



Brian Clark, Psy.D.
licensed clinical psychologist
PSY 25198

ADOLESCENTS
ADULTS · FAMILIES

specializing in:

Achievement Pressure
AD/HD
Parenting Support
Anxiety
School Stress
Depression

954 Risa Road · Lafayette
(925) 385-8050
www.brianclarkpsyd.com

SMC Students' Jan Term Visit to Cambodia Educates and Illuminates

Submitted by Omer Malik



Saint Mary's Jan Term students in Cambodia.

Photo Provided

“Clean, fresh water! We all took it for granted until we travelled to Cambodia on our service trip,” said Saint Mary's College student Omer Malik.

As part of a Jan Term course offered at the college, Malik and 15 other Saint Mary's undergraduate students embarked on a water and education mission to Cambodia for more than two weeks last month. “Our effort has received a tremendous amount of support, raising over \$2,600, funds for 35 water wells, and 1,000 pounds of vitamins,” he said.

The group partnered with Friends of the Cambodian Child's Dream Organization – a small non-profit organization that works closely with students from around the Bay Area in hopes of inspiring awareness and giving opportunities for sharing and learning through service, benefiting rural communities and, in particular, children.

“It was a unique opportunity to not only serve the underprivileged people of Cambodia, but also to ex-

perience their culture and travel to some of the most breathtaking and historic locations in the world—the famed temples of Angkor Wat,” Malik said. The group spent nearly half of their trip volunteering in two rural schools.

“We spent many hours teaching English to children ages six to 20 years old. I count myself lucky enough to have been part of this enriching experience, which was led by inspiring professors Ksenija Olmer and Alexandra Rollo.” With their guidance, the SMC students maximized their presence in and out of the villages.

“We developed what I would like to coin ‘active travel,’ or the act of traveling with a motive of truly engaging with those often less fortunate than ourselves, and not only teaching and aiding them, but learning from them. In a sense, the course's scope was not just to leave some of ourselves behind but to bring Cambodia home with us, giving a voice to a country and its people, which is

lacked on the global stage.”

Indeed, this was an endeavor that cannot be replicated in a lecture, book, video, or even conversation, explained Malik. “I never realized how much one learns about oneself by teaching others. In the villages we witnessed genuine gratitude, happiness, and perseverance. From teaching at the schools we developed an ever greater appreciation for the power of education and realized the advantages of being a native English speaker,” he said. “At the temples we discovered spirituality, a kind that does not discriminate by religion. And finally, we felt a deep sense of grief and loss at the infamous Khmer Rouge Killing Fields. We learned of technological simplicity as we helped build one of the wells with our bare hands and only a few simple tools.”

The group's social networking outlets continued to grow, even several days after returning from the trip on Jan. 26. “Our Facebook page, originally created to keep close friends and family in the loop, has transformed into a traffic hotspot averaging nearly 1,250 new views a week. We all agreed that this trip was an essential experience that every student should partake in for a complete college education. Thus we inspire to change lives—others, but also ours!”

There will be an informational meeting at 7 p.m. Feb. 27 in Saint Mary's Galileo Hall, room 201, for the community and interested students. For more information about Cambodian Child's Dream Organization, visit www.friendsofcd.org. To view the Jan Term Facebook page, visit <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Saint-Marys-College-of-CA-in-Cambodia-Jan-13/426282020777990>.

Salon Elegante

Get the look you deserve

Men & Women

Blowout \$35
wash, blow dry & style

European Trained Stylist
Perfect color & highlights, extensions, Keratin smoothing treatments, make-up

43 Moraga Way, upstairs in Suite 204, Orinda
www.salonelegante.com | 925-258-HAIR (4247)



Nina Kalani

It is Spelling Bee Season!

Can you spell W-I-N-N-E-R-S?

Submitted by Shirley K. DeFrancisci



Daisy Cho

Photos provided



Emma Connor



Lucia Pirone



Leo Naylor

Moraga Schools held their spelling bees over the last two weeks and four students have been named as the top spellers. Each winner is moving on to participate in the 37th Annual Contra Costa County Spelling Bee, which will be held March 23 in Walnut Creek.

Each school held preliminary written tests to qualify finalists for their respective, school-wide oral spelling bees. Students made it through several grueling rounds of challenging words before the final winners were determined.

At Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, the winning word “delinquency” was spelled by Daisy (Eunji) Cho, an eighth-grader who competed against 25 other finalists. At Camino Pablo Elementary School, fourth-grader Emma Connor spelled her school's winning word “mosque” in the fifth round without needing clarification such as a definition or language of origin.

Los Perales Elementary School students experienced “déjà vu” as they cheered on their peer, Lucia Pirone, a fourth-grader who won the school's spelling bee for the second year in a row. Rheem Elementary School fifth-grader Leo Naylor took the school's top spelling honor as his peers watched and applauded; Naylor also received a certificate and a coveted “Super Speller” pencil to use as he studies for the next round.

The county-level spelling bee was in jeopardy of being cancelled this year due to lack of a local sponsor. Thankfully, the Contra Costa Times stepped in at the 11th hour to sponsor it again. The champion of the Contra Costa County Spelling Bee will receive an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., courtesy of the California Lottery to compete in the 2013 Scripps National Spelling Bee in May.

Best of luck to our local spelling champs!

The Common Application: Change Remains the Same

By Elizabeth LaScala, PhD

When a high school student starts to apply to college, the first application he or she will probably encounter is called the “Common Application,” produced by a nonprofit organization called “Common Application” (www.commonapp.org) that serves members and students nationwide by providing a single application to streamline the college admission process. Students may submit this ‘common’ application to any of the organization's nearly 500 member colleges.

At the annual meeting of the National Association for College Admission Counseling last October, Common Application announced that the fourth-generation Common Application would be launched this summer and the new version would incorporate several important changes. Since the announcement, a multitude of voices weighed in on the proposed modifications, but the one change that caused the most discussion was the fact that the original six essay questions were going to be totally revised. No one knew what the new prompts would be and concerns were raised by both college counselors and admission staff since both sides are well aware of the importance of the college essay.

The prior version of the application required a short response describing one activity in which the student is involved. In addition, the student was asked to write a longer personal essay that responded to one of six possible prompts. One of the six was ‘topic of your choice’ which Common Application decided to remove as an option. This change alone prompted much discussion in the college admission world and thousands upon thousands of words flew back and forth on the pros and cons of excluding this alternative. Another flurry of pens accompanied the word limit to be placed on the essay.

Now the wait is over—the 2013-14 essay prompts debuted Feb. 5. The short-response question

about one activity has been deleted entirely, and the previous prompts have been replaced by five brand new ones. They are:

1. Some students have a background or story that is so central to their identity that they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, and what lessons did you learn?
3. Reflect on a time when you challenged a belief or idea. What prompted you to act? Would you make the same decision again?
4. Describe a place or environment where you are perfectly content. What do you do or experience there and why is it meaningful to you?
5. Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.

The minimum word count is still 250 words, and the maximum count has been increased to 650 words; that limit will be strictly enforced. Although it is true that the new set of questions do not include the open option, the first prompt is quite broad and easily gives students enough flexibility to write about virtually any topic of their choice. The remaining four prompts offer ample opportunity for students to distinguish themselves. Take for example prompt two: a discussion that ends your participation in sports for a season, a poor grade that lowers your overall grade in a class you struggled in, a debate lost. Later as you move past the disappointment, you can reflect on how you coped and lessons learned.

Young people challenge ideas, take risks, regret actions taken or opportunities missed to act. With luck, each of us has a place where we are at peace and feel contentment. For many that place is concrete, like your room or atop a

childhood tree house, and for some it could be a transcendent state of mind, that when reached brings calm to the soul. In each family and many cultures, events mark adulthood, whether formal like a bat mitzvah or quite informal, as when a young man's father accepts his son's revelation, even though he disagrees.

With these thoughts in mind, and as much for fun, as to allay undue concern about new questions, I went back to each and every essay my senior clients wrote for the Common Application during the last two admission cycles. That represented nearly 100 unique essays. I found that each student's essay could be used to respond fully and well to one (or more) of the new questions. Despite all the discussions about how the changes in the Common Application could harm the application process or diminish opportunities to develop a personal, creative essay, my conviction is that relatively little has changed. The essay remains the place on the application where the student can respond using his or her own voice in a personal, unique and insightful way.



Elizabeth LaScala, Ph.D. is a Lafayette college advisor. Dr. LaScala draws on 22 years of higher education experience to help guide and support the college admissions process for students and their families. Dr. LaScala is a member of NACAC, WACAC and HECA. She can be contacted at (925) 891-4491 or elizabeth@doingcollege.com. Visit www.doingcollege.com for more information about her services.

please...



...thanks

NEWSPAPER