

Piner High School Community Opposes Plan to Convert into a 7-12 School Model

By Alexander Guzman, Aaron Moreno and Elly Somnavong

The Piner High School community including students, parents and teachers say the **Santa Rosa City School Board's** plan to make Piner into a 7-12 school for the 2026-2027 school year will have many negative consequences including overcrowding and a potential increase in fighting.

The school board adopted the plan, which closes three middle schools and converts other high schools into 7-12 schools for the 2025-2026 school year, due to a \$20 million budget deficit, because of declining tax revenue and the loss of federal money for Covid relief.

The board's controversial plan represented an effort to avoid closing **Elsie Allen High School**, which drew much criticism from the Santa Rosa community.

Piner High School Principal **Andrea Correia** was not available for comment for this story.

At a February 19 Santa Rosa School Board meeting to discuss the potential changes, **Hollie Retzinger**, an English teacher at Piner and a parent of a Slater Middle School student, urged the board to reconsider the plan to close 3 middle schools and make all high schools into 7-12 schools.

"Five months is not enough time for them to prepare their high school facilities to accommodate an entire new student body of a new age group," Retzinger said.

She said "there are no portable classrooms available in California due to the LA fires."

She said "your capacity model for schools is based upon class sizes of 33, and has factored in the square footage of spaces that are not meant to be classrooms."

She said with the 7-12 model in one year, they will be overcrowded and unsafe on their campuses.



Hollie Retzinger

Retzinger said students will suffer if the high schools are forced to combine 3 classes into one for a lecture-hall style class in any available gym, theatre and cafeteria space.

Moreover she said the high schools may have to cut some electives, science labs and special programs because of the lack of space. In addition, she said, teachers will need to travel to a new classroom every period, and share their classrooms during their prep.

“The district will hemorrhage money in teacher overages when our classes are packed beyond capacity,” she said.

In the meantime, Retzinger said “parents of current 6-8th grade students are already panicked, looking for options outside the district”.

She said “these parents know that an 11 or 12 year old girl should not be at a high school campus. And as a parent of a seventh grade girl and high school teacher, I wholeheartedly agree!”

Piner students also registered a number of concerns about turning Piner into a 7-12 school.

“The decision to turn Piner high school and other high schools into 7th-12th grade campuses will significantly impact students, teachers, and families,” said **Susana Sanchez**, a Piner 12th grader.



Susana Sanchez

Sanchez said while the move may be intended to deal with budget issues or declining enrollment, it also can bring serious concerns.

“One of the biggest challenges is managing such a wide age range in a single environment.”

Sanchez said “seventh and eighth graders are at a very different developmental stage compared to high school seniors, which could lead to social and emotional struggles for younger students who may feel overwhelmed or out of place.”

Additionally, she said having so many students in one campus can become a “nightmare.”

“The hallways will be crowded, the cafeterias will be packed, and overwhelmed facilities will make it harder for staff to maintain order.”

She said with more students crammed into one space, it will increase the risk of conflicts.

“Tensions can easily rise in crowded environments, leading to more fights and disciplinary issues”.

Younger students may also become easy targets for bullying, while older students could get frustrated because of the lack of space and freedom they have, she said..

“Teachers and administrators will also face challenges in maintaining control and ensuring a safe learning environment,” she said.

“It will be difficult to monitor interactions across different age groups, and the strain on resources could negatively affect the quality of education.”

She said “while the idea might solve some financial problems, the long-term social and emotional impact on students could outweigh the benefits, leading to an unstable and potentially hazardous school environment”.

Mixing middle schoolers with high schoolers can create significant social and emotional challenges, said **Gabriel Calderon**, a Piner junior.



Gabriel Calderon

“Middle school students are typically in a different stage of development compared to high schoolers”.

He said they are still adjusting to the changes of adolescence and they may feel overwhelmed because of the more mature environment of high school.

He said this can lead to them feeling more stress and anxiety, as they try to navigate social dynamics that they may not yet be prepared for.

“The presence of older students can also introduce pressures related to fitting in and peer influence, which can impact their self-esteem and overall well-being.”

He said “academically, the gap between middle school and high school curriculum can be substantial.”

He said middle school students might have a difficult time keeping up with the more rigorous demands of high school coursework, especially in subjects like grammar where foundational skills are still being developed.

“High school teachers may assume a level of proficiency that middle school students have not yet achieved, leading to frustration and potential academic failure,” he said.

This can create a discouraging learning environment, where younger students will feel left behind and unable to meet the expectations.

“Furthermore, the social dynamics between middle schoolers and high schoolers can lead to issues such as bullying and exclusion”.

“High school students, being older and more experienced, might inadvertently or intentionally dominate social interactions, leaving middle schoolers feeling marginalized,” he said.

This could create a hostile environment where younger students will feel unsafe or unwelcome, he added..

“It is crucial to consider the developmental stages and needs of students when designing educational structures to ensure that all students have the opportunity to thrive both academically and socially”.

If Piner does change into a 7th to 12th school he might leave, said **Alex Parker**, a Piner freshman.

“My reason being that if we start having little kids running around it means we may lose a lot of our liberty.”

He said he is going to have to watch his mouth because parents may complain about their kids cursing and saying slurs.

He said teachers and other adults on campus may actually get mad at him and other students for cursing even though he doesn't use such language.

Parker said he is also concerned about losing his smartphone privileges because 7th and 8th graders don't understand how to use their phones appropriately.

“I love being able to use my phone,” Parker said. “And I love how teachers also use it as a tool and not” a distraction. “If we had 7th and 8th graders they would probably abuse that.”

Parker said another potential problem with Piner changing to a 7-12 school is a rise in vaping.

When he was in middle school, he said “kids were already vaping. I never did because I'm not trying to live off a ventilator at 30.”



Alex Parker

He said that when Piner becomes a 7-12 school “kids who already vape may be able to do it more easily, and other little kids, who do not vape, may start.”

The school board's decision took some students by surprise.

“Ever since last year I’ve been hearing rumors about the government shutting down schools,” said **Mark Velasquez**, a Piner freshman.



Mark Velasquez

Velasquez said he thought those rumors were fake until his mother told him that the middle school he went to was shutting down.

“My mom also said the kids from that middle school would be sent to high schools and one of them is Piner High School,” he said. “I thought to myself—is this the right thing to do?”

If they let 7th and 8th graders into Piner High School, there will be more problems than before, like the school will be more crowded and it is more likely there will be more fights than before, he said.

“If the school board makes Piner High School into a 7-12 school it would affect the students because there would be so many people for the lunch line or just to walk down the hallway,” said **Jacqueline Rodriguez**, a Piner freshman.

Rodriguez said there are going to be too many students and their parents are going to have to wait in traffic to drop off their kids.

“Not only that but the bus stop is going to have so many people at it, more than there already is,” she said.

“Some people are going to get home around 4:40 pm if they take the bus.”

Rodriguez also stood up for her teachers, saying they are going to have way too much work to do, too much work for the amount they get paid.

“I believe the teachers would be overworked.”



Jackie Rodriguez

“It also would be bad for the younger kids because they aren’t mature enough to be with older students,” she said.

“So I know it’s better to keep the high schools 9-12 because the younger kids would get bullied and would look up to kids who don’t make good choices and would see kids fight and smoke and cuss etc...”

Piner Lecture: Holocaust Survivor's Son Tells Tale of His Father's Luck During a Very Unlucky Time

By Sebastian Witthaus



Hans Angress



Eric Angress

If **Eric Angress'** father **Hans Angress**, a survivor of the Holocaust in Nazi Germany, were still alive in 2025, he would probably say the key to his miraculous survival was a tiny helping of luck during a very unlucky time to be alive.

That's the assessment of the younger Angress, who came to speak to **Ms. Paulina Lopez Javalos'** 10th grade history class earlier this month.

The elder Angress was one of the millions of European Jews during World War II, who found themselves rounded up, sent to work at concentration camps or killed at extermination camps including Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka, Belzec, Sobibor and Chelmo.

Eighty years later these names still ring cacophonously in the ear like bells and symbols of death, including the six million Jews who were systematically murdered in those still haunted places.

After the war, the elder Angress, who died in 2021 at 93, spent his time telling his lucky story of survival in schools and lecture halls. Since the elder Angress' death, his 76-year-old son has taken it upon himself to continue to tell his father's story. He said he wants "to remind people that we can't just forget our past, and that we must listen to the stories of survivors."

In the lecture before Ms. Lopez's tenth grade history class, the younger Angress shared his father's story.

While the younger Angress was born 3 and a half years after the war, which lasted from 1938-1945, the elder Angress grew up in Nazi Germany with his mother, father, and brothers Tom and Fred.

The younger Angress said Germany had fallen into a Great Depression of its own after World War I (1914-1919), an economic collapse that ravaged the people and left them desperate for relief.

That was when **Adolf Hitler** emerged as the leader of the Nazi Party in Germany and used his natural charisma and speaking ability to give voice to the German people's anger.

While Hitler spent time in prison in 1923 after a failed coup, just a few years later he won a democratic election to become Chancellor of Germany, on the specious argument that Germany was being held back by nefarious forces including a combination of Communists and Jews.

After winning the election in 1933, Hitler set about persecuting Germany's perceived enemies including the Jews, but also including the Romani people, Muslims and LGBTQIA+ people.

The younger Angress said his father called Hitler an "evil, but intelligent maniac."

Around 1933, the Nazis began to restrict the opportunities and jobs that Jewish people could possess, trying to encourage them to leave.

While growing up in Nazi Germany, the elder Angress began school at the age of six with the traditional cone of candy to signify a sweet year ahead.

The younger Angress said his father didn't really believe in Nazis, or at least didn't think the other kids around him were Nazis. The German people and kids were only following what they saw and were told to do by the Nazis, he said.

Many of the German people had to act like they hated the Jewish people to avoid trouble, he added.

Despite his optimism about his school mates, the elder Angress' first day at school quickly took a sinister turn. The younger Angress said the German kids sang a Nazi song about killing Jews and made the Nazi salute.

The younger Angress said the incident left his father feeling very lonely and secluded at school.

The next school year, the younger Angress said his father's family enrolled him in an all-Jewish school, though it didn't offer much protection from Anti-Jewish laws that barred Jews from owning property and stripped them of their civil rights.

The younger Angress said at this point his father's family wanted desperately to leave Germany but could only do so after paying a large sum of money.

The younger Angress said his grandfather **Ernest Angress**, who worked in a bank, smuggled his entire life savings out of the bank so the family could escape Germany. He said in order not to arouse suspicion they packed up and pretended to be going on vacation.

During their escape with Nazi authorities hot on their trails, the family ran into some bad luck when bad weather prevented their flights from taking off and forced family members to split up temporarily.

The younger Angress said this bit of bad luck soon turned into good luck when his Uncle Tom, separated from the others, was able to lie to the Nazi authorities about traveling alone instead of with a family of five.

The younger Angress said his father's family wanted to escape to Brazil, but decided against it when they realized they would have to convert to Catholicism.

The younger Angress said his grandmother, ever the survivor, said, "What's just a few drops?," referring to the Catholic ritual of baptism. But his grandfather refused to convert his family, so they went to Holland, the only place accepting of immigrants like them.

In Amsterdam, the family's luck returned for a while at least. The younger Angress said his grandfather opened up a lingerie store called Mayfair, which was so successful he opened another store as well.

To be sure, the younger Angress said the family's good luck soon ran out when German forces invaded Holland.

Holland's military was no match for the German forces, so after about five days the German occupation began.

While the people of Holland resisted the German occupation and refused to become Nazis, the younger Angress said it didn't prevent his grandfather from being arrested for smuggling and sent to Auschwitz where he died in a gas chamber.

The younger Angress said around this time his father enrolled at the Joodse Lyceum, an all Jewish school, where **Anne Frank** was enrolled as well.



Anne Frank

The younger Angress said his father never really spoke to Miss Frank, but he played volleyball with her on opposite teams.

During this time, Jewish people were required to wear a yellow Star of David with the word Jood on it (Jew). They couldn't hold public office, couldn't work in journalism, couldn't enter the stock exchange, and had to move to the "Jewish Section" of Amsterdam.

Jews also had to turn in all radios, bikes, and could no

longer have cars or drive. In addition, they weren't allowed to travel, and couldn't even use streetcars, buses, or trains.

Public beaches, swimming pools, parks, sports fields, even public telephones, were off limits. Jews also weren't allowed to go to the movie theater, and couldn't go into hotels or restaurants. In addition, they couldn't go into libraries or museums, couldn't host sports, join clubs, and enjoy fishing.

A curfew forced them back to their homes at 8 pm. Jews couldn't work without a permit and couldn't hold many jobs, couldn't visit non-Jews due to complete segregation, couldn't sell housewares and furniture, all of their salaries and rations were reduced, and had to turn in all valuables.

The younger Angress remembers his father talking about the special meeting Hitler had with his lieutenants, who came up with a scheme to exterminate Europe's 11 million. The scheme was called the Final Solution.

The meeting was like a "pest control group," the elder Angress told his son. It took only 90 minutes to decide to gas and murder 6 million Jews, his father told him.

While it doesn't seem so lucky to be caught up in the Holocaust, the younger Angress said his father was very lucky to have survived.

Of the 23 students in his father's class at the Jooden Lyceum, the younger Angress said only 12 survived. In comparison, only 11 survived out of Anne Frank's class of 30.

The younger Angress attributes some of his father's luck to a lesson he learned from his mother.

"If the Nazis ever get a hold of you, run" the younger Angress said his grandmother told his father.

The younger Angress said that advice would later save them both, for during one of the first Nazi raids, when his father was about 14, he looked out the window to witness Nazi police approaching their door.

The younger Angress said his father grabbed his mother, and they both escaped to a neighbor's nearby apartment. The quick thinking probably saved both of their lives, the younger Angress said.

Another time luck intervened to help his father was when he and his mother were hiding in the attic of the council building with no access to a bathroom. When nature called, he found a lucky empty wine bottle in the attic.

The younger Angress said as the Nazis descended on Amsterdam's Jewish Ghetto, the remaining family members were separated and didn't see each other again until 18 months after the war ended.

The elder Angress also was lucky to meet some very kind people who risked their lives to house him and feed him and save him from the Nazis.

The younger Angress said an Amsterdam couple named **Alli** and **Ton Kooy** hid his father in a room with their two sons. The younger Angress said the Kooy's could have very well been arrested or executed for hiding a Jew.

The younger Angress said the kind of resistance his father saw in the Kooy's brought an excitement to his life. If the Kooy's were always willing to resist, he said his father vowed to help in any way he could.

The younger Angress said soon after that the Kooy's helped his father get a fake ID without the "J" on it to mark him as a "Jew." The fake papers identified him as Hans Andreas and said he was born in Rotterdam. The location of his birth was important because Rotterdam had been heavily bombed making it extremely difficult to check birth certificates.

The younger Angress said his father suspected that while many of the people around him knew his papers were fake they didn't betray him.

The younger Angress recounted that when Dutch Liberation Day came, his father told him that he said at the time: "The nightmare had ended."

The younger Angress also recounted a memory of his father on the day his nightmare ended: a smiling black man riding down the street on a motorcycle

"Since then, that was always his symbol of freedom," the younger Angress said.

For the rest of his life, the elder Angress liked to encourage young people to be politically involved, to prevent things like the Holocaust from happening again, said the younger Angress.

The younger Angress also recalled a video his father made before he died in which he said:

"When evil people come to power, apparently it is easy for them to convince perfectly decent people to commit horrendous acts."

Piner Varsity Girls Soccer Team Wins Its First League Title in 60 Years Thanks to Chemistry Built Under Coach Santoyo

By Aaron Moreno, Adriana Trujillo, Marcela Urbina and Eduardo Lujas



The Piner High School Varsity Girls Soccer team won its first **North Bay title** in 60 years, thanks to a core group of girls who built team chemistry over the past three years under Coach **Miguel Santoyo**.

Piner's girl soccer team made history by being the first group of girls to win a league championship. That was the only title Piner didn't have. The school was founded in 1966.

"The goal was to win our league and we did," said Coach Santoyo in an interview. The team was 8-0 in league play and 10-4-3 overall. That being 10 wins, 4 losses, and 3 ties. Coach Santoyo explained that Varsity Girls Soccer has two effective seasons, a pre-season that doesn't affect league standing and league season, which does.

"The team's 2-4-3 record in pre-season (two wins, four losses and three ties) was by design," said Santoyo. "The Athletic Director and our coaching staff agreed that we needed to play stronger teams to expose ourselves to better play to prepare ourselves for the league season."

This strategy allowed the team to compete at the highest level by the time playoffs came around, he said.

Santoyo admitted that on paper it doesn't look great but from a performance standpoint it does.

After winning their league the team was headed to the playoffs to play against the best of the best. Unfortunately the team lost in the first round against Castro Valley.

"They were a Division II school, while we were Division III," said Santoyo. They performed well during the game but lost 4-2 in a penalty kick shootout. "The overall grade on the game was a 9 out of 10," said Santoyo.

Santoyo said there were no standout performances in that game, "It was a collective performance." Everybody needed to play their role.

While **Lena Martinez**, a senior, played goalie in the losing effort against Castro Valley, she and two other goalies were undefeated during the regular season. The other goalies were **Jessica Carlino** and **Guadalupe Pineda**.

"During league play we switched goalies up quite a bit between Martinez, Carlino and Pineda," said Santoyo.

Santoyo doesn't put any blame on the goalie, he said. "Playing goalie is a high pressure position and a penalty kick shootout made it even harder for Martinez. It's basically a 50-50 situation. There's nothing she could have done. Those kicks were too hard to block."

While Martinez was sad after the loss, Coach Santoyo stressed "it did not break her or the team. As soon as the whistle blew, a bunch of the girls took Martinez in their arms and held her tightly."

While Coach Santoyo stressed that everybody on the team mattered during the season, he said there were some players that stood out as good players and as good leaders.

"If we're talking standout players, we were very fortunate to have senior **Sierra Olvera**, her sister sophomore **Kamila Olvera**, my daughter **Atiana Santoyo** and **Sophia Correia** (Piner Principal Andrea Correia's daughter)," said Santoyo

Asked what made this team so special, Santoyo said in high school players come and go each year so it's always a rebuilding year. But the core group of girls on the team this year have been playing together for his three years as a coach.

"They were an exceptional group of girls, relatively the same age, playing with each other for a while," said Santoyo. "The chemistry was set a few years ago."

Santoyo has been coaching at Piner for 3 years. He has also coached outside his time at Piner, overall Santoyo has 16 years of coaching experience.

This year's team obviously did great, but with some of the star players gone next year because they're graduating you have to wonder how the team will do next year. Since the core of this year's team are mostly graduating seniors, Santoyo said next year will be a rebuilding year. "Like in a lot of sports, rebuilding is inevitable," said Santoyo.

He already has a good sense of the players next in line to carry the team forward. They include **Aaliyah Reece**, **Kamila Olvera** and **Dayanara Cruz**.

Piner Senior Azriel Cuevas Says the Upward Bound Program Allows Students to Sprint to Future Success

Elly Somnavong

The Upward Bound program at **Piner High School** more than lives up to its name every year, giving students like senior **Azriel Cuevas**, his brother and sister a leg up that helps them sprint confidently to future success.

Cuevas found out about the program, run by Rayna Penning, through his older siblings, saying that it is like passing the torch down to the next generation through his family.

Cuevas said his older sister Wendy, a Piner alumni, Class of 2019, participated in Upward Bound and the other programs as well.

He said Upward Bound helped his sister Wendy Cuevas prepare for college.

She graduated from **Sacramento State University** with a degree in a field of science, and now is getting her Master's in the same field.

Also, thanks to Upward Bound, Cuevas said his older brother **Aidan Cuevas**, another graduate from Piner, Class of 2022, is in his third year at **University of California Santa Barbara**, studying Microbiology. Cuevas said his brother plans to go to medical school later down the line.

Cuevas joined Upward Bound following the lead of his sister and brother, who he said both benefited from the program.



Cuevas said one of the best things about Upward Bound is the way it brings people together. Upward Bound is part of a TRIO program, alongside the Academic Talent Search and Student Support Service.

A big benefit of the three programs is that students are able to socialize and hang out with each other while still learning how to prepare for college.

“Upward Bound is pretty social,” he said. Cuevas said he’s made some great friendships through the program such as **Jair Castro**, and his brother **Cris Castro**, a sophomore.

“I believe it’s a strong part of the program that it gets passed down to younger siblings,” he said.

Cuevas expects his younger sister **Aileen Cuevas**, who is in 7th grade, to eventually join the program as well. She is currently part of the Academic Talent Search Program.

Passing down the tradition of going to the program and experiencing what the older generations of a family did is something that isn’t always possible due to fees and lack of money.

However, Upward Bound aids families and those who wish to participate in the program. Every year, Upward Bound funds 60 students, allowing them to explore future career choices throughout their high school years.

“Upward Bound helps to pay fees at the JC including tuition and textbooks,” said Cuevas. “The program also helps pay for college application fees, which can add up to hundreds of

dollars. They also help students with school supplies, such as pens, paper and textbooks.”

With the help of Upward Bound, students are free to be themselves, take their time to find what they are interested in, and choose their own paths in life, without having to worry about money.

Not only did Upward Bound help Cuevas’ siblings find what they wanted to do in life, it helped Cuevas and others as well.

“Upward Bound helped me figure out who I am and what I want to be and where to go to school.”

His plan is to attend **Dominican University of California** in the fall and study criminology. After graduating he plans to attend law school.

A large aspect of the program that helps people figure out an idea of what they want to do after highschool is taking the teenagers on sponsored field trips to various colleges and universities.

Cuevas said he went on campus tours of the **University of California San Diego** and the **University of California Irvine**.

He explained, “we got to see what student life was like and see if the university was a good fit for us and if we could see ourselves there.”

Getting to see what student life in universities was like helped aid Upward Bound participants in understanding what life was like beyond high school on the paths they wished to take.

Not only does Upward Bound support academics, but also student athletes and people who want to pursue sports. Upward Bound helps student athletes with balancing their commitments to sports and academics.

Moreover, Cuevas, a track and field and cross country athlete, said the Upward Bound program helped him get signed up and committed to join the track and field and cross country teams at Dominican University.

Dominican is a Division II school, a huge opportunity for Cuevas that likely wouldn’t have been possible without the aid of Upward Bound.

Max/Gracie/Bazinga/Fella Brings Mystery, Purrfection to Piner

By Scarlet Vasquez and Jo’elle Rose

Piner High School has the *purrfect* solution for students in need of a little comfort after a hard day.



Max/Gracie/Bazingsa/Fella posing for a photo at the Grace Club.

Come to the northeast corner of the campus between the Grace area and the D and H wings to meet Max the Cat.

The Grace Club knows Max by another name, having dubbed him **Gracie** and apparently changed his sex. Other students and teachers call him **Bazingsa, Fella** or **Mama**.

Max is the most identifiable of the colony of neighborhood felines who congregate on

Piner campus under the classrooms of the H wing.

According to Forgotten Felines, a cat colony is a group of cats that congregate in a specific location, and it can consist of one or more cats. Unowned/homeless/stray felines cluster in a specific location due to a consistent source of food/water or shelter...or both. Dumpsters behind a restaurant, a barn/field full of mice, a dairy farm with barns and outbuilding, a natural body of water, etc., are general colony locations.

Max is not exactly a forgotten feline, however, though he loves his freedom.

Antonio Chavez, Piner's head custodian, said Max is actually owned by one of Piner's neighbors, though he doesn't know who the owner is.

Indeed, Max has been spotted climbing up and over the fence across from the Grace area.

On any given day, Max/Gracie/Bazingsa can be seen wandering around the campus bringing joy to those who stop to give him a much needed scratch.

Chavez said Max has been attending Piner for at least a couple of years. He said the teachers and students in the H and D wings and the Grace counselor Johana Perdomo and Grace students feed Max regularly.

"Max is really cute and really sweet," said **Maddie Robbins**, a Piner freshman. "I met him the first couple days of school and really enjoyed seeing him around campus."

Robbins said she and her friends like to call him Bazingsa. She said Bazingsa also likes to visit her ceramics class.

Max “is very friendly and social,” said **Samantha Rose**, a Piner freshman. “I met him on the second day of school and always try to pet him if possible.”

Rose said she’s seen Max stroll into her 5th period class like he owns the place.

Many students and teachers have special names for Max the cat. For example, **Matthew Samet**, a science teacher in D-1 calls him Fella.

Anthony Guaraldie Brown, an art teacher in D-16, said he calls her Gracie or Mama.

They all enjoy seeing Max around and try to prop their doors open when they can. Max makes random visits to the classrooms near Grace a few times a week.

“I met a cat in August when I was setting up my classroom in summer,” Samet said. “He comes in only if the door is propped open.”

“I first met the cat when it came into my classroom when I first moved in about 2 years ago,” Brown said.

Max/Gracie/Bazinga/Fella hangs out in his class, Brown said.

“It’s Nice to see everyone be nice to the cat.”

Brian Pedersen, a Ceramics teacher at Piner, said “we don’t know if Gracie is a male or a female, since it has no identification collar.”

Mr. Pedersen feeds Gracie treats whenever he/she comes into his Ceramics class.

“Gracie is not afraid of people,” Pedersen said. “She will hop on tables, sleep on students while they work.”

Pedersen added that Gracie is a pure example of a cat because she gives attention to kids, but only when she chooses it.

Some students and teachers worry about Gracie when she isn’t around or when school is not in session..

“I worry about her during breaks in the winter time,” Pedersen said.

Pedersen said Gracie sometimes doesn’t come around for weeks at a time.

“Everyone loves when she’s around,” he said. “Though, some people get taken aback when a cat struts into their class.”

English Learners, Newcomers Say Piner Is a Welcome Respite for Them

By **Adriana Garcia and Romina Ortiz**

Newcomers and **English Language Learners** at **Piner High School** say that while school has its challenges for them, they are very grateful for the support they get from each other, their friends and families and from their teachers and aides.

“What I like most about Piner High School are my friends and the clubs it has,” said **Lashelle Ccorpa**, a 10th grader at Piner.

She belongs to the **M.E.C.H.A. Club** also known as the **Chicano Movement of Aztlan**, a U.S.-based organization that seeks to promote Chicano unity and empowerment through political action.

Ccorpa said her “experience entering Piner was not so good since I had a really bad freshman year.” She declined to comment specifically on her experience.

Even so, in her second year, she said things are much better.

“My grades are good. I still need help with my homework but I am improving.”

Ccorpa’s optimism is shared by other ELLs and newcomers.

“What I like most about Piner High School is the support that everyone gives me,” said 10th grader **Chelsey Maldonado**. “I really liked meeting my friends. I met a lot of people that I never imagined would be part of me.”

Maldonado said when she entered Piner “everything was very different from my previous school.”

She said she “realized that the students were kinder, more understanding. They were more helpful with everything.”

Even so, she said her freshman year was not without difficulties.

“Everything happened in my freshman year,” she said.

“I had differences with people, we couldn't get along. There were false friendships. But I never had and I don't have resentment toward anyone. And there is nothing else to complain about or say that it was a bad experience.”

For his part, 9th grader **Hugo Garcia** said Piner has been an improvement on his experience at Comstock Middle School and he’s grateful for that.

“I feel very comfortable with my classes,” he said. “I like the atmosphere here. The people are calm. I say this because of what I saw at my previous school, the students were more intense, more compulsive, etc.”

“But what I especially like most is that I gave myself the opportunity to meet very good

friends, people from whom I have learned many things.”

He said his experience entering Piner “was very good.”

He said having friends from Comstock helped him make the transition to Piner.

“I didn’t have a bad experience at all,” he said. “I liked everything from the first day I arrived.”

Three Piner Journalism Students on What Women’s History Month Means to Them



Amelia Earhart



Sally Ride

By Isabel Ramirez

Women’s History Month is important to me because it is a month that is celebrated every March in the United States to honor the achievements of women throughout history. It started as a week-long celebration in the late 70s and became a month-long event in 1987.

During Women's History Month, there were a lot of events and educational programs, and activities that highlight the importance of what women have done. People celebrate this month to raise awareness about the challenges women have faced and to inspire future generations of women.

Amelia Earhart was the first female aviator to fly solo across the Atlantic ocean. She was born on July 24, 1897 in Atchison Kansas. She disappeared in June 1937 while trying to become the first woman to circumnavigate the world in a plane.

Earhart liked to go on adventures at an early age. In 1932, she became the first woman to fly across the Atlantic Ocean as a passenger. In 1932, she also made a solo transAtlantic flight becoming, first woman to do so. She flew from Newfoundland to Ireland in about 15 hours.

Sally Ride was the first American woman in space in 1983 aboard the Space Shuttle Challenger. She was born on May 26 1951 in Los Angeles, California. Sheshe was an avid tennis player and wanted a



Valentina Tereshkova

professional tennis career. She attended Stanford University. In 1978 she was selected as an astronaut candidate by NASA, part of the first group of astronauts to include a woman. She flew on mission STS-7 in 1983 and she also flew on STS-41G in 1984 spending more than 343 hours in space.

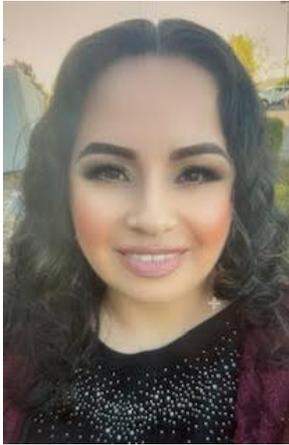
Valentina Tereshkova was the first woman to fly in space in 1963 orbiting earth 48 times aboard Vostok 6, a space mission of the former Soviet Union. She was born on March 6, 1937 in the village of Maslennikovo, Russia. She came from nothing. On June 16 1963, Tereshkova became the first woman to fly in space. She orbited the Earth 48 times over nearly three days in space. She is the only woman to have been on a solo space mission and is the last surviving Vostok programme cosmonaut.



Keriana and her mom Katie

By Keriana Singkeo

As a woman myself, **Women's History Month** is the month where women are appreciated. Before the women's rights movement women were treated as maids. Their job was to stay home cook, clean, and take care and birth their children. Men were the only people that could get jobs and vote, women weren't allowed to do anything the men could. Women are still treated badly to this day. I don't think the treatment will ever stop or change because it's just been happening for so long. I don't think women getting a month changes the way women are being treated. Three women I admire would be my Mom, **Katie**, and I think that's it, I can't think of anyone else. Mothers are the most important thing in the world, they are born, they care, they feed, and they protect. Being a mom is harder than working a 9-5. The hardest job out there is being a mom and being a mom is a full time job. You can't catch a break. That's why I look up to my mother because she did everything to take care of me and my siblings. Raising more than 1 child is very hard and I'm proud of her for trying her best to raise us right. Women are one of the most important things in the world without them there would be no people.



**Eduardo's mom
Cinthia**



**Eduardo's grandma
Maricela**

By Eduardo Lojas

Women's History Month means a lot to me because the women in my life have inspired me about many things, like trying hard in school, how to treat and respect women, and more. The three most influential women in my life are my Mom, Grandma, and Martha.

Mom (Cinthia)

My mom's name is Cinthia and has inspired me to try hard in school because when she got pregnant with me she gave up her dream of being a nurse to take care of me and she always told me that if I try hard in school that I can get into a good college and get a good job and with her help I joined the ECM Program at school.

Grandma (Maricela)

My grandma's name is Maricela and she always told me to respect and treat women how I would want people to treat her and my mom. I always have. I wouldn't want anyone to be rude or disrespectful to her because during all of elementary school she took care of me from 4 when I got out of school until 9-10 when my dad got out of work and picked me and my little brother up.

Martha (Ice Cream Lady)

Martha, the ice cream lady, also made a big impression on me. Whenever I was at my grandma's house and Martha came by, my grandma would always buy me something. Afterward, Martha and I would talk about my future and she always told me: "Necesitas un buen trabajo para no estar aquí trabajando como yo por vien chinito dinero." (You need a good job so you're not here working like me for little money.) A little while ago, I was walking home from school, and she saw me, so I stopped and talked to her for a while, telling her everything I've done, like competing in math competitions, and getting into the Early College Magnet Program. She told me that she was proud of me.

TO SUBMIT A TIP ABOUT AN EVENT THAT THE PINER PROSPECTOR SHOULD COVER,
PLEASE EMAIL JOURNALISM TEACHER DAN LONKEVICH AT
DLONKEVICH@SRCS.K12.CA.US

REPORTERS/EDITORS

Eva Escamilla
Adriana Garcia Torres
Alexander Guzman Ruiz
Eduardo Lojas Trigeros
Aaron Moreno Gonzalez
Romina Ortiz Palomares
Adriana Ramirez
Isabel Ramirez Beltran

Jo'elle Rose
Keriana Singkeo
Elly Somnavong
Cristian Tobar Cortez
Marcela Urbina Pineda
Scarlet Vasquez Palomares
Damian Viveros Espinosa
Sebastion Witthaus

