

# FEATURES

## Focus on the Foreign Language Department

By Colin Dietz and Michael Lovejoy

### Department adjusts to growth

Though enrollment in Spanish courses has increased in the past several years, there have been no advanced classes added to meet the demand. Five out of the other six public high schools in Marin County have Spanish honors classes, not including Spanish 5 AP. Despite the increase in numbers, San Marin still fails to offer any advanced language classes other than Spanish 5.

In 1996, Natasha Pelka's first year at San Marin, there were three Spanish 3 classes, one Spanish 4, and one Spanish 5. This year there are five Spanish 3 classes, three Spanish 4, but still one Spanish 5.

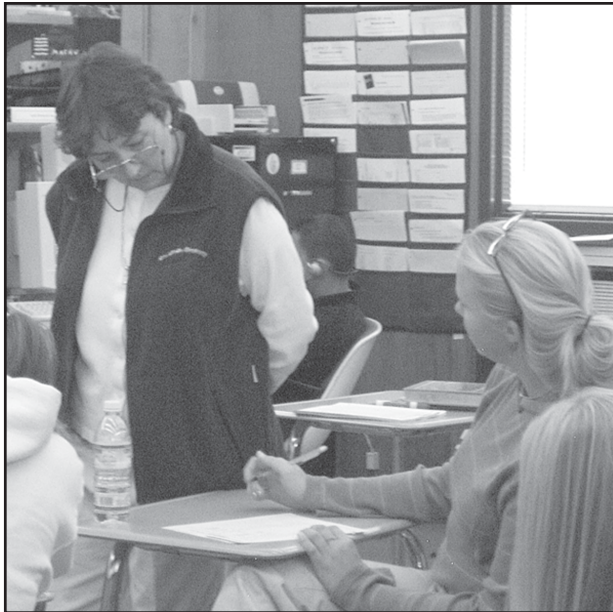
Traditionally, teachers do not prepare students for the AP test until Spanish 5. Pelka has been introducing the test to her students in Spanish 3 and 4, but she believes it may be too little too late. "Students need to prepare for the AP early, starting in Spanish 2."

There is also a separation of motives among Spanish students. Some take the foreign language in order to fulfill the three year UC requirement, while others want to excel and pass the Spanish 5 AP test. Pelka explains, "We need more advanced classes to challenge the bright students who plan to take the AP test."

For most students to be able to take Spanish 5, they must begin taking the foreign language course in eighth grade. Many students choose to take music or art instead, and the middle schools do not allow the children to take two electives.

In order to take music in high school, students are required to take band or choir in eighth grade. Because of this, anyone wishing to take the Spanish AP test and also take a music class must skip Spanish 3 or 4. This makes it more difficult for students to learn the new concepts when they have not been able to master the ideas taught in Spanish 3.

"I would rather have students skip Spanish 1 than 3, because I can teach them the basic vocabulary and structure in Spanish 2," says Pelka. "I would like to eventually see Spanish 2, 3, and 4 honors classes for the more advanced students. This would prepare them sooner for the AP test."



Natasha Pelka

### Tamara Gonzalez

Tamara Gonzalez, San Marin's newest Spanish teacher, is not really new to the school. In the 80's, before her children were born, Gonzalez did her student teaching in the English department.

Gonzalez was born in Sacramento, California, with English as her primary language.

She does, however, have a Spanish background; her grandparents were born in Spain and her father taught Spanish classes.

Gonzalez attended Spanish classes while at Monterey High. She enjoyed the language so much that she decided to minor in the language during college.

After college, she enrolled in a school in Spain for six months.

Gonzalez teaches three Spanish I classes.

### Reyna Lowrie

Reyna Lowrie was born in El Salvador and came to America when she was eight years old. She was enrolled in ELD classes in San Francisco for the first two years.

"Then," she says, "I had a wonderful English teacher."

When asked what it was like to adapt to American culture, Lowrie replied, "The first year was very hard because of the language."

She was adopted by an American family and said that although the culture was very different, it was also fun. "I missed the food a lot, but I was just so happy to have such wonderful parents and brothers," she explained.

She enjoys the freedoms that the American culture offers to women.

Lowrie, who is in her second year at San Marin, teaches two Spanish I and three Spanish III classes.

### Natasha Pelka

Natasha Pelka, now in her eighth year at San Marin, grew up in Cuba under Fidel Castro's regime. She lived in Cuba for 19 years and attended school with

"Fidelito" Castro, the Communist dictator's son. When a close relative was jailed, she and her family immigrated to New Jersey.

She moved to California when she married and immediately fell in love with Novato.

Pelka started teaching in Cuba when she was involved in the National Literacy Campaign. She taught older people to read and write, and realized she enjoyed educating her community.

Pelka substituted at San Marin for one semester and enjoyed it enough to become a full-time Spanish teacher.

Pelka continues to teach Spanish in Novato because this is her community. She says, "I enjoy living and teaching here, so this is my community." Having grown with a socialist education, she has a greater respect for people who work with their hands. "I see class everywhere." When it seemed that war was inevitable, Pelka was taught to bite a pencil to deal with

the pain of a nuclear blast. This childhood has increased her appreciation for life and understanding of how lucky Americans have been to grow up without fear, and she has passed this knowledge on to her students.

### Marcelyn Watson

Unlike the majority of Spanish teachers, Marcelyn Watson has an American heritage.

She was born in Staten Island, New York, and, just like students at San Marin, learned the Spanish language by enrolling in classes in school.

In ninth grade Watson had the privilege of spending a summer living with a family in Culiación, Mexico.

During college, she was able to study in Spain for a year. She also taught Spanish but upon graduation took a hiatus from teaching.

When asked how she felt about returning to teaching, Watson replied, "I am so glad to be back at it again!" Watson is currently teaching five Spanish II classes.

### Rosie Walwyn

San Marin veteran Rosie Walwyn primarily teaches French, although her first language was Spanish. In fact, she remembers her confusion when she started school and discovered everyone else was speaking English. Her mother shrugged when she voiced her frustration and told her she'd learn faster that way. And we all know that mothers are always right.

She grew up in San Francisco the child of a father who was half French and half Hispanic, and a mother who is from Central America. She now speaks English, Spanish, and French fluently.

Walwyn teaches two French I, one French II, one French III, and even one Spanish II class. Walwyn has a busy teaching schedule that includes two languages that are not as closely linked as one may think.

She moved to Novato after getting married and began as a substitute for the district. Walwyn has taught Spanish classes at San Marin for 26 years, and French for 15 years.



Rosie Walwyn

## Bridging the gap

By Abby Yim

"What am I going to do with the rest of my life?" This question seems to plague most of us as we come closer to graduation. Thinking of a major for college or even a general field of interest can be a daunting task. But we can make it easier on ourselves.

Despite the stigma attached to them (thank you Monica Lewinsky) internships can be a great tool in bridging the gap between school and a potential work place. Internships offer the opportunity to go to a business or future work environment that you're interested in and see what a normal day is like. Sam Moyhee is a student that took advantage of the opportunity to scout out a future occupation. Moyhee spent the summer at the Romberg

Tiburon center, which is a division of the San Francisco State University. "Doing the internship provided good experience and helped me realize that I didn't want to be a Marine Biologist."

Internships offer more than just experience according to Judith Morgan, Liaison for Marin County School to Career partnership: "Students are given the opportunity to learn things like communication, networking, multi-tasking skills and problem solving. By doing something that they're interested in students are willing to learn and are able to develop life long learning skills."

Unfortunately many students aren't using this resource and are unprepared by the time their ready to put down the books and pick up the brief case. According to the Herman trend report "A serious problem will face both workers and employers as we move through this decade and the next.

Knowledge and skills gaps will restrict economic growth, corporate achievement, and career development. The consequences will create problems of historical significance."

So what can we do to break the trend? One way is by making an appointment to see Micky Carson, a new but valuable face to San Marin. Carson is the liaison for school to career counseling. Job shadowing opportunities, resume help and links to some employers are just a few of the resources that Carson offers. So before you have a slight panic attack at that stressful question: "What am I going to do with the rest of my life," remember that there are options out there for the searching student.

## Football and music: a winning combination

By Kevin Kahn



They don't march. They don't wear fancy band uniforms. Some don't even know how to play instruments or read music, and others don't even know the difference between football and basketball. But there is one thing that the members of Pep Band do know how to do: cheer, loud.

Every Saturday afternoon the group of spirited students plays such songs as the San Marin fight song, "Celebration" and "Let's Go Band" to promote school spirit and support the varsity football team to victory.

At every home game, rain or shine, chants are being sung, drums are being banged, and bellowing cries of excitement exude from the Pep Band, organized by sophomores Michelle Lee and Angie

Pilacelli, "I joined last year because it looked fun and I really liked its positive energy," says Lee. "It's important to keep the San Marin spirit alive."

The band's popularity and support from the fans at the games is evident. As the percussionists carry the large bass drum and symbols to the bleachers before opening kickoff, a crowd of exuberant football patrons always cheers and shows their gratitude. One team mom at a recent game yelled in excitement, "Here comes the spirit band!"

According to senior jazz and pep drummer Phil Koehler, a major reason for varsity football's undefeated NCS Championship last year and continued success this season is because of the unrestrained support and encourage-

ment provided by the Pep Band, "Each time we play at a game, they win! It's great!"

Pep Band's positive effects are evident on the scoreboard as well as in the stands.

It's not mandatory for musicians to join the band or attend the games, but members do simply because it's a fun and rewarding way to spend a fall afternoon. The band's goal is to have the entire San Marin community, students and parents alike, fill up the stands and cheer for the team at every game. The football team needs the school's support to keep its winning tradition, and the Pep Band needs help from the bleachers in order to promote San Marin High spirit.

## Under the knife

By Stephanie Alderson and Rebecca Guthrie

A rising number of students around the country are deciding to opt out of the science class ritual of dissection. They are saying the practice is cruel and wasteful, insisting they can learn just as much, if not more, from a computer simulation. This is while others are saying that many of those who oppose in-class dissection are acting on emotion rather than intellect. In other words, they believe that nothing can be more valuable than physically seeing what goes on in parts of science.

Since dissection is a hands-on experience in investigating the anatomy of animals, some think that the knowledge attained from dissections is irreplaceable. They argue that true understanding of the body cannot be obtained without discovering it for oneself. Models and books do not reach the student in the same fashion. What organs may appear to look like in models is completely different from what they really look like and each circumstance is unique.

The Humane Society estimates that about six million animals are dissected each year in schools across America. They are usually frogs, fetal pigs, and cats. The Humane Society avidly opposes dissection and distributes anti-dissection videos and lends computer software to schools who

are interested in offering alternatives. California is one of only eight states that have policies that allow students to choose not to participate in class dissection.

During the course of the year at San Marin, both sophomore biology and AP senior biology perform dissections. The sophomores dissect frogs and the seniors do fetal pigs. "Some students are a bit squeamish, but I find, by the end, they really get into it. I truly don't believe you can get the same experience from a CD-ROM that you can by truly discovering how the systems work," says biology teacher, Jennifer Carlomagno. While Carlomagno believes that the students should participate in the dissections, if a student approaches her with their reasons and she talks to the parents, an alternate assignment is given. For the sophomores, the alternate assignment requires the student to research and write a paper on each frog system and then compare and contrast it to the human body.

"The alternate assignment is so much harder to do but I can understand where the science teacher is coming from. I still think it's wrong to kill something just so you can cut them up and look at them," says senior Gina Cippolina.

## Got alcohol?

By Mike Gutierrez and Mark Kellner

Every weekend a large number of San Marin students drink alcoholic beverages at social gatherings. Parents, socially inept, and ignorant teachers often pose the question, 'How do minors get their alcohol?' We're here to investigate.

Recent studies show that alcohol is still the most common method of minors altering their perception of reality. Through what means do they seek to obtain alcoholic beverages to satiate this so popular pastime?

There are many methods, but the ones most common among teenagers include raiding their parent's alcohol supply, Fake Identifications, older siblings or friends doing a favor, or simply shoulder tapping random people in front of convenience stores who look of age.

Most minors experience alcohol for the first time from their parents' personal supply. However, once the 80 proof bottle of liquor has been watered down to about 20, they begin seeking other

means of quenching their thirst.

Fake IDs aren't difficult to obtain, however, finding a good one that consistently works can be tricky. Minors take a big risk using fake IDs to buy alcohol. Consequences for such an offense range from community service hours to driver license suspension and probation, not to mention a hefty fine that might accompany it. When asked about their fake ID an anonymous senior said "It's very convenient because you don't have to depend on other people, but having an ID makes me the buyer for friends and the more I buy, the bigger the risk." There are other ways to avoid such risks. This is where older siblings or friends become useful.

Also, 21 year old people and older, who distribute alcohol to minors run a big risk of earning probation time and high fines of their own. This is one aspect that makes it so hard to obtain such a "friend with benefits." However, to avoid incriminating family and friends, minors have resorted to other means, known as shoulder tapping.

This method can be used as a "last ditch effort," since there is

always the chance of that stranger bagging up the money and taking off. Minors who are craving an alcoholic beverage can simply ask a random stranger in front of a store to buy it, usually including an incentive for that person, like a tip.

"I've never had a person just steal my money before, but it is definitely a concern. I just make sure that the person looks reliable," a senior reported about their expe-

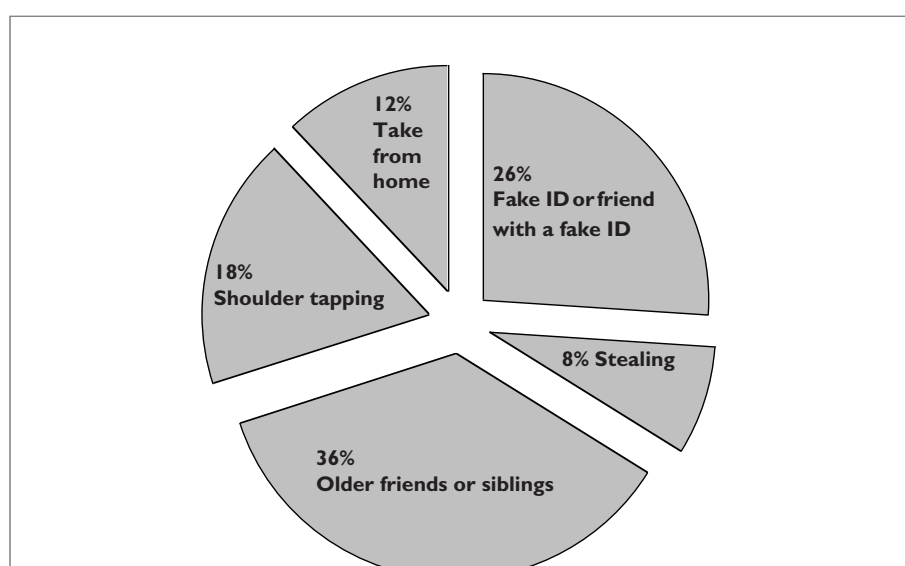
riences in shoulder tapping. If this fails, minors who are desperate to get drunk, could resort to stealing.

The old "five fingered discount" is most common among minors who use alcohol on a regular basis, and have trouble compensating for the debt that their habit produces. However, minors who continually embezzle alcohol out of stores usually get caught at some point. "I used to jack bottles,

but ever since my friend got caught and put on probation I decided it wasn't worth it," said an anonymous junior.

Countless laws and funds have gone towards preventing minors from obtaining alcohol. However, no matter what people say or what legislation prohibits, if minors are determined to get alcohol, they'll somehow achieve this goal.

### Means of obtaining alcohol



Poll taken from 50 randomly selected juniors and seniors

## Parents face their worst nightmare

By Rachel Oppenheimer

The Every 15 minutes program was not only a lesson for the students involved, but it affected the parents as well. Can you imagine having a policeman come to your door to tell you that your son or daughter had been killed in a drunk driving accident? Well for many parents on October 23, this nightmare came true.

Parents seemed to have the same reactions as the students. "I am still slightly unsure of how I feel about the Every 15 Minutes program, however, if it saves only one kid, it is worth it," replied a parent. Many felt that the assembly was good, but a little long. Some parents on the other hand felt that it created a new bond between them and their child and even brought them closer together.

"I think that all four classes should have been able to watch the crash scene because that was one of the most devastating parts of the whole program," stated a parent of

one of the victims.

The program was also a wake up call for the parents. Drunk driving is not only preformed by high school students, but adults are guilty of the same crime. "This program was a good lesson for the students, the parents, as well as the entire community."

"I thought the assembly was very good, a little too long, but good. Most of the faces I saw on the kids were serious and engaged in the assembly. The convict just ripped my heart out of my chest. The pain I felt for him and his family and the family of the kid who was killed is enormous," said an anonymous parent.

The parent retreat was powerful and, although led by a pastor, it was more psychological than religion. "I know that the parents were moved and touched by the program. We clung to each other for support as we realized what life would be like without any one of

you. If just one of you was lost, we'd all feel the pain. You students belong to this school and community. Losing any one of you would devastate the entire town. I wish the kids could've seen their parents' tears and heard their fears. You guys are so loved and cherished it is almost too much responsibility. Personally, I have known so many of these kids since diapers that it was hard for me to watch the crash, the videos and listen to the discussion.

"To improve the program I would have all the students at the crash scene and I would have all the all the parents there, too. Parents are guilty of drunk driving sometimes, too," said an anonymous parent.



## Change is short-li

Have attitudes changed? Every fifteen minutes was intended to demonstrate the dangerous effects of drunk driving and eliminate drunk driving from the San Marin community.

Two weeks ago, November 1st and 2nd, several San Marin students had encounters with the feared Novato police department. Although no DUIs were issued, an anonymous few received MIPs (Minor In Possession). The consequences for these misdemeanors are less severe than for a DUI, but this issue questions the success of the Every 15 Minutes program.

The program has obviously

affected many people in positive and negative ways. Will the impact of this create a lasting effect in the San Marin community? Will the number of MIP's this past week amount of alcohol consumption does not seem to have changed. We don't think the program had the intended effect. The students were upset that friends and family members "died," but once the program was over and the lives returned to school, the students in the San Marin community went back to their old habits. Many students still believe that drunk driving is invincible or have a c



## Students comment after Every Fifteen Minutes program

"The seniors have been drinking and driving for a while. They should have been exposed to this earlier." senior Rachel Walera

"Once you go to college, you make all the choices." – junior, name withheld

"Now I know that you're not only affecting yourself when you choose to drink and drive, but everyone in the community." junior Zach Bachmeier, participant

"Having the students return to class would have been more effective." junior Christina Blankenburg

"Even as an adult, I will think twice before drinking and driving." junior Andre Leverson, participant

"They didn't tell people what was going on. It was too emotional." senior, name withheld

"The majority of the people involved either played sports, or were related to staff members." senior, name withheld

"It's not worth the risk to drink and drive. If you're pulled over, your whole life changes." junior Jean-Ncho Oguie

