

MESA helping kids learn to be better students

By Mike Albanese
The Chronicle-News

After school, students at Trinidad Middle School are doing more than just making their way back home and playing video games.

Instead, students make their way to visit middle-school teacher Angela Hadaway and take part in the Mathematics, Engineering and Science Achievement after-school program that allows students to create and learn how to be a better student.

MESA is comprised of 30 students from 6th, 7th and 8th grade interested in building their leadership skills and character. The program also teaches students different aspects of science and engineering.

Hadaway, a sixth- and seventh-grade math teacher who is in her sixth year running MESA, said the group participates in two major competitions, the CSU-Pueblo Design Competition in March and the Colorado MESA state competition in April.

Although these competitions focus on math, Hadaway said the students experience all aspects of art and culture.

"While these competitions focus on math, science and engineering, the students on the Trinidad team also have quite a lot of



Mike Albanese/The Chronicle-News

Eighth-grade student Marie Lubitz and sixth-grader Michael Papadopolous work on their dome project during the MESA after-school program at Trinidad Middle School.

exposure to history and the arts through a number of venues," Hadaway said. "The MESA team members are also the caretakers of the Southern Colorado

Math and Science Center where we host younger students for science days."

When involved in MESA, Hadaway said the students will benefit from more than

just learning about math and science, as the group takes several field trips to college campuses, letting the students experience the college atmosphere.

"Every trip we take includes at least one college campus visit," she said. "Students on our team have seen large campuses and small private schools."

While on trips to colleges, the students are allowed to eat at the cafeterias and tour the dorms, and Hadaway said this gives them the chance to see themselves as college students.

"We don't want to talk about 'if you go to college,' but 'when you go' and 'where you will go,'" she said. "As young as sixth grade we have kids comparing colleges in their minds."

And for students that aren't already in MESA, they are missing out on a great opportunity to experience aspects of education that you may not get to see sitting at home.

"MESA is a wonderful opportunity for young people to be exposed to their peers from other schools at conferences and at competitions where they meet in an environment of learning and support," Hadaway said. "Every year we see the MESA team become a very supportive team of students who take care of each other not only in meetings and at school, but in our community as well."

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Area youth speak out at oratorical contest in Raton

By Tim Keller

Special to The Chronicle-News

RATON — Three-dozen teenagers showed that the future is in good hands as they competed in the 15th annual Oratorical Contest at the Shuler Theater last week.

Sponsored by Raton's Knights of Columbus Coronado Council #1332, the public speaking competition drew teens from Springer, Cimarron, Maxwell, Raton and Hoehne. They competed in the junior Division I for ages 12-14 and senior Division II for ages 15-18.

Maxwell Schools again cinched the team trophy when sophomore Thomas Casper won the senior division after Jacob Sanchez had sewn up the junior prize. Coach Rick Jones continues to lead a program that wins awards in competition against much larger schools.

Raton dominated the numbers this year, contributing 12 entries to the senior division's field of 19 after sending no entries last year. Raton Middle School's 13 entries constituted about two-thirds of the junior field.

Raton seniors Chelsea Chavez and James Neary won 2nd and 3rd prizes, respectively, in the senior division, with Raton junior Marisa McCarty just missing the cut after the judges had to confer to break ties. In fact, ten of the senior entrants scored above 90% on the judges' score sheets.

Following Maxwell's Sanchez in the junior field

were Springer's Ashley Hildebrand in 2nd Place and Raton Middle School's Estrella Vargas in 3rd.

The contest requires each student to write an original essay on a single theme and deliver it to the audience in a speech lasting 2-4 minutes. Judging is weighted 50 percent on content, 25 percent on delivery, and 25 percent on appearance.

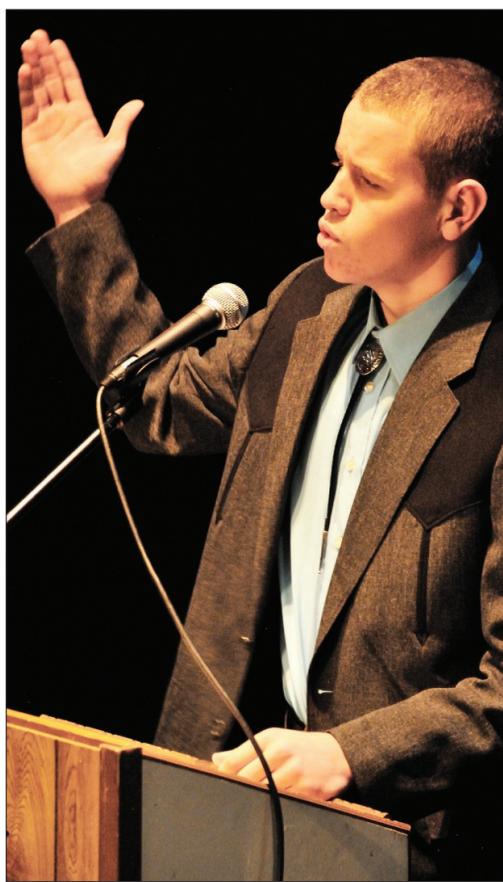
This year's theme was "Life is a Song Title."

First National Bank of New Mexico provided savings bonds of \$100, \$75, and \$50 for the top three finishers in each division. Sports Arena provided medallions for the winners plus the team trophy that was carried home to Maxwell for the fifth consecutive year.

Surprisingly, the successful program that showcases the best of the region's youth is not a statewide program of the Knights of Columbus: It was created 15 years ago by the Raton chapter and directed each year by Ed Fidel.

The word has spread though: representatives of the state organization traveled to Raton Thursday to watch the Oratorical Contest in action as they consider implementing the innovative Knights of Columbus Oratorical Contest throughout New Mexico.

As it grows, the contest will need to hone the professionalism of its production. Despite a cursory request for the audience to



Tim Keller/Special to The Chronicle-News

Sophomore Thomas Casper won the 15th annual oratorical senior division contest at the Shuler Theater last week.

turn off cell phones, the ubiquitous phones rang throughout the night, making the young people's job harder as many strived to deliver their speeches from memory. Worse, two of the offending phones belonged to two of the three judges, one of whom was even observed receiving, writing, and sending text messages during the young people's speeches, raising questions of fairness and accuracy in the judging.

One middle school student had her speech interrupted when the program

director inexplicably mounted and crossed the stage to adjust the microphone in the midst of the girl's presentation.

Even with these glitches, Ed Fidel and the Knights of Columbus Coronado Council earn well-deserved praise for their innovative program that year after year brings out the best of the region's intelligent and talented youth. It's no surprise that their program appears poised to spread across the state.

Students worry changes taking away from learning time

Editor's note: Dylan Hutson is a 16-year-old student at Trinidad High School.

By Dylan Hutson

Special to The Chronicle-News

Many of the changes that have been instituted at Trinidad High School are taking away from classroom learning time, several students and teachers say.

One of the first changes instituted by new Superintendent Manuel Rodriguez requires that all teachers present a daily class, followed by a closure. The point of these statements is to present the goal for the day and a reflection on what was learned, both of which students must record in their notebooks at the beginning and end of every class period.

"Objectives take away from class time and knowing what we're supposed to do does not affect how we learn it," said sophomore Aaron Lubitz.

Another change instituted by Rodriguez and the school board is Compass Learning, a computer learning program designed to help students increase their proficiency in areas that their CSAP scores came back as unsatisfactory.

Some students and teachers, though, complain the Compass Learning program requires students to miss classroom time in core subjects.

"Students taken out of core classes for Compass Learning are missing out on a lot of class. Time will tell if Compass Learning is effective or not, but instead of a hands-on approach, it's just a screen in front of you," said teacher Mike Duran. "Feedback from students suggests they can skip through it without learning. Students think it's a joke and are not learning anything."

Some of the frustration of the students came out last week after about 200 students at the high school walked out of second period class because of concerns that preliminary budget proposals being discussed by the school board would cut teaching positions and possibly programs.

A financial adviser at a

recent school board meeting proposed four budget plans for next year, the first being no change at all, and the fourth being the most drastic. Components of budget plan number four include the elimination of 16 teachers, eight of which belong to the high school.

Several high school students, parents and staff members attended the meeting and spoke about the importance of student morale and continuation of Miner culture and tradition in Trinidad.

That Friday, half the high school students abandoned their second period classes to meet in the parking lot for a peaceful protest.

Prior to the walkout, Principal Jennifer Mason and Rodriguez gathered the students in the cafeteria for a last-minute attempt to discourage the students from walking out. This was followed by an intercom announcement, again warning the students about the consequences of walking out.

The actions did not stop the students from pouring out of the building at the sound of the bell. Student leaders gathered in the bed of a pickup truck with a megaphone to organize speeches and explaining their reasoning for the protest and collecting forms signed by students saying that they would behave and conduct themselves with the utmost maturity.

Meanwhile, several students and media members spoke with Rodriguez about the upcoming decisions that are to be made on the budget. After 45 minutes of protesting, including a few songs on the acoustic guitar, snow began to fall and the parking lot was cleared. Most students returned to class.

The students said that no one had been listening to their complaints about the declining quality of education; thus a walkout should grant them the attention they are yearning for.

Junior Ellie Hillhouse said this: "School is about the kids so everything should be geared towards the kids, there's too much politics in school."

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: ANGEL VALDEZ

Angel Valdez is a senior at Grace Christian School with a 3.9 grade point average.

Her goal is to keep up the good grades and graduate in the spring. She is the first student to do a work/study program at Grace.

She plans to attend Bel Air Institute of Animal Technology in Denver to train to become a veterinarian.

In her spare time, she loves working with and riding her horse. She

enjoys training horses, also. Her family has horses and donkeys, so being with the animals has inspired her to continue her education with animal technology.

Her favorite Bible verse is Joshua 1:9, which says, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage, do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

She is the daughter of Pete and Jennifer Valdez.



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Genius without education is like silver in the mine.

Benjamin Franklin, American author, inventor and physicist (1706-1790)

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