



Two students comfort each other on Monday, Jan. 19, the first day of school following Shaye Fields' death in a car accident on Jan. 16. Students wrote their sentiments on the wall poster and sheets of butcher paper taped to long tables in the quad. Photo by Bill Wolfe

Students pay tribute to classmate and friend with displays, vigil, scholarship

By Will Palmer and Sadie Burton
Editors-in-Chief

On Jan. 16, the Taft Union High School community was devastated to learn of the death of Shaye Fields.

Shaye Lee Fields was born July 6, 1992 in Bakersfield and raised in Taft. She was very popular at Taft High, and her family was well known and appreciated throughout the community. Shaye is survived by her father Kim, her mother Gina, her brother Kyler and several other immediate family members.

Students and others who were close to the family held multiple events in memory of the much loved student. A candlelight vigil was held in front of the Fields' house in her honor, and a large piece of pink butcher paper was posted in the quad on Jan. 19 for students to write their final messages to their friend.

The funeral service for Shaye was held Thursday, Jan. 22 at 3:00 P.M. at Westside District Cemetery. School ended an hour early to allow students to attend the funeral.

Shaye Fields was involved in

many clubs and programs at TUHS, including ASB and AVID. She was also one of the best players on the golf team.

"She was #1 on the golf team," said junior Patricia Moore, one of Fields' best friends. "She always had a smile, and could brighten up any room. She was the best friend you could ever ask for. She always looked for the best in people. I miss her."

"She was a wonderful friend," said senior Corran Thompson. "She always had a smile on her face, no matter what kind of day it was. I could say so much about her. She was a gift to us for a short time -- too short."

"She was nice, polite, outgoing, and never afraid to say anything. She was open and over-the-top fun. She will be missed dearly," concurred junior Rodolfo Noriega.



Classmates Tiffany Saltiban (left) and Sierra Sutherland add their personal messages to Shaye in the quad on Jan. 19. Photo by Bill Wolfe

"She was great, an awesome person. She always made you smile," said junior Phillip Allen.

"Even though she sometimes would experience the challenges teens face, at

the end of a conversation, she would always look on the bright side, verbalize the best way to handle the challenge or use it for personal growth," remarked Shaye's AVID teacher, Debra Popejoy. "I just hope that people will reflect on her memory, and see the gift that I saw and hoped others would see."

"She was an amazing young woman who wanted to change the world around her," stated history teacher and family friend John Kopp. "She will be deeply missed."

A memorial scholarship has been established in Shaye's honor by the ASB, and stickers circulated among the community encouraging others to buckle up in her memory.

The poem from the funeral service program perhaps summarizes best the feeling in the TUHS community:

In everybody's garden
A little rain must fall
Or life's sweetest, fairest flowers,
Wouldn't grow and bloom at all
And though the clouds hung heavy
So heavy. Oh! My friend
I'm sure that God who sent the shower
Will send the rainbow's end.

TUHS community copes with tragic loss of junior student-athlete Shaye Fields

Students and friends gather to show love and admiration for Fields and her family.

By Sadie Burton and Will Palmer
Editors-in-Chief

The loss of a Wildcat has overwhelmed the TUHS campus in mourning and celebration of the life of 16-year-old junior, Shaye Lee Fields.

On the evening of Friday, Jan. 16, Fields was driving to see a friend in Valley Acres after leaving a basketball game she had attended with her father. She was driving east on Highway 119 approaching Airport Road when she over-corrected her VW Beetle, causing it to overturn. Fields was not wearing a seatbelt and was ejected from the vehicle.

Fields received immediate care from an eyewitness and an ambulance returning to Bakersfield. She was airlifted to Kern Medical Center, where she was pronounced dead. The cause of death was severe head injuries.

Immediately after the accident, the effects of the loss of a wonderful person began to appear. A gathering was held Sunday night in front of the Fields' house, where friends and community members left flowers in the front yard.

On Monday, Jan. 19 and during the rest of the week, faculty and staff tried to keep things as normal as possible and continued with the regular school activities. Grief counselors were on campus all week and many students sought help. Most students found comfort from their peers and gathered to engage in various activities.



On the first day back to school after the accident, students wore pink and yellow in honor of Shaye's favorite colors. They also decorated the quad with posters, pictures and a giant pink sign for students to share their thoughts and memories of Shaye.

Family and friends numbering in the hundreds gathered on Thursday, Jan. 22, for a moving and inspirational service at the Westside District Cemetery. Josh Salazar, Shaye's youth pastor at First Baptist Church, and John Kopp, family friend and mentor to Shaye, officiated.

It was overcast with a light drizzle as the service began, but later in the service the clouds cleared and the sun shone through. Salazar spoke of how Shaye was a hero and of the compassion she had shown him. Kopp spoke of Shaye's love of God and her dedication to serve others, and he asked attendees to continue her good works.

Pallbearers were Kei Fields, Dave Robertson, Mike Cowan, Paul Reed, Patrick Romero and Travis Bauer. The Honorary Pallbearers were Trisha Moore, Ashley Lynch and Jana Durkan.

Pink and yellow balloons were released in the quad at lunch on Friday, Jan. 23, and students wore pink and yellow to the varsity boys' basketball game that night against Shafter. Students were able to lift their spirits and support each other in their grieving.



Friends expressed their sense of loss in a roadside memorial on Hwy. 119. Photo by Bill Wolfe



Shaye (center) was the star of the girls' golf team. Photo courtesy of Gary Rennie

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Editorial

It's time for students to restrict their rampant PDA

Public displays of affection, or PDA, have become a problem at Taft Union High School. However, there are many sides to the topic, meaning both teachers and students are to blame for some of the problems.

Students overstep unwritten boundaries of decency by publicly displaying affection. This has resulted in a knee-jerk reaction from the teachers to anyone displaying any form of PDA (except when it comes to the overtly-sexual displays, it seems).

Minor displays of affection are acceptable, but stepping over the boundary lines of decency is not right.

However, both students and teachers can solve this problem with one step: stop going over the edge. Teachers need to stop overreacting

to small, harmless displays of affection, while students need to stop displaying disgusting amounts of PDA.

Acceptable displays of affection should include things like short hugs, holding hands and maybe small pecks in between classes.

However, making out, grabbing inappropriate places and doing things like kissing necks are really too much when it comes to decency. Basically anything further than quick kisses is inappropriate and it would be greatly appreciated if these were not displayed.

However, the same should go with teachers. Faculty should generally accept decent displays, while vulgar displays should be the punishable offenses.

School cellphone photo and video abuses reined in

By Will Palmer
Editor-in-Chief

Do you ever feel like recording your teacher on your phone? A strange question, but one to which some students can truthfully answer "yes."

Texting and calling people in class are yesterday's distractions; now students are pulling pranks on teachers by recording them on their phones to post on the Internet (particularly YouTube).

One instance at Kentridge High School, near Seattle, is an excellent example. A student, Gregory Requa, videotaped one of his fellow classmates making lewd pelvic thrusts behind a female teacher's back. He later added special effects and audio to the video (including the rap song "Ms. New Booty") and posted it on the Internet. When authorities found out about the tape, school officials booted Requa (and his friends) out of school with 40-day suspensions.

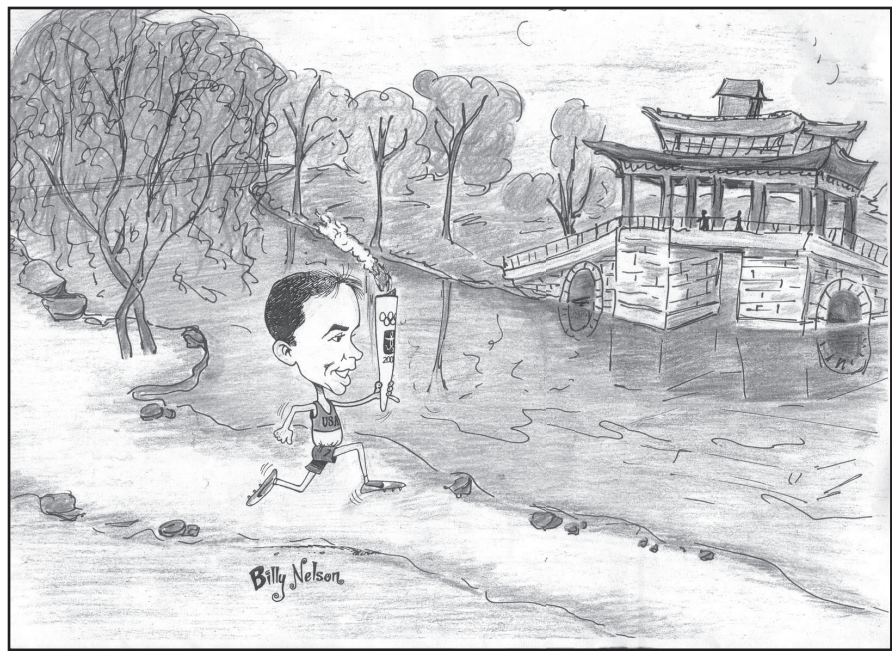
Requa wasn't about to take the sentence sitting down, and sued the school claiming that administrators were restricting his First Amendment rights. However, a federal judge disposed of the lawsuit, claiming that the video consisted of "sexual harassment," a direct violation of the school district's policy.

In addition, the judge dismissed the lawsuit based on Requa's method of recording the video, since phones and other "personal electronic devices" were not allowed at the school.

The issue has gotten so out of hand that Fox News produced segment called "Caught on Tape," emphasizing the increasing number of cases where the problem has arisen. The special focuses on students who posted videos on YouTube, displaying teachers who acted inappropriately in class. This raises another question: Do students have the right to videotape a teacher's behavior that violates school policy?

Not according to Kearny High School district, a small district in New Jersey. After a 16-year-old recorded a teacher in an apparent violation of the separation of church and state, the district adopted a rule stating that students could not record teachers without their permission.

Students should be able to be open with their concerns in the classroom, says an attorney for the district, though those "who exercise their rights should not be viewed negatively." Whether he was referring to teachers or students is open to interpretation.



Instructional aide Jeannie Ecklund wins Staff Coloring Contest

By Miranda Landreth
Staff Writer

The usual Christmas theme was replaced for this year's third annual Staff Coloring Contest.

Instead, Spanish and Cartooning teacher Bob Peterson drew a stylized picture of Taft High alum Billy Nelson running in honor of his participation in the 2008 Summer Olympics.

Participants were given a copy of the drawing, which contained only

the depiction of Nelson running with an Olympic torch. Their challenge was to fill the rest of the sheet with their original artwork.

Instructional aide Jeannie Ecklund took first place honors.

"I was very pleased when I found out that I had won," said Ecklund. She decided to draw Nelson running in China, to reflect the fact that the Olympics had taken place in Beijing. Ecklund took art all four years of high school, as well as in college.

What's your New Year's resolution?

Survey and Photos
by Monica Solis
News Editor



"I don't want to eat as much." -- Andrew Arelano, sophomore



"I want to get a 4.0." -- Dakota Bailey, senior



"I want to develop dolphin-like characteristics." -- Chesney Doak, junior



"I don't set one up because I feel like I'm setting myself up for failure if I don't come through." -- Cassandra Gale, junior



"I want to study three hours a day to get my grades up and to not get into trouble as much." -- Jesse Gama, sophomore



"I want to get better grades." -- Mariana Gutierrez, sophomore



"I want to listen to Mrs. Schonoweis more often." -- Warren Mead, senior



"I want to climb a mountain on stilts." -- Jordan Yarbrough, junior



"I want to get straight A's." -- Raveena Bhakta, freshman



"I want to start having a New Year's resolution." -- Eric LeClair, junior



"I really want to improve my grades." -- Misty Fuller, freshman



"I want to serve more people." -- Mr. Kopp, history teacher

Custodian arrested for improper student relationship

By Matt McDaniels
Staff Writer

TUHS custodian Kristy Stubblefield, 36, was arrested by Taft police on Dec. 11 on suspicion of having a sexual relationship with a 17-year-old male student.

At her arraignment on Dec. 12 Stubblefield pleaded not guilty to two counts of unlawful sexual intercourse with a minor and one count of oral copulation with a minor.

According to a report in the Bakersfield Californian, the minor, who worked as a student custodian, reported the relationship to a school employee on Dec. 2. School officials immediately notified the police, who began an investigation.

Stubblefield was arrested when she went to the police station to be questioned and admitted the improper relationship to authorities. The improper relationship had been going on for a couple months, Taft Police Lt. Ed Whiting told the Californian.

Stubblefield was released on a bond (bail) of \$22,500 shortly after her arrest. She is reportedly living in Bakersfield pending further proceedings in the case.

Stubblefield was placed on paid leave when the accusation was first made and then unpaid leave once criminal charges were filed against her. According to Dr. Mark Richardson, TUHS principal and superintendent, Stubblefield will be fired if

she is found guilty. For the time being, she is barred from entering the campus.

Richardson told the Californian that no other students reported involvement with Stubblefield.

"We're confident this is an isolated incident," Richardson said, calling the situation "extremely disturbing."

A preliminary hearing is set for Jan. 29 at the Taft branch of the Kern County Superior Court. At this hearing, according to FindLaw.com, a judge uses a "probable cause" standard in deciding whether the district attorney has produced enough evidence to convince a reasonable jury that the defendant committed the crimes with which she has been charged.



Coloring Contest winner Jeannie Ecklund Photo by Miranda Landreth

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Tina Dickey with her family after she was named Renaissance Staff Member of the Year. Photo by Cristina Loza

Registrar Tina Dickey is 2008 Staff Member of Year

By Cristina Loza
Features Editor

This year's Recipient of the Renaissance Staff Member of the Year award was registrar Tina Dickey.

Dickey's office is in the back of the Guidance Center, so students don't see her very often. She sends out transcripts, keeps student's personal files up-to-date, corrects grades and orders diplomas.

Winning the award came to her as a surprise, even more so because she had broken her left kneecap and was not planning on going to the rally in the first place.

However, her boss told Dickey that she was required to attend the rally. She says she was shocked when she heard her name because not many people know about her and her job until they need transcripts.

"I like to think that I'm always here to help and, if at all possible, I will help," she said.

She has been working at TUHS

for 16 years. Before becoming registrar, Dickey was a custodian and a Special Programs Secretary. Ever since she was in high school she had wanted to work in an office, but she started a family instead.

"Things in life don't often work out how you want them to. You have to get what you can," says Dickey.

Then she started working as a custodian and began taking night classes at Taft College in order to move to an office job.

What does Dickey do in her spare time?

"Let's see, do I have spare time?" she jokingly asked, laughing. She spends her spare time with her two grandchildren and she likes crafts and reading. She also enjoys traveling and has been to the Caribbean and almost every state west of the Mississippi.

Overall, Dickey says she enjoys the way things work in the Guidance Center.

"The whole office is inspiring," says Dickey.

ACE, AVID students learn about leadership the Disneyland way

By Krystle Holder
Features Editor

ACE Academy students and selected AVID students traveled to Disneyland to participate in a program called Disney Leadership in Action: Pursuit of Excellence.

The program is designed to teach students important skills that are part of Walt Disney's "secret of making dreams come true."

"It was really fun. We learned about how they want to build Disneyland and about Walt Disney's vision and ideas. We were able to learn while riding some of the rides," said Rachel Sasi.

The students enjoyed the experience and learned about the four C's.

"The four C's of success are Curiosity, Confidence, Courage and Constancy," said Sasi.

"They had a 9:30 to 12:30 leadership training, and the most important thing they talked about was the character of Walt Disney," said AVID teacher Debra Popejoy. "A Disney youth leader told us that Walt Disney believed in the four C's."

"The leadership workshop was very beneficial. We rode some rides and everybody was really happy. It was almost embarrassing," said junior Devin Smith.

The goal of the trip was for participants to understand personal leadership skills and how to apply them.

They were asked to discuss the importance of diversity, brainstorm for creative ideas and solutions, apply different ideas to a project, explore and approach a project from different perspectives, gain the confidence to overcome obstacles, find the courage and determination to accomplish goals and believe in their dreams and to lead a project to completion while maintaining a positive attitude.

"We learned what makes a good leader and helpful tips on how to become one," said Smith.

The instructors used famous attractions such as Disneyland Railroad, the Pirates' Lair on Tom Sawyer's Island, Pirates of the Caribbean and Splash Mountain to build confidence and apply the ability to work as a team.

"We walked into the exit door of Pirates of the Caribbean and partnered up. We had to ask our partners questions off a sheet of paper. It was dark and you couldn't read the questions. When we got off, they asked us if we had trouble and if we could ask the questions easier in a different environment," said Popejoy.

They used the Pirates of the Caribbean to show how work becomes more difficult in a bad environment.

This trip was a great way to teach students the important leadership skills that help them to achieve their goals and excel in their lives.

Carli Tweedy awarded Most Improved Student honor at fall Renaissance Rally

By Krystle Holder
Features Editor

Carli Tweedy was named the Most Improved Student at the fall Renaissance Rally. She raised her GPA a total of 1.86 points, from a 2.14 to a 4.0, during the spring.

Her teachers enjoy having her in their classes and only have good things to say about her.

"She's a great student, very bright and respectful," said English teacher Lisa Borrecco. "She is the epitome of the perfect student. She is going to go far."

"She's my student aide, but last year in AP Chemistry she was one of the better students," said Eric Newton. "She asked good questions and was very interesting. She took it very seriously. When she's really into a subject she puts a lot of effort into it. She's respectful, outgoing and helps others," he added.

"Carli is a very diligent and knowledgeable student. She's at the top of my class; she's one of the brightest," said John Usrey.



Carli Tweedy (center) is joined by her mother and MC Greg Goossen at the fall Renaissance Rally. Photo by Cristina Loza

Carli found that her schedule wasn't working for her and was keeping her from getting good grades.

"I stopped slaving through my schedule and made it work for me," said Tweedy. "I had overloaded myself. I got in over my head."

Her favorite teacher is John

Kopp.

"He teaches you about life. It's not all about history, it's about the future too," said Tweedy, who added, "Mr. Newton made chemistry come to life."

Her favorite subject is chemistry, and she plans to be a chemistry professor at a university.

Winter Speed and Strength Camp students attend two-day UCLA clinic, meet Olympic champions

By Nick Ramirez
Staff Writer

The winter Speed and Strength Camp was held during December, with 60 students participating. It was supervised by Paul Martinez, who is in his sixth year coaching S&S.

At the beginning of the year Martinez and his students held a fundraiser to raise money for a Speed and Power clinic at UCLA.

"I was able to take 28 out of the 60 students to one of the top universities in California," said Coach Martinez. He chose his students based on their attendance, attitude and effort.

The UCLA trip took place over two days, Dec. 29 and 30 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. When they first arrived at UCLA they did drills to work on running techniques and then took a break for lunch. When they resumed, the students played speed games and then tested over the two days to see if they had improved.

According to Martinez, "All the



Some of the TUHS girls who attended the UCLA clinic met Olympic superstar Alyson Felix, among other well-known athletes. From left: Kathy Lopez, Dora Cornejo, Felix, Stephannie Heerdink, Hope Howell and Joanne Almaguer. Photo courtesy of Paul Martinez

athletes improved and worked really hard. At the end of the day they got the chance to see and talk to some of the former and current Olympians who participated in the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

"One of the current Olympians was Alyson Felix. She is a former world record holder in the 200 meter dash and won the silver medal at the Beijing Olympics.

State legislature empowers schools by passing bill addressing burgeoning problem of cyber-bullying

By Monica Solis
News Editor

With new technological advances, cyber-bullying has become increasingly common throughout the country. The days of a big kid harassing a smaller kid for lunch money are long gone.

These days, there are different forms of bullying, partly because of the development in technology. The Internet has become a common place for bullying and intimidation through social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook, chat rooms, instant messaging and text messaging.

There have been many incidents in which cyber-bullying has ended in tragedy. In Vermont, Ryan Halligan, a 13-year-old boy, took his life after being encouraged to do so by his peers. In Novato, California, a hateful Internet campaign followed 14-year-old Olivia through three schools. Her classmates created a MySpace page, which they called

"Olivia Haters," which was full of taunts, slurs and threats, all directed at her.

In a more recent case in Missouri, Lori Drew, 49, was convicted last November of three misdemeanor charges of computer fraud for her involvement in 2006 in creating a fake MySpace account to psychologically abuse a teenage girl, who later committed suicide in October 2006.

Drew, with the help of her daughter Sarah, then 13, and Ashley Grills, a family friend, posed as a teenage boy named "Josh Evans." They used this fictional boy to flirt with and later reject 13-year-old Megan Meier.

After receiving an e-mail from "Josh" saying, "The world would be a better place without you," Megan hanged herself that afternoon in her closet.

As a result of such incidents, at least 13 states, including Arkansas, Delaware, Idaho, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina and Washington, have passed laws

aimed at stopping harassment, intimidation and bullying through the Web.

California is the latest state to take a stand against this growing problem. Assembly Bill 86, sponsored by Assemblyman Ted Lieu (D-Torrance), is designed to give schools the authority to suspend or expel students for bullying fellow classmates through the internet, text-messaging or by any other electronic means.

This new law became effective on January 1 and only applies to bullying that occurs during school hours or during school-related functions.

TUHS psychologist Mark Shoffner, occasionally deals with bullying-related problems here on campus. He has noticed that these types of problems have increased significantly.

There are many things a student can do if they are being bullied. It is completely confidential

"The first thing you can do is tell someone, it could be a teacher or a counselor," said Shoffner.

Students of the Month know the way to academic success

Michael Bennett

By Brittany Dillingham
Staff Writer

The senior November Student of the Month is Michael Bennett. Bennett earned a 4.0 GPA in the fall semester.

Bennett has made a huge turnaround in his grades.

"They were bad before and I just got tired of them being bad," said Bennett.

He decided that since it was his last year of high school he wanted to go out with a bang and please the people around him by earning good grades for a change.

"I wanted to make my last year in high school count," Bennett said.

Bennett offers students three tips: go to school every day (it helps a lot), turn in your homework, and pay attention in class (don't just socialize).

"I wish that I would have tried to do this my freshman and sophomore year," Bennett acknowledged.

Bennett is grateful to English teacher Jim Carnal for always pushing him to do his best.

Bennett's one regret was not staying involved in AVID.

"I wasn't willing to work as hard as they wanted me to, so I dropped the class," said Bennett. He worked very hard to get straight A's. It took a lot of effort but he discovered that it was not impossible to achieve.

Courtney Houle

By Shannon Gillespie
Staff Writer

Courtney Houle was one of the four outstanding students of the month for November.

Houle was the junior November Student of The Month. Her GPA of 3.7, combined with her awesome

attitude, led three teachers to nominate her. Yearbook advisor Lisa Borrecco, leadership teacher Eric Newton and cartoon drawing teacher Bob Peterson all sang her praises in their nominating letters.

Borrecco said, "Courtney has been my lifesaver in Yearbook. Even though she is only a junior, she has taken over as a leader of the class. She has never once let me down and always follows through with her assignments and what I ask her to do."

Leadership teacher Eric Newton added, "Courtney has been a very spirited student all year. She works well with others and is always making it fun for everyone involved. She has been a great Activities Commissioner this year."

"Courtney is a very gifted artist in my cartoon drawing class who always gets her assignments done completely and on time," art teacher Peterson stated.

"If she has a problem or a question about how to do a certain assignment, she will always ask for help, which is an important skill to succeed at the next level in college. Courtney leads by example. The rest of the students in class can see the quality of her work, her dedication and her cheerful attitude, which makes my job as an educator that much easier. I really enjoy having her in class because I don't think she knows how to have a bad day or complain."

When Houle found out she was named Student of The Month, she was shocked but excited. "I always do my homework and pay attention," she said, which makes her an excellent student.



November Students of the Month (announced in December): senior Mike Bennett, junior Courtney Houle, freshman Matt Maxcy and sophomore Caity Ball. Photo by Jim Carnal

Courtney advises her peers "to always have a positive attitude."

In her spare time she works on yearbook and likes to hang out with her friends.

Caity Ball

By Daniel Loza
Production Editor

Sophomore Caity Ball was named November Student of the Month. Her teachers praise her as a hard worker and an excellent student.

"She's a very dedicated student ready to work and get everything out of her experience," praised Caity's choir teacher, Amanda Locke.

"Caity has a wonderful talent for

music, which she enjoys and everyone around her can appreciate. I'm really proud of her," she added.

Another thing that helped Caity become Student of the Month was her performance in the Central California Honor Choir.

"She came to my attention when she qualified to the Honor Choir," said nominating English teacher Jim Carnal. "She works really hard and she's really good about participation," he added.

"She is a Science Fair winner and an outstanding student and role model," Carnal said.

"She always greets me with a smile," noted her science teacher, Ryan Hickman. "She is very polite, a courteous, conscientious hard

worker."

For those aspiring to become Student of the Month, Ball revealed the secret to her success.

"I've been working hard on all of my classes," she said.

Caity also has some advice: work hard and don't let others discourage you.

Matt Maxcy

By Silvia Gervacio
Staff Writer

November's student of the month, Matthew Maxcy is an outstanding student.

"Matt is an incredible student. He shows maturity, confidence and leadership skills that are remarkable for a freshman," said AVID teacher, Mike Cowan.

"I feel pretty awesome for being awarded student of the month," said Maxcy.

His favorite classes are science and history. His favorite teachers are Ryan Hickman, Mike Cowan, and Joy Reynolds.

"Matt is such a helpful student," said French teacher, Ann Hess.

He would love to become something that is helpful to the community, like a doctor. Maxcy is also involved in the Key Club and band, where he plays percussion. In order to stay on top of his grades he schedules most of his events.

"He is focused on his goals and doesn't get distracted or waste time like many freshmen tend to. If Matt continues on the path he is on, his potential for success in the future is limitless," commented Cowan.

In his free time he enjoys playing video games.

"My favorite would have to be the Call of Duty series," said Maxcy.

Maxcy is a friendly, mature and smart freshman that is on the path to success.



Key Club member Britnie Horton wraps a Christmas present for the child of an Alpha House resident. Photo by Bill Wolfe

Alpha House offers sanctuary for battered women

By Monica Solis
News Editor

Alpha House in Taft provides a safe haven for domestic violence victims and their children. It was established in 1992 and has helped over 1,500 people escape abusive homes. The shelter also helps individuals make a fresh start for themselves and their children by helping them locate housing and employment. It is located on North and Seventh Street.

According to the Alpha House website, in 2003 homelessness was one of the county's most prominent unmet needs. IN Kern County reports, 49% of the female householders with children below the age of five are below the national poverty

level. According to the Domestic Abuse Women's Network (DAWN), "Nationally, one half of all homeless women and children are fleeing domestic violence."

There are only two other homeless shelters in Kern County, Bethany Center and Tabitha's House, which are located in Bakersfield. There are also two domestic violence shelters, the Alliance Against Family Violence (AAFV) in Bakersfield and High Desert Shelter in Ridgecrest. Alpha House is the only shelter for both domestic violence victims and homeless people on the west side of Kern County.

Alpha house provides their clients with many services. They provide a 24-hour Crisis Help Line case management and mentoring

programs, which help women to build stable and independent lives. It's a safe place with 24-hour admissions for women and their children, a place where women can remove themselves and their children from destructive, unsafe environments and break the cycle of domestic violence. Domestic violence and sexual assault prevention education is offered to community groups, schools, churches and businesses in an effort to prevent future abuse cases.

This past Christmas, the Key Club had a Christmas gift-wrapping fundraiser where proceeds went to the Alpha House. Toys and gifts were donated so that 27 children had a toy for Christmas and 11 moms were helped out as well.

Academic Decathlon students prepare for county face-off

By Devin Smith
Staff Writer

Athletes of all calibers have an opportunity to participate in athletic competitions but what many people don't know is that there is an Academic Decathlon team to give intelligent students an opportunity to compete as well.

Science teacher Leslie Moe returns as advisor, guiding the AD team toward the February competition at Bakersfield College. She has joined together with students like Sophomore Amber Strong and Freshmen Abraham Flores, Shelby Wilkinson and Hailey Cook, who make up the entire team, to compete in the 10-subject event.

"The team is very important to me because without them, I wouldn't be able to compete," says Flores.

The topic this year is Latin America, and the subjects to be tested include music, economics, history, art and evolutionary biology. The competitors must also read the novel Bless Me, Ultima by Rudolfo A. Anaya, an acclaimed Chicano author.

The A.D. teams consist of three "A" students, three "B" students and three "C" students, but this team only has two "A" team mem-

bers (Strong and Flores) and two "B" team members (Cook and Wilkinson). They will prepare by intensely studying and meeting to discuss the topic of Latin America.

To learn more about Latin American subject, the group recently traveled to Monterey Bay to see some of the first Spanish settlements, also to Stockton to experience Latin music concerts and theatre performances related to Bless Me, Ultima.

On Jan. 22 students went to Bakersfield to write a timed essay, give a speech and be interviewed.

On Feb. 7 the team will travel to Bakersfield College for the main competition, the remaining seven events of the decathlon, including the exciting game-show-like Super Quiz in the BC gym.

Senior Holly Starks-Perkins, who is a three-year veteran of the Academic Decathlon Team and is helping Moe, says, "Ms. Moe is a really good advisor. She really knows what she is talking about and is determined to help the team win."

Moe is also excited about the competition. She says of her students, "They are very hard working, they follow through and they really enjoy the trips."



Leslie Moe travels to India for three-week science teaching project

By Rebekah Horton
Staff Writer

Science teacher Leslie Moe spent her Christmas vacation, plus the first week of the spring semester, in Mori, India on a science exhibition sponsored by the charity Children to Love. The organization worked with her church in Bakersfield to sponsor a group trip to India to teach the children about astronomy.

Moe also helped the students learn English, and she set up 14 science exhibits at Riverside School, a private Christian school.

"I was so proud to help the science exhibition," said Moe. "Everyone helped out so well, and I'm proud of the friendships I made."

One student stands out in Moe's mind. Sheubashina was a 10th grader with whom Moe worked closely.

"Sheubashina is really serious about her education, along with the other kids who make it to tenth grade," Moe said. The students' 11th and 12th grade is like college to us.

"They [the students] envy us, but they're so much like us," Moe said she learned while she was working with the students.

"The food and clothing really stood out to me," Moe said. "The food was some of the healthiest I've ever had."



Students from kindergarten through 10th grade line up for the morning announcements. Photo courtesy of Leslie Moe

The girls normally wear trousers and a fancy shirt or sari (a six-foot length of material that wraps around the wearer). However, the guys dress much like American boys with jeans and a shirt.

The Indian culture is very different from American culture.

"It broadened my horizons, re-

moved the negative images and showed me there were much more positive outlooks," Moe said.

Telugu is the main language in the state Moe visited. Every state has a different language, Moe learned while in India.

"They are very absorbed in culture, religion and education,"

Moe stated. "Unfortunately, their casteism is like our racism."

In the Hindu religion, which dominates Indian life, all people belong to one of several social classes, which are called castes. One cannot move up the social ladder. Instead, if you live a good life, you can be reincarnated in a higher caste. Ob-

viously, this is completely different from American culture, in which an individual can rise as high as their effort and achievement can take them.

Moe is planning to return to India to help out again. The next science education program will focus on biology.



Tenth grade physics students get a lecture on wave motion. All students must take physics and chemistry before they graduate at the end of 10th grade. Photo courtesy of Leslie Moe.

S Club offers service opportunities for TUHS girls

By Devin Smith
Staff Writer

Soroptimist International is a nationwide organization made up of women who perform services for the less fortunate or anyone who needs to be served. Fortunately for Taft High, members of Soroptimist International of Taft have formed a group to allow teen girls the chance to serve the community as well. This is the S Club.

The S Club was started last year at Taft High and is comprised of returning members and new freshmen. All together the group has 22 members.

Advisor Rosemary Day and a devoted group of club officers (president Jordan Mead, vice president Angela Dickard, treasurer Paige Schoneweis and secretary Mariah Melton) lead the S Club.

Service projects this year have included a yard sale to raise money, making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches with the Key Club for its blood drive, serving tables at the annual fashion show at Westside Believers Fellowship Church and ring-

ing the bell at Albertson's for the Salvation Army.

"I love the S Club because you get to serve the community and they're fun services," says junior member Melissa Miller.

Each service gives members Service Points, and the eight girls with the most points get to attend a conference at Asilomar Beach in Monterey to learn more about leadership and how to be a positive influence in the community.

Due to their hard work in float decoration, the S Club and ladies of the Soroptimist International of Taft won first place in Taft's annual Christmas Parade.



Members of the S Club gather at a Christmas event. Photo by Rosemary Day

"The Soroptimist women are so sweet, and I really appreciate working with them because they help a lot," junior Jordan Yarbrough says, expressing a sentiment no doubt shared by all the S Club members.

How to drive safely in winter fog

By Silvia Gervacio
Staff Writer

Driving in the fog is difficult and much more dangerous than most people realize. In fact, 2008 held 60 accidents in one day due to fog, and in 2007 there was a 100-car pile-up in the Central Valley.

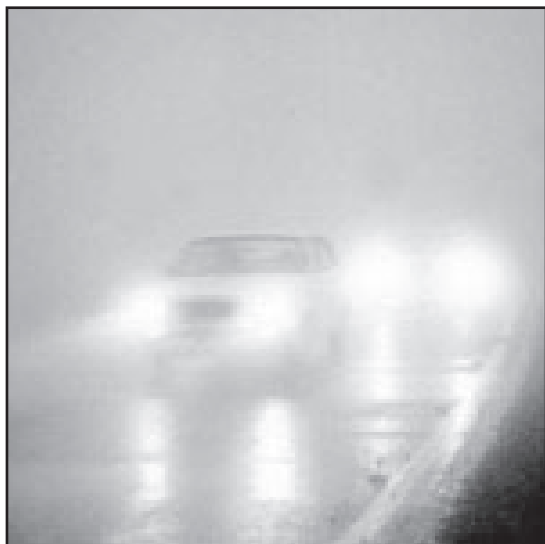
In total, fog was responsible for 951 reported injuries and 57 known deaths in 2007.

To stay clear of trouble during fog season, make sure your lights are on so others can see you. Do NOT use your high beams or the light may reflect back to you.

Slow down. Driving too fast will make it hard to prevent an accident.

Avoid tapping on your breaks every five seconds in order to prevent the driver behind you from hitting you.

Turn down your radio and be more cautious of your surroundings. Traffic and pedestrians will be harder to spot in the fog.



Signal early, and when reaching a stop sign, don't stomp on your brakes. Sudden stops may cause a collision.

If you decide to pull off the road, make sure you are completely off the street. Turn your driving lights off but turn on your flashers to let people know where you are parked.

Fog can reduce visibility completely at times. The best advice in this condition would be to stay off the road until the fog clears up and it's safe.

Campus Life shares Christian fellowship

By Brittany Dillingham
Staff Writer

No doubt you have seen Campus Life mentioned in the morning announcements. Have you ever wondered what the club involves?

Campus Life is a Christian-based club that has been active at Taft High.

Math teacher Josh Tofte is the club's advisor.

Many people think that it is just a religious club, but that is not true. It is also a good way to make new friends and have someone you can count on to go to when you need anything.

Tofte loves to build a great relationship with the students.

His goal in advising the club is to encourage students to become more involved with God. He doesn't want students to be afraid to talk to, ac-

cept and have a relationship with God.

About 20 students are involved in Campus Life, but Tofte is hoping to recruit a lot more.

"Don't be afraid to come out," he says. "You have a place where you will be accepted no matter what."

Senior Sam Molar is the president of Campus Life. Instead of giving orders, he pushes members to be more active in living their faith.

Sophomore Curtis Walchock enjoys being a member. "I joined because it looked like a good environ-

ment. The best part about the club is Jesus."

"I joined because I wanted to learn more about Jesus," said sophomore Jacob Johnson. "The best part is that we have something on campus that involves Jesus."

Johnson is hoping that more people will consider joining because he wants more people to know about the Lord.

Campus Life meets every Monday during lunch in the IRC Lecture Hall.

Chinese now fastest-growing language class in U.S. schools

By Monica Solis
News Editor

Chinese is increasingly being taught in schools throughout the United States, according to the St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times.

A national survey taken in 2000 by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages estimated that about 5,000 students were learning Chinese. Today, experts believe approximately 50,000 students are learning Chinese.

In eight years, the number of students learning Chinese has increased tenfold, making it the fastest-growing language in the country.

"The growth has been substantial," Steve Ackley, spokesman for the foreign languages council, told the Times. "Everyone realizes this is a country with whom we are going to have to deal on a business and social and cultural level in the future."

The demand for Chinese has become so great that it is becoming difficult for schools to find teachers to teach the subject. Schools are working hard to meet those demands by trying to hire teachers who can teach Chinese.

Currently TUHS offers French and Spanish. In the past, Taft High has offered Latin and German. Maybe in the future, TUHS could offer Chinese here on campus as another foreign language.

"I really like that idea because we have to understand that one out of five people [on the planet] speaks Chinese," said Mike Cowan, foreign language department chair. "It's widely spoken, and China has a powerful economy." Experts be-

lieve that China will join the U.S. as the most powerful nations this century.

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Varsity boys soccer features non-stop action, as in this recent home game. Photo by Monica Solis

Varsity boys soccer finishes preseason with mixed results, begins league play

By Monica Solis
News Editor

The stadium lights are back on, but this time the spotlight is on the varsity boys' soccer team. The Wildcats lost to Avenal 6-1 in a friendly pre-season opening game on Dec. 2.

They then played in both the Liberty and Garces Tournaments. The boys finished in third place in the Garces Tournament.

"The team is progressing well," said head coach Cris Flores. "The only problem is that our key players keep getting hurt and some are still not committing."

"We're doing pretty good, we just need to practice more and try harder," added senior Chris Nevarez.

The Wildcats shut out the Mojave Mustangs 8-0 in their first home game of the pre-season on Jan. 6. Senior Chris Nevarez contributed three goals, juniors Sostenes Mendoza and Saul Valencia put in two goals each and sophomore Kevin Rivera closed up the score with another goal.

The next day, with high spirits, the boys played against Mission

Preparatory High School of San Luis Obispo in a fast-paced game. It was a very close game with many attempts on goal from both teams, but in the end Mission Prep managed to shut out the boys 1-0.

With pre-season at an end, the boys found themselves with a 6-7 record.

The Wildcats played their first game of league play against Tehachapi on Jan. 13, defeating the Warriors 4-1 with two goals from Chris Nevarez and two more from Saul Valencia.

"This was one of our best games so far," commented Flores. "We were able to touch the ball from side to side and develop a good attack to move the ball forward."

In their first league game away from home, the Wildcats lost to the Arvin Bears 2-1 on Jan. 16. The boys had the lead going in to second half with a goal by junior Saul Valencia. By the end of the game they were tied 1-1. They then headed into overtime where the Bears managed to get another goal and win the game.

They face some tough competitors this season. "Arvin and Wasco pose the biggest challenge," said Flores. "Arvin is fast in the mid-

dle and they attack well, and Wasco is really strong in midfield."

"I think we can go 6-5 or 6-4 in league," said Flores. "I don't like to say that because I'm kind of jinxing myself, but we can do well."

His players, however, have higher hopes. "We look forward to winning SSL and Valley," said senior Alexis Meza.

This year they sold dinner tickets in order to raise money for their team pictures and their end of the season sweatshirts.

"We had a very good turnout," said Flores. "We want to thank the Rotary Club for buying a lot of tickets and the Kiwanis Club of Taft for always supporting us."

Some of the standout players include Chris Nevarez, Saul Valencia, Alexis Meza, Jesse Gama and Kevin Rivera. According to Flores, the most improved player is Tony Ramirez.

"Alexis has a good chance to go pro," commented sophomore Jesse Gama. "He's a good defender, he has the speed, he's smart with the ball and he supports the whole team."

"The one thing we need to work on is the defense," noted Flores. "They're really young and they need to be more patient and a lot smarter with the ball."



The JV girls are steadily improving, forcing opponents to give chase in games and in the league standings. Photo courtesy of The Derrick

JV girls soccer team looks to improve this season

By Travis Morrow
Sports Editor

The girls junior varsity soccer team hopes to improve on their overall record from last year and enable players to move to varsity next year. Coach Tim Greer is heading the team for the second season.

Greer feels their season is going to go really well as they have a lot of experienced players who are willing to learn. Some of the standout players on the team are freshmen LeeAnn Shinn and Kristen Coke, sophomore Jade Morse, and juniors Mayra Aguilar and Cindy Palacios.

The girls kicked things off on Dec. 4, shutting out Independence 2-0. The first goal was scored by

Shinn, with sophomore Rhondelyn Boot scoring the second goal.

On Dec. 8 the girls played Mission Oaks, losing 6-1. Boot scored the Wildcats' only goal. Mission Oaks scored all six of their goals in the first half.

The girls then played in the Garces Tournament at CSUB on Dec. 20, losing to Foothill 2-0. Their 3-0 loss to Bishop knocked them out of the tournament.

The girls played Mission Prep on Jan. 7 and won 2-1. Chelsea Coke scored both goals. Two days later, however, they lost to Mira Monte 4-1. Again, Coke scored the only goal.

League play kicked off against Tehachapi on Jan. 13. The Lady War-

riors won a close game 4-3. Shinn put two balls in the net and Coke added what seems to be her reliable contribution of one goal per game.

The girls played Arvin on Jan. 16 and lost 2-0. But they bounced back on Jan. 20 with a 5-0 win over Shafter. Shinn scored two goals, with Boot, Elizabeth Saldana and Whitney Campbell contributing one goal each.

The girls next played Wasco and came away with a 1-1 tie. Coke scored Taft's only goal to help them tie the game.

The girls are having a good season and are improving on last year's record. They should supply next year's varsity team with talented and experienced players.



Kathy Lopez gives it her all in a recent home game against Kern Valley. Photo by Doug Keeler/The Driller

Lady 'Cats varsity soccer team comes together as league starts

By Rod Sanchez
Staff Writer

Every team would like to head into the league season with a good start, but it does not always happen. Such was the case for the Taft varsity girls soccer team after experiencing a loss in the first game of the season.

The Lady Cats started off the season with a disappointing loss to Mission Prep, 5-0, on Jan. 7. Mission Prep scored one goal in the first half, so the game was close. In the second half Mission Prep scored four more goals to shut out the 'Cats.

"It's their team, so it's their choice to make it what it is," said a frustrated coach Billy Long. "We coaches can teach them, but it's up to their dedication to make the season what it becomes."

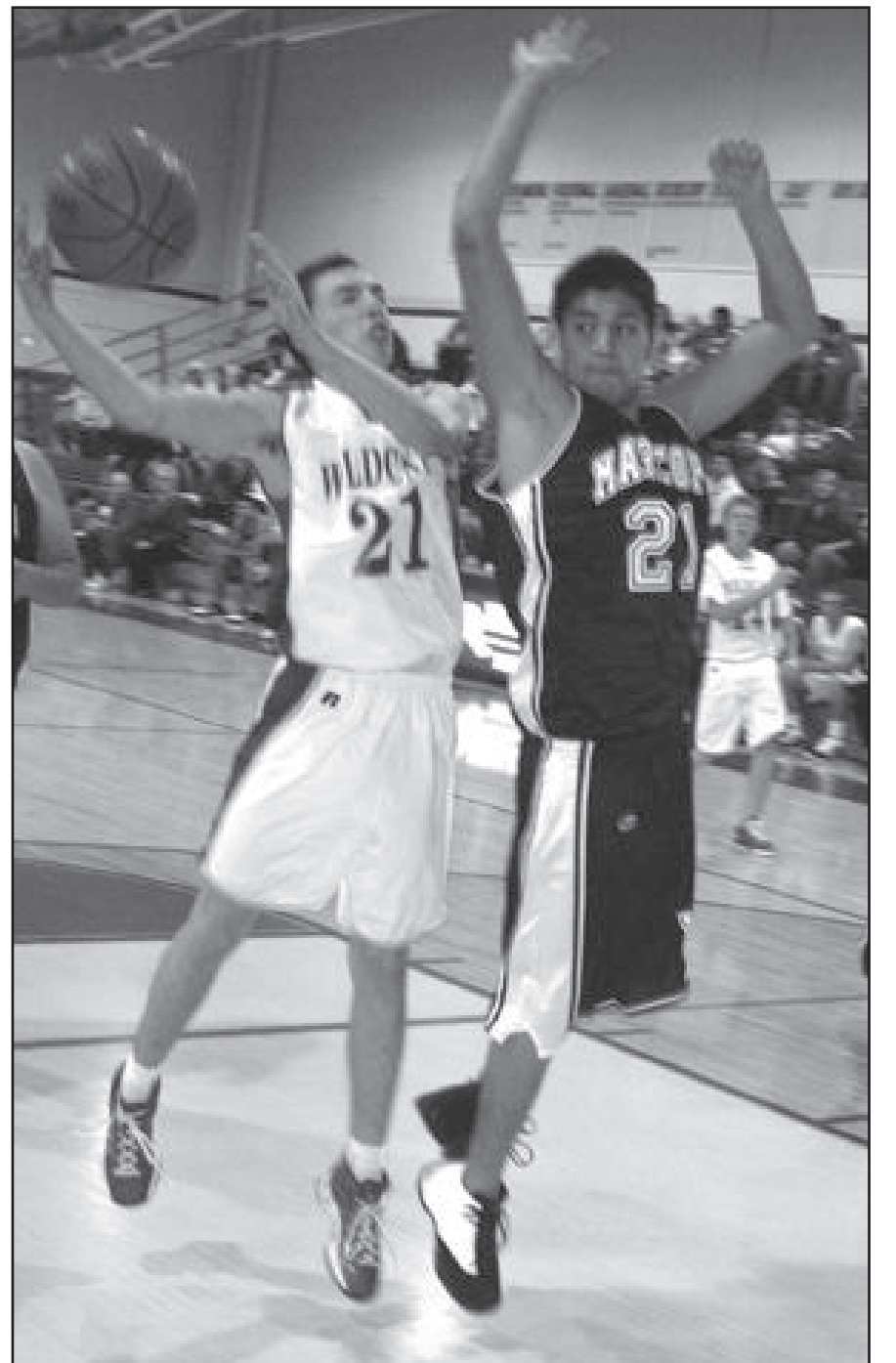
After their defeat, the Lady Cats got into gear and beat Arvin 3-0 on Jan. 16. Early in the first half junior Kathy Lopez scored the first goal. Arvin defended well against Taft but their efforts couldn't stop Lopez from scoring two more goals to claim victory.

"Our team has come together," says captain Nicole Owen.

As of Jan. 16, Taft has gotten off to an even start at 1-1 in SSL. The Lady Cats are content with their record so far and are optimistic about the remaining season.

Joanne Almaguer sums up their feelings in a single statement. "Our team is good but minor improvements need to be made."

JV boys basketball in action



Brett Howard plays with his usual intensity against Maricopa. The Gusher will have full coverage of the JV team's season in our next issue.



The Wildcats finished the preseason at 6-5 and look forward to league competition. Photo by Brittany Dillingham

Returning players hope to lead varsity basketball team to league success

By Brittany Dillingham
Staff Writer

Wildcat basketball is back for the 2009 season.

Varsity boys' basketball is 6-5 in preseason.

Coach Mark Hutson is happy to have a lot of returning athletes on the team, and the players are optimistic about their chances this year.

"We are learning a lot," said senior point-guard Jerry Romo. "We are learning how to work together, but we should do fine with league."

In the Garces tournament, the Wildcats split four games, losing first to Liberty High School 76-31. With that loss they knew they would have to pick up their game.

They had an early game the next day against Delano High School and won a close contest, 79-78 in overtime.

They went on to play Corcoran High School, losing 56-46. In the final game of the tournament they pulled off a win against McFarland, with a final score of 68-55.

"We didn't play our game," declared Romo. "If we would have played our game, we would have beaten the teams that we lost to."

"Our biggest disadvantage is our height," stated junior Adrian Howell. "We don't have the advantage like most of our teams in our league. Our tallest player is 6'1"."

Howell's best game was against Lindsay High School.

"I had eight points total and two steals. I played really good; I was proud of myself," acknowledged Howell.

Blake Emberson is the team's standout defender; he is fifth in the nation with 24 charges taken. Emberson averages around five points per game.

JV girls basketball season begins



The JV girls basketball team is a group of tenacious competitors. Here, Grecia Almaguer and Jessica Neher face off against Independence High School. Read all about their season in the next issue of *The Gusher*. Photo by Daniel Loza



Juana Espinoza (13) plays strong defense against Madera South on Jan. 6. The Lady Wildcats won the game 42-29. Photo courtesy of *The Derrick*

Varsity girls basketball has "ups and downs" but enthusiasm remains high

By Cristina Loza
Features Editor

This season has been anything but disappointing for the Lady Wildcats varsity basketball team.

Their 51-37 win over Arvin on Jan. 17 left the girls feeling pretty enthusiastic.

"It was intense but we dominated," said sophomores Karla Lopez and Jessica Barlow, almost simultaneously.

The team has had a good season so far with wins of 54-13 against Maricopa on Dec. 2 and 57-41 against South on Dec. 9. On Dec. 10, the Lady Cats lost to Sierra 63-42.

"We are doing good so far, but we've had our ups and downs," said junior Alexis Juarez.

When they resumed play on Jan. 6, they started off with a strong win over Madera South 42-29.

The Lady Cats suffered a disappointing loss to McFarland, which narrowly defeated the Cats 46-45 on Jan. 13. Another disappointment for the Wildcats was their 38-33 loss to the Shafter Lady Generals on Jan. 20.

Some of the challenging teams the Lady Wildcats have already played are Garces, Redwood and Monache. The ladies will also face Tehachapi, Shafter, Arvin (again)

and Bakersfield Christian.

"I think our attitude is one of our strengths," commented Coach Ed Hill.

Although all of the team members are good, senior Juana Espinoza is one of the standouts.

Coach Hill says one way the team can improve is by reducing the number of turnovers.

"If we keep improving, we'll be an excellent team," said Hill.

Even though this season is going well, the team would like more support from the student body.

"We would like our student body to come and cheer," said Hill.



Sophomore Andrew Arellano moves the ball upfield with support from his teammates. Photo by Krystle Holder

JV boys soccer team endures rough pre-season but looks forward to progress in league play

By Silvia Gervacio
Staff Writer

The 2008-09 boys JV soccer team had a tough pre-season, but they are making an effort to start off the South Sequoia League season well.

They are confident that they can step up to the challenge.

"We started off bad but now we are going to step it up and do way better," said sophomore Edwin Cazares.

The boys have a lot of potential. "I think that we have a good

chance at SSL if we get our act together," said sophomore captain Jose Barrera.

The JV boys played their first league game at home against Tehachapi on Jan.13.

"We dominated the whole game but just couldn't put [the ball] in the net," Coach Jose Tafuya told the *Midway Driller*.

Tehachapi took the lead in the first half, but with five minutes left in the game, Braulio Lopez and Edgar Padilla tied the game up with a score of 2-2.

The boys finished with another tie against Arvin 0-0, and lost to Shafter 5-0 on Jan. 20 before winning at BCHS.

On Jan. 23 the boys went to BCHS longing for a win. They tried their best and ended up defeating the Eagles 5-1.

On Jan. 27, the boys experienced a disappointing loss to Wasco 4-0.

For the moment, they hold a record of 1-2-2.

With five games remaining, the boys are determined to finish the season strongly.

**In the next issue of *The Gusher*:
Winter sports season wrap-ups
& spring sports season previews**



The "cool girls" bully an outcast in *Thank You for Flushing My Head in the Toilet*. From left, Brenda Gallo, Patricia Petersen, Samantha Cox, Bethany McWhorter, Morgan Gallatin and Jordan Cordova. Photo by Bill Wolfe

Thank You for Flushing My Head in the Toilet confronts school bullying

By Miranda Landreth
Staff Writer

The Advanced Drama club performed *Thank You for Flushing My Head in the Toilet and Other Rarely Used Expressions*, a dramedy by Jonathan Dorf, on Nov. 20-23.

This play uses scenes and monologues that vary from the unusual and wildly theatrical to still moments of anguish as it observes one of the biggest problems facing teens today, bullying.

Helen and Achilles are two teens who are constantly picked on at school. Achilles has a regular meeting with a bully who flushes his head in the toilet, and Helen has become so afraid of the girls who make fun of her that she creates reasons to be late.

Cool girl Glinda appears and offers them a way out of the bullying, so of course they jump at the chance. They quickly realize that Glinda's

solution is to turn them into bullies. They both resist. She sends them to a school that is even worse than the one they left. Their only means of escape is saving themselves, even if that means becoming the people who tormented them.

Jordan Cordova was a stand-out as Glinda because she was not afraid of losing herself in her character. Her exuberant stage presence was a pleasure to watch.

Morgan Gallatin gave an outstanding performance in the role of Helen, playing her first as a geek and then as a bully.

In his first on-stage performance, Rodrigo Sanchez did an exceptional job playing the role of Achilles.

Other performers included Jerry Barham, Kari Edmaiston, Jonathan Solis, Samantha Cox, Carli Tweedy and Kristin Vontz. All the actors were ably supported by the stage crew, who handled sound, lighting and sets.

House of Night series explores life, mysteries at teen vampire school

By Travis Morrow
Sports Editor

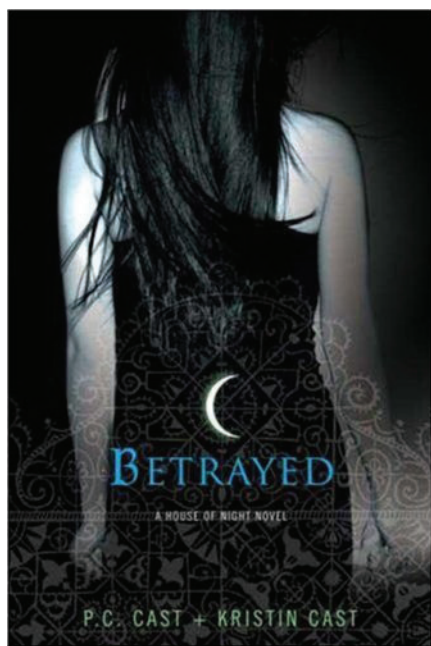
The *House of Night* series by P.C. Cast and Kristen Cast is about a fledgling vampyre who has been marked and goes to the House of Night, a school for vampyres.

Zoey is just your average everyday girl until the day she is marked by a mysterious being who goes around marking new vampyres. But Zoey's mark is unusual; it is colored in and nothing like that has happened to any fledgling in a long time. On top of that, she has an uncanny ability to sense all five elements: wind, water, earth, fire and spirit.

In the first book, *Marked*, Zoey finds herself in trouble with a snobby girl named Aphrodite. She is the leader of the Dark Daughters, a group that meets every time there is a full moon.

In the second book, *Betrayed*, Zoey takes over the Dark Daughters and changes the rules of admittance and the ritual itself. In this book she has a boyfriend who is also a vampyre. A problem arises when human teens are being killed and the community does not know by whom. Later in the book death strikes the House of Night and Zoey has to find the courage to face a difficult personal challenge.

The third book, *Chosen*, finds dark forces at work at the House of Night, and Zoey's adventures at the school take a mysterious turn. People who appear to be friends are turning out to be enemies. People who hate each other are turning out to be best friends. Stevie Rae, Zoey's best friend, has turned undead and is struggling to maintain her humanity. "Trust has become a rare commodity at the House of Night."



When things couldn't get any worse vampyres are starting to turn up dead.

In the fourth book, *Untamed*, Zoey's life has become a living nightmare because all of her friends are mad at her. In one week Zoey has gone from three boyfriends to none, and from having a close group of friends who supported and trusted her to an outcast. Neferet, the high priestess, has declared war on humans.

In the fifth book, *Hunted*, Zoey has her original friends again and the red fledglings aren't secret anymore. Meanwhile, Zoey is in trouble and has to find the strength and wisdom to face her problems.

This is one of the best series of the decade. There may be a sixth book in the series and it will no doubt be a shocker as Zoey finishes her schooling at the House of Night and the series comes to a satisfying end.

In my opinion, the books are exceptional and will continue to be popular for years to come.

CD Reviews



All-American Rejects *When the World Comes Down*

By Miranda Landreth
Staff Writer

With their 2005 CD *Move Along* producing three Top 20 hits, many people were speculating whether The All American Rejects' new album, *When The World Comes Down*, (released on Dec. 16) would be as successful.

The Rejects' latest album emphasizes traditional pop-rock rather than the alternative rock or emo found on their previous albums. They are not the type of band that tries to incorporate dance music into their songs and that is undeniable in straightforward songs such as "Fallin' Apart" and "Mona Lisa."

AAR seem to drown in more self-satisfaction with each album. Lame lines such as "Our love is the perfect crime" can be found throughout the album's weak lyrics.

Bassist-vocalist Tyson Ritter has always had a strong high tenor voice, but his whininess wears thin over the course of this album, probably because the quality of the songs is not high enough to make you overlook it.

Also, the muddy production weakens the impact of even the few uptempo rockers. They just don't blast out of your speakers as they did on earlier releases.

When *The World Comes Down* never quite matches *Move Along*. But anyone who has been depressed lately now has the catchy sing-along hit "Gives You Hell" as his or her inspiring theme song.



The Living End *White Noise*

By Rod Sanchez
Staff Writer

Aussie trio The Living End has returned with their fifth album. *White Noise* takes the band in a new direction than the previous four albums, but that's not necessarily a bad thing.

Instead of the traditional punk-style riffs fans are used to, the band emphasizes an approach reminiscent of more traditional rock styles. This may be off-putting to longtime fans, but they shouldn't write *White Noise* off as a sellout album yet.

Lyrical, this is the band at its best, angry but articulate. Songs on *White Noise* deal with politics, rebellion and other standard topics found in most punk songs.

"Raise the Alarm" is a good example: "I do not believe in God/That doesn't mean I'm a lesser person/I still have a heart/And I know what it feels like to be broken," then continues with "I'd rather risk my fate/Then lose my faith."

Guitarist-vocalist Chris Cheney has developed into a versatile and impassioned singer.

White Noise may not be as raucous previous albums, but it definitely lives up to expectations. Regardless of your musical tastes, there's a good chance you will find *White Noise* to be enjoyable.

White Noise will please fans and will give new listeners a good sense of the band's distinctively rocking yet melodic sound.



Trivium *Shogun*

By Will Palmer
Editor-in-Chief

Florida metal band Trivium's most recent album, *Shogun*, was released to good reviews and overall success. Taking inspiration from their previous albums, *Ascendancy* and *The Crusade*, *Shogun* is a mix of all the best parts of Trivium, while giving a promising look to the future of the band.

While *The Crusade* shied away from screaming, *Shogun* fully embraces it, and the mixture of melodic singing and screaming (mostly singing) is a welcome change from the Hetfield-style rough singing that permeated the last album.

Shogun starts out with "Kirisute Gomen," which in Japanese means, "I apologize in advance for decapitating you." The song is an excellent prelude to the album, from bizarre references to mythological figures and cryptic, mystic language, to the music itself. The mix of melodic verses and harshly screamed lines, as well as twin guitar solos, prepares you for the onslaught of music to come.

"Torn Between Scylla and Charybdis" and "Down from the Sky" are the next songs to come. "Down from the Sky" is one of the best songs on the album, combining the stories of tyrannical WWII leaders with the clean ferocity of the riffs and heavily harmonized chorus.

"Throes of Perdition" and "Insurrection" are twin cryptic attacks against organized government and religion, focusing heavily on the betrayal that those in power often display toward those they are supposed to serve.

"The Calamity" is even more cryptic, and thus open to many interpretations. "He Who Spawned the Furies" tells the Greek story of Chronus, who devoured his own children and eventually gave birth to the Furies with his blood when his son killed him.

"Like Callisto to a Star in Heaven" continues the Greek theme, telling of Callisto, a nymph who was raped and impregnated by Zeus, brutally murdered and placed in the sky as Ursa Major, the Big Dipper.

The album ends with the 12-minute title track, which begins like many of the other songs, but takes a 180-degree turn about halfway through. The metallic tone changes quickly to an acoustic sound, which then changes again to an almost bluesy tone, before finally ending with a brutal finish.

Shogun is sure to please any Trivium fan, or any fan of metal in general. Although Trivium has garnered a legion of critics due to both *The Crusade*'s Hetfield-like lyrical style and "true" metal heads criticizing *Ascendancy* (which was Metalcore), the ironic twist is that the combination of the two has produced a fantastic album which not only is Trivium's best, but is probably one of the best of the year.

It won't silence all of Trivium's critics, but it is sure to please anyone who listens to it without bias.

**Got opinions of your own?
Share them with us.
Send emails to
bwolfe@taft.k12.ca.us.
Be sure to include your name**

Legend of Sleepy Hollow offers movie buffs thrills, chills...Depp

By Rod Sanchez
Staff Writer

In search of a movie so frighteningly good it will make your head roll? Look no further than *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. Director Tim Burton's Oscar-winning cinematic take on the classic horror tale of the headless horseman is a superb movie that you may have overlooked. The movie won an Academy Award for Best Set Direction and Art Direction.

The movie is set in the little village of Sleepy Hollow in 1799. Ichabod Crane (Johnny Depp) is a constable sent from New York to investigate a series of murders in which the only evidence is headless corpses.

The townspeople believe it's the legendary headless horseman Hessian, who had been decapitated by his own sword during the Revolutionary War. They believe he has returned from Hell to reclaim his head.

Crane refuses to believe the leg-

end and is convinced he can solve this mystery using science and logic. But with the help of the fair Katrina van Tassel (Christina Ricci) and the son of one of the victims, he encounters some interesting evidence that would suggest otherwise.

Though the movie is a very good adaptation of the original story, the presentation is the highlight of the film.

Burton effectively creates a depressed mood and Gothic theme. The mood and theme, coupled with the impressive visual effects, with a melodic score that fits each scene result in a haunting experience for the viewer.

Sleepy Hollow is an impressive movie in all respects. Some might gripe about the excessive violence and gore, but the movie's strengths will hush the nitpickers. *Sleepy Hollow* remains impressive over nine years after its 1999 release and should be seen by everyone who enjoys stylish, well-acted movies.

