath who uses vigilantism as a moral excuse to enact sadistic murders, and paints his perception of reality with dark humor. Rorschach's entire life has transformed him from a traumatized freelance detective into a guilt-ridden killer of killers. Nite Owl, once a fearsome, courageous figure comparable to Batman, is now overweight, suffers erectile dysfunction, and finds companionship only in his elderly predecessor. Ozymandias,

the smartest man alive, ponders a solution to the threat of nuclear war; a problem much too big for a handful of masked men to handle. The Silk Spectre is seeking a sense of identity, pressured to carry on her mother's legacy. Her lover, Dr. Manhattan, is a godly freak accident of science who mourns the loss of his own humanity and feels isolated from the rest of the world.

All of these characters are focused on equally, detailing to some extent why and how they became costumed crimefighters and enlightening us as to how time, and the Keene Act strictly outlawing their activities, have impacted their lives. But some seem to stand out more than others. Jackie Earle Haley (nominated for an academy award for his role in "Little Children", from which he's reunited with Nite Owl's actor Patrick Wilson), who plays Rorschach establishes a presence that commands the viewer's attention, providing an eerie air of his merciless attitude and all-or-nothing beliefs. Jeffrey Dean Morgan's (The Comedian) performance is also exceptional; while not as similar to Heath Ledger as his character's name implies, he uniquely commits heinous, unspeakable acts while somehow being impossible to hate. The only ones who seem a bit out of place are Malin Akerman (Silk Spectre) and Matthew Goode (Ozymandias); they have their shining moments, but appear stiff for large portions of the film.

Visually, the film is amazing, filled with spectacular special effects, glorious set designs and engaging costumes (some of which were begrudgingly changed from the original material, but seem to somehow fit better on screen). The money put into them was wisely saved by filling the cast with C-list actors instead of splurging it on big names and marring the effort necessary for other portions. Though I will admit, this is sometimes offput by the camera's tendency to seem trapped in fixation and several scenes being led - or dragged on - by narrative speeches straight from the book. Unless one is a fan of the book or open-minded, they may find these two a little irritating and distracting. While the action scenes are often scarce, they are jam-packed; bone-crunching, flesh-ripping violence often tatters the screen in quantities and exposure comparable to the latest "Rambo". I was also delighted to find that the R-rating lent itself to taken opportunities for exciting martial arts choreography, often



desired but left out in several Batman films and others about superheroes who supposedly possess them.

Snyder reused the copious inclusion of slow-motion action sequences seen all over "300", but most of the time in "Watchmen", they are appropriately placed. The only other thing that seems to not quite fit, for some, is the soundtrack. The composed score appropriately decorates major events, but could be much better at other times. Music from various label artists are input, some having been referenced or quoted in the book, but the other pieces are unexpected and perhaps out of place. An exception is Bob Dylan's "The Times Are Changing" in the memorable opening credits scene. Though just a bit longer than "The Dark Knight" and encompassing many of it's themes in even darker, deeper forms, the pace is much different, and the quality of the overall experience remains the same. It's easier to sit through if you expect an epicurean murder mystery instead of a cheeky action-fantasy spectacular. As a product of it's generation, "Watchmen" is impossible to alter without losing a big piece of what has made it so great; it cannot be updated to the present day like "X-Men" (the script of which is also written by Hayter), or the story significantly changed like "Hellboy". There is a brand new subplot which may have unnecessarily eradicated many of the original elements that were replaced. It results in a different ending, but the outcome, messages and impact are still the same. I personally prefer the ending in the book, as, in my opinion, it lends itself to more philosophical interpretation.

Despite many qualities that might deterr the general viewer, I still thoroughly enjoyed "Watchmen", and look forward to seeing it as many times as I can. Even if I were not a fan of the book, I probably would have had the same experience. It's one of the most inspirational, conformity-challenging and thought-provoking cinematic experiences since the original "Matrix" film. At the same time, it's just as brutally unrestrained, humanistic and emotionally touching as "Oldboy". In all it's socially unorthodox symbolism, unexpected turns and psychological trials, it fairly equates to yet adequately summarizes what is arguably the greatest comic book ever. While certainly not a movie for everyone, I consider Watchmen, in both film and book form, to be diamonds in the rough, standing against expectations like a candle in the wind.





Mr. Don Lopez

*By Corrine Allan & Kelsi Ward
Staff Writers*

Q: How many years have you been a teacher?

A: I will be completing my 30th year on June 5th.

Q: What classes have you taught?

A: I've taught mainly agriculture (Intro to Ag, Large animal science, LSD, Ag Business, Ag and Natural Sciences, as well as other agriculture classes no longer offered) Computers, Life Science, as well as the first person to be in charge of OCS.

Q: Has Liberty been the only campus you have taught at?

A: I've been at Liberty my entire teaching career.

Q: Did you always know teaching was what you wanted to do?

A: When I was a senior at Liberty, I had to do a job search/report and that was when I decided my future was in teaching Ag.

Q: Where did you attend college and

what was your major?

A: The majority of my course work was completed at Fresno State, but I also attended Modesto Junior College, San Joaquin Delta College, St. Mary's, Cal Poly SLO, and UCD.

Q: What do you plan on doing with your time now that you'll be retired?

A: My retirement goals include becoming more competitive in the show lamb industry, travel to Australia and Alaska and attend all of the livestock shows I couldn't while I was still working.

Q: What is the funniest/most memorable thing that has happened as a teacher?

A: One of the funniest stories I can remember was during Homecoming week. One of the days was dedicated to "Pajama day". I had a student who's teacher gave extra credit to anyone who would participate in the theme of the week. In order for this student to receive HIS extra credit

he wore his pajamas which were his 'tighty-whitey' underwear. When he left my class headed off to the class where he would earn his extra credit, he had his street clothes in one hand and his cowboy boots in the other. He did attract a little attention. What made it even worse was his mom was a teacher on this campus. She was a very embarrassed after she found out what he had done. He was definitely grounded for a long time!

Q: What do you feel was most rewarding for you, being a teacher?

A: I always loved it when I had former students come up to me after they graduated and tell me how much fun my classes were and that they actually used some of the things they learn while in Ag.

Q: Are you going to miss teaching at Liberty and being the FFA Advisor?

A: I will miss the students most of all. I get really close to my students because we travel together and I get an opportunity to see them in a different light. I probably will miss the com-

petition factor. I'm very competitive and I love watching students compete whether it's watching a championship volleyball game or showing an animal at fair.

Q: Do you know what's in store for future agriculture students at Liberty? Do you think they will hire someone to teach it, and keep the FFA program running?

A: They have assured me that the Ag program and the FFA will continue at Liberty. I hope the district follows through with their promise. It's the only Ag program in Contra Costa County.

Q: Do you think you'll be around for your students after? Would you be willing to help them with their FFA projects and such?

A: I have promised the FFA members that I will help them until I feel my help is no longer needed. The FFA program is not an 8:15-3:00 job. There is a lot of behind-the-scenes activities and someone who is not familiar with how it runs will be buried in all of the extra work it requires.

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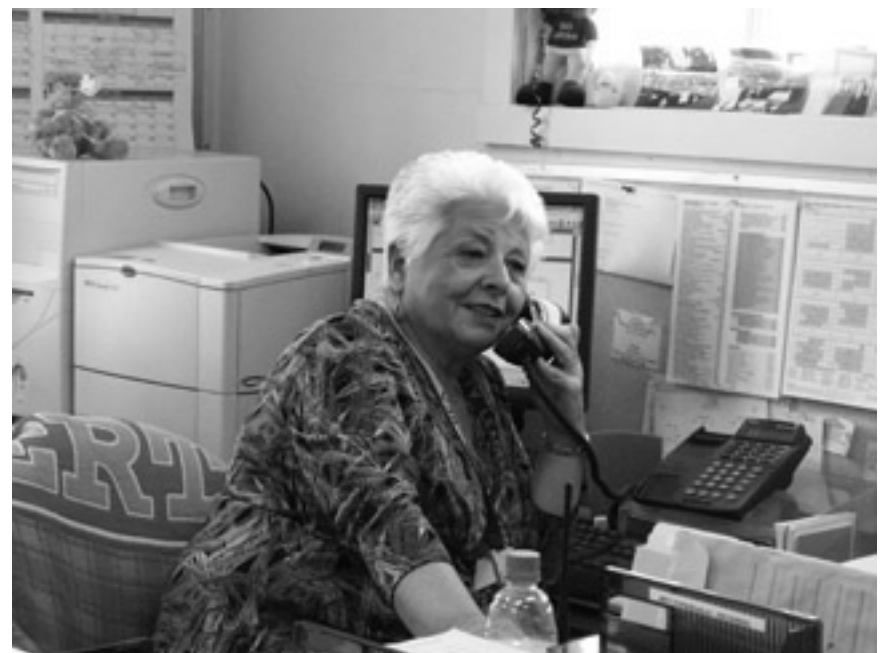


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