

# MUSD Radiant



## Career Pathways

**AQUSA KHALIL**

THE IDEA OF career pathways is not new to Madera Unified, but they are taking on a much different face.

A career pathway is a sequence of three to four classes that students will be able to take, with a focus in a specific industry. Students at our high schools can pick an area of interest, take preliminary classes about the subject, and finish with a class that will allow them to gain some level of expertise. "Our desire as a District is to have students begin

thinking about careers and be able not just to learn about them but to experience them," says Sheryl Sisil, Director of College and Career Readiness.

These classes will allow students to earn industry-recognized certifications, such as a Microsoft Office specialist or a Certified Nursing Assistant. Some of the courses are getting more than just an elective credit as English or Science; for example, a course for Medical Terminology could also count as English credit. Integrated courses like this are recognized by the UC/CSU, so students can still get into a four-year university if they desire.

In addition, some of the classes in a Career Pathway are going to be dual-enrolled. Mrs. Kristin McKenna, Coordinator of College and Career Readiness, explains that "teachers at the Madera Center and high schools will work together to teach the same curriculum, and students will walk away with three or more college credits for free." Currently, MUSD has four career pathway courses that are eligible for college credit and taught on the high school campuses. The District is excited to expand this opportunity to more classes very soon.

PATHWAYS cont'd on page 8...

## In This Edition

Career Pathways .....	1
Message From The Mayor .....	2
Message From The Superintendent .....	2
Autism Programs Open Doors And Hearts For Students .....	3
Mountain Vista High School Dispels The Myth That Alternative Education Schools Are For The "Bad Kids" .....	4
Madera Girls Swing Into Success ...	5
Teach One to Lead One .....	5
MUSD ALUMNUS: Angela King-Twitero .....	6
MUSD ALUMNUS: Justin Potter .....	7
Future Farmers, Present Success! ...	7
Lalo Herrera—Student, Runner, All American .....	8
MUSD ALUMNUS: Mayra Reyes .....	9
New Food Choices .....	10
"Diary Of Anne Frank" Play .....	10
MSTC Makes Noise With "Museum" .....	11
Positivity For Alpha Elementary! ..	12





*Mayor Rob Poythress*

## Message From The Mayor

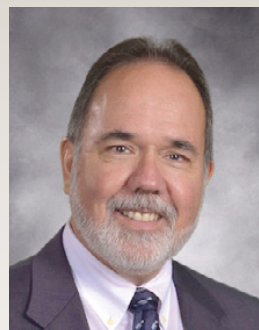
**ROB POYTHRESS**

MANY MADERANS ARE sports fans who recognize that practice is necessary for athletes to perform in a manner necessary to be successful. Regardless of the type of sport, practice allows the athlete to develop better expertise in order to overcome an opponent. This principle is one that is true in all areas of life, including the importance

of students “practicing” or studying to become better and more successful students. Parents are the “coaches” who can use the following guidelines to help make their students more successful in the short run and develop discipline for life. These principles are provided courtesy of Judson High School in Live Oak, Texas:

- 1. Create a Homework Center:** Designate a comfortable, well-lighted place for completing homework assignments. The “place” can be a separate room or the corner of the kitchen table, as long as it meets your child’s needs.
- 2. Establish a Homework Routine:** Establish a set time for doing homework. Regardless of when the child works on homework, it is important to begin doing homework at the same time every day.
- 3. Promote Good Attendance:** Make sure your child gets to school on time. Also, try to avoid scheduling family trips or doctor appointments during school hours.
- 4. Monitor Your Child’s Progress:** Review your child’s returned tests and graded assignments on a regular basis. If you discover that your child is having problems in school, don’t wait to be contacted by the teacher. Take the initiative and set up a meeting. Review the grades online.
- 5. Spend Time Together:** Talk with your children every day. Encourage them to share what they did and learned in school. Give your children opportunities to initiate conversations.
- 6. Read Aloud Every Day:** Reading together is a wonderful way to relax at the end of the day and spend time together. Reading stimulates the imagination and creative thought, and instills the love of reading and learning.
- 7. Communicate with Your Child’s Teacher:** Establishing and maintaining a good working relationship and open communications with your child’s teacher will help both of you work together as a team to support your child’s learning.
- 8. Be Supportive, Encouraging, and Positive:** Children who have support, who are encouraged, and who understand the importance of education are more likely to succeed in school. Be patient with your children. Give them positive feedback in all areas of their lives. Children learn better if they know they are doing things right.
- 9. Attend Parent-Teacher Conferences:** Parent-teacher conferences are one of the most important ways you can learn about your child. In these conferences, you can meet the teacher face to face and find out how well your child is doing.

Staying involved in your child’s school life will encourage him to work harder and will show him that you care about him and his future.



*Superintendent Ed González*

## Message From The Superintendent

**ED GONZÁLEZ**

AS WE BEGIN the second half of the school year, it is helpful to reflect on the great work that is being accomplished by our students and staff day in and day out. And personally, it is helpful to me to reflect on my many blessings, one of which

is working here in the community of Madera surrounded by so many dedicated people who are committed to the futures of the children of Madera.

Academic preparation, character development, collaboration, and instilling the desire to contribute to society are the cornerstones of our educational efforts. More than half of our Madera Unified families speak a language other than English at home, and their success in school is dependent on our ability to help them master English fluency. For that reason, we have committed additional resources, in personnel, training, and programs, to support our teachers as they tackle this challenge. Approximately 90% of our District’s students come from families who live below the federal poverty level, one of the highest poverty levels in the state. These statistics are formidable, but we continue to make great progress in the face of these challenges. Our most recent graduation rate for English learners showed significant improvement, as did the graduation rate for the District as a whole. We believe in building strong families and engaging our parent community to be partners with us in our efforts to improve educational outcomes for Madera’s children. Working together, we know we are building a strong future for our community.

True learning is based upon encouraging curiosity and discovery, and to further that belief, we are expanding the experiences of our students, sponsoring grade-level field trips for all elementary schools. We have hired additional art and music teachers, knowing that exposure to the arts results in increased academic performance and a healthier child. Our many performing arts ensembles have won numerous awards and are attracting notice throughout the region. We have enhanced our P.E. and athletic programs, and are coming off our most successful athletic season in at least 40 years. We are reviving our Career Technical Education program with new pathways and innovative partnerships in the business community that increase post-secondary options for students. Our teachers and support staff enjoy an increased emphasis on professional development and mastering the technology of today’s learning environment. Management and labor work together to address the needs of the students.

Going forward, it is clear that new schools will need to be built. Thanks to the generosity of the voters of Madera, we are in the design phase of a new high school and a new elementary school. In the next several months, I will unveil a 12-year plan for future school construction and innovative new programs. More and more of our students are involved in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, and this increased involvement results in improved attendance and better academics.

I am proud and grateful to be the Superintendent of this great District. I look forward to continuing to serve our District and am excited for what the future holds.



# Autism Programs Open Doors And Hearts For Students

ANGELICA COSTILLA

AS MADERA UNIFIED continues to expand in more ways than one, so does its ability to improve and strengthen both the minds and lives of students. While every school in MUSD takes great pride in caring and tending to all of its students, Pershing Elementary strives as a campus holding the most classes designated for those with autism.

Autism is a condition that can affect every child differently; thus every child is approached and helped in a different way. Pershing Elementary houses one of the largest autism programs in our District, as it provides our students with four classes to partake in. It is a team effort that requires a well-trained and equipped staff. From transportation, teachers' classroom aids, administration, and really everyone on the campus, the students need the support of the entire facility. The Pershing students encourage and befriend the students in a positive manner.

Madera Unified added a key piece to the puzzle this year by bringing on Laura Mitchell, a teacher on special assignment who serves to support our autistic students. Not only does she work primarily at Pershing but also in a new kindergarten-through-second-grade program at James Madison Elementary. The District has students sprinkled throughout, and has a class at Madera High School for students who need additional support. The CDC states that an epidemic 1-in-68 children have Autism Spectrum Disorder. People like Ms. Mitchell, and more programs to serve these students, are needed more than ever.

Ms. Mitchell's time is spent at each campus, observing students and giving suggestions on what can be put into place for their best interests. She is there to coordinate services, support students, educate staff, and help students with whatever problems they or their teachers might be struggling with. Autistic students need a coordinated effort and consistency to help them get through the average day.

"I pretty much go wherever I am needed," says Ms. Mitchell herself. "This can be anything from behavioral management or simply assistance with academics."

She explains that the best part of her job is seeing progress. "It is the progress that makes everything totally worth it. Seeing



L-R: Kathy Gonzales, Laura Mitchell, and James Riché.

them graduate and go off to college is such a big deal for me. It's very rewarding to see that. Just to be a part of everything makes me so proud."

An important part of the day for Ms. Mitchell and other advisors is making connections with the students. "There is so much more to them than their condition, and once you find that one common interest that opens them up, it's just great," shares Mitchell. The Autism Program at Pershing Elementary and what is beginning to grow at Madison Elementary is designed to provide structure and routines that are specifically tailored to each student's needs.

These programs have been great in helping parents carry that over to their homes, and in creating a more predictable and stable environment for their children. "For parents, we try to always be a resource for them. If

they need to know what options are available to them, I like to pass that information along, because a lot of parents haven't heard of parent organizations or the kind of help that is actually out there. It's a wonderful thing, seeing not only students but families reach their full potential."

In regards to these programs at Pershing and James Madison and all other schools within Madera Unified, the biggest hope is the spreading of awareness. Every student is different, and it takes a great measure of understanding to reach success, which is exactly what these programs put into play. Many of these students will continue to develop and be able to progress well enough not to need services when they are older. With the addition this year of Laura Mitchell, the students with autism now have continuity as they progress in Madera Unified.



Students from Madera High School's autism social skills class presented one of their projects – a large-scale mosaic of the County Seal – to the Madera County Board of Supervisors. The mosaic, which students worked on over the summer using donated materials, is displayed permanently in the main lobby of the Madera County Government Center. "The social skills class at Madera High School is comprised of a group of autistic students who are able to create beautiful art work through collaborating, communicating and problem solving, all while developing their social skills as well," said Madera High School teacher Lalo Sanchez.





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## Contributors

**Ed González**, MUSD SUPERINTENDENT  
**Rob Poythress**, MAYOR, CITY OF MADERA  
**Angelica Costilla**, MUSD STUDENT  
**Aqusa Khalil**, MUSD STUDENT  
**Jonnie Montano**, MUSD STUDENT  
**Nicole Whipple**, MUSD STUDENT  
**Angel Vargas**, TRANSLATOR  
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# Mountain Vista High School Dispels The Myth That Alternative Education Schools Are For The “Bad Kids”

## AQSA KHALIL

LET’S FACE IT! Even the best and brightest might get lost in a school that has over 2,200 students. When high school students get lost or struggle, alternative education schools play an important role in our community by providing students the chance to get back on the graduation track with smaller class sizes and more individualized attention. The State of California authorizes Districts to create continuation schools for the express purpose of recovering credits and providing support for students who might face difficult life circumstances. Continuation schools can also help students who have behavior problems if a District chooses to use the continuation school in this way, but the main purpose of a continuation school is to help tenth- through twelfth-graders get back on track in order to graduate on time.

Mountain Vista School was established as a continuation school. The principal at Mountain Vista, Aimee Anderson, clarifies that “our class sizes allow teachers to work with students to address any gaps in their learning. Our staff also works on establishing positive connections with the students.”

Mountain Vista focuses on students developing their ROAR: Respect, Organization, Awareness, and Responsibility. Students are taught that these four characteristics will serve them well in both academic and career situations. “We know that students do better in classes when they have positive relationships; our staff has to work hard to convince students that we are their allies,” says Ms. Anderson herself. She also says, “It is important for our community to understand that Mountain Vista School provides secondary students with the opportunity to get back on track for on-time graduation.”

Two students who both exemplify ROAR are Timothy Letsinger and Eduardo Astudillo. Both of these students came to Mountain Vista after falling behind in credits at comprehensive high school sites.

Timothy Letsinger is a twelfth grade student who has been at Mountain Vista High School for just over a year. He has maintained a grade point average of over 3.5 and has been an active member of the student body. Tim has attended School Site Council meetings and helps out with school activities and events. He participated in District level LCAP meetings and met with the WASC accreditation team during last year’s successful accreditation visit. Timothy was eligible to return to the comprehensive high school site, but chose to stay at Mountain Vista, where he has teachers who support him even when he might face personal circumstances that cause him to miss school.

“I’ve made up 130 credits since I have been at Mountain Vista, and I am eligible to graduate early from

high school and attend Fresno City College. Teachers give one-on-one support, like when I was preparing for my mock interview. The teachers are very supportive, and they give us their time before school, during lunch, and even after school to help us through tough situations and problems,” explains Timothy.



Eduardo Astudillo is a twelfth grade student who has been with Mountain Vista (and the school’s former Eastin-Arcola site) since his sophomore year. Eduardo has passed all of classes with grades of C or better and has also been an active member of our student body. Eduardo attended School Site Council meetings last year, and this year ran for and was elected student body president. Eduardo was also eligible to return to a comprehensive site, but has made the choice to complete his fall semester at Mountain Vista.

“I came here with low credits, and I feel that I have been given many different opportunities at Mountain Vista. Mr. Avita has helped me with family issues and allowed me different ways to make up assignments. Teachers like Mr. Avita and the rest of the staff give up their time to support us and help brighten our future,” says Eduardo.

These students are just two examples of the many Mountain Vista students who are not troublemakers or “bad.” These students attend class every day, pass courses that have the same standards as other high schools, participate in extracurricular activities in our community, and plan on furthering their education.

Ms. Aimee Anderson explains that the staff works with students to recover credits by providing more individualized help than is possible at large comprehensive high schools. “Our school does not water down curriculum, and students have to earn credits with hard work and determination.”

Thanks to Madera Unified and specifically to the dedicated staff at Mountain Vista, students like Eduardo and Timothy have a place to go where they can get the support they need to achieve their academic and career goals.





# Madera Girls Swing Into Success

ANGELICA COSTILLA

THIS YEAR HAS proved to be a year of success for both Madera High's and Madera South's Girls' Golf Teams. As both teams geared up for the 2015 fall season, they were in for a ride that would leave a mark not just on the course but on themselves as well.

Over at Madera High, the team stepped out of their comfort zones and into a field of new opportunities. Doing so, they managed to win one of their most memorable CMAC tournaments, the first time they accomplished a victory over their respectable opponent Bullard in 10 years! Making their way to the Valley Championships, the team placed an exceptional fifth place, imprinting a strong stance for the next teams to follow. When asked what the team did to prepare themselves for these big matches, Coach

Scott McKinney of eight years at Madera High School noted, "Golf is all about recovering from your last mistake, so we tried to put ourselves into those situations in practice. We also spent a lot of time practicing putting because we can save so many strokes there."

The team made notable progress through the season as it carried through match after match. Both the seniors and leaders of the team, Alyssa Geiger and Lynnea Pickens,

express the closeness this sport has brought to their hearts and the patience and discipline it has taught them. "I love being able to have a great bond with a great group of girls," Lynnea states. While golf can be a very humbling sport that doesn't necessarily promise instant satisfaction, the team's strong bond was the force keeping them together, making every ounce of hard work worth it.

On Madera South's side, the team demonstrated nothing short of exemplary strength and leadership. Led by seniors Andie Catuiza, Cassandra Martinez, Samantha Bass, Sara Casiallas, and Daniela Florian, they made marks that are safe to say can be looked back at with a smile. The team tied with their honorable



cross-town school Madera High on Madera South's senior night, enabling them to move forward in the Central Section Valley Championships. There they placed sixth out of a total of 18 schools, ending their season with a bang.

The Stallion team made sure they practiced every day after school and traveled to the Madera Country Golf Club twice a week. For a couple of girls on the team, this was their sixth year playing golf for MSHS. Senior Cassandra Martinez states, "I have been with these girls since middle school, and this being our final year, we really connected with each other a lot. We're part of a team where, if you're feeling down, we bring each other up." Although every year is different, this season was a time when improvement was vivid and the love for both the sport and each other was stronger. "We all improved on our swings, and simply working on that helped us beat teams we thought were unbeatable," reveals Martinez.

Thanks to the amazing coaches who stood by these girls' side, both teams were able to accomplish a season to remember.



## Teach One to Lead One

TEACH ONE TO LEAD ONE (T1L1) is a team-mentoring program to help transform at-risk kids into responsible citizens. Mentors from the Madera community teach character principles such as respect, integrity, teamwork, excellence, compassion, and more, for approximately 12 weeks during a semester. In the fall 2015 semester, we had the privilege of working with Patrick Savage's 4th grade class at Monroe Elementary and Amelia Vasquez's 5th grade class at Madison Elementary.



*T1L1 celebrates the completion of the program by presenting a leadership certificate to each graduating student.*



*The "Respect" lesson in progress.*

Our curriculum includes a service project. The T1L1 students presented a lesson on "Respect" to a class of 2nd graders. The T1L1 students did all the teaching and partnered one-on-one with 2nd graders to review their lesson and help understand the character principle of "respect." Mayor Robert Poythress, a regular guest of honor, addressed the students and invited them to be a part of his T1L1 team.



## MUSD ALUMNUS: Angela King-Twitero

### NICOLE WHIPPLE

ANGELA KING-TWITERO IS currently CEO of HOUSE of AKD Japan and Angela King Designs Inc., one of the largest cheer uniform makers in the world

#### **Q. Where did you attend school?**

I attended kindergarten in Howard Elementary School, John Adams in first through sixth grade, seventh and eighth grade in Thomas Jefferson Middle School, then Madera High School, and Fresno City College and Fresno State University.

#### **Q. Who were some of your favorite teachers, and did they teach you any valuable life lessons?**

Mrs. Lorraine Gould at John Adams Elementary. She believed in us and created programs to keep us motivated and involved. The "bead" program was a favorite. For each special achievement or for just being a good kid, she handed out beautiful beads. We would string the beads and wear them with great pride. I remember the bicentennial celebration with our huge group all dressed in colonial costumes. She taught us that taking pride in ourselves and our school was important. She expected the best from us every day, and made sure we knew it! I think one of the reasons perfection is important to me is because of Ms. Gould and her expectations from us kids, even at a young age. Also because my mom expected perfection as well.

Mrs. Willa Farrell at Thomas Jefferson Middle School. Mrs. Farrell was a P.E. teacher and also the mom of my childhood friend. I loved her because she always had a happy outlook on life. She loved each one of us for the personalities we were, and in the most caring way would tease us. Things were always fun with her whether we were in class or at her house.

Mrs. Sharon Pisk (Humphrey) at Madera High School was a P.E. teacher at MHS and was my Cheer/Pom director. She took extreme care to believe in us and build us as a team. She did not settle for less than our full potential. She also gave us opportunities outside of school. Sharon left teaching to pursue a career in the professional cheerleading world with the United Spirit Association. Because we all loved her, we stayed in touch with her. My senior year, I worked for Sharon and USA in the work experience program. This allowed me to travel with her and learn more about the cheer industry. Because of her mentorship, I continued working in cheerleading after high school. I was hired by USA as a leading instructor, I modeled for the varsity cheerleading uniform (Sharon was VP of sales), and also became a cheerleader for the San Francisco 49ers. Working with Sharon gave me a strong base of cheerleading knowledge, and she always included me in events and

programs. It is because of Sharon, and her influence on my life, that I developed my own cheerleading uniform company.

#### **Q. What positive effects did Madera have on you?**

I loved growing up in a town that allowed for kids to be involved in many opportunities. Madera offered sports, dance, and music, along with many other programs. My focus was dance, and I spent many hours at the studio. Madera was a safe town, and I loved being exposed to the local agriculture. I also loved being so close to the Bay Area and the family trips to the coast.

#### **Q. How did you get started in cheer?**

I started at a young age in the Madera Pop Warner Football/Cheer program, became a Letter Girl at Thomas Jefferson Middle School, and then onto four years at MHS in the Cheer/Song program. I danced nearly every day in high school at the local dance studio, teaching and taking classes. Dance was a crucial part of my success in the cheerleading industry.

#### **Q. How did you get involved with the San Francisco 49ers?**

I was a song leading instructor for the United Spirit Association (USA), and dancing professionally, the 49ers wanted to develop a Cheer/Dance team. So they recruited 14 dancers for an inaugural season. I was one of the dancers they recruited ... straight out of high school at age 17. I graduated in May, and signed with the 49ers in July. I was the youngest member of the team. As a member of the very first team of 49er Cheerleaders, it changed my life and opened many doors.

#### **Q. What inspired you to start your company?**

The costumes I was given to wear as a dancer never fit correctly. They were not being designed or manufactured by a dancer. I knew there was a better way. When I was in elementary school, my mom managed the local fabric store. She also was a seamstress and made some of my costumes and special dresses. Because I was exposed to fabric types and embellishments at a young age, I understood fabrics and garment construction. That knowledge is something I used as a base for creating my company. After all these years, I still put on each costume design to check fit and quality for our customers.

#### **Q. How did you get your company started?**

I started the company in 1989, with a couple hundred dollars, some great ideas, and a seamstress. Thankfully, the industry needed my ideas and the costumes we could create. I was the first, 26 years ago, to implement an adhesive for rhinestones on stretch fabrics which revolutionized the Cheer/Dance costume visual impact. The



company has grown and currently is based outside San Antonio, TX. At our headquarters we have an in-house production room and administrative offices. We also produce in other states, but every AKD product is made in the USA. Currently we manufacture four different costume labels. We are an international/global company. Our sales extend beyond the United States into Mexico, Canada, Europe, and Asia. We have a division located in Tokyo, Japan and will be expanding in that area. To represent and handle sales in the U.S., we have sales reps nationwide.

#### **Q. Was it difficult to get the business running?**

It wasn't difficult to get the business running because there was a need. The challenge lies in keeping it running. Every day is a new day of development to give our industry something new and innovative. It is the business of fashion, in a specialized niche.

#### **Q. What do you do in your free time?**

I enjoy traveling and spending time with my four kids and husband. There is always an event or sports activity with the children. We live on a lake, and I love spending weekends by the water and with our lake friends. Quiet time is important to me and is when I develop new ideas for the company.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention that none of the above would have been possible without my mom, who took me to every extracurricular activity, made sure I was involved, kept me busy and on the forward track, and believed that I had potential to do great things. She worked at MHS, in charge of the attendance department for years. She was as much involved with the school as I was. It was with her support that my high school experience was filled with success, right down to the perfect dress for Blossom Week.

## MUSD ALUMNUS: Justin Potter

ANGELICA COSTILLA

JUSTIN POTTER IS a 2009 Madera South Graduate who is now the very first MSHS Alumni student to return and work for his former high school.

**Q. What is your history like with Madera? What schools did you attend growing up?**

In kindergarten, I went to Lincoln Elementary School. Then in first grade I attended Berenda Elementary School, and I stayed there for first through sixth grade. I then went to Martin Luther King Jr. High.

**Q. Who were some of your favorite teachers?**

Mrs. Warnes, my sixth grade teacher, was one of my favorite teachers growing up. She was just a lot of fun. She was a young teacher. I was in her second class, and it was just really enjoyable. Mr. Krause was another one of my favorite teachers. He was my U.S. History teacher my junior year and my Civics and Econ teacher my senior year.

**Q. How does it feel to be the first person to graduate that holds a job here?**

It feels weird. I realized that the freshmen this year, when they graduate, will be 10 years from my graduating class. So that kinda makes me feel really old. This campus feels like my home.

**Q. What was one of your favorite things about being a student at Madera South?**

Being the new high school in Madera, we looked at the challenge of being new with a smile. I feel like we created a culture that was very positive and very focused on academics as well as having fun and being passionate about the school and being the first graduating class. It was a lot of fun.

**Q. What activities were you involved in during high school?**

I did Band my freshman year, Drama all four years with Mrs. Latimer, and Volleyball all four years. Between those two things, I was also very involved with my church and youth group.

**Q. What is your current position at Madera South High School?**

Right now I am a Special Education teacher at Madera South High School. I am a collaborative teacher, so I go to different classrooms. I am currently covering English 111, Geometry, World History, and Civics/Econ. I am also an assistant varsity Volleyball coach.

**Q. What do you love most about your job?**

I love working with the kids. I love when a kid has that "Ah hah!" moment, and finally understands something in class. It makes it a lot of fun just knowing that they're working towards something, and then when they achieve it, their faces light up.

**Q. How did you get to where you are now?**

After I graduated, I went to Fresno State and I earned my History degree. I graduated in 2014, and I am currently working on my single-subject history credential at National University.

**Q. What are your plans for the future?**

The ultimate goal would be to earn a job teaching History, since that is my favorite subject and what I have a degree in. I love what I teach now and feel blessed to be able to help students grow.

**Q. What made you want to become a teacher?**

I wasn't sure about what I wanted to do until I was in Mr. Krause's class. He made



learning really enjoyable, and just seeing how much of an impact he's had on my life and other students' was really inspiring. You see it, and it's something you want to do.

**Q. What kinds of opportunities were you offered growing up in Madera and being a part of MUSD?**

Drama opened some opportunities for me. We did a lot of competitions that opened the door to potential scholarships at Fresno State. I was also able to play and be a part of the Fresno State Volleyball team while I was there. I have so many mentors now who have become friends.

**Q. Do you have any advice for the students of Madera Unified?**

Don't underestimate yourself. If you commit to hard work and being enthusiastic about your work, you'll be able to achieve great things.

Future  
Farmers,  
Present  
Success!



ABOVE: Madera FFA 2014-2015 chapter officers.



LEFT: 2015 California state FFA tree pruning team. L-R: Mark Cavallero, Vanessa Maravilla, Virat Kang, Jenae Hansen.



Madera South's FFA team placed 2nd in the nation of 45 teams at Louisville, KY as the Best Informed Greenhand team.





## Lalo Herrera—Student, Runner, All American

**TIM RICHÉ**

YOSEMITE, FARMING, AND being the heart of California is what Madera is known for. People from all over the world visit or stop for business here. In the world of cross country, Madera is simply known as a place where speed equals success!—a city that loves running and supports its running programs by creating opportunities for our student athletes to achieve elite running status.

Madera High has always had fast runners, and Head Coach Dennis DeWitt at one point won 10 consecutive section titles in a row. Then coach Rich Parris won five consecutive titles from 2002 to 2006, prior to departing back to his home town of San Diego, only to return a year later to Madera's new high school at Madera South. Coach Parris built what has become a dynasty, winning six consecutive section titles before handing the reins off to current Head Coach Eloy Quintana Montoya, who has won the last two years. Madera South has won titles in Division III and Division II, plus the last four titles in the highest Division I.

Cross Country is scored with points given according to the place of finish for the top five runners, lowest points wins. In one of the most impressive wins in Central Section history, Madera South runners finished 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 10th, giving them a team total of 20 points, the lowest recorded score in Central Section history.

Freshman Victor Ochoa placed 10th in the race, showing tremendous potential. The future continues to look bright as juniors Nicholas Hernandez and Michael Ochoa both finished 4th and 3rd places, with another junior, Miguel Villar, finishing 2nd. The team kept up with their senior Eduardo “Lalo” Herrera, who placed 1st.

Herrera is a four-year varsity runner who came in 11th as a freshman and 2nd as a sophomore, and has won the Section Championship both as a junior and senior student of Madera South. This is the fourth year that he

*“Lalo” Herrera, 2nd in the state, 5th in nation.*

qualified for state with the goal to win, but Lalo had a specific goal. Cross-Country is very much a team sport with the slower three runners defining your place, but it also allows for athletes to reach their specific goals. This year his goal was to beat the central section time of 14:51 set by C.J. Albertson, son of MUSD’s Chief HR Officer, Kent Albertson.

At the state meet on November 28, the team placed 4th overall, with the fastest team time Madera South has ever run. Herrera placed 2nd overall but ran a personal best time of 14:48.8 and reached his personal goal to rewrite the history books and become the fastest runner in Central Section history on the course at Woodward Park. With the finish he qualified for the Nike Cross Nationals in Oregon on December 5, where he placed 5th in the nation at 15:13, averaging 4:53 per mile. Placing in the top ten in the country garners him the title “All-American.”

Herrera appreciates the education he received. “I had great teachers, like Mr. Gregor at Nishimoto, who helped me understand the importance of good grades and working hard, which has helped me throughout my educational experience. The staff at Madera South has been great as well; my teachers really care about the success of all their students.”

Herrera has many college offers because of his running, his great attitude, and his 3.6 GPA. Although some students would be taking easier courses, among his course load is Human Anatomy and AP Statistics. He still has not picked a college to run for, but his future is bright and he is definitely running towards it.

PATHWAYS cont'd from front page ...

The goal of a career pathway is that a student leaves high school with the knowledge and skill to get a good-paying job with the skills and certifications they will obtain through the course work completed. Moreover, students will also be able to meet college entrance requirements. Students can go to college with great part-time jobs because of the skills they have gained, or begin the first steps in a career.

In order to understand what a student needs to be successful in a field, Mrs. Sisil and Mrs. McKenna meet frequently with business owners and managers in Madera to see what they need when hiring a student. Through these connections with industry, students will see more opportunities for mentorship, job shadowing, field trips, and eventually internships in their field of interest.

Basically, the idea of a Career Pathway is that a student picks a pathway, and through that pathway the student gets industry-recognized certifications, as well as college credits. The way we have chosen pathways that will be taught at the high schools is based on the job market for Madera. The three sectors with the largest amount of jobs and growth are agriculture, health science, and advanced manufacturing. We need to make sure we have students ready in these fields to fill the jobs in Madera. Additionally, there will still be pathways in performing arts, business, education, culinary arts, transportation, and construction. Sisil says, “MUSD high school students will be college-ready and career-prepared.”





## MUSD ALUMNUS: Mayra Reyes

### JONNIE MONTANO

MAYRA REYES IS an alumna from Madera South who is currently a freshman at UC Berkeley.

**Q. What schools did you attend? Who was your favorite elementary teacher, and why?**

I attended Alpha Elementary K-6th grade and Martin Luther King Jr. for middle school. I liked everyone! It's hard not to get close to all your teachers and staff, like Gladys in the front office and Mr. Stafford behind his desk, but two teachers who stuck out the most would be Mrs. Bradley and Mr. Detjen. Mrs. Bradley was very supportive in everything I did, whether it was in the classroom or on the track, all throughout my school. Mr. Detjen taught me more than just sixth-grade Algebra; he taught me how you have to put the best of yourself on the line and enjoy the little things.

Mr. Aranico is the person I will always thank the most, because I was so scared of accepting my admission to UC Berkeley. He pushed me to get over the fear of rejection and try for the number-one public university in the country, and I made it. Mrs. Larrivee and Mrs. Ibrahim were like my moms. I was able to go to them for literally everything. Mr. Christiansen showed me that it's okay to be who you are, because at the end of the day it's you who matters the most.

**Q. Were you involved in activities in high school?**

In high school, I wanted to do everything. Seriously. I was in Varsity Cross

Country and Track, Varsity Tennis, Key Club, Fresno State Upward Bound, UC Scholars, Stallion Honor Society, Block S, CSF, Science Club, Leadership, and ASB. I was also Historian of CSF for two years, Vice President for Science Club, and ASB Commissioner of Athletics.

**Q. What are some of your favorite memories?**

Memories were made every day! My favorite memories would probably have been at ASB camp in Lake Tahoe or on overnight track and cross country meets.

**Q. Why did you choose your career?**

In high school, I really enjoyed Mr. Durbin's Honors Human Anatomy and Physiology class. Berkeley has an amazing Biology program, and I will be declaring a major in Integrative Biology with the emphasis of Physiology so I can make my way into Medical School.

**Q. Plans for the future?**

I'm still trying to figure my life out. My plans are slowly coming to me, like getting my PhD in Integrative Biology from Stanford Medical School. Right now one goal of mine is to get involved in Berkeley and stick with something I enjoy.

**Q. What kinds of opportunities did the community afford you?**

My community was able to provide me with amazing opportunities to find myself by giving back to the community who gave to me and my family when we needed it the most. I was a part of Key Club & CSF, and



we did many community service events, from donating items of clothing, food, and our time, and cleaning up parks and our school. I loved it! I really believe in "Paying It Forward."

**Q. Do you have any advice for current students?**

Find a goal, some motivation, a dream that allows you to keep striding to success. Because when you're writing that personal statement for scholarships and college applications, they want to know about you, your aspirations, and achievements. Most importantly, keep trying your best in everything you do. The worst thing you'll feel is knowing you could have done better.

**Q. How did high school prepare you for college?**

What I did in high school allowed me to be who I am and where I am now. I learned how to take advantage of the opportunities given to me and be a respectful and responsible young lady who has big dreams. I did the Fresno State Upward Bound Program, and that definitely prepared me for Berkeley. I took classes in the summer at Fresno State for high school credits. I stayed in the dorms and experienced the first leap of what being a college student is. AP Literature and Composition is the class that prepared me the most for all my readings and lecture discussions.

**Q. Would you recommend your career path to current students?**

I say do whatever you feel passionate about and do not let others influence your decision negatively.





## New Food Choices

**JONNIE MONTANO**

RENOVATIONS IN SCHOOL lunches and school facilities have impacted students and staff all throughout Madera Unified. "I actually look forward to eating my school lunch now," says Brianna Hyatt, one of the many Madera South students who has noticed the improvements in school lunches in our District.

The new choices were made to provide more fresh food options to the students. These changes include tri-tip sandwiches, fresh (never frozen) hamburgers and cheeseburgers, and rotisserie chicken sandwiches with the choice of Frank's hot wing or BBQ sauce, as well as leg, wing, or thigh entrée plates served with vegetables. District-wide, there are an average of 6,222 breakfast meals and 14,661 lunch meals served daily. Madera Unified tries its best to offer many different meal choices to please as much of the student body as possible.

In the past, meals were being shipped from many manufacturers, distributors, and local markets. Now Madera Unified receives freshly baked bread



*Brian Chiarito*

from Basque Bakery and Bimbo, as well as all-natural grilled burritos made in California with all California ingredients. Although the biggest difference has been made in the way the food is served, preparing the food on-site has made a bigger difference in the way the meals are being presented. "Out of wrappers and more personalized" is what the students seem to enjoy best.

The improvements have gone beyond just the meals. Facilities such as Sierra Vista, Millview, Thomas Jefferson, Madera High, and Madera South have been revamped. When asked how these improvements have affected the staff, Brian Chiarito, Director of Child Nutrition, states, "It's always encouraging to have new things that improve what

you do each day, helping to provide the best meal possible for what students want to eat." It truly is an exciting time to be a part of child nutrition. There are many ideas looking to be further implemented into the menu and facilities in the future of Madera Unified.

The goal is to create an atmosphere where students have a choice in what they have to eat. Changes to Madera South High school have already been implemented as of the 2014-2015 school year. These changes include additional serving lines to support the "build your own burrito" concept as well as a "build your own deli sandwich" line. For the future, the plan is to upgrade the serving windows at the snack bars on campus to provide faster service. With these

upgrades, the ability to provide more quality options like a Chinese fast food line and a pizza-by-the-slice concept will be more easily made available. The Department of Children's Nutrition looks forward to bringing these concepts to the schools, improving the serving lines and the meal options for students in the near future.



## "Diary Of Anne Frank" Play

**NICOLE WHIPPLE**

JAMES GUNN HAS been at Madera High School for six years. Mr. Gunn enjoys teaching English, but the stage is his real love. He has directed for four years in the Coyote Drama Productions and has a total of eight years of directing underneath his belt. This year, the company tackled a very special play, *The Diary of Anne Frank*. November 12 was opening night at Madera High School's theatre.

Gunn was inspired with this play because his friend directed the play a few years back and made a significant, positive impact on his community. "There's a lot of politically correct things going on in our country today, where people are being shouted down if they happen to have the wrong ideas. A political environment like that is poisonous and ends up creating the environment that these poor people found themselves in," states Gunn.

Although this is a more serious play, "There's a lot more to entertainment than just song and dance; good quality theatre will touch your heart in ways it couldn't be touched, and a good story does that," Gunn said. He encourages his students by telling them, "The stage is the safest place you could possibly be; everybody in that audience wants you to succeed." The play ran for nine night performances but also performed six different day performances. Howard Elementary, John Adams, and Sherman Thomas brought 371 sixth-graders who have already read the book.

Josefina Lopez moved to Madera High from Chowchilla High a year ago and was intrigued by Gunn's drama class, so she carried on with drama after moving. She became the stage manager and was in charge of lighting in the play. She wrote down blocking notes, taking notes on where the actors are positioned on stage. "I enjoy being involved in drama," she said, "and I would for sure do it next year."

Gunn tries to involve students from all grade levels. "I make it a practice always to cast freshmen in my pieces, because freshmen are tomorrow's sophomores," he says. The students involved in the play spend roughly a hundred hours rehearsing and memorizing their lines. They learn life lessons by working as a team and coming together to produce a piece, learning discipline by coming to rehearsals and solving problems quickly and efficiently.





# MSTC Makes Noise With “Museum”

ANGELICA COSTILLA

IT IS NO secret that Madera South’s Theatre Department hosts some of the most amazing talent and advisors. However, what might be less known is the amount of hard work and dedication it takes to get there. Within Madera South’s Drama Program lies an incredible team who all share a common passion of the arts and who work together as a family. This year, their Drama Department has had their hands full, busy with both creation and production.

Traveling to a variety of different places, including elementary schools, MSTC put on a wonderful forty-five minute musical titled “Captain Louie” early this year, which is based on the children’s book called “TheTrip” by Ezra Jack Keats. This was the program’s very first venture into children’s theatre, and it is one that they hope to make a yearly event.

Along with stepping into new places the department has never been before, they made sure to make a big noise with their grand fall production of the play, “Museum.” This play ran from Thursday, November 12th through Saturday November 21st. The play was set in a contemporary art museum and captured the comings and goings of people who were experiencing art. This exceptional comedy involved 48 students as the cast and in offstage support, and was directed by Mr. James Humes, drama alumnus and teacher at Madera South.

With this production, both Madera South and Madera High actors came together to deliver an outstanding performance for every audience member to remember. Students worked five nights a week to prepare for the show, plus Saturdays for set construction. “We have no life,” laughs Ginger Latimer, head of the Drama Department. They usually do this for a total of two to three months, ensuring the best performance possible for their productions.

This play was driven with the purpose of allowing others to take on a very different perspective of art’s nature in general. “There is art in humans and humans in art. It’s kind of a funny take on how we see art, and what it means to us,” states Mrs. Latimer. Every character in this play proved to be unique in his very own way, teaching us that no matter how different we might seem, art is something that can unite us all in a number of different ways.





# Positivity For Alpha Elementary!

ANGELICA COSTILLA

THINGS ARE LOOKING up for Alpha Elementary, and that is because it is the teachers and staff who make it a point to look up at every day with encouragement and positivity. With Alpha's fairly new Positive Behavioral and Intervention System (PBIS), staff work towards focusing on the good that students do, rather than directing all attention to the bad. Their main goal is to provide a happier and safer place for students to learn and enjoy.

Behind this new movement for Alpha Elementary is a book titled "Fill a Bucket," written by Carol McCloud. This book serves as a guide to daily happiness for young children. It teaches the lesson that everyone carries his own bucket, and rather than dip into a person's bucket, one should be kind and instead help fill the bucket. Principal Mr. Tom Chagoya made sure to purchase a copy of this book for every single classroom in hopes of promoting the ideal of "Being the Good in the World."

Within this system, students are rewarded with tickets when engaging in an act of positive behavior. This can be anything from being polite, to bringing in canned food, or even simply completing their homework. These tickets can be spent once a month at their student store, which sells all kinds of

goods such as pencils, stickers, bookmarks, etc. To make sure the environment is further filled with positive energy, Mr. Chagoya purchased shirts for all staff members to wear at least once a week, that reads, "Believe There is Good in the World." Students are able to feel more open to being kind and doing well in school as opposed to feeling tempted to step into the boundaries of what is bad for them.

PBIS has also made a huge impact with its Student Council, fourteen students who help put on rallies, promote school spirit, and organize fundraisers such as Pennies for Patience and a local Canned Food Drive. Moreover, the Student Council is the muscle behind school

activities, and they help put together the school's candygrams fundraiser during the holidays.

The whole purpose of the work behind these students and staff is to create the understanding that "to be kind does not cost anything, so to be kind is cool," says Andrea Burton, a fourth-grade teacher at Alpha Elementary. She notes that students have responded tremendously to the changes being enforced. "The campus is cleaner, lines are straighter, students are eager." Having such a positive impact in such a short amount of time shows how much seeing the good in all things really can do.

