

# Acalanes Senior Driven to Empower Women

By Lucy Amaral



Acalanes senior Jordan Myers, and author and child advocate Gina Otto.

Photo L. Amaral

With the goal of encouraging women to let go of preconceived identities and negative self-image, Acalanes High School senior Jordan Myers created "Unfinished Business: Empowering Women and Girls," a seminar and workshop held May 24 at the Veterans Memorial Building in Lafayette.

"Everywhere females look, they are told they are 'too this' or 'too that' or 'not enough,'" said Myers. "I created this event in the hopes that they could drop those stories and become who they truly were meant to be."

Myers said she titled the event "Unfinished Business," based on a quote from U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, in which Clinton says that 'the rights of women and girls is

the unfinished business of the 21st century.' "This struck something inside of me," Myers said. "Women suffer on a daily basis from various things, and I believe when one woman is empowered, she can then go and empower ten more."

More than 100 people attended Myers' event, which was developed through her English 4 -WISE class. The WISE program (Wise Individualized Senior Experience) at Acalanes serves as an alternative to the traditional English 4 or AP English 4. It gives students the opportunity to explore areas of interest through independent projects or internships and emphasizes real world, outside-the-classroom experience. Myers worked for more than four months coordinating this event, guided by an in-school mentor, as well as with her mother, an event planner. It was through her mother that Myers met the event's keynote speaker, Gina Otto.

A best-selling author, producer and

children's advocate, Otto read her book, *Cassandra's Angel*, a modern-day fairy tale about labels girls are given and take on as their identity, and the power of dropping those labels. Using the book as a backdrop, Otto illustrated the importance of empowering women and girls, the process of mentorship, and the need for self-expression, personal growth and self-esteem.

Otto focused on the labels that can be placed upon young girls, calling them "Stories" and how young women's insecurities can be based on these stories. She said the overriding reaction that comes after the meetings from women she speaks with is that they didn't even know they had a choice to drop the stories. "They say 'This is how we live, this is how we've been taught,'" said Otto. "(After the seminars) They will say: 'I didn't even know I had a choice to take back my own thoughts, own my own voice, shine my own light.'"

Otto recently launched the Cas-

sandra's Angel Initiative to engage, educate and empower American girls, who in turn, will empower others.

"The message is either you are the story or you are the light. And every moment we get to choose: are we the story or are we the light?" said Otto. "And when we find that light, we light up the whole world."

Myers said she didn't know what result to expect from the event. "I thought maybe a few girls would be impacted," she said. "But the reality was that every woman and girl in the room was impacted. I could not have asked for better results."

Myers will attend UC Berkeley next year and plans to major in Media Studies. She hopes to continue her efforts to empower women through her studies and her major. "I find the media fascinating as it is a huge part of everyone's lives," she said. "Unfortunately, the media doesn't always have the most positive impact on girls so I hope with my work I can change that."

# 2011 Miramonte High School Community Service Award Ceremony

Submitted by Eloise Schneider



Photo provided

On Thursday, May 26, Miramonte High School recognized 86 students from all grade levels who went above and beyond to serve their community in many different ways. Each year the number of students who are active in community service grows. This was a record-breaking year with 20+ students more than last year receiving awards. Students were presented the President's Volunteer Service Award for volunteering 100+ hours in a 12 month period. Students under the age of 15 received the award

for volunteering 50+ hours. The Miramonte High School Volunteer Service Award was presented to students who qualified for the Governor & First Lady's Award (that program was recently canceled by our Governor.) The Community Service Award Program is coordinated by Eloise Schneider, College & Career Advisor. Principal Adam Clark assisted with the presentation of awards. The Miramonte Parents Club provided refreshments.

## TEEN SCENE

### Teens Give Thumbs Up for Rheem Dances

By Arianna Tong



DJ's Voni and Crank on the billboard

Photo courtesy Julian Edwards

Every month hundreds of teens gather at Moraga's New Rheem Theater to attend the recently established Rheem Dances. The celebrity DJ's who conceived of and produce these events are Voni and Crank who have a dedicated following in the San Francisco Bay Area. "We traveled to Los Angeles, San Diego, Santa Monica, and Hollywood, but no matter where we went, this area is our favorite," Crank explains.

Although the dances attract teens from all over the bay area, the majority of the attendees are from Lamorinda. Orinda's Ryan Childers loves the Rheem Dances: "These dances are the best thing that happened to Lamorinda. I like how the DJ's pump energy into the crowd and bring the party to life." Aaron Sisneros agrees, "The dances are awesome. 'Freak Show' was a lot of fun. I like to dance."

Rumors have circulated about drug and alcohol usage at these popular venues, but the DJ's firmly state their zero tolerance policy; security is tight. "Instead of kids going out to an unsafe party with tons of drugs and alcohol, we want to provide a safe environment where kids are monitored by professional adult security for their personal safety. They can have fun dancing and socializing. It'd be easy for us to offer eighteen and older events only, but we want to give back to the community by providing these dances for the teens," Crank says proudly.

From the teen perspective, these dances are an excellent way to spend a Friday or Saturday night getting together, meeting new people, and

of course, dancing. "I think the dances are a lot of fun. The music is great," comments high school student Jazmine Derouen.

The Rheem Dances are theme-based with subjects like Jungle Fever, Blast from the Past and Cinco de Mayo, giving teenagers an oppor-



A young crowd gathers for a dance

Photo courtesy Julian Edwards

tunity to dress up and express their creativity.

The next dance party Voni and Crank have scheduled is called Summer Bash 2011, which will be held on Saturday, June 18th. Mark your calendars, tell your friends, and grab your dancing shoes, as this will be a party you won't want to miss!

Arianna Tong is a freshman at Miramonte High School. She likes to swim, play water polo and dance.



Arianna Tong Photo provided

The opinions expressed in Teen Scene are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly.

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