

# TEEN CENTER TIMES

A PLACE WHERE YOUTH ARE EMBRACED BY COMMUNITY

Fall 2006

Volume 3, Issue 3

## Teen Center Relay for Life Team Nets \$1,000! — Mark Pacini

Who would choose to walk around a track for 24 hours? And why? September 16 was the starting date for this year's Calistoga/Up Valley American Cancer Society Relay for Life walk-a-thon. This event is one of many held across the nation to raise funds for the American Cancer Society for research, education, advocacy, and support services for cancer patients and their families.



Our local event began at 9:30 Saturday morning as cancer survivors walked the traditional first lap. It is a moving experience for me, especially because I always recognize more people there than I think I will. It becomes more than obvious that cancer is not choosey as to whose life and whose family it affects.

The Teen Center "Team" was one of 48 teams who raised funds and committed to have a representative on the track walking at all times during a 24-hour period. Often though, there are several team members walking at a time as the mood is one of fun, in spite of the serious nature of the event. Each team is provided a spot on the lawn inside the track where a base camp is set up... tents, chairs, food, and the much appreciated fire pit for the wee hour chill of the morning. Kids and adults come and go as they fulfill their promised time frame, and others drop by to socialize on Saturday afternoon. Good conversations are had by all as the experience is shared.



The most powerful part of the event culminates at sunset when the track is lined with wall to wall luminaries (a white paper bag, with a lit candle

inside, showing the name of a cancer survivor or victim). The evening begins with readings of poetry, singing of songs, and tributes made as the luminaries shine. The words to "Amazing Grace" fill the air, but now with more meaning than ever before. We walk our laps more slowly now as we read each bag looking for familiar names of friends and loved ones



who have been touched by this terrible disease. It is sobering indeed and the night is long, but the skies are filled with stars, and hope illuminates as the sun welcomes in the beginning of a new day. Almost all of the luminaries remain lit. The parallels are not hard to see.

This is the second year that the Teen Center has participated in this event, bringing in \$1,000 towards the Calistoga goal of \$157,000. Thank you to all who participated either by your donations or by walking the track. A special thanks goes out to Stephen Benner and Brett Hayes for walking all night long (over 350 laps / 87+ miles between the two of them) and to John Butler, Chris Stanton, and Ryan Brown for filling in the gaps; this was especially nice for the older supervisors (Tom, Lori, and me) at 3 am.

Linda Schulz, chair of this year's event shared, "Relay for Life shows our communities at their best —sharing their time, money and talents in hopes of one day having a cancer-free world."

We are already looking forward to next year's event. Plan to join us by pledging money, walking for our team, or both. The experience is not one easily forgotten and finding a cure for cancer is a noble cause indeed.

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### Recent Events

- 8/8 Sheriff Thompson joins Center's Support System
- 8/15 Jim Steward joins volunteer staff
- 8/16 Denise Pope—Doing School Seminar
- 8/23 Doing School Follow-up at Women's Center
- 8/29 Parent's Support Group met at Napa Valley Roasting Company
- 8/30 Safe School Ambassador Program hosted by Sara Cakebread
- 9/13 Denise Pope-Stressed-out Student Project
- 9/16-17 Relay for Life, Calistoga
- 9/25 Tour of St. Helena High School
- 10/5, 12, 19 Dr. Jim Roy-Choice Theory Seminar Series
- 10/17 T-shirt Tie Dyeing

### Upcoming Events

- 10/26 Choice Theory Seminar continues
- 10/26 Strategies Youth Development Seminar
- 11/9 Madeline Levine, author—*Price of Privilege*, St. Helena Elementary Auditorium

## DIRECTOR'S CORNER TOM AMATO

### WHAT IS THE WORTH OF A CHILD?

As I read the latest literature in books such as Denise Pope's Doing School, and Madeline Levine's Price of Privilege, the question was stimulated as to how a child's worth is determined; personally believing that worth is a major motivating factor for achievement.

Questions flooded. Who gets to determine or evaluate this most powerful motivator - worth. Are they chosen or self-appointed? Is it based on a democratic process, taken with power or position, or simply assumed? Where do they get their credibility and validity? What is the criteria?

It appears that the attainment of a set of outcomes is the key. If this is the case then life become a lifetime series of outcome based performances that will be evaluated and translated into personal value by ones self according to a cultural criteria or someone who either places themselves in the evaluator position or is set in such a position by others.

If this is the case, we have a most interesting dilemma, since many authorities suggest that individual worth should have absolute nothing to do with production, outward appears, or behavior; but instead be based upon a state of being.

The question remains, what or who should a child believe? Who do they look to for help – parents, teachers, friends, community, God? What is projected as most valuable:

- The Child or their academic standing or ability to fulfill a task?
- The Child or their behavior or status they are able to achieve?
- The Child or their appearance or the image they project on us?
- Your Child or the outcome?

Do you think they know the answer that you and I choose in actuality?

Is their value in our eyes based on a God-given state of being or the factors above? Is the value of a child based upon arbitrary human criteria or is it based on the inestimable value of being human?

A more important question is on what do they think their value is based, and why? Because if by some chance they think that performance is the key to value; or their accomplishments as compared to those around them; or their appearance as compared to a movie star persona; we are fostering a continuously stress-filled life that could cripple the very best and produce the most frightening behaviors as they express their pain and devastation.

### Alliances Take Our After-School Programs to New Heights

We would like to extend a special thanks to our Howell Mountain Principal Tom Stubbs and Trudy Bouligny from the Napa County Office of Education for working with us in the development of our Community after school programs. Their passion for the care of children is extraordinary.



Above: Camping with the guys

Below: Fun at Scandia



### A Graduate Shares Wisdom Learned

By Gabe

1. Be open-minded.
2. Listen.
3. Study.
4. Seek a balanced life.
5. Build friendships.
6. Don't judge.
7. Get to know your teachers.

### ERVIN BIGHAM FAMILY TRIBUTE

We wish to extend a special tribute and thank you to Ervin and Della Bigham for their many years of caring service for our community, and for their continued support and care of the Teen Center, including the Memorial Gifts that were directed to the Teen Center as a result of Dr. Bigham's passing. The Bigham's have always had a heart for others from the time they came to care for the students of the Prep School to their present passion for the Community Service Center. We are most grateful.

# THANKS TO 2006 DONORS

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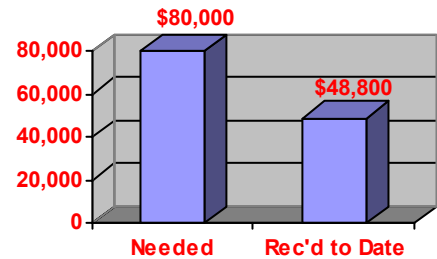
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## A DEEPER DIMENSION OF LANGUAGE JIM STEWART

Sharing who we are, what we feel, our dreams and ambitions, can be very challenging and very frustrating. When our children speak to us, it is very common for them to tell us what they think we want to hear. Although we have listened as they spoke, we may not have heard them. Many of us are accustomed to "speaking" with our mouth and "hearing" with our ears.

Many ideas, dreams and feelings can get "lost in the translation" with this form of communication.

Learning how our children "speak" and encouraging them to use the "language" that communicates who they are, not what they think we want to hear, is the challenge.

Creative writing, poetry, and photography are examples of "languages" that I use to communicate the deeper things of my being.

In what "languages" are you fluent? Do you have a desire to teach/share them with others? Close your eyes and tell me what you see.

## Free Guitar Lessons

Free Guitar Classes offered by Kaelen McCrane at the Teen Center!

Classes will be held Mondays from 4-5:30 p.m. Individual attention and tutoring. All ages and skill levels welcome. The only materials required are a guitar, and a willingness to learn! Come and join the joy of music. Let your child explore the infinite possibilities music has to offer.



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## STRESSED OUT STUDENTS

Nationally renowned speaker Dr. Denise Pope, founder of the Stressed-Out Student Project at Stanford University and author of *Doing School: How We Are Creating a Generation of Stressed-Out, Materialistic and Miseducated Students* presented astounding research findings at two presentations held recently at Pacific Union College Prep School and Napa Valley College. These programs were sponsored by the Healthy Community Teen Project of St. Helena Hospital Center for Behavioral Health and our Community Teen Alliance. Dr. Pope states, "Now more than ever before, pressure for high achievement in school has become a significant risk factor for adolescent mental and physical health, academic integrity, and school engagement."

One of the more startling observations is that students in suburbia are three times more likely to be at risk for these issues than those in an inner city. Moreover, quite commonly it is the high-achieving student dealing with cheating, depression, unhealthy study habits and distorted views of success. The balance of students are quite often alienated and disengaged from an academic program that consistently focuses upon mechanics in just "doing school" as opposed to actually absorbing and learning about the subjects taught. A fifty percent remediation rate in the University of California and other state schools is quite disturbing.

Twenty educators and administrators from Napa Valley attended an earlier presentation at Cubberly Hall at Stanford University, followed by a two-day seminar, *Helping to Improve Health, School Engagement, and Academic Integrity*. This clearly demonstrates a tremendous opportunity to join together

to create healthier family and educational systems. Educators, administrators, students and parents unique to each school can develop multiple strategies through full collaboration. For the past three years schools throughout the United States have been involved in the Stressed Out Students (SOS) program.

An editorial in the *St. Helena Star* on July 20 noted that presentations such as Dr. Pope's "are traditionally doused by the cold reality that the people who need the most help attend the fewest meetings." A feature article in the *Star* on August 24 reviewed her presentation once again raising her message to a higher profile. The communication process continues.

The two Pope presentations were video recorded and Alan Gordon, Superintendent for the St. Helena Unified School District, has recently offered that they be shown on Cable Channel 27. Video CDs of the presentations are being made available to those who attended as well as any others who request copies. It is critical that as much of the community as possible be made aware that a national educational resource is readily available at Stanford University. There is a limit to how many schools SOS can handle from year to year. Slots are rapidly being taken by schools from as far as New York.

The week after the Pope presentations, the first of many community forums to come was held to consider implementing SOS projects in specific Napa Valley schools. Each school panel requires educators, administrators, students and parents all be fully represented. Interested constituents from any and all schools are being actively sought.

For more information, contact Tom Amato at 963-1515 or by email: amatomp@napanet.net.

BEAU VAN DEREN