



The Gusher

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Wildcats Since 1912

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Luau brings aloha spirit to Taft's end-of-year "dance"

By Jessica Hall
Staff Writer

The last dance of the year, the Luau, brought some island spirit to TUHS on May 9.

For the first time in a long time the Luau did not take place in the quad, but instead was held on the football field.

Leis were handed out, and a buffet of free food was available. The buffet included chicken strips, fruit, BBQ wings and other Hawaiian-themed foods. A beverage booth sold virgin pina colodas and strawberry daiquiris for \$2.

The strawberry daiquiris were a big hit.

"The taste is exquisite," junior Ryan Ventura commented.

Fire dancers and hula dancers performed at the Luau for everyone's entertainment.

DJ Double D was so well-liked at Prom that he was hired again.

"The DJ was so the bizz," freshman Tala Savaii said.

Photographer Gary Morris took formal pictures in the mirror room.

"This dance is off the chain. They put the phone off the hook," junior Billy Friend enthused.

The decorations for the Luau were sponsored by the Senior class, but the dance was managed by two nonofficers, Alexcia Perales and Jenny Gonzales.

"We didn't want the last dance of the year to go badly for lack of planning, so we picked it up last minute and did what we could," said Perales. "I think it went well."

Some students were not a fan of the lighting on the football field.

"It's too bright; it is like we are dancing in midday," senior Joel Vermillion said.

"I got lei'd at the Luau," senior Fabian Taute joked.

Senior class advisors John Usrey and Ryan Hickman were joined by several other chaperones.

"We did a reasonable job of keeping a lid on the thug life," Usrey commented.

Principal Mark Richardson was also enjoying the night.

"The Luau was very festive. Looks like everyone had a good time," Richardson said.



Freshman James Byers and junior Kalyn Valentine join the hula dancers at the luau. Photo by Jessica Hall

Battle of the Sexes rally brings out students' fighting spirit



It was chaos as members of the boys and girls teams scrambled to get onto the water slide in the final contest. Photo by Bill Wolfe

By Sam Gonzales
Features Editor

Martin Memorial Stadium was brought to life with pink and blue for the age-old Battle of the Sexes on May 22.

The festivities were kicked off when M.C. Eric Newton asked 25 girls and 25 boys, including staff members, to take the field in order to see which was the better gender.

First, teams were asked to select their fastest student and staff member to see who could run the length of the football field most quickly. For the girls, sophomore Karlie Twisselman and staff member Joy Reynolds ran, while senior Dalton Botts and staff member Mike Cowan ran for the boys. As the runners finished, they tagged a different teammate who was required to dress up in clothing of the opposite gender.

The next game was the medicine ball toss. All participants got in a straight line and passed a medicine

ball either over their head or under their legs.

Following the medicine ball battle, there was a trivia quiz. The girls were asked questions like: "Who won the first Super Bowl?" "What does the T in TKO stand for?" and "Where is the abductor longis muscle?" The boys were asked such questions as: "How many pills are in a pack of birth control?" and "What does the company Hard Candy make?"

As the trivia questions came to an end, the next game was the waterslide race. The first team to get all of their members standing in front of their side of the stands would win. Participants fought their way up the slide and down into the water. In the end, the boys were victorious.

Finally, it was time for the water balloon free-for-all. Any students who wanted to participate were invited down to the field to finish out a battle that has yet to be won.



Staff member Robert Lumsden tries to defend against senior Dalton Botts, while senior Chris Fink watches. Photos by Jenny Gonzales

Senior vs. Staff basketball game ends in last-second Staff victory

By Britten Smith
Staff Writer

The annual Senior vs Staff basketball game was held on May 20 in the Mullen Gym.

Seniors participating included: Andrew LeClair, Dalton Botts, Jesse Tafoya, Chris Fink, Tommy Halphin, Jeremiah Twisselman, Kurtis Rawls, Sergio Gonzales, Lyndon Fagauu, Aaron Howell, and Britten Smith.

On the other side, the Staff team included Mike Goodwin, Mike Cowan, Joy Reynolds, Ryan Hickman, Mark Richardson, Tammy Sutherland, Terrance Howell and a few others.

The game was close during the first half, but the Seniors managed to gain a five-point lead by the end of the half with a score of 25-20.

There would be a lot more scoring to come in the second half by both teams. The Seniors jumped out to a 12-point lead early on, but only managed to maintain this lead through the third quarter.

The Seniors had a five-point lead with 45 seconds left in the game, but Terrance Howell hit a 10-point shot, giving the staff a 72-67 come-from-

behind victory.

"That was pretty epic," commented senior Dominic Carino. "The game was enjoyable to watch. I like the addition of 5-point and 10-point shots because it made the game a little more unpredictable," Carino added.

Senior Morgan Blair observed that, "For the first time in a while, there were no girls on the Seniors Team."



Staff player Terrence Howell gets in senior Britten Smith's way, as Robert Lumsden and senior Aaron Howell move in to assist.

STAR testing changes well received by all

By Megan Chappelle
Managing Editor

The new STAR testing schedule that was introduced this year had a positive impact on students and teachers. This new schedule allowed the students to take the tests in their own classes with their own teachers.

"Studies show that this is a better environment for high stakes testing," says Marilyn Brown, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment. "Also, we didn't want to overwhelm the students with too many tests in one day."

About 99 percent of all eligible Taft High student participated in STAR testing.

The majority of teachers loved the new schedule, enjoying the less stressful days with no more than two tests. They also liked the fact that they tested their own students in their own classrooms.

"It's hard to be in a [testing] environment for too long," says Brown.

The fact that the students were in familiar environments seemed to help them relax and perform better.

In addition, nutrition breaks were provided to give the students a chance to walk around, have a snack and enjoy the outdoors in between tests.

Also, the STAR test raffle sponsored by Principal Mark Richardson and his office gave the students an incentive to participate and do well.

The Academic Performance Index reveals how well a school has performed on the STAR tests. Last year, Taft High's API was 661. The growth target for this year was seven points, making a total score of 668. The state has set a goal of 800 for all schools.

"All the elements are there for success," says Brown. "It's still hard to tell [if we met the goal]."

Overall, the STAR testing schedule was a success.

"Everybody was more relaxed except those of us down here turning over tests," said Brown.

Kern County NASCAR track stalled by financial issues

By Will Palmer
Staff Writer

"Kern County's New Home for NASCAR", the temporary name of the NASCAR track being built on Enos Lane at I-5 between Bakersfield and Taft, is a source of both suspenseful anticipation and elevated hopes for many citizens of the two cities.

The groundbreaking for the new track took place on Feb. 7, 2007. The groundbreaking included a race between Alen Destefani, chairman of KCNASCAR, and Marion Collins, former owner of Mesa Marin raceway and owner of the new track. They raced in two enormous earthgraders, with Destefani winning the race. They then proceeded to perform a more traditional groundbreaking ceremony by digging up the first clods of earth with golden shovels.

The NASCAR track is currently being built and financed by the Collins family and the Destefani family, as well as many sponsors, local and national.

"I've been to a lot of groundbreakings since I've been in office," Ray Watson, Kern County Supervi-

sor, told the Bakersfield Californian. "This is the largest groundbreaking ceremony I've seen in Kern County."

The proposed \$35 million-dollar complex was originally scheduled to be finished in January, but was delayed by weather and financial issues. It will sport 5,000 permanent seats, and will have enough room to set up temporary seating to house about 10,000 extra spectators for special events. The track will also sport a children's playground, where parents can watch over their children while still maintaining a view of the racing track.

Two months ago, backers of the track were hopeful that about \$30 million would be secured within 60 days to finish the project. The fines and debts piled up when the price of real estate dropped drastically and land that Destefani hoped to sell lost value, reducing their construction funding drastically.

"No one has given up," Larry Collins told the Bakersfield Californian recently. "It's a unique process, bringing in professionals and trying to finance a racetrack. It's a little more difficult to accomplish your task."



Two views of the NASCAR track at I-5 and Enos Lane: the artist's rendition and the partially constructed track. Photos by Bill Wolfe

ROP AutoShop class prepares to race at new speedway

By Lillie Gervacio
Entertainment Editor

With the opening of Kern County's new home to NASCAR at the intersection of Interstate 5 and Enos Lane, the ROP auto shop class is fixing up a 2001 Chevy Cavalier to participate in 11 student races to be held this summer.

The class will be working on the car and will assign four drivers and a pit crew.

"Basically, a bunch of us will build a car into a modified race car," explained senior Aaron Howell. "It will get inspected and then our team will be able to race. High schools all over do it. Hopefully by the summer we'll be ready," he added.

To drive, a student must be 18 years old, a high school graduate and (as a personal rule) have been in auto shop for at least two years. To be part of the pit crew the only requirement is to be enrolled in the class.

Each driver will only be allowed to drive three times, and no engine modifications will be allowed.

"The students who are most interested are Brad Howard, Robert Vons, Brian Baker, Doug Hutchison, Toby Logan, Frankie Ray, Dale Harris, Travis Neuman, Josh Kendrick, Ricky Romo, Aaron Wroblewski, Aaron Howell and Brendon Neal," commented instructor Don Thornberry. "They will most likely make up the crew and drivers."

The class will be sponsored by Westside ROP and will be looking for more sponsors, but the vehicle will be labeled as a TUHS car and will be painted white, blue and yellow.

"I'm looking forward to driving," commented Romo. Ray is looking forward to "the experience." Both will be driving and be part in the pit crew.

Be sure to save this copy of *The Gusher* to add to your yearbook. The last two issues of *The Gusher* contain coverage of events from the last quarter that are not in the yearbook. In years to come, you'll be glad you did. Have a great summer!

Prom Night's "Black Tie Affair" generates largest attendance in years

By Sam Gonzales
Features Editor

Students' smiles were shining at "A Black Tie Affair," Taft High's prom on April 12. The festivities lit up the local H2O Club from 8 p.m. to midnight.

Upon arrival, students were greeted by student volunteers posing as paparazzi, who took their pictures.

Those pictures were then displayed in a slideshow projected on the wall of the club, which was managed by IT technicians Jodi Jackson and Billy Long.

Students were then directed to the side to vote for Prom King and Queen.

Finally, students advanced to the dance floor. All around the dance floor tables were decorated with shooting stars.

Non-alcoholic beverages were served at the ground floor bar. Bartenders were Kelly Federoff, Yolanda Hodges, Savannah Wilkey and Becky Martin.

These ladies mixed non-alcoholic strawberry daiquiris and pina colodas. Students were also able to purchase bottles of water.

Robyn Rowland and Andrew LeClair were crowned Prom King and Queen.



Prom Queen Robyn Rowland dances with King Andrew LeClair. Photo courtesy of The Derrick

"I think this was a great choice of Prom King and Queen," said junior class advisor Paul Martinez. "Robyn breaks the mold."

Fellow advisor Tammy Sutherland was impressed with the event.

"I thought prom was outstanding. It was the best one since I've been here," she said.

Security included vice principal Rona Angelo, campus supervisor Mary Miller, Barry Jameson, Larry Breslin and Charlotte Frakes.

Martinez admits he would have been done a few things differently.

"I would have done the picture situation differently," he explained.

"Maybe we should open up pictures for a few hours in the afternoon and that way it would eliminate a lot of people from the evening."

Karen from KC Photography served as the official photographer.

Other planned improvements include making sure there is air conditioning, not wasting money on food and having two photographers.

"I would have picked and ordered the decorations earlier to relieve last-minute stress," noted junior Kayln Valentine.

All flowers at the entrance were donated by Kings Nursery.

Throughout the night random awards were given to students. The Prom Committee devised the awards beforehand and selected winners by drawing names out of a hat.

"Without the support of volunteers, parents, teachers and kids, there was no way we could have had the prom that we had," said

Martinez.

Parent volunteers included Kristal Partlow, Kirk and Lisa Kindred, Vicki Howard, Charlotte Kidd, Rene Adamo and Diane Kasynzki.

Staff member support was provided by Rick Woodson, John Kopp, Brandy Trejo, Mike McCormick and Kelly Morris.

Major student contributions were made by Trisha Patterson, Megan Crane, Kalyn Valentine, Konr Smith, Holly Starks-Perkins, Jessie Starks, Natalia Zarate, Jessica Martin, Carli Tweedy-Cross and Sierra Sutherland.

"Kalyn made an incredible effort. She was setting up for prom every day from start to finish," said Martinez.

Overall, Prom went on without complications, and there were many positive aspects to the night.

"I would have to say my favorite part of prom was the decorations because I designed them and put them up," admitted Valentine.

"I was most impressed with how every single student made a great effort to present themselves. I am truly impressed with the TUHS student body," stated Martinez proudly.

Senior class takes a day off for annual Magic Mountain trip, while rest of student body takes STAR tests



By Jessica Hall
Staff Writer

On April 21 the seniors enjoyed an adrenaline-filled day away from school.

While all other students took their English STAR tests, the seniors spent the day at Magic Mountain.

The group departed at 8:15 a.m. for their exciting adventure. A lot of students were psyched for the trip.

"It was a nice break from school. It was fun to just hang with my friends and chill," said Jozie Stew-

ard.

The chaperones were John Usrey, Mary Miller, Brandi Trejo, Ryan Hickman, Mike Cowan, Rich House and Elizabeth Usrey.

The daredevil advisors enjoyed riding DejaVu and Goliath. Mr. Usrey personally recommends The Swing Shot, a huge swing that sways while you sit and chow down on your food.

Students had a lot of fun on their Senior Trip.

"I sure did have fun! The reason for that is obvious," said senior Alberto Panchi. "When I see those

huge, amazing, powerful rides like DejaVu, X, Tatsu and Superman, all the excitement comes flowing into my body like a river of energy, telling me 'You have to get on all those rides and see if they really are scary.' So that is exactly what I did. I rode them and BANG!"

"If the day had a theme, it would be 'awesome'," Meggan Strosnider stated.

Since the trip was on a Monday there was not much of a crowd.

"The trip was great; the longest I had to wait was five to ten minutes tops," Mr. Usrey said. "There were very few people and it was very easy to get around. I have received a lot of good feedback. Although DejaVu put my stomach in my throat."

The group arrived back home at approximately 6:15 p.m. Mr. Usrey said that Magic Mountain is the perfect place for the Senior Trip because it pretty much "dominates."

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Junior Chris Johnson is proud of his unusual vehicle, a Jeepster Commando. Photo by Britten Smith

Car of the Month: Chris Johnson's 1971 Jeepster Commando owns the road

By Britten Smith
Staff Writer

Junior Chris Johnson owns a 1971 Jeepster Commando, also known as that big silver thing that "goes anywhere," as Chris would put it.

Chris inherited the Jeepster at age 13 when his grandpa passed

away. Though Chris loves his Jeepster, fixing it is definitely not his favorite part of the vehicle.

"When you go to fix one part on it, you find five or six more that need the same attention," Chris said.

It costs about \$25 every three or four days to keep gas in the Buick V6 that makes the Jeepster go.

In the future, Chris wants to fully rebuild the motor and transmission and rewire the entire vehicle.

His master, senior Jessica Hall, enjoys the Jeepster as well.

"I like driving it. I pretty much peel out daily. I like going through the mud puddles in the fields as well," Hall said.

New research challenges belief that today's teens are more narcissistic than those of years past

By Sam Gonzales
Features Editor

Are teens by nature narcissistic? Some scholars think that the level of teen narcissism has increased in the present generation, but it might just be that teens have simply been "schooled in the church of self-esteem," according to New York Times writer Stephanie Rosenbloom.

According to new research that challenges existing knowledge, American teenagers are actually not more narcissistic than earlier generations, although they demonstrate signs of self-obsession.

"There have been very few changes in the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of youth over the last 30 years," Kali H. Trzeniewski, an assistant professor of psychology at the University of Western Ontario, recently told the New York Times.

Several reasons why the young may be perceived as having increased narcissistic traits include personal biases of older adults, the ever changing nature of societal normalcy, the shining light of celebrity mishaps and the phenomenally popular social networking sites.

MySpace, the largest networking site, has become a major source of fuel for adults who think teens have become self-absorbed.

For those who didn't grow up with the Internet, it might seem strange to think of a mere website as an actual place.

According to an article in USA Today, "Teens hang out at MySpace," the website has been referred to as one cause of narcissistic teens and has grown to 47.3 million members among these in their teens, early twenties and even older.

In the 1970's-80's teens grew up with much less than teens today. The average teen now possesses multiple

electronic devices such as an iPod, a cell phone and a computer at home, and as a result they are able to communicate at virtually all hours of the day. This makes them seem narcissistic, while also making them appear obsessed with luxury.

"Everybody likes luxury as long as someone will give it to them," notes Taft High psychologist Mark Shoffner.

Most adults would agree that by giving children everything, they have no idea what it's like to work for something, and that teens with

the Twenties."

Shoffner partially agrees. "If families make time, then yes."

Major changes have taken place in the home life of the children of this generation.

Parents of today's children had a different home life. Now both parents usually work, leaving time for their children to occupy themselves, and also allowing them to become more independent.

Shoffner explains, "From a developmental standpoint, teens are becoming individualized. They are becoming more independent, and are turning into adults."

According to Jean Twenge, an associate professor of psychology at San Diego State University, whose research was conducted in response to Dr. Trzeniewski's, narcissism is much more prevalent among people born in the 1980s than in earlier generations.

Twenge's findings were in part based on the change in cultural beliefs that arose when baby-boom parents were dedicated to instilling self-esteem in children starting in the early '70s.

"We think feeling good about yourself is very, very important," said Twenge in an interview with the New York Times. "That never used to be the case back in the '50s and '60s when people thought about 'What do we need to teach young people?'" She also brings to light cultural sayings such as, "Believe in yourself and anything is possible" and "Do what's right for you." "All of them are narcissistic," she commented.

Whether it's narcissism or just independence, the latest generation of parents will always think that the current generation is more self-absorbed, but the same thing was said about them.



What exactly constitutes narcissism among teens?

jobs are better as adults. As society becomes more affluent, children are being seen as more narcissistic because they expect more, when in reality, it is simply that more things are available.

"Young people have a closer relationship with their parents than existed between children and their parents in the 1960s," asserts Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, a developmental psychologist who is the author of "Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road From the Late Teens through

can Life, 39% of teens ages 12 to 17 post their own photos, artwork, stories, and videos; 33% create or work on webpages or blogs and 28% have created their own online journal blog. Over half (55%) maintain a MySpace profile.

"It's something to do and a good way to keep in touch with friends,"

Honors Night awards \$164K to 73 seniors for college costs

Seventy-three seniors took home a total of \$164,350 from 66 scholarships at the annual Honors Night held in the Auditorium on the evening of May 15. The two-hour ceremony was the culmination of the Local Scholarship Program, in which local businesses, organizations, and individuals award scholarships to outstanding TUHS seniors. Students were required to submit an application along with a short essay, letters of recommendation and a transcript by the March 14 deadline.

The big "winner" of Honors Night was Allen Hickernell, who received nearly \$18,000, which he will apply toward his first year at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo.

Beatriz Aguilar collected \$10,550 for her freshman year at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.

Jeremiah Twisselman received several scholarships, totaling \$10,350. He plans to attend Taft College and then transfer to Cal Poly SLO. Unfortunately, Twisselman, along with several other baseball players, had to miss Honors Night as the varsity baseball team was at Dos Palos for playoff game.

Zakary Krigbaum heard his name called from the podium several times at Honors Night; he will have \$9,850 available for his freshman year of college.

Andrew LeClair and Selene Frausto each received \$5,150 in scholarships. LeClair will attend Cal State University, Monterey Bay and Frausto will attend UC Santa Barbara.

The evening's Master of Ceremonies was Chelle Koerner, Director of Special Services. Laura Macias, senior class president, led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance and ASB president Jennifer Gonzales made the closing remarks.

Honors Night Recipients:

Beatriz Aguilar	\$10,550
Gerardo Almanza	\$2,300
Candyse Arney	\$4,000
Laura Avendano	\$1,100
Donnie Baggs	\$500
Brittany Barlow	\$1,650
Dora Barrera	\$4,100
Morgan Blair	\$200
Jordan Bonner	\$900
Dalton Botts	\$3,900
Kelsey Burch	\$3,700

Dominic Carino	\$800
Brianne Carroll	\$2,100
Cynthia Cervantes	\$1,500
Megan Chapplear	\$2,950
David Chu	\$600
Corrine Clinton	\$800
David Coker	\$100
Disa Cranmer	\$1,600
Wes Eiland	\$2,100
Tina Erdei	\$200
Jose Flores	\$1,400
Selene Frausto	\$5,150
Kinsey Freeman	\$1,100
Brandee Garrett	\$1,500
Jennifer Gonzales	\$3,425
Samantha Gonzales	\$200
Sergio Gonzales	\$1,000
Matt Griffing	\$4,225
Jessica Hall	\$2,300
Brenda Hernandez	\$1,600
Cinthia Hernandez	\$2,100
Perla Herrera	\$2,500
Allen Hickernell	\$17,850
Gina Higginbotham	\$800
Aaron Howell	\$500
Megan Jaske	\$2,900
Meeshell Jewell	\$500
Zakary Krigbaum	\$9,850
Bethany LaChapell	\$2,000
Heather Layton	\$600
Andrew LeClair	\$5,150
Jesus Leon	\$600
Roia Liljeroos	\$2,050
Jayne Lund	\$1,300
Laura Macias	\$2,850
Alfredo Martinez	\$300
Deidra Matamoros	\$600
Brittney Mayfield	\$2,600
Lacey Mayo	\$200
Kayla Minyard-Grissom	\$800
Dylan Niblett	\$4,050
Malu Osormio	\$800
Stephanie Owens	\$3,750
Gerardo Padilla	\$600
Alberto Panchi	\$950
Katie Parker	\$1,100
Brittany Plowman	\$600
Kurtis Rawls	\$1,300
Franklin Ray	\$1,350
Krysta Rogers	\$500
Robyn Rowland	\$1,700
Alicia Rubadeau	\$600
Maria Salas	\$300
Juliana Salazar	\$500
Sarah Sandoval	\$2,750
Steven Spoonmore	\$2,850
Jesus Tafoya	\$2,000
Carey Tuuamalemla	\$200
Jeremiah Twisselman	\$10,350
Maria Uriarte	\$1,900
Jessica Yarbrough	\$850
Cody Yeates	\$750
Total awarded:	\$164,350

Are teens under the influence of music? Do lyrics matter?

By Lillie Gervacio
Entertainment Editor

There are many things out in the world that have negative effects on today's youth. These negatives include alcohol, drugs, etc. However, according to a recent study, the majority of minors across the country are under another harmful influence. Thanks to mp3s and iPods, most parents are unaware of the damage being fed to their young ones. What could this influence be, you might ask? The influence of music.

Teenagers listen to an average of 2.5 hours a day, totaling up to almost 20 hours of music per week. The Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine reported that one in three songs on the charts refers to drugs and alco-

hol use, apparently brainwashing children in those two hours and 30 minutes.

The University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine led a research study using 279 popular songs. The study came up with nine percent bad influences in pop music, 14 percent in rock music, 20 percent in R&B and hip-hop, 36 percent in country music and 77 percent in rap music. In total, three percent

referred to tobacco, 14 percent described marijuana use, and only four percent portrayed a positive anti-drug message.

On the other hand, these influences have been present for years, and what makes musical references to drugs and alcohol different from what you see on television? Will a minor choose to get drunk because of a song they heard on the radio?



Wired lifestyle: Teens creating their own online content, from blogs to videos

By Lillie Gervacio
Entertainment Editor

It seems as though teenagers have more and more uses for the Internet these days: music downloads, shopping, e-mailing, research. Now teens are creating their own content online.

Because of social-utility sites like MySpace and Facebook, teens are now creating blogs, re-editing contents found online and posting their own pictures and video.

Teenagers are definitely living a wired lifestyle; in fact, 83% of teens have online access. According to the Pew Survey of Internet and Ameri-

says senior David Coker.

These websites and blogging sites have become so popular that most schools in the country, including TUHS, have blocked them. A school in New Jersey actually ordered its students to delete their online diaries/blogs or they would be suspended.

"I've blogged before, but now it's like there's too many blogs about the dumbest things," says freshman Silvia Gervacio. "It's kind of over-rated."

As for videos and pictures, senior Laura Macias says, "It's just something you want to share with your friends."

Senior Sentiments: Graduating students experience bittersweet feelings

By Megan Chappelle
Managing Editor

"What are you doing after graduation?"

As a high school senior, this is a question you are probably being asked on a regular basis. And if you are like many seniors, you may be struggling to answer this question with a degree of confidence.

Seniors often feel pressure to be enthusiastic about the future, or to have a set plan that will satisfy others. But the often unrecognized reality is that, although graduating high school can be a very exciting time in life, it can also bring feelings of fear, sadness, confusion and doubt. This is because graduation is an important life change. Life transitions, even if they are positive, are also typically stressful.

The way a student experiences the approach of graduation is unique and individual, and depends on one's personality, personal circumstances, coping style and both positive and negative experiences in high school over the previous four years.

Some students say they can't wait to graduate and others have no desire to leave high school. But the majority of seniors feel mixed emotions at varying times. It's possible, for example, to feel proud of one's accomplishments and to look forward to a sense of freedom. However, at the same time, there may be a real sense of loss about the high school years coming to an end, along with worry about the next stage of life.

Much of the stress of senior year can be attributed to uncertainty about the future and the loss of a sense of predictability. Questions naturally arise about what will come next in many different areas of life. It can be challenging as a senior to know and to trust one's own decisions for the future.

It is also common for seniors to feel insecure, especially if friends and acquaintances seem to be hav-



Member of the Class of 2008 in the senior panoramic photo from the yearbook. Photo courtesy of The Derrick

ing more success in particular ways, like getting a job or being accepted to colleges.

Another common fear for many seniors is the approach of what seems like a dividing line between youth and the responsibilities of adulthood. Many seniors worry about being expected to be a full adult and fear "being out in the real world." Some students feel a sense of pressure to "have fun" and to try to enjoy senior year as much as possible. Balancing one's social life, academics and activities on campus may become more difficult during the last year of high school.

The seniors at Taft High have mixed feelings about graduating and finally being done with high school.

"I'm super excited to finally get out of high school and go out into the real world. At the same time though, I'm sad to leave all my friends and awesome teachers. I feel the best compromise between these conflicting emotions is to face the future head-on and always remember the wonderful memories created here at TUHS by the teachers and friends I've grown to love." - Katie

Parker, Taft College

"I'm so sad that these past four years of high school flew by so fast, but I'm excited to graduate and go to college." - Brenda Hernandez, CSUB

"I'm really nervous and scared, but also I'm excited. Living on the beach will be fun, and I'm probably going to get seasick, but it will be worth it." - Kinsey Freeman, Cal State Monterey Bay

"I am sad and happy at the same time. I'm sad because I am leaving high school and the people I see on a daily basis. I will miss everybody a lot. I'm happy to graduate because I'm ready to start college and a different life." - Malu Osornio, Taft College

"I have mixed feelings about leaving Taft High to pursue my goals and dreams at college. These years have flown by, the best years of my entire life. I am sad to leave behind the many friends I have made. I will miss everyone. However, I am excited to see that I have made it through the years - some challenging ones. I

am uber-excited to finally become a college student." - Leslie Saltiban, Taft College

"Noooo!" - Zak Krighbaum, Taft College

"I feel that graduating high school will be very sad because I am going to miss everyone, even the people I really don't know that much, because they are a part of my graduating class. I am also going to miss the awesome and amazing staff on this campus. But most important, I am excited to take the next step in life and accomplish great things." - Jesse Tafoya, Bakersfield College

"Graduation seems exciting yet scary. I can't wait to move on, but leaving this place behind will be weird. Whatever happens, happens, and I can't wait!" - Jozie Steward, Taft College

"I am so excited to be graduating from high school, but I am also kind of sad in a way. High school is fun, even though I say I hate it. I like seeing my friends, going to lunch with them and just having fun every day. I am really super excited

though. I can't wait to go to college and continue growing up! I'm excited to graduate, move in with my boyfriend, Steven, and just be a real adult. It will suck not seeing all my friends all the time and just basically not being a kid or 'teen' anymore, but I am more excited than anything. High school was so much fun, but I'm sure I'll have even more fun in college and starting the next chapter of my life. It's crazy how fast high school goes by." - Disa Cranmer, Taft College

"After graduating from high school I will be sad, scared and happy. I will be sad because it is the end of a great experience. I will be scared of beginning college because it is something completely new. I will be happy because it was time to end my high school experience and begin a new one at college. High school was an experience that I will never forget." - Selene Frausto, UC Santa Barbara

"[I feel] pant-crapping terror." - Matt Griffing, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo

"Graduating is the epitome of my life..." - Morgan Blair, Cal State Monterey Bay

"It is not hard to leave high school, but the only things I will miss are my friends and teachers. I'm excited to graduate because it is the step that I'm taking towards college. It is time for our class to leave and achieve our goals." - Maria Uriarte, San Diego State

"I still cannot believe four years have gone so fast. As I approach graduation day and the end of my high school career, I am filled with both excitement and fear. I am happy because I am going off to LMU to experience life outside of Taft, but I am also sad because I am going to miss my family." - Beatriz Aguilar, Loyola Marymount University

Foreign Exchange Students reflect on their year at TUHS and time in U.S.



Lucas Schulze

By Lillie Gervacio
Entertainment Editor

Foreign Exchange student Lucas Schulze arrived from Germany early in the second quarter, but this didn't sidetrack him from enjoying his stay here in Taft (or Derby Acres, where he has actually been living).

Before arriving, Lucas thought "that people wore cowboy boots and hats all the time or wore gangster clothes."

After arriving, though, he realized that not everyone dressed like a cowboy or gangster. What did surprise him was his first impression of Taft. Being from a big city, Lucas thought it was weird how small Taft is. In addition, he had never seen so much desert in his life and had a bit of a problem adjusting to the heat.

Now however, Lucas has grown to like Taft. "I actually really like it here," he says. "It's... cute, and the people here make it worth it."

This school year he made many friends, played basketball, did Tough Guy Volleyball and ran track.

However, despite all of the fun he's had, he has missed his friends, food and being able to drink legally. Now that he is preparing to leave, he thinks he's going to miss bacon double cheeseburgers, Dr. Pepper and, of course, his friends.

Lucas' favorite class was Span-

ish, and his favorite teacher was his ROP instructor, Mark Fitzsimmons.

Before leaving, Lucas would like everyone to know that the events in the movie Hostel "aren't really true."

When he gets home to Germany he is looking forward to seeing his friends.



Fabian Taute

By Britten Smith
Staff Writer

When he came to the United States as part of the foreign exchange student program, Fabian Taute, from Germany, was under the impression that all Americans were fat, everyone would be wearing a backwards baseball cap and everyone would support President Bush.

When Fabian arrived, he found that not everyone was fat, not everyone had on a backwards baseball cap and not everyone supports President Bush.

One of the toughest things to adjust to for Fabian while living in the United States was the food.

"For almost a full month after moving here, I had an upset stomach and stuff man." Fabian said.

The things Fabian misses the most about home are the food, the relaxed lifestyle, the smaller absence of drama and the German way of

life.

Though Fabian misses Germany, he wants to do his best to come back to the states for his first semester of college, and to Taft to visit his friends.

What Fabian likes about Taft, and California, is the relaxed atmosphere, the calm environment, and the low crime rate. He also loves American breakfast, namely Denny's. He has grown to love Dr. Pepper, something they have in Germany.

One of the main reasons Fabian likes Taft so much is the high school and his friends.

"It's a whole different world over here. This school is awesome man. The food, the cool people, and the food's pretty good too," Fabian said.

The dumbest school rule, according to Fabian, would have to be the fact that when you're late, they call your parents immediately.

"It's stupid," Fabian said. "In Germany, you can be five, ten, even fifteen minutes late and it's no big deal."

When Fabian leaves, he thinks he's going to miss American cars, some of the food, TUHS, the sun, the atmosphere and, ironically enough, being foreign.

When it comes to his favorite class, Fabian enjoys Foods with Lynn Bramham, and his favorite teacher is Josh Tofte.

Fabian will be leaving us, to return to Germany on June 10th, so make sure you say goodbye to him before he leaves. And if you haven't gotten to know him, you definitely missed a chance to meet a great guy.



Gustaf Hultkrantz

By Sam Gonzales
Features Editor

Swedish native and foreign exchange student Gustaf Hultkrantz has been able to develop his own opinion about the U.S. while spending a year at Taft High.

When Hultkrantz arrived in America he had a picture in his mind that people would be very fat. Hultkrantz soon realized that not all people are.

It took little time to realize that school in America was different than in Sweden.

"There are a lot of sports and activities here. At home it's more about academics," commented Hultkrantz.

His most difficult school rule to adjust to was being on time.

"You have to be everywhere on time and they get really mad if you're not," he said.

Hultkrantz's favorite teacher is Greg Goossen because he's cool, and his favorite class is Foods because you get to eat.

His favorite American restaurant is IN 'N' OUT.

Hultkrantz is a fan of Taft weather.

"It's really cold in Sweden, but it's pretty nice here," he noted.

As the school year winds down to an end, Hultkrantz said he will

miss his friends.

He is most excited to see his friends and family when he returns home, and also looking forward to Swedish food.

Hultkrantz might return to the U.S. for college but it will probably be on the East Coast. If he decides to live in the U.S., he would like to live in Newport Beach.



Lena VonPlaten

Lena VonPlaten is excited to be on her way back home to Sweden. Since she has been here she says that she has grown up a lot.

"This school is a great school," said Lena. She came to Taft six months ago from Oregon, and she likes TUHS better. "It's easier," she said. Her favorite class is Fashion Design, and her favorite teacher is Mrs. Andreatta. She says that school in Sweden is more difficult than it is in America.

Her favorite thing about America is the people, which is also one of the things she's going to miss the most. "The people here are very open."

She's also going to miss the weather. "It's cold and rainy in Sweden," she explained.

Compared to the food she has eaten in the U.S., she prefers Swedish food. "It's healthier," she said.

After a year in America, Lena is very happy to be going home.

-Carli Tweedy-Cross

WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO COLLEGE?

Question 1:
What are you most excited for?

Question 2:
What are you going to miss the most?

 Candyse Arney Geology	 Brittany Barlow Undecided	 Dora Barrera Medicine	 Cynthia Hernandez Veterinary Medicine
 Corrine Clinton Childhood Education	 Sergio Gonzales Kinesiology	 Brenda Hernandez Nursing	 Cynthia Cervantes Sociology
 Lacey Mayo Communications	 Kayla Minyard-Grissom Adolescent Psychology	 Dylan Niblett Engineering	 Alberto Panchi Medicine/Education


Gina Higginbotham
California State University, Chico
Major: Medicine
Q1: "Living in a new city."
Q2: "Friends and family."


Brienne Carroll
San Francisco State University
Major: English
Minor: Journalism
Q1: "Seeing what life outside Taft is like."
Q2: "The small town atmosphere."


Wes Eiland
Fresno State University
Major: Economics
Q1: "Something new."
Q2: "Friends."

CSU BAKERSFIELD

Cal State Bakersfield
Q1 (Candyse): "New people."
Q1 (Sergio): "Lots of new girls."
Q1 (Lacey): "Getting away from Mr. Wolfe's bad jokes."
Q2 (Corrine): "Being at a small school."
Q2 (Dylan): "Nothing."
Q2 (Kayla): "High school sports."


Morgan Blair
Criminal Justice


Dominic Carino
Computer Programming


Selene Frausto
University of California, Santa Barbara
Major: Chemistry
Q1: "Going to the beach."
Q2: "My mom and family."

CSU Monterey Bay

Q1 (Kinsey): "Not living with my parents."
Q2 (Morgan): "Being sheltered and having a safety net."
Q2 (Dominic): "My brother, Anthony."
Q2 (Andrew): "My friends & family in Taft."


Sam Gonzales
English


Megan Chappellear
Pepperdine University
Major: Biology
Q1: "Being away and meeting new people."
Q2: "The friends I'm leaving behind."


Maria Uriarte
San Diego State University
Major: Psychology
Q1: "Meeting new people & the beach."
Q2: "Family & friends."


Andrew LeClair
Animal Husbandry


Kinsey Freeman
Law



Jenny Gonzales
Computer Science


Matt Griffing
Aerospace Engineering


Allen Hickernell
Civil Engineering

Cal Poly San Luis Obispo
Q1 (Jenny): "Living on my own/ the bowling alley on campus."
Q2 (Matt): "Homemade food, family, and sleep."
Q1 (Allen): "Living in San Luis Obispo."

CAL POLY MUSTANGS



David Chu
University of California, San Diego
Major: Bioengineering
Q1: "Starting a new chapter of my life."
Q2: "Friends, teachers, and supporters."


Brittany Plowman
Northern Arizona University
Major: Forensic Science
Minor: Psychology
Q1: "The weather change."
Q2: "The flatness of the desert."

NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY


Beatriz Aguilar
Loyola Marymount University
Major: Civil Engineering
Q1: "Leaving Taft & experiencing the world."
Q2: "My family, friends, & some teachers."

LMU


Meeshell Jewell
Brigham Young University
Major: Undecided
Q1: "Living in a house full of girls."
Q2: "Friends and family."

BYU

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2008

Varsity baseball's winning season ends in 6-5 playoff loss to D.P.



Wildcats pitcher throws some smoke toward a Shafter batter in a late-season game won by Taft. Photo by Bill Wolfe

By **Brianne Carroll**
Sports Editor

Having finished second in league, the varsity baseball team feels good about their season.

"Overall, the coaches are happy with all of the players' performance," says Coach Dave Robertson.

Their league record ended up being 11-4, with three losses to Ba-

kersfield Christian and one loss to Wasco.

On Apr. 8, Taft suffered a close loss to Bakersfield Christian, losing 12-11. By the fourth inning, the

Wildcats were down 10-2, but an inning later they had an 11-10 advantage. During the sixth and seventh innings, the Eagles scored two more runs, clinching the win.

Taft played Bakersfield Christian again on Apr. 10, losing 6-4.

After the two losses, the Wildcats began a winning streak that lasted until the end of the league season.

They beat Tehachapi on Apr. 15 in a close game that ended with a 12-11 win. Taft took an early lead, earning five runs in the first inning, two in the second and five in the fourth inning. Tehachapi didn't go down without a fight, though. They scored six runs in the fifth inning, three runs an inning later and one in the seventh inning, leaving Taft ahead by only one run.

After the win over Tehachapi, the Wildcats came out to beat them again on Apr. 18, in another close game, winning 8-7.

On Apr. 22, Taft beat Wasco 9-2. The game was tied 2-2 up until the sixth inning, when the Wildcats exploded with seven runs, sealing the victory.

Three days after defeating Wasco, Taft beat them again 11-3 at home.

Taft faced Arvin on Apr. 29 and May 1, winning the first game 4-0 and the second 12-2.

As the end of the league season approached, the Wildcats prepared to face Shafter two more times, on May 6 and May 9. They came out on top in both games, stomping the Generals 10-1 and 13-1.

After ending their season 17-8 overall, Taft had high hopes for their playoff game against Dos Palos on May 15.

Taft lost 6-5, cutting short their playoff run.

"That was the worst part of the season," says senior shortstop Jeremiah Twisselman. "We had a couple of bad plays in the playoff game that ended our season."

The coaches have high hopes for next year's varsity team. Six of the starting players in the playoff game will be returning for the 2009 season.

"Next year will be our best year for returning players," says Robertson.

Senior Tommy Halphin summed up the team's view of the season.

"It was a really good year. I wish we could have gone further than we did, but I'm happy with what we achieved," he says.

Swimming and Diving team wraps up strong season at league and CIF meets

By **Sam Gonzales**
Features Editor

Stroking through the season with high hopes, the Taft High swim team finished with an SSL title.

Head coach John Usrey was surprised with many of his swimmers.

"Caleb Taylor made huge improvements, along with Wyatt Lehman and Matt Griffing," commented Usrey.

While the season went well, the boys beating Tehachapi was a huge accomplishment.

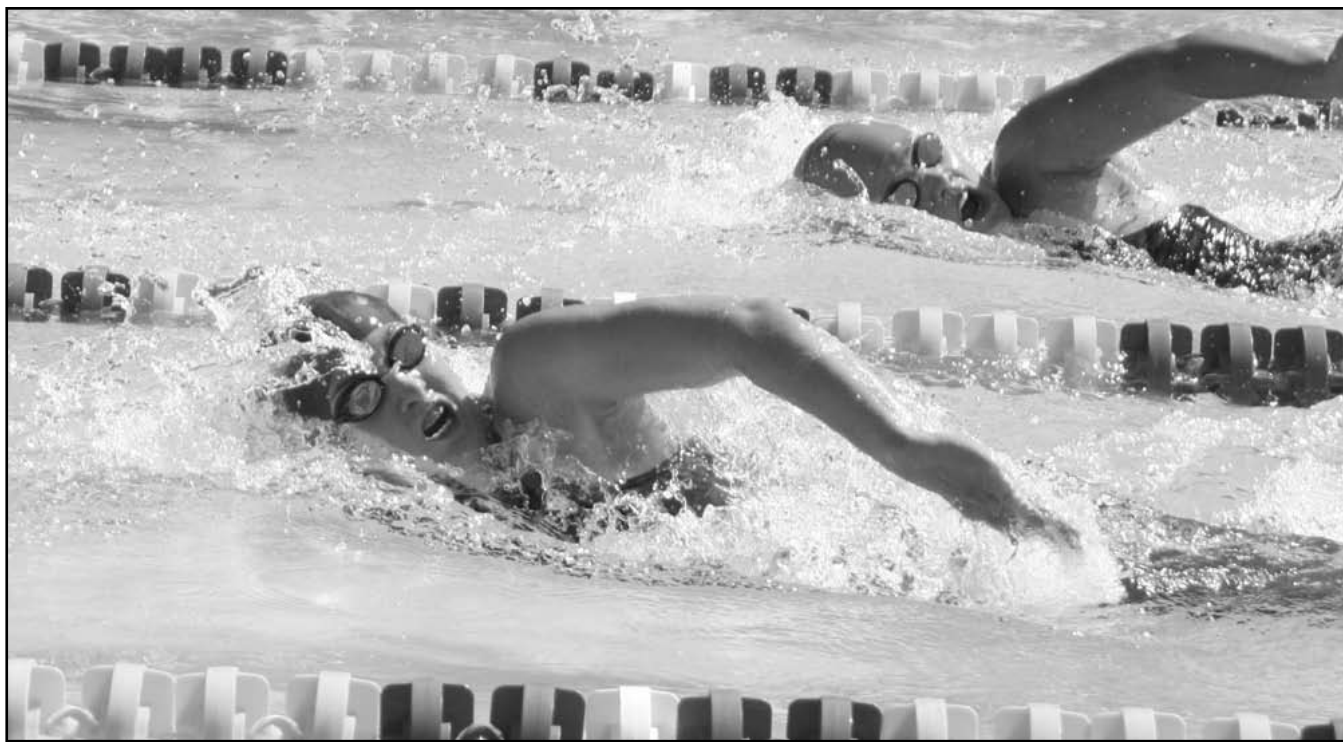
After winning an SSL title, the team went on to compete in the State-Central Section.

On April 15 the Taft Wildcats competed in a meet against Tehachapi. The boys won the meet by a score of 100-83. Individually, senior Clayton Dudley captured the 50-yard freestyle and the 100-yard freestyle in times of 23.36 and 53.74. Junior Tyler Garrison and senior Matt Griffing opened up opportunities for the boys by finishing second twice. The Lady Wildcats fell short, losing to Tehachapi 104-77. Sophomore Kasey Stuntebeck and junior Nicole Owen were the only swimmers to win individual races. Stuntebeck placed first in the 50-yard freestyle with a time of 26.55. Owen took her race with a time of 2:24.20.

Taft faced the Shafter Generals on April 22. The boys defeated Shafter 126-39 by capturing first place in nine out of 11 events. Dudley paved the way for Taft by finishing first four times. For the relays, Dudley teamed up with Garrison and sophomore Mike Hagstrom, finishing in a time of 1:37.89 in the 200 freestyle. In the 400 freestyle relay Dudley then joined with senior Allen Hickernell and junior Mark-Aaron Nearn, winning the race in 4:05.49.

The girls' race was a little more of a battle, but they managed to come out victorious. Senior Megan Chappelle led the Lady Wildcats with two wins in individual races. Chappelle then won two additional races in relay events. First, Chappelle teamed up with Stuntebeck and Owen to win the 200 medley relay in 2:15.89 and then she teamed up with sophomore Kylie Rawls, Owen and Stuntebeck to win the 200-freestyle relay in 1:58.95. Stuntebeck also captured first in the 100-yard freestyle with a time of 59.00.

Standout swimmers included Garrison and Stuntebeck. Garrison placed seventh in the breaststroke at CIF, while Stuntebeck placed ninth and 14th in the 50 and 100 freestyle. The boys placed 14th in the 200-meter relay.



Kasey Stuntebeck surges through the water in the league meet at the Taft pool. Photo by

Team atmosphere was favorable, with all swimmers working with a spirit of camaraderie.

"We all got along good. Everyone was close and we had no problems," commented Rawls.

Junior Karely Urias was satisfied with her swim season.

"We tried our hardest and did

the best we could," she said.

For the boys' side Dudley was a very strong asset to the team, and for the girls, Stuntebeck and Chappelle were the standouts.

"Working with coach Usrey was fun," said Rawls.

"He was very entertaining," said Urias, "It was fun occasionally push-

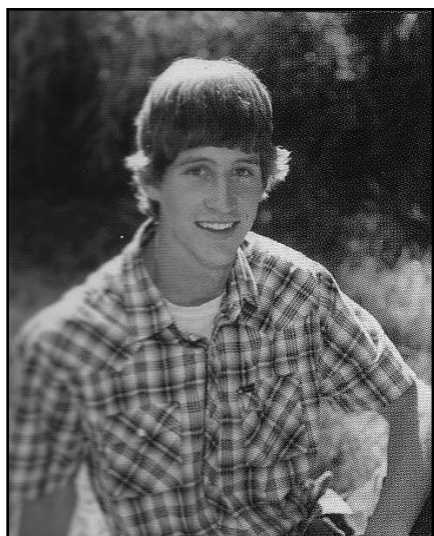
ing him into the pool."

Next year will be a difficult year for the Taft High swim team. They will lose seven seniors.

Overall, Usrey is pleased with his season.

"They've been a great group to work with. I'll miss the exiting seniors," said Usrey.

2005 grad JC Chitwood remembered fondly by those who loved him and worked with him



JC Chitwood in his senior portrait from the 2005 Derrick. Photo courtesy of The Derrick

By **Brianne Carroll**
Sports Editor

Taft Union High School 2005 graduate JC Chitwood was a beloved son, brother, cousin and a wonderful friend. His life was cut short due to a tragic motorcycle accident on Taft Highway on Apr. 19, six days shy of his 21st birthday.

He was born on Apr. 25, 1987 to Jim and Karen Chitwood of Maricopa, where he grew up.

JC attended Taft Union High School for four years, where he participated in activities such as basketball and golf. He graduated with honors and was in the top 20 of his class.

"I had JC as a freshman and I always remember him being very happy and a humorous young man," says Spanish teacher Mike Cowan.

Other activities JC enjoyed were hunting, fishing, riding his dirt bike and spending time with his friends.

Senior Brittany Barlow, who was friends with JC, says, "JC was a true

friend. He made me feel comfortable when I needed someone to talk to and he was always understanding."

After he graduated, JC attended Taft College and worked as an AVID tutor at Taft High for a year.

"JC brought an easygoing intelligence into the room when he tutored the AVID students," says AVID Coordinator and teacher Bill Wolfe. "He showed them you could be cool and popular and still be smart. He particularly liked tutoring pretty girls," Wolfe said with a smile.

JC was liked by everyone he came into contact with, and he touched more people than he could have ever imagined.

Senior Gina Higginbotham says, "JC was always there for me if I needed someone to talk to and he always cheered me up."

JC left his footprints at Taft High and in all of our hearts. He will never be forgotten.

Ag Welding students impress at state competition in San Luis Obispo

By **Jessica Hall**
Staff Writer

Ag Welding teacher Patrick Casey and four Taft High students competed in the State Welding Competition in San Luis Obispo on May 3.

The group of students included Jerry Almanza, Justin Lawrence, Cody Ezell and Woody Trout.

Since Friday, May 2 was a school holiday, Casey and the boys met late Friday morning and drove over to Casey's house in San Luis Obispo.

They met up with Roy Coffman, the shop manager of Chicago Bridge and Iron, who gave them a two-and-a-half-hour tour of CBI's supplies and technology. The tour included explanations of the new technology, employment in the welding business and a few qualities he would look for before hired someone.

The boys also received dinner from the Floor Culture Judging Team from Paso Robles before getting rested up for their big day.

Casey and the boys had to be unloaded and in line for the competition at 7:30 a.m. on Saturday.

The competition consisted of

seven rotations. Of that seven, four were welding: TIG, MIG, Stick and Flame welding. Another was their knowledge of welding. One rotation allowed the contestants to submit their portfolio and job application.

Sophomore Woody Trout received a perfect score on his portfolio. Casey explained that getting a perfect score is pretty much "unheard of."

"Receiving a perfect score felt pretty good. Hopefully I will continue to score like that for my upcoming years," said Trout.

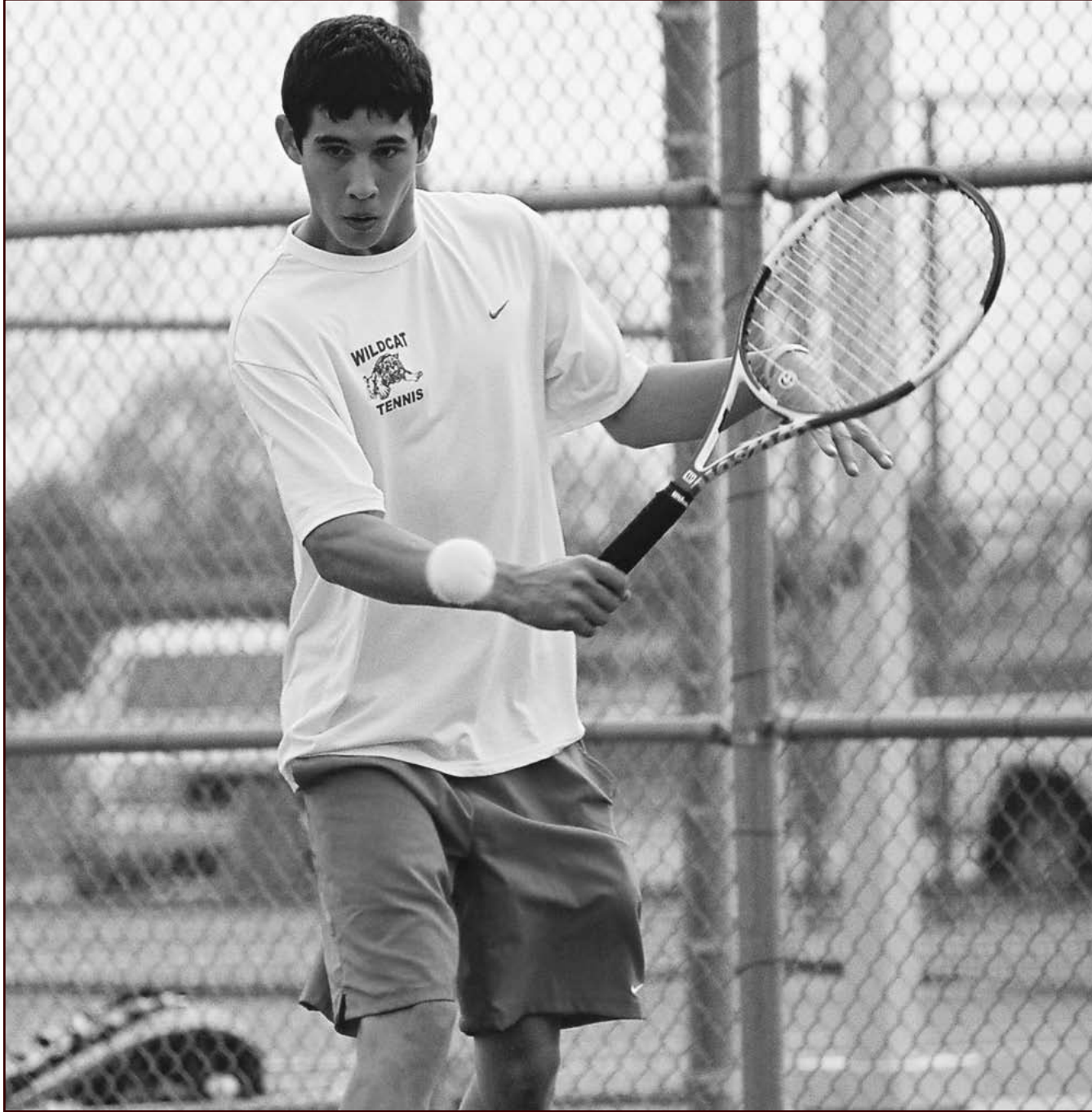
After enduring five to six hours of welding, the participants attended a career fair and talked to several well-known vendors about welding. They walked around for three hours waiting for their results.

Cody Ezell received a bronze medal and an individual notable mention.

Overall, they placed 10th out of the top 20 welding teams in the state of California.

"I am very proud of our guys. They worked really hard and came a great distance in one year," Casey said.

Boys' tennis, led by Terry and Patton, finishes with best season in 30 years



Senior Rober Terry works on his game at a recent practice. Photo courtesy of Jim Carnal

By Carli Tweedy-Cross
Staff Writer

Boys' tennis came to a close with the best season in 30 years led by Kenny Patton and Robert Terry, said coach Jim Carnal. The team lost a few members throughout the season but still managed to finish strong.

In their last game in the playoffs against the Orosi Cardinals they were unexpectedly defeated, losing 5-4. The No. 1 players match had Robert Terry in a battle with Orosi's Anthony DeLacerda, with Terry winning 3-6, 7-6 (7-4), 12-10. Patton

also won his match against Ramon Jimenez 6-4, 6-4.

The boys were handed their first defeat when Christian Ramirez lost 6-2, 6-3 to Alex Mendoza. Another Orosi win came against Taft's David Chu, who lost 6-2, 4-6, 10-8 to Francisco Farias.

Taft suffered another loss when Rodolfo Noriega lost in the tiebreaker to Mendez. Jose Estrada earned Taft another win by defeating Alex Quevido 0-6, 6-4, 10-1.

In doubles play, Patton and Terry were in a close battle but scored 11 points in a row to defeat Mendoza

and Jimenez 7-5, 6-0.

Taft was finally knocked out of the match when two players lost in a row, giving Orosi the win.

"If one or two balls had bounced the other way, it would have been a different story," Coach Carnal told the Midway Driller.

Taft's team was no longer in the running, but Terry and Patton went on to play in Valley Individuals, where they lost.

Taft finished the playoffs with a record of 7-3 and a season record of 16-9.



Sophomore Juliana Campos takes off in the long jump. Photo courtesy of The Derrick

Track and Field girls win SSL title, place second in Valley, in strong year

By Carli Tweedy-Cross
Staff Writer

The Wildcat Track and Field team had a good run this year, with one of the largest track teams in school history.

"Everyone's done really well. It's just been awesome," says junior hurdler and long jumper Loren Kolb.

"It went really well," adds junior discus thrower and shotputter Felipe Pulido. "We were really competitive."

The Wildcats were very successful in overcoming the competition, and for the second year in a row, the girls won SSL. They placed second in the Valley Championships and, as icing on the cake, senior Carey Tuamalamalo has qualified for State as a discus thrower. She is considered one of the top 18 girls in the state and will be representing Taft at

State on May 30.

"This year has been just as competitive as the past," says head coach Paul Martinez. "We ended with 88 kids. This is my fifth year coaching, and each year we get bigger, better, stronger. We did really good in all sports this year, and one of the reasons is because kids are more dedicated in the Summer Speed Camps."

In fact, over 150 students are expected to participate in Speed Camp this summer, including athletes from track, football and other sports. Martinez also said that the dedication of the kids to practicing track, as well as attending the camp, were two of the reasons for their success.

The track team enjoyed a very successful season, and the way things are going under Coach Martinez's leadership, next year should be even better.

Varsity softball team reaches Valley semifinals, loses 2-1 on controversial call

By Britten Smith
Staff Writer

The Taft High Lady Wildcats began a three game home stand on April 8, hoping to sweep, and started off on the right foot when they defeated Tehachapi.

Next, the Lady Wildcats faced, and demolished the Arvin Bears on April 10. The Lady Wildcats won 24-6, boosting their record to 9-10 overall and 2-0 in league play.

The third game of the home stand ended their hopes of making the sweep when they fell 9-4 to the Wasco Tigers, lowering their record to 9-11 overall and 2-1 in league play.

In their fourth league game, the Lady Wildcats lost Bakersfield Christian, 8-3, for their second loss in a row, making them .500 in league play at 2-2.

After dropping two straight games, the Lady Wildcats hoped to get back on track, and the Shafter Generals just happened to be the victim. The girls beat the Lady Generals 13-0 in a five-inning game. With the victory, the Lady Wildcats' record was raised to 3-2 in league play and 10-12 overall.

The main contributors in their slaughter of Shafter were Karlie Twisselman, Ashley Young and Roia Liljeroos, with two runs batted in a piece.

Next, the Lady Wildcats faced Tehachapi for the second time in

their fifth league game. They started off nicely in the top of the first when Karlie Twisselman scored after leading the game off with a single. The Lady Wildcats would only score two more runs the entire game, however, and would fall to the Lady Warriors 10-3, dropping their league record to 3-3 and their overall record to 9-13.

The Lady Wildcats returned home to face the Wasco Bears on May 6, but it wasn't exactly the homecoming they had hoped for. Taft struggled before losing 3-2, lowering their league record to 4-4 and their overall record to 11-13.

For their Senior Night game they faced the Shafter Generals in what turned out to be a walk in the park, with Taft winning 6-0. With the victory, Taft ended the regular season at 13-13 overall, with a second place finish in SSL with a record of 6-4.

In the first round of the playoffs, the Lady Wildcats won on the road, defeating Dos Palos 2-1.

The Lady Wildcats came home to play in the second round of the playoffs, against Immanuel. The game started off as a pitchers dual, with no runs being scored early.

The Lady Wildcats scored first, but let up a run the next inning allowing Immanuel to tie the game.

In the top of the seventh, Immanuel scored again, taking a 2-1 lead going into the bottom of the seventh.

The Lady Wildcats were able to



Second baseman Karlie Twisselman runs down a Bakersfield Christian player in their last matchup of the season at home. Photo by Bill Wolfe

get a runner on, who was promptly replaced by the speedy Miesha Youngblood, who is a stealing threat and a very solid base runner.

Miesha was on second, with two outs, and Karlie Twisselman at bat when she grounded the ball toward the shortstop. It appeared to be a

base hit, and possibly even the go-ahead run, but the umpires called the base runner out on "interference" with the shortstop and ended the game.

The Lady Wildcats had a solid season and definitely didn't deserve to go out on an "interference" call.

Congratulations to all the Wildcat teams on their great seasons! We look forward to covering your games again in next year's Gusher.

Once Upon a Mattress brings musical comedy madness to TUHS auditorium



Senior Melissa Hoffman and junior Erik Shertz with cast members in one of the big musical numbers, highlighted by Hoffman's impressive singing and acting. Photo by Bill Wolfe

By Carli Tweedy-Cross
Staff Writer

Taft Union High School's 7th Street Players performed the spring musical comedy, *Once Upon a Mattress*, on Mother's Day weekend. Directed by Kelly Morris, this comedy was a big hit. The musical included an extravagant set designed by Morris and constructed by her stagecraft class, with help from Morris' mom.

Once Upon a Mattress was set in 1428 in a medieval castle ruled by a very talkative queen and a silent king. Alexcia Perales portrayed the queen very effectively, and Robert Abonce had no problem becoming his character either.

The queen does her best to keep her son, Prince Dauntless, played by Erik Shertz, from finding a bride. What makes matters worse is that no one in the land can get married

until Dauntless is married. Lady Larkin, played by Monika Manuz, is going to have a baby out of wedlock and needs to get married so that the reputation of her lover, Sir Harry, played by Kinsey Freeman, isn't ruined.

Sir Harry had one the funniest lines in the play. When Lady Larkin told him that she would leave and never come back if he wished, he replied, "No, you'll stay here. Why should we both suffer all of our lives just because you had a moment of weakness."

The king always seems to be chasing around one girl or another, either the Kitchen Wench, Kari Edmaiston, or the French Lady Mabella, Jordan Cordova, though he never catches them. Although the king is silent, he has his right-hand man, the Jester, played by Dominic Carino, and the

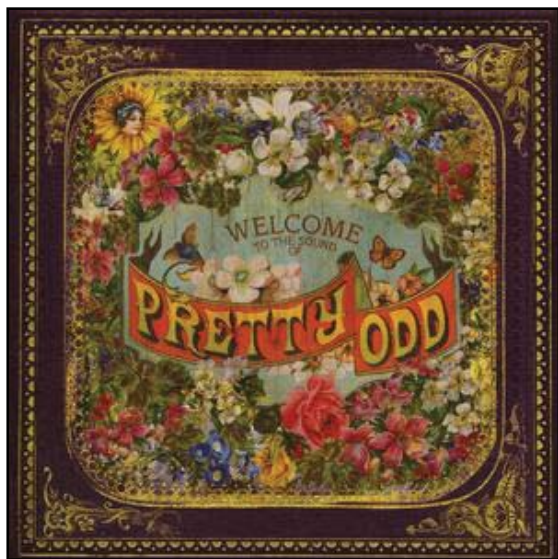
Minstrel, Anthony Carino, to get the king's point of view across by the many games of charades.

The star of the play was Melissa Hoffman, who portrayed Princess Winnifred, the not-so-shy princess who wins over Prince Dauntless' heart from the moment he first sees her, when she climbs out of the castle moat.

Without the amazing vocal abilities of Hoffman and Manuz, the musical wouldn't have been nearly as good. When Hoffman started her first song, it was apparent she had an amazing singing voice, and the same goes for Manuz.

The play flowed very smoothly; there were very few instances in which there were awkward pauses. Morris did a very good job directing this musical, and it turned out to be a great artistic success.

CDs: Panic at the Disco returns, Muse rocks live



Panic at the Disco
Pretty Odd.
By Lillie Gervacio

After selling millions of records with their debut 2005 release, *A Fever You Can't Sweat Off*, Panic at the Disco have dropped the exclamation point from their name and come back with a different sound, a 'pretty odd' sound you might say.

Pretty Odd, the band's latest release, differs from Panic's old work in the sense that this is an album that they can actually play live. *Pretty Odd* also shows some Beatles influences as well as other 60's and 70's bands.

"Nine in the Afternoon" most clearly shows the Beatles influence. It practically sounds like a mash-up of "For the Benefit of Mr. Kite" and "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band." It starts off with an apology from the band for the album's delay and for being away writing songs for none other than you. The song has become a hit and has landed on both MTV and Fuse countdowns.

Another standout is "When the

Day Met the Night," which is perhaps the best on the record. It seems to be somewhat of a love song, with an interesting sound that will have you pressing the repeat button.

After pretty much having an album completed and ready, Panic at the Disco threw it all away and started over, and thank God for that. We are left with *Pretty Odd*, an album that will most likely be the soundtrack to our summer. Anyone can grow to love this album despite what they normally listen to. *Pretty Odd* will capture everyone's interest.

Muse
H.A.A.R.P.
By Lillie Gervacio

After four studio albums, British alt-rock band Muse have released a new live CD/DVD, *H.A.A.R.P.* (High-Frequency Active Auroral Research Program)

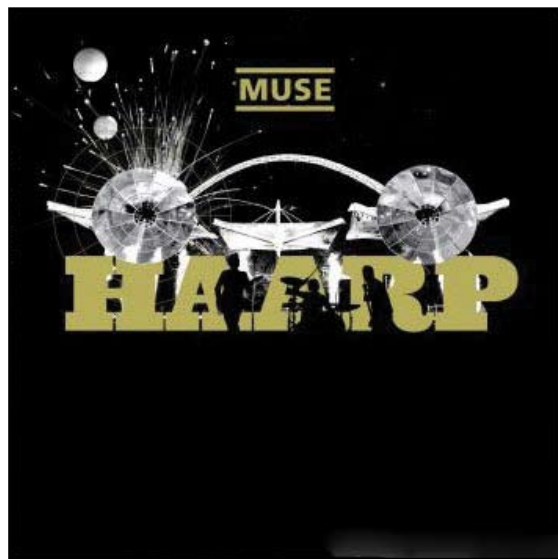
The CD/DVD features highlights of their two sold-out concerts at Wembley Stadium in London on June 16 and 17, 2007. In each of the

eleven songs on *H.A.A.R.P.* you can hear the energy and detail the band puts into each and every song. Matthew Bellamy sings like never before, as drummer Dominic Howard and bassist Chris Wolstenholme aid him in the sonic perfection.

Among the many hits featured on the CD are "Unintended" from 1999's *Showbiz*, "Newborn" and "Micro Cuts" from 2001's *Origin of Symmetry* and "Hysteria," "Time is Running Out" and "Stockholm Syndrome" from 2003's *Absolution*. And finally, the majority of 2007's *Black Holes and Revelations*.

"Time is Running Out" and "Starlight" receive the best performances on this live album. Despite the fact that these songs were recorded live, the quality is astonishing. The band added more powerful intros and dramatic endings to many of these songs, including these two.

For over 10 years, Muse has been pushing musical boundaries and successfully winning over millions of fans. The band has sold out arenas worldwide and the music on *H.A.A.R.P.* shows why.



Stephenie Meyers' *Twilight*, *New Moon* and *Eclipse* are among the most popular books with Taft teens.

Twilight trilogy entrances teens, book 4 due shortly

By Carli Tweedy-Cross
Staff Writer

The *Twilight* saga is one of the most popular series to hit the bookshelves in the last few years. So far three books have been released: *Twilight*, *New Moon* and *Eclipse*. *Twilight* introduces the two main characters, Isabella Swan and Edward Cullen.

Isabella, or Bella, moved from the Phoenix sun to a dinky town called Forks on the Olympic Peninsula, which happens to be the rainiest town in the entire United States. It's a rare day when the sun actually shines. Bella absolutely hates Forks. Her dad is the tiny town's chief of police, and the entire town knows she is coming to live with him.

The Cullens are a family of vampires living in the hills outside the city. Carsile Cullen, the "dad," is a doctor at the hospital, his "wife" Esme stays at home and all of their "children" attend Forks High School. Rosaline, Jasper and Emmett are all pretending to be seniors, while Edward and Alice are juniors. Bella is also a junior.

Although the Cullens are vampires, they refer to themselves as vegetarians because they have decided not to hunt humans. Some have special gifts that come along with becoming a vampire. Edward can read minds, and Alice can see the future. Another thing that seems to be common with vampires is that they are extremely beautiful and very charming.

When Bella arrives for her first day of school, Edward is intrigued that he is unable to hear her thoughts; it drives him crazy. In science class Bella is forced to sit next to the beautiful Edward, who acts as though she is hazardous.

Throughout the book Edward deals with his extreme blood lust for

Bella. Even though Bella is in constant danger of accidentally being killed by Edward, they fall hopelessly in love. Bella is Edward's entire life.

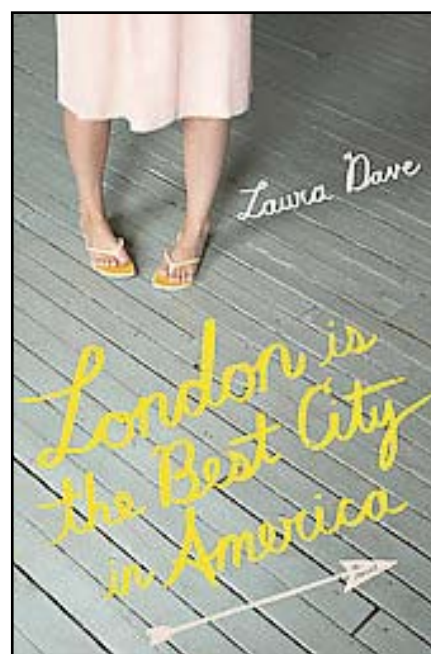
New Moon continues with Bella and Edward's epic love tale and also adds a few new characters, including a group of werewolves, who are mortal enemies of the vampires. One of the biggest twists is that Bella is in love with a vampire, while her best friend, Jake, is a werewolf.

New Moon focuses mostly on werewolves, since *Twilight* focused on vampires. The book gets off to a slow start and there is a lot of history and background, so at times it can be slow. But the book will pull on your emotional strings and tend to make you outraged. When the pace picks up, you are rendered unable to put it down.

Eclipse does a good job of capturing your attention right away and holding it for the entire book. Meyer does an amazing job of tying the first two books together. Bella is trying to juggle her friendship with Jake and her relationship with Edward. She ultimately has to choose between her love or her friendship, a choice that will leave the other torn.

The end of this book leaves you wishing you could read the next book, *Breaking Dawn*, as soon as you are done. It hits bookstores on Aug. 2. A preview will be in a special edition of *Eclipse*, which will be released on May 30. The cover artwork for the next novel will also be released on that date.

After starting *Twilight* on a Friday morning, I finished the series on Saturday night. I already have both books preordered, as do many other readers obsessed with the *Twilight* saga. It's hard to read other books, as they just don't compare.



By Brianne Carroll
Sports Editor

London is the Best City in America

Laura Dave

Almost everyone has been or will be at the point in their lives where they face the terrifying question, "What's next?" *London is the Best City in America* by Laura Dave provides a portrait of a young woman who is posed with this question and depicts how she faces it and overcomes it.

Emmy Everett is a young woman in her mid-twenties who is unenthusiastically returning home for her older brother Josh's wedding. She knows that questions about her life and future await her.

Emmy has always been the child in the family who wasn't quite perfect, while her brother, on the other hand, always had everything in line. Josh is a doctor and has been dating the same girl since he was in college; and it was accepted that they would eventually get married.

When Emmy returns home to find her brother, the one person who in her mind always has things figured out, questioning his impending marriage, she is left baffled. She begins to lose hope for herself when she sees that even her brother can't figure out what he wants in life.

Emmy accompanies her brother on a journey to find the answer to the daunting question of whom to spend the rest of his life with. One thing Emmy didn't expect to find along the way was the answers to her own questions.

She finally gets the courage to face her fears and all of life's uncertainties.