

'GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND': ACADEMIC DECATHLON OFFERS ANOTHER KIND OF COMPETITION

(By Lou Fancher)

MORAGA.—It was a repeat of last year's finish, as the top three teams at Contra Costa County's 2013 High School Academic Decathlon on Feb. 4 mirrored the winners of 2012's competition.

The "Red Team" from Campolindo High School in Moraga took first place and will advance to the state competition March 14 to 17 in Sacramento.

This year, as last, Campolindo's "Blue Team" placed second, and Alcalanes High School of Lafayette placed third for the second straight year. Other teams competing in the county decathlon were Antioch High, California (San Ramon), Freedom (Brentwood), Las Lomas (Walnut Creek), Miramonte (Orinda), Pittsburg and Dublin.

California's Academic Decathlon pits nine-member teams drawn from about 500 schools statewide in a frenzy of tests, essays, speeches and interviews. Scrimmaging over art, economics, music, language and literature, mathematics, science and social science might sound like torture to many high schoolers, but not to students like Campolindo's Zach Scherer, this year's Top Overall Academic Decathlon Individual Award winner.

"I like decathlon (club) because it's not a regular class, with a teacher lecturing for 50 minutes," the 16-year-old said. "It's students, all interested in learning."

Paul Verbanszky, an advanced-placement psychology and government economics teacher at Campolindo since 2004, leads the school's decathlon club.

"I used to be able to barely field a team. Because we're winning, more students have signed up. Now I have 40 students at the start of a year," he said.

The club's increasing popularity has little to do with students aiming to shine on college applications, Verbanszky said. Rather, the biggest motivators are the chance to excel at something other than sports and "going above and beyond" academically.

Team co-captain Evelyn Steefel, 17, said it's just fun.

"The meetings are entertaining," she said, "and there's nothing like learning new, interesting facts."

Campolindo's two teams (schools with more than nine students participating can form multiple teams) met three times a week, beginning in September.

This year's theme was Russia. With a mix of newbies and veteran decathlon members, the students divvied up the study guides democratically.

"We just put it up for whatever each person wanted to do and made sure each section got done," Steefel said.

A dizzying array of approaches, from PowerPoint presentations to "Jeopardy"-style games to pop quizzes, staved off drudgery. Winning the decathlon is more than facts; it's analysis and skillful test-taking, Scherer and Steefel said.

Scherer remembers the interview section of the competition beginning with simple questions about his interests.

"I discussed the clubs I'm in, model United Nations and math club, and how they have shaped who I am now," he said. "Then they asked, 'How has being in U.N. shaped your interest in diplomacy?'"

Steefel used the decathlon's speech portion to talk about hypocrisy in America.

"It's a country that promotes freedom and equality, but it goes against those principles in its actions. The major thing I talked about was slavery, but also affirmative action and discrimination against women. I

talked about the current generation needing to stop hating, because we're not moving together as a country."

The Super Quiz—during which teams work together, and a roaring crowd of supportive family and friends is allowed—tested their knowledge of Sputnik 2. Another question challenged them to compare and contrast two Russian composers.

"First, you have to know about the specific facts," Scherer said. "Then, you have to know about the controversies involved, the worldwide movements, the complexities."

Verbanszky said it's not the two Campolindo teams' high scores or crafty mental gymnastics he's most proud of.

"They care about the program, but also each other," he said. "Freshmen to senior—they help each other with homework and talk about their problems. They've become friends."

RECOGNIZING JEFFERSON COLLEGE AS IT CELEBRATES ITS FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

HON. BLAINE LUETKEMEYER

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 9, 2013

Mr. LUETKEMEYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Jefferson College located in Jefferson County in Missouri, as the community celebrates its fiftieth anniversary this year.

The Community College District of Jefferson County was approved by voters on April 2, 1963. Senator Earl Blackwell of Hillsboro sponsored Senate Bill Number Seven, which made possible the formation and financing of public junior colleges in Missouri. Jefferson became the second junior college district in Missouri to be approved.

Seventeen months later the first courses are offered at Hillsboro High School with 14 faculty members and 303 students. Jefferson College moved into its first permanent building on the Hillsboro campus in September of 1965, and held its first commencement in June of 1966, where 31 graduates received associate degrees.

In 1967, Jefferson College became the first community college in Missouri to be designated as an area vocational school. Today, in addition to the Hillsboro campus, the college has expanded to sites in Arnold, Cedar Hill and Imperial, which offers programs in Certified Nurse Assistant, EMT-Paramedic and a Law Enforcement Academy, as well as a fifth campus which offers online instruction.

As a testament to their vision to make higher education more accessible to their community, Jefferson College has successfully now grown to over 5,500 full and part-time college credit students and 4,300 plus students in continuing education classes.

In closing, I ask all my colleagues to join me in wishing the community of Jefferson College congratulations on their fiftieth anniversary.

IN RECOGNITION OF CLARK E. GUINAN

HON. JACKIE SPEIER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 9, 2013

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Clark E. Guinan, better known as Gus, who is

retiring after a remarkable legal and public service career that spanned over three decades. Gus was the City Attorney of the City of Burlingame for the last four years. His devotion to justice and the Bay Area are reflected in his work and passion for life.

Gus, a native San Franciscan and third generation Californian, was raised in Los Altos. He enrolled in the seminary in Menlo Park at the young age of 13 and studied there through high school and college until he was 24 years old. He received his B.A. in Philosophy from St. Patrick's College.

After eleven years in the seminary, Gus realized that he had a different calling. He wanted to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather who was his hero and a prominent attorney in the California Attorney General's office. Gus started law school and earned his J.D. from the University of Santa Clara.

Upon earning his degree, Gus became a deputy public defender in San Joaquin County from 1974–1984. Then he accepted the position of Senior Assistant City Attorney in Palo Alto where he served for five years.

In 1989, he faced a difficult decision. He and his wife Signe Harnett had adopted infant twin girls. They still lived in Stockton and the daily commute to Palo Alto would prevent Gus from seeing his two babies grow up. He left public service and became a litigation attorney with the law offices of Rishwain, Kakim and Ellis in Stockton from 1989–1991. Gus' love for San Francisco drew the family back to the Bay Area and in 1991 they moved to Berkeley and he joined the law office of Barry Balamuth in Orinda.

In 1993, Gus returned to public service and accepted the position of Assistant City Attorney for the City of San Rafael where he stayed until 2008 when he was appointed to his most recent position of City Attorney of Burlingame.

Gus is a member of the Public Law Section of the California State Bar Association, the Bay Area City Attorneys Association, the Marin Public Agency Attorneys and an alternate board member of the California Joint Powers Risk Management Authority. In the past, he served as a delegate at the State Bar Convention in Sacramento, as a section editor of the Municipal Law Handbook of the League of California Cities and as a member of the board of governors of the San Joaquin County Bar Association. Gus has also lectured at the Delta Community College in Stockton and in the "Bridging the Gap" program. Last but not least, he has been a proud member of the San Rafael Elks Club since 2006.

In his well deserved retirement, Gus is looking forward to spending more time with his wife of 25 years, their now 24-year-old twin daughters Kate and Lindsey and their stepson Chris. He will finally have more time to lose himself in his passion for California history, hiking, travel, photography, reading and swimming.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the House of Representative to rise with me to honor Clark E. Guinan, a man with a brilliant legal mind and a big heart who has protected the rights and safety of the residents of Burlingame and other Bay Area communities.