

THE TALON

THE PROFILE ISSUE

Hood River Valley High School

February 2014

Hood River County School District welcomes new superintendent Dan Goldman

By Scarlett Adams
Talon Staff Reporter

A room full of teachers, staff and administrators, all dressed in their regular work attire, sit early one morning in a staff meeting. The brand-new Superintendent is rumored to be in attendance. Sporting a suit, a dapper man greets people as they enter the library. It can only be one man, Dan Goldman, Superintendent of Hood River County schools.

"People have told me I gotta take this suit off if I'm going to fit in here," says Goldman. "It's really important for me to have community members know that teaching and schools are professional organizations, and that we have a very serious craft."

Goldman's days are filled with meetings with community members and administrators. He tries to begin every day in a school, whether it is an elementary, middle or high school. There are lots of meetings involved, with different administrators and parents. He often visits Salem to discuss school policies, and collaborate with other school administrators. Goldman is constantly working behind the scenes to make sure the school day goes smoothly for almost 4000 students in the school district.



Superintendent Dan Goldman, in his ever-present suit, grins for a shot in the HRV library one morning last month.

Goldman didn't aspire to be a superintendent when he was young. He was born in New York, and climbed Mt. Rainier during his senior year of high school. Looking for a college in the Northwest as close to a mountain as he could get, he selected Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. There, he majored in Psychol-

ogy, and minored in music. "I wanted to be a rock star, or a clinical psychiatrist."

All throughout high school, Goldman was involved with kids. He was a camp counselor, and worked with physically handicapped kids. In college, he interned at a school and started teaching. All of his experiences led to his love of

working with kids.

Following college, Goldman moved to Portland. He got a job at The Christie School, and alternative school. Following that job, he got a job in Portland Public schools as a teacher. Goldman earned his school psychology degree, and transferred to the Tigard/Tualatin school district. There,

he worked as an administrator as the first director of curriculum and the director of elementary programs. Moving up in the school pyramid, he became the principle of an elementary school.

There were a lot of superintendent jobs open all around Oregon, but Goldman chose

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Sierra Bigelow thinks positive

By Collete Zack
Talon Staff Reporter

High school can be a place filled with stress and negative energy for students. We often lose sight of the simple things that bring happiness and joy to our lives and the people around us. There is one person who is a light to the sometimes dull hallways. Her name? Sierra Bigelow.

When was the last time someone made a point to say hello to you, ask you about your day, and converse in a genuine conversation that didn't happen over text? For many of us, it was the last time we saw Sierra's face smiling with her headphones playing her favorite song, *Beat It*, by Michael Jackson. "I enjoy seeing her optimism and positivity spread to her peers," reflected Vice Principal Co-



Payton Rigert wrestles her opponent at a women's meet in North Salem.

Payton Rigert takes world by storm

By Zoe Swisher
Talon Staff Reporter

Some may know her as an all-state wrestling superstar, others may know her as a super smart 4.0 student, but most know as the person who can do a million things at once. Payton Rigert may look like your average HRVHS sophomore but she has a crazy busy schedule that no one can comprehend. Payton

is a wrestler, she runs cross country, she takes taekwondo and jujitsu, she is a part of Leos, she does robotics, 4H leadership (president of 4H club), she ski races, she's a 4H state ambassador, and she is a member of the tri county leadership board for Hood River County. Payton will also be going on a summer exchange to India through Hood River Rotary Club. So how does this busy girl manage her crazy life,

keep up with her schoolwork, and still have a social life?

"People need to know how dedicated she is to everything," sophomore Annika Martinez, stressed. "She's a really good friend. Payton always manages to make time for us. She makes the best of everything and that's what makes her such an amazing friend." Another close friend of Payton's, sophomore, Marelle Vorester,

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Sierra Bigelow shows the school spirit at HRV by dressing up in blue and gold!

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Jeff Strong helps out in more ways than one

By **Stephanie Heidi Villalobos**
Talon staff reporter

Mornings are dreadful to mostly everyone, but before school starts you will see Jeff Strong helping Gabe Cunningham find the solutions to the inevitable problems of math. One would never assume that this "spiritually led" leader is a math fanatic, but behind all the equations he is known as a youth mentor to HRV students.

"Jeff was created to be that middle man to help people open their eyes to God, and be there for you in any situation," said Strong's mentee, senior, Ethan Field. "When I think of a leader, I think of Jeff, because he is the perfect example of a leader. He treats others the same way he wants to be treated," continued Field.

Strong graduated from Linfield University in 1999 with a math major and secondary education. In 1999, Strong started teaching basic math at The Dalles Middle School. The following year Strong began working for Hood River Middle School and taught for two years. "As a teacher I wanted to make a difference in the lives of kids. The problem was that the real issues and questions kids had were not being addressed in the context of a

classroom."

His willingness to help students has allowed Strong to be cherished by many youth, and community members: "The name says it all, Jeff is a strong, caring man that never looks at anybody's bad side. He is humble, even when it comes to his wakeboarding skills," said junior Jesus Becerra, one of Strong's mentees.

Strong interchanged all the excitement from teaching in a classroom for three years to become the area director for Young Life in the community of Hood River. Strong created an environment where HRV students could meet and ask questions about anything they were experiencing. "I totally underestimated the amount of time it takes to invest in the life of a person. We all have issues and experience brokenness in ourselves and others, and I became a Young Life leader, because I wanted to be part of these important questions and wrestle with them." As the years progressed, Strong adopted two loving children with his wife, Ronda Strong. He has not only shown his devotion to students, but he has shown that anybody has the ability to help in any situation.

"Many students claim I am a leader, but in reality I lead by example. I am not the leader



Youth pastor Jeff Strong makes grilled cheese sandwiches for a recent lunch meeting at HRV. Strong calls grilled cheese the "secret ingredient" to a good lunch.

who presents speeches and convinces the masses to follow me. I try my best to live out of my convictions and beliefs; but when I fail I know to ask for forgiveness. My hope is for people to see clearly how to love others and learn they are given the freedom to figure out what that looks like for them."

Despite the wondrous adventures Strong has encoun-

tered in mentoring and starting a new family, he manages to volunteer every Thursdays during lunch to provide grilled cheese sandwiches for HRVHS students. "Not to sound too cheesy, but I love seeing students come together, and enjoy each other's company," said Strong. "Sometimes we all need a little break, and grilled cheese just happens

to be the secret ingredient." Even though the fanatic for math cannot be stopped holding his spatula, and solving for X, Strong manages to make his Young Life club a healthy and safe environment. The Young Life club has numerous fundraisers to help members attend camp every summer.

Sierra Bigelow article continued...

lumba Jones, "Her interaction with people always produces a smile and her peers are always happy to see her." Sierra's close friend Ahnauna Andrews looks forward to her daily hugs and conversations with someone who cares so much about other people's feelings. "She is always sharing new stories with me and walking with me to lunch or in-between passing periods," stated Andrews. "I have never met anyone so real and accepting."

Fashion forward, wonderful sense of humor, and hardworking are all used to describe Sierra as well. Sierra

volunteers in the office, the library, in cleaning the Community Education building on weekends for everyone to enjoy, and the school recycling every week. "She does a lot at this school to help out!" said Sierra's teacher, Becky Franks. "She teaches us daily to work hard and be willing to lend a helping hand."

So how can we be more like Sierra in our own lives? Known for her kind heart, optimism, compassion, and enthusiasm for life that comes straight from her heart, "we can all learn to be the first to say hello, smile just because,

and never hesitate to stop and chat and make somebody else smile," added Jones. Sierra herself stated, "Everyone at the school just needs to be happier. But sometimes if I am sad people try to cheer me up. That's why I like to give other people hugs and cheer them up. I think we should always be trying to cheer each other up." Sierra's favorite line for when things aren't going your way is "Think positive." Sierra Bigelow, a role model and light in the HRV hallways, reminds us to remember the simple things like a hug, a smile, or waving hello.

Payton Rigert article continued...

said, "She is very intelligent and kindhearted. She loves to plan activities with us girlfriends, even though she's always so busy with her sports and other activities."

Payton is very dedicated to sports especially wrestling. "Payton competes 120% every time she steps on the mat," wrestling Coach Trent Kroll stated. "We're proud of how far she's come in less than two years in the sport." Payton is determined to become women's state wrestling champion. "She has all the drive and initiative, competitiveness and the ability to accomplish her goals," said Kroll. Because she progressed rapidly since the last season, she serves as a role model to her teammates. "She's a great team leader and

she thinks about team first."

When Payton is not wrestling, skiing, karate chopping, working, or studying, she is a short term Rotary Youth exchange student. "I'm totally planning on going to India this summer for 2.5 months" Payton beamed. "It would be so cool to go to India. The food there is totally boss." Other than India, Payton is interested in going to South Korea and Finland. "I want to go to Finland to find my people," Payton exclaimed. Wherever she ends up going, she will be sure to make the best out of it.

Time for the million-dollar question: How can Payton Rigert do a million things at once? "I always plan ahead. I keep a calendar. It's all about scheduling," Payton admitted.

"I usually have to wake up early in the morning to do homework, and I go to sleep really late to finish homework. But I really try to plan ahead and do the homework as soon as it is assigned to me." Even with all her activities, Payton still manages to maintain her 4.0 grade point average. "I want to be a doctor with no boundaries when I grow up. I really like to travel and I want to follow in my Dad's footsteps."

With a million activities, sports, school, and her social life, Payton is a very busy girl. She does an amazing job of balancing her spontaneous life. Wherever life takes Payton, she will always be ready for a challenge and will put 120% into everything she does.

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Hood River Valley High School

October 19,

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The Talon is the student newspaper of Hood River Valley High School, and has operated as a public forum for student expression since 2000. The paper comes out monthly, October through June. Letters to the editor may be sent to the school in care of Dave Case, Talon Adviser. Only signed letters will be printed.

Advertising rates are as follows:

Annual:
One Quarter Page--\$200
One Half Page--\$350
One Page--\$600
Single Issue:
One Quarter Page--\$50
One Half Page--\$100
One Page--\$200

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Barajas pursues glory through athletics



Sebastian Barajas and Eli Fults get some practice throws before the meet. Track & Field season 2013. Sebastian later on in the season went on to win the state competition in discus.

By Jose Marquez
Talon staff reporter

Do you ever walk through the halls and feel like there's such little room to walk through? That's maybe because you're walking through the halls of HRVHS where a triple-sport, 5'10 223 pound, state champion in track and field is walking right by your side! You might know him as "Seabass" or just "That one big athlete kid" who

lifts more weight than anyone in all of HRVHS! Sebastian Barajas, is a sophomore who many people admire and look up to.

Sebastian Barajas, a three-sport athlete, works hard in and out of school to achieve many goals of his. Throughout the years HRVHS has had many amazing students with many amazing talents and Sebastian Barajas definitely is one of them. Even outside of

his athletic life, Barajas has many other personal goals. Seeing Sebastian around pretty much sums up who he really is. Despite the fact that he's a great athlete, his personality is great as well.

"Every morning I wake up, I hear my brother Sebastian moan and groan like if he just finished weight lifting," said Omar Barajas, Sebastian's younger brother. You might think Barajas is just one ca-

sual kid, but if you really get to know him, you will know he's ready for anything that life has to throw at him. Barajas is a very understanding and hard-working guy. Once he says he's going to do something, he really means it.

Seeing Sebastian's athleticism ever since middle school, everyone knew big things were in store for him. Qualifying for the state championship tournament for wrestling in middle school meant a lot to him. Sadly, Barajas came in last, but he knew he had to keep his head up and keep on striving and working harder for his most dedicated sport, track & field. Winning a state championship as a team in 8th grade for track and field was just the beginning of Barajas's long journey up ahead of him. "That was my last push, I knew I had it in me, the feeling of being number one was the best." "My goal in life is to be somebody many people look up to, I want to be successful, I want to be SOMEONE, not a nobody," said Barajas when asked what his future goals were. Barajas hopes to attend Stanford University to go one step forward in his Track & Field career. To be more specific, Sebastian throws discus in Track & Field. Already contacted by Stanford University, Barajas is inspired; he's bettering himself mentally, physically and emotionally. Hard days of training in the weight room and hours of the same old throwing discus routine that he's done 1,000 times are yet to bring him more success.

Towards the end of freshman year in high school I remem-

ber talking to Sebastian about his qualification to the state championships in Discus. He seemed to be really excited and confident going into the state championships. Barajas ended up placing 1st in state for the discus throw competition as a freshman in high school! Being the unexpected underdog he impressed and shocked many people, beating older sophomore, juniors, and seniors. "To be honest, not to be cocky, but I've actually gotten used to winning in the discus so it was exciting but not as I imagined it would be," said Sebastian when I asked how it felt to win 1st in state.

"How do you feel when you get all this recognition from people around Hood River?" was asked to Sebastian, and he replied with "It feels great, it gives you a motivation boost, especially when little kids tell you that they look up to you, I want to be that guy that everyone dreams of being in the future." Sebastian is already one who many look up to, I can only imagine what the future for him looks like.

Sebastian plans to attend college in the near future. He hopes to maybe one day go to Stanford and throw discus there. With the motivation and potential that Barajas has, Is already enough to say he's a special guy. Besides sports, Sebastian has lots of potential in life and tries to be good at anything he does as well. Nonetheless, Barajas's future looks very bright as of now and hopefully more good things are yet to come into his life!

Mason Bailey leaves her mark

By: Lexi Jones
Talon Staff Reporter

The music comes on, thundering down over your ears. You then see your peers running up in front of you. Pony tails are flying and bows are glittering. Shining, bright smiles are shown, chests heaving, arms lifted up high. The Hood River Valley cheerleaders stand waiting for their cue.

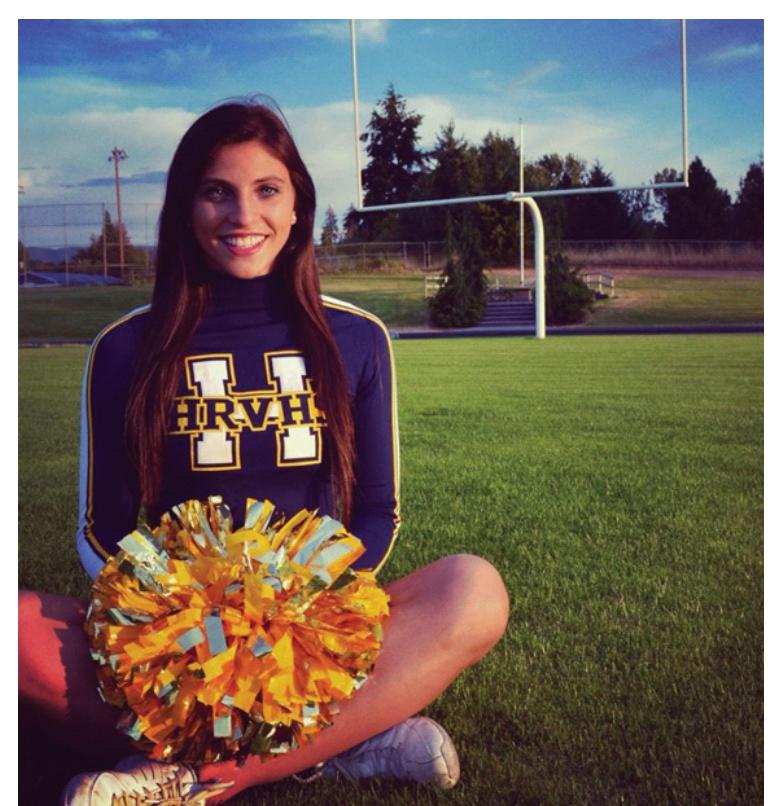
Senior Mason Bailey is ready to take off from the nest, but not before she leaves her mark on the school. It's evident that Bailey has a passion for cheerleading and puts 110% into it every day. "I really love it and it's just something I'm really passionate about. So it's never really a chore to be doing it." Throughout the three years she's been an HRVHS cheerleader, Bailey has finally made it to the top and qualified to be one out of the few all-state cheerleaders, an exciting reward for the hard work put in through the years. "Having her on the team I just know that whatever she does she's going to do her best and make it so much better," said senior

Georgia Orgain. Orgain and Bailey have been friends for what seems to be forever. Both girls participated in cheer tryouts their sophomore year with Ashlynn Olmstead and Jesica Campos. "She's positive, she's always striving to do better and be the best," said Olmstead.

Bailey never imagined she would be where she was. When she was younger she was in gymnastics, but she didn't ever think she'd be a cheerleader. It was her sophomore year when she tried out for her first time with her best friends, Orgain and Campos. "I started cheering because it was something all my friends were doing and I thought it could be fun." Little did Bailey know that in the end it would amount to something much more. Bailey spends multiple hours every day with gymnastics and cheerleading practice. "She helped me a lot with my gymnastics and she pushes me to tumble and throw. She truly loves cheering and she's just really amazing and inspiring," said Kimberly Gomez, Bailey's fall cheer teammate. When asked to describe Bailey

in a few words the words that often came up were: "positive, inspiring, hard-working, amazing, and talented." These few words come up to describe Bailey as she is and will continue to be. Bailey is dedicated to her cheerleading and with dedication comes hard work and with hard work comes results and rewards. She hopes to continue cheering after high school. "She's hilarious, positive, energetic, and outgoing person. She helps bring the creativity to the team," said Olmstead. Bailey's influence on the team as a whole has been a great one and to her younger peers she's an inspiration for the years to come, "She's an outstanding cheerleader, and truly an inspiration, she inspires me to work harder. Every time she was cheering at a game she would work really hard, super enthusiastic and you can tell she really loves it," says fall cheerleader Hannah Hart.

Bailey did her EA project last year on a cheer camp. Sophomore Zoe Swisher said, "I attended the camp last year, even though I didn't try out for the season, it was really



Mason Bailey dons her uniform on her home field.

fun to meet people, learn the new routines that Mason was teaching us and you could tell that she was really devoted to it and she wanted to help people be successful."

The music ends and heads go down. Your cheerleaders smile wide and bright, their

Angela Klein teaches students young and old

By Anna Ralph
Talon staff reporter

Walking into room B16 of Hood River Valley High School is like walking into a completely different world. While high school students in other rooms are busy in their classes learning languages, analyzing poems, or mastering the quadratic formula, Angela Klein's preschool students are determined to learn how to write their names, learn their numbers, and even beginning to read. HRV students don't always realize that they are sharing their campus with the preschool, Little Learners.

Angela Klein has been involved in early childhood education for over 20 years. At the early age of 13, Klein started babysitting. This led her to working in in-home daycares, which eventually advanced her into working at centers which are bigger and have a wider range of age groups. She has worked at several different centers over the years. However, Klein has been with Little Learners preschool since 2005. "I stepped into this because my youngest was four months old, I had just had a baby, and my husband said, 'You should just go get involved with the school district and see what happens.' So I started working Saturdays just teaching classes and then in 2005, the woman who was running this program left to go out on her own and they offered me the position. I've been here ever since."

Little Learners is not just a daycare. It is a preschool. Klein's objective is to prepare her students for kindergarten. She does this through a curriculum that she has created based around "the letter of the week." Klein explains, "This week we are working on the letter Y. They'll be practicing the sign for it, they'll be practicing the phonetical sound of the letter, and we'll have books that are tied into it. We'll also



Preschool teacher Angela Klein sings songs with her students as they finish their daily morning meeting. During their morning meeting, Klein has her students do their jobs, learn about the letter of the week, and read a story.

be talking about days of the week and year this week. I want to keep engaged because I realize the more we can get that down, the easier kindergarten will be for them." Klein also spends one-on-one time with each of her students frequently so she is aware of their progress and then personalizes a way for them to keep progressing.

Although Little Learners is open to the community, the program was originally created to host to teachers with younger children. Because of Little Learners, teachers are able to see their children while they're at work, either during their prep periods or at lunch. Kathryn Yasui, an English teacher at the high school with a child in Little Learners says, "It is so much fun to be here, working in my classroom and then to hear the shrieks of little kids running down the hall and knowing that my kid is one of them. I'm doing my

job but I can still actually be a part of that."

Klein is not just a teacher to preschoolers; she also teaches high school students. HRV students have the opportunity to be a teacher's assistant at Little Learners. Klein explains the benefits of the being a teacher's aide in her classroom: "You're getting all of the aspects of early childhood education, which is what we are teaching you in here, but at the same time you're getting to actively do it. It's one thing to sit in a classroom and hear about how kids learn but it's something completely different to be in the classroom with the kids and to learn with them."

Klein has also created a curriculum for her high school TAs. Each week students are given an interactive assignment with the children. Klein and her co-workers mentor and help the TA with any questions or complication that may come up with their assign-

ment. Rosario Olivas-Perez, a student teaching assistant at Little Learners says, "Everything runs really smooth. They are doing a great job. Angela is a very straight-up person so it makes it easy to understand what she wants from us."

Klein is very involved and engaged with job as a teacher whether her students are preschoolers or high school students. While some high school students are interested in being a teacher's assistant at Little Learners to gain more experience and understanding of younger children, other students take the class to see if they would like to pursue a career working in a field similar to Klein. "She likes to have a lot of fun while she does her job and that is very admirable," says Violet Mittelstadt, a Little Learners teaching assistant.

Not only does Klein have great relationships with her students and their parents,

she also has a wonderful staff. Klein's co-worker Lisa Worsley has been at Little Learners full time for two and a half years but had previous subbed for four years while her children attended the preschool. "I love it. I wouldn't have had my kids come here if I didn't love the program. It was just a natural fit for me to start working here. Angela does a great job," says Worsley.

Leaving room B16 of Hood River Valley High School is like stepping back into reality. No more silly songs, letters of week, or illustrated books. The occasional sound of giggles and the pitter-patter of little feet running through the halls that students and teachers hear while sitting in their classrooms is just a small reminder that HRVHS is shared by both young and old due to Angela Klein's Little Learners preschool.

Hood River as his first choice. "We had always loved Hood River," Goldman said, "and we wanted to raise our kids somewhere outside the city, but not too far."

The Goldman family, including his wife and two young girls, moved from Portland where they had been living for 18 years to Hood River. "Moving a young family is challenging," he said. "It was hard leaving friends."

The move was worth it. "There is a strong sense of community here." One of the challenges Goldman is facing early on is figuring out how things are done in the school district. "Teaching is a complex organization," said Goldman. He faces the challenge of the changing state standards

in math, and teachers adapting to them.

One of Goldman's favorite parts of being a superintendent is "going into different schools and seeing kids learning." Meeting all sorts of people and building relationships are some more of Goldman's favorite parts of his job. He has the ability to affect a huge amount of students in a positive way by the decisions and actions he takes as a superintendent.

Unknown by the common student, Goldman has already made various changes to the school district. After being officially appointed to the position of superintendent on July first 2013, Goldman has hired a new chief financial officer, and a new curriculum direc-

tor. On top of the new personnel working in the school district, Goldman hired Rich Polkinghorn as the new principal of HRV. Together, they worked to get helpful grants for the high school. One of the grants was to help the metal shop get a much needed facelift. Goldman got a massive two million dollar grant for after school activities in elementary schools. 150,000 dollars was granted for programs to help eighth graders and ninth-graders start planning for college.

Every new superintendent has ideas and changes they hope to make to the school district. Goldman feels strongly about young students at the elementary level learning to read at high levels, so they have access to all the mate-

rial that is available to them in middle schools and beyond. Also, the district is working on integrating math with science and technology. With education budget cuts affecting schools all over Oregon, Goldman is working at keeping the productivity and quality of Hood River at a standard that prepares students for life beyond high school.

The one question every student in the school district wants to know the answer to is how does the superintendent decide if the school day is delayed or cancelled? "The director of transportation will call me at around 3:45 in the morning," Goldman said. "Then I'll drive around the roads and decide if they're safe." By five in the morning,

Dan Goldman article continued...

the director of transportation and Goldman will make the final decision whether there will be a delay, or full cancellation.

In the short time he's been here, Dan Goldman has shown he's excited and determined to lead the Hood River County school district and all of its students to success in school while reaching their full potential. As an active member of the community, Goldman can be found at schools, and out and about. He has a profile on Twitter, where he can be followed for news and information about various events that go on in the district. Wherever he is, whatever color his suit is that day, Dan Goldman has each and every student's best interest in mind.

Austin Clarke breaks through the screen



Austin Clarke lines up for a three pointer in the game against the Pendleton Buckaroos, on January 23rd. Photo by Quinn Tyler.

By Cameron Malone
Talon Staff Reporter

The gym squeaked along with the players running up and down the wooden floor. A never ending thud bounced off the walls with the rise and fall of the orange ball. The Hood River Eagles kept up their speed, never stopping. Austin Clarke stands in the middle of it all, waiting for his opportunity to score some points for his team.

High school junior Austin Clarke has been fascinated by basketball since he was in elementary school. "I've played sports like cross country and football," says Clarke, "but basketball was the only sport that really challenged me so I stuck with it." Now, after more than five years of the sport, Clarke has developed his own ritual to be performed on the day of every game. "Before a game I like to drink a green

smoothie and eat a bagel for breakfast," Clarke begins. "I also use my special game day body wash and shampoo." Despite these pregame rituals, Clarke notes that there is definitely room for improvement in his team and the season so far. "Everybody's been working really hard and we're all a tight knit group, but we can definitely be better, and work some more."

During his few divergences from basketball, Clarke and his friends have gathered several stories. One in particular stands out to Clarke's friend, Junior Quinn Tyler. "In eighth grade," The story begins, "he would skip track practice and we would sneak into the gym at the middle school to play basketball. It was quite the elaborate set-up we had, to ensure we didn't get caught." Clarke's dedication to basketball led to his being kicked from the track team, and he continued that enthusiasm by

dedicating his newfound time to his favorite sport. During this time, Clarke has gained a reputation amongst his fellow teammates. "He pushes himself really hard," junior teammate Colin Tegeman explains, "Too hard. He pushes us too, but he always works with the team." It's this effort that has made Clarke a varsity player since his sophomore year and his love for the sport will carry him for a period of time that not even he knows the length of.

As the gym continued to rumble with the excitement of the crowd, he runs past the defense and lines up along the three point line, working as fast as he can. He'd made this shot a thousand times before, why should this one be different? He let the ball go, leaving it to fly over the assembled players. And spin around the hoop before it fell in for yet another good shot.

Steven Swafford wrestles his way into the hearts of many

Talon Staff Reporter
Mercedes Roberts

As sweat dripped down his face, he focused in on his opponent. It was the third round and he was up by five points. Steven Swafford had been practicing all wrestling season for this match. Every wrestler has that one opponent that he wants to beat every year and Swafford was going to finally accomplish his goal. Thirty seconds remains on the timer, he moves in for a double leg takedown. The ref holds up his hand and gives Swafford two takedown points. He goes in for a pin; he needs to score one more point to get the team the winning team dual point to win. The ref starts to count down as he holds his opponent in a cradle. Five seconds remain, as the ref yells "one, two, three, PIN." Swafford had beaten his opponent and won his team the dual meet.

Junior Steven Swafford talks about why he wrestles: "I wrestle because I love the way wrestling makes me feel and it's a blast. I remember one day after school crying to my dad cause a kid made fun of me all the time so he signed me up to wrestle."

Behind every great athlete and student there is a huge support system. Swafford is not only supported by his parents in everything he does but by his girlfriend, his wrestling teammates, his friends, and his coaches. Everybody in Swafford's life not only helps him become a better person but he also impacts each individual's life as well in a positive way.

Junior Alex Buschauer describes how Swafford has impacted his life in a positive way. "He makes sure that I do

the technique right and tough enough. If I don't hit a take-down correctly or if I don't act fast enough in a bottom position he makes me pay for it and I learn pretty quickly what to do and what not to do. Whenever coach calls out to partner up, Steven is always my first choice, just because I can rely on him to have a good practice and tough workout. I've known him for a while now, and I consider him a good friend. He really represents what wrestling is about." Swafford is a family guy. He not only juggles three sports, school, and other after school activities he also tries to stay close with his family. Family is a huge factor into Swafford's life and it's his family who helped him become who he is today.

Steven Swafford's mom, Kim Swafford, likes him being a three-sport athlete and how it affects their lives as a family. "Well, it keeps him busy and

happy and gives us a chance to be super involved with his life. Football, wrestling, and lacrosse are all combat sports: this makes us worry about his safety but also very proud that he is able to excel in all of his sports. As long as he still loves doing sports, we'll be there to support him."

Behind every good man is an amazing woman. Well that's not the case for Swafford. His girlfriend is not behind him, she is right beside him not only on a regular bases but working and sweating hard on the wrestling mat together.

Payton Rigert, Swafford's girlfriend and fellow wrestler, talks about what she thinks makes him a great athlete. "He has an amazing work ethic, he is super focused, when he wants to get something done, he does it. He works out every day at some crazy time in the morning and he won't give up, even if the odds are against him. Like when

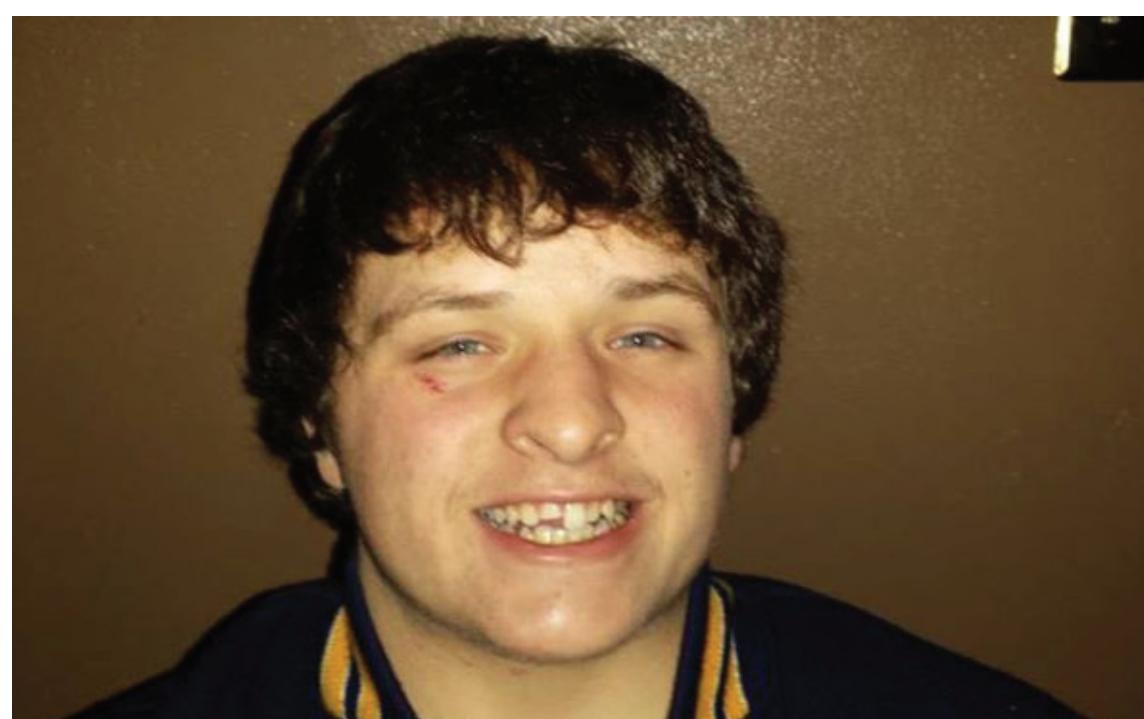
he broke his tooth, he came back and pinned the guy! Who does that? He is definitely very mentally tough. He is really helpful whenever you get confused on how to do a move in wrestling. He gives 120% in everything he does!" Swafford is not just a good boyfriend but a great teammate as well.

Kim Swafford shares how as a parent she helped him become the best he can be. "What drives Steven to be the best he can be? We have instilled in Steven from a young age to believe in himself and work for nothing else than to get better and enjoy doing it. Steven loves the feeling of going up against difficult odds and coming out on top. He works for that sense of accomplishment and working at all times to get better." Swafford does admit though that it is hard but he doesn't give up. "It's a struggle sometimes because I'm gone for a lot of school; I do a lot of

homework on the go. I like playing games and it might sound weird but I love working out and just hanging out with friends. I will continue wrestling in college and I plan on going to South Western Community College after high school and I hope to be accepted in their wrestling program down there."

Buschauer tells an amazing story about how Swafford didn't give up even when he was hurt. "Like when he chipped his tooth in his match against Churchill. He powered through what a lot of people would have probably stopped for, and pinned the guy. And he continued to compete again afterwards! Stuff like that I think really draws good attention to the team; obviously not that he chipped his tooth, but that he had the will and determination to win. Plus he's just a beast. He often times competes a whole weight above and he still over-powers people."

Swafford is an amazing athlete, student, friend, and son. He will continue to work hard and not give up no matter what circumstance he is in. Wrestling Coach Trent Kroll always says "Give a hundred and twenty percent in everything you do." That is who Swafford is. He will always be the best he can be and if he doesn't think he is at his full potential, he will work hard until he gets to that place. Like the quote from NFL Head Coach, Vince Lombardi, "It's not whether you get knocked down; it's whether you get up." Swafford will always get back up and try again because that's what makes Swafford an amazing man.



Steven Swafford smiles big for the camera after losing one of his front teeth during a wrestling match. Swafford ended up beating the guy after losing half of his tooth. Photo by Kim Swafford

Justin Danner and his take on his amusing life



Senior Justin Danner works on the new winter play after school. Photo by Hannah Hart.

By Katie Scarborough
Talon Staff Reporter

Justin Danner is a senior here at the high school, and also a great leader. He is the president of the Gay/Straight Alliance club, held on Wednesdays in Dave Case's class room, where he sets great examples of promoting and defending gay rights. There are plans right now to try and plan a dance or movie night that is GSA themed. Also they are working with Oregon United for Marriage to gather

signatures, plan events, and raise awareness.

Outside of this club he enjoys his Phoenix Theatre class, which most of his friends are in. Zoe Shepard, a sophomore in Danner's Phoenix class, says, "He is always so energetic and creative about everything he does." One time in Phoenix they were playing the Ostrich game, and Danner dressed up in an ostrich costume and started to jump and run around. Shepard says that they couldn't get the costume

off him because he was having too much fun.

Danner was born in Springfield, OR, on March 13th. He has placed top 50 in the Rand McNally national writing contest, the stage manager for the nutcracker, and on the HR Oregon United for Marriage council, and more. Danner is an outgoing and exciting person. He likes to say, "Life is Exciting." This proves he sees life as something worth living. Danner's dream career would be to teacher at a high school,

preferably in the theatre or drama department, since he loves acting. After he graduates, he plans to attend CGCC for one to two years to get his prerequisites out of the way. Danner has also worked as the secretary for the Wilson Street Medical Clinic.

Danner has come a long way since middle school and so has his little brother, Jonathan Danner, a sophomore. "We have an ever-changing vortex of anger, love, hate, frustration, and humor," comments

Justin when asked about their relationship. Although Jonathan still has his young stubborn attitude, Justin tries to stick up for his brother when they are not fighting. They also have a cute cuddly cat named Momo, who sometimes sleeps with Danner at night.

Sophie Finstad, a close friend to Danner has known him since eighth grade and they became really good friends in their freshmen year. They have even talked about going to college together, but Danner has planned to go to a community college for about two years before going to a university, whereas Finstad is planning to go straight to a University. "We had hoped to go to college together, but we don't think that it will work out that way, unfortunately," Finstad said. College can create long distance friendships, but Danner and Finstad plan to stay in touch often.

Danner is also in the new winter play, *Does My Head Look Big in This*. Practice has started and they practice every day except on Friday and on the weekends. Danner is the stage manager for the new play, and is working hard to organize it. He even has to sometimes substitute a part when the real actor or actress is absent. Teachers can depend on him, and that trust is always something you should be proud of.

Mariachi Teacher's Dream Comes True

By Julio Verduzco
Talon Staff Reporter

As a young boy in Mexico, he always had dreams of helping others. Teacher assistant at HRMS Juan Antonio Martinez is not only an assistant, he also helps around the community and the world.

Growing up in a small ranch, he had dreams that he would help kids that live the same lifestyle as he did. Now he is founder of the international program, "ESDUN" El Sueno De Un Nino. The purpose of the program is to teach the children of the town to play an instrument that is played in a Mariachi band and be the choir for their local church. This program takes place in seven different towns that are pretty rural areas in the state of Guanajuato, Mexico and also here in Hood River on Mondays at the St. Mary's church from 6-8 PM.

Even with his busy schedule and between prioritizing lessons, he had time for an interview: "Making the program was a risky situation, but it was worth it because it was always a dream of mine to help people that don't have the same opportunities as I do, living in these small towns," he said. "When I got my first violin, it only had two strings sometimes one and



Juan A. Martinez, (left) founder of ESDUN, playing for his students in Guanajuato, Mexico.

just the sound of playing the only notes I could play with two strings brought joy to my heart." He also has big plans for the program: "I would love to make the program bigger because there are kids all over the world who don't have opportunities to learn an instru-

ment. So that being said, I'm working towards going to Africa and start the program over there."

Sophomore Cameron Marquez was a student of the program and took a moment to describe his experience in it. He explained his experience;

"It's really great because there are always things to learn, it is free and an overall fun experience because you're in a happy environment of people that want to learn."

Clearly, this program brings joy to everyone involved and that's why it is growing big-

ger and bigger. This is an awesome opportunity for anyone that wants to learn an instrument and it's free to learn! It's nice to see people's dreams come true especially one like this one, where helping others is involved.

Sandy Spellman sets a positive tone



Office assistant Sandy Spellman is working on the computer in the main office of Hood River Valley High School.

By Jessica Hardy
Talon staff reporter

Rain, snow, or shine, there is one person you can always count on to have a great attitude and a smile on their face. This person is the first one you see when you walk into the school is Sandy Spellman.

Spellman has worked for Hood River Valley High School for about 14 years. She has a lot of experience with answering phone calls and working with people roughly

all her life. Spellman loves working with people and has so much on her plate every day she comes to work; from phone calls to handling upset people to helping others in the office. "The work I do have I fit in with the interruptions, but there is never a dull moment and I love it," said Spellman.

Every day she has a smile on her face and fantastic attitude. She works from 7:30am to 4pm every weekday. With the load of work she has, she knows how to keep a positive

attitude. Spellman said, "I have the thought that I treat people the way I want to be treated when I want someone to help me. It doesn't matter what kind of a mood I'm in, I try really hard to leave my problems somewhere else." Working in the office consists of talking to many different people that have different attitudes. "One of the most challenging things is dealing with upset parents, but again I try to stay calm, I don't get upset, and I try to do everything I can

to help them instead of battling it. If I find myself in a situation where I'm getting irritable, the switch just comes on and I remember that they may be upset, but they're not upset with me so I try not to take it personally." She believes our school of roughly 1200 is full of great students, even when kids are being kids; it really goes pretty smoothly." One of the biggest challenges I have is the fact that I'm in charge of the medical situation here, giving out medications and stuff, and that's a big responsibility. It's just a responsibility you have to really watch and be careful of." Days that are more difficult for her are snow days. Those are the days where parents call all day asking if there is school or if anything is happening. "The phone goes off the hook," she says. "We just know that on a snow day, we're not going to get any of our work done. We just answer the phones all day."

Spellman is the main person that answers the phone and directs people. "We couldn't do our jobs as well as we do without the office aides," says Spellman. "Believe it or not, we really depend on them. They are running around with the notes, answering phones, and just doing the things that we ask them to do." One of her aides, sophomore Mykan Malone said, "I think Sandy does her job very professionally. She has a lot of people skills and she's always calm when it gets overwhelming for

her." She also said, "I personally could not do Sandy's job. You have to have really good people skills and I don't have a lot of that. Not a lot of people, I think, could do it."

She's been with the ladies there in the office for a good amount of time and they get along so well; they're a team. "For the fourteenish years I've worked here, we have gone through a lot of changes. When you get a lot of women in a room it can get uncomfortable, but we have a remarkable working environment. Not only do we notice it but other people notice it too. People even comment on it when they walk in. There might even be that one person in the group you don't get along with, but not here, it's sincere and I feel very fortunate for that. Not getting along with the people around me would be more of a stress than any work load I could get."

Lorie White is one of the main ladies in the office too. She agrees that the office has great people in it. "We get along really well; I think we're a really good team." White also added, "Kids here don't realize that Sandy is probably their best advocate. If someone needs taking care of she will take care of them whether it's doing a locker, taking care of their medication, or getting copies for them, she will go way above and beyond to help kids. She also adores animals and adores babies and little kids. We all just love her."

Robert Wellenstein is more than a math teacher

By: Hannah Hart
Talon Staff Reporter

Pages flip and pencils scratch numbers into graph paper. The room is filled with the slight tap, tap, tap of students using their calculators. One hand, then another hand, and another reach up to grab the teacher's attention. The teacher runs between each one, advising, strategizing, and assisting each student until they understand each concept.

It is obvious that math teacher Robert Wellenstein loves his job. "I never wanted to have a job where I was bored and had to look at the clock and couldn't wait, so for me, my job here, that never happens." Wellenstein explains about his work. He says there is nothing boring about his job and he loves working with kids and touching people's lives. Math teacher and co-worker Jacob Kellert said, "His focus is always on students, so whenever we have a decision to make his perspective is always what's going to be best for students."

Wellenstein spent his fourth period preps throughout first semester helping students pass the Oregon state math test. "Every single time I went



Math teacher Robert Wellenstein helps sophomore Andrea Martinez in his period 3 Algebra 2 class.

in there first semester, the kids were needing help," Wellenstein says. Wellenstein says he was putting his time where it was most needed.

Outside of school Wellenstein connects math with day-to-day life. Along with teaching his children and helping them learn math he also runs a little company on the side. "I also am an investor," Wellenstein states, "so I use math as a way of calculating the best

investment for my dollars." Wellenstein also uses real-life examples in the classroom to add meaning to the math. "I think he really inspires a desire to learn math, and a desire to do well in his classroom," said junior Stan Ocheskey. Ocheskey finds Wellenstein to be a supportive teacher always willing to help students.

Not only has he helped students improve at math, but he has made it fun. Senior Myrna

people give up, some people never try, but some people just prevail."

Wellenstein also loves languages. Currently, Wellenstein can speak French, German, English, and Spanish. He began learning Spanish when he moved to Hood River and discovered German and French would not be as useful in his job. "I am most fluent in English," explains Wellenstein. "Second would be German, and then third would be French." Wellenstein has a love for learning new languages and wants to eventually learn Italian. His love of learning does not escape his students' notice. "I am passionate about languages," said Najera-Perez. "And he speaks three languages [other than English] as well so it's great to talk to him and usually I stay after class just to talk to him in French."

As the class ends students begin to file out. Chairs squeak and papers are shuffled. Chatter fills the air. Wellenstein stands at the front of the room speaking to students about the day's lesson, test scores, and homework. He gets to do what he loves: helping students achieve their goals every day.

“He’s hard to ignore.”

Freshman Deylan Gudiel thrives in high school with a spirit of passion, artistry and companionship

By Annika Martinez
Talon staff reporter

“I think that we all are best friends in the sense that we can all enjoy doing different things with different people- that is the meaning of friends.” For freshman Deylan Gudiel, high school is so much more than a center for education, but rather a realm where he expresses his many passions for the arts, his love for everyone around him and communicates his many flourishing ideas. For Gudiel, the world is his to show others his wonderful outlook on all things. Everyone he meets is instantly drawn to his bright energy and his accepting personality. “He’s taught me to never doubt myself,” conveys freshman Abby Kinoshita. “He is a very unique person- he’s very hard to ignore.”

“I really enjoy being in Leadership, because it makes me involved and I have a say in things.” Being class president, Gudiel goes to the community known as the freshman class and takes each of their ideas to heart. Bringing the art he sees in this world to the school, Gudiel is in the process of developing a mural project to bring art and inspiration to the blank walls of this school. More information on this mural project will be disclosed at the upcoming arts assembly in February.

Gudiel has carried his love for art throughout his whole life: he made comic books as a young child with his older brother, Bryson Gudiel, painted anti-drug themed murals in middle school alongside Portland artists, and is always improving on his drastic and unique style. Art is a huge



Gudiel's life is engulfed in art, both visual and musical, he shows his talents wherever he is.

influence on his life: “It gives you a way to express yourself and gives you a chance to create something beautiful that you might not have known you could create.”

Everyone who knows this freshman recognizes the unique details and passion that engulfs his art. Art teacher Kori Walsh expounds on Gudiel’s tendency as an artist and as a student. “He has this ability- because he loves it so much- that he puts himself into his art. He really cares, and it’s not only the ability to draw, there’s also a personal

motivation behind his art.” While not in art class, Gudiel’s talent is appreciated by all who admire art. “Oh, it’s great! It’s so sleek and professional- just really realistic- it’s talent!” states freshman Casey Holzman. “When you look at the art on the wall, you can tell which one is his because of how much detail he’s put into it,” Kinoshita recalls.

Along with the visual arts, Gudiel is also engulfed with the musical arts. Along with playing first chair flute for the sophomore and freshman “concert band,” he also plays

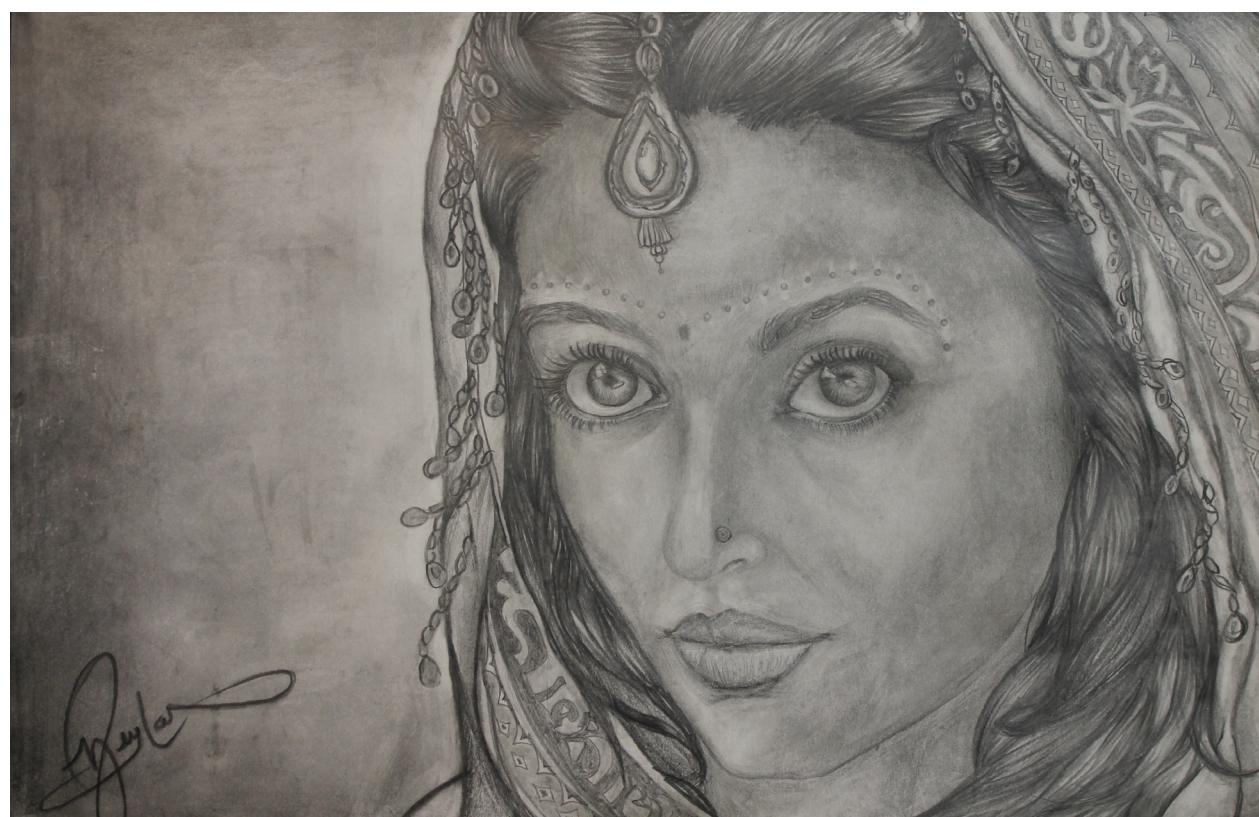
the clarinet, piano, marimbas and an assortment of instruments that he has accumulated from all over the world. Along with playing, he also composes pieces of his own. “I love to play music because it brings people together and it’s just a fun thing to do and it’s something that just brings joy and it’s so raw and pure and beautiful. It just brightens your life.” Music mends the broken, relieves stress and intertwines people in a rare way.

On top of his art-and-leadership consumed life, Gudiel participates in many clubs,

sports and advanced classes. Gudiel is an avid Boy Scout, the only male member of the Youth Hearts Of Hospice Club, A member of the LEOS club, spends volunteer hours at the FISH food bank, is on the Speech and Debate team, and is planning on doing track. He also goes to church and is a loving brother.

Gudiel is in Honors Physical Science and Geometry, so school can be stressful, but he pushes through by prioritizing and working hard. “I really want to get good grades because I want to be a successful member of society when I grow old. As I’m growing up I understand the importance of education in my everyday life because it’ll help me as I grow to become a successful individual and raise a happy family and support that family! With the education that I gain that will help me to obtain the career of my desire.” Gudiel takes each decision he makes to heart, realizing the importance of his steps to a successful and happy future.

“He’s just so talented in so many things that I actually have no idea what he’s gonna do, but I know whatever he is gonna do, he’s gonna be successful,” states Holzman. His many beloved friends and teachers convey the same, seeing nothing but success in all that he does. Pertaining to his future decisions for his career, Gudiel has innumerable ideas. “I have many ideas of what I want to do in the future, honestly here in high school, right here and right now, I don’t have to make that choice for myself as to what I want to be- I can explore my options and do what I love and share my talents!”



Gudiel's unique style expresses his inner self, and the journey he has taken to achieve the talent he obtains. The art he creates has a piece of him in every brush, stroke or pencil outline. It is a way to express, and find himself as well as relieve the stress of everyday life. Gudiel's work on the left will be entered into an upcoming art competition.