New Year, New League

This is the first school year for the new north bay sports league. The goal of the changes was to allow smaller schools to be more competitive in league sports, playing teams of similar size and records, with hopes of encouraging more students to participate as they find success because, face it, it’s more fun to win than to lose.

Most fans of El Mo Athletics would never know these changes had been made because, as Athletic Director Mike Roan stated, “Ninety-nine percent of the people attending these games don’t know or care that it is not a ‘league’ game.”

For those who do pay attention to such things, there was fear that this change would detract from historical rivalries, most notably, Analy, for what is football season without an Apple Game? But with many sports still playing Analy in pre-league, it is evident that the long-standing rivalry is not going anywhere. Girls volleyball won their Apple game for the first time since 2013. Soccer also was victorious, and the 54th annual Golden Apple varsity football game ended in a knuckle-biting loss by only 7 points.

Some have questioned if playing these games defeats the whole purpose of the reconfiguration, but most students are happy with the opportunity they’ve had to play against the athletes in blue.

El Mo Knows

It is abundantly clear within the school and athletic community at El Molino that the phrase “El Mo, You Know” is more than just a catchy cheer. The El Molino student body knows who they are. They have a clear identity and are proud of their school, regardless of the number of wins and losses. The students know that a championship football team does not make an outstanding school.

Athletics are a vital part of any school, but El Mo students are not building their self-worth and pride in their school based solely on the sports teams’ records. The mob of kids that came out of their seats at the end of this year’s Apple football game was excited to see if their team might pull off an unexpected victory, but when they did not, the students were not downcast. They were and will remain proud to be a Lion.

Goaaalll For Lions’ Soccer

Boys soccer under the skillful coaching of Dave Rosales had the most successful team in a decade, led by a strong core of seniors. And congratulations to the girls team that was in the playoff hunt until the very end.

Lions Leaving It All On The Mat

The Lions’ wrestling team showed great improvement over the year. Sophomore Erik Dimond had a 4th place North Bay League finish and advanced to the North Coast Section tournament for the 2nd year in a row.

Our girls will have a pennant on the wall for their NBL Redwood Division title, with Ardenne Chevrolet finishing in the top 12 of the NCS and Hannah Ricoli bringing home 3rd place.

League champ Hannah Ricoli headed to Bakersfield for the state wrestling tournament.

Mountain Bike Madness

El Molino’s mountain bikers are the best in Sonoma County, Division 2. Last year the team took second in the state meet for their division, JV girls rider Neva Titus was #1 best for 2018 in the NorCal league, and the Lions’ all-around strength propelled them to fourth in the league for 2018, beating out all other Sonoma County teams.

The 2019 season started with even more success. The team came in 1st place out of 28 teams in the opener. Titus, the first ever El Mo female varsity rider, led the team in points. Blake Macheras earned 1st place in the sophomore race. Grant Feige came in 4th in the JV race, and Taj Krieger, after suffering a crash at the beginning of the varsity race, hopped back on and won 12th place. Fresh Caleb Bush won 8th in his first race ever, and Jack Grassl and Ian Parsons also had successful races.

Coached by Mike Warren and Kate Aldridge, all the riders are working hard and making great strides in this competitive sport.

Shout Out!

Sam Wilson-Mietz was in the Press Democrat as a triple threat athlete, bringing attention to the fact that many El Mo athletes participate in multiple sports in the school’s Integrated Athletics Program.

Track and Baseball Victories

The El Molino track team got off to a great start with an early season victory over Analy and several early season wins. The baseball team also appears to be on its way to another successful year with several early season wins.
Progress On The PAC

“We perform in the cafetorium. Is that even a word? I repeat. We perform in the cafetorium.” stated an eloquent El Molino student at the 2011 school board meeting when decisions were made about how to spend Measure I bond money. Finally, construction is well on its way for the state-of-the-art Performing Arts Center on the El Molino campus to provide a long overdue proper space for the talented musicians, dancers, and actors to perform, eliminating the poor acoustics and small stage of the infamous “cafetorium.”

Measure I provided funds for Phase 1, the theater, stage and 298 comfy seats, scheduled to open fall of 2019. Phase 2 is being funded by Measure A passed in June of 2018. This includes the “front of house” lobby, ticket booth and restrooms and the “back of house” greenroom and boys and girls dressing rooms.

Jennie Bruneman, Director of Operations for the school district, envisions this as more than a performing arts center, but also an educational tool with public speaking and lecturing opportunities for the students and community. She is excited to see how this building not only enhances the beauty of the campus, but also enriches the lives of the students, families and greater Sonoma County. Faculty share these sentiments. Jolene Johnson, the director of the Dance Company, stated, “Our current cafetorium is very small, maybe 20 by 20 feet, where a real proscenium is 40 feet by 40 feet. It will give students a real-life experience with room to actually move.” She believes that this will draw people to the school for the arts programs as well as the great academics. Megan Gilmore, the new drama teacher, said, “The PAC will give students in Theater Arts a space to call their own and will help bring life to a program that harbors student talent that might otherwise often be overlooked.”

LIONS, TAKE A SEAT FUNDRAISER

Honor someone special at the PAC! The El Mo Ed Fund is selling name plaques to be attached to the theater seat armrests. For just $150, a seat plaque will be inscribed with your chosen name(s).

Go to elmoedfund.com/help to purchase your unique inscription.

New Faces Bringing Fresh Talent to El Molino Performing Arts

At El Molino, students not only get instruction in the fundamentals of instrumental, vocal, dance, and dramatic arts, they also participate in stagecraft, lighting, production, and collaboration, skills that they will put to use in all academic areas and future vocational goals.

Meet Megan Gilmore: This hardworking Sonoma State University graduate is currently getting her Masters at the University of San Francisco while also teaching English and drama classes at El Molino. Her directing debut with the winter play, Almost, Maine, was a great success. Twenty students produced and performed this poignant, funny play with impressive professionalism. Then these talented kids brought you the classic dark comedy Arsenic and Old Lace.

Meet Merissa Silveira: This recent graduate of the University of San Francisco is currently working at El Molino for five years. When budget cuts were threatening several popular programs last year, the community raised over $75,000 to save sections, including dance classes. Thank goodness, for these students are remarkable. They performed to sell-out crowds at their fall and winter shows, as well as at several ball games and Back to School Night.

Dance, Dance, Dance

Jolene Johnson has been teaching dance at El Molino for five years. When budget cuts were threatening several popular programs last year, the community raised over $75,000 to save sections, including dance classes. Thank goodness, for these students are remarkable. They performed to sell-out crowds at their fall and winter shows, as well as at several ball games and Back to School Night.
Culinary Fun: Students and Chef Chris Correa ham it up at the annual Russian River Rotary crab feed, helping raise over $30,000 for local community Rotary projects and scholarships.

Lady Lions Roar
Maggie McKelvey Whisler, Kassidy Sani, Lydia Zelk, and Adyson Posner were selected to apply for a summer program at Stanford, and McKelvey and Posner were accepted. This week-long program hosted by the SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory is to encourage college bound girls with a passion for discovery and innovation to become a part of the STEM community.

Catherine Martin is one of 15 winners nationwide of the Yale University’s Bassett Award for Community Engagement, she was a delegate to the U.N. Youth Assembly in New York, and she serves on the county’s Junior Commission on the Status of Women.

Let’s Hear It For The Boys
Congratulations to the 2019 Boys State winners. Every year American Legion Post 21 in Santa Rosa interviews El Mo juniors selected by teachers to attend the summer leadership conference held at CSU Sacramento. Pictured l. to r.: Jackson Conger 2019 backup, Gabriel Arevalo, Marius Smith 2018 winner, Carlton Smirni, Owen Searles 2019 winner, Principal Matthew Dunkle.

Small But Mighty Academics
El Mo has 10 Advanced Placement courses in English, Math, Social Science, and Science, plus honors and accelerated courses. Students can study media, photography, woodshop, culinary, hospitality, stagecraft, drama, music, art, dance, and more. There are ag-based science classes and courses in Spanish and French. Thanks to our teachers, administrators, and community, students have the benefits of bigger schools in a small, personalized environment.

Moving Faster Than Ever
High-speed 10-gigabyte Internet came to El Molino in December thanks to local housing company Sonic.net and the federal E-Rate program.

All About Ag
There’s much to be celebrated in our Ag Department this year. In addition to a fantastic showing in multiple categories at this summer’s fair, students are getting hands-on experience in the vast agricultural businesses that are the cornerstone of our community.

One major project is a remodeling of the current garden area to accommodate an 18-foot by 36-foot greenhouse, 16 galvanized trough planting beds and a concrete pad for outdoor labs and FFA activities. This was made possible by generous funding from the North Coast Agriculture Partners and the Russian River Valley Winegrowers Foundation.

“The hope is by having a greenhouse, there will be more opportunity for students to complete their Supervised Agriculture Experience projects and have more hands-on experiences, learn about propagating and grafting, even assign groups of students to a trough bed and let them plant what they want so they get to go through the whole planting-to-harvest experience,” said agriculture teacher Jen Murphy. The department also has plans to start selling various plants, flowers, and veggies to the community as well as provide produce for the culinary program. They hope to have chickens and fresh eggs on campus.

“The ag department at El Molino is about much more than Cows, Plows, and Sows," said Emely Guerra at Back to School Night.

Making The STEM Grade
Students in Project Make are loving the new Chromebooks and charging stations funded by grants from the CTE Foundation of Sonoma County. These machines are key to maintaining our instruction in Computer Aided Drafting and so much more.

Woodshop Masterpieces
John Paneno, Ella Kinderman, and Strider Risley show off their works of wooden art. Mr. Phillip’s woodshop students are making beautiful pieces that could be sold in any boutique.

El Mo Students, Staff Unite
This winter El Molino featured two special events to encourage unity and connection amongst the students.

The annual Unity Week brought presenters on campus that represented various cultures, religions, and ethnic groups that the students might not be familiar with or that are under-represented in our student population. This year Ethnic Studies teacher Jerod Brown involved his students in the organization of this special event, letting them reach out and coordinate a weeklong line-up of exciting and interesting speakers, with 21 presentations and over 120 students in attendance for each.

Speaker included The Story Project on the Holocaust, Susan Drake who was Cesar Chavez’s personal secretary during some of the United Farmworkers strikes, Dr. Mariana Martinez to speak about Latinx Leaders in education, and many others.

“The goal is to create unity and inclusivity on our campus through empathy and exposure to new backgrounds and experiences,” said Brown.

In a second event over 80 students gathered in the library for Challenge Day. This powerful program brings a wide variety of students together to address difficult topics that affect everyday life and allows them to see how they are not alone in the challenges they face. Through group activities, games, and storytelling, they are empowered to “Be the Change” and go forward with greater empathy, compassion, and vision to a brighter future.

Also, several staff and teachers have participated in workshops at the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, attending guided tours that help promote social awareness of surroundings and give skills on how to support themselves and their students, sponsored by the Sonoma County Office of Education.

Challenge Day at El Molino.
I am continually amazed and proud of the accomplishments of our students and teachers. Starting this past summer, students visited Vietnam and Cambodia while others toured colleges across the country. Students won awards at the Sonoma County Fair, prepared for Advanced Placement courses, and participated in Sonoma State University’s STEM Institute Program. There have been major achievements in all areas of athletics, academics, the arts, and agriculture.

As the year has progressed, we’ve faced smoke and floods that have brought out the best in our close-knit community. And as policy changes and financial challenges have raised questions about the future of our school, the teachers and families of El Molino have banded together to bring awareness about the unique attributes and opportunities we have to offer.

I am humbled by the outpouring of support and excited to see how we will continue to grow and show that Together, We Are El Molino. — Principal Matt Dunkle

**Where Are They Now?**

Once a Lion, always a Lion is a popular slogan that has come true for many El Molino teachers and coaches. “Students here are served in a much different manner than at other schools. There’s a unique quality here that benefits them,” said Spanish teacher and football coach Jerod Brown, class of 2009.

It seems this intimate nature of the campus and the way everybody watches out for one another makes El Molino a very special place that’s hard to leave. Other staff alumni include culinary teacher Chris Correa, math teacher Leslie Grassl, and health tech Melyssa Farmer.

“There’s a special quality here. It’s a tight-knit community,” said Farmer, class of 1998. Returning alumni also extend their Lion pride to the next generation. At least 10 staff members who are alumni also have a relative currently attending the school.

“The reason I chose to bring my children here is because of the great teachers we have here, along with the fact that it is a small school. I love that they will get a great education while having a wonderful high school experience, and not have to sacrifice one for the other!” said Grassl, class of 1990, whose two sons are currently students at El Molino.

Athletic director Mike Roan said he sees that alumni coaches truly coach for the good of the school and have the best interests of El Mo athletes at heart. “They’re Lions through and through. That really is true,” Roan said. “I am proud to say that I love El Molino,” said girls volleyball coach Becky Sani, class of 1991. “I bleed red and black.”

**Where Are They Going?**

Senior Class President Natalie Milan speaks at a board meeting about her decision to come to El Molino. She is thankful for the education and friendships she’s gained in our tight-knit community. She will be attending Stanford in the fall.

So far, the Class of 2019 has been accepted at CSU Monterey Bay, Humboldt State, Stanford, Berkeley, CSU Channel Island, Univ. of Nevada, Northern Arizona, Sac State, Sonoma State, UC Davis, UC San Diego, UC Santa Barbara, UOP, Dominican Univ., Chico State, Univ. of Idaho, and the Air Force Engineering. Way to go, future El Mo alumni.