

Editors Column

Helping Youth Learn Nicotine Prevention and Awareness



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On the 30th of January, I visited the Don & Esther Mission Center to help teach children in elementary school children about the dangers of nicotine and vaping.

The organization I am part of, POCO, arrived early at the Mission Center to set up the event we call AWANA, and there were many tasks that needed to be done. Two groups would be doing the teaching of the students: the Sparkies, consisting of kindergartners through 2nd-grade students, and TNT, consisting of 3rd- grade students, all the way up to middle schoolers, were how they were divided.

Volunteers were separated into two groups, each with 6 people who would be presenting. We explained to the youth the importance of how damaging nicotine can be and how to stay away from it. We asked the kids questions, and they answered in a very bright, pure way that we wouldn't expect from high school students. We gave chocolate and pencils to the children who were able to answer the questions that we asked them. They all loved the decora-



Sparkies (K-2nd) are listening to the presentation on the side effects of nicotine given by POCO members. [Source: Chris Min]



Children create turtles during the event against nicotine and vapes given by POCO. [Source: Chris Min]

colored paper and used it to create a turtle by gluing them on paper. Others also used them as flowers and leaf petals to create a colorful tree. For the TNTs, we built tiny handbags by cutting up paper. We also played a game of "This or That" where the kids had to choose the correct option, like whether nicotine is harmful or helpful, and taught them the negatives of nicotine.

After the event ended, all the educators, skit performers, and activity helpers relaxed by eating gimbap and cup noodles provided by the parents. As they sat together, they realized what a success their efforts had been.

Overall, the event was a great success; the children had a lot of fun, and they learned the importance and the consequences that they may face from handling nicotine and vaping.

tive pencils and ate their chocolates happily. They also laughed at the funny pictures and gifs we had added to the performance, and they were very enthusiastic about our presentation.

Another group of members that were not educating the children made up a skit showing how two friends were pressuring one of their friends to vape. The friend stood up for herself and refused to

smoke, showing students that even when it seems hard, you can still do what's best for you. This delighted the students very much, as they saw the protagonist win against the harmful nicotine and knew they could do this themselves.

After the education and skits were done, we had activities and games set up for each of the groups. For the Sparkies, since they were younger, we had a project where they smoothed thin

Student Reporter

Remembering Samiljeol: Korean American Students



Amber Lee
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For Koreans, March 1st is a very memorable day when our ancestors fought for independence against Japanese rule at that time. This day is also known as Samiljeol, or the 3.1 Movement. At the Fullerton Korean School branch, students, volunteers, staff, and parents actively honored this day together.

On March 1, 1919, millions of Koreans peacefully protested against Japanese colonial rule under which Koreans had been tortured and greatly suppressed. The protest didn't lead to independence right away, but it symbolized the Korean identity and the desire for freedom.

At the Fullerton Korean School, where I volunteer as an assistant teacher (TA), an event commemorating the March 1st Movement was organized to help kindergarten to ninth-grade students understand the meaning behind the honoring of this movement. Even though many Koreans know the existence of a holiday on March 1st, being born and raised in the United States, it is easy to not know or forget about the important Korean history behind it.



All of Fullerton Korean School's students came out to the middle of the school to recite the Korean Declaration of Independence and to remember the bravery of people who fought for Korea's freedom. [Source: Author, Amber Lee]

My job as a TA was to first help 4th-grade students make Korean flags out of paper, colored pencils, and tape, in order to glue them onto sticks to be waved when they march through the school. The marching started from the oldest ninth graders all the way down to the little kindergartners. We marched from hall to hall, waving our flags in one big line. Finally, after sweeping through all of the classes,

we moved to the center stage of the school where we recited the Korean Declaration of Independence, sang the Korean national anthem, danced to meaningful songs, and learned about why the event still holds meaning to both Koreans and Korean Americans today.

This event didn't feel like any other ordinary school event. For me, it evoked a feeling of pride in

being Korean and being able to pass down this history to younger generations. Students learned about the numerous sacrifices made by our ancestors, and although many of these students usually mess around during these events, I noticed that for this day specifically, everyone was solemnly focused.

Ultimately, this event, directed by our Korean School, felt extra special. I felt extremely grateful to the staff and parents who organized it, as the student body learning about Samiljeol and honoring this important movement in Korean history was such an important task for older generations to do, to not forget about our cultural heritage.

During times of chaos and the advancement of technology in the 21st century, I've realized that forgetting about our national history is normalized. So, informative and memorable school events like this are even more meaningful for the Korean American students, who are miles away from the actual Korean land, to participate in, in order to keep the national Korean spirit and gratefulness to our ancestors.

Student Reporter

Behind the Music: My Year with OCCYO



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OCCYO, Orange Community Christian Youth Orchestra, is dedicated to serving our community through music. Students range from middle to high school, and although this gap creates differences in skills and interests, the orchestra comes together for a shared goal: to play music. Every Sunday, from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., students practice either in sections with a teacher or as a whole orchestra. This was my second year being part of this group, and I wanted to share my experience.

After the orchestra's concert in October, the group immediately began preparing for their concert in March. With this fresh start came mixed feelings: I was excited to learn new music, play new rhythms and styles, but I was also stressed about the difficult pieces. During sectionals, however, each instrument group worked closely with a teacher to break down challenging parts, which helped me with the areas I struggled with. After the first few sectional practices, the orchestra began rehearsing together, combining the parts each section had individually practiced.

Some practices were especially tiring, but something I al-



After months of practice, the OCCYO Orchestra comes together for a concert at El Dorado High. [Source: DongHee Kim]



OCCYO, a community orchestra, performs at El Dorado High School after months of practice. [Source: Eleanor Cho]

ways looked forward to was the food. Each week, parents would take turns preparing snacks or a simple dinner for students after rehearsal. So, while the students were finishing up or packing their instruments, parents would be outside setting up the food. Sometimes it was sandwiches, sometimes Korean

fried chicken, and occasionally even In-N-Out. After two hours of focusing on music, eating, and talking together felt like a reward. It gave students a chance to relax and enjoy some time with their friends.

As the concert day, March 1st, got closer, rehearsals be-

came more intense. In addition to the regular Sunday practices, we began meeting on Fridays and Saturdays for extra rehearsals that lasted two to three hours. At times, it was challenging to balance these longer practices with my academics and extracurriculars. Playing the same difficult sections repeatedly was also very tiring and required a lot of focus and patience. However, those extra rehearsals were also where the orchestra improved the most. Each time we practiced, the music became more precise and beautiful.

Finally, the concert day arrived at El Dorado High School. Sitting on stage with the rest of the orchestra, I felt nervous about our performance. I wondered if I would mess up or whether all those practices meant nothing. It was only when I played the first piece that my nerves faded. In that moment, all the long rehearsals, challenging pieces, and extra practice felt worth it. Our music sounded unified, and it was rewarding to hear how far we had come. Looking back, the experience was challenging, but I'm grateful I had the opportunity to participate and continue playing in OCCYO.

Student Reporter

Reading the Room: The Language Nobody Teaches You



Karis Kim

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Robert Frost Middle School

In conversations, people communicate more than with just the words they say. Subtle facial expressions, body posture, and small movements often reveal what someone is really feeling, even if they never say it out loud, because that is the natural response. Psychologists call this body language, and it plays a huge role in human communication. Learning to notice these signals can help people better understand emotions and build stronger emotional connections. By paying attention to simple signals like eye contact, posture, and facial expressions, it becomes easier to “read the room” and understand how others truly feel.

One type of body language is posture and body movement. Interpreting body language comes differently to each individual, but consider your perception of others based on how they sit, walk, or hold their head. Upright postures can often be associated with confidence or an optimistic attitude. Practicing an upright posture can present oneself as self-assured and more engaged in conversations. Having higher confidence can make you feel more prepared, improving your performance. Lowered heads can convey sadness/submission, while upward tilts may exhibit arrogance. Crossed arms can indicate defensiveness, discomfort, or frustration. Shifting



Knowing when to give space is its own form of closeness. Open posture and soft attention can communicate care more honestly than words can. [Source: Author, Karis Kim]

weight while standing or crossing legs tightly can indicate a desire to disengage. Knowing how to interpret posture is not only useful for becoming more emotionally aware of others but can also help one improve oneself, allowing you to know yourself better.

Facial expressions can also provide a sense of emotion leveling. Microexpressions are the hardest to read because they can be very subtle and occur very quickly. When someone’s eyebrows shoot up for just a split

second, they are often surprised or sense familiarity in the subject. Their eyes may widen, and their mouth may part slightly. A slight lip curl – even for a second – can indicate that someone feels superior or dismissive of you. Blinking rapidly may be a subconscious attempt to hide something or avoid dealing with stress. One can detect subtle disgust in the narrowness of eyes, wrinkling of the nose, or slight raising of the upper lip. Body language of someone who is not pleased with you includes licking their front teeth, flaring their

nose, pressing eyebrows together, or moving their head forward in an annoyed manner. Understanding the hundreds of microexpressions that exist can offer an honest glimpse into how someone is feeling more than words alone.

A gaze held a moment longer than usual, a slow blink, a full body turn toward someone are the quiet signals that say I see you before a single word is exchanged. Eye contact is one of the most powerful tools we have: soft, sustained eye contact signals genuine presence. Touch works the same way: a brief hand on someone’s arm, a firm hand on the back, small gestures that open an atmosphere. When these elements come together (eye contact, touch, and open gesture), they create something words can barely portray: the feeling of being truly seen.

Body language is not something you can learn overnight; it’s a skill, one that you can refine the more you practice. When recognizing body language, context matters. People are different, and reading someone takes patience and genuine attention. Slowing down enough to notice how someone is holding their body is the greatest act of care. Most people go through life feeling only partially understood. Learning this language, even imperfectly, is an honest way to change that.

Student Reporter

Why Every High School Student Should Do an Internship



Ryan Park

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As high school students start to prepare for college and their future careers, internships are more important than ever. Rather than simply learning from lectures and textbooks, internships allow students to gain real-world experience, helping them understand what it’s like to work in a specific career field. In addition, by experiencing this opportunity first-hand, students can determine if this career is the right fit before making long-term commitments.

Just like any other high school student, I am currently facing my own dilemmas about what career I should pursue in college. As a junior, there is only one year before I start my applications for college. Thankfully, I had been able to narrow down my interests to political science and international relations. However, I still felt like I needed to work in these fields and gain valuable experience and knowledge.

Unfortunately, organizations and businesses don’t often choose high school students for positions, opting for college stu-



An event hosted by the Los Angeles World Affairs Council for high school students called the Art of Diplomacy was a fantastic opportunity to listen to the different consulate generals [Source: Ryan Park]

dents instead. Finding an internship during the school year for high school students is incredibly difficult. Many students are unable to work as many hours as they would be without attending school for the entirety of the day. Luckily, I was able to find a non-profit organization, the Los Angeles World Affairs Council (LAWAC), which was hiring a few students. The LAWAC was founded in 1953 to help educate the

public on international, national, and regional issues. Through my extracurriculars and enthusiasm for the position, I was selected to become an intern under the High School Program.

The High School Program was made to provide students with the opportunity to learn new perspectives on current affairs and ask questions to esteemed guests and panelists. In the High School Program, I am tasked with main-

taining and creating new relationships with high schools across Los Angeles County and updating our database. Besides working on spreadsheets, I also help to organize our quarterly event. Our most recent event was called the Art of Diplomacy, where we invited 3 consul generals from different countries and students across the city. It was hosted at the Arizona State University California Center, where students had the opportunity to listen to the diplomats talk about their journey into becoming a consul general and why foreign policy was so important, especially in a city like Los Angeles.

By interning at the Los Angeles World Affairs Council, I have been able to gain the necessary skills obtained by working in this field, while also learning more about foreign relations. As an intern, I have access to webinars and events that are usually only exclusive to individuals who pay a membership fee. Working for LAWAC has been one of the best decisions of my life, and I would highly recommend it to other students to start interning as well!

Student Reporter

From Papers to Practices: How Sports Shape a High-Schooler’s Life



Robin Ryul Kang

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High School

At 3:15 P.M., when the final bell rings, many students head home to rest, begin their homework, or work on their extracurriculars. For student-athletes, the day is far from over. Athletes assemble, the coach speaks, and practice begins. As a junior balancing Track & Field along with a busy academic schedule, I’ve come to realize that being a student-athlete is what has shaped me to be the student I am today and connected me with my community of supportive friends and coaches.

The physical benefits of exercise are widely documented. According to the CDC, regular physical activity improves cardiovascular health, muscle and bone health, and, of course, mental health. Obviously, being physically active is very important for all age ranges; however, for high school students with quickly growing bodies and brains, sitting around all day can be a retarding factor towards their health in the present and the future. For me, practice became a reset button after a long day of school. One might think



A student high-jumps over a bar, arching his body to maximize the height he can reach. An athletic activity, as such, can only brighten up the rest of a student’s day. [Source: Author, Robin Ryul Kang]

that sprinting and jumping would make me even more tired, but it was the opposite. Intensive physical exercise after school ironically fostered energy within me, so I left practice energized and mentally prepared to finish my homework.

Personally, Track & Field has taught me discipline: the ability to show up even when you don’t want to. In my freshman year, I started with cross country, and

at the start of sophomore year, I transferred to Track & Field. The former taught me physical and mental endurance as a baseline, and the latter solidified it. Over three years of sports, it not only improved my physical body and health, but also reshaped how I handled stress, pressure, and fatigue. I became better focused in classrooms, completely got rid of procrastination, and learned to

be composed under pressure. But most importantly, I became part of a community. During these three years, I’ve formed close relationships with many people, because participating in a sports program together is the best way to form a relationship, even more than talking in class or working together academically. Sports allow constant feedback, encouraging one to push beyond personal limits together. That shared vulnerability and hard work build trust far more quickly than conversations alone ever could.

From papers to practices, the life of a student-athlete is demanding; however, it is fighting through this demand that allows you to see the beauty and growth from it. Every day at practice, panting after an intensive workout, I look up at the glaring sun, hand covering the yellow ball of light. In that moment, I think: every drop of sweat, breath, and sore muscle is worth it. The benefits of being a student-athlete are not just physical. It’s also the mind, the friendships, and the person I am becoming every day.