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Continuity at the Head of Camino Pablo Elementary

By Sophie Braccini



(from left to right), Neil Jennings, Mary Thomas, Deborah Roden and Diane Haley Photo Sophie Braccini

"I am beyond happy," says Deborah Roden, future Principal at Camino Pablo Elementary (C.P.). "I feel like I'm in Heaven." The woman who will fill Neil Jennings' shoes come August, believes that the school and the community are a perfect fit for her, her values and her experience.

Roden is bringing to C.P. a rich and diverse experience all based in California education.

She taught K-7 grades for more than 10 years, then changed the focus of her career to administration. She became a resource teacher in a magnet school, then got her master's degree and served as vice-principal and principal in different greater Bay Area schools. She presently

works for the Lodi School District as coordinator of professional development.

Her diverse experience taught her that focus, consistency and continuity make for better results. She observed and practiced this method teaching teachers and implementing methodologies and curriculum across a whole district. "We were very impressed by Deborah Roden's caliber," said Moraga School Superintendent Rick Shafer. "She will be a great addition to our team and we're looking forward to working with her."

The distressed situation of Lodi's school district motivated Roden to look for another job. "I looked for another opportunity

that would allow me to fulfill my absolute passion, working with children," she said. Roden choose Moraga for many reasons: The community resembles the small town where she was raised near Santa Cruz; and its values seem to offer the kind of environment she likes best, where families share the same values of respect, security, manners, and of course have high expectation for learning.

She feels ready for the challenges of the position. "Where I am now I balance the objectives and requirements of 50 schools, 2,000 teachers, and 125 staff," she said. "As a principal, I will do the same with different constituencies, parents, students, and district." She feels she understands the demands of the Moraga parents. As a mother, she has the same high level of expectation for her own children. "The main focus is to give children a well rounded education, with a strong core of learning," she adds.

When she starts next fall she is not planning to revolutionize the place. "I'll gently make the transition, I will watch, I will listen and I will learn," she says. "Of course I have my own personality and experiences, but I will wait before changing anything."

Acalanes Student Takes Senior Project for a Ride

By Lucy Amaral



Chris Oliveira with his bar stool go cart Photo Jennifer Wake

Parents, take stock of your household furniture. If you're not careful it could end up as a senior project in Bear Begelman's Design and Fabrication Shop at Acalanes High School.

Chris Oliveira, a senior at Acalanes and a student in Begelman's Fabrication 3 class combined his automotive acumen with the creative freedom of Mr. Begelman's class to design and build a bar stool go cart for his senior project.

"He had this wild idea to make a bar stool go cart," said Begelman. "He was excited about it, and he's a crackerjack with his hands. So, I said, 'If you are going to do this, it's not going to be haphazard. It must hold your weight and maintain torque.'"

Begelman's class offers students the opportunity to work with wood, metal, jewelry, ceramic tile and, according to Begelman, "Whatever some-

one can come up with." He said that other senior projects from his class have included a 17-foot kayak and an electric guitar.

Obviously this is not your father's wood shop.

This industrial-sized building at the far side of the high school houses sophisticated machines and an aura of creativity. "We can make anything here," said Oliveira. "It's a room full of possibilities."

Along with the full litany of smaller tools like wrenches, hammers and hand-sanders, large items like computer controlled routers, a full complement of work-working machines, plasma machines, mig welders, and tools for bending and shaping metal make their home here. Projects can range from cutting boards, to outdoor furniture to even an oversized, piece-welded, skull-shaped metal bobble-head.

Oliveira, 19, has worked

on race cars with his dad since he was 10 years old and has worked for Gomes Motor Sports in Manteca for the past five as pit crew and shop mechanic, so the idea of a motorized bar stool was viable, but actually building one was maneuvering into uncharted territory.

"The hardest part was the designing," said Oliveira. "You have to fit a lot of things in a really tight space."

Begelman advised Oliveira through the intensive planning and design process. Begelman said that Oliveira spent a good deal of time researching similar machines, visualizing what he would want, the materials that would be needed and then laying it all out on paper.

What Oliveira ended up with was his go cart, boasting a 28 horsepower engine that runs on 110 octane gasoline that he says can go up to 70 miles an hour. Not that Oliveira runs it at 70. "I got it up to 55 miles per hour and got a little scared," he said.

It also ended up being more than a Naugahyde-topped, metal stool strapped to an engine. "Once you step back and look (at the end result), you see you've used fabrication, art, design, math," said Oliveira. "There's a lot of stuff wrapped up into one project."

Oliveira presented his project to a panel of judges at Acalanes, outlining his work, offering his documentation and describing in Begelman's terms "what did you learn and how did it change your life."

While Oliveira doesn't know what his final grade yet, he has some plans for the go cart. "I'll probably mount a tool box on it and use it on the race track."

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