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CASTRO VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

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Former CVHS students implicated in gruesome murder

By Melody Moteabbed and Reyna Garcia

In the early morning of Oct. 18, Alameda County Fire Department responded to a house fire on San Carlos Avenue. The firefighters soon discovered a woman's dead body amid the ashes, and sheriff's detectives were called to the scene.

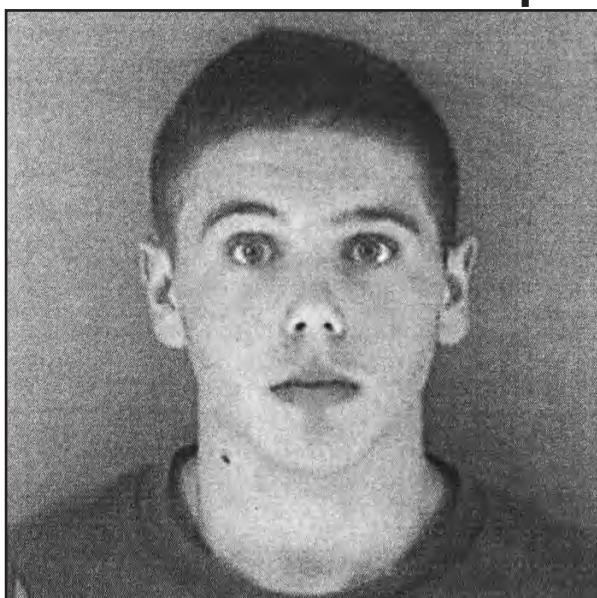
The investigation led authorities to Christian Birdsall-Hernandez, 16, and Cody Nicosia, 18, two former CVHS students who were arrested on suspicion of murder and arson on Oct. 25.

Nicosia attended CVHS from 2008 until his graduation earlier this year.

Birdsall-Hernandez attended CVHS from 2010 through the spring of 2012 and was attending Redwood Alternative High School this year.

After the arrests, the sheriff's office had a press conference and presented the following information about the case:

Victim Barbara Latiolais, 58, lived in the San Carlos Avenue



Two former CVHS students were arrested on suspicion of murder. The left image shows Cody Nicosia. The right image is a police sketch used to identify Christian Birdsall-Hernandez.

home with her boyfriend, Michael Rice, 60. Birdsall-Hernandez was very distantly related to Rice, and had previously done yard work for the couple, according to the sheriff's office.

On Wednesday, Oct. 17 at 8:00 a.m., Birdsall-Hernandez and Nicosia hid at the residence. Knowing Rice was out of town,

their intent was to burglarize the house and steal valuables like jewelry and loose change, as well as guns. Birdsall-Hernandez had become aware of Rice's registered guns and expressed interest in shooting, said Alameda County Sheriff's Sgt. J.D. Nelson.

Rice had promised to take him shooting once he returned from

his trip, and this notification gave Birdsall-Hernandez the idea for the timing of the break-in, Nelson said.

The suspects waited outside for Latiolais to leave until about 12:00 p.m., but because she did not end up leaving, they came up with an alternative plan, Nelson said.

Birdsall-Hernandez knocked on the door between 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. and asked Latiolais if he could come in to do some extra work for her. She agreed, and while Latiolais was some-

“It's a horror movie, except it wasn't a movie.”

J.D. Nelson
Sheriff's Sergeant

where else in the house, Birdsall-Hernandez opened the back door and let Nicosia in, Nelson said. He hid somewhere in the house.

Some time later, according to Nelson, Nicosia jumped out and grabbed Latiolais in a strangle hold. Police later discovered that her carotid artery was cut off, meaning that she did not die at that point, but became

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SAVANAH KHAN / STAFF WRITER

Charging to homecoming victory are members of the senior class.

Seniors reign supreme in homecoming

By Cameron Beresini
STAFF WRITER

The homecoming competition this year resulted in a convincing win for the Class of 2013.

Seniors reigned, finishing in first with 1,400 points total, a result of having won in all of the categories except the book drive.

The juniors took second with 985 total points by taking second in most categories. A big hindrance to the junior score was the amount of people caught in tardy sweeps, which cost the class 100 points.

Sophomores, who took third

with 830 points, had the least amount of students stranded in tardy sweeps, and averaged second place in the lunchtime activities.

The freshman class finished last with a total of 510 points, though finished second in the penny drive.

“I think the senior class song girls deserved their first place title,” said junior Rix Linayao. “They were really creative. They had a nice use of props and their choreography kept them moving to different places of the field which kept it entertaining.”

The placement of male skit got praise from the students as well.

“The placing for the male skit performances seems very accurate, because male skit for each class gets better each year through experience and by observing how other classes perform,” exclaimed senior Justin Lew.

“The seniors deserved first place because our skit had a great storyline, humor that made the audience and judges laugh, clean choreography, and we showed we had fun on the field,” Lew added.

Prop. 30 passes, offers new hope for schools

By Kate Pellegrini
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The passionate dedication of California Governor Jerry Brown and supporters, as well as most teachers across California, finally paid off on Nov. 6 with the passage of Proposition 30.

Prop. 30, proposed by Brown, was an initiative that applied an income tax increase to citizens earning over \$250,000 for seven years and a ¼ cent sales tax for four years.

These tax increases will be directed toward education. About 89 percent of the funds will go to K-12 schools and the other 11 percent to community colleges. It will help restore classes in community colleges, reduce class sizes, and subsidize extracurriculars that were in danger of being cut.

“The passage of Prop. 30 means that the state will not make \$6 billion in automatic cuts to education in January which is good news,” said Superintendent Jim Negri. “However, Prop. 30 does not provide any new money to the school district in the 2012-2013 school year.”

The money will not be realized until California initiates the new 2013-2014 budget based on the new tax revenues.

The win didn't come so easily. Teachers worked day and night

to spread the word about the essentiality of this proposition.

“We stayed up well into the night to spread the word,” remembers Hayward teacher Nancy Wright. “I made signs, called people, and even went door-to-door in the days leading up to the election. And then I stood as close as I could in front of the voting booths and tried to convince some people last-minute.”

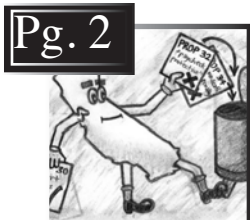
It was a close call to be sure, with a margin of a mere 717,960 votes – 53.9 percent to 46.1 percent.

Teachers were apprehensive about the chances of Prop. 30 passing, but were hopeful that Californians would realize their obligation to save education from the fatal waters of budget cuts.

“I was freaking out when I went to sleep Tuesday night,” said Wright. “It looked like it was going to fail. But it turned out okay in the end, thank God.”

Opponents were worried about how Prop. 30 would hurt small businesses. In reality, however, the tax is no different for these people than it is for the majority of other Californians.

It may take awhile to feel the benefits of Prop. 30, but rest assured, it has already been put into action and will bring some much-needed revenue to our beleaguered schools.



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The ballot props: good and bad

Divided staff analyzes state election

Chemist turned teacher

Thompson prepares future scientists



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Stung by the Yellow Jackets

Trojans play hard but lose 15-13



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Olympian likes voters' ballot choices, mostly

Editorial:

A total of 11 new propositions, 30 through 40, were proposed this year in California.

We at *The Olympian* reviewed the voters' decisions regarding some of the propositions, namely Propositions 30, 32, 34, 36, and 38, approving of four of the voters' decisions.

By passing Proposition 30, the people of California agreed to increase taxes on individuals earning over \$250,000 for the next seven years as well as to increase sales tax by 0.25 cents for the next four years.

The extra tax money will be used to fund K-12 schools and community colleges. We seemed to be split about this proposition, because while getting school funding is appealing, all money isn't explicitly guaranteed for classroom benefit.

In addition, while it is helpful having people who are able to afford contributions to funding education, they may not necessarily have educational investments at the top of their list. In the end, voters agreed that K-12 and higher education is important and ultimately agreed to help fund schools like CVHS.

If Proposition 32 had passed, it would have stripped labor unions' powers to make contributions to elected officials. Labor unions tend to agree with liberal policies and throw support to liberal politicians, help-

ing them with campaigns and providing them with assistance. If Prop. 32 passed, the liberal stronghold known as California would have crumbled. Unanimously, we concurred that a proper democracy requires unions, and that they are necessary to our society.

Thus, it was agreed that labor unions deserve voices in politics, so *The Olympian* praises voters for rejecting Prop. 32.

Also greatly concerning educators across California was

Proposition 38, which voters also rejected.

It would have imposed different tax increases on everybody except for those in the lowest tax bracket until 2024. However, we came to the consensus that the variety of tax increases seemed complicated.

Some also questioned why the tax only supports K-12 education, and nothing higher. Overall, we agreed that it was right to reject Prop. 38.

Although Proposition 34

didn't relate to schools and education, it was heavily discussed among us. The rejected Prop. 34 would have ended the death penalty in California and provided no parole to anyone sentenced to life imprisonment.

Members of our staff were split. Some argued that nobody -- not even murderers -- deserved to die, while others claimed that the prisons are overcrowded and that the death penalty provided the best solution for the problem.

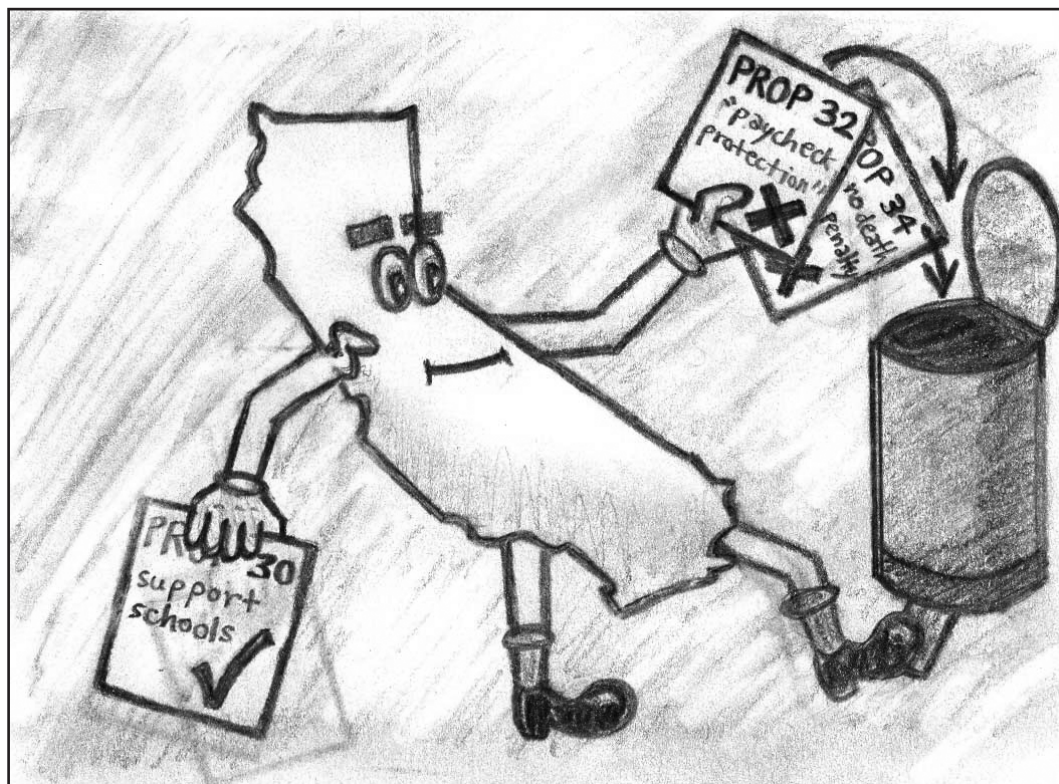
Only a few more of us frowned upon the decision to reject Prop. 34. The death penalty is a question of morality and practicality: is it right to kill a killer, and is it right to kill people if it costs billions of dollars? In the end, the staff was still divided on both sides of the issue.

Finally, Proposition 36, reformed the state's Three Strikes sentencing law. Previously, those convicted of two violent or serious felonies could be sentenced to 25 years minimum if they were convicted for any sort of third felony.

Under Prop. 36, people must commit a serious or violent third crime to qualify for life in prison. We believe the law should review a convict's entire history. Nevertheless, revising Three Strikes was beneficial, and the voters made the best decision.

With a total of five out of 11 propositions passed in California, we can expect change and conflict to arise soon enough.

Democrats and Republicans will almost always be butting heads, arguing in a seemingly endless debate. But it is obvious that the people of California, and the people of the United States will be able to endure any hardships that come their way, and that Americans will always work to take a step forward and stand up for what they believe in.



LILY CARRELL / OPINION EDITOR

THE **OLYMPIAN** CASTRO VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

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Letters to the Editor

The Olympian encourages letters from our readers. Please note that letters must be signed and no longer than 200 words. They can be e-mailed to cvhsolympian@gmail.com, delivered to Mr. Johanson's box in the office, or dropped off at our *Olympian* office in room 113.

Dodging speeding cars in Castro Valley



By Alexa Ludke
STAFF WRITER

They say your life flashes before your eyes right before you die, like a reel-to-reel tape of all your memories, regrets, and achievements.

Unfortunately, I do not live in a movie or novel, and that isn't really how it happened for me.

Early last spring, a friend and I were walking to Castro Village, and we had to cross the street near the post office at the stop sign near the Santa Maria Apartments.

I stepped onto the street first and at that moment, a white Honda Civic sped out of a drive way further down the street and barreled towards me.

I saw no visions of my regrets, had no thoughts of my family

and what they'd do without me. All that was left in my mind was the split-second realization that this car had no intention of stopping, and that if it hit me, at the speed it was moving, I would not live to tell the tale.

My heart seemed to stop dead, and I couldn't bring myself to move my limbs, even as every instinct in my body told me to run fast.

Luckily, just in the nick of time, my friend hoisted by my arms and yanked me backwards onto the sidewalk, where we both fell backwards out of the car's deadly reach.

Standing up, bruised but mercifully still breathing, we watched as the owner of the car, a stubbly-faced middle aged man wearing a yellowed tank top continued to speed past us, kindly flipping us the bird as he went.

I was aghast. How could this man nearly hit and kill two teenage girls, and then place the blame on us?

There was a clearly visible stop sign at the crossing, and he had not even paused there for a millisecond.

I believe there is something to be said about driving in Castro

Valley, as this incident is not a first for me.

On many occasions I've found myself dodging speeding cars and careless drivers backing out of parking spots. I realize I am not exceptionally tall, but I am still visible over the hood of a car!

Sometimes I feel as if I am a walking target for these drivers (25 bonus points if you hit the brunette with the 30 pound backpack!), but I have also seen many other CVHS students avoiding these road disasters, and escaping by a hair's breadth as well.

I'd like to make a shout-out to all Castro Valley drivers, and CVHS students who walk around town often.

Please be careful, and aware of your surroundings. Follow the rules of the road and be reasonable when you drive, and stay away from distractions as you drive or walk. Don't blast your music and don't text or make phone calls, and don't talk distractedly to a passenger or a friend.

If you are aware of the things going on around you, you can better protect yourself and others from accidents on the road.

Remembered as friends, not murderers



By Leia Saelee
STAFF WRITER

Step by step, I approached my fellow peers in the hopes of friendly banter and companionship to help relax from a long day's work. But just a couple steps away, my friend caught my eye and made a gesture that suggested I avoid the group and go no further. Instead, I pushed forward, determined to find out what had happened.

My mouth dropped in disbelief as I listened to a story on

what my two good friends, Chris Birdsall and Cody Nicosia, had allegedly done. They were arrested and are now being charged for the murder of Birdsall's step-aunt, Barbara Latiolais.

I realize now that I went through an initial feeling of shock, the body's natural way of coping with sudden changes. My mind hummed and suddenly everything I heard around me turned into an utterly frustrating crowd of gossip; I just ached for some sense of truth.

However, after staring at a computer screen for hours, reading Facebook posts, scanning different articles, and watching various news reports, the realization left a dull ache in the pit of my chest. The Chris and Cody that I knew were not these hideous monsters portrayed in the media, but supportive and caring friends who took the time to lend

a listening ear to troubled souls.

Upon hearing the news, several close friends cried, many chattered incessantly, and some remained silent, but all together created an air of solemnity and mourning. Personally knowing both boys, I couldn't fathom why they could commit something like this, and I understand how hard it must be on their loved ones. My sympathy goes to them as well as Latiolais and her loved ones.

This made me realize just how frail and mortal human lives were, how easily (and morally wrong) it is to take another's life. One simply does not have the right to take away another's right to live. Although I was not a victim, I may never feel the familiar trust and friendship I had once laid upon them. If anything, anybody could be a victim, and it's something we must learn

from and carry on.

Chris was somebody who showed genuine concern for those around him, taking the time to comfort or listen to one's troubles in a time of need. Cody was a friendly, laid-back guy who was good company, and overall had good character. This was how I remembered them -- and how I will continue to remember them -- but a taint stains their images and ultimately serves as a reminder to be cautious of those around me.

As social creatures, we confide in others who will sympathize with us to soothe the flares of emotion that rise from the stress of traumatic events, and sometimes this is the best way to cope. With time, things heal. People start to gradually fall back into rhythm, and memories start to fade. But one question I can never seem to get off my mind is: "Why?"

"Thinspiration" promotes anorexia



By Felicianna Marquez
STAFF WRITER

Anorexia, a disease common amongst young women from ages 12 to 25, is unfortunately a term familiar to most young women in America. Anorexia is an eating disorder in which a person will have an irrational fear of gaining weight, a distorted body perception, and unhealthy eating habits.

Recently, a blog promoting anorexia on the website Tumblr, called "Thinspiration," has created ongoing tags such as "skinny," and "thin" that people can use to identify and promote anorexia.

A majority of the blogs are from young women explaining how much they hate their bodies, how they will never be good enough until their thighs don't touch, how much they want their ribs to protrude and so on. Most consist of pictures of girls whose bodies are unnaturally skinny and undernourished.

"I'm not hungry for food," reads one of the blogs. "I'm hungry for how good skinny girls look in a bikini. I'm hungry for feeling tiny underneath a small sweatshirt. I'm hungry for bony collars and shoulders. I'm hungry for that light-as-a-feather feeling when I'm being picked up. I'm hungry for skinny legs, thigh gaps and a flat stomach. I'm not hungry for food anymore, because nothing can ever taste as good as I will feel when I am thin."

One CVHS student, who wishes to remain anonymous, was anorexic in middle school and high school. Luckily, she has fully recovered and is currently living a healthy lifestyle.

"I was once there," she relayed. "Feeling that the only way I could be beautiful was if I was a size 0'0. I starved myself for days. At one point I couldn't even go anywhere because food repulsed me. I knew that it was unhealthy. But when you are that low and feel so worthless you will do anything to feel something. We should create more awareness on the blog and what it stands for. Young girls are insecure and need guidance. This is not the right path to lead them down."

Other girls felt the same, stating that "Thinspiration" is a parasite in society, bringing girls down when they should feel confident.

"Reading this and remembering my own experience makes me only think that promoting a healthy lifestyle should be the main focus of people, not promoting starvation, and malnutrition," exclaimed another girl.

"Thinspiration" and other similar websites have sparked anger amongst the general public. Anorexia is a disease and should be treated like one. If websites continue to allow promotion for anorexia, more young girls will be led down a path of destruction that will only cause them pain. Just like other diseases that affect humans, we all need to stop them by coming together and taking steps to aid those who struggle with anorexia.

Student takes a stand: "Don't cheat"



By Hans Mortimer
STAFF WRITER

Copying answers, copying written work, or giving yourself an advantage on exams is cheating. Cheating is not doing the complete amount of work. If there were to be a Wall of Shame for cheaters at CVHS, everyone would be on it.

I walked into my fifth period class and it hit me. I forgot I had homework due. It was in that frantic, heated moment when I decided to cheat. My friend handed his homework to me without question when I asked to copy. Bam! I had instant homework.

Did I feel guilty for cheating? No.

It's easy to say that cheating is morally wrong. It's a violation of ethics. It has no integrity. But, it's so easy to cheat and to justify the means. I didn't have time, and it will only be this once. I forgot there was homework.

It's easy to justify getting answers when I desperately want them. It's easy to justify giving answers to my friends when they need them. This mutual relationship is the unofficial friend code.

In the past ten years at CVHS, from 2002-2012, classes have submitted 41,669 papers to TurnItIn.com for electronic scrutiny. The web site reported that 842 papers had 75 percent or more of their content plagiarized and 1,558 papers had 50 to 74 percent of their content plagiarized. About 6 percent of all papers were plagiarized.

Our friends hand us the answers. We help our friends at any cost, even when we really should say no. Although we allow cheating to happen, we all know it's wrong. We copy discretely and try not to get caught. When we cheat, we don't shout, "Hey everybody, look at me! I'm cheating!"

We believe cheating is com-

monplace. Heck, even teachers are caught cheating on licensing exams and standardized tests. The rule for us is: "Cheat. Don't get caught."

We cheat in an attempt to score better. We cheat because we have pressures from society, our teachers, our parents, our friends, our siblings, and ourselves to "Go Big or Go Home." Tell them to give us our space.

Cheating is all around a bad idea. The person who we're cheating off of is most likely a bonehead like ourselves and we aren't going to get the right answer. If we have the answers, we respect ourselves, our friends, and our work by of-

fering our help but not our papers to others. If we cheat, we give ourselves bad reputations.

Doing the work assigned builds up one's integrity. Having integrity means doing what is morally right and being trustworthy. Keep your good name intact. Don't cheat. Set an example for others by speaking up against cheating. Not saying anything is allowing it to happen.

In the end, school gives us each ant-sized ink blobs on a piece of paper as results. We get triangles, rectangles, circles, maybe semi-circles, and hopefully not squares. These shapes on the piece of paper do nothing to describe us as indi-

vidual persons, not even to our own selves. We are each infinity times more valuable than ink blots.

If we have integrity and a willingness to learn, we can go wherever and do whatever we want to do. We will succeed no matter whether or not we know what kumquats multiplied by oranges equals. We don't need to cheat to know either. We will be hired for the job because we are smart and have good morals, not because we got good grades in school. Be of moral character, do your best, be confident, own up to mistakes, fix those mistakes, and don't give up. That's how to succeed.



LEIA SAELEE / STAFF WRITER



"X" marks the spotlight for Maxwell

By Evan Kwong
STAFF WRITER

The average high school student will do anything to get his or her name out in the world, and Johnny Maxwell, a junior at CVHS, has accomplished just that.

Maxwell had successfully gone through auditions and performances on season two of *The X Factor*.

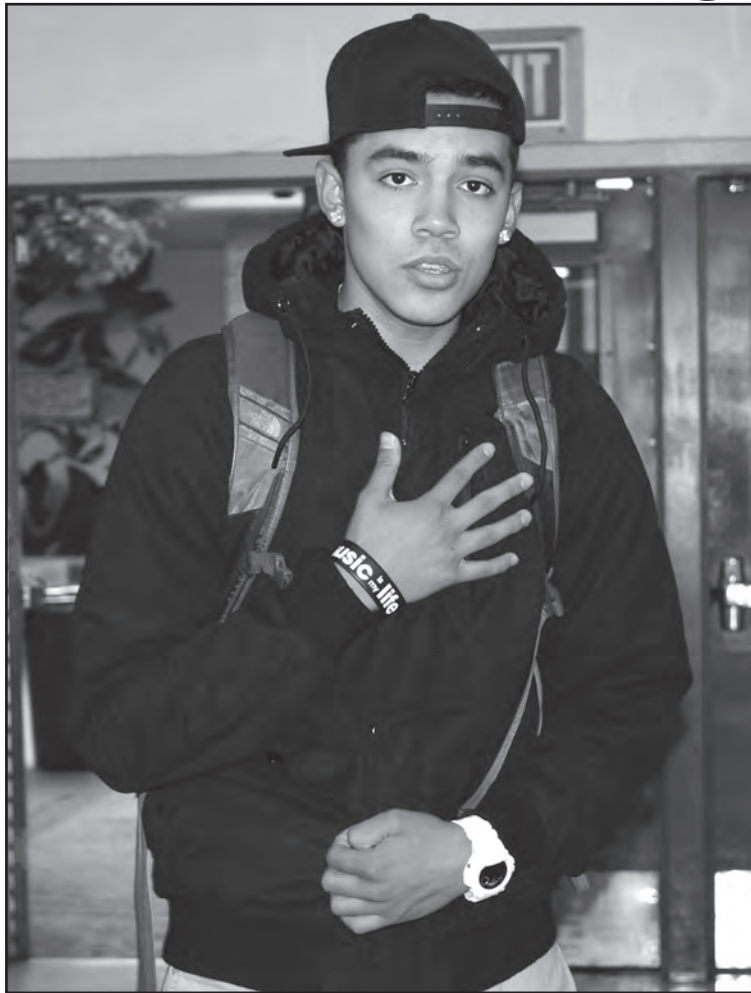
The X Factor is a singing competition where contestants undergo a series of auditions and performances to showcase their talent. The winner receives a \$5 million recording contract with Syco/Sony Music.

Maxwell's first audition aired in September. He sang his original song, "All These People."

At first, the judges looked tense and hesitant, but all their opinions vanished as the song progressed. Even one of the judges, L.A. Reid sang along to the chorus of the song.

All four judges were impressed by the audition and agreed to let Maxwell advance onto boot camp. Judge Britney Spears called him "passionate and fun to watch," and also "adorably cute." Maxwell smiled and gave her a heart sign with his hands.

"My experience was crazy and unreal," said Maxwell. "It feels not too long ago that I was here



KELLY CHAN / STAFF WRITER

Johnny Maxwell represented CVHS on *The X Factor*, showcasing his talent and passion.

in my normal school life, and that I was watching season one of the show. Now I'm heading down to

Miami."

Maxwell participated in the show's nerve-racking boot camp

in Miami. Boot camp reduces the number of contestants by having them sing in another round of performances.

Maxwell unfortunately forgot the lyrics to the song, "I'll Be Missing You" by P. Diddy, during his performance. But he was determined to continue his journey on *The X Factor*, and so he made it past the cuts.

"My boot camp performance was not well prepared," said Maxwell. "I had too many nerves."

Maxwell advanced to the next round: the "judges' houses." Maxwell sang in an astounding group performance with four other contenders: Austin Corini, Brandon Hassan, Josh Metzler, and Owen Stuart. Together, the five boys known as Playback, performed "Rich Girl" by Hall & Oates in front of Simon Cowell and Marc Anthony. Sadly, their performance did not make the cut and they were eliminated from *The X Factor*.

"The group performance was definitely a new and fun experience," said Maxwell. "I was more confident because I wasn't just relying on myself."

With a growing number of fans, Maxwell believes he's blessed and is thankful for his supporters.

"My family and friends have been so supportive since day

one," said Maxwell. "And although we've had our ups and downs, I'm glad they're willing to invest in this."

Maxwell still continues to work hard and is not give up his dream.

"I'm in the process of working on some songs," said Maxwell. "But if nothing happens for me this year signing-wise, I'll try going back on next time."

Successful performances on national television takes talent, time, and effort. Maxwell demonstrated his charisma and confidence as he performed in front a loud, cheerful audience.

The thrill of performing to a huge audience, in front of judges and through television is a life-changing experience.

"It's taught me to be humble with my whole career, and to be very thankful for everything," said Maxwell. "It's really improved my work ethic and taught me to apply myself wherever I can."

Although he may not be participating in *The X Factor* anymore, Maxwell has shown the world what he's capable of, and now countless opportunities are yet to be revealed. All Maxwell needs to do is continue demonstrating his passion, ambitious talent, and the will to never give up.

Shine on, Johnny Maxwell!

CASTRO VALLEYANS "MEET THE STREET"

By Suzanna Chak
A&E EDITOR

Christmas arrived in November and the best gift of all was the long-awaited completion of the troublesome construction on Castro Valley Boulevard.

The residents of Castro Valley, young and old, gathered on Nov. 10 to celebrate the completion of the streetscape project. Gone are the bumpy roads, the big noisy trucks and the bright orange cones. Instead, there are rain gardens (which help keep pollution levels down in surrounding creeks), public art, more trees, permeable paving, new street lights, and more.

"I think the project is great. It benefits the community. The street is beautiful. I'm loving it," says county supervisor Nate Miley.

The ceremony began with the Star Spangled Banner, followed by a few words from Miley, as well as from the deputy director of the Alameda County Community Development Agency Eileen Dalton, director of the Alameda County Community Development Agency Daniel Woldesenbet, board president of the Castro Valley Sanitary District Ralph Johnson, and General Manager of the Castro Valley Sanitary District Roland Williams, Jr.

Next, the crowd gathered excitedly as Miley cut the big red ribbon with a large pair of gold



SUZANNA CHAK / A&E EDITOR

Band members helped celebrate completion of the Streetscape project on Castro Valley Boulevard.

scissors. Behind him stood people that made the streetscape project possible.

"The street is now officially open!" Miley said. His words were greeted with cheers from the crowd.

Walking amongst the residents were elves, dressed head to toe in green and red. Some made balloon animals for children, some juggled, and one even rode the street on a unicycle.

Merchants, whose business had suffered during the con-

struction joined in on the joyful celebration. Knudsen's Ice Creamery gave away free ice cream cones, and Rigatoni's gave away a small plates of pasta. Others offered discounts; Big Apple Bagels sold their bagels with cream cheese for \$0.99 instead of the usual \$1.99.

The street was lined with much entertainment, adding to the residents' excitement. Booths crowded the sidewalk across the street from Castro Valley Village. These included Kaiser Permanente, Swiss

Delices, and the Clean Water Program of Alameda County. Bands added music to the happy occasion, including the CVHS band, who entranced a crowd of their own. Carriage rides were also available, pulled by large brown horses. Kids lined up excitedly and waited for their faces to be painted next to the Ice Creamery.

The grand finale, the Light Parade, began at 5:30 p.m., as night began to fall. The national anthem was sung again. The lights on the passing vehicles

illuminated the night. Amongst the procession was a fire truck, marching clowns who played music, the carriage pulled by

"I think the project is great; it benefits the community. The street is beautiful."

Nate Miley

County Supervisor

horses, elementary school students walking and filling the night with joyful shouts, a back hoe, a yellow school bus, and much more. Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus concluded the parade, waving to delighted children and adults alike.

The ceremony was dedicated to Harry Francis, a man who contributed much to the Castro Valley community for more than 17 years as a member of the Castro Valley Sanitary District Board of Directors.

Thompson teaches in his element at CVHS

By Amanat Riar
STAFF WRITER

Some of us may believe that teachers are just regular adults who show up at school every day to instruct us. While our teachers cannot be superheroes, they come very close to it by showing

“Mr. Thompson actually takes the time to sit with you and explain what you don’t understand.”

DeNia Nelson

Junior



AMANAT RIAR /STAFF WRITER

Kyle Thompson used to be a chemist working in a lab but now has found his new home at CVHS.

a lot of enthusiasm for the classes they teach and pushing for every student to succeed.

That's what new CVHS teacher Kyle Thompson does when teaching biology and chemistry. What makes him different from other science teachers? Well, for starters, he used to be a chemist working in a lab, testing cancer drugs and looking for a drug

to cure mad cow disease. He also took chemistry his senior year and although he had a bad teacher, Thompson managed to comprehend what he was learning and decided that it was something he was interested in.

As a result of all his experience and exposure to different mediums in the science field, Thompson is able to express his

lessons in ways to appeal to his students.

“Mr. Thompson is probably one of the best science teachers I have ever had,” said junior DeNia Nelson who has him for chemistry. “He is very helpful - he actually takes the time to sit with you and explain what you don't understand or what you might have questions on. Also,

he is very relatable for a teacher,” she said.

Between writing lesson plans, grading assignments, and attending meetings, teachers sometimes find it hard to find extra time to help students. But Thompson always has his doors open to provide more help.

“So far, one of the best things he has taught us is mole calcu-

lations. I don't think any other teacher would have taken the time to break down the problems step by step for me,” said Nelson.

Thompson uses real life examples for his students to relate to in order to explain his lessons. For instance, he clarifies how electricity powers our cell phones through the art of science. He hopes that by doing so, those interested in science will pursue a career in it.

Thompson has been teaching for five years now, but finds being a teacher more difficult than being a chemist. Although he gets more vacation days and hours, he finds this job to be a little more challenging than working in labs. He is faced with new students, different colleagues, and a completely different working environment, which at times can be a little disconcerting.

“Those jobs feel like less work,” he said, referring to the work in the lab.

But with the exception of an occasional immature student, Thompson enjoys working here and being able to talk about his previous job. He especially likes taking the opportunity to inform the juniors and seniors about different careers involving science.

When asked whether he likes biology or chemistry more, he admitted he was split between the two subjects.

“Personally, I find biology more interesting because you learn about the human body, but I enjoy teaching chemistry to students more,” said Thompson.

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Shocking arrests stun campus

Former CVHS student attended Redwood

By Kristen Jensen
STAFF WRITER

Christian Birdsall-Hernandez, a 16-year-old junior at Redwood Alternative High School, and previously a student at CVHS, was arrested and charged with the murder of Barbara Latiolais on Oct. 17 in conjunction with Cody Nicosia, another recent CVHS student.

Birdsall-Hernandez is often described as funny, compassionate, and ready with a smile. He is outgoing and "a little out there" but always happy, friends have said.

Many recall good memories of being with Birdsall-Hernandez: playing ninja in the park, enjoying birthday parties, and having deep, sincere talks are only a few of those memories.

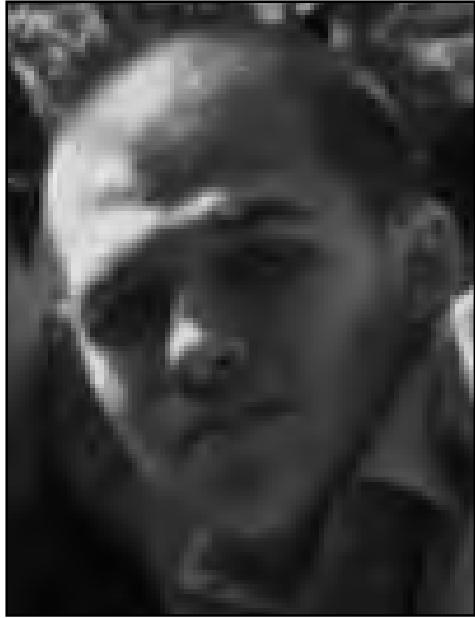
"He's really funny and he's a total sweetheart," said junior Sam Tracq, who has known Birdsall-Hernandez since her freshman year. "He's just a goofball, honestly."

"He's one of the sweetest people I've ever met," said freshman Kimberly Abraham, who had met Birdsall-Hernandez a year ago at a church youth group event. "No matter what, he'd always be there for you."

Many couldn't believe that Birdsall-Hernandez was capable of committing this crime. "I was in total disbelief," said Abraham. Others echoed this sense of shock and denial when they were told of the incident.

"I felt off," said Saunders after discovering the teen's alleged role in the crime.

However, there are possible



Christian Birdsall-Hernandez

signs that could show this wasn't so uncharacteristic of Birdsall-Hernandez. Tracq said of him, "I want to say he's one of those people who can hide things really easily."

A long-time friend of the two suspects said Birdsall-Hernandez "doesn't think stuff out" and that he can get physical very quickly. He said Birdsall-Hernandez had anger problems and is a spur-of-the-moment type of guy. Yet despite this, he said, "I honestly don't think he did it on purpose."

Sgt. J.D. Nelson of the Alameda County Sheriff's Department said that the two suspects showed "very little, if any, remorse" and calls it "the stories that nightmares are made of."

Birdsall-Hernandez had no significant previous criminal record, Nelson said. He will be tried as an adult even though he is under the age of 18, a decision made by his district attorney.

If found guilty, he will not be eligible for the death penalty, but he may be sentenced to life in prison.

Recent graduate called "a normal guy"

By Reyna Garcia
COPY EDITOR

Before Cody Nicosia, 18, was arrested on suspicion of murder, he graduated from CVHS this year with the class of 2012. He appeared to be a normal student, attending classes and playing for the football team.

"He was just a normal guy. He liked football and girls and hanging out with his friends," said senior Klarees Hansen.

Friends of Nicosia described him as a

normal teen. None thought that he would ever be involved in a murder.

"He was always so sweet," said Lindsey Hill, senior and ex-girlfriend of Nicosia. "He was really shy and reserved, but when you got to know him, he was a really good friend and a fun person to be around."

"I would never expect him to end up murdering someone," said senior Alex Matula.

"I'm honestly still in shock because that's not like him," said Hill. "I've tried to understand why, but I've realized that I can't keep searching for answers. I can never understand why they did it; I don't think they know why. I just remember them as good friends. I'm not ashamed of knowing them because we had some good times and I love the boys I knew before all of this happened."

Nicosia wasn't perfect, but most teenagers aren't. "I know he drank. He'd go out on the weekends and drink," said Hansen.

"There was one instance



Cody Nicosia

where he almost got in a fight, but he never ended up fighting," said Matula.

Nicosia had many friends, including Birdsall-Hernandez. "Chris and Cody were inseparable. They were so close that they practically finished each other's sentences," said Hill.

Nicosia's home life wasn't perfect, but his family loved him. "His grandma is probably the sweetest person I know. She did everything for him and loved him more than anything," said Hill.

Nicosia lived with his dad and Birdsall-Hernandez on Rex Road in Hayward. "I know his dad was nice because he was always talking about him and he was a good parent," said Hansen.

"A lot of people don't realize that when stuff like this happens it affects their loved ones in such strange ways," said Hill.

In the 2012 CVHS yearbook, Nicosia shared a quote from a Johnny Cash song: "Don't take your guns to town son, leave your guns at home Bill, don't take your guns to town."

Counselors willing to lend an ear and a hand

By Joyce Liang
COPY EDITOR

Following the arrest of two former students on suspicion of murder, CVHS has been providing students with the necessary guidance and support needed to cope with this tragedy and loss.

"This is a complicated situation and it's normal to feel confused and uncertain about this, especially if you know any of the persons or families involved," said CVHS Principal Mary Ann Valles. "We have a support system in place for those of you needing to talk."

CVHS counselor Lisa Wasserman encourages students to seek help and discuss this issue with somebody if they are having a hard time.

"Our job is to help kids get through school on a daily basis and so, anything that any of us can do to help, we're here to do," said Wasserman.

Counselors are available to students before, after, or during school in their offices.

"You're never too sure about someone's capabilities and we are helping students start the road towards acceptance and being able to understand both sides of a person and what they are capable of," said Wasserman.

Redwood Alternative High School, where Christian Birdsall-Hernandez attended prior to his arrest, has also been helping students cope with this matter in a different approach. During these past few weeks, additional counselors, including Wasserman, were invited to speak in classrooms and help students, who had classes with or knew Birdsall individually.

Redwood also had a guest speaker -- an expert on restorative justice -- come in.

"I know that we are a strong community and we will get through this," said Valles.

►MURDER: From page 1

unconscious. The boys realized that they had left evidence behind at Latiolais' residence, so they returned around 10:30 p.m. that night with cans full of gasoline. According to the police report, they soaked Latiolais' body with it and spread the gas around the house. When they were satisfied, they lit a match and threw it in the house, closing the door and departing shortly before midnight.

At that time, the cause of the house fire was not yet known. However, detectives became suspicious after they discovered an accelerant (gasoline) had been used.

The following morning, Birdsall-Hernandez drove to school in Latiolais' car. During his first period class, however, he realized that the car was too conspicuous, so he went back and dropped the car off at Brookdale Avenue in Castro Valley, Nelson said.

A neighbor on Brookdale Avenue saw Birdsall-Hernandez

leaving Latiolais' car and then returning to school. Noting the stranger as unfamiliar and the event as odd, he memorized Birdsall-Hernandez's physical appearance, and then provided this information to the authorities, helping an artist create a composite sketch of him.

After a composite was released to the public, detectives investigated Latiolais' connections.

"We wanted to get that composite out," said Nelson. "Then investigators got to the homeowner and asked about who'd been in the household a certain number of times because generally, events like these aren't random. Birdsall was one who was mentioned. Looking at the composite, and then looking at Birdsall, it was pretty close."

After the composite was publicized, a relative of Birdsall-Hernandez saw the sketch and called in to identify him.

"Two things pointed at the same person," confirmed Nelson. The witness who had seen

Birdsall-Hernandez on Brookdale Avenue was contacted shortly after. By the time detectives contacted him, he was in Tennessee. The detectives flew out to see him. They arranged a photo line-up and instantly, the witness pointed out Birdsall-Hernandez as the one who had left Latiolais' car.

Officers arrested Birdsall-Hernandez at Redwood on Oct. 25. A warrant to search his place of residence on Rex Road in Hayward, where he lived with Nicosia and Nicosia's father, was issued.

During the search, Nicosia looked at his father and said, "We killed someone," Nelson recalled.

At that point, officers arrested Nicosia also. The two were booked on suspicion of arson and homicide.

The boys admitted to having sold about six to nine handguns and rifles. The police were also led to recover other guns stolen from Latiolais' home that were hidden in Carlos Bee Park in Hayward.

Birdsall-Hernandez said that each of the boys made \$800 from

the burglary, according to Nelson, but sheriff's officers think that the amount was much higher.

About 20 investigators have spent time working on this case.

An event like this is particularly startling to such a tight-knit community as Castro Valley. "We were concerned, and the public was concerned, that we had a murderer running around Castro Valley," Nelson said. "You're in your own home, and you're set up by someone you know. And that person jumps out and grabs you from behind... it's a horror movie, except it wasn't a movie. It was real, for her. You don't think about this happening in somewhere like Castro Valley. You just don't."

Nelson also mentioned that Birdsall-Hernandez and Nicosia have been remarkably cooperative with the authorities.

"It's very shocking. When Nicosia just said he killed someone, the cops knew they had to arrest him as well. They had no intention of arresting him at that point until he

said it," Nelson continued.

However, the boys also seem to show little remorse.

"There's not a lot of emotion there," Nelson said. "A lot of times people lie to us, and so when they do tell the truth, they get a lot of emotion that comes with it. But there's not a lot of emotion when it comes to these guys. They could be showing their remorse with their cooperation."

Currently, Birdsall-Hernandez is being held at Juvenile Hall in San Leandro and Nicosia is at Santa Rita Jail in Dublin.

Birdsall-Hernandez, a minor, cannot be considered for death penalty but could be sentenced to life in prison. As a legal adult, Nicosia does face the death penalty, although Alameda County has never sentenced a teenager to death, said Superintendent Jim Negri.

The case may take several years to proceed through the court system, Nelson said.



Yellowjackets sting Trojans for title

By Indigo Flowers
STAFF WRITER

The CVHS varsity football team battled Berkeley High School for the WACC Foothill League Championship title on Friday Nov. 2. Unfortunately the Trojans lost 15-13 due to a missed field goal to finish off the game. However, the Trojans did not give up without a fight, and played exceptionally well.

Castro Valley started the game off on a bright note when junior Demareyeh Lane scored a three yard touchdown in the first quar-

ter, making the score 6-0. To top off a great first quarter, senior Ben Atkinson recovered a fumble by Berkeley, turning the ball over to Castro Valley.

During the second quarter, Berkeley scored its first touchdown, but senior Luke Huerta, the Trojans' quarterback, made a 17 yard run. This was followed by a touchdown by Trojan's kicker Kevin Galvan, making the score 13-6. Seniors Nick Lerschen, Hunter Huffaker and Trevor Trammell commanded the field with their defense.

When the fourth quarter start-

ed the score remained 13-9, with Trojans in the lead. Unfortunately for Castro Valley, with 1:29 left in the game, Berkeley made a three yard touchdown, making the final score of the game 15-13.

"We wanted this win so badly, but now we just have to keep our heads up and prepare for our next game," said Huerta.

The year's Trojans came closer to winning a league championship than they have in years. Castro Valley lost its first NCS game against Amador Valley High School which finished out the season.



INDIGO FLOWERS/ STAFF WRITER

Trojan players sprint down the field in a close game against Berkeley.

Volleyball team qualifies but sits out NCS tourney

By Savannah Khan
STAFF WRITER

The annual girls volleyball NCS tournament began on Nov. 6. Unfortunately, the Trojans did not compete this year. The girls played well enough to qualify but NCS officials did not accept CVHS because the team missed the deadline to enter postseason play.

Head coach Frank Largusa told the players he forgot to enter the team's paperwork on time and apologized for the mistake. This is the first time the Trojans sat out the NCS tournament in 22 years.

"I'm mad and disappointed. All that hard work for nothing," stated Bianca Higuera, a very upset player. She was one of many who spent the summer and afternoons training and practicing for this tournament. The seniors are especially upset about this.

"It's my last year and I can't play this tournament. Ugh!" said a flustered Jessie Pangelina.

The Trojans would have been

one of three teams in our league to move on. CVHS placed second, right behind O'Dowd. The Trojans' absence in the tournament

"Everything he gave those girls far outweighs the one mistake."

Andy Popper
Athletics Director

opened a space for a lower-ranking team to enter instead.

"I feel like we could have made it past the second or third round. Maybe we could've even won," Higuera said. She believes that the team could have done very well,

and so do the rest of the girls.

Athletics Director Andy Popper asked the players and their supporters to move on from the disappointment and to remember the coach's great efforts and contributions to the program.

"Everything he gave those girls far outweighs the one mistake," said Popper.

Despite the unfortunate ending, the volleyball season was still a good one. The girls celebrated the season with a wonderful banquet and everyone enjoyed themselves. At this banquet the honored players, coaches and captains for their dedication.

Largusa feels that this incident should never be repeated and wants to make sure it doesn't.

"We hope to put a process in place that would minimize a repeat of these types of occurrences," Largusa said. Everyone hopes for the best next year with this new process in place. Players and coaches are looking forward to a great season next year.

Cross country teams make CVHS proud

By Joelle Bassett
STAFF WRITER

CVHS cross country teams made Castro Valley proud during the WACC finals at Hayward High School on Nov. 3.

The varsity girls showed a tremendous amount of endurance during their three mile varsity run. The competition was challenging, but the deafening cheers and motivation from teammates and peers made it worthwhile. In the end, the team was able to push forward and come in fourth place in the league's Foothill Division.

The Trojans' top runner Nicole Anthony came in sixth place, finishing in 19:24. After Anthony came Katherine Embody in fifteenth with a time of 20:24 and Arianna Alfaro in nineteenth place with a time of 20:40.

"You have to mentally push past it and put it behind you, and

hope for the best outcome," said Anthony.

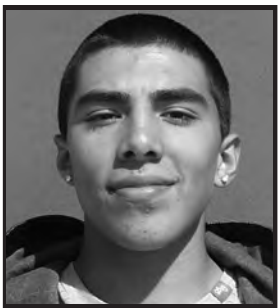
The boys varsity did well in the three mile varsity run, coming in third place behind Bishop O'Dowd and Alameda High School with a score of 76. Their race was the last of the day and the excitement was palpable. The CVHS supporters were definitely not a let down when Carter Mackey came in eighth with a time of 16:06. Brandon Arias kept the Trojans going when he came in twelfth with a time of 16:33, followed by Matt Eva in 16:42.

"I'm really proud of everyone," stated Mackey. "I feel like everyone stepped up in that race and showed how good Castro Valley is in long distance running."

The whole CVHS cross country team performed very well. Castro Valley placed first in the frosh soph girls two mile run, led by winner Alexandria Embody.

Super Savvy Sports Stars

Anna Talajkowski / STAFF WRITER



Ray Maxwell, freshman

Still a fresh new face in tackle football, freshman Ray Maxwell has fast been climbing the high school football ladder. He is currently on the JV team, a tremendous achievement for someone who just started playing tackle football this year.

Maxwell started out playing flag football at Canyon Middle School. An offensive player, Maxwell says one of the most important parts of the game is playing as a team.

"It's eleven people on the field, it's not just you, so the spotlight is on everyone," he says. "It's pretty fun when everyone works together and we score a touchdown. We all feel good about it because we all did our job."



Lauren Jelks, sophomore

For Lauren Jelks, nothing is more satisfying than smashing a tennis ball down the court at her opponent. She has loved the sport of tennis ever since she first played at the Castro Valley Community Center when she was eight years old.

Jelks joined the girls tennis team this year. She says one of her best moments playing has been her recent victory playing for CVHS, in which she won the match 5 to 3. To Jelks, being on the team not only is a great experience, but it also develops responsibility.

"If you're on a team, it shows you have commitment and motivation," she says.



Wesley Nild, junior

Soccer has been part of Wesley Nild's life since he was just six years old.

Nild has been part of the CVHS soccer team for the past three years, playing both the center back and center midfield positions.

He says his best game so far as part of the CVHS team was a game during his freshman year. The team played O'Dowd in a crazy match.

"I was so pumped," he recalls. Yet overall, Nild's favorite part of the soccer team is the bond he has with his teammates.

"We get stronger and stronger over the practices and the next couple of years," he says.



Brooke Costello, senior

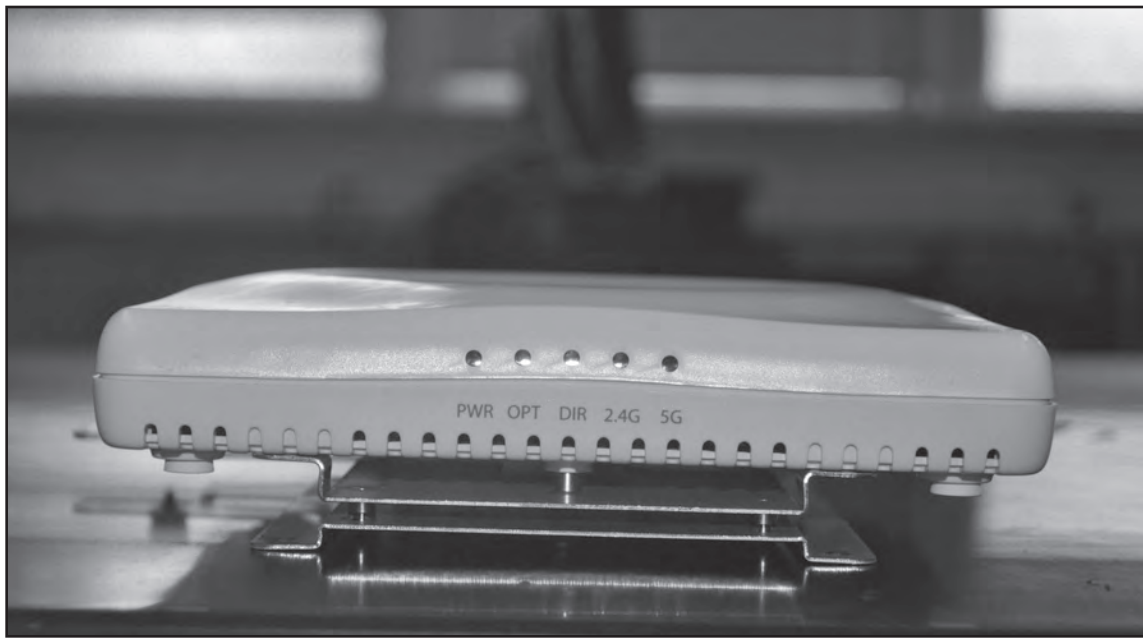
For Brooke Costello, the volleyball courts are home. Costello is a libero on the CVHS girls volleyball team. She has been playing varsity volleyball for three years.

One of her favorite moments playing volleyball was during a game her team won when she was 14. The game qualified the team for the Junior Olympics.

"It was probably the best game I've ever played," she says.

But for her, winning isn't everything. Costello's favorite part of playing on a team is how close she and her teammates have become.

"We became a family," she says. "We are just really, really close."



ALEXA LUDKE / STAFF WRITER

A wireless router heroically connects teachers to the Internet in classrooms across the campus.

Classrooms get Wi-Fi, students don't

By Stephanie Huerta
STAFF WRITER

CVHS has finally upgraded to wireless Internet, but many are curious whether or not it'll be available for students.

No one has a definite answer and there are no guarantees that students will have access to it anytime soon.

The wireless Internet, which cost roughly \$55,000, was installed this summer. Many teachers on campus who are already accessing the wireless Internet are loving it, while others are doubting it.

"From my understanding, some teachers have gotten kicked off the wireless Internet when another teacher goes on it from another classroom," said science teacher Richard Schneck. "In other words, if they have their entire classroom trying to go on it, sometimes the other teacher in that wing gets kicked off. To prevent that, I've stayed wired, because that ensures me that I'll have connection."

The idea of having wireless Internet was requested by many

teachers and was a common topic discussed in the technical committee of the district. They decided to go ahead with it, although one worry was if the Internet could work in a way where no one gets kicked off from the Internet while someone else is also online.

"We need to upgrade the Internet bandwidth at CVHS so the system can handle an additional 3,000 potential student devices," said CVUSD director of information technology John Perry. "While this upgrade has not yet been scheduled, it is being planned for fall or winter of 2013."

The Internet is still needed in classrooms as our world becomes more advanced with technology. New and improved ways of teaching are waiting to be implemented on our campus.

"We recognize that in the 21st century providing a broadly accessible Internet connection is needed at all of our campuses. We also realize that providing students with open access to the wireless network is an important next step," said Perry.

If wireless Internet is open for students to use, a main concern is that it'll slow down the connection and that it could also be used inappropriately at school.

"We need to figure out a way to open it up for students while also balancing out the legal protection we as a school must enforce," said Jim Negri, superintendent.

While the district is trying to revise policies that could benefit the use of the wireless Internet on campus for everyone.

Students using the Internet in inappropriate ways is a concern. Students often feel empowered to use the Internet as a source to harass and bully other students.

"The Internet can be a great resource or a huge distraction, so students need to manage their time, stay on task, and act responsibly," said Perry.

While many students are eager to have the Internet available to them, there is still a lot to do before it happens. As the district continues to work on ways to keep everyone safe and the connection strong for all Internet users, there is nothing left to do but to wait.

A victory for tenure: Green wins JSA debate

By Reema Kakaday
STAFF WRITER

Social studies teacher and Castro Valley Teachers Association president John Green and CVHS junior Savannah Khan participated in a heated debate on teacher tenure, a controversial issue that attracted students and teachers alike to the overflowed lunch meeting of the Junior State of America (JSA) club on Oct. 30.

What exactly is teacher tenure? Technically speaking, teacher tenure is a policy restricting public schools' ability to fire teachers, requiring a "just cause" rationale for firing. It provides job security for teachers who have successfully completed a probationary period of two years. Although this policy has been around for decades, it is starting to stir up controversy between students and educators across the country.

Green commenced the debate with a shocking statistic, passing out two different flyers of eye-popping red and crisp white, filled with facts to back up his position.

"Fifty-one percent of Americans are anti-black, ageist, homophobic, and/or prejudiced in some way, according to a new study released just recently. Tenure, or permanent status, is protection against those prejudices. It also protects students from having their teacher pressured by outside groups," Green boomed across the classroom.

As a subsequent speaker, junior Lee Ann Shaffer explained, "Teacher tenure actually helps out more people than just teachers. My dad is also a teacher with tenure. In this bad economy, it makes me feel supported and reassured to know that my dad has a job that won't go away and will pay the bills," she argued.

On the other hand, Khan, the main speaker against teacher ten-

ure, argued how teacher tenure is detrimental to the growth of a student's progress. She pointed out that not all teachers with tenure can teach sufficiently or efficiently, rendering their tenure harmful to all students.

Khan continued to explain that teacher tenure puts students in an unfair position because if the teacher does not instruct adequately, it is the students' education on the line. She also mentioned how not all, but some, teachers who receive tenure may end up not giving as much effort into their job as they normally would.

"Fifty-one percent from 1975 actually taught at the same pace their whole career. That dropped to 31 percent in 2007," Khan pointed out. "That shows how the quality of teaching has substantially gone down, which in the end affects students' futures," she underlined.

With all those facts and opinions lined up, it was evident to see the line between the two sides. But which one do you agree with? Will you side with the informed CVTA president Green's argument that encompasses how tenure protects teachers from prejudices and provides a much needed job security in this economy? Or do you believe that "tenure is outdated and useless, and is being abused by teachers across the nation," like Khan?

The debate concluded with a vote at the end, which tallied up to five votes for Khan, 23 votes for Green, and four abstentions, solidifying Green's stance on pro-teacher tenure. Although Green won this debate, grumbles were still heard throughout the audience.

How do you feel about this topic, and many other issues facing our school and country? Come voice your opinion at JSA in room 112 on Tuesdays at lunch.

Science teachers get faster, safer chemical disposal

By Michael Castillo
NEWS EDITOR

In light of recent revelations that chemicals were being stored improperly for years, the science department is moving to implement a new chemical disposal system that will improve safety and free up shelf space for chemistry teachers. In tandem with this effort is a move to renovate the ventilation systems in science classrooms to allow for proper ventilation of toxic chemicals.

For decades, the science department kept excess chemicals on the shelves which had long gone out of use. With no regular system to dispose of them, the chemical storage cabinets fell into neglect, creating large amounts of clutter for teachers. Chemistry teacher Dr. Deborah Yager said that CVHS has chemicals dating as far back as the 1950s.

Castro Valley Teachers Association President John Green saw this lack of record-keeping as a potential liability.

"The law is very clear about

"No students were in any serious risk."

Dr. Deborah Yager
Chemistry Teacher

the minimum safety requirements," he said. "I think that we have to be clear that there is a moral obligation to keep students and staff safe. We can't go ahead with an educational program if we're putting someone at unnecessary risk."

The new system will do much to improve organization; it will have old and excess chemicals picked up at regular dates throughout the year. This is a huge improvement for chemistry teachers, who previously had to request a pick up every time they wanted to get rid of chemicals.

"It's having a more proactive approach rather than a reactive

one," said Assistant Principal Matt Steinecke, who is in charge of on-site logistics for the project.

The first mass cleaning of the shelves will take place this Thanksgiving break, whereupon all excess chemicals will be picked up by the district. After being picked up, the chemicals will be permanently incinerated.

"It's simple, clear, and easy to do as a department," Yager said.

Due to an increased demand for chemistry sections in recent years, many chemistry teachers have been forced to teach in rooms that are not outfitted with the proper safety equipment.

"Now that everybody takes biology and chemistry to graduate from high school, we have more chemistry sections," said Richard Schneck, a chemistry teacher. "We don't necessarily have all the rooms ready to do that."

Schneck has been teaching for years in a room without an eyewash station or emergency shower, both essential pieces of safety equipment for lab-based chemistry classes. His room also lacks the ventilation necessary

to handle corrosive chemicals, such as hydrochloric acid, in the high concentrations necessary for labs.

Green said that by the end of January, all chemistry rooms will have the proper safety equipment necessary to do labs. However, according to those involved with the project, there was no real risk to students.

"We certainly had issues with ventilation in this building, which is a whole separate con-

cern," said Yager. "But no students were in any serious risk."

Michael Miller, the district administrator in charge of the project, agreed.

"We have had the facility inspected by...the district's risk management company," said Miller. "They found that the chemicals in most cases were properly stored, and they did not see any issues that presented an immediate hazard."

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