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The Nerd Wörd

Also in this edition:

- Interviews
- More articles
- May's birthdays
- An end-of-the-year Top Ten
- And more great advice

More than just a nickname

By Michael Fountain, guest writer

As soon as you mention the name Ms. Tootie to any Governor's School student, words like "friendly," "outgoing," and "good sandwiches" come to mind. Ms. Tootie, whose real name is Sandra Byrd, does not know where she got her nickname, but she has been called by it ever since she can remember. "Ms. Tootie" is not just the nickname of a woman who makes sandwiches. It's a name that has become a part of the dining experience at the Governor's School.

Ms. Tootie loves to talk to people. She has become great friends with her co-workers. That is the best part about her job. "I just enjoy talking to everybody," she says. Ms. Tootie doesn't care whether it's students, co-workers, faculty, or staff. Even though she knows many students on a first name basis, she isn't afraid to talk to and learn the names of the students she doesn't know.

"I used to joke with Dr. Brockman about the new Governor's School building. I would say, 'When am I getting my new school?'" Ms. Tootie never dreamed she would get to come and work in the accommodating facilities of the new Governor's School. Here she manages the deli bar, and helps in the kitchen and with the salad bar. Standing behind the deli bar, she fixes students the sandwich of their choice with a side order of friendly conversation. No matter what kind of day she has had, she always talks to the students she serves and tries to improve their day. "I enjoy working with [students] and for [students]," she says. "Without [them], I wouldn't have a job."

"I've been out of school a while, but I'm not ashamed of my age," claims Ms. Tootie. Her big white smile gleams from her friendly face as she recalls her MVP title on the softball team at Hartsville High. While she may no longer play sports, when she is not working in the cafeteria, she can be spotted at GSSM sport events. She goes there to offer support to the students she sees every day and just to enjoy a good game. She has gotten to know so many people while working for the Governor's School and Coker College. "I could name out a million students I know. I even keep a scrapbook of prom pictures. Kids just started giving me pictures. It's become kinda like my little brag book."

Outside of her job, Ms. Tootie is a loving mother. She has a seven-year-old daughter named Sierra whom she loves to spend time with when girl scouts and choir aren't keeping them busy. Ms. Tootie hopes that her daughter will continue her education once she graduates.

After working in the Governor's School facilities, Ms. Tootie hopes to even persuade her daughter to apply there. Much like her own family, Ms. Tootie claims that she tries to treat students the same as her own daughter. "I'd give them lots of hugs and plenty of smiles," Ms. Tootie said while taking a break from the deli bar to watch students have fun playing in the snow.

When talking with other students, I have yet to find somebody who doesn't enjoy Ms. Tootie's presence in the dining hall. Alex Marshall, a Governor's School student, claims, "She's a sweetie, and is one of the most respected and nicest staff members in my opinion." Ms. Tootie has developed a positive reputation among students and teachers through kindhearted interactions, and because she cares about the students with all of her heart. She gives students the extra encouragement they need to make it through the day.



Gearing up

By Lauren Bright

"And that's how you make silly putty," I concluded, smiling at the kids in front of me. One had a disgusted look on her face. She picked up the goo and squeezed, her grossed-out look transforming almost automatically into one of amazed pleasure.

"Cool!" she said, stretching it out and smelling it.

A simple reaction using glue, sodium borate, water, and food coloring can do so much.

"Can we get this at the store?" one asked me, still looking at his blue goo.

TEAM GEAR UP is an important part of the outreach department here at GSSM. TEAM GEAR UP, Teaching, Activating, Encouraging, and Mentoring/Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs, is designed to provide chances for middle school students to increase their academic skills and backgrounds. According to the program's website, "there are three major components of GEAR UP, which include Early Awareness Programs, Saturday Academies/Summer Institutes (SASI), and High Performance Partnerships. GSSM is involved in the SASI component of GEAR UP, which is an academic component. Ten colleges and universities throughout South Carolina form the SASI Network. Each SASI host institution has agreed to conduct 10 Fall Saturday Academies, 10 Spring Saturday Academies, and a 3-week Summer Institute. During the SASI

programs, middle school students are engaged in well-rounded academic programs." The students get to have "hands-on and minds-on" science, math and technology fun with GSSM students and other leaders.

Mr. Randall La Cross, who works on many things in the school and is one of the busiest people I know, is in charge of the GSSM segment of GEAR UP. I asked him what the best part of GEAR UP was for him, and he was torn between "watching middle school students enter a learning environment filled with misconceptions where bright students clear up those misconceptions" and "watching GSSM students come in as juniors and mature and grow through the whole experience." He loves having GSSM students stop by his office and tell him stories about a student who learned something amazing, students who showed a spark of interest in something that amazed the GSSM students, and about their own learning experiences. GEAR UP, in Mr. La Cross' point of view, is also an "opportunity for our GSSM students to solidify the content of what they're learning and grow as a young adult." He likes to learn and considers everyone life-long learners. The goal for him in GEAR UP and with GEAR UP is to develop and nurture that love for learning.

To me, TEAM GEAR UP is more than something to put on a college application. If it was, I would have stopped long ago. It's seeing the looks of amazement on students' faces as they shoot off a rocket,

look at burning food, or make something like silly putty. GEAR UP isn't something that we GSSM students do for our own benefit; it's for the students we're reaching out to. If I can help one out of 50 students, I find my day satisfactory. Just a few weeks ago at a workshop hosted at the Governor's School itself, I was working on the Blast Off! section of the program, where by using water displacement, you trap hydrogen and oxygen gas. After mixing the gases, you ignite them, which shoots off a tiny rocket (part of a pipette). Somehow the rotations were off and I ended up with only one girl in the last group. She was very involved and answered almost all of our questions about energy and gases. As I was walking her to lunch, I explained that what we had done in the lab was what NASA did on a small scale. She smiled, and then proceeded to tell me all about the Challenger incident in 1986. I was amazed at how much she knew, and approaching the cafeteria, she turned to me and asked if I was going to be here next year. After receiving a negative response, she nodded and said, "Well thanks, the rocket part was the best part today."

Walking back to the lab to clean up, I thought about TEAM GEAR UP and found that it wasn't just important to me - it was important to all the students we were reaching out to. I put my hand in my pocket and found there was silly putty there. I squeezed it and grinned.

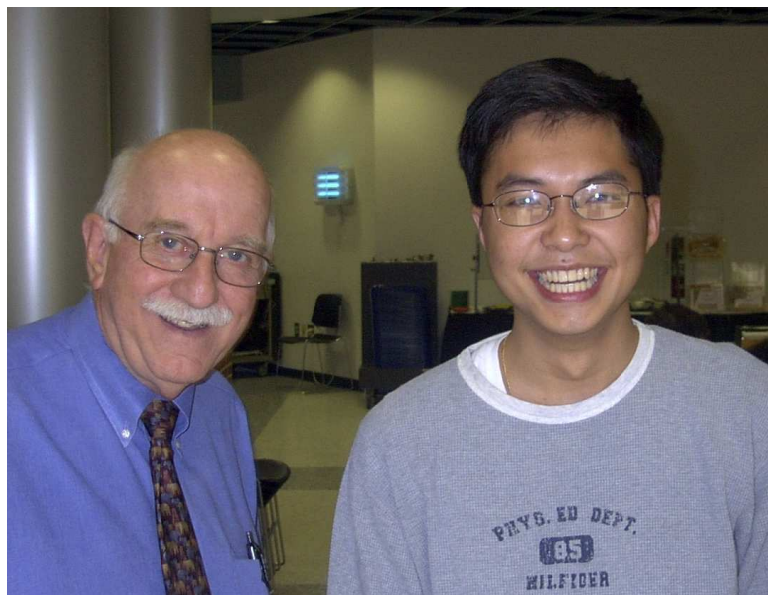


Duy goes to DC

By Lauren Outen

What role should the United States play in keeping world peace? Duy Nguyen responded to the subject and won a national essay contest, sponsored by The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of South Carolina. Duy wrote, "To safeguard our own security and that of the world, [I believe] we must take a proactive stance to confront global issues and propagate the promise of democracy."

The prize, you ask? He received a National Scholarship for the Congressional Seminar in Washington, D.C. This means that he has been invited to attend an all-expenses-paid, week-long trip to Washington, D.C. from June 19th-25th. Duy will attend a mock Congress where - according to him - "[He'll] be politicking, trying to pass a bill, and," jokingly he adds, "meeting hot girls. It's a great opportunity to meet new people who pursue the same interest in government."



Blog wars

By Erica Plowden

Often at high schools, there are trends that many people follow, like wearing certain clothing items or saying certain phrases. And, although GSSM isn't too bad, it still happens. The current craze is the use of blogs, or online journals. These can be obtained by simply signing up at one of the many sites that offer them, often exclusively. Some favorites are blogspot.com, livejournal.com, and opendiary.com. After users set up an account, they can then add entries as they please, personalizing them with colors, backgrounds, fonts, pictures, and emoticons.

Journaling is a very good habit to have. The recording of events in one's life can provide stress release, a source of venting emotions, and a way of working things out. Often, getting something written down, or typed as the case may be, allows the author to objectively view the problem and see solutions. Often, though, keeping a physical, pen-and-paper diary or journal can be bothersome. People don't have the time to write out everything. This is where online journals come in. They provide a more convenient format while still providing the same benefits as the tangible

version. A lot of people type much faster than they write and one can update while on the computer, checking email and the like.

The only real difference between blogs and physical journals is confidentiality. Although most, if not all, of the sites offer a private option, where no one can read it, most people leave theirs public. It has become a fad to read other people's journals and leave comments on them, which can be both positive and negative. They have the potential to open lines of communication not previously available. For example, a person may think something is up with another person, read their blog to find out what the problem was, and go to this person to work the problem out.

However, things don't often follow that route. To illustrate what usually happens, here is a fictional situation. Shannon has some habit that really bothers her suitemate, Tara. So Tara, not necessarily in the spirit of malice, writes about it in her blog. When Shannon reads the entry, she gets offended and writes an entry in *her* blog. Tara retaliates by either leaving a note on Shannon's blog or writing another entry. And things go on like this, often with more than just the original people involved. This situation has become known as a "blog war." The sad thing is that it could have easily been avoided if either Tara or Shannon had gone to the other person when they realized there was a problem. Because blogs are typed

and not spoken, things are blown out of proportion or taken out of context. Usually, the problem that started it wasn't even that big of a deal, even to the person who wrote the original entry.

My personal belief is that one's diary, blog, or journal should be kept completely secret, so you don't have to worry about offending anyone and you don't have to censor yourself. Writing should be a private, personal form of therapy and should not be for public consumption. However, since many people don't feel this way, if you chose to have a public diary, you need to realize that there may be consequences to what you write. You don't really have any idea who may be reading your diary. And for those who choose to read other people's diaries, you need to keep three very important things in mind. One is that just because they seem mad in the entry does not mean they are really that angry. Two is that they may not even be referring to you. Most importantly is three, which is TALK TO THE PERSON. If they say something that makes you mad, don't just fume about it and write a retaliating entry. Go to the person and find out what the problem is. That way, any misunderstandings can be cleared up and the problem can be resolved.

A “math-a-lete”

An interview with Matt King

By Lauren Outen

A “math team” you say? While most schools have just sports teams, the Governor’s School is one of the few which has a Math Team. I sat down with one of its members, Matt King, and asked him some questions about being on the math team.

Were you on a math team at your old high school?

Yes. Basically, I think that everyone who is on the math team now was on it at their old school.

What do you like about being a part of the math team?

I like problem solving and enjoy the satisfaction of completing really difficult problems.

How did the team prepare for the meets this year?

We started the year by doing practice problems once a week to better our problem solving. Dr. Long would put two or three problems in our boxes, and we’d have to turn those in.

What are the competitions like?

Math meets are open to any school that wants to come, but sometimes they create another category for out of state. At every competition, there’s always an individual written exam. The number of questions varies from about twenty-five to thirty-five, and the time limits range from an hour to two hours. Sometimes they have ciphering, which is where students from each school go one at a time and solve a problem displayed on an overhead projector. It’s a lot of pressure, and you get more points if you get the correct solution quickly. They usually have about seven questions per student and only three students from each school do it.

Are all the math meets the same?

No. Some competitions are unique. For example, the College of Charleston has a bunch of mini math exams based on different high school subjects like physics and chemistry.

What is the pressure like at the competitions?

There’s a lot of pressure because we’re expected to win—not only by our sponsors but by the other teams. This year there’s been more competition for us because we’re equal with more schools than we usually are.

How do they decide the winner?

The four or five highest scores from each school on the individual exam are combined with the ciphering score to make up a team score. The school with the highest score wins!

I know the team has done well this year, but how exactly did you place at some of

the competitions?

We got first at the College of Charleston, second at Winthrop, and fourth at Furman. At USC we also placed first. It was very elevating! Sebastian Zhang got a full scholarship to USC for getting the highest score on the written exam at that meet. This past Tuesday, we went to The American Invitational Math Exam. It didn’t go as well as we planned. Although more of the problems were doable this year, we got about the same score as last year.

From now until Nationals—this will be held in the last part of July for five days in Huntsville, Alabama—the Math Team will have six practices. “It’s probably going to be really difficult,” says Matt, “because although we practice all the time, not even the best of the govies on the team in previous years has placed first.” Congratulations to the team for all they have accomplished so far this year. We wish them luck at Nationals!



Top ten things on everyone’s mind...

Compiled By Lauren Bright and Erica Plowden

- Graduation is in four days!!!
- The end of the year
- The internet cutting off at 12 AM
- Exams...
- Cleaning out your room
- Summer being really close
- No more classes
- All those end of the year activities (Senior Banquet, yearbooks, the dance...)
- Missing everyone after you leave
- Did we mention that graduation is in FOUR days?!?!?

JCL

By Crystal Zhao

On March 27th, Governor's School students went to Lexington High School for the annual Junior Classical League Spring Forum. JCL is an organization where students come together to celebrate Latin language and classical culture. The faculty sponsor of our school's branch of JCL is Dr. Godwin. He has been part of the JCL program at this school since 1999. JCL itself has been around for over fifty years and has a senior branch for college students as well.

The South Carolina JCL organization holds two large gatherings each school year: Spring Forum and Fall Workshop. In the summer they have a National Convention, but GSSM never attends because the SPRI program interferes with the scheduling. At these gatherings,

there are many Latin-related events and contests. Contests can range from athletic ones like the volleyball competition to artistic ones to taking Latin tests. One special contest that is a tradition for JCL is "Romecoming," an event where students do silly things like eat pie without their hands. The two GSSM students who participated in this particular event were Christi Lynn and Reggie Coleman. The GSSM students that attended represented our school well in all categories, ranging from sports to academic tests. They also entered the spirit competition. "We made posters, we wore hats, Reggie and Cam wore togas, and we sang and danced. We yelled so loudly that we were hoarse, but we didn't win," says Caroline Mix. Still, they did succeed in other areas with these final contest rankings:

Kayla - 4th place Daily Life Test

Christi - 2nd place Derivatives 1

Caroline - 2nd place English Oratory

April - 3rd place Mottos and

Abbreviations

April - 4th place Vocabulary 2

Everyone - Best Organized Volleyball Team.

Birthdays for May

Compiled by Brittany Strecker

Linmiao Xu (1) / Gal Soltz (12) / Patrick Nugent (12) / Tina Zhang (18) / Peter Henry (20) / Brittany Strecker (21) / Geoffrey Ford (21) / Benjamin Garrett (30) / Christina Hong (31)

Crystal Zhao speaks...

Advice on missing birthdays, prom, and cleaning

Q: "I missed my very good friend's birthday. I was caught up in doing schoolwork, and I completely forgot about it. How do I make it up to her?"

A: Ouch, your friend is very likely crushed about this. If you were really good friends, she ought to be able to understand, especially if she's a Governor's School student herself. Just make sure that you get the point across that you feel really guilty about it, and then buy her the same kind of present that you would have if you hadn't missed her birthday. Hopefully you can move on after this incident. Don't kick yourself over it too hard; everybody makes these sorts of mistakes.

Q: I'm borderline passing and failing a very critical class. I try really hard, but my test average is horrible and could be the line between whether I pass the grade or not. What can I do?

A: First of all, don't resort to bribery. That sort of thing only works in

movies. The most important thing you can do is study as hard as you can for the final exam, because that could bring your grade up a lot. If you need extra help, go to the teacher first. Make it clear to him/her however that you



want to do well because you want to learn the material and show you have, not because you're just trying to make a good grade. If you were smart enough to be accepted to this school, there's no class that you can't pass if you work at it.

Q: "My roommate is a lot neater than I am. Whenever my side of the room looks messy, he always goes ahead and cleans it up for me when I'm not around. This really bothers me because then he puts things away where I can't find them. How do I get him to stop?"

A: You have a right of personal property, and he shouldn't be touching your belongings without your permission, especially if he is inconveniencing you with this cleaning habit of his. Maybe he thinks that he's doing you a favor, so you should first communicate to him that you have a problem with it. If he still continues to touch your things, consult an RLC or an RA. Worst-case scenario: you have to find a new roommate. On the other hand, would it be so hard for you to clean up your own mess?

Do you have a thought, comment, or question? Need some advice? Then email us at journalism@gssm.k12.sc.us. We also accept letters to the editor, articles, top ten lists, comic strips, etc. Please submit!