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Modesto High School

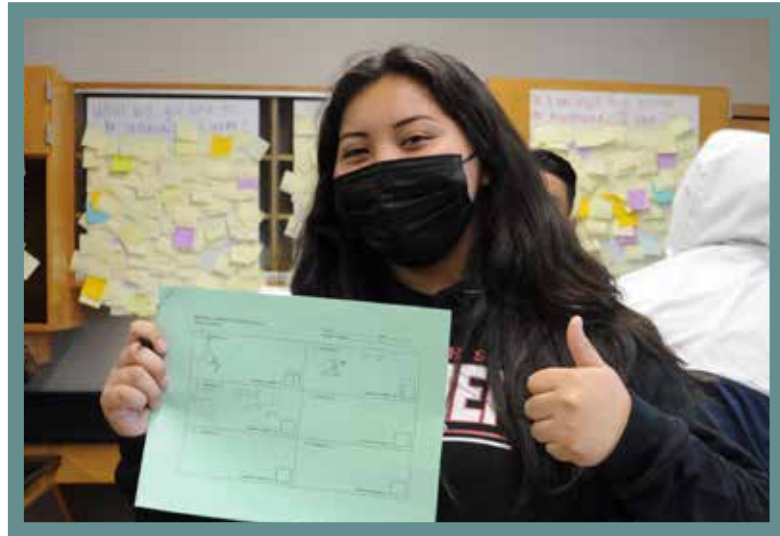
Fall Issue 2021



CLASS OF 1968

Back in School

By: Dylan Starn



Junior Gigi Valencia in her eighth period math class

As schools reopen, students return back on campus after a year of nearly all-online learning. With this, comes excitement and relief but also an increased struggle to re-adjust to learning as it was before.

For many, being able to be back at school has been a relief. Most freshmen experienced middle school almost completely online, making the transition into high school all the more tumultuous. Similarly, sophomores never got to experience being on campus for high school until now, missing the entire transition process that follows with freshman year. Returning from distance learning proved to be a greater transition than expected.

“I definitely enjoy being back at school,” said freshman Maci Raby. “I’m glad I can at least talk to friends in person...” she added — which was a

common thread across all students, when asked about what they missed of school last year.

Besides regaining connectivity with peers, students are also having to transition to not being digitally overloaded all the time. During distance learning, students tuned into classes in the safety of their homes, which created learning challenges. One student even admitted to using TikTok during class periods. Being back on campus brought back handwritten assignments, plus class discussions that build upon a rapport and energy that just wasn’t re-creatable over a screen.

Freshman Iheoma Aguanne discussed the transition from distance learning to in-person learning by saying, “...it’s in the middle, I feel like it was a lot easier for me online compared to coming to school...”

With many students needing to adjust to distance learning last school year, many have to be able to re-adjust to being back in person.

Despite having been on campus before, upperclassmen still expressed the struggle of distance learning and its contrast with being back in-person. Junior Vanessa Diaz said that, although schools closed down midway through the third quarter of her freshman year, she didn't feel like she'd lost too much — “But I feel like I did miss out on sophomore year,” she said. “I didn't get to meet most of my sophomore teachers in person.”

Even for the students who were able to attend school previous years, a lot was missed. Luckily, for many being able to come back to school was a much smoother transition for them seeing as though they weren't new to campus.

With students officially being back at school for the new 2021-2022 school year the smaller things are becoming a bit more normal.



Students in the quad during 8th period

CLUB

On September 16, students filled the quad during both lunches to participate in the Club Faire — an annual event dedicated to promoting school clubs.

During the pandemic, Club Faire was conducted completely virtually, making this year's Club Faire all the more special. Activities Director Ms. Mulder said Club Faire was “fabulous, amazing to have in person, and very engaged, as well as organized.”

Set up in the shadow of the science building, Club Faire was a display of many of the school clubs — including clubs such as Key Club, Diverse and Artistic Student Union, and the Dungeons and Dragons club. The school band played during Club Faire, accompanied by the Color Guard. “Both lunches were packed,” said Activities Director Ms. Mulder.



Art & Anime Club



Recycling Club

Senior Thomas Damrell echoed Ms. Mulder's sentiments and added that Club Faire is a great opportunity for students to “spread their wings” and integrate themselves more into the Panther community by finding people who “share their same interests.” A popular school event featured during Club Faire was the Black Hole Club. Senior Hector Colunga said that the club is great for school spirit and is a “great way to make friends.”

FAIRE

Another club that caught students' attention was NAMI On-Campus — the National Alliance on Mental Illness club. Set up under a bright green tent and handing out lollipops, students were drawn to the club's message of providing resources for improving student mental health. Damrell said that the club is a "good resource" for all students to have access to, while junior Lilith Vann said the NAMI club "works to break the stigma" against talking about "mental health and mental disorders."

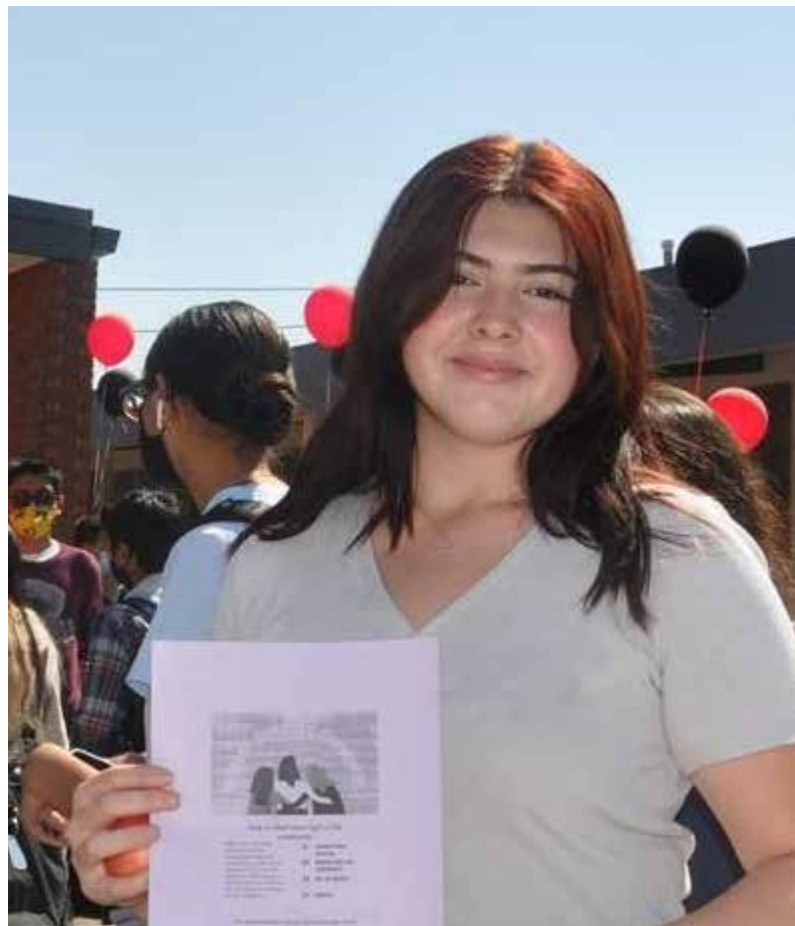
Students were also encouraged to join the Stanislaus County Volunteer Outreach Club (SCOVO). SCOVO is a club where students have an opportunity to help their community, especially during the pandemic. To quote Dhara Patel, "... our community can be a brighter community and bring smiles on people's faces and do something to impact them in a different way." SCOVO is a great way for students to engage in their community and for them to be able to gain that experience in helping others.

Other clubs that students enjoyed were the Art Club, which junior Vanessa Diaz said was her "favorite club" at Club Faire, and the Time in the Saddle Club — a club for bike-lovers across campus.

Club Faire this year was just another extension of the Panther community's warmth and collaboration — coming together to make this year's Club Faire a great one.



Color Guard



Respect Diversity Community Club



Environment Club

NEW STAFF MEMBERS

New school year, new staff members! Every school year, new staff members are hired, including teachers, counselors, and security officers. This year, Modesto High hired about 20 new staff members. For that reason we decided to interview a few new staff members and ask them some questions about their background and why they chose to work at MoHi.

Z.S.: What were you doing before you started working at Modesto High?

J.P. : I was attending CSU Stanislaus working towards getting my teaching credential. I student taught at Gregori High last year as part of the program I was in.

Z.S. : What is one work that best describes the type of teacher you are?

J.P. : Reasonable



Jacob Pierson



Erin Kutzman

T.P. : What is one word that best describes the type of teacher you are?

E.K. : A word to describe the type of teacher I am is "Love." I love the art of dance, and I love sharing it with my students.

T.P. : What is an interesting fact you would like to share about yourself?

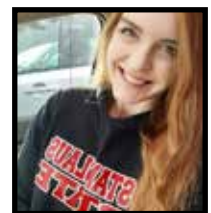
E.K. : I have never seen *Harry Potter*.

Z.S. : What is one word that best describes the type of teacher that you are?

J.W. : Excited!

Z.S. What is an interesting fact that you would like to share about yourself?

J.W. : I am one of seven siblings and have 15 nieces and nephews!



Julie Wylie



Kimberly Rodreick

T.P. : Why did you choose to work at Modesto High?

K.R. : I was a student here and was very active in the theatre department. I have always wanted to come back and teach here since I have so many good memories here.

T.P. : Where did you go to college?

K.R. : For my undergrad degrees and credential, I went to CSU Stanislaus. For my Master's, I attended Brandman University.



Steven Syndenys

Z.S. : Why did you choose to work at Modesto High?

S.S. : I was a head attendance clerk at Modesto High about 5 years ago, so when an opportunity came up for me to teach here, I took it!!

Z.S.: What were you doing before you started working at Modesto High?

S.S. : I worked previously at Gregori as a Transition Teacher (18-22 year olds).

T.P. : What is one word that best describes the type of counselor that you are?

D.S. : Compassionate

T.P. : What is an interesting fact you would like to share about yourself?

D.S. : I speak two languages and I love shopping at Starbucks.



Denise Sarabia



Guadalupe Vargas

Z.S. : What were you doing before you started working at Modesto High?

G.V. : Before I was a counselor at Modesto High I was a counselor at Atwater High School, so I was working as a substitute for a year and then over the summer I worked for CDOC with migrant students.

Z.S. : What is an interesting fact you would like to share about yourself?

G.V. : I think the most interesting fact about me is that I have a twin brother.

T.P. : What were you doing before you started working at Modesto High?

R.W. : I taught science in Castro Valley.

T.P. : What is an interesting fact you would like to share about yourself?

R.W. : In my free time I play horse polo.



Rebecca Wihl



George Fontana

Z.S. : What are your favorite things to do outside of school?

G.F. : My favorite things to do outside of work is to go fishing, workout at the gym, go to sporting events and travel during the summer breaks.

Z.S. : What is an interesting fact you would like to share about yourself?

G.F. : One interesting fact about me is before I got into teaching, I served 6 years in the United States Air Force.

T.P. : Why did you choose to work at Modesto High?

J.L. : Nurse Sandy told me that Modesto High was a good school where you could get lots of help, and this is a good place for me to start my high school journey. There is a lot of support from administration.

T.P. : What is one word that best describes the type of nurse that you are?

J.L. : Hardworking.



Janet Lee

~Modesto High

The Dining Room

By: Dylan Starn

For weeks, the school halls boasted flyers promoting the first play of the school year, *The Dining Room*. *The Dining Room* was the first production of the year -- and an absolute hit. Within the first day of showing, tickets sold out and, on the second day of showing, reserved seats filled up the Black Box Theater. With the first play of the year being a success, it is only a matter of time until we can expect another play in the future.



The actors performing around the dining table

Photo by Scott Mitchell

This comedic and heartfelt play symbolizes the overlapping occurrence of families being brought together through a single room in their house. *The Dining Room* gradually transitions into the 1920s to the 1980s, where families have their own events around a dining room table. The play shines a light on American culture throughout the decades and how different families have fought through their own difficulties and hardships.

The production not only highlights the difficulties many face but shows the successes being celebrated between families. The cast and crew were able to project the message that all families are different and have their own struggles.

With major projects and events like the play, there are always challenges. With the crew setting up stage design and the cast memorizing their lines, many can imagine the different emotions the cast and crew were feeling before the big night. Throughout the whole process, cast and crew encouraged each other and were able to trust each other; with this they were able to create a fantastic performance.

Mrs. Roderick, this year's director of the *The Dining Room* was able to help the cast collaborate on making the production possible. While discussing the play, she said, "With any play, just like any art, it's never truly 'done;' we just run out of time."

With the time the cast and crew did have, as a group, they were able to create a memorable production.

With the many things that had to be done while preparing for the play, COVID19 was another bump in the road. Keeping the virus in mind while preparing for the play seems to have definitely been a struggle. Having to remember to stay socially distanced and to keep masks on may have been a struggle while getting ready for the big night.

When asked what production was like while keeping COVID in mind Mrs. Roderick stated, "I can't say I've ever run into a problem such as that before, but in the end the actors pulled together and put up a great show."

The theater production faced multiple problems including COVID exposure. This led to half cast having to quarantine due to exposure. Mrs. Roderick pointed out that masks were a major issue while preparing for the play. She pointed out, "This was particularly difficult because masks cover the most expressive part of our faces."

We can imagine the difficulty the cast faced while preparing for more dramatic scenes in the play with a mask covering someone's face. Fortunately, the cast got a very large shipment of clear masks which made it a lot easier for preparation and made an even more cinematic impression during the big night.



The audience in the Black Box Theater Photo by Mr. Davies

Even with these chaotic problems the cast and crew faced they were able to come together and produced a great performance.

Cast members had lots to do in order to prepare for the big night. Between fitting into costume and preparing the finishing touches there was a lot to do. One of the cast members Abigayil Akers, said, "The hardest part hands down had to be remembering my lines...I can't imagine how that was for the others, especially those with huge lines." Throughout all the work they had to do, it all paid off as they were able to produce an amazing show.



Senior JohnCarlos Cerna and junior Julio Barraza performing in the play

Photo By Scott Mitchell

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The Dining Room was a play to remember. With it being the first production of the year after distance learning, it is a great sight to many to see the small things become a bit more normal.

For the first time in school history, a Modesto High school delegate for Girls State, Nithya Medam, went to the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) Girls Nation.

ALA Girls State and Girls National are summer programs for rising high school seniors to learn about the mechanics of American government through government simulations — Girls State through a mock state legislature and Girls National through a mock US Senate. Each year, Modesto High sends one female student to represent the school at the California Girls State session.

Nithya Medam got nominated to Girls State through an internal teacher nomination process, then had a follow-up interview with a local ALA representative who selected her to represent the school. “In all honesty, I was really surprised that I had been selected,” Medam said about her nomination — she’s interested in the biomedical field, rather than law or policy, but regardless, she was “thrilled to be given the opportunity and planned to make the most of it.”



GIRLS NATION

This year, Girls State was conducted completely online. But, despite the changes that occurred as a consequence of the pandemic, Medam says that Girls State has been “one of the most transformational experiences of [her] high school career.”

Throughout the weeklong experience, Medam was elected to the mock state legislature and wrote a bill for the simulation titled the “Personal Financial Literacy Act” that argued students should have to take a financial literacy course in high school in order to graduate. This — a combination of getting to both write legislation for, and getting elected to, the mock state legislature — gave Medam a “greater appreciation for what it means to be a part of a democracy and to embody the spirit of a faithful American,” she shared.

Of all the state delegates, Medam had the honor of being chosen as one of two delegates to represent California at the Girls Nation convention in Washington DC. “This one week alone was enough to completely transform the way I view government and our duty of civic engagement,” Medam said in her Girls Nation statement. Through the experience, she realized the “strength and power” held by American citizens and how to exercise said power to improve the nation.



For Girls Nation, Medam had the opportunity to co-author another bill, this time legislation targeting the lack of regulation of direct-to-consumer genetic testing companies. The bill passed “with an easy majority,” according to Medam, after facing “little opposition and a single amendment.” Through the presentation of her bill on the mock US Senate floor at Girls Nation, Medam said she learned “the importance of comprehending the spirit of the proposed bill” and recognized the “importance of the issue in terms of impact on American society.”

In her Girls State and Nation speech, Medam closed by thanking the ALA for “providing such an invaluable opportunity to us females in learning the importance of government, generosity in society, and living as a citizen with integrity. Thank you.”

By Cassandra Delgado
Photos courtesy of Nithya Medam

By Cassandra Delgado



SPEECH AND DEBATE



The Modesto High Speech and Debate team is back to competing in person after a year of online tournaments and is already off to a great start.

Last year, all Speech and Debate events were conducted online — students logging into Zoom meetings, dressed up in formal wear; debating with other students and giving their speeches, all within the space of their homes. Despite the setbacks, Modesto High sent the most students to state than it ever had in the history of the program, according to Speech and Debate coach Mrs. McDonald.

This year, though, the team has transitioned back into competing at in-person tournaments. The first tournament this year was supposed to be at Bear Creek High School, but was canceled due to Lodi Unified District’s policies regarding COVID-19. Rather than let the first tournament fall back online, the Enochs coach stepped in and hosted the first tournament at Enochs, followed by the second tournament at Enochs as well, as originally planned. The location of future tournaments has shifted, too — making it so the fourth tournament, which Mrs. McDonald said “is supposed to be at Mountain House,” will be hosted online.

Despite the setbacks, senior Ferial Dagher shared that the team is “ecstatic” to be back in person. “The real spirit of public speaking and live debate is something that couldn’t be translated to the virtual world,” she shared.

Junior Jaya Naidu echoed Dagher’s sentiment, adding that it’s better from a technical perspective too. “It’s a lot easier to read your opponents,” she said. “The speeches are better too, because you get to hear everyone else as well.”

Senior Fernando Bazan has participated in both speech and debate competitions this year in the Lincoln-Douglas debate and Original Oratory speech events. For Lincoln-Douglas, he said, he “debated the lifting of intellectual property protections for medicines” by the World Trade Organization; while for Original Oratory,

he gave a speech on “recognizing misogyny in cultures.” These experiences were both educational ones, he said — allowing him to explore a variety of perspectives, both through competing himself and also listening to what his other competitors had to say.

When asked about what they’re looking forward to this year, nearly all Speech and Debate students reiterated the same thing — they’re looking forward to competing again this year, and this time in person, building upon the energy developed at physical tournaments in a way that just wasn’t possible last year.

Mrs. McDonald added that, now that Speech is back in person, the tournaments are as much a learning experience as a competition — giving students the opportunity to “learn from those outside their own pod.”

Is it Possible to Balance Work and School?

As the world reopens and school starts again, students are beginning to have to balance work and school. During the pandemic, students started getting jobs, whether to help out their families or even just get some money of their own. With online school, it was easier to accommodate school hours and create flexible work schedules. Now with school reopening, students are starting to build up more stress from navigating both work and school.

No matter how difficult it gets trying to find a way to manage their time, these few students have been able to find a good balance between the stress of school and work. They have successfully been able to maintain their school and work careers during these troubling times.

Agnes Biju, a junior, works at Starbucks. When asked how she keeps up with everything, Biju said that having a routine is key. "I have a routine for days I have work and days I don't work and sometimes sacrificing sleep helps if it's the worst of all cases." This is a perfect example of how hard some of these students work to keep up. They give a lot of time and effort into the activities they do. Biju adds that "On a daily basis I get 4-5 hours of sleep and if I have to cut down on sleep then it's all nighters."

Another student who is also dedicated to making the time for everything is a senior student, Jakhi Nichols. He has two jobs, one for Jamz Cheer and Dance and the other for Sunshine Academy, a daycare. He said, "I have a routine set to where I do my assignments during school, so that after



Senior Jakhi Nichols works as a spotter to keep the cheerleaders safe while performing stunts

Requirements to get a work permit:

1. You cannot be deficient more than 20 credits toward graduation.
2. Must maintain a 2.0 GPA.

*Due to the pandemic, there are some circumstances under which a work permit may be obtained even if a student does not meet the requirements listed above. See Mr. Murry in the Career Center for more information.

work and practice, I can just go home and not have to worry about homework.”

Although it might not be too difficult for some students, senior Naleen Rin who works at a boba shop, said “It can be a bit stressful because my boss can give me days where I have to work right when I get off at school and even when I get home from work I have to do schoolwork and it all gets very tiring.”

Along with some of these hardworking students, Ariana Padilla happens to have a lot of time on her hands. She said that the thing that motivated her to get a job while still in school was that “I have plenty of free time, and wanted to see where I could grow in that. I think it helps expand your way of how people think and that could really help in the long run.”

Also reaching for above and beyond is Gigi Valencia who works two jobs. She says her main motivation is her future. “I really

want to go to college and my mom is a single parent so it’s going to be pretty hard for her to have to pay for my school in the future, so I just want to be able to help her and myself succeed.”

Overall, these students are proof that it can be tough trying to find a good balance, but over time it’s definitely doable. They have all successfully managed to maintain a good stability with their school and work careers.

Restrictions on working students:

1. You cannot work more than 20 hours per week.
2. You cannot work more than 4 hours per day, Monday - Thursday.
3. You cannot work more than 8 hours a day Friday - Sunday.

There are exceptions that allow for students to work more hours if they have a work experience permit. Students with this permit are required to attend a class at school one day a week.



Senior Naleen Rin working at One Tea, serving boba

Back in Black and Red

MoHi Athletes Back in Action



Photo Courtesy of Scott Mitchell

With schools re-opening and students coming back on campus, the new school year means the return of sports on campus. Some sports that are starting up again include football, volleyball, cross country, girls tennis, girls golf, boys and girls water polo.

The football season begins in the summer when conditioning starts. Their first game was on August 20th. Their final game, the Fall Homecoming game, was on October 29. Excitement fills the stands during the games, the Black Hole cheering on the school football team. JV football player, sophomore Joey Pritchard said that he enjoyed the sense of community football creates, saying he appreciates how it's a team sport. Then, he added, "it's fun."

Another sport that starts conditioning during the summertime is volleyball. Their first game was on the 27th of August - the team performed well this year, winning a couple games. The girls all said, time and time again, they enjoyed playing a sport that they loved and appreciated the rush of competi-

tion that each match brings.

Another sport is cross country. Their first race was early into the school year, but already, they'd started practicing before the year even began. During practices, they highly prioritize stretching to prevent possible injury, plus running around the track and outside school. Freshman Vania Garcia said that she's excited to continue within the sport for the rest of her high school career to see her improvement; while freshman Dulce X, who qualified for Sectionals, said she liked the "social aspect of Cross Country" and that she plans to do it "all four years". Some of the events held this year included the Beyer scrimmage, CCAL 1, Half-Moon Boy, and the Hughson Invite.

As new sports start up with the quarter ending, plenty of sport seasons came to a close, athletes putting down their running shoes and taking off their jerseys for the year. When asked about her sport ending, Garcia confessed that she feels sad — "I'm going to miss all my friends."

By Alejandra Hernandez



Photo Courtesy of Sycamore Staff

Photo Courtesy of Sycamore Staff



Photo Courtesy of Sycamore Staff



Modesto High Battle of the Sports!



Insta poll results are in. MoHi Panthers were asked to vote on their favorite sports in head-to-head battles. Football came out on top, but one thing is clear, Modesto High loves all of its athletes! The results posted above are based on the votes that were cast prior to the cutoff time each day.