

COMMUNITY CORNER

Developing Responsible, Respectful and Prepared Students

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: November 8, 2024

Banning High School Students Shine in Moving Production of *Radium Girls*

BANNING, CA — The Broadway Broncos of Banning High School recently captivated audiences with their powerful production of *Radium Girls*, performed from October 25-27. This drama brought to life the true story of young women employed in the 1910s and 1920s to paint luminous watch dials with radium, only to face severe health consequences and ultimately stand up for justice in the workplace. Through remarkable performances and the support of their directors, the students illustrated themes of resilience, corporate accountability, and the enduring human spirit.

“Our students’ ability to convey such a story speaks to their hard work and dedication, as well as the incredible guidance provided by their instructors,” said Superintendent Terrence Davis. “*Radium Girls* highlights not only the importance of the arts in our schools but also the lessons of resilience and courage. We are immensely proud of everyone involved.”

The *Radium Girls* were young factory workers employed by companies like the United States Radium Corporation, where they painted watch dials with radium-laced paint, unaware of its dangers. Encouraged to use a “lip-pointing” technique, the women ingested radium with each brushstroke. Initially believed to be safe, radium caused severe health issues among the women, including anemia, bone fractures, and the infamous “radium jaw.” Their 1928 lawsuit against their employers was a landmark case, leading to greater protections for workers and sparking public awareness about radiation exposure and workplace safety. This production not only retells their struggle but honors their role in shaping labor rights and safety standards.

The creative process for *Radium Girls* exemplifies the unique collaborative art of theater, where each element is carefully crafted to serve the play’s central themes. “Theater is a unique art form because it is collaborative from start to finish,” explained Technical Director Tamara Lillibridge Griffey. “We begin with the play and shape our concept around the theme and structure. Together, Mr. Prisk and I formulate a plan, and the students help bring the vision to life with spectacular creativity.” In this production, Griffey and the students crafted a set with partially eroded brick walls to reflect how radiation “ate away” at the girls’ world, while a giant clock

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loomed overhead—a reference to the watch dials the girls painted and the time slipping away as they fought for their lives.

Once the concept was set, students engaged in all aspects of construction, including building the set and creating props. They sourced time-appropriate furniture and costumes and designed soundscapes and lighting, including a newly installed temporary lighting system for the performing arts center. This setup featured intelligent lighting that allowed the student designer to project a moving clock over the stage, adding a haunting visual layer to the production. The process included continuous communication and production meetings between Griffey and Director Joshua Prisk to maintain a unified vision, with Prisk guiding the actors' performances and Griffey enhancing the story through technical spectacle.

In addition to their onstage roles, the Broadway Broncos took charge of nearly every aspect of the production. Students designed and built the set to authentically capture the look and feel of a 1920s-era watch factory. They also ran the audio board, crafted the lighting design, and managed front-of-house operations, including student ushers and ticket booth attendants, making *Radium Girls* a fully student-led experience. Directors Prisk and Griffey supported the students' vision, helping them achieve a truly professional production.

“As the director of *Radium Girls* at Banning High School, I couldn't be prouder of the incredibly talented cast and crew who have dedicated hundreds of hours to bringing this powerful story to life,” shared Prisk. “This production isn't just a show—it's a testament to the perseverance and dedication of these young artists, and I am so proud of what they've accomplished.”

Banning High School's *Radium Girls* exemplified the potential of student-led productions, leaving a lasting impression on both participants and the community. The Broadway Broncos' dedication and talent served as a powerful reminder of the impact of youth-led arts in education, showing how storytelling can foster unity, understanding, and resilience.

To view photos from the production, visit

<https://banning-usd.smugmug.com/2024-2025/October-Events/BHS-Radium-Girls-Theater-Production>.

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PHOTO CAPTION: Banning High School students take on dedicated roles in *Radium Girls*. In Act 1, these three students vividly portray the factory workers as they paint with radium, capturing the intensity of the historical setting.

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PHOTO CAPTION: Banning High School students take the stage in a variety of roles, from reporters to pivotal characters, bringing *Radium Girls* to life with their dynamic performances.

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