

## Wood Works for Campo Students at State Fair

By Cathy Dausman



Campolindo High School student Christy Faoro's chessboard made of maple and padauk, framed in walnut. Photos provided



Work by Campolindo student Jessie Thompson.

Seventeen Campolindo High School students recently earned California State Fair Industrial and Technology Education awards for their woodworking projects. The entries ranged from small desks to cabinets, chests, clocks and chessboards. Three students – Christy Faoro, Jessie Thompson, and Matin Amanat – won first place awards. Faoro also took home Outstanding Award, Best of Show and the MacBeath Hardwood Award.

The students were all enrolled in second or third year woodworking classes taught at Campolindo by Donald Dupont. Dupont said he encourages all his students to enter either the Contra Costa County Fair or the State Fair; he requires seniors to enter one or the other.

“Christy’s [Faoro’s] project was really outstanding; she deserved everything she got,” said Dupont, who estimated there was a total of 60 to 70 wood project entries at the fair.

Faoro’s project was a chessboard made of maple and padauk woods, framed in walnut. She scroll cut individual chess pieces last year using poplar and redwood, then paired them with the “nicer board” she made during this year’s class. Faoro combined the chessboard she made last year with this year’s checker pieces, and gave that set to her mother as a gift.

“The chessboard only took about a month and the chess pieces took

two and a half months [to make],” Faoro explained.

Faoro had not entered at the state fair level before, and was “really surprised” to learn she’d won.

“It was fun seeing other people’s entries,” she said. Faoro said woodworking classes, “have helped me process my [other school] work.”

“It’s been a great class,” agreed her mother Liz Faoro, who said it has given her daughter a skill to share with her father and uncles, all of whom work with wood.

Campolindo students Erwin Gove, Matthew Tuan, and Patrick White earned second place awards at the state fair. Four students – Kyle Gavce, Weston Gillbanks and Bonny Pennell – earned third place awards, and eight more students – Drew Gustafson, Tyler More, Alex Oeth, Alyssa Parsons, Robin Slovak, Matthew Stickle, Caitlin Burnite and Chase Ingersol – received Honorable Mention.

Dupont said his third year woodworking class, Furniture Design, History and Construction, satisfies an entrance requirement in visual and performing arts for the University of California and California State University systems. Campolindo’s woodworking classes are completely funded through the Moraga Education Foundation (<http://morageducation.org/>), said Stacy Giglio, MEF Promotions. All MEF funds come from private donations.



Work by Campolindo student Matin Amanat.

## Student Actors Prepare for “The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee”

By Celia Magidson and Sophie Braccini



Young actors rehearse for “The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee” production at Town Hall Theatre.

Photo Dennis Markam

During the summer Town Hall Theatre in Lafayette resonates with the laughter and youthful energy of the students who spend most of their waking hours in the dark confines of the large showroom. Working on one show, sometimes on two, the teens are there for the love of theater. If you did not see their last production, “Much Ado About Nothing,” mark your calendar from Aug. 16-18 to see the multiple award-winning musical “The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee” – an amusing and tender play about a group of over-achievers vying for the championship of a lifetime.

The play is based on a book by Rachel Sheinkin with music and lyrics by William Finn.

“The first time I saw it, it was about four years ago,” recalls Joel Roster, Town Hall Theatre’s director of education. “It was just this incredible story of young people who are pushed by parents or society to be overachievers. I thought it was something that these guys (the middle- and high-school level students at THT) could relate to, and they did, because it’s also very, very heartwarming.”

Dennis Markam, who directs the play, enjoys working with the passionate young cast. “They already know the basics of theater,” he says. “We can really work on timing, placement, character development and more complex music, taking them to a higher level of performance.”

Markam says the actors themselves are evolving and adding nuance to their characters as rehearsals progress. They also work one-on-one and as a group with Margaret Halbig, THT’s music director, who plays live every night of the performances.

Some of the actors of “The Bee” were also in the July play, “Much Ado.” According to Roster, they would literally spend their entire day rehearsing, not wanting to go home at night.

All the actors are very enthusiastic about the play. “It’s ironic, good and funny,” says 11-year-old Alton Gray Schmitt, the youngest actor in the group.

“There is a character for every-

one. You can always relate,” adds 17-year-old Michael Kirk, who is the group’s oldest member.

And actress Jennifer McFarlane, who also starred in “Much Ado,” says: “This play is easier and completely different.”

This is Schmitt’s first time on stage, but most of the other actors have been with THT for some time, taking classes during the year and performing. Louis Kehoe has been taking theater classes for four years; he also goes to the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco, “but I mostly play at the Lafayette Town Hall Theatre. The mood in the group is very good,” he says.

“We all get along,” adds McFarlane. “Some of us have known each other for four, five years now. It’s also cool to get to know new people.”

After the rehearsal, the students go over the notes taken by Markam to make corrections. They all pay close attention,

adding their own suggestions on how to make the play even better.

One aspect of the play is that members of the audience can be called on stage. Before the show, the characters who play the school’s principal and the organizer of the Bee set up a table in the lobby and up to four members of the audience can sign up, if they are good spellers, and are called up during the show to sit on stage and participate in the spelling bee. “They can ask for a definition, or the language of origin, and if they get eliminated there is a song that is sung as they go back into the audience,” says Roster, “but in one of the performances I saw, a spectator who was an excellent speller staying on stage for about three-quarters of the show!”

There will be four performances, the evenings of Aug. 16, 17 and 18, and a matinee on Aug. 17. For more information and tickets, visit [www.thtc.org](http://www.thtc.org).

Town Hall Education Presents  
The 25th Annual Putnam County  
**SPELLING BEE**

Music and Lyrics by William Finn      Directed by Dennis Markam  
Book by Rachel Sheinkin

**com\*pe\*tition** (kämpə'tiʃən) noun  
1 - The activity or condition of competing  
• an event or contest in which people compete  
• [ in sing. ] the person or people with whom one is competing

**August 16-18**  
Town Hall Theatre.com - 925.283.1557

Warning: This show has content/language that may not be suitable for younger audience members.

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