Fresno Unified’s Valedictorians Shine

Fresno Unified’s Class of 2006 contained a near record 186 valedictorians among the 3,270 graduates. And among those 189 with top grades, some stood out for their extra-curricular and volunteer work.

McLane Valedictorian, Pahoua Yang, enters the University of California-Davis in the fall on an esteemed Bill Gates Scholarship. This full scholarship also includes graduate school studies, which has helped cement Pahoua’s decision to fulfill her dream of being a bilingual physician or a nurse practitioner.

Graduating with a 4.32 grade point average (GPA), Pahoua was a member of the Medical Academy at McLane, where she conducted research on diabetes with the Community Diabetes Care Center. A four-year AVID student (Advancement Via Individual Determination), and a tutor at McLane, Pahoua also is a lifetime member of the California Scholarship Federation (CSF) and served as the treasurer of the school’s Key Club.

Volunteer work and fundraising for non-profit organizations also played an important role in Pahoua’s high school experience.

Pahoua said that she worked on several projects for Tree Fresno, Habitat for Humanity, Valley Children’s “Kid’s Day,” Poverello House and Nazareth House.

Pahoua is very proud of her participation in the school play last fall and participating on the back stage crew for this year’s spring production. “I am glad I took theatre because I proved to myself that it is possible to achieve a lot as well as maintain good grades and take part in extra-curricular activities at the same time,” said Pahoua.

Pahoua said that her Principal, Frank Silvestro, “understood me very well” and she will always remember his support and kindness towards her whenever she talked to him about personal conflicts she was experiencing during her years in high school.

Roosevelt High School’s Valedictorian, Sue Yang, has made his mark as an award-winning high school student and now prepares to do the same as a freshman next fall at California Polytechnic Institute in San Luis Obispo. Sue, the seventh of 15 children, won the prestigious Dirgan Academic Scholarship for the highest grade point average of 4.2 at the 53rd Annual B’Nai B’rith Awards.

Sue was the North Fresno Exchange Club Youth of the Year and was also Student of the Month at Roosevelt, according to Roosevelt High School Assistant Principal, John Leal. Sue’s honors also include ESPN Player of the Week and the NYL Discussion Champion. He was a two-year letterman in both football and track and field at Roosevelt. Sue will study engineering and physics next year at Cal Poly.

Fresno’s valedictorians all plan on attending institutions of higher learning, with many having been accepted with scholarships to some of the nation’s most prestigious schools.

Representatives of Fresno Unified’s 186 valedictorians met in front of the Bulldog statue at the Shehadey entrance to the SaveMart Center on the campus of California State University, Fresno.
Two teachers from Hidalgo Elementary School, along with the district Reading First Content Expert, were given the unique opportunity to interact and exchange ideas with international colleagues, when they served as Early Childhood Delegates for the People to People Ambassador Program in China.

Gay Ockey, Reading First Content Expert, said their team of three, including Maryann Lambaren, Reading First Coach and Clara Romero, Kindergarten teacher and Grade Level Chair, traveled to China to broaden their knowledge on language acquisition and to learn instructional strategies that would improve achievement for students in Fresno.

“What we thought we would see in this communist country was a very traditional, teacher-centered, education system,” said Ockey. “What we observed was just the opposite with student-centered, experience related classrooms that reminded us of some of the past teaching practices popular during the ‘Whole Language’ movement of the early 1980’s and 1990’s in many of the U.S. school districts.”

The Fresno delegates visited two preschool/kindergarten schools in Beijing but were unable to visit any first through six grade classrooms. They learned that the Chinese began teaching a second language - usually English - as early as three to six years old. Chinese teachers have students listen and repeat words and songs with chants, use pictures to reinforce words, read stories and send home tapes so parents can also help.

Delegates found that the Chinese are now taking into account the education of children with special needs, with more than 1500 special education schools around the country. They have also tried to ensure minority education opportunities through bilingual schools with texts in 53 of the 55 minority languages in over 3,500 textbook titles.

The People to People conference was held at the Beijing Normal University, a teacher university located in the capital. This university sponsored one of the kindergarten schools that the delegates visited. Some of the teachers at the university trained and worked at the kindergarten school and were also the Chinese counterparts in an exchange in U.S. schools.

The delegates expressed their appreciation for being able to participate in the professional exchange and learned new techniques for accelerating English Learners’ progress. The Hildago teachers came back with answers to many queries posed by principals and literacy coaches prior to their departure to the international exchange. They said they also gained new learning and friendships throughout the endeavor and found a better understanding of the similarities that all countries encounter in regards to educational reform. “America is in the forefront in many regards, but there are many lessons to be learned from abroad,” added Ockey.
Superintendent’s Message

By Joel Rabin, PhD.

The name of this newspaper – Building Futures – refers to the important work of preparing students for their future. It also refers to our current work to build the capacity of the entire organization to create the best educational system for every student and for our collective future.

Regardless of whether we call it professional development or staff training, building capacity, like building futures, is about investing in development or staff training, building capacity for every student and for our collective future.

I was recently sitting with my children, reviewing their year-end report cards from a Fresno Unified elementary school. My first-grader wondered why work he completed had to be graded. I told him that I thought it was important to have goals and to check in along the way to monitor his progress. Report cards are one way our teachers give that feedback. When he asked me if grown-ups ever get graded, I told him that it happens every day for most adults at work. It started me thinking.

As the school year comes to a close, at the end of my first year as Superintendent I’d like to share some of the district’s progress.

Last August, I stood in front of our administrative team and school site leaders – approximately 500 people – to set some targets for the 2005/2006 school year. These targets were based on what community leaders, in the Choosing Our Future task force report, had identified as needing work:

- instructional and operational strategies
- governance, human resources and organizational philosophy
- stakeholder engagement
- fiscal matters
- academic performance

In August 2005, I committed to:

1. Re-building our organization
2. Developing better skills in our leaders and our teachers
3. Improving communications inside FUSD and with the public
4. Reporting on our financial status regularly throughout the year
5. Redesigning the budget process – to start earlier and to have students’ needs drive budget decisions
6. Accelerating learning for every student

We’re still waiting for our marks from the state on last academic goal, but the district has made significant strides in the other areas. And our budgeting work has resulted in a plan for the 2006/07 school year that’s something to cherish about. It stands in stark contrast to budgets in recent years that had cut staff and programs such as elementary music. This summer we’ll be hiring scores of teachers, counselors and school leaders to support our struggling schools and improve student learning.

To get to significant changes in our budgeting and staffing we had to first rebuild our organization. In January, 2006 I reorganized the central office to focus on academics and divide the instructional workload into three divisions – one that works on accelerating learning for students, a second that provides support to our schools, and a third to provide service to Special Education students and their families. We also restructured four departments this spring – Prevention and Intervention, Special Education – one that works on accelerating learning for students, a second that provides support to our schools, and a third to provide service to Special Education students and their families. We also restructured four departments this spring – Prevention and Intervention, Special Education – one that works on accelerating learning for students, a second that provides support to our schools, and a third to provide service to Special Education students and their families.

In addition, 70% of the district’s leadership team has changed and there are 19 new principals. These new leaders have each made significant commitments to our district and our students by effectively saying, “I’m ready for the hard work ahead, because I believe in our students and our team.”

In this edition of Building Futures you can read about the work we’ve done to provide leadership development opportunities for those committed staff. We supported four vice principals this year in central office positions, to give them a totally different management experience then they would receive while working at a school. Three of them were recently hired as new principals.

We’re also partnering with Fresno State University to develop an administrative training program specifically designed for our staff.

As we’ve been reorganizing, our Communications Office has sent dozens of updates to employees and community leaders throughout the year to keep everyone informed about important changes in a timely manner. To improve communication and connections with the community next year, we will double our investment for our new Community and Family Engagement Network (formerly known as Parent Engagement Center). CFEN will work to put information, classes, and parent resources in every school, to make our schools more welcoming and friendly, and to help families become more involved in their students’ education.

Throughout this past year, to better communicate and explain financial matters, we made regular budget presentations to the School Board and frequent fiscal assessments for the public. Last month after hearing presentations on the district’s budget, Standard & Poor’s and Moody Investment Service upgraded Fresno Unified’s financial status, boosting our credit rating so the district will get a better interest rate the next time we sell a bond. It’s already made the difference in the bonds we’ll be selling this month to help finance the construction of a central kitchen and nutrition center.

We have made changes to our budgeting and staffing processes which is having a profound affect on our schools and educational programs for the 2006/2007 school year. Budget discussions started in February when we asked the Board of Education to set priorities and goals. This year, our budget decisions were driven by those priorities and goals for academic achievement, school safety, social/emotional support for students, broad opportunities for students, and a skilled workforce. Given our trustees’ focus and the expectations from our community, we asked principals what kinds of additional spending would be most beneficial. We incorporated those priorities into our new Community & Family Engagement Network (CFEN) to help ensure that our schools and programs are best serving students and families.

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Please see Superintendent’s Message, Page 11
Seniors throughout FUSD experienced a first-hand brush with death when they participated in ‘Reality Check,’ a drunk-driving accident simulation held at several high schools in April.

McLane High School Activities Director Chris Boswell explained that in cooperation with the Fresno Police Department, two wrecked vehicles and five students helped stage an accident involving alcohol. Police, paramedics and the coroner were all on hand, lending to the full effect of what an accident of this nature would be like.

Students commented that the mock accident really “hit home” and they were better able to identify with the consequences of drinking and driving because of the life-like demonstration. Members of the police department and the coroner’s office also spoke to students about the dangers of driving drunk and showed a video after the simulation.

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Construction begins on Mario G. Olmos Elementary School

Members of the Fresno Unified School District recently gathered with community leaders, neighbors and Olmos family and friends, for the groundbreaking ceremony of the Mario G. Olmos Elementary School.

The new school, which is slated to open in August 2007, will be located at Chestnut and Mono between Kings Canyon and Tulare Avenues. It will serve kindergarten through 6th grade students and will be composed of a two-story building of classrooms surrounded by auxiliary buildings, kindergarten rooms and a preschool.

The school is designed to serve the community with soccer fields, baseball diamonds and an outside amphitheater.

It is the third of 10 sites to be built with Measure K monies from the successful passage in March 2001 of $199 million in bonds for new schools and upgrades to other schools throughout the district.

The school is named after Judge Mario G. Olmos, a respected Fresno community leader, who was tragically killed in an automobile accident in 1990 at age 43. Judge Olmos made an impact in the San Joaquin Valley’s Chicanx-Latino community by being an exemplary role model through his achievements as a student, volunteer, lawyer and judge.

Hispanic organizations such as the Association of Mexican American Educators (AMAE) and La Rosa Lawyers recommended that the school be named after Olmos.

Superintendent Michael E. Hanson opened the ceremony which featured messages from the Olmos family and friends. Olmos’ widow, Mary Louise Frampton, said that Olmos would have been honored by the school being named after him as he valued and credited his success to public education.

The school is designed to serve the community with soccer fields, baseball diamonds and an outside amphitheater.

The celebration also included music provided by the Latin Jazz Band of Roosevelt School of the Arts, entertainment by the Fresno High Folkloric Dancers, presentation of the flag by the Duncan Polytechnical High JROTC color guard, and greetings to visitors from the Mayfair Elementary School cheerleaders.

Above: Judge Olmos mother, Dolores Olmos lays a rose on the ground with sons Tomas and Fidel during the groundbreaking ceremony for Mario G. Olmos Elementary; Below, Fresno High Folkloric Dancers at the ceremony.

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Algebra is ‘King’ at Kings Canyon Middle School

Drop by Kings Canyon Middle School on any Saturday morning in February and March and you will find more than 100 students brushing up on their Algebra skills with Algebra teacher Chuck Rogers at the front of the class.

Why would students spend their weekend working math problems? According to Rogers, for the past two years students have enjoyed the "no pressure" and voluntary time honing their math abilities prior to district testing.

"The kids really enjoy coming in for Saturday school sessions," said Rogers. "They are all business when they get here."

Interest in the Saturday sessions far surpassed what Rogers and Program Manager Kathy Brown had first envisioned last year. Rogers said he initially made 30 permission slips to hand out to potential Saturday students. To his amazement, 110 students showed up that first Saturday, so he moved the sessions from a classroom to the cafeteria.

Rogers’s Saturday sessions are so popular now that students began asking when the classes were going to start at the beginning of the year. Rogers said that test scores on the Assessment of Critical Standards test and the California Standards Test (CST) are improving, in part because of the Saturday school sessions. He also added that the classes have helped bring the students together, while the kids see a different side to teaching.

Kings Canyon was ranked fourth in the district on their Algebra scores last year. "Our goal is to knock off Edison Computech from the number one spot, and we are heading there," he said.

Rogers is well known for his ability to motivate students with his "Algebra Rap" and dressing to get the attention of his students. He also calls this his second career, because Rogers worked his way up the wine industry ladder for 15 years prior to his becoming a teacher.

Rogers graduated from Fresno State with an Enology degree (wine chemistry) and initially went to work as a chemist for Gallo. He took a promotion as Assistant Winemaker for Gibson Winery, Sanger, for five years and then went to Vie-Del as Winemaker where he was finally promoted to be their Plant Manager. It was at this point that Rogers realized that his career in the wine industry was not what he wanted. He decided to go back to school and learn to do what he so enjoys today—teaching.

"This is the best job I have ever had," said Rogers. "There are some days that I wouldn’t even have to be paid to come here to teach," he added.

Rogers’s enthusiasm has earned him several honors, including Fresno Unified’s “Excellence In Education.” He also was most recently honored for his contribution to education by the Association of Mexican American Educators (AMAE).

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FUSD Transportation Director Trades Buses for Saddle

Terry Beaver leads a double life. When he is not serving as Fresno Unified’s Transportation Director, he is riding a horse as a Captain for the Fresno Police Reserve.

Beaver’s career with the school district has spanned 36 years. He currently supervises a department that transports 13,000 students per day from their homes to school and back to their homes. It doesn’t take long for the District to rack up 1 million miles providing safe transportation for the students.

According to Ralph Meza, Transportation Supervisor, the District has 91 buses and operates 68 routes daily. (The extra buses allow for service and maintenance.) The buses travel more than 4,600 miles per day, or about 118,000 miles per month. That means District buses surpass the 1 million mile mark each and every school year.

Beaver makes sure those buses keep running every day while also working part-time on the police reserve for the last 25 years. With a degree in Criminology and six horses at home, Beaver finds his work with the police reserve a perfect fit.

“This is the way I give something back to my community,” said Beaver. “I also have a lot of fun serving.”

According to Beaver, some 240 hours of training readied him for a 40-hour certification course to become part of the mounted unit. He said the training started from ground zero, teaching each officer everything about proper horse care, equipment and riding techniques.

As a mounted police reserve officer, he performs the same duties that a regular police officer does. Public relations, controlling crowds, intervening in physical disturbances and sometimes arresting people are all part of the job.

Aboard his primary assigned horse “Stagecoach,” Beaver and a team of two to four other mounted officers patrol regional parks, shopping centers, Grizzly Baseball games and special events such as Mardi Gras in the Tower District or at the Big Fresno Fair. Beaver works 40-60 hours each month, primarily on the weekend. Also, monthly training meetings must be attended to be a reserve officer.

“Anybody considering law enforcement should try the police reserve first to decide if that’s what they want to do,” said Beaver. He also touts volunteering as part of the citizen patrol program as a way of getting involved in the community.

“There is a lot of self-satisfaction involved with this work,” said Beaver. “You meet people in a different frame on horseback. The horses draw people in and it is one-on-one in a non-stressful situation.” For more information on the police reserve or volunteering contact Officer Roger Hogan at 621-2345.
Celebrates Heritage
Southeast Asian Conference

A celebration of mutual heritage and an exploration of advancement and broadening children’s educational experiences brought parents, students and educators alike, to the 4th Annual Southeast Asian Conference, held at Roosevelt High School in April. Mai Yang and Kou Moua, students at Roosevelt High School, register participants for the conference at Roosevelt High School.

Capacity
Continued from Page 3

The idea of taking aspiring leaders from schools for a one-to-two year “internship” appears to be a promising way to prepare them for site leadership. At the same time however, the district will need to hire many more site leaders each year.

Fresno Unified is partnering with California State University, Fresno’s Kremen School of Education and Human Development to create a new Leadership preparation program to meet the unique needs of FUSD teachers. Courses will be taught by FUSD senior leaders and CSUF professors – bridging theoretical models of leadership with day-to-day operations. Teachers will earn an Administrative Services Credential and Masters degree in just one year as they attend class at nights and on weekends.

“It will be extremely meaningful for the participants as they learn about leadership by studying actual Fresno Unified operations,” said Julie Severns, FUSD Administrator of Leadership Development. “It’s a win-win situation – the district will create a larger pool of qualified leaders, and it will help individuals with their own professional growth. My hope is that this program will become the model for all of our aspiring leaders.”

The district will also continue the Aspiring Administrators program to support the professional development of teachers who have already completed their administrative credential. This program helps them to build relationships with other FUSD leaders, giving them first-hand experience using data to solve district problems. The 25 Aspiring Administrators meet as a group monthly and are supported by a district mentor.

While watching the Hoover High School Class of 2006 take their first steps toward their own future, Principal Wait reflected on his experience as Assistant Principal on Special Assignment: “Every site leader should have an opportunity like that, to participate in district operations and decision making, work with teachers and site leaders from different schools, prepare presentations for the Board of Education, and work closely with leaders and staff from each of our central office departments.”

Human Relations Council Embraces Diverse Leaders

Where can you meet some of the most responsible, respectful and trustworthy kids in Fresno Unified? Ask Robin Snowden, Algebra teacher at Fresno High and she will eagerly point them out.

A unique and diverse group of 60, who have their advisor Mrs. Snowden singing her praises, serve Fresno High as its Human Relations Council (HRC). Fresno High’s HRC take tremendous care and pride to create and implement a school-wide action plan for a kinder, more welcoming campus. The group encourages students to talk out differences and works to maintain a culture where everyone feels safe, special and significant.

Each Fresno Unified high school has a Human Relations Council, promoting respect for the rights and integrity of all individuals and recognizing the value of each group as an important part of the community.

“The Human Relations Council at Fresno High has taken on a number of difficult campus issues and dealt with them in a way that cuts right to the issue, but also in a way which offers solutions to students, solutions that make sense to them, solutions that they can embrace,” said Bob Reyes, Principal at Fresno High.

According to Snowden, the council serves as an integral part of campus safety. Staging several campus-wide activities and events during the school year including “Breaking Down the Walls,” and “Mix It Up,” HRC also partners with Link Crew Leadership to assist incoming freshman students in their adjustment to campus life.

“We are different from all the other clubs on campus,” said Freshman Samantha Carreon, a HRC member at Fresno High. “We actually get out there and get involved while talking about what’s happening at school and in Fresno.”

“We actually get out there and get involved while talking about what’s happening at school and in Fresno.”

Samantha Carreon, freshman and HRC member at Fresno High

“Breaking Down the Walls,” and “Mix It Up,” HRC also partners with Link Crew Leadership to assist incoming freshman students in their adjustment to campus life.

Not only is Snowden’s council fulfilling the mission of the district HRC councils by “celebrating what’s right: in our families, in our schools, in our community, in our world,” said Snowden. But students are also developing themselves as true leaders within their student body.

“I love these kids,” praised Snowden. “Our focus of campus environment, caring, citizenship, respect, fairness, responsibility and trustworthiness is being fulfilled by this awesome group of students.”
Addicott Hosts 28th Annual Sports Day and Open House

Addicott Elementary hosted its 28th annual Sports Day/Open House on Friday, May 19. The day was geared towards children that are mentally and physically challenged, and included severely disabled students from Fresno Unified, Clovis Unified and the Fresno County Office of Education. Over 150 students participated in events that included mobility sports, adaptive devices, and basketball hoop shots. In addition to the sporting events and open house, there was a petting zoo, clowns, face painting, fire truck, music and more.

Superintendent’s Message

Continued from Page 3

staff and new programs would work best to support student learning.

In the previous four years, over $75 million in programs and personnel was cut from the budget. This next year, we’ll add programs, hire new staff and have money for employee raises. We will put 251 additional teachers in classrooms – to reduce class sizes in 9th-grade English and Math, to provide an in-school classroom alternative for suspensions, to expand AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) classes to Middle Schools and to work in class with groups of struggling students freeing the regular teacher to move ahead with the rest of the class.

Next year we’ll also be hiring 84 expert teachers to provide high-quality on-the-job professional development for other teachers. The budget funds 76 counselors, social workers, intervention specialist, and activities directors focused on campus culture to support students’ social/emotional development and to work on making school environments more conducive to learning. We have also made it a priority that every elementary school has at least one vice principal – and some schools will have two or three vice principals based on the needs of their students and staff. Those extra school leaders will be helping deal with student discipline and evaluating teachers.

In the coming weeks, families will get a letter outlining the improvements they’ll see next year at their child’s school. We expect these extra teachers and support staff at our struggling schools to boost student achievement. It’ll take more than a year for test scores to show our progress. You have my word when those marks – the state’s Academic Performance Index and the federal Adequate Yearly Performance – arrive, they will be well publicized by our staff.

In the meantime, we’re beginning work on another type of district scorecard to publicly show our progress in increasing student achievement as well as finances, staff retention, student suspensions and expulsions, stakeholder satisfaction, and in many other areas.

For now, however, our end-of-the-year marks aren’t perfect yet. We still need improving in many areas – especially academics where only 25% of our student meet grade level standards. But we continue to focus on our transformation into the best district in California. I continue to be committed to our community, our schools, our staff and every student in our district. And I look forward to working with you in the 2006/2007 school year as we implement this exciting new budgeting and staffing plan. Have a safe, restful, and enjoyable summer break.

International Baccalaureate Program Keeps Growing

Throughout the world, the International Baccalaureate (IB) program at Fresno High School offers students a competitive edge with a rigorous college prep curriculum for those interested in working at a higher academic level.

"This is the best high school academic program I have ever seen," said Bob Reyes, Principal at Fresno High. A student graduate of the program with an IB diploma has the potential to enter a university as a sophomore. Reyes said students are expected to be well-rounded with an international perspective on coursework. With only 400 IB diploma programs in the U.S., Fresno High’s program, is one of 60 in the state and the only one in Fresno. Fresno High administrators modeled their program after Franklin High School’s program in Stockton. A 300-page application which took nearly one and a half years to complete was submitted to open Fresno High’s program in 2003.

Nearly 25 teachers at the school have undergone workshops and a one-week summer training program to be able to teach in the IB program.

The Class of 2006 has 25 students, with six full-diploma candidates including the “Great Eight”, who started at the program’s inception in 2003. Another eight students received certificates from the program for partial completion.

Next year, 367 students are anticipated to take part in the program.

Students enrolled in the program take classes in six liberal arts areas including science, math, English, social science, foreign language and an elective area such as technology or performing arts.

During grades 11 and 12, students take IB exams and are required to write a 4,000 word research paper, perform 150 hours of community service including a written reflection on the service and take a “Theory of Knowledge” class. Summer homework is also given out in both the freshman and sophomore years.

"Even if a student doesn’t pass IB exams, they still will benefit from the program by being better prepared for college," said Reyes.

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Fresno High’s PACE Moms and Infants Get Free Shots

Fresno High Principal Bob Reyes (far left) welcomes the county’s immunization mascot and county health workers to the school. Fresno High PACE (Parent and Child Education) students and their infants received free booster immunizations in April for Pertussis in honor of National Immunization Week. The Fresno County Shot Mobile staff along with Fresno Unified nurses administered the shots as well as provided information about health care. As an added incentive to receive the booster shots, Wal-Mart gave each parent a $25 gift card!

The PACE Program provides child care and parenting education for teen parents who attend Fresno Unified high schools. Age-appropriate, high-quality care is given during school hours for infants, toddlers and pre-school age children.

Remember that Fresno Unified School District requires children to have a physical examination before starting Kindergarten in the fall. Physicals must be done after March 1, 2006, and all immunizations must be current. Call Fresno Unified Student Health Center for an appointment now if you cannot get in to see your health care provider or if you do not have insurance or a regular health care provider. FUSD Student Health Center (559) 248-7382.

Community Clean-Up Day

Julianne Duffy and Alex Cameron, 10, wash the windows at Burroughs Elementary School during community clean-up day in May. They are members of Northside Christian Church and part of Agents of Grace assembled by One-by-One Leadership, a non-profit organization run by area churches. The Agents of Grace worked at a number of Fresno Unified Schools during the community clean-up.

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Fresno Teacher Considers His Military Service More Than Just an Obligation

Story by Spc. Jennifer Sardam
USCENTCOM PAO/ESGR Forward Team

KABUL, Afghanistan – “The military put me through school, so I owe them,” acknowledged Army National Guard Sgt. Daniel Rivera, who teaches Spanish at Fresno High School. He earned his G.I. Bill through a four-year term in the U.S. Navy and used it to fund his Bachelor of Arts degree in Chicano-Latin American studies and Spanish at California State University, Fresno.

Rivera may have already paid his dues to receive that educational benefit from the Navy, but he’s still serving his country deployed in Afghanistan with the Oxnard, Calif.-based 315th Engineer Company. He doesn’t stay in the military because of what he can get out of it. “I stay in the Guard to just keep serving the country in some way,” he remarked with a visible expression of pride.

The military furthers his education in nontraditional ways. Rivera said he first enlisted “to learn more about the world.” So far he’s accomplished that goal, having served on missions to Mexico, Australia and Latin America, as well as countries throughout Asia. Rivera passes on this unique blend of knowledge and experience in the classroom at Fresno High School, where he has taught Spanish for almost five years.

Having seen poverty around the world, he has learned to appreciate the things that could be taken for granted, such as “our Americans’ rights, living conditions and everything in life we have.” Rivera said he advises kids to “take advantage of the education they get, use it wisely and make something out of it.”

Whether he’s serving in his civilian career as a teacher or as a U.S. servicemember, either role requires professionalism and an adherence to strong values.

“It’s about the discipline, knowing what’s right from wrong and doing it in an everyday situation,” explained Rivera. In his hometown in Fresno, Rivera is a cook attached to the 1106th Aviation Classification Repair Depot.

While deployed abroad with the 315th, Rivera’s job is to “inform the commander what’s going on on a daily basis and give daily briefings.”

While in Kabul, Rivera can stay positive and totally focused on the mission ahead of him, knowing Fresno High School Principal Bob Reyes is holding his job at home for him.

Rivera mentioned that when he notified Reyes of his mobilization, he hired a long-term substitute to fill in during his 18-month deployment and then said, “Go take care of what you need to do.”

Sister School to Hoover High Dedicated

A large dedication ceremony on April 25 at the Comprehensive School Complex in Ruda Śląska, Poland, named for U.S. President Herbert Hoover, attracted national media recognition throughout that country. The school will become a “sister” school to Fresno Unified’s Hoover High School. The bilingual (Polish-English) dedication ceremony opened with the American and Polish national anthems, a film about Herbert Hoover, a donation of a flag to the students, speeches by the U.S. Ambassador, City Mayor and Speaker of the Provincial Parliament. Among several letters that were read at this ceremony was a letter from Jerzy Buzek, former Polish Prime Minister; and congratulations from Zbigniew Stanczyk of the Herbert Hoover Institute at Stanford University. Doug Jones, Principal of Fresno’s Hoover High sent a letter wishing the new school well, which was read by Kenneth Fairfax of the U.S. Consulate in Krakow.

Bullard High School Choir Earns Superior Rating at State Event

Twenty members of Bullard’s Honor Choir sang at the Fresno-Madera County Music Education Association as part of a larger group choir. Roosevelt High School also sent choir members to participate. The choir has also recently traveled to California State University-Stanislaus for a non-rated music festival.

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Sunnyside High Choir Grabs Silver In Italy

Sunnyside High School's Chamber Choir “Cantus Vocem” was awarded the highest silver award with a score of 20.41/30 points at the Concorso Corale Internazionale (Musico Mundi) at the International Riva del Garde Festival, Riva del Garde, Italy.

Competing against 48 choirs from 26 countries across the globe, including college choirs in their category, the Sunnyside Choir received many compliments from the audience, especially for their rendition of “It Takes A Whole Village.” Some attending the concert even tried to imitate the choir’s choreography.

The competition followed the format of each choir singing four songs with no applause in between and was judged by five music professors from various countries. According to Choir Director, Bob Bullwinkle, the choir owned the stage during the performance.

The choir was also asked to perform as one of six choirs at the opening ceremony. The Sunnyside singers performed in front of a full church with people standing in the back, Bullwinkle explained. One particularly exiting moment came during the opening ceremony, when all 49 choirs sang en mass, “Viva musica mundi.”

The choir spent 16 days touring and performing with concerts in Notre Dame in Paris, the Dom in Munster and the Cattedrale di Verona in Verona, Italy. Bullwinkle said their performances accomplished the choir’s goal to bring “multi-cultural harmony through music to the world.” Director Bullwinkle leaves Fresno Unified on a high note; he has accepted a position at the Fresno County Office of Education as coordinator of the music program.

Five Year-round Elementary Schools Transition to Traditional Calendar

For the 2006-2007 school year five elementary schools – Birney, Mayfair, Norseman, Homan and Slater will go off year-round schedules to a traditional schedule. Students will begin school along with the majority of the district on Monday, August 21, 2006. Each of the five schools will hold or have held community meetings to explain changes on campus such as moving a few portable classrooms and adding bathrooms at some sites. All parents are encouraged to attend the meetings or call the school site with questions or concerns.

Fresno Unified’s Leadership Team is moving aggressively to return all elementary schools to traditional calendars by August 2007 by building new elementary schools and changing boundaries to align with enrollment trends.

The program at Fresno Pacific was flexible enough to allow me to finish up my education and still have time to spend with my family.”

A Yang graduate, Fresno Pacific University School of Education

There are plenty of good reasons to earn your certificate, credential or master’s degree in education at Fresno Pacific University. A flexible schedule is just one of them!

For more information call 453-2016.
Students Can Choose Their ‘Perfect School’

“The perfect school has tetherball, a big playground, recess at 2 o’clock, and a nice teacher…” That’s how Christopher describes his perfect school. In the Fresno Unified School District, the mission of the Transfers Office is to help students and their families find their perfect school. The Open Enrollment process, magnet school recruitment and family related transfers, including transfers that help families who are employed within the boundaries of Fresno Unified, are designed to assist families with selecting the school of choice that is just right for their family.

The timeline to indicate an interest in Open Enrollment and Magnet schools will now be December 1st of every year. The Transfers Office, in turn, will begin notifying families as early as February about their school placement for the upcoming year. In addition, the District is making every effort to ensure that students will continue through to the highest grade in their school to minimize interruptions during the school year. In the near future, website will include all of the necessary forms to make the application process easier. The website, along with better software to manage the lottery process used with magnet school selection and open enrollment, are just a few of the technological advances that we hope will make the school choice process much more accessible and easier to understand.

Fresno Metro Ministry Wants You To Know

Parents and Caregivers,
When school is out this summer, your kids can get free meals and fun at a neighborhood Summer Food Service Program site. These sites offer free, healthy meals to children 18 and younger. For a site near you and the dates and times it is open, call 485-1416.

Food Stamps can help you stretch your food dollars further. Call 1-800-870-3663 to find out if you are eligible or for more information about Food Stamps Nutrition Program with the EBT ‘Golden State Advantage’ Card.

Just taking my own advice.

DR. WAYNEARIOTO

I hate running. But I love ice hockey.
I’ve got a regular game with the guys a few times a week, so I need to stay in shape. That’s why I run. I don’t really have the time. It’s not fun. But when I get the puck on a breakaway and it’s just me against the goalie, it all pays off. Hey, if I can do it, maybe you can, too.

Kaiser Permanente. Thrive
Fresno State is keeping its promise to be the finest regional university in the country with a national and international impact. This year has been one of the best in our history and includes these accomplishments.

- Fresno State now has the second-highest graduation rate among the 23 California State Universities.
- In the past five years, Fresno State has received $183 million for research and sponsored programs.
- 26 nationally accredited academic programs.
- The Smittcamp Family Honors College continues as one of the best honors programs at any California university.
- $1.1 million available annually to award in scholarships.
- A dedicated faculty who concentrate on teaching and mentoring.
- 200,000 distinguished alumni in all careers and professions throughout the world.
- The crown jewel of athletic and entertainment events centers on the West Coast, the Save Mart Center at Fresno State.
- A new state-of-the-art Science II building, a large Student Recreation Center and work on a new $91-million Library that began in 2005.

You can share in the excitement of academic excellence at Fresno State and join a stellar group of academic achievers. Log on to www.FresnoStateNews.com/deansmedalists.htm to read about just a few of Fresno State’s academic all stars!

For more information or to learn how you can help support Fresno State’s exciting future, go to www.FresnoStateNews.com or www.SupportFresnoState.com