

Spring 2014

Long Beach 908 Magazine



- Professional Golfer John Merrick
- High School Art
- Great Small Businesses

local business, local teams, local people

LB908 LONG BEACH

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Editor and Publisher John Grossi
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 Jonathan Murrietta
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magazine

lb908.com

If you like golf, art, coffee, princesses, or rock n roll, then this is the issue for you. We want to especially thank John Merrick for taking the time to interview with us, as well as Wilson, Millikan, Lakewood, St. Anthony, and St. John Bosco for so willingly letting us display their students' art. As always, we encourage the residents to support the small businesses and independent contractors who support our magazine. If you need something done in East Long Beach, chances are there is a hard working, honest business man or woman with an ad in our magazine who can help make your life easier. I hope you find this issue as amusing as I do!

John Grossi
 Editor/ Publisher

Cover Art:

Center: **John Merrick** by Amanda Vidal (page 4)
 Top Left: **Sunflower** by Ryan Sweeney (page 30)
 Top Right: **Bloom** by Karah West (page 45)
 Bottom: **Blue Ocean** by Kseniya Meshcheryakova (page 41)

Do you and your neighbors and friends have a summer tradition like a block party, movie night, road trip, or something else? Give us a call or email!
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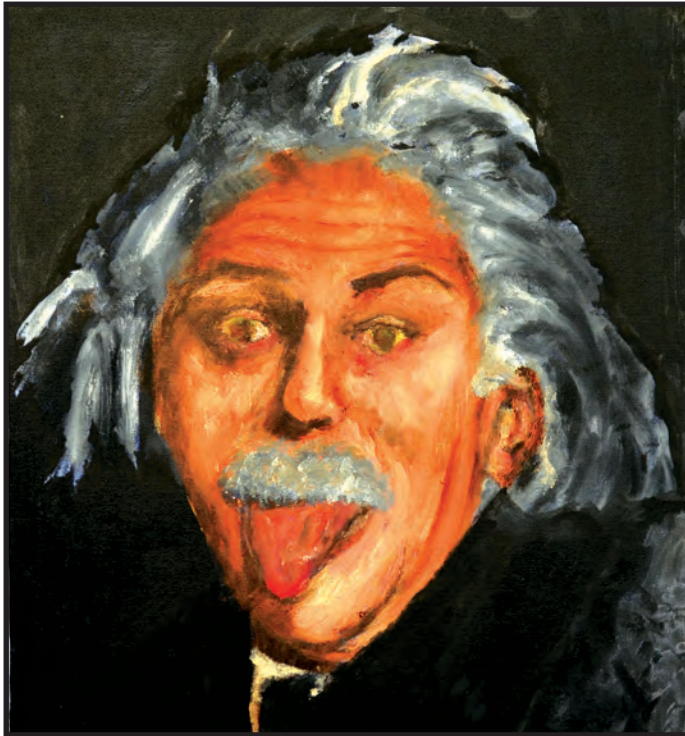


Johnny Cash

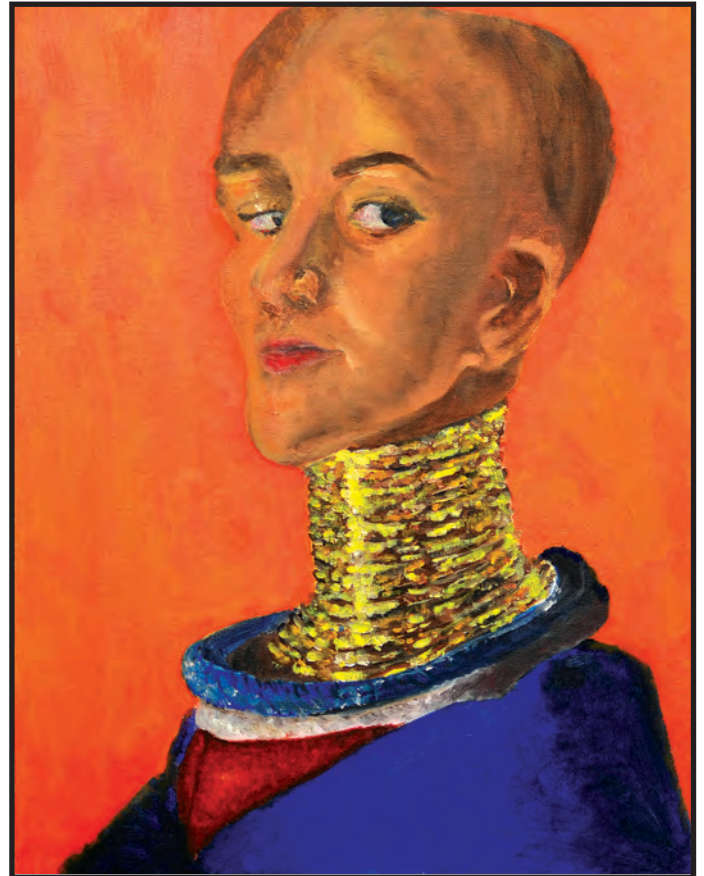
Graham Law started pursuing art because it was popular among the skateboarding scene in Long Beach. Graham skates 3-4 days a week at El Dorado and Cherry Parks. The St. John Bosco Senior also loves to play guitar. Johnny Cash is one of his favorite singers so when his art teacher gave him the assignment to draw a portrait of someone they admired, Cash was a no-brainer for him. Graham went to St. Joseph Catholic School K-8 and plans to attend either CSULB or San Francisco State next year to study cinematography.



Graham Law



The Genius in Me



I'm Africa



Amanda Vidal

Amanda Vidal hails from Brazil, which remains the source of inspiration for her paintings. When she was only 4, she was awed at the paintings, large murals, and landscapes created by her mother's then boyfriend, who was a professional artist. From that early age she loved to have a paintbrush in her hand releasing her goofy self onto paper. Amanda, now a senior at Wilson High, plans to attend Long Beach City College next year to study illustrations. She works over 30 hours a week at a local juice bar and would like to add another job next year. She loves working and contributing to society. After spending the first decade of her life in Brazil, Amanda thinks she might want to spend her last decade there too—but that's not for a long time. She says when she's 90 she might move back but for now is content to visit her dad once a year and use the trips as inspiration for her art!



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Dana Myers

Dana Myers, a junior at Wilson High School, has a lot going for her. She is finishing up her third year on varsity tennis, takes 4 AP classes, and is currently a 4.0 valedictorian candidate. Although volunteer work is not required for students, Dana gives her time to the aquarium and the animal shelter once a week. With all that said, she exclaims without a doubt that her favorite time of day is art class. For her, it makes school creative and fun.

Dana is a product of Montessori Children's House and Stanford Middle School. She always created art as a child but didn't think she was very good. When she took Mr. Szeto's drawing and painting class, her work and confidence reached a whole new level. Technical skills she had never thought about got way better. Details like color mixing, and shadow vs. light, were instilled in her more than ever before. Now that her paintings look much more realistic, Dana feels lucky to have another year at Wilson left to perfect her style.



Self as Hippie





...Sophisticated Sparkle

Dream Come True Party Room

By Andrea Sampson



Owner Elena, with her son and mother



Dream Come True Play Room

Satin swirls, the room sparkles and the air is filled with the joyous laughter of small children. Princesses line up to have their faces painted, while parents relax with a cup of punch. This magical scene takes place at Dream Come True Party Room, right here in Long Beach, 3962 Studebaker Rd. at the intersection of Studebaker and Los Coyotes Diagonal.

Elena Hassan, owner of Dream Come True, began hosting parties for children more than 10 years ago. A quick question from a shopper looking at Hassan's handmade fairy costumes led to the beginning of a new business. The question, "Do you host fairy tea parties for little girls?" After many years running a mobile party business called Enchanted Fairy Tea Parties, Hassan decided to grow the company and open a party room. Dream Come True Party Room opened its doors just over a year ago.

Dream Come True is a ready-to-use party room. Sky blue walls, a welcoming dining table for tea parties, a whimsical chandelier hanging from the ceiling, and the magical castle wardrobe set the stage for any party. The room is a mix of fairy dust and sophistication. Children will feel like they've entered a fantasy world, while adults will feel relaxed and comfortable in the tastefully decorated space.

The party room is extremely versatile and can be transformed to fit almost any theme. Princesses, fairies, pirates, knights and dragons or even Lego parties can be accommodated. A party with Hassan is a dream come true for the parent too. The party includes costumes, face painting, games, crafts, storytelling, food, cupcakes and a party host. Additional features, like the cotton candy machine, can be added, for Hassan says a perfect party is all in the details.



A princess poses for a picture midway through her fairy tale makeup treatment

April 26th, 2014

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Princesses, parents, and, employees at a February 2014 Ice Princess Tea Party

In addition to parties, Dream Come True offers weekly events, such as storytelling and tea time on Wednesdays, and monthly events, like the Ice Princess dinner. Jeffery Grill, a local Long Beach resident has attended several Dream Come True events with his 2-year-old daughter, Aspenn. "Dream Come True is amazing, and Aspenn is always excited to return," Grill said. "The tea parties teach her table etiquette, and she loves the princess dresses."

Dream Come True is not just for kids. It is also an ideal

location for showers, luncheons, meetings and parties. In addition to hosted parties, this unique space can be rented out for photo shoots, yoga classes, meeting space or business gatherings.

Hassan is a pro at party planning, and her parties have been featured on "Real Housewives of Beverly Hills," "Tori & Dean Home Sweet Hollywood" and "Platinum Babies." This lovely Long Beach gem is not to be missed. It is the perfect location for your next soirée. ■

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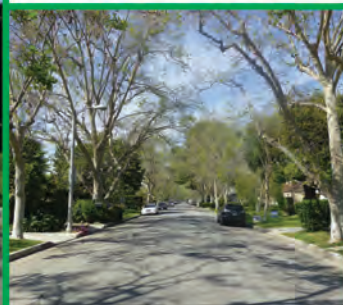


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Alexis Angermund

Alexis Angermund has lived in Lakewood Village her whole life attending Mark Twain Elementary and Bancroft Middle School. The 12th Grader will be playing water polo on a scholarship to UCLA next year. She was team captain at Wilson for both water polo and swim this year. Alexis is truly multi-talented including being a math-whiz. She passed AP Calculus as a junior. At some point

between water polo practices she must have stared at a couple telephone poles because I don't know about you but when I stare at that drawing I feel like I'm looking up!



Powerlines



Mouths



Ian Moreno

Ian Moreno is a senior at St. John Bosco. His piece *Aboriginal Koala* was an experimentation with Australian art forms for a drawing and painting project. The St. Cyprian K-8 grad especially loved Legos as a kid. He plans to study civil engineering next year in college because, as he sees it civil engineering is a lot like real life legos.

Ian keeps busy outside of school and art with sports. He is on the St. John Bosco golf team and also plays soccer. He thanks his family for being so supportive with art and sports. Ian has learned a ton from the mentorship of his dad, who has coached him in golf and soccer throughout his life. Maybe one day he will get to design a golf course in Australia. He certainly has the background for it!



Aboriginal Koala



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Kirra Bixby

Kirra Bixby, co-president of the Wilson High School Art Club, spends much of her time coordinating meetings and projects for the club. She is particularly proud of the murals that she and fellow club members have organized and painted throughout campus. Kirra's other passion is soccer, and she was a key part of the Wilson varsity team this year. The 12th Grader has narrowed next year's college choices to the University of San Diego or

Duke. While her major will probably be communications, Kirra hopes to minor in art and play intramural soccer, thus emulating her passions during high school. No matter what college she decides upon, she loves Long Beach and plans to live here when she's older. Kirra has already made her mark with murals all over the Wilson campus - so who knows what her plans are for the larger city?



Shells



Eyes

Ellie Ng enjoys taking normal, everyday surroundings and turning those images into art. The junior at Millikan High School did not discover her talent for painting until this year. She loves AP Studio Art because it pushes her to explore outside of her comfort zone, allowing her to be a more creative and innovative artist. Ng also excels in math and science. Apart from her academic interests, she is president of the Origami Club at school.



Ellie Ng

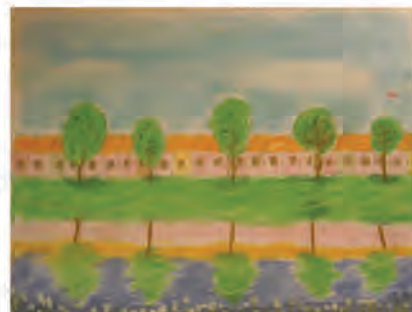


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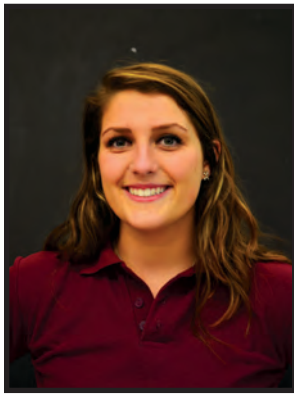
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Kendall Marotto

Kendall Eileen Marotto got her start as an artist through the Meet the Masters program at Lowell Elementary School. The district-wide program introduces children to famous professional artists as kids like Kendall attempt to copy their form. At Wilson, Kendall met Ms. Westberg, her favorite teacher ever. Here her love for art has become reinforced into a serious hobby. Though Kendall has obvious talent with drawing and painting, her favorite form of art is linoleum carving, with which she makes a variety of stamps.

Kendall is also enthralled with glass art. She collects glass pendants and sculptures and has thought about becoming a glass blower, though the industry is very tough. For now, she plans to continue working at the Original Grind Coffee House in Long Beach and Los Al, and upon graduation this spring, she will attend Cal State Long Beach in pursuit of a nursing degree. Kendall hopes to one day become a physician's assistant, while never giving up her hobby as a stamp artist.



Burn



Orpheus

Orpheus, which is based on mythology, as he loves to create meaning through art. In *Orpheus*, he portrays the story of a man who has gone down to the underworld to save his true love. The black represents the unknown, the face represents our tendency to look back at the past, and the lines represent how darkness seeps through the light. Quincy looks forward to representing Wilson for another year and eventually pursuing an art degree in college.

Quincy Irving is a product of art programs around the city. He started art at Newcomb Academy and is now a junior in AP Drawing and Painting at Wilson. He credits most of his development to the Young Artist Camp at Long Beach State. Quincy attended the camp every year possible from 2nd grade to 8th grade.



Quincy Irving

Quincy is a skilled varsity water polo player and looks forward to his senior season next year, but will probably not pursue the sport in college. He most enjoyed his art project

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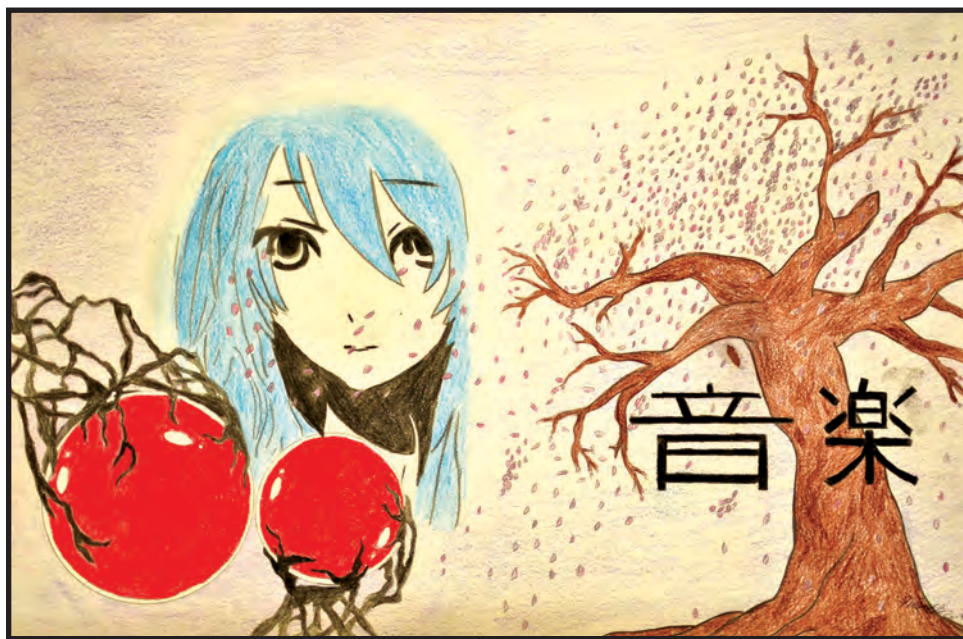
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Emotion's Toll



Nelson Lewandowski

Nelson Lewandowski, a 12th grader at St. Anthony High School, uses art as an escape and a way to balance his life. The Long Beach native has a lot of responsibilities and pressure to deal with. As the oldest son, he lives with his mother, who escaped from

the Khmer Rouge, and two sisters with Down Syndrome. Before high school, Nelson attended Lakewood Christian where his favorite class was woodshop. At St. Anthony, art is the closest thing to woodshop and he has grown to love it. He takes full advantage of its active, soothing qualities. Nelson has loved his time at St. Anthony. He is president of the anime club, one of the biggest clubs on campus, and he has been involved in band all four years. He plans to attend LBCC next year, which is very near his house, and will continue to help out with his family at home.



Alison Pirie

Alison Pirie has a giving and creative heart. She loves sharing her passion in art by helping others. She volunteers with the "Best Buddies" program at Millikan and loves working with special needs students. Over the summer, she volunteered by helping special needs preschoolers, and for her senior project, organized a gallery of "Best Buddies" artwork.

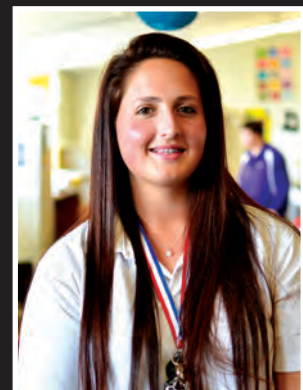


Internal War

The senior is attending Chapman University next fall. She is very interested in art therapy and using art to help others cope with life's stresses. Pirie is also interested in film production and dance.



Koi



Megan Anderson

Megan Anderson started art just this year at St. Anthony High School but she already loves it... at least more than traditional homework! When it comes to her art she is a self-described perfectionist, especially on her outlines and paintings. The 12th Grader will be attending SMU in Texas next year on a full ride for rowing, after spending four impressive years on the Long Beach Junior Crew team that has recently won nationals. Her specialty in rowing is the engine room which sits in the middle and creates all the power for the boat. She plans to study political science next year and hopes to keep releasing all her energy from rowing, through art as a hobby.

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Ozymandias

Luciano Thomas loves art in many forms. His drawing and painting habits formed at a very young age with creative expressions on paper. He was constantly doodling until Mr. Szeto, the art teacher at Wilson High, taught him techniques to make more realistic and conventional art. Luc, as friends call him, owes a lot to these techniques and to the art history Mr. Szeto incorporates into the class because they have transformed him as an artist. He approaches art in a whole new way now and says it is extremely satisfying when he finishes a piece.



Luciano Thomas

Luc's art doesn't limit him to the paper and paintbrush. He is also passionate about music – playing both guitar and piano. Luciano's Indie-pop band called The Blondes can be heard on Sound Cloud. He and his band members enjoy both recording songs and playing live concerts at local venues. They feel honored to play with The Moderates—another local band whose recent Wilson graduates have mentored Luc and The Blondes. Luc isn't all music and paint; he has wrestled for the past three years and maintains a 3.7 GPA. His favorite teacher, Mr. Arzate (AP World History) would be well advised to stay tuned as Luc hopes to make some history of his own in the near future with his band or his art or both.



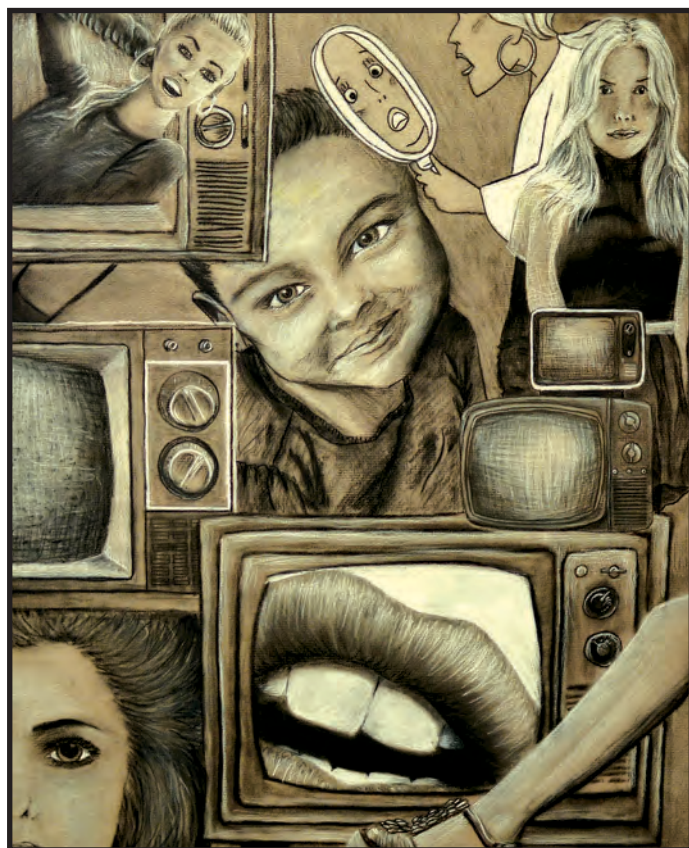
Claire Gadberry

Claire Gadberry, a senior at Millikan High School, dreams of seeing the world and becoming a missionary. The artist of many profound social issue pieces, Claire finds inspiration in her faith, nature, music, and traveling. Her charcoal piece, *Media vs. Self-Esteem*, boldly addresses how the media can impact a woman's self-esteem. It is impressive that Gadberry finds the time to create such thoughtful artwork, considering that she takes many AP classes—her favorites being AP Studio Art and AP English—and also works at a dermatologist's office.

Claire's favorite activity is traveling, and immersing herself in different cultures. Next year the Bethany Lutheran Church attendee will attend Calvin College, a small private Christian college in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Over the years, Claire has visited many exotic places, including Ecuador. She has been an artist her whole life, and will no doubt continue her artistic endeavors while traveling around the world, inspiring and serving others.



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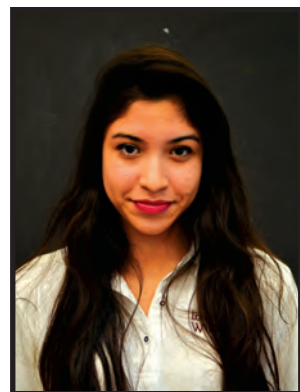
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Stereotyped

Leslie Jovel attended Minnie Gant Elementary School and Stanford Middle School where she started to learn to paint. She has now taken art at Wilson High School for three years and enjoys it so much she wants to keep taking classes in the future. Leslie puts great inspiration into each individual piece of work and often draws upon her El Salvadorian roots as a muse.



Leslie Jovel

As portrayed in her painting, *Stereotyped* a big mission of Leslie's is to disprove the stereotype that Latinos/Latinas, and Salvadorians in particular, are degenerates and gang members. Leslie points out that she does not belong to a gang, stays in school, and strives to stay on her best behavior. She wants to promote the positive aspects of her culture and share its beauty. Leslie volunteers at MOLAA where she works with children and senior citizens, teaching art. She loves science at Wilson and plans to major in biology next year at Cal State Long Beach with hopes of eventually going into the medical field.

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...Where Everybody Knows Your Name It's A Grind Coffee House (on Spring St.)

By John Grossi



At It's A Grind staff members are a lot more like friends to the customers



Coffee, delicious treats, and pastries



An all new gluten-free menu

Sometimes you want to go where people know you and your order by heart. Sometimes, you want a mocha, latte, espresso, muffin, bagel, or regular old coffee. Sometimes you want to meet friends, relax, catch up on family news, or talk business and work. Sometimes you just need to wake up. For anyone looking to receive a smile and give one back, be sure to check out It's A Grind—a place where everybody knows your name.

It's a vision that started 18 years ago, when It's a Grind opened its first coffee shop right here in East Long Beach on Woodruff and Spring; the chain has since expanded to 35 locations worldwide. This year, Shannon Barisoff, an It's A Grind patron from the beginning, purchased the landmark location with her sons Aaron and Austin, revitalizing the energy of the original franchise owners at the location that started it all.

Shannon has lived in the area (only 3 minutes away), for over 40 years. Austin and Aaron grew up here and went to Cubberly and Marshall, eventually graduating from Millikan.

For Shannon and her two sons—both born and raised in 90808—this is more than a business venture. The store is a tribute to her late husband and father of the boys. Before passing away in 2010, Bill Barisoff attended the It's A Grind every single day. His picture is still on the bulletin board!

Shannon and her sons' goals with It's A Grind are simple but honorable. Serving up coffee and savory treats is a straight-forward business but the in-store encounters can become the most important part of a person's daily routine. In the morning, an It's A Grind employee might be your first human contact of the day. It means a lot to the owners and group of 13 local employees to make you smile and to put a



Spacious interior of It's A Grind

positive impact on every customer's life. Simple things like having your order ready before you get in, asking about your kids or about that project you're working on can make a big difference in a resident's life.

Along with various improvements to the layout of It's A Grind, the new owners have recently added gluten free products and are now importing some bakery treats from the Crema Cafe in Seal Beach! Throughout the transition process, manager Jennifer Millan and the rest of the employees have kept things running smoothly for all of the regulars. They have been an integral part in restoring the atmosphere to that of the original It's A Grind.

Barisoffs and Baristas alike invite you to stop by for a cup of joe and a friendly chat. Whether they see you everyday already or you haven't met yet, the atmosphere at the original It's A Grind next to Pavilions is refreshed and ready to get at least one thing right in your day- a great cup of coffee. ■



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Advertiser Spotlight

Jose Diaz is the owner of El Burrito Grill with two locations in Long Beach. EBG#1 is on the corner of Bellflower Blvd. and Carson St. EBG#2 is on PCH near Anaheim St. LB908 Publisher John Grossi recently caught up with Jose for an interview and to thank Jose for supporting 908 magazine over the last 3 years.



Hi Jose, can you briefly describe your two restaurants and the vision behind your business?

My vision for my restaurant business is to provide a welcoming environment for the surrounding communities. I want local residents, businesses, and tourists to indulge in some delicious Mexican food entrees and always leave pleased. My mission for my restaurants is to serve healthy, affordable, and 100% original Mexican food made from scratch. We maintain affordability and creativity with our food while continuing to serve a variety of entrees (for both adults and children), appetizers, deserts, and beverages. We also feature Mexican artwork, panoramic views, and music as part of the restaurant ambiance.

You have supported our magazine since the first issue and we want to thank you for that. Why did you choose to start your business in East Long Beach and how have you incorporated your business into the community?

After researching potential areas to launch my restaurant business, I found East Long Beach. Its mix of housing, schools and businesses made it the ideal place for EBG to grow. In East Long Beach, our two locations have the opportunity to serve a varied clientele that includes local residents, people working in the area, students, and commuters – a key consideration for me in selecting these restaurant locations. I like to show my gratitude to the community by giving back in various ways. We support local K-12 schools, sponsor sports teams, and participate in CSULB's ongoing fundraisers. In addition, EBG has been able to donate dining certificates to local school organizations, churches and recreational parks.

I know that March 17th, 2014 was your 5 year anniversary in business at the corner of Carson and Bellflower. How has your concept at El Burrito Grill changed over the past 5 years? When I opened my first EBG location, the main goal was to serve the best-quality, authentic Mexican food with the expectation that customers would enjoy our plates. Fortunately, business at this location grew each year; and our customers continue to enjoy our service, value, and delicious food. Soon after opening, I also introduced a catering service. Customers for that side of the business range from large organizations such as Jet Blue Airlines to local schools and organizers of family events. I then had the notion of increasing the social ambiance by adding Happy Hour, which now runs 7 days a week from 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. During Happy Hour, customers enjoy their Mexican plate with half-off the price of an alcoholic drink. Both Happy Hour and Taco Tuesdays are available at both locations. Recently and due to a high demand, we began offering the purchase of large, individual containers of our fresh made salsa at both restaurant locations. Soon (in May of 2014), our customers will be able to enjoy an outdoor dining area at our Carson St. location.



Jose and his wife Haydee are now residents of Park Estates near their second EBG location

What sparked you to open up EBG#2 on PCH?

The spark to open my second location on PCH 2 years ago was while taking a walk with my wife in the Park Estates neighborhood. I found limited options for authentic Mexican food in this area, and began envisioning how this beautiful neighborhood of Park Estates and the adjacent Belmont Heights would be great communities in which to introduce a second edition of EBG. My good friend Bill Hayward, a local real estate agent, helped me find the PCH location with its high visibility to residents and commuters.

Are there certain dishes or entrees that have become customer favorites? What is your favorite entrée?

One customer favorite is the mixed sizzling fajitas, brimming with steak, chicken, and/or shrimp. Our homemade beans, whether as a side or inside a burrito, are very popular and customers love to order our famous Wet Burritos. Regardless of how many years I've been in this industry, I still enjoy my good old bean and cheese burrito as well as carnitas tacos!

Customers can order to go or sit down for a family dinner. What are the seating arrangements at each location?

Seating arrangements differ slightly per location. At EBG #1, we offer booth or table seating on the first floor, or for larger parties, we offer second-floor seating with a view over Heartwell Park. In May, our outdoor patio will be open at this location. At EBG #2, customers have the option of inside dining at booths or tables, or outside on our patio area. Both locations offer television viewing.

Is there any relation between El Burrito Grill and the El Burrito Juniors of Orange County?

The El Burrito Junior restaurant is where I learned the foundations of operating my own business. It is because of what my parents taught me at El Burrito Junior in Seal Beach that I've been able to build my own restaurants. I feel fortunate to have been raised in a family restaurant business.

What is the best part about owning your own restaurant?

The best part is to have achieved my ultimate goal of entrepreneurship. During my early teens I always envisioned how my future business would look. I loved studying how successful restaurants operate. When I was finally able to launch my first EBG, it was fun to realize all the ideas and plans that I had been hatching in my mind. I have been fully involved on every level, from working with the architects and engineers on the restaurant layouts to their interior design. Some perks of operating your own business include the ability to see your ideas take shape and your visions of service carried by your team of employees. I also love interacting with a variety of customers daily.

What is the hardest part about owning your own restaurant?

Having limited time. I work nearly every day, including weekends. Working daily is something I am used to, but it does limit the amount of time I can put into other activities. I am also constantly thinking of new ways to innovate my restaurants and keep the business growing.

What would you like to say to your customers in East Long Beach?

My endless appreciation goes out to all of my customers over the past five years. I know East Long Beach offers many restaurant options, and so I thank my repeat customers for their continued support of EBG. Without this loyal support in both locations we would not be here. We look forward to continuing service and providing the ultimate food experience at both of our locations. Lastly, we hope to soon serve customers at a third EBG location! ■



...From Belmont Shore to the PGA **John Merrick**

By John Grossi

John Merrick and I are pretty much the same person. We are both named John, we both graduated from Wilson High School in Long Beach, we both started playing golf at a young age at Little Rec and Heartwell Golf Courses, and when we were 12 years old we both shot a 71 (one under par) at Big Rec Golf Course to win a major junior golf tournament in California... Oh wait, that last part was just him. I guess that's when he separated himself from me and the rest of us PGA wannabees... at age 12.

And I guess it's that combination of natural talent and endless work since his preteen days that explains why last year he found himself grinding out a par on the second playoff hole of the Northern Trust Open in Los Angeles to beat Charlie Belgan on the way to his first PGA tour victory

and a handsome check worth more than a million dollars. Meanwhile the rest of us find ourselves using a foot-wedge to grind out a double bogey in our quest to not have to buy the first round of beers for our golf buddies at the end of the round.

What felt so great about Merrick's victory at Riviera Country Club last year in Westwood was that it culminated all of the hard work he put into the first 30 years of his life. They say the first win is the hardest, but this one was no fluke for John Merrick, who finished 30th in FedEx points (PGA golf ranking) after the 2013 season. In front of and to the loud cheers of more than 50 friends and family from his hometown and current residence of Long Beach, and from college days at UCLA, he hoisted the trophy. Joined by his



Merrick with his family after winning the Northern Trust Open at Riviera Country Club in 2013

parents who taught and encouraged an interest in golf, his wife Jody whom he met at UCLA, and his two young kids, Merrick savored the moment that meant everything to him. For arguably the toughest sport on earth, Merrick was the best in the world for that weekend and his life was perfect for that moment.

John Merrick grew up right by Marine Stadium in Long Beach, where his parents still live. He went to Lowell Elementary School, Hughes Middle School, and Wilson High School before accepting a scholarship to play at UCLA in 2000. Merrick learned to play golf mostly with his dad and friends at Little Rec golf course. He also participated in the red-shirt junior golf program at Heartwell and from a young age played in tournaments throughout the city. Merrick has fond memories of playing baseball at Long Beach Little League, and marveling as a youngster at the great Little League World Series runs of Sean Burroughs and company in the early nineties.

John's playing golf at the college level was nothing new to the Merrick family. His older brother Brian played for the Long Beach State team with John Mallinger, another local

guy on the PGA tour. Like Mallinger, after finishing up a great college career, John Merrick was offered an honorary membership at Virginia Country Club in North Long Beach as he started his quest to become a professional. For those not yet on the PGA tour the journey is arduous. Merrick spent his 2004 and 2005 years playing Monday qualifiers just to earn a spot on the Nationwide Tour—now called the Web.com Tour and one step below the PGA.

Monday qualifiers include anywhere from 80 to 100 golfers facing off during one round of golf and vying for one of the 10 to 15 spots in the tournament that are open to qualifiers. The task is extremely difficult, travel is expensive, and the competition is dense. In 2004, Merrick made 4 events and in 2005, he improved to qualifying for 6 events. His combined earnings in his first two years out of UCLA totaled under \$20,000, but the investment in his game started to prove worthy in 2006 when he finally earned full status on the Web.com tour. That year, upping his golf game, he finished 21st on the money list for the whole tour – which hosts hundreds of the best golfers in the world.

In 2007, John Merrick earned his PGA tour card, allowing



Merrick family at home in Long Beach.

him to play in the best tournaments with the best golfers on a regular basis. He hasn't looked back. Last year, his 6th on the tour, proved to be his best – highlighted, of course, by the glorious win at the Northern Trust Open. In his young career playing at the highest level, John has racked up 40 top-twenty-five finishes, 15 top-ten finishes, two second-place finishes and one win, totaling more than \$8 million in career winnings.

Highlights of playing at the PGA level include time spent golfing with childhood idols like Fred Couples, Ernie Els, and Davis Love III. And of course there are the majors. When I asked wide-eyed about The Masters at Augusta National, Merrick agreed, “It’s the premier event in the world. There is not one weed, every inch of grass is perfectly kept, and all of the history, it’s a lot to soak up.” Merrick has played all over the world—Australia, New Zealand, China, Malaysia, and Japan to name a few. But as far as the best place to play golf, “It’s hard to beat Pebble Beach on a sunny day.”

That preference may speak to John’s personality as a California boy. After all, his first big win came at a course just up the 405 freeway from his hometown; and his best finish in a major came in 2008 at the US Open hosted by Torrey Pines in San Diego, where Merrick came in sixth while golf-



Merrick family at the Masters in Georgia

ing alongside The Big Easy, Ernie Els. Some of Merrick’s favorite memories as a golfer certainly come from Big Rec, the course he has played the most in his life, and one that he still enjoys playing at least once a year with friends here in East Long Beach.

“It’s the premier event in the world. There is not one weed, every inch of grass is perfectly kept, and all of the history, it’s a lot to soak up.”

**-John Merrick
(on playing at the Masters)**

When John married Jody in 2007, it was a no-brainer for them to choose East Long Beach as the community in which to buy a house. “It fits my laid-back, ‘beachy’ personality,” said John, who with his wife also loves the family-oriented aspect of the city. Their son Chase is now 2 years old (but swings the bat like a 6-year-old—believe me, I watched him play whiffle ball with his dad), and their daughter Gemma is



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John and his son Chase playing whiffle ball



Teeing off at Riviera Country Club

just over 1 year old. When home, the family takes full advantage of the shops up and down 2nd Street for purchases of food, coffee, and everything else they need, just a block away from their house. "It's always nice to see the other moms with baby strollers walking around Belmont Shore," said Jody. The family loves going to Livingston Park just as John did when he was a youngster, using the bike trails along the beach, and setting up a tent at the bay on the 4th of July with all of their Long Beach friends new and old.

From March to October, however, the family's primary residence is the road. While John plays events across the nation for almost half of the year, his wife and kids are right there traveling with him. "It gets pretty interesting on all of the plane flights," John explained, "but having them there on the road with me is real cool." The family rents out hotel rooms and houses for a week at a time all over the country. They say the PGA is also extremely helpful for families with kids. "It seems like every week one of the guys just had a baby," laughed Merrick. Every single tournament has a daycare system to make focusing on golf a little bit easier for the players. Based on an outsider's knowledge of the PGA tour, my guess is that the kids' facilities at Pebble Beach are at

least as well-kept as McDonald's Play Pens, and I always had a blast at those, so I'm sure Chase and Gemma are okay with their daycare situation.

Besides playing rounds with the older golfers he always idolized, Merrick likes to keep a close-knit local community on the golf course. Tuesday practice rounds on the tour are generally played with his fellow Virginia Country Club buddies John Mallinger and Patrick Cantlay, when possible, as well as some other local guys from Southern California like Bill Haas. I asked about how much talk went on during PGA rounds. He said that players definitely maintain a professional business-like atmosphere most of the time. When there is talk, it's about the small things we'd expect. How's your family, how are your kids, and of course, how are favorite teams performing in other sports. The on-course chatter reminds me of seeing a baseball player interviewed after his team won the world-series, and hearing him talk about how well his fantasy football team is doing. Being a professional athlete doesn't seem to make one immune to the awe and enjoyment of other professional sports.

So what does it take to get to the highest level of professional golfer? John admits that he always had a natural swing and an eye for the game, but without steady practice since he was about 6, he would not be where he is today. When he's on the road golf is constant. Monday you travel, Tuesday you try to get in a light practice and play round. On Wednesday each golfer is paired up with a representative from the tournament's sponsor to play 18 holes. Then, from Thursday through Saturday you are spending half your day playing in the tournament and half the day hitting balls getting ready for the next day. On Sunday, if everything goes right, you're playing late into the afternoon.

At home, it's a little bit less golf. However, that's because

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Barbecuing out front of their Belmont Shore Home



Merrick shows us his coveted Northern Trust trophy

most of his time is spent busily running around with the kids. Merrick tries to get to Virginia Country Club about 4 days a week to hit balls for an hour, chip for an hour, and putt for an hour. One steady influence in his golf life has been swing coach Jamie Mulligan. Mulligan has worked with Merrick since he was 14 years old, and Merrick sings countless praise for the close friend. Progressing his own career on pace with Merrick's, Mulligan is now the golf pro at Virginia Country Club after starting out at as head pro at Skylinks. Mulligan has coached and continues to coach a number of other greats from the Long Beach area, and certifies resident status on his official website by calling out Joe Josts as "his favorite 19th hole."

I know it has become almost cliché to call a golfer "one of the nicest guys on the tour," but since John Merrick is the only PGA golfer I've ever met, I am going to go ahead and say it anyway. I genuinely feel he won't let me down on that aspect. Merrick is a laid back, family guy, whose favorite moments are barbecuing out in front of his Belmont Shore home with the wife and kids. He is straightforward about the upsides and downsides of playing golf for a living. "It's great when you're playing well," but even for a professional that doesn't always happen. It was a joy for all of us who saw his best year on tour in 2013 and I strongly encourage anyone who enjoys golf, Long Beach, or both to watch for him in tournaments this year as he tries to improve an already fantastic career. His life has come full circle here in

Long Beach. Yet even with a win under his belt and kids under his watch, Merrick retains the mark of a budding professional. "The thing about [golf] is that even when I'm not playing I'm always thinking about it. Somewhere in the back of my mind I'm thinking about that putt I missed or how I can get better."

In that aspect, maybe Merrick and I are the same person. The difference though—I probably will miss that putt again. John Merrick will put it into the center of the cup. ■

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Sara Von Epp

Sara Von Epp, a Millikan junior, is inspired by people and nature. In addition to her 2D work she also explores 3D media and sculptures. Sara took her first art class in seventh grade. Since then, her artwork has been featured at the Long Beach Museum of Art. She spends hours at a time working on her pieces and admits she sometimes sets aside other homework to work on her art. Sara knows without a doubt that she wants to attend an excellent art college to further her career as an artist.



Hummingbird Somnium



Unryan

Ryan Sweeney's interest in art first took root as a young student attending Lowell Elementary followed by Rogers Middle School. As seen by her *Sunflower* on the cover of this magazine, Ryan's attention to detail and expressive brush strokes has become a strong point in her painting.

The senior is involved at Wilson both as co-president of the art club and as a Link Crew commissioner in charge of freshman orientation at the school. Ryan plans to attend Cal State San Luis Obispo next year; she hopes to eventually use art in a future career working with children. Recently while her brother was in the hospital, Ryan volunteered with the kids at Miller Children's



Ryan Sweeney

Hospital in Long Beach, making arts and crafts with the patients as they battled their ailments. Don't let *Unryan*, her "self as other" oil painting fool you, Ryan is vibrant, energetic, and loves art and life to the fullest.



A Scholarship fund has been started in honor of Mr. Vandruff!
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Chris Kiklowicz

Christopher Kiklowicz can trace his gifted knack for drawing back to a visit to the zoo at age 3. The Lakewood High School senior remembers drawing the animals he saw for months after the visit. When the first Spiderman movie was released, Chris was inspired to start drawing people, and eventually found his ultimate passion in drawing comic book art because of that movie. Chris began to perfect his comic book drawing over the last year through attending courses at the Gnomon School of Visual Effects in Hollywood. At Gnomon, Chris has met, been mentored by, and networked with a plethora of established concept artists, visual effects artists and other professionals. Chris has already started creating his own comic book characters and is an expert at reproducing existing cartoon characters. For a career, Chris Kiklowicz would like to pursue doing concept art for movies and video games. He's got a pretty good chance considering *Doctor* and *Epic Heroes* are hand drawn!



Doctor!



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... Passing on a lifetime of Rock and Roll

Rockstars of Tomorrow

By John Grossi



Owners Brad n Stephanie Cummings with their kids Roman and Paolina

Are yooooouu reeaadddyyy tooo rock????!!!!!!

If that question ignites your blood, you owe it to yourself to check out the newest studio and music lesson space in East Long Beach. With five spacious, sound-proof rooms, a fully professional recording studio, and high-profile instructors for every instrument, if you or your child has ever considered learning or improving a musical talent, this is the place to look first.

Owner Brad Cummings is inspired to share the benefits he has reaped throughout his life as a professional musician. He has played all over the United States, in many different parts of the world, and worked on projects with stars from Metallica and Sting in the rock world to Wayne Johnson and Keiko Matsui in the Jazz scene. The long-time Long Beach resident (you may recognize Brad and wife Stephanie from their real estate business in ELB) feels it is time to give back to others after seeing how music improved his own confidence, intellect, and emotion from the time he was in middle school. Whereas a few of his friends fell into self-destructive habits as teenagers, Brad – a drummer-turned-bass-player – learned to channel his energy into something productive and creative.

The big difference at Rockstars of Tomorrow is that its modern, performance-based instruction keeps music exciting and gratifying to learners at all levels of experience, and ranging in age 4 to 104. All of the instructors, like Brad, are current professional musicians who know what it's like to play in front of large crowds on a weekly basis and who understand the high skill level required to play music with a performing band and record flawless music. On any given day, music students may listen in on the real-time studio re-



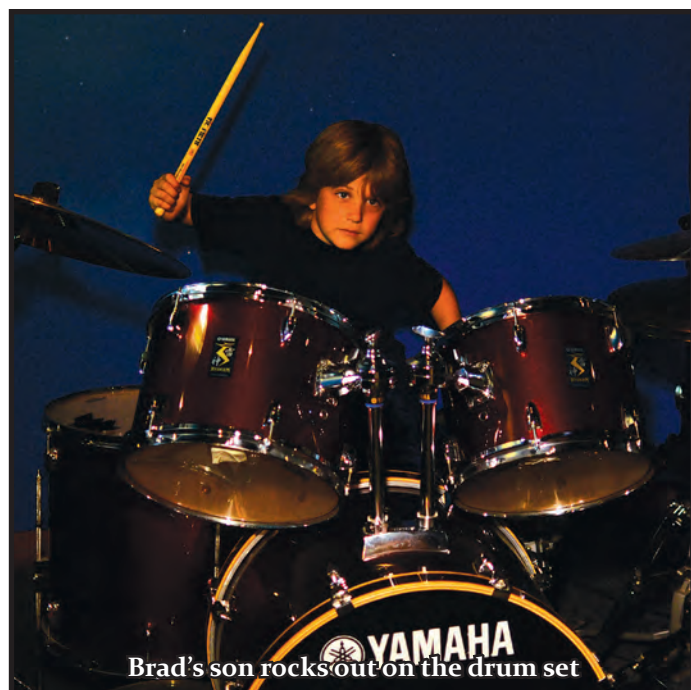
Students of the school perform at 4th Fridays at 5 Street fair in front of hundreds of residents

cording of an actual Hollywood movie soundtrack, then take a 30-minute instrument lesson, followed by an impromptu jam session with a beginning drummer, high school guitarist, and a seasoned instructor. As evidenced by its other location run by founding partner Michael Anderson in Corona, Rockstars of Tomorrow is poised to become the major music hub of relevant music in Long Beach.

Brad feels that the key to learning music depends on one's skill-level and age. Beginners need to explore different instruments – to play around on the piano keys, slap the strings of a guitar or bass, and wear themselves out on the drums. Getting the feel for creativity and rhythm is vital. Once students know how to have fun playing an instrument, it is time to fill in the techniques like learning to read music and understand music theory. Brad knows that anyone serious about playing professionally cannot fake his or her way through the formalities, but he thinks that in this day and age, it is important for a student to love the instrument before tasking too much on theory.

Brad prides himself on artist development. A big aspect of the business involves taking kids and adults with already great talent and potential and driving them to the next level. With every instructor on the cutting edge of current music both recording and touring, they know how to turn someone's raw talent into industry results. "The most important thing," says Brad, "is to never be content. A musician is always learning a new genre or instrument or regional nuance to make himself or herself better."

Brad has gained equally valuable experiences from playing in everything from surf-punk garage bands as a teen, to ultra deep pocket groove funk bands, African bands, jazz

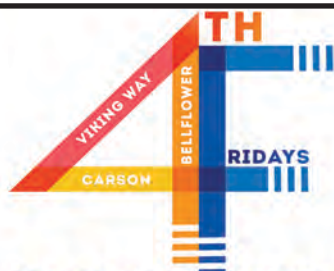


fusion bands, full orchestral performances, Movie and TV soundtrack sessions as well as many years as bassist for Mariners Church in Irvine, California.

Students at Rockstars of Tomorrow will gain experience performing monthly at the Parkview Village 4th Fridays street

fair as well as a number of other local venues. Creating a performance-driven, confidence building music hub will always be at the center of Brad's mission at the shop. His continuing participation in nationally touring groups as well as local performances and his continuing real estate practice, allows Brad to offer music lessons and artist services at prices below the national averages. Rockstars of Tomorrow provides Brad with the rewarding opportunity to give back to the art form he loves, in the community where his family thrives. Rockstars of Tomorrow will offer summer band camps starting in June! ■

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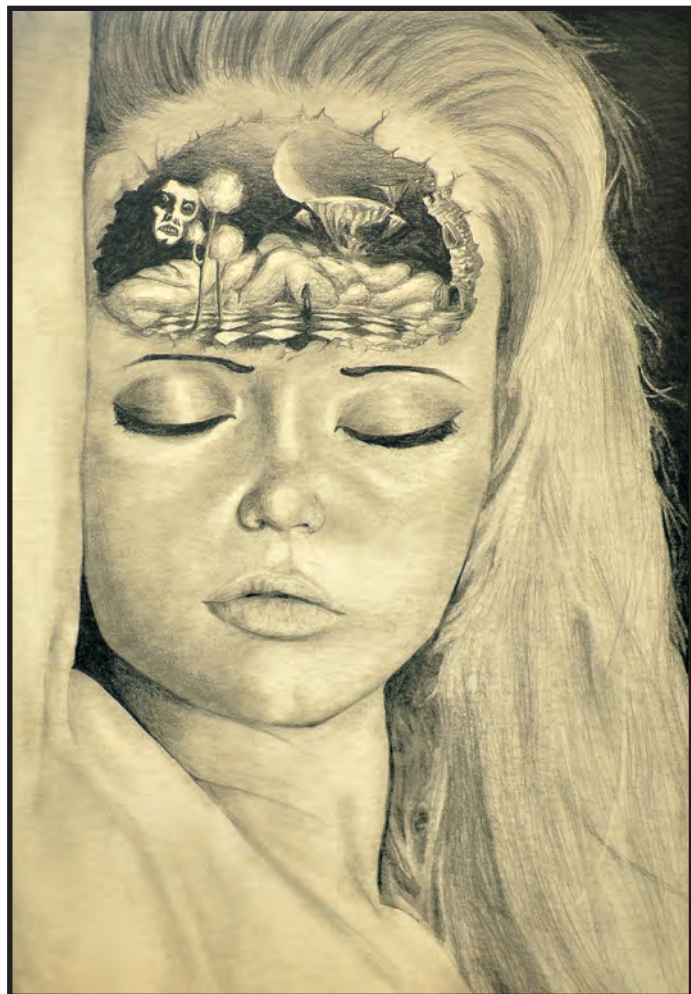
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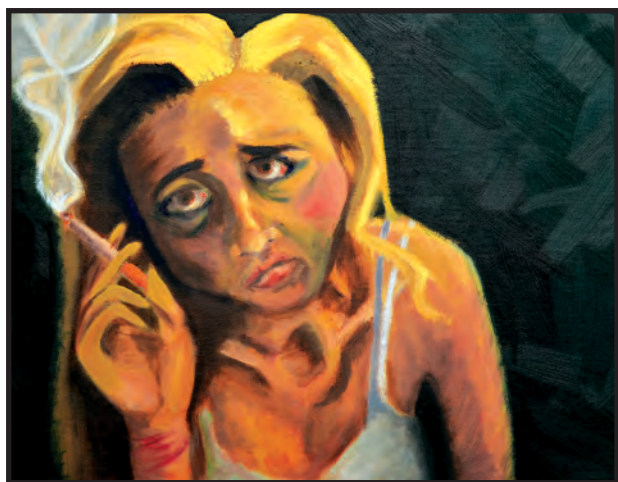


Anthony Myers

Anthony Myers creates graphite pencil pieces. The famous artist Salvador Dali greatly inspires the Millikan senior's surreal depictions of dreams and nightmares. Myers says the best part about being in AP Studio Art class is the encouragement and inspiration he finds from his teacher and classmates. Though Myers loves playing video games like "Call of Duty" and ultimately dreams of becoming a video game designer, he also enjoys running, playing the guitar, and challenging himself in school.



Deep Somnolence



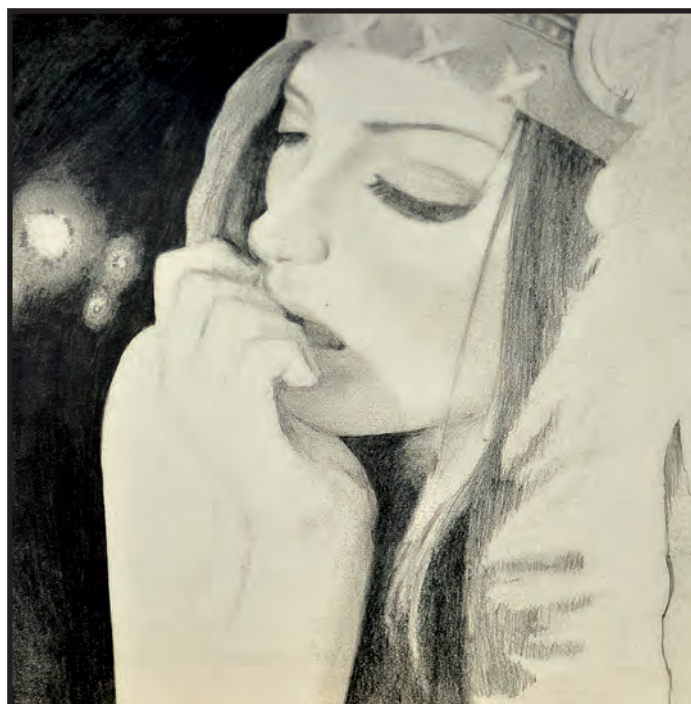
Self as Other

Micaela Lofy was inspired to get into art by her sister Sloan who, after perfecting her ceramic talent at Wilson High School, received a scholarship to Humboldt State four years ago. For Micaela, her freshman year



Micaela Lofy

art teacher, Ms. Westberg, helped shape her into the painter she is today. Micaela launched from drawing and painting 1-2 as a freshman to drawing and painting 5-6 as a sophomore. The Junior at Wilson also plays volleyball and is part of the leadership group for confirmation at St. Cornelius Church. Over the summer she plans on visiting Portland, San Diego and San Luis Obispo to narrow down her college choices.



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Pansy Thoughts

Maison Chiu is a junior AP Art Studio student who finds inspiration for her artwork in nature. Chiu remembers her art career began with finger-painting as a young child. She took her first art class her freshman year, and since then has not put down the paintbrush.

Chiu plays varsity tennis for Millikan. Her dad is a professional tennis coach and coaches Maison and her sister. Seeded second in Moore League, Chiu played doubles with her sister. She is quite busy with her tennis schedule, but finds time to work on her art. Chiu, a junior, already has many goals for the future. Awash in curiosity, Maison stated interests in psychology, marketing, and advertising as possible areas of future study and career paths.



Maison Chiu



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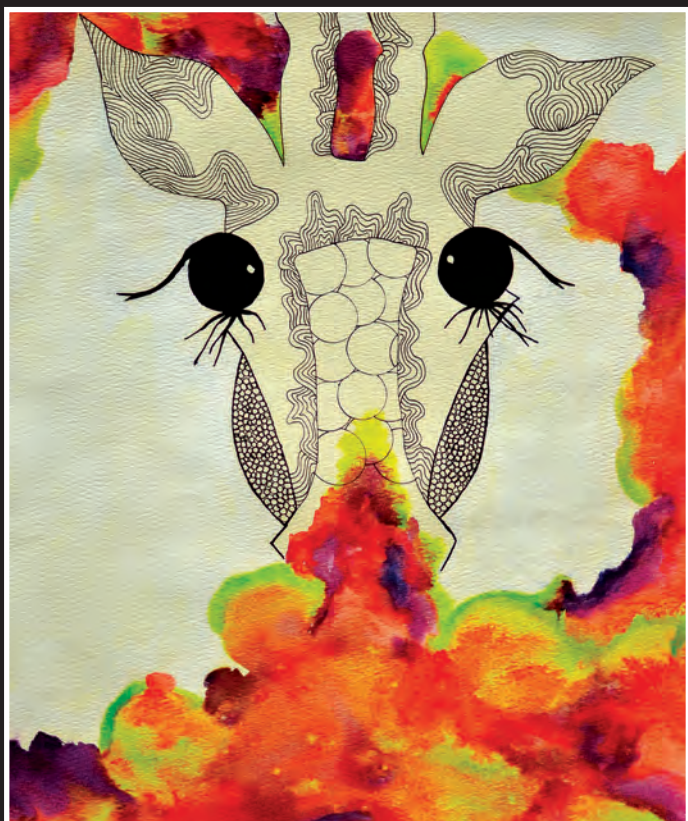
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Madison Flores

Madison Flores loves fashion and giraffes. She says Millikan classmates call her “Baby G” because she is “clumsy,” much like a baby giraffe. Her artwork, however, is anything but clumsy. She began painting at a very young age, and started taking art classes in 6th grade. Her pieces are more than just a collection of giraffe images. Her body of work includes drawings using watercolors, pen, and acrylic paints.

Though Flores compares herself with a clumsy baby giraffe, the senior has very structured and stout goals for the future. She will be attending the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising, or FIDM. Her high school artistic endeavors have prepared her for what she really wants to pursue—runway and set design. She appreciates her AP Studio Art class because it is challenging and allows students to freely explore their creativity, as long as they produce quality projects. No doubt, “Baby G” is ready to use the artistic talents she has cultivated in her challenging AP Studio Art class to take the fast-paced fashion world by storm.



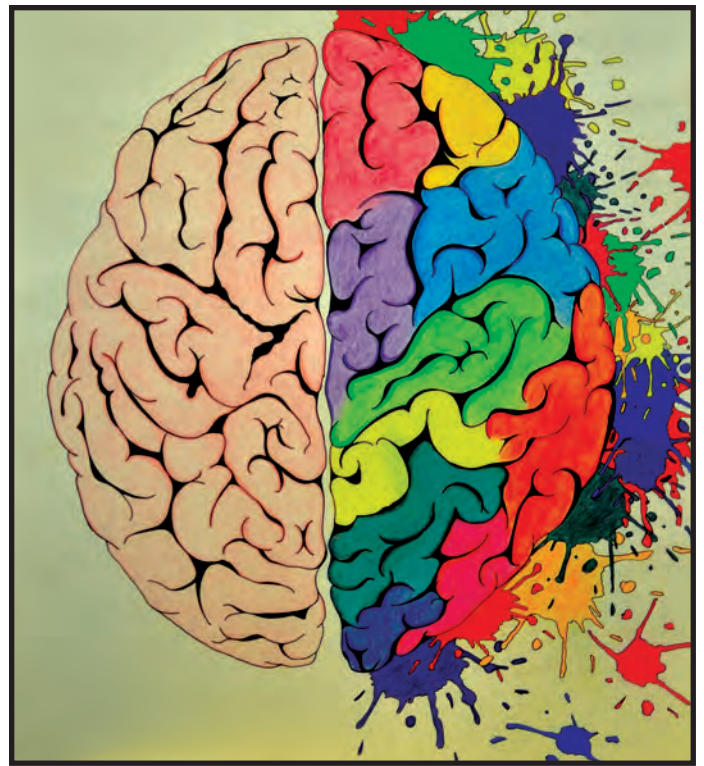
Blow of Color



Philly Hernandez

Philly Hernandez went from drawing in coloring books during elementary school, to painting intricate images of the human body in his art pieces at Millikan High School. *Creativity is Right* depicts an illustration of the human brain and how the right side generates creativity.

Hernandez will have to put his creative energy on the backburner for now, as he has enlisted in the Marines. The senior looks forward to immersing himself in a different kind of art—the art of combat. He will use his military experience to ultimately fulfill his ambitions of becoming a police officer. Hernandez says his love of art will never dissipate, but in the meantime he is looking forward to exchanging his paintbrush and art apron for a firearm and flak jacket.



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Waves of the Ocean

Neda Noeum, a Millikan student, likes to meet new people and incorporate deep character analysis in her artwork. The Cambodian junior credits her artistic brothers for challenging her to become a better artist. She likes using different styles and media in her artwork and explores aspects of movement in her pieces. Noeum has aspirations of becoming an art teacher and owning an art café.



Neda Noeum



Portrait of Joe Armstrong



Kseniya Meshcheryakova

Kseniya Meshcheryakova is a senior at Lakewood High School. She credits her parents for being so supportive and inspirational in helping her follow her artistic passion. Both her parents are artists—her mom was an art major, and her dad's job is art in the form of architecture. Her schooling before Lakewood High at Lakewood Christian also helped shape her talents. All of the teachers were

extremely encouraging during K-8th starting with her first influential art teacher Mr. Lindley at Lakewood Christian.

Kseniya grew up in Ukraine until she was 4 years old and she cherishes visiting her hometown every other summer. Her favorite drawings and paintings to create are portraits; she loves the process of taking a real picture, then trying to emulate the picture with her own stroke. Next year, the aspiring psychiatrist plans to attend Cal State Long Beach. She is excited but will certainly miss Lakewood High School, a place she has grown to love!

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... California lending programs beg the question Time to MOVE UP or FIX UP?

By John Grossi



**A recently remodeled house in El Dorado Park Estates.
Pool and Deck building by East Long Beach Pool Supply and lighting completed by New Light Electric**

Chances are you didn't remodel your home between 2008 to 2012. For one, that's what statistics say, but I hate statistics. "There are lies, damned lies, and statistics" (Mark Twain). I say that because I've been driving up and down the streets of East Long Beach my whole life and I didn't see a lot going on. Of course there are exceptions in every neighborhood in Long Beach. But seriously, for four years many of us put off some of the improvements we wanted to make on the housing front.

Lately I've been driving up and down the streets and it looks like people are starting to make improvements. The spike in real estate flyers on my doorstep says that people are buying new homes again too. The great thing is that our magazine has a slew of supporters in the home improvement department. Still, some families are growing at a rate that demands a new house all together. We have plenty of great real estate agents in East Long Beach to help you with that too!

However, what sparks this article more than anything else is our latest supporter, Dennis Fontes, a loan professional at Go Green Lending. I met recently with Dennis who talked about some interesting and noteworthy new programs and laws that make it easier than most people think to either move up or fix up in East Long Beach, especially with the recent increase in home values.

Most people in the 908 zip codes may have access to a larger amount of remodeling funds than they think. Loan programs available in California value the property based on the completed remodel and its upgraded value to allow you more equity than traditional loan programs. This also helps

to eliminate the need for P.M.I. monthly premiums to save on the monthly payments. This great feature nearly doubles the amount of lendable equity for your dream home.

Because all East Long Beach homes were built before 1978 more savings are available through energy efficiency improvements and utility rebates. Go Green Lending specializes in these types of loan programs. The "Go Green Lending Hybrid Loan Program" combines cosmetic improvements, plus Energy Efficient upgrades to make your home:

- ☐ Healthier and more comfortable
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You can use the Renovation loan programs for both your existing home or for a newly purchased home to fix up the way YOU want it.

These H.I.P (home improvement programs) loan programs are not new, but they are increasingly making more sense with the stabilized economy. Dennis Fontes is not the only guy who knows about these programs, but he has helped a number of people in Long Beach and Lakewood reach family goals that at one time seemed impossible. Dennis has been a Long Beach resident since 1980 and his office is in Lakewood Village on Viking Way. There are a number of great enthusiastic locals who want to help you with whatever home improvement you need, and Dennis is one example

of a loan agent who can't wait to go over what your personal options are according to your home in Long Beach. It never hurts to give him a call, go over your options, and ask, "Is it time to move up or fix up?" ■



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Thinking of moving?

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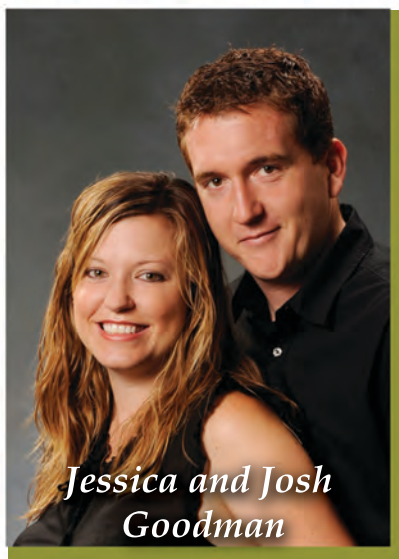
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Karah West

Karah West loves exploring the cycles of life. Her artwork displays themes of death and decay, as well as the symbolic nature of the blooming flower (cover).

Just as water and sun foster the growth of a flower and help it

to express its vibrant colors, artwork allows the Millikan senior to freely express herself and thus allows her growth as a person.

Though she has a full school load with many AP classes, the QUEST student is able to dedicate time to focus on her art. Art truly makes her happy. West will attend Cal State Long Beach next fall, majoring in Art Education. The Long Beach resident dreams of becoming an art teacher.



Pop



Josh Bolger

Joshua Bolger attended St. Cornelius K-8 School. His proximity to Heartwell Park may have something to do with his passion for soccer, as seen in his self-portrait. Joshua has played soccer all four years at St. John Bosco, as well as on a club team. Even more impressive is that he coaches four different youth soccer teams in the under 8 division. His coaching is not for a sibling or for community service hours, rather it is something he really enjoys and a way to give back and teach kids how to play the game he loves.



Joshua Bolger

Joshua thanks his dad for getting him into both playing and coaching soccer. He thanks his grandma for introducing him to art. Since preschool his grandma would draw with him and encourage his artistic abilities in school projects. Since attending Bosco, his art teacher Ms. MacRae has helped him develop his skills and expand his drawing and painting. Joshua says St. John Bosco has been awesome, and Ms. MacRae is his favorite teacher. Next year he plans to stay local, attend Long Beach State, and continue with his art and coaching hobbies.

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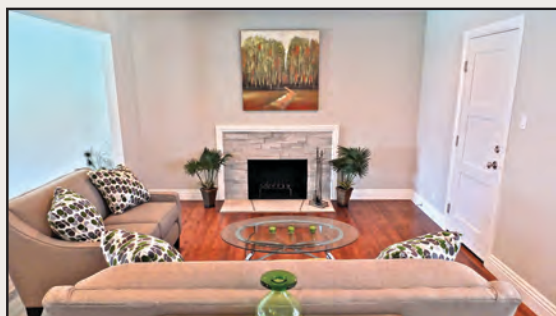
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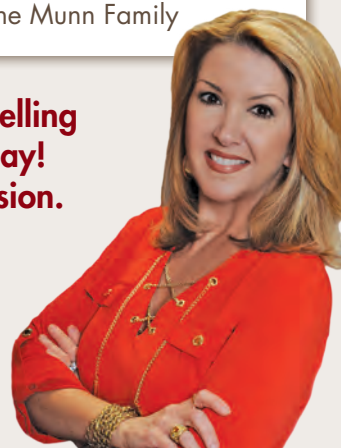
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