



The High School View

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Valedictorian reaches out

By Katherine Donegan

Opportunity is sometimes ephemeral for 21 of the 31 top sixth graders in Morazán, Yoro in the Honduras. Regional high school alumni Eric Herman is trying to help raise money so that these students can progress beyond primary school through the Honduras Educational Development Assistance Corp (HEDAC).

After receiving his degree in psychology from UNC Chapel Hill in 2009, Eric joined the Peace Corps, and dedicated two years and four months to improving education in Morazán. After finishing the Peace Corps in September 2011, Eric began working for HEDAC in October as a translator because of his bilingual capabilities.

In Honduras, a free primary education is obligatory for every child between the ages of seven and fourteen. The reality, however, is that because of a lack of schools, the high cost of materials, and the poor quality of public education, a



PHOTO COURTESY OF ERIC HERMAN

Honduran students take lessons in English, Spanish, gym, and math in their school room.

good education lies largely with those who can afford to send their children for private institutions. Beyond age 14, education becomes even more scarce, as more than two-thirds of students who graduate primary school do not continue on. HEDAC aims to promote and make education accessible to as

many students as it can across 15 schools.

"HEDAC is an organization that helps support schools in this area. What we're doing is trying to raise money for these kids to go onto the next step in their education, which most of them can't afford," said Eric.

Currently, HEDAC is sponsoring 39 children who will be continuing into 8th and 9th grade. This year, 31 students who have grade point averages above 85% are eligible to be sponsored. "Even if, by some miracle, we succeed in sponsoring these 31 kids, there are always more. The 31 HEDAC is trying to support are those with the top grades, but there are many, many more who simply won't have the opportunity to get past a sixth grade education," said Eric.

Eric, along with other volunteers, have been tutoring this year's students with their educations to reinforce their learning. "The entire staff is made up of volunteers. No one is being forced to do this, not even the students. It's a collaborative effort," said Eric. He taught PE, Spanish, and Math to the students, while also helping to train teachers to better meet the needs of students. "A lot of the teachers are lacking in skills and instruction. They're being asked to teach English when they don't speak English. When we started, many of them didn't know how to turn on a computer," said Eric.

The cost for a student to attend

high school in the Honduras is \$400 per year (\$33 per month) and is the difference between a sixth grade education and a high school diploma. In addition to the 39 students already sponsored, HEDAC only has the funding for an additional 10 or fewer students of the 31. "Thirty-one students are eligible for sponsoring, but they know how scarce the funds are. They know there are limited slots given the budget, but these are wonderful kids. They're bright and high-achieving, and they desperately want to go to high school," said Eric.

Donations of any size are encouraged, and partial sponsorships can be arranged under multiple donors. To donate, email Eric at eric.herman.pchn@gmail.com. HEDAC needs to buy supplies and resources in time for February 13, when the school year starts, but if they receive funding after that students can still enroll late. The funding will help the children of Morazán end the cycle of poverty and provide role models and leaders who will give back to their community in the future.

Pencils aimed at midterms

By Lily Bick

For four grueling days, students at the regional high school faced their fears armed with number 2 pencils, Scantron sheets, and hours of studying packed into their heads. It was the recently concluded midterms week.

Each day of midterm testing is comprised of two periods. Midterms began with A and B period tests on Thursday and ended with G and H periods on Tuesday.

Students' emotions regarding the tests ranged from excited to overwhelmed. Junior Katelyn Fritz had a positive outlook. "It's a good tool to tie together the material that we've learned so far," she said.

Science teacher John Nelson also appreciates the tests and their ability to prepare students for the future. Captain Nelson said, "Midterms are like the hurdles that we have to jump over to get through this 440 yard dash that we call high school."

For some students, the purpose of midterms is to relay all the information gathered during the first semester. English teacher Bill McCarthy takes a slightly different approach. He said, "I don't want the exams to be a regurgitation of what students have learned. The best exams would crystallize a se-

mester's learning."

Senior Cal Fiore said, "I like the tests. They are an apt assessment of a student's real knowledge." For most students, the exams count as one tenth of their final grade for the class. For seniors with a grade of 90 or above or AP students who are exempt from the end-of-year exams, midterms are counted one ninth. Cal Fiore said, "It's unfair that midterms more likely to lower one's overall grade than they are to raise them."

This year was freshman Zana van Rooyen's first experience with midterm week. She said, "The tests can be extremely stressful on the mind and body. They definitely took a toll on me. But they aren't as bad as you expect them to be. They're just like treasure hunts for information in your mind."

Teachers, too, sometimes find themselves under pressure during midterms. Bill McCarthy thinks that students and teachers should have a day off after midterms to take missed tests, finish grading, and prepare for the new semester. "I want the rhythm of the school year to be reasonable," said Mr. McCarthy. "We don't want to come into the new semester flat-footed and worn out. We want to come in with a sprightly step."

Rumors fly in "Gossip" production

By EmmaJean Holley

Can a small town gossip turn global? What is the power of speculation? Does the circulation of one rumor reap unintended consequences? "Gossip," an original play written by Kate Murray and regional high alumni Alison Carr, will explore these topics for their upcoming Festival performance piece.

The play, a comedy, is narrated by the character of Kim Karmel -- also known as the Gossip Guru in her local newspaper column in the fictional town of Rumor Mills, Tennessee. She designs a social experiment in the form of a book to determine the forces of interactions that exist within the social constructs of her town. She wants to see whether small-town gossip can turn global.

"And it does," said director Kate Murray. "The play explores gossip in its many forms, through many different characters."

Indeed, the play is rife with indirect refer-

ences to a plethora of well-known celebrities -- Kim Kardashian and Ellen DeGeneres will find manifestations of their personas in the play, to name a few. There is also a cast of original characters: a new teacher who is the center of rumor and hearsay, a stereotypically flamboyant hairdresser, and an up-and-coming rapper whose success is aided by a host of elderly rocking chair dwellers.

"The play portrays classic small-town bias using stereotypical gossiping scenarios," said senior Jake Sudarsky. "So it definitely highlights an important social issue."

"It's a complex plot," said junior Taylor McNeely. "There's a few different storylines going on at the same time. But it's a funny play. I'm excited to present it."

"A lot of this is embarking on new territory for us," said Kate.

Besides having the largest cast and crew in the department's history for a Festival performance -- 33 people -- this is also the first year that the play will be performed at the school. Issues of language and sexuality may render it unsuitable for all audiences. "It's not wildly inappropriate, but it deals with some mature themes," said Kate.

Public performances will be on Thursday, Feb. 16 at 7 PM; Friday, Feb. 17 at 7 PM, and Saturday, Feb. 18 at 4 PM and 7 PM. Tickets are \$10 and \$7 for students and seniors.



PHOTO BY DYLAN BROCKMEYER

Junior Sarahrae Gruner (left) and senior Chris Pitt rehearse their characters Truly and Francis after-school on Monday. The drama department has been preparing for the debut of "Gossip" since late November.