

A win for world language

Spanish teacher and colleagues win grant

By Parker Jones

Every year, Spanish teacher Melissa Trask invites her Spanish 3 classes to celebrate the Day of the Dead through making masks, preparing traditional food, and learning about Mexican culture. While her Day of the Dead lessons have inspired students for years, they recently paid off in an even larger way.

In February of last year, Trask submitted an application for a grant to the NEA (National Education Association) Foundation, working closely with librarian Gail Bonner and now-retired librarian Chris Mann. The application took six months to complete, with many hours of hard work, but it paid off with a \$5,000 grant, which has gone towards new Chromebooks for the classroom.

The application was based on Trask's Day of the Dead lesson plan and the importance of teaching students to be global citizens who can appreciate other cultures. In Mexico, death is understood in a very different way than it is in America, and it's one of the best examples of a diverging cultural value.

"For the Mexican, the only death is being forgotten," Trask said. "They believe that you should celebrate a person's life. Once a year, on Day of the Dead, you keep their spirit alive by talking about them, by building the ofrenda, the altar, and putting out the pictures they loved in life, the food they loved in life, the objects they loved in life... It keeps their spirit alive."

Beyond educating students about the Day of the Dead, Trask's overall goal is to teach students about the importance

of understanding others' views and perspectives. This was one of the biggest "selling points" in her application.

"That's what my grant submission was about, being a global citizen and opening your eyes to the fact that people have different perspectives on almost every aspect of life: relationships, death, marriage, love," Trask said. "The way a culture celebrates or doesn't celebrate those things defines the culture."

In addition to writing about global citizenship and the value of Trask's lessons, Trask and Bonner also needed to sort out the budgetary aspects of getting a grant, which were far more complicated than one might expect.

This responsibility was mainly taken on by Bonner and Mann, who sorted out most of the financial specifics, which proved to be a complex and detail-specific task.

"Ms. Mann and I did the background stuff, looking into how much computers cost and how many we could buy," Bonner said. "We couldn't say, 'I need 4,938 dollars and 27 cents.' We had to take the whole \$5,000, and tell them how we were going to spend that \$5,000 to the penny. So, we said that we would buy X number of computers, and with the leftover money, we would buy headphones with microphones and that kind of thing."

Although Trask won the grant and has been able to buy 20 Chromebooks so far, she has received only \$4,000 of the \$5,000 she won. This is because she and Bonner must provide the NEA Foundation with proof that they've spent the funding how

they said they would, with photographic evidence and receipts from the purchase of the Chromebooks.

At that point, they'll be able to purchase at least another five Chromebooks, but because Trask has classes of up to 30 students, she will need to find a way to purchase five more, perhaps through applying for another grant.

In the meantime, Trask, Bonner, and Mann have been able to celebrate the hard work which led to their success. They

see it as a win for not only themselves and Trask's students, but as a win for the world language department as a whole.

"When you look back at all of the previous grant winners, there's language arts, math, science, social studies, all of the core classes," Bonner said. "You almost never see either an art or a world language win. So, the NEA Foundation was probably excited to see a grant go to a world language, helping students become global citizens."



Sophomore Zoey Born, a student in Trask's Honors Spanish 3 class, decorates a mask on Day of the Dead. Students were asked to bring in authentic Mexican foods to celebrate the holiday, and they decorated masks that incorporated the elements of earth, wind, and fire. Photo courtesy of Jayce Brady



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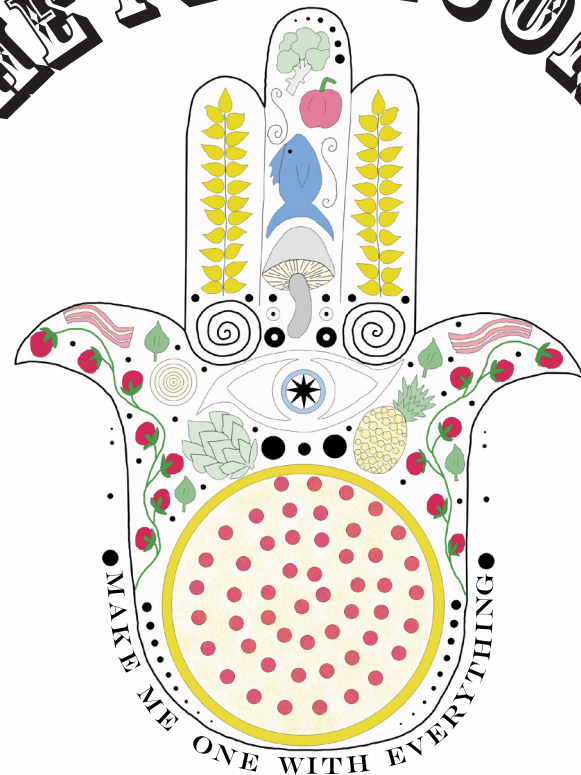
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Trip to Europe

Excitement builds as students prepare for Europe trip

By Luca Gorla

This summer, 15 students will be traveling roughly 4095 miles to Europe, to visit Spain, France, and Britain for 15 days. Thanks to EF tours, students now have the opportunity to travel beyond America's borders and see the world for themselves.

The trip will have a maximum number of 15 attendees, and six students have already signed up, eager to take off. The meeting to go over essential details took place on September 20th. However, for those who still wish to go on the trip, talk to French teacher Susan Bergkamp or Spanish teacher Melissa Trask for further details.

The group will be flying overnight to London, and then on to Chartres, Loire Valley, Bordeaux, Biarritz, San Sebastian, Pamplona, Barcelona, and possibly Madrid if the trip is extended. All of their transportation will be via plane or vehicle, over the course of 12-15 days.

Bergkamp will be the chaperone on the trip; however, if the group expands to 10 students or more, Trask will be joining as well. While Bergkamp and her students are ecstatic about the trip, Bergkamp has some worries about the trip regarding the safety and responsibility of her students.

"I'm worried about their safety and about their preparedness, and whether

they will pack the right things: passports, clothing, etc.," Bergkamp said.

This will be Bergkamp's first trip abroad with high schoolers; in addition to the previous concerns, she is worried about students sneaking out and participating in dangerous activities. Behavior means a lot to Bergkamp, especially when they are out in public on a trip.

"It sounds silly, but I feel as if we're representing the United States when we're out there in Europe," she said.

Students will be learning about the cultures of the three different countries and fully immersing themselves in them. Students were also promised

periods of their time being completely independent where they can explore the city individually or alongside friends. This further interests individualistic students, and it will allow them to experience the culture on a more personal level.

Sponsors have plastered the walls with posters and the trip has been growing in popularity and interest. Students will not only be able to see the world from a different perspective, but the trip has the potential to serve as a maturing point in their lives, giving them responsibility and allowing them to learn more about themselves as well as other cultures.

Feeling included

Being alone is no fun

By Ava Dalton and Hunter Brewer

For most, feeling excluded is not an unfamiliar sensation. This feeling can often be found in freshmen, when the school is still unfamiliar and they don't recognize the faces they see in the hallway.

There are a wide variety of solutions both in and outside of the school that aim to help students who have been stricken with feelings of exclusion, from clubs to counselors to sports teams.

The different clubs in the school include the following: Spanish Club, DECA, Drama club, Board Game club, GSA, Hiking Club, HOSA-Future Health Professionals, Imagination Destination, World Culture Club, Interact Club, Keep Conifer Green Club, Key Club, LINK Crew, TCG Club, Mountain Biking Club,

Military History Club, Journalism Club, Robotics Club, and Rock Climbing Club.

"Spanish club has been the highlight of my year; I love the food, and my Spanish language and knowledge has improved so much," sophomore Maya Skurski said.

Joining a club not only helps one make new friends, but it looks amazing on resumes and college applications. To find out how to take part in one of these clubs, 1) Go to the Conifer High School Website, 2) Click on Athletics and Activities, and 3) Click on Clubs and Activities.

Conifer also offers various sports teams that give students the opportunity to exercise and join an inclusive group. If a student is interested in being a part of a sports team, there are many spots available in spring sports. The

spring sports include Girls Tennis, Girls Lacrosse, Track and Field, Boys Baseball, and Girls Soccer. This is a great way to make friends, and being part of a team is a cool feeling.

"We play for each other, not for ourselves, and it's a great group of girls; they're like my second family," sophomore Skyelar Armstrong, a rugby player, said.

For students who don't play sports, the peer counselors offer another solution to some problems that sports or even friends can't quite help with.

There is always a peer or school counselor who's available to talk through all hours of the school day.

"If anyone needs to just come in for stress or any other related problems, then

someone is always here to help. Peer Counseling is an excellent tool, and it should be used more often," senior Alana Giles said.

The peer counselors organize various events such as Diversity Day (a day with no classes that allows students to explore people's different ideas and beliefs). They also give out birthday gift bags filled with candy throughout the year.

"I could have joined a club to organize dances, but this is an opportunity to save lives," senior Will Toppin, a peer counselor, said.

Although high school throws various stresses at students and can often induce feelings of exclusion, there are many programs offered by the school that promote inclusivity.

Intermediate Algebra cont.

Intermediate Algebra is an incredibly exclusive class with only 25 students who were hand-picked by Weiss and the counselors, although Weiss hopes that will change as they continue the program

"I think since this is the first year we've

selected students to be in this class based on a whole laundry list of criteria. I would really like student self-select to be a part of this class, and open it up more, but right now we're limited." Weiss said.



With its door open, the math hut sits on the outskirts of the school parking lot. Students in the class make the trek to the outside building every day they have the class, an experience that most high schoolers don't have. Photo by Daniel Main

XBOX in the air cont.

to rush down there and get it first, and I'm probably going to be one of those people if there are good games," junior Evan Stewart said.

Beyond some of the possible challenges that could emerge as a result of the new gaming system, many students have reacted with excitement, looking forward to checking out the new console during their free time.

"You never really would think that there would be a video game console inside a school but for us to even use that console while we're at lunch - that's epic," junior Kathryn Ryan said.

It's unclear how the addition of the XBOX will play out, but it was put in place with the intent of keeping students mentally active and happy while they're at school.

"I'm always trying to think of things that we can bring to the school that will entertain the students and keep them active so that they avoid making bad choices," Paxton said.

Students will need to bring in their own controllers, and they can bring in their own games as well, as long as they are pre-approved by principal Paxton.



Freshman Derek Sands plays a game on the XBOX console during a lunch. Students will often bring in their own games and controllers so that they can enjoy the console during their free time at school. Photo by Parker Jones