

## Piner High School Community Mourns the Passing of Beloved Unofficial Mascot Max the Cat, A.K.A. Gracie

By Xavier Coello

Tributes poured in from the **Piner High School** community of students, staff, teachers and counselors after the untimely passing of **Max the Cat**, the school's beloved unofficial mascot. Everyone agreed that Max, also known as Gracie, was a source of calm, love and inspiration.



**A memorial to Max in the Grace Counseling Office.**

Sadly, Max was found dead in a classroom in the H building on Tuesday, December 2, where he had been trapped without food or water over the week-long Thanksgiving Holiday.

GIS, Earth, and Space Science Teacher **Kurt Kruger** said he was shocked and saddened to find Max's body when he came into his classroom after Thanksgiving break.

He said Max had knocked over some stuff in his classroom during his entrapment.

"Like everyone, I am crushed," said Mr. Kruger. "It's no one's fault, just Max's curiosity finally got the best of him. He must have snuck in when a janitor was emptying the waste baskets."

"That's just like him," said **Peg Marcom**, Max's caretaker who lives on Jenes Road just over the fence from Piner's Grace Program Office. "He was a sneaky cat and a wanderer, but very special."

On Monday, Dec. 1, Ms. Marcom told *The Piner Prospector* that Max had been missing for a week and asked the newspaper to look into the matter for her.

Ms. Marcom had said Max might have "followed someone home and is being kept indoors."

To be sure, Max had gone missing before, from Piner at least.

Last Spring, he was injured by a wild animal, thought to have been an opossum. He had to recuperate at Ms. Marcom's for several weeks and sported a plastic cone to keep him from scratching his healing wounds.

Max has many loyal and loving friends at Piner including head custodian **Antonio Chavez**, Grace program counselor **Johana Perdomo** and Science Teacher **Sarah Kanga-Livingstone**.

Mr. Chavez, who has been one of Max's best friends at Piner for years, said he was very attached to Max and feels terrible about what happened to him.

Indeed, Mr. Chavez said he received a phone call from Max's owner about Max being missing for a week on Sunday, which was his wife's birthday.

Mr. Chavez said he told his wife he had "a bad feeling" about Max being trapped somewhere on campus and drove to the school to search some classrooms where Max liked to hang out. Unfortunately, he didn't find him.

"Don't get me wrong, I love my wife, but that should show you how much I loved that guy," he said. "It hurts really bad. In all these years, not every day, but most days, I would find him and he'd come running to me, and I'd give him a little something. I don't understand why an animal like that, with so much heart, has to go through what he did."

Mr. Chavez said Max never fought with other cats and would often let them eat first.

"Every other cat respected him."

When told that Max was missing on Monday, Mx. Kanga-Livingstone, decided to create a poster to let



**Head custodian Antonio Chavez**

students and teachers know to be on the look out for Max.

"I truly miss Max from the bottom of my scientific heart," said Mx. Kanga-Livingstone in an email.

## MISSING CAT



**MAX**

AKA GRACIE

AKA HEY YOU WANT TREATS?

LAST SEEN LEAVING D4 AT 3:27 PM ON 11/21

IF YOU HAVE ANY INFO, PLEASE CONTACT

MR LONKEVICH OR MX KANGASTONE

**A poster Mx. Kanga Livingstone was planning to distribute on campus.**

Max used to “come into my room every day and sleep for hours at a time enjoying head scratches and treats from students,” they said.

“Students would argue about whose turn it was to feed him each day. It was nice coming in from lunch and seeing him waiting, with his raspy meow.”

“He rasped meowed indignantly whenever you picked him up, especially if it meant

ending his nap,” they said.

“Sometimes I would stay after school working in my classroom longer so he could keep sleeping.”

“One time he kept me company until 6 pm as I worked to get my grades submitted. What a good cat. I joke that I have my work cat and my home cats.”

For her part, Ms. Perdomo grew very quiet and tearful when informed of Max’s death. She and the student of the Grace Program were among Max’s biggest fans.

Over the holiday, Ms. Perdomo even bought some cat toys she was going to give to Max when she saw him next.

“I am truly heartbroken,” said Ms. Perdomo. “Every morning, he was a light in my day, waiting patiently outside my office door.

Max or “Gracie,” as the Grace Club called him, “offered quiet emotional support to everyone and brought a special warmth to the Grace office.”

He “was sassy, sweet, and unforgettable,” she said. “I will always cherish the memories. Some of my favorite memories are the times I had to gently roll him out of the office, still napping on the chairs, when it was time for me to go home.”

Ms. Perdomo said the Grace Club set up a memorial for Max in the Grace office for anyone who would like to visit or add anything in his honor.

Students expressed their deep feelings of sadness about Max’s death.

“Max was a quiet guardian of our school days,” said **Betsy Alamilla**, a Piner sophomore. “Whether sunbathing by the entrance or weaving between our feet, he made everyone feel

welcome. His calm presence brought comfort on stressful days and companionship on lonely ones. Though he no longer walks our halls, the warmth he brought will always be remembered. Thank you Max for every purr, every nudge and every moment you spent with us.”

Max’s body was returned to his caretaker Ms. Marcom, who said her husband “buried Max out by the gate against our back fence, right where he used to go through -- across from the Grace classrooms.”

Max is survived by a brother Cheeks and a brother Blinky, who has only one eye.

## **Piner’s Black Student Union Says First Ever Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day Was a Success It Can Build On**

*By Mr. L’s Journalism class*

**Piner High School’s Black Student Union** hosted its first ever **Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day** on Friday, November 14 to honor the memory of the Civil Rights icon who as a six year old helped integrate **William Franz Elementary School** in New Orleans in 1960.



**Ruby Bridges in the early 1960s.**



**Black Student Union Advisor Bo Reece.**

The Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day was celebrated across the United States on November 14 to encourage students to walk to school to foster dialogue on anti-racism, and promote inclusivity. Events across the country included community walks, educational discussions and symbolic purple attire.

Piner's version of the event included about 20 members of the Black Student Union, including **Aaliyah Reece** and her father Robert "Bo" Reece, who is a **Student Safety Advisor** at Piner and advisor to the Black Student Union.

"We had about 20 participants, students and staff this year," said Mr. Reece. "Hoping to have more participation next year."

The BSU has about 40 members, so there's room for improvement among its own members.

"We did get a good response from the Ruby Bridges event," Mr. Reece said. "It was our first time doing it and we felt it went well and we can improve on it for next year. We will work on being more informative."

For her part, Mr. Reece's daughter Aaliyah said "it was nice to bring a new tradition to Piner and to be a part of it. At first, we were a little nervous but then you know it was for a good cause and we were putting out a good message so we were excited."

Mr. Reece expressed his deep admiration for what Ruby Bridges accomplished sixty five years ago.

"What Ruby Bridges Day means to me is that if you want to change things it takes courage and a strong will to be a leader and stand up for what is right," said Mr. Reece.

"No matter how much you are hated on and discouraged and the trials and tribulations come your way, you stand up for what's right and what you believe in," he said.

Mr. Reece said he was 7 years old when he learned what Ruby Bridges accomplished at six years old and it made him feel proud.

"I felt her courage was amazing and it showed me you can do whatever you put your mind to with the help of a strong family supporting cast and the Lord," he said.

"Ruby was a young lady who was battle tested at a young age and stood up to the challenge never backing down."

In the meantime, Ruby Bridges Day is only the latest event planned by the Black Students Union.

"We plan on being a part of the second food fair this year," Mr. Reece said.

The BSU also is planning events for February's Black History Month.

"I plan on trying to take the students to more events and trying to connect with other BSUs throughout the Santa Rosa city schools."

Mr. Reece said the BSU was started in San Francisco in 1966.

Asked why he wanted to be an advisor to the Black Student Union, he said he wanted to do it for today's students because "others did it for me when I was young and it opened up avenues and opportunities."

## **Piner High School Counselor Johana Perdomo Embodies Grace Under Pressure as She Splits Time Between Piner and Elsie Allen**

***By Yaretzy Sedano, Evelyn Sanchez and Alexandria Hicks***

When **Johana Perdomo** learned in August that she would have to split her time as a high school counselor between **Piner High School** and another high school due to budget cuts at **Santa Rosa City Schools**, she was "heartbroken" and concerned that she wouldn't be as effective in her job.

For the last four years, Ms. Perdomo has been the Grace Program counselor at Piner, where she is responsible for advising about 60 students who historically have struggled in school due to social and economic obstacles and the epidemic of anxiety and depression that were exacerbated by distance learning during the Covid-19 crisis.

At Piner and as part of the Grace Program, Ms. Perdomo has worked diligently to build relationships with students who are going through a multitude of personal issues that often get in the way of their academic pursuits.



**Johana Perdomo**

In the 2025-2026 school year, that herculean task became even more challenging when she learned she would spend Tuesday, Wednesdays and Fridays at Piner and Mondays and Thursdays at **Elsie Allen High School**.

"I love Piner High School and I've found a community here and I have close relationships with students and staff," she said. "The silver lining is that, if I was going to be split with any other high school, I would have chosen Elsie Allen."

So far the 2025-2026 school year "has been very challenging....because I'm basically working two full time jobs," Ms. Perdomo said.

When she's at Elsie Allen, students and teachers at Piner are reaching out for support and when she is at Piner she is getting emails from students and teachers at Elsie Allen.

With so many more responsibilities and not enough time in the day, she has had to guard her available time in ways she'd like to avoid.

"I have had to hide in the office to try and get work done," she said, which affects students with fewer opportunities for check-ins.

At both Piner and Elsie Allen, Ms. Perdomo is a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, Program Counselor or MTSS program counselor.

That role involves supporting all students who are struggling in school. Every day, she has one-on-one check-ins with students; she also facilitates support meetings, seeks teacher/staff feedback, and facilitates tier 2 intervention meetings.

Santa Rosa City Schools has only 5 MTSS counselors. Ms. Perdomo is the only one who also has a caseload.

"I feel guilty that I'm not doing as much as last year with the Grace Program," she said.

"Where it gets challenging is when there is a student in need and I am at a different site," Ms. Perdomo said.

"This year there have been many times that I get urgent emails from my Piner students and I have to call my colleagues to support my students when I am not there. This causes confusion for students and more work for my colleagues."

Ms. Perdomo said she is very grateful for the grace she has received from her students and colleagues at Piner who have helped her during the transition.

"The grace I've received at Piner has meant more than I can express," she said. "Even when I feel the need to apologize for what I can't take on, or when I have to ask for help, I'm met with patience and support. I'm truly grateful for my students and colleagues and the understanding they've shown during this shift."

## Piner Alum Daniel LaTourelle Is Grateful for His Piner High School Experience and Proud to Give Back as Piner's Athletic Trainer

By Marcos Espinoza, Anahi Moreno and Eva Rodriguez

When **Daniel LaTourelle** experienced a series of minor injuries that sidelined his athletic career at **Piner High School** in the early 2010s, he could have let it get him down. Instead, the 2015 graduate of Piner decided to turn his love for sports into a related career path as an athletic trainer.

"I played basketball and baseball growing up," said Mr. LaTourelle. "I was an average athlete during my time at Piner and didn't play in college. Some of the students here at Piner refer to me as 'JV Quarterback.' I take it as a compliment!"

Unfortunately Mr. LaTourelle sustained a handful of injuries during high school. He fractured his finger and shortly after being cleared to practice again, dislocated his shoulder.

"I missed out on my entire sophomore season," he said.

During this time, he admits his mental health was not the greatest.

"I had two lengthy rehabilitation efforts where I was first introduced to the profession of physical therapy. I thought it was such a unique profession where you get to help people recover after sustaining an injury.



**Piner Athletic Trainer Daniel LaTourelle**

This allowed him to do some research and eventually discover Athletic Training. "My thought process was that I loved sports and also had a passion for helping people. Athletic Training seemed like the perfect blend of the two."

Athletic trainers are certified and licensed health care professionals, who provide injury prevention services, emergency care, clinical diagnosis, therapeutic intervention, and rehabilitation of injuries and medical conditions.

The position requires at minimum, a bachelor's degree in athletic training from an accredited university or college and complete appropriate clinical training; this requirement will change to a Master's degree soon.

Athletic trainer hopefuls also must pass a comprehensive exam to earn their athletic trainer credential, or ATC. They also must keep their knowledge and skills current by participating in continuing education.

They are required to adhere to standards of professional practice set by one national certifying agency and to a national code of ethics.

They work in a variety of settings, including schools, colleges, professional sports, clinics, hospitals, corporations, industry, performing arts venues, municipalities (e.g. fire and police departments) and the military.

For LaTourelle, his career path started after Piner when he went to college.

"I graduated from Piner in the spring of 2015 and was accepted to San Diego State University," he said.

He received his bachelor of science in Athletic Training in the spring of 2019, and then pursued a masters degree and enrolled online at **Concordia University Chicago**.

Mr. LaTourelle received his Master of Science in Applied Exercise Science in the fall of 2021.

"I thoroughly enjoyed my experience at both universities," he said. "I gained invaluable knowledge and experience that molded me into the professional I am today."

His first position as an Athletic Trainer was an internship at **Stephen F. Austin State University** in Nacogdoches, Texas.

"Each Athletic Trainer is assigned to a sport and I was responsible for the track and field program," he said.

"I was fortunate enough to be surrounded by an amazing staff of Athletic Trainers who taught me how to be a true professional."

To be sure, moving halfway across the country to Texas "was a hard decision to make, but I am forever grateful that I took advantage of the opportunity," he said.

Mr. LaTourelle said he learned so much about himself and what it takes to be a successful Athletic Trainer.

"In order to find out what you want in life, you have to put yourself in potentially uncomfortable positions," he said. "Although I was unsure how everything would play out, I would have never known if I didn't take the chance. Don't let fear deter you from a potentially great opportunity!"

In 2020, he moved back to California and took a job as an athletic trainer at Justin Siena High School in Napa, California.

He left there in 2021 for “an amazing opportunity at the University of California San Francisco,” where he worked for a year.

“I was part of the PlaySafe program that offered Athletic Training services to several public and private high schools in the San Francisco Bay Area,” he said.

Part of his responsibility was working in the Sports Medicine department at the Orthopaedic Institute. The other half of his responsibilities was working directly with student athletes at various schools in San Francisco.

“Working at such a prestigious institution with so many great members of the sports medicine team was a great opportunity to grow my skills and enhance my knowledge.”

While working at the Orthopaedic Institute, Mr. LaTourelle was commuting every day from Santa Rosa to San Francisco, which was both physically and mentally demanding.

So when he saw an ad for a newly posted position to be the Athletic Trainer at Piner, he immediately knew it was something he needed to pursue.

“It would provide me an opportunity to eliminate my commute and provide healthcare to the students of the high school I graduated from,” he said.

Mr. La Tourelle started at Piner in January of 2023. “The class of 2026 is the first class that I have been with for the entirety of their high school experience. They will always have a special place in my heart!”

The most serious injury ever had to treat was a dislocated elbow.

“This happened a couple years ago during a football game,” he said. “A dislocated elbow is a serious medical emergency given the structures surrounding the elbow joint.”

The dislocation can cause damage to ligaments, bones, nerves, and blood vessels. As a result, immediate splinting to stabilize the injury is crucial to prevent further damage. Then, transportation via ambulance allows for the quickest reduction of the dislocation from a healthcare provider trained in relocating the joint to its normal position.

The most common injuries he treats include muscle strains, ligament sprains, and concussions.

“Musculoskeletal injuries occur quite frequently in sports,” he said.

“As for concussions, they are also prevalent and their rates vary depending upon the sport. My job is extremely important in helping student athletes safely return to athletics after they sustain a concussion.”

He also ensures that any academic accommodations set forth by their physicians are relayed to the counselors and teachers so they can succeed in the classroom as well.

“I am extremely grateful for our counselors and teachers for always being so understanding and helpful when our student athletes receive accommodations,” he said. “They play just as big a role as I do in supporting our students.”

Perhaps the most high profile incident he’s faced in his three years as Piner’s athletic trainer was an incident involving a collision during a varsity football game against Willits High School.

After a collision between a Piner player and a Willits staffer, the staffer went into sudden cardiac arrest. That’s when Mr. LaTourelle really showed his mettle.

“When this occurs, we immediately activate our emergency action plan (EAP),” he said.

An emergency action plan is a detailed document outlining the response needed in the event of a medical emergency where emergency medical services are required. It clearly outlines roles and responsibilities of myself, coaches, administrators, and any other support staff. The purpose of the emergency action plan is to ensure all involved parties are prepared to act when a medical emergency occurs.

“Each one of our facilities at Piner High School has a specific EAP,” he said. “Each year myself, coaches, and staff review our EAPs to maintain our confidence in responding to any medical emergency.”

Mr. LaTourelle said it is his job as the Athletic Trainer to facilitate the execution of the EAP; however, the EAP requires a collaborative effort of everyone involved.

“Each person relies upon one another to execute their defined roles. I am extremely grateful for the help of my colleagues and was thoroughly impressed by our response to the situation this fall.”

For his part, Mr. LaTourelle said the incident was very stressful for everyone involved.

“ I would be lying if I said my heart wasn't racing during the event. Part of being an Athletic Trainer is calming your nerves and responding to the situation with a clear mind.”

In the moment, he had to use everything he was taught throughout his educational and professional experience.

Finally, Mr. LaTourelle gave “a shoutout to the teachers at Piner who helped mold my academic foundation! You helped me understand the importance of work ethic, dedication, and the necessity of taking constructive criticism. Teachers are the heart of schools and they have lasting impacts on the students they teach.”

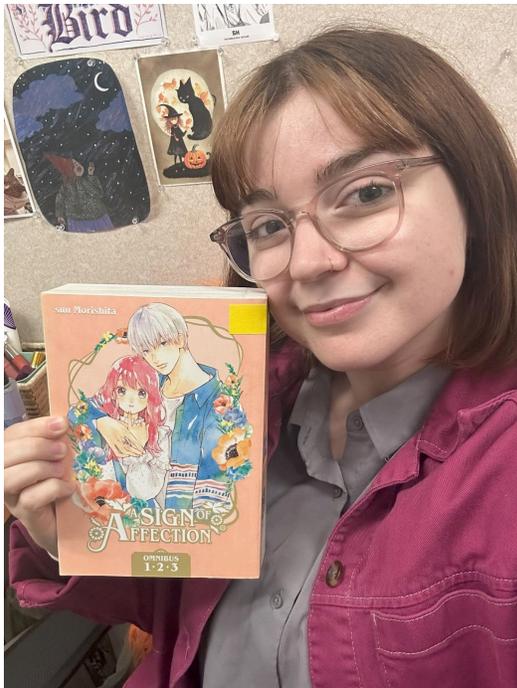
## Destiny Lopez Learned to Love Libraries at Piner and Now Serves as the Teen Services Librarian at Sonoma County Library

**By Gael Paramo**

**Destiny Lopez Romaniz**, the teen services librarian for the **Sonoma County Library** and a 2014 graduate of **Piner High School**, was always attracted to libraries throughout her life and especially during high school and college.

“I was always attracted to the physical spaces of libraries, whether it was to browse books, do homework, or simply hang out after school before going home,” said Ms. Lopez in answer to questions posed by **The Piner Prospector** about how she became a librarian.

Ms. Lopez said her interest in libraries as a career is perhaps ironic given that she is “not the biggest reader in comparison to some of my friends.”



**Piner Alum Destiny Lopez at work at Sonoma County Library**



**Ms. Lopez as a graham cracker, making smores with teens at the library.**

While libraries were more of a sanctuary for her in high school, they became more of a tool when she went to college at the **University of California at Los Angeles**.

“In college, I often sought the help of research librarians for various projects and that is where my interest in the profession really sprouted,” she said.

The idea of connecting people to information “was fun to me, and when I started working in public libraries I also saw the value in the various programs that the library offered for free.”

Ms. Lopez was always interested in the community, CPR classes, clubs, college readiness programs, and more.

For one of Ms. Lopez’s group projects in a digital humanities course in college, she was given a set of digitized sketches from an old department store and told to make a research project website from this information.

She said she and the group of students she was working with had no clue what to do with the limited data set, so they consulted with a research librarian.

The research librarian guided them and helped them find more information beyond the sketches, she said.

Some of the things they learned from the research librarian were that the store would send people to fashion weeks abroad, make sketches for the designer runway looks, and come back to the U.S. and replicate those designs for less expense.

“It was amazing to me that this librarian was able to guide us to so much more information just from a simple data set,” she said.

At UCLA, Ms. Lopez earned a bachelor’s degree in Psychology with a minor in Digital Humanities.

Her first library job was a small city library in Southern California where she worked for about 18 months. After moving back to Santa Rosa in 2020, she decided to pursue a Master’s degree in library science.

“I have worked several branches before now working at the Northwest Santa Rosa library, which is the library I grew up going to as a kid.”

She received her Master’s in Library and Information Science from San Jose State University in 2022.

In her current position, she is “responsible for all teen related programs, materials, and outreach for my specific branch. I still help any person that comes up with questions at the desk.”

Ms. Lopez is either selecting young adult books for the Northwest Branch collection, doing classroom visits at a middle school, or a high school, or planning for a teen program and training new volunteers when she is not present at the desk.

Ms. Lopez speaks fondly of her time at Piner and the teachers who influenced her..

“One of my biggest influences was my Spanish teacher, Senora Michiels, who I had all four years at Piner. She was always so enthusiastic and passionate about teaching, and incorporated things such as film and music into our lessons.”

Ms. Lopez also connected with the librarian who worked at Piner when she attended.

“My high school librarian was Holly Ramos who is one of the kindest people you will ever meet,” she said.

Ms. Ramos “was always so friendly and helpful as a teenager, and she always made my friends and I feel welcomed.”

Ms. Lopez said she now works with Ms. Ramos in the Sonoma County Library system.

“My favorite part of being a teen services librarian is building connections with teens and seeing them grow as individuals,” she said.

“I'd say my least favorite part is constantly feeling old because I don't know or understand the latest trends.”

Ms. Lopez said she loves “seeing teens become friends with each other at the library. I have seen many times where students who go to the same school but have never interacted will start talking with one another and become friends.”

For her part, Ms. Lopez said Piner students would be surprised that the library offers a ton of free programs for teens at all branches.

She said programs involve everything from weekly craft clubs, manga book clubs, Nintendo switch play sessions, CPR classes.

“The library is more than just a place to find books; we strive to be a community hub for all.”

## Winter Showcase Concerts Were the Smoothest Ever Under Music Director John Mayer Thanks to His Committed Students

By Gian Almorado

**Piner High School Music Director John Mayer** said this year's Winter Showcase concerts were the smoothest he has ever experienced at Piner.

Mr. Mayer explained that the students spent the entire semester practicing their music, and by December, "the students were mostly ready." The last two weeks before the shows were spent in the Performing Arts Center or PAC, working on entrances, exits, and how each group would move on and off stage.

"This year's concerts were different because the school held two separate nights, one for the bands and one for the choirs," Mr. Mayer said.



**Mr. Mayer in action, commanding the microphone.**

Last year, the groups were all together and there was not enough room for everyone, he said. Splitting the concerts made everything run better.

The shows also included new groups, like the jazz band and the rock band, which added variety.

The music performed ranged from classical pieces like *Second Suite in F* by **Gustav Holst** and *Sleigh Ride* by **Leroy Anderson**,

to popular songs like *Creep* by **Radiohead**, *Dreamin of You*, by **Selena**, and *Feel Good Inc.*, by **the Gorillaz**.

Mr. Mayer said that some songs were chosen by students and some were chosen by him, depending on the group and what they were ready for.

For his part, Mr. Mayer singled out several standout students for making a big impact this year.

**David Robles**, a senior who has studied with Mr. Mayer for 4 years, was described as "a great singer and a leader in my choir."

**Dex Griggs**, who plays bassoon, piano, and sings in choir and has studied with Mr. Mayer since 6th grade, was described as "one of the best musicians we have."

Mr. Mayer also praised **Ace “Ryan” Soy**, a junior who leads the flute section and is already taking college music classes, along with **Brian Guadarrama**, who became the first Piner trombone player in more than twenty years to make the **Northern California Honor Band**.

Two other students also stood out this year, Mr. Mayer said.

**Laiwa Fakhouri**, the alto sax section leader, “helped spark the idea of creating the jazz band and performed several solos,” Mr. Mayer said.



**Juniors Laiwa Fakhouri and Brian Guadarrama.**



**Senior David Robles.**

A new student named **Salani Segá**, “who impressed everyone from the start,” won the top solo spot for the choir performance and it was not close,” Mr. Mayer said. He also praised Ms. Segá for helping her section stay on pitch and focused.

Looking back on the concerts, Mr. Mayer said he is proud of how students handled challenging music and how well they adjusted to changes during the shows.

When last minute decisions had to be made on stage, he said the students adapted quickly.

The PAC was completely full, with the first night selling out and the second night also filled.

“The energy and commitment from the students this year was something I had not seen at Piner before,” he said.

Finally, Mr. Mayer also shared what being a music teacher means to him.

While he did not originally plan to become a teacher, he discovered that “teaching and getting to help these students has become what I love to do.”

With the winter concerts over, Mr. Mayer and his students are now preparing for a busy spring that includes competitions, a Six Flags trip, and more performances.

## **Piner Girls Basketball Coach Bo Reece Says His Second-Year Team Has the Unity and “Family” Approach to Make Playoffs**

**By Inoke Seviua, Jacky Cruz and Marcos Espinoza**

When **Robert “Bo” Reece** walked back onto the **Piner High School** campus, he got the same burst of energy he did as a teenager sprinting across the court in 20xx.

“I have always wanted to coach basketball,” he said. “When the job opened at my old high school and my daughter was about to attend, I knew it was the right moment.”



**Second year Girls Varsity Basketball Coach Bo Reece**

Mr. Reece's roots at Piner run deep. As a sophomore he was pulled up from junior varsity to the varsity squad, and over three seasons his teams lost “maybe five games total.”

His prowess earned him a partial Division One scholarship to **Morris Brown College** in Atlanta. After two seasons he was back in California, continuing his athletic trajectory at **Santa Rosa Junior College**, this time on the soccer pitch.

Coaching wasn't far behind. “I have been coaching for over twenty years. Boys, girls, coed. I just enjoy helping players grow,” he said.

Now in his second season as the Girls Varsity head coach, Mr. Reece feels the program turning a corner.

“Last year our team was very young,” he explained. “This year the goal is to finish above five hundred and make the playoffs.”

Standing beside him is his assistant coach and cousin **Celeste Tunde Claye**. “She balances me,” he said. “What I do not see, she sees.”

Mr. Reece preaches a simple philosophy.

“There are two things you can control, your emotions and your effort.”

But his deepest goal is unity.

“We are not just a team,” he said. “We are a family, and families take care of one another.”

**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](mailto:DLONKEVICH@SRCS.K12.CA.US)**

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