

# GAVELL

O.W. HOLMES HIGH SCHOOL, MAY 2017 VOL 53 NO. 4

## THE PEOPLE ISSUE:







# THE PEOPLE ISSUE: *changes*

People encounter change throughout their life whether its change of location, personality, physical change, a change in mentality, or the changes associated with adding a member to the family. In this issue, we decided to focus on the effects of change for students on campus. Each person had their own unique story and method of handling their change, and each is finding a way to better their lives and themselves because of it. We're excited to share their stories with you in our annual *People Issue*. Enjoy!

-Gavel Editors

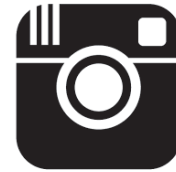


# THE GAVEL

MAY 2017 VOL 53 NO. 4



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This magazine is published twice a semester, along with regular postings on the Gavel Online ([studentnews.nisd.net/holmes](http://studentnews.nisd.net/holmes)), and daily news via our Facebook page (Holmes/BC News), Twitter, and Instagram (@holmesbcnews) by the journalism department at Holmes/Business Careers High School, as a laboratory project for students in advanced newspaper classes. Its purpose is to provide leadership in news and editorial content, and to create a forum for student and staff opinion.

Letters to the editor are encouraged, and may be submitted via e-mail to [matthew.singleton@nisd.net](mailto:matthew.singleton@nisd.net), or presented in person in room A102d. The staff reserves the right to edit all letters for length and/or appropriate language or libelous content. All letters must be signed. For advertising information or rates, e-mail Matthew Singleton, or call (210) 397-7054.

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# JOCED OSORTO

## OSORTO'S CITIZENSHIP JOURNEY SHUFFLES FAMILIES, BEING ALONE, FUTURE

by Keren Cumpian, Co-Editor

At the entrance of the deserted airport, a family was surrounding a little boy. His mother, along with his cousins, accompanied him to the airport to say their goodbyes. They surrounded him with love, tears and laughter. On the other side of the gate, his stepmom was waiting for him.

"Flight to San Antonio, Texas is about to board," the intercom voice said.

At that moment, a young Joced Osorto let go of his family and made his way through the gate towards his stepmom. He looked back at the entrance with

tears in his eyes and waved goodbye. This was his first step towards a new life.

Joced moved at the age of seven from Honduras to seek a better education in the U.S.A..

To do so, he had to leave his mom,

the only family he knew, and move in with his father and brothers who lived in another country. When he moved, Joced was surprised to meet his younger brother who looked just like him.

"The main reason I came here was for school, and now I am about to graduate high school in America and I'm going to an American college. This is such a big thing," Joced said.

Moving to a new country can be a challenging transition. For Joced, the transition was even more difficult. He had to learn a new language, get used to a new family he wasn't as familiar with and do it all without his mom at his side. Since he had a close relationship with his mother, it was tough not being able to talk to her or see her like he was used to. Differences in schedules started limiting their conversations to only two times a month, instead of daily.

"I felt sad because my mother wasn't here, so I felt like I didn't have anybody. I just felt alone and lonely the whole time," Joced said.

Even in the sadness of leaving his mom behind, he knew the sacrifices that he made were for a better future. He kept this in mind as his motivation when he started learning English. Every day, as soon as he got home from school, his stepmom would make him read books to her while she was taking care of the house. She helped him with his pronunciation and motivated him to be the best in school.

"She always pushed me to do better. Whenever I would fail I would say, 'Well others did the same as me,' and she would tell me, 'Well you're not the others. You're your own person, so you have to beat them,'" Joced said.

Just when everything seemed to be falling into place, his father passed away. Joced had only begun to build a relationship with his father. The absence caused him to lose interest in school and he felt as if he had no one to impress anymore and no one to motivate him. Jorge, Joced's brother, saw the challenge that he was

facing when his father lost his life.

"He felt alone. That's another few people who he was related to through blood that he just lost. He no longer had a connection with his father, his role model," Jorge said.

With the passing of his father, his stepmom had to move back to Honduras to take care of his father's businesses. This changed life for everyone. His stepmom moving out caused the two youngest brothers to be under the care of their older siblings. In the beginning, their uncles and grandfather helped out with the everyday necessities.

"My grandpa was the one supporting us the whole time. Especially buying us food, taking us to school and just pretty much getting us everything we needed," Joced said.

Adjusting to this new family structure was another challenge Osorto had to face. Even with the support of his siblings, living with no parental figure was hard for the two youngest siblings. They had to learn to take care of themselves. It was emotionally difficult.

"Going through high school without parents makes you feel like you're on your own. It feels like I moved out of the house, even though I never did," Joced's brother, Jorge, said.

Osorto decided not to fall into bad habits. His father worked hard to get his business running to provide for his family, and education was one of the tools that he wanted his sons to have. Not only that, but the years his stepmom invested in teaching him English motivated him. He did not want the efforts of his parents to go to waste.

"I decided not to fall into that path because the main reason for me coming here was to go to school. I decided to keep his wish true," Joced said.

After years of dedication and effort, Joced has seen this commitment through and is attending Texas A&M University in the fall. Not only that, but after 11 years of being a resident, his citizenship papers were recently approved and he attends his citizenship ceremony to become an official citizen of the United States of America on this last week of May.

His journey from being a scared kid, through trials and losses, and to a bright future has felt complete with the security of citizenship now attained.

"It feels amazing. After all of these years, I don't have to be scared of any laws being passed or something being changed for immigrants, now that I have those papers."

# Pasquell Williams

## MOVE FROM WARREN TO BUSINESS CAREERS A POSITIVE CHANGE THANKS TO HELP FROM FRIENDS

by Madeline Sierra, News Director

Pasquell Williams imagined having to leave his school, friends, teachers and teammates behind and going to a new school the he heard nothing but bad news and rumors about. He imagined having to start over and make new friends. He imagined not feeling welcomed and how hard it might be. When he enrolled at Business Careers and stepped on campus, he quickly realized that he would avoid this nightmare.

Pasquell applied to Business Careers, not thinking he could get into the magnet school. Before he went to B.C., he attended Warren High School for his freshman year. During that year, his mom got married, so they moved to the John Jay area. His mom really didn't want him going to Jay, and she was presented with the idea that he should apply to B.C.. At first, it was just way to get Pasquell to not attend Jay, but it has since influenced his life and shaped his future plans for his career.

Pasquell wasn't sure if he should attend B.C., and he was worried about fitting in and having to make friends again. After long talks, persistence and persuasion from his mother, Pasquell and his mom finally decided that this school and the students would be more welcoming to him, because many of them knew what it was like to have start over again and make new friends.

"I fit in because us B.C. kids all came from different places, so we all know how it is when you first go to a new school and don't really know people. Also, here, even if you are a part of a group, you can still be friends with different people and you don't have to just stick to that one group. I played soccer and I had soccer friends, but I also had friends who played other sports like football and basketball," Williams said.

In his early days at B.C., Pasquell met Armando Luna and John Duhon. They soon taught him the insides and outs of the campus and told him what to expect. Knowing all this new information took a lot of stress and nerves away from Pasquell, and helped make the change easier.

"When I finally got on the bus, Duhon and Armando talked me through it and told me who was cool. Then I finally met Mota, Madeline, Mauricio and Tanyah. Duhon and Armando made that happen. They made me feel comfortable," Williams said.

Duhon knows it was about who Pasquell was too.

"At first he didn't know people except me and Armando, but soccer helped him make more friends. Plus he's outgoing, so that helped him make more friends too," Duhon said.

Soon after Pasquell settled in, he realized that the experience helped him decided what he wanted to do the rest of his life.

"I would like to do something in Business. When I first got here, I saw B.C. as an opportunity not to go to Jay, but now I see going to BC as an opportunity to start a better life for myself and my family," Williams said.

While at B.C., Pasquell learned how to be a leader, to be motivated and to work hard both in school and out of school. He also learned how to get to know people and how to connect with them, characteristics that will serve him in business. Pasquell took that mindset he learned in class and used it to motivate new cross country teammates and others to excel at what they do.

"Pasquell is just one of those people that wants everyone to be better. He pushes his teammates no matter if they are a boy or girl. He wants improvement from everyone and he is just that one person everyone always wants be around and have a fun time with," teammate Philip Garcia said.

This spilled out of just the cross country team, with pasquell being a positive face and support for the entire campus.

"Senior year, Pasquell was

the ultimate hype guy for all the sports, which got him even more known for his school spirit," Duhon said.

If Pasquell never got accepted to BC, he would never know what he truly wanted to pursue after high school, and he wouldn't have all of the friends he has today. Pasquell wouldn't be as open and friendly as he learned to be, and he wouldn't have a scholarship for cross country to run at Ranger College along with Mia Garcia. She realizes that as much as Pasquell was changed by Holmes and BC, he's left a lasting impact on people around him here as well.

"He's someone you can rely on no matter what. He's been such an amazing friend," Garcia said. "I'm glad he came into my life, and I'm glad I will continue to have him next year when we go to college."



# Bethanie Moreno

## CHANGE IN CHARACTER A NEW PATH FOR MORENO, CONNECTING WITH NEW INFLUENCES, EXPERIENCES

by Alondra Martinez, Executive Editor

"I'll never be like them," senior Bethanie Moreno thought. She scoffed as she watched the carefree students who seemed to not have any problems. As her best friend Max walked up, she knew he had another idea that'll get them into trouble. She knew she would probably go along with it. She took one more glance over to the group with no problems across the courtyard. She thought, "if only I could be like them."

Growing up, Moreno was always known for getting into trouble. She was surrounded by people who encouraged bad behavior and it gave way to her being involved in things that she shouldn't have been. It took getting away from those influences for her to find her way, and to learn she could also be carefree.

"[Max] ended up going away, and it was a good thing for me because I wasn't around his bad vibes or negativity or peer pressure. I was allowed to finally be me and do what I want to do," Moreno said.

While she was ready for high school, Moreno wasn't ready for all of the responsibilities that came along with it. Assistant Principal Vicente Arcos recalls his constant run-ins with her.

"Our conversations were like, 'Beth get to class,' 'Beth get your work done,' 'Stay on top of your work.' She was just being immature and not ready for high school," Arcos said.

One of the major events that helped her find a new way to be herself had to do with her coming to terms with her sexual orientation. When she came out to her peers, she was not met with understanding. Instead, students would talk about her and insult her.

"I thought everyone would accept me for who I wanted to be. I got a lot of judgement. I was bullied," Moreno said.

Fighting and acting out in anger was how Moreno coped with tough situations. She found it easier to hit things rather than to cry or talk it out. She would take all of her positive thoughts and find the negative in them.

"I would punch walls, kick, scream, and throw tantrums. I didn't really like being that way," Moreno said.

Freshman year, Moreno joined ROTC, the Reserve Officers' Training Corps. Although it did help her in trying to become more disciplined, she still found her way into trouble.

"Even with ROTC, I still got into fights. ROTC kept me going. They threatened to kick me out of ROTC because of my behavior," Moreno said.

One of the people that kept Moreno going was her grandmother. She was always there to offer advice and was willing to do anything to support her granddaughter.

"She always told me to ignore anybody that doesn't accept me for who I am. If they don't accept me, that was their fault because they were missing out on a blessing. That really kept me from going off on people or doing bad things," Moreno said.

That made the loss of her grandmother hit her hard. She felt like a huge part of her life was taken away from her. During this time, she isolated

herself from her friends and family.

"She had a huge impact on my life. It was hard saying goodbye," Moreno said.

Others noticed how hard she was taking it, but after some time she was able to regain a new focus and character.

"She went through a period where she was very down. Now I see her, and she seems like she got her spirit back. She seems happy," JROTC Instructor Robert Verastiqui said.

In November of her sophomore year, she met somebody that would eventually mean a lot to her. Because they were going through similar situations with losing family members, they could easily connect with one another. In order to keep her

new friend Maria Garcia in her life, Moreno knew that she had to start acting better.

"I started cleaning up my act for her and I made changes for her," Moreno said.

Because Moreno wanted to be more involved, Garcia knew that she had to change her ways to be successful.

"I would always push her to become a better person.

Last year, she wanted to start playing soccer. I told her that she had to start getting herself together," junior Maria Garcia said.

This newfound friendship gave Moreno hope. She felt reconnected with her past and that helped her keep going.

"Her being proud of me felt like my grandmother being proud of me," Moreno said.

For Moreno, it

was hard to leave her old ways. She couldn't stop getting in trouble. Eventually, she recognized that she had it better when she was involved and wasn't in the office as much.

"It took her a long time to get that through her head. When she finally did, she started changing her ways," Garcia said.

Others that have watched her grow, have noticed the change within her. They've noticed that she finally saw the goodness within herself and is finally letting it show.

"I saw her involvement as saw her realizing that she had value and she could contribute it some way," Arcos said.

When she started at Holmes, she allowed others to define her, and she was headed down a path of destruction.

Now, she will be the first to graduate high school in her family, and she is enlisting in the military, a dream she has had since she was little. Through finding the right support from her friends, family, and faculty, she was able to become the person she wanted to be. Moreno knows she experienced something that could help others. She has advice for anybody who finds themselves where she was;

"Don't let somebody write your future for you."



# ALEN TOKIC

## CANCER FIGHT REVEALS DEPTH OF FRIENDSHIP

by Samantha Ruvalcaba, staff writer

It was dark and cloudy out when Alen Tokic set out on his daily morning run. At one point in the five miles, he felt a sharp pain on the right side of his stomach. He didn't think much of it at first, after all, it was normal for runners to get cramps. At home, the pain wouldn't go away. He decided to sleep on it. It was there waiting for him the next day. Something was wrong.

A visit to the doctor made everything more serious, as doctors and nurses tested him with a variety of methods. What seemed to be a cramp derived from his training, turned out to be germ cell cancer.

Tokic knew that his entire world was about to change significantly. The seventh floor of the University Hospital would become as familiar as home to him. Pills and needles were now a part of his daily routine. The chemotherapy would cause him to lose hair all over his body, and Tokic would be left with surgery scars. Nevertheless, he knew that letting the cancer get the best of his mentality would not only be detrimental to his health, but his family's as well.

"I tried to stay positive for my family and everyone. I didn't want to let anybody down. I tried to be upbeat with my mom and keep going, but I felt like, 'Oh my, god why me?'" Tokic said.

Chemotherapy is widely-known as the treatment to most cancer. It helped Tokic defeat the disease. Tokic's cancer success story may have attributed to chemotherapy, however, the contribution of friendship was a cure of its own for him. His friends, Enrique Valdes and Elijah Garza-Lepe recalled that before cancer, Tokic was an upbeat, take-charge type of person and always the one to make plans for them to hang out. However, that changed when he was diagnosed.

"Compared to his old self, where he would be up and around, showing off, real happy, he turned into someone that's not that at all. It was very hard to see him, because you just look at him and you see somebody that's sick,

somebody you want to care about. Seeing someone like that that's very close to you is hard," Valdes said.

Despite not being able to play rough with Tokic like they used to, his friends decided not to let Tokic's illness change the way they treated him. Visiting Tokic every chance they got became a priority of theirs. University Hospital became as familiar to them as it did to Tokic, and they soon began to know his medicine routine as well. Where some friends would have given their "get well soon" cards and left, Valdes and Garza-Lepe stood by Tokic throughout the entire ordeal, and this meant a lot to him.

"We started having to base our lives around his so that we could spend as much time as we wanted with him," Garza-Lepe said.

The frequent visits by Tokic's friends lifted some of the overwhelming effects that cancer inflicted on him.

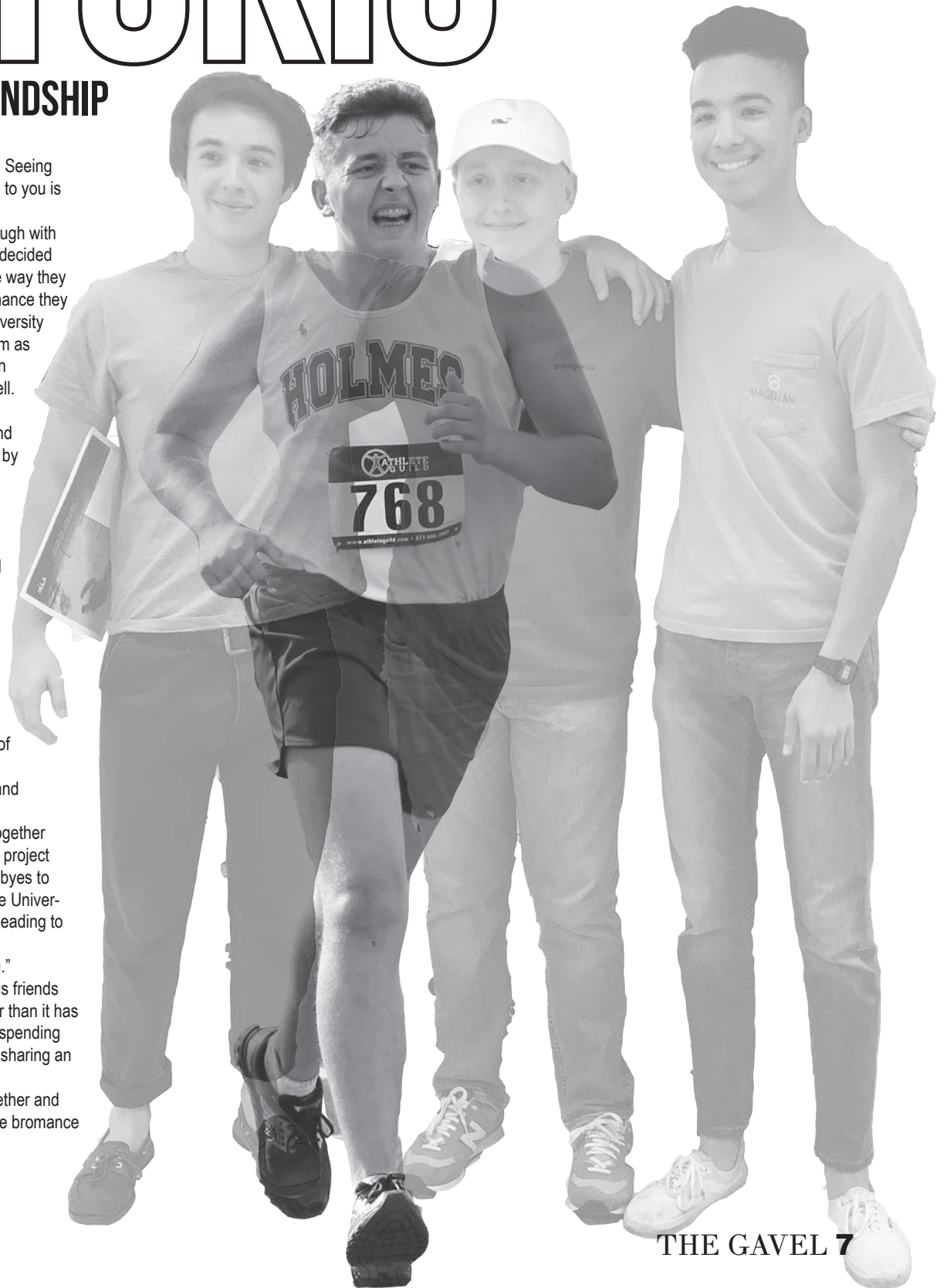
"You might be depressed and a little sad but when it feels like friends are there, it does lift some of that up off of you," Tokic said.

Thanks to the chemo, positivity, and friendship, Tokic was officially announced as cancer-free in April. Together with his friends, Tokic purchased a project car to work on. Tokic said his goodbyes to his room on the seventh floor of the University Hospital and hello to the road leading to mechanical engineering.

"I like life," said Tokic. "I like living."

After beating cancer, Tokic and his friends feel as if their friendship is stronger than it has ever been. They hope to continue spending time together, modifying cars, and sharing an education.

"We plan on going to college together and renting a place together to keep the bromance going," said Garza-Lepe.



IN LOVE WITH THE  
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## FRIENDS, FAMILY INSPIRE CHANGE IN STUDENTS

by Brittany Volz, Senior Designer and Sarah Molina, Photo Editor

Students around campus responded to the online survey asking the question "Has someone inspired or encouraged you to change something in your life?" From family members to peers, students talked about the people that have helped them. Here are some of their responses:

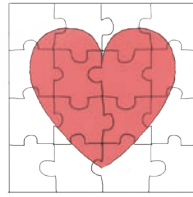




*Marina Rojas*

**ABOUT GRIMME MOON**

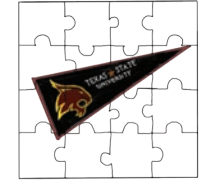
"It's cheesy, but he showed me that there were people who cared for me when I was in a dark place. He kept believing in me when I was ready to give everything up. I'm slowly learning how to love myself and become a better person than I was previously by losing a negative mindset."



*Kaitlin Rodriguez*

**ABOUT MONICA YZAGUIRRE**

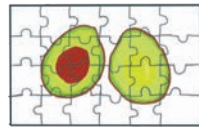
"Without this person, I may not have made it this far in my life. She helped me learn to see the brighter side of every situation and the value I brought into this world. When I lost my father, I went through a period of depression that put me in a really bad place of mental health, and she made sure that her classroom was my safe place where I could laugh and also be vulnerable. She became like a mother to me, and without her I'm not sure I would be here, or better yet, be heading off to college next fall."



*Catarina Floresta*

**ABOUT MARIA GARCIA**

"She helped me realize that sometimes you don't need certain people in your life and self-love is an important factor. She's my best friend and has always stuck by my side. I've definitely changed for the better. I dropped bad habits and started focusing on myself instead of how others perceived me. She's basically my backbone."



*Roslynn Briseno*

**ABOUT JAQUELINE ROCHA**

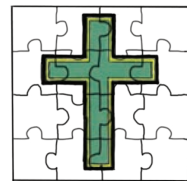
"This person made me want to look forward toward the future. Any obstacle I went through this year, I knew it'd be okay because of her. She was the one positive thing out of many bad things this year. I've changed into a person that cares for myself first. She taught me that it's okay to take toxic people out of your life."



*Phillipe Garcia*

**ABOUT HILDA KNIGHT**

"[She] opened their home to me and helped me with the problems I'm facing in life. I have opened my eyes and found something that is greater than all of us and it's led me to believe that I'm not alone. Before, I really wanted to experience church and wanted to actively participate with the church. Now that that's happened, I feel so much better knowing that I always have someone looking out for me."



*Bianca Irwin*

**ABOUT BOBBY IRWIN**

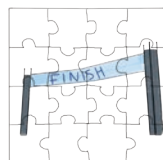
"In high school, he used to kind of slack and didn't really try, but now in college he's majoring in pre-med and gets straight A's, works, and still has time to go out. I try harder to be like him because I'd like to be like him. Before, I thought if you did bad in high school, it was the end. But I know college is a second chance to do better for yourself. Or worse, but hopefully better."



*Corey Williams*

**ABOUT RUDY TORRES**

"He raised me even though I wasn't his biological son and he always told me that if I work for something, then I'll be able to achieve it"



*Skye Reyna*

**ABOUT BIANCA LEYVA**

"She helped me realize who I am and accept my sexuality. I've become more confident in myself. I was confused and now I can be myself."



# Den Paul Cortez

## SEARCH FOR TRUTH LEADS CORTEZ TO SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE, NEWFOUND CHRISTIAN FAITH

by Krissie Ruiz, staff writer

Den Paul Cortez looked up towards the sky, and speaking to something bigger than himself, that he wasn't sure about. He had a conversation with God, that filled his mind with change. He looked up, his mind clear and thought about having a greater relationship with God, and having a greater sense of faith. At first, when he looked up, it seemed to be a regular sky. The same that everyone would see. But something in him changed, and he decided to make a commitment.

There are roughly 4,200 varieties of religious beliefs in the modern world to date. 123 wars have been classified as being caused by religion, and it has always been a hot button topic that many people choose not to avoid at dinner parties. In one night, Den Paul Cortez became one of the faithful, and changed his life by opening his eyes and mind, lighting and jumpstarting his faith in a matter of milliseconds. He took a chance.

Cortez identifies as Christian, a big transformation for him, even though he was born into a Catholic family. He went on a retreat with his best friend, and began thinking about his life and how much he needed a stronger connection to

God. When it came time to talk to God, he was somewhat stuck at the start, unable to communicate, but something in him changed, while looking at the sky.

"I wasn't born Christian, but I want to die Christian," Cortez said.

The decision happened because he wanted a change in his life, and the results of the decision made him feel more sure in his faith.

"At times I felt really lost and I just wanted to find faith and connect. I was so overwhelmed with love and humility once I found it," Cortez said.

From that moment on, he was going to be the best person, son, follower, and student; the goal was to become an all around better person, going out of his way to ensure that everyone is

happy, just to try and continue the good fortune of his faith. This faith journey comes

at a crucial time in his life, as he prepares to attend the University of California,

Berkeley. His acceptance was a miracle of it's own, because that has been his

dream school, and he doubted he'd be able to make it in.

One of the major reasons he converted was the love and acceptance he felt from a group of strangers and one friend.

"The amount of brotherhood and the amount of love felt and that I continue to feel has awakened me," Cortez said.

Senior Noah Woinicki invited Cortez to the church retreat, just for him to experience something different than what he had been exposed to before. He had hoped that it would spark something in Cortez to get him on the move, because Woinicki had received such a spark himself in a similar fashion. Cortez showed faith by making 'the first step towards God, saying "yes," and choosing to be baptized just like his friend Woinicki a year before.

"In my faith right now, I'm trying to be a leader," Woinicki said.

This is what ultimately caused Woinicki to invite Cortez to come with him on the adventure. He wanted to help and guide Cortez to the way that had helped him so much.

Youth Pastor Nathan Rainei was one of the major players in Cortez's conversion. He leads Campus Life on campus, hoping to help the youth at Holmes. According to Rainei, there are only two questions that are on everyone's mind about God. One is what to believe, and second is who God is, and the truth to everything. It was these conversations with Cortez that led Cortez to ask Rainei to baptize him almost a year ago.

"Truth is key," Rainei said.

He believes the truth is sometimes put right in front of us to see and to carry to one another, in hopes to open a door.

"I have an ulterior motive, where every student becomes and can become a seeker of truth," Rainei said.

He believes that everyone has a mission to know the truth, and no matter what the truth is, it's up to the person asking the question to answer for themselves.

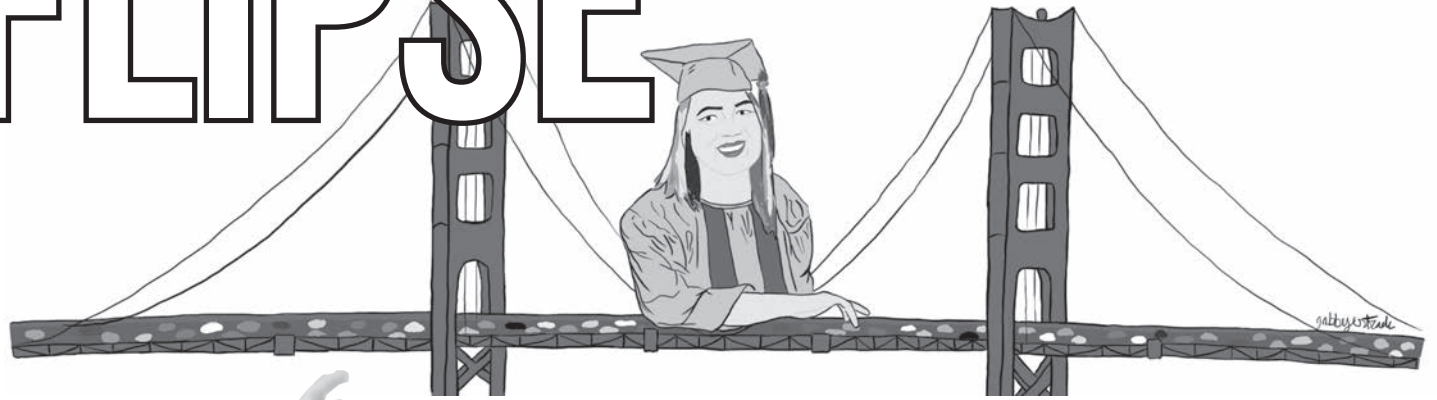
There's a famous quote from Judy Blume that says, "Some changes happen deep down inside of you. And the truth is, only you know about them." Cortez experienced that change, and is forging his faith daily on his own. Cortez believes his journey is one we all must go on at some point.

Cortez explains, "No one is born with your faith, you have to discover it through people, but in your own way."





# KAT FLIPSE



## FLIPSE HOPES COLLEGE MOVE THE RIGHT CHANGE

by Dezaray Villarreal, staff writer

Looking down at the rejection letter, seeing in big bold letters, "Thank you for your application, but unfortunately you will be waitlisted for Read College," her stomach dropped. For most people, this rejection would have been the end of trying to go to college.

For senior Savannah "Kat" Flipse, this meant that one door closed and another one opened, leading her to the University of San Francisco, in California where she will attend college next fall.

The idea of a new adventure is what drove Flipse to choose to go out of state for college and to attend San Francisco University.

"It occurred to me that I travel a lot I with school, and I just kind of knew that I wanted to get out of here and go somewhere else and find a new adventure--somewhere not here," Flipse said.

Flipse struggled making the final decision that would change her future forever, and worries about being completely independent and alone.

"The hardest thing was actually making the decision, because I'm not always that great at making decisions. There's a lot of doubt that I have, and I won't always admit that, because I am scared. I'm really excited mostly, but I am scared of the fact that if I go out there and do something and I fail, it's up to me to figure out my next step. And when I go out there, I'm gonna be completely by myself. My nearest family is in Arizona, so it's kind of scary," Flipse said.

While she didn't initially picture herself going to the college she will attend, she believes in the idea of following gut instinct, and for her, that instinct was to pick the University of San Francisco.

"I wouldn't have said four years ago that I would be going to University of San Francisco or California. My vision changed from what I wanted to be, and where I wanted to go. It all changed," Flipse said.

Flipse's close friend, senior Elizabeth Rodriguez, witnessed the hard work that she has put into her dream of going out of state for school.

"She has put in tons of work, from trying her hardest to make the money in order to go, to working extra hours at her job just to save up. She is honestly a super human in my eyes because she balances her school work, making high straight A's, and a part time assistant supervisor position at Sea World. Kat somehow balances a social life,

school life, and work," Rodriguez said.

Flipse explains that all the effort and work she has contributed to school, is going to prepare her for her future in college.

"I do know how to sit down and study for like five or six hours straight now, so I'm ready," Flipse said.

Flipse will major in performing arts and social justice with a concentration in dance and a minor in business. While this combination may seem a little out of the ordinary to some, Flipse has a plan.

"My plan is to look at dance less of a performance aspect, because I don't want to be a performer or make my money off of that. I want to focus more on how you can change society through the fine arts, which is really important to me and it hits pretty close to home," Flipse said.

Flipse's mentor and academic decathlon teacher Diana Johnston is excited for her as she heads to San Francisco, where she hopes Flipse is able to attain a support system and continue to develop in a new setting.

"I hope that she experiences the ability to express herself, whether it's through dance or artistically, or politically or whatever way that she wants to grow. I just hope that she can get a network of support there, like she has here, and get in touch with mentors and people that can help her grow," Johnston said.

Johnston is confident that any problems or challenges Flipse will face, she will be able to overcome.

"I think she's going to handle it like she handles everything. Any challenge that comes up, she's going to face them one at a time and conquer them," Johnston said.

Flipse is excited for the journey that this next year will bring. She also realizes that she and everyone else has their own path to follow, and that struggle is one that every human has to go through to be happy.

"I've learned that not everybody has the same story or the same outcome. We all have different paths that we need to explore in life," Flipse said. "We're all people and we're all going through the struggles of life, and we all just want to be happy and live."

# XAVIER GUTIERREZ

## CHANGES ON THE OUTSIDE LEAD TO REALIZATIONS OF CHANGE NEEDED ON THE INSIDE FOR GUTIERREZ

by Lizbeth Perez, Arts & Culture Director

He felt the constant paranoia of being judged, and eyes following him around the room when he stood up. He wanted to cover himself up because he didn't feel comfortable with himself. Living this way was draining.

Senior Xavier Gutierrez experienced and fought through this situation almost every day of his high school career, before he went through dramatic changes both inside and out. It started with a dramatic weight loss.

"Dropping over 80 pounds was due to people always grabbing my chest and laughing. I would always feel like I was getting laughed at, so there was a day where I had to say to myself, 'Enough is enough. I need to get my butt out there and do something'," Gutierrez said.

His motivation came easy, but the path he had to take to make it happen was tougher to walk.

"During sophomore and junior year, I would have to wake up at five a.m and go to L.A Fitness. I would take bus 82, which would leave me over by Paul Taylor Field House. I would have to cross the highway every morning, walk to the gym, do my work out at 6:30 a.m and from 6:30 to 7 a.m I would walk to school. Sometimes I was hungry, and I was so motivated that sometimes I would even stop at the hotels and eat breakfast there," Gutierrez said.

The shame that he got from others pushed him to start a new path in his life that would come with more than just weight loss.

"Unfortunately over the years I grew up a little bit, and losing a lot of weight got to my head. I kind of changed a bit of my character, because I felt if I'm putting in all this effort, why can't anyone else do it? I didn't want to hear them complaining," Gutierrez said.

This thought process didn't just start with the weight loss, it started with the people that would body shame him. But after they saw that he was changing, they started talking differently to him, which negatively impacted his point of view on people.

"I noticed a trend in my head that I started viewing people as if they were nothing. Junior year is one of the years that really hit me. Specifically, one friend got me to look at people in a negative way and made me feel like they're beneath me," Gutierrez said.

His long time friends even noticed his change of attitude.

"He was really sweet and caring. He really was like that towards everybody, but then he came to high school and he shut that down," senior Leslie Campos said.

It led him to the point where the only person he wanted to be with was one person, and that person was himself.

"I would always just be with myself, and I am at fault, because I was a

little more distant from everybody. Once I hit that mental stage, I said, 'I really don't need to depend on anybody,'" Gutierrez said.

He later realized that isolating himself might have not been the best decision for the long run.

"Come senior year, it hit me about who my friends are and who my friends aren't, and it hits really hard," Gutierrez said.

It wasn't long before that realization helped him see what was more valuable for a long term transformation.

"The important part of the

change wasn't so much the physical thing, but what I learned along the way. It gave me a new mental state of mind, and it taught me how to be more humble than I already was. Even when I was big, I still felt like I was all that, and that wasn't a good thing. It's never good to think that you're above anyone else," Gutierrez said.

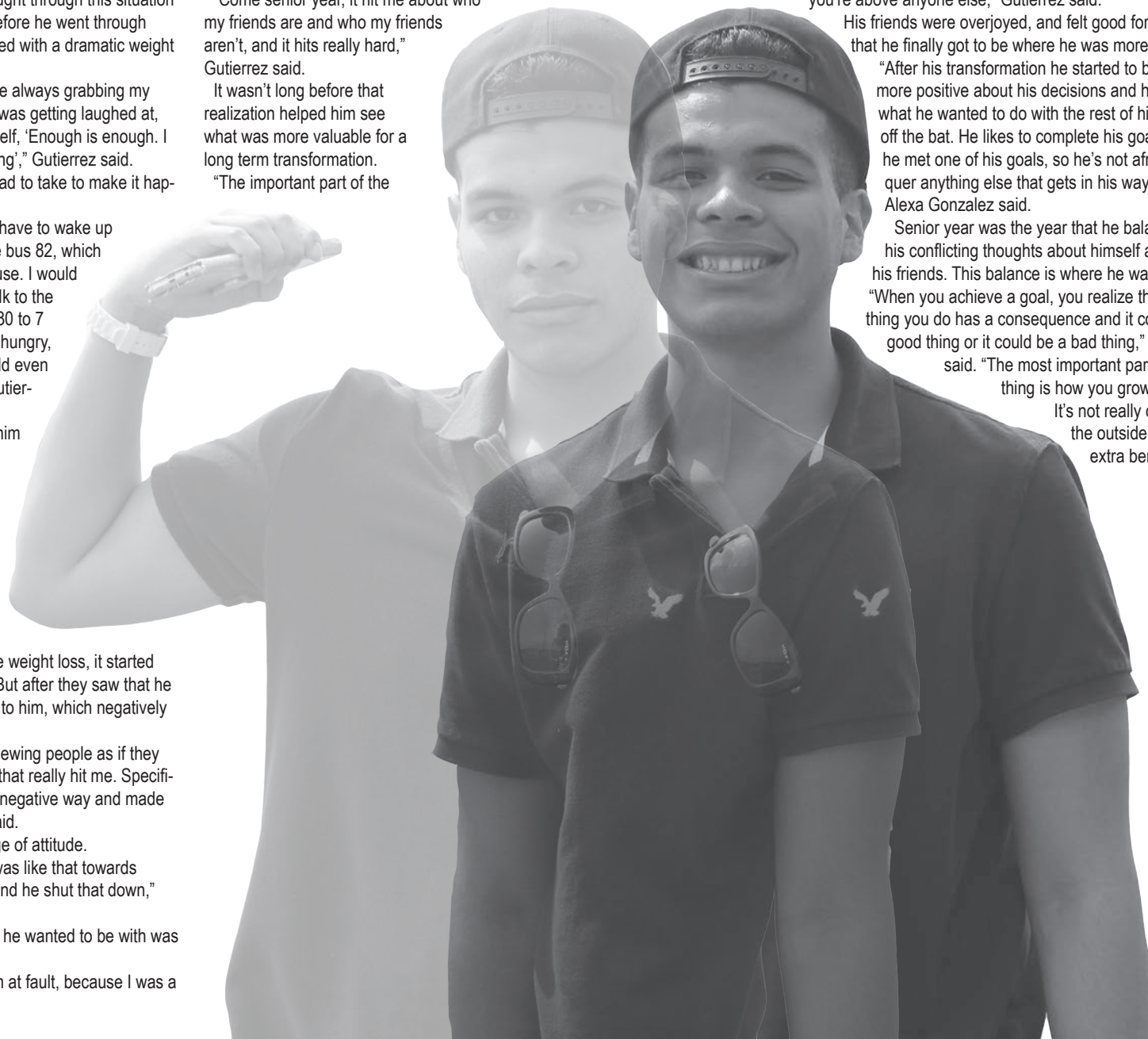
His friends were overjoyed, and felt good for Xavier that he finally got to be where he was more content.

"After his transformation he started to be way more positive about his decisions and he knew what he wanted to do with the rest of his life right off the bat. He likes to complete his goals and he met one of his goals, so he's not afraid to conquer anything else that gets in his way," senior Alexa Gonzalez said.

Senior year was the year that he balanced out his conflicting thoughts about himself and about his friends. This balance is where he wants to be.

"When you achieve a goal, you realize that everything you do has a consequence and it could be a good thing or it could be a bad thing," Gutierrez said. "The most important part of everything is how you grow inside.

It's not really outside, the outside is just an extra benefit."





# Mikayla Hartfield

## MOTHERHOOD CHANGES HARTFIELD'S HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCE, GIVES PERSPECTIVE, PURPOSE

by Stormy Rice, Co-Editor

Senior year is exciting and stressful in every way, students getting ready for college, testing, prom, and all while maintaining a social life. For Mikayla Hartfield, she had to deal with the additional stress of becoming a mother at the beginning of her senior year. About eight months ago she was just finding out she was already six months pregnant, and today she has a healthy five month old son named Joseph, whom she continues to succeed for every day.

For most students, the main priorities may be just going to school and hanging out with friends, but once a student becomes a teen parent, life changes to caring for the best interest of the child.

"Education-wise, it made me just want to strive harder honestly. Before I even knew I was pregnant, I was just like, 'Oh, it's my senior year. I'm going to have so much fun. I'm going to do this and that, and now I just don't feel the need to go party or go hang out with friends anymore,'" Hartfield said.

One of the biggest challenges she faces having a baby in high school is following through with plans she made for after high school, such as going to college. For many girls in this situations, they don't get to follow their plans and a huge percentage drop out of high school, but even a few weeks away from graduation, Hartfield is still going strong.

"Mikayla is going to succeed. She is going to follow her plan and path, and she'll make a good role model for her baby," School Age Parenting teacher Kim Bustos said.

Becoming a new mom, it's extremely important to have support from family and friends either emotionally or financially. Hartfield's parents are involved in her son's life and have become supportive since he was born.

"My mom always wants to be in my presence, especially since I have Joseph. And my stepdad is not the type to want to stay home, but when Joseph is there,

he wants to stay home," Hartfield said.

Hartfield being a mother and having her hands full could make it easy for her to fall into the stereotype most teen moms fall into. Teachers will notice that they start coming to school less and not turning in work, until eventually it becomes too late and they're drowning in

makeup work.

"I had other pregnant students who did not stay on top of it and it fell apart, but she stayed on top of all of her work during the pregnancy, the delivery, and ever since she got back. She's very focused and dedicated," English Teacher Brenda Cornell said.

Becoming a mom comes with a lot of sacrifices for Hartfield, but she has kept her head high through it all, because she knows it's best for her son.

"I didn't even end up going to prom or anything that would be conflicted because of him," Hartfield said. "I don't regret doing most of the things that most people in high school get to do, because he is more important."





# Gavel Staff GLO-UP

## PEOPLE BEHIND THE PEOPLE ISSUE

by Alexa Gonzalez, Art & Design Director

Meet the people behind The Gavel, and see how they've "glo'd up" since they were kids, including how being in journalism helped to change them. This year's staff made this issue and three others, as well as contributing regularly to our online paper, [studentnews.nisd.net/holmes](http://studentnews.nisd.net/holmes).



### AIYANA VILLARREAL

Copy Editor  
My life soundtrack:  
*Trapathy - \$uicide Boy\$*  
"Journalism has given me a different outlook on life, a deeper aspect and respect."



### ALONDRA MARTINEZ

Executive Editor  
My life soundtrack:  
*Float On - Modest Mouse*  
"Journalism shaped me because it became the most important aspect of my life, and it became what I want to do for the rest of my life."



### LIZBETH PEREZ

Arts & Culture Director  
My life soundtrack:  
*Lucky, I Got What I Want - Jungle*  
"Journalism gave me a more positive outlook on life, and made me not as frightful of new obstacles that come in my life."



### ALEXA GONZALEZ

Art & Design Director  
My life soundtrack:  
*Futura Free - Frank Ocean*  
"Journalism helped me express my artistic side through a different way that was not notes on a music piece."



### GABRIEL WILSON

Staff Writer  
My life soundtrack:  
*Hopeless Wanderer - Mumford and Sons*  
"Journalism has helped me think, express myself more and be more creative."



### MADELINE SIERRA

News Director  
My life soundtrack:  
*The Zephyr Song - Red Hot Chili Peppers*  
"Journalism brought me out of my shell. It taught me to open up and to talk to people."



### BRITTANY VOLZ

Senior Designer  
My life soundtrack:  
*Winse - Healy*  
"Journalism made me a more outgoing person. It made me more comfortable to talk to strangers."



### JORGE OSORTO

Cartoonist  
My life soundtrack:  
*You Make My Dreams Come True - John Hall & Oats*  
"Journalism shaped me by showing me the things that I'm flawed in, and then fixing those things helped me better myself."



### RYAN SCHUESSLER

Sports Director  
My life soundtrack:  
*Freak - Radiohead*  
"Journalism allowed me to express myself and my passion for sports."



### BRYANNA RAMIREZ

Artist & Designer  
My life soundtrack:  
*A Million Reasons - Lady Gaga*  
"Journalism made me a better person. It makes me feel like I'm a part of something."



### JOSEPH VASQUEZ

Staff Writer  
My life soundtrack:  
*Alright - Kendrick Lamar*  
"Journalism made me open up more, showing more of a soft side, rather than how football makes me the tough guy."



### SAMANTHA RUVALCABA

Staff Writer  
My life soundtrack:  
*Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood - The Animals*  
"Journalism has introduced me to some pretty cool people and it inspired me to be a better person."



### DEZARAY VILLARREAL

Staff Writer  
My life soundtrack:  
*Bohemian Rhapsody - Queen*  
"Journalism shaped me and got me out of my comfort zone. I'm more prone to express myself."



### KEREN CUMPIAN

Magazine Co-Editor  
My life soundtrack:  
*(What a Wonderful World - Sam Cooke*  
"Journalism helped me grow as a person. I used to be very timid. It helped me grow into being more social."



### SARAH MOLINA

Photo Editor  
My life soundtrack:  
*Troublemaker - Beach House*  
"Journalism let me see past the boundaries that I created in my head."



### GABBY ESTRADA

Staff Writer  
My life soundtrack:  
*Find Your Wings - Tyler the Creator*  
"Journalism made me realize that my opinion mattered."



### KRISSIE RUIZ

Staff Writer  
My life soundtrack:  
*Call Me Maybe - Carly Rae Jepsen*  
"Journalism made me more aware and made me realize everybody around me, and every event going on. I feel more connected."



### STORMY RICE

Magazine Co-Editor  
My life soundtrack:  
*Hollaback girl - Gwen Stefani*  
"Journalism allowed me to say what I was always thinking without feeling judged."



**CAN  
PEOPLE  
REALLY**

*change?*

## OPINION: I CHANGED, AND SO CAN YOU



*FACE OF CHANGE: Junior Gabriel Wilson sees change happen in his life over the years, in deeper ways than just his long hair (left) and current style (right).*

**Personal Opinion Column by Gabriel Wilson, staff writer**

The past five or so years have been pretty rocky, but I believe that has changed me into someone more confident about my actions and voice. With that voice, I want to talk about change, or more specifically, people changing, for better or for worse.

Let's start this little story from the beginning. Not too long ago, I was very reserved, talking to no one unless it was necessary, spending every hour either reading or listening to music to block everyone else out.

This mentality followed me throughout middle school, until high school came around, in which, on a whim, I joined the Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps and later on, the Journalism class. While in ROTC, I gained a much higher self-confidence in what I was doing with my time in school, as well as in life.

Journalism, however, gave me an opportunity to express myself both creatively and emotionally. Effectively changing my from a shy, uncertain, self-centered child, to someone with a direction and sensibility.

People can change if they are willing to put in their own effort and receive support back. However that effort is rarely applied, so change is rarely seen, so support is not given, and people stay where they are.

For many, the subject of change might bring to mind a few things that they might wish to forget; change happens without consent and without notice when you don't pay attention to it.

"A liar is always a liar, and a thief is always a thief," but that is not always the case with change. If the individual is willing to try to change, and if others are capable of not enabling the destructive behaviour, a person is able to change themselves if others don't dismiss the possibility. We have prisons for rehabilitation, but look at prisoners as flawed creatures that can't be helped. It's inhumane to think someone can't change given the right circumstances.

These circumstances are often manipulated by others using peer pressure, which can be used to get through to people that need it. When taking the steps are too difficult, it is up to others to be able to push them in the right direction.

We can help change others by being a positive influence, by encouraging them, and supporting them. Take the first step, and offer words of encouragement to those around. Or if you're the one wanting to change, look to those who support you for help.

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**THE GAVEL 15**



# Sports SHORTS

## STATE QUARTER FINALIST, SOFTBALL ENDS SEASON AS AREA CHAMPS



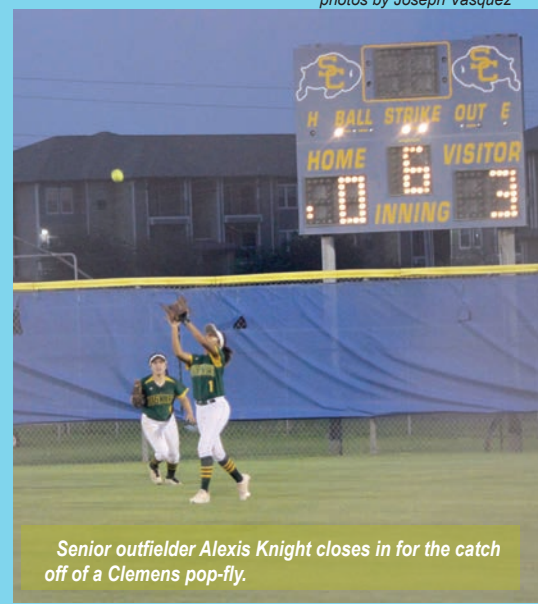
Juniors Jalissa Alicia and Dazlyn Klebahn take a breath and celebrate after collecting a playoff win against Clemens in the first round.

**"Our mindset was to go all the way, this was the first time in a long time that we made it past the first round and there was no way we were ready to leave."**  
-Junior Mercedes Vergara

photos by Joseph Vasquez



Freshman Alissa Martinez beats the throw to third, sliding into scoring position against Clemens. Martinez was recognized as a player of the week in the news for her performance in the first round.

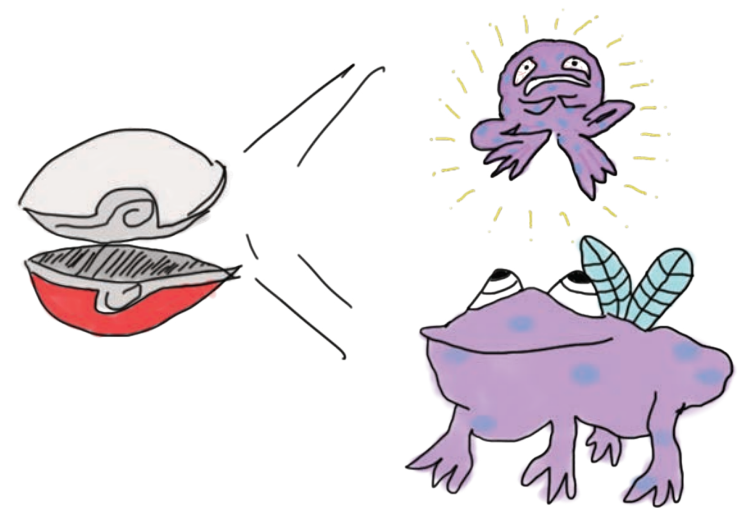


Senior outfielder Alexis Knight closes in for the catch off of a Clemens pop-fly.

by Ryan Schuessler, Sports Director and Joseph Vasquez, sports reporter  
Softball ended their regular season as District Champions, and defeated Clemens High School in the first round of playoffs, followed by Austin Lake Travis in the second round to clinch the Area Championship and advance to the state quarterfinal, where they took on New Braunfels Canyon, and lost. This deep playoff run continues a streak of appearances by the team over the past several seasons, and marks one of their deepest runs yet.  
Players receiving season honors include Alexis Knight, named to the Elite Team, and both Destiny Rodriguez and Mercedes Vergara who were named to the Academic All-State Softball Team.

## COMIC RELIEF: *change*

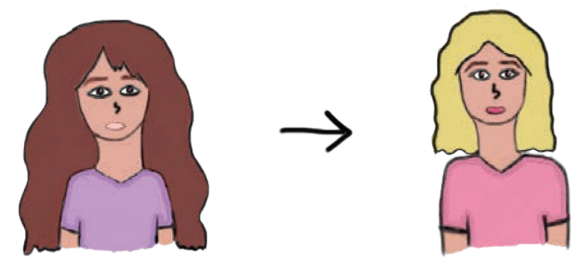
GUCCI TALES by Jorge "Gucci" Osorto



IF MONSTERS CAN CHANGE  
YOU CAN TOO!

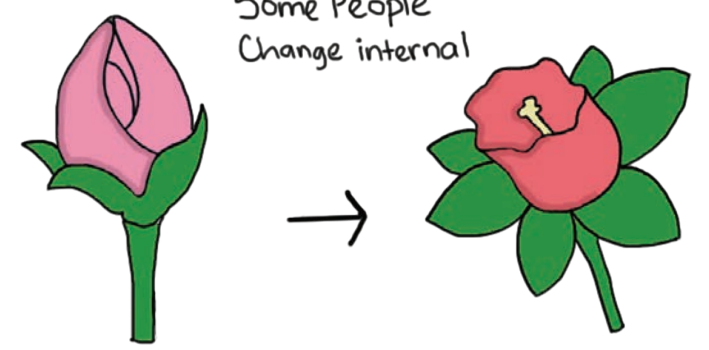
By

THE HUSKY LIFE by Bryanna Ramirez



Some People  
Change external

Some People  
Change internal



By