

READY, SET, GROW

How changing expectations at school and home impact basic life skills

by **Smitha Gundavajhala** and **Mihir Joshi**

Mihir Joshi | El Estoque

Su Ling sits in a wicker rocking chair, hands folded on a purple pillow in a rare moment of relaxation. She has come home from work, not an hour ago, and it's nearing 11 p.m. But none of this is new to Ling, who is mother to three daughters. One daughter is a junior in graduate school, one a freshman in her undergraduate studies and one a junior at MVHS. It makes sense then, that she has always been a worrier.

"Jody and Sandy started taking the bus to go to school in about the fourth grade," Ling said. "When my husband wanted them to take a bus to school, I was so mad. 'You should take care of your kids,' I said. 'How come you let them take the bus by themselves? Do you know how bad it is outside?' But my husband told me, 'Don't worry, don't worry. You worry too much. If you never let them try, they'll never grow.'"

But when do they grow? More importantly, who teaches them the skills that'll help them grow?

MVHS used to offer courses that would supplement students' education not only in academics, but in life. Choir teacher Shari D'Epiro, a 1979 alumna, took a variety of classes when she attended MVHS that aren't offered today.

"I took Driver's Ed; that's how I got my license," D'Epiro said.

"I took Cooking one year. I took Sewing one year — I mean, I wasn't very good at sewing, my mom helped me with everything. My mom's a great sewer."

D'Epiro notes that back then, a lot of the experiences sought outside of school today were more integrated into the school day. She used to be on the Drill Team, the equivalent of which today is Color Guard, which met during a designated PE period. Auto Shop, in which students learned to take care of their vehicles, and Work Experience, which required students to document jobs they worked, were also classes that provided credit while allowing students to work toward their nonacademic goals.

As the district cut budgets and the interests of those in the community shifted, many opportunities were moved outside of school, causing students to seek this supplemental education through other avenues.

"There are more viable means to [take classes like Driver's Ed] outside of school now," said guidance counselor Sylvia Lam as to why the school provides less application-based classes. "Before, parents maybe didn't have access to that, or they didn't have the monetary means to provide that. But now, kids do have that opportunity."

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Many classes that once existed at MVHS have been reapportioned — for instance, Culinary Arts in the intradistrict Career and Technical Education program has replaced the cooking class. Since these classes may not stay forever, Lam emphasizes the importance of learning such life skills through one avenue or another.

“If you’re not learning life skills here [at school], I’m hoping that kids are also learning that at home,” Lam said. “I see it as a community. It’s parents, it’s the students, it’s the teachers and the schools. We all work together. Even if you’re not getting educated here, you know, with my own daughter, I’m teaching her these skills at home. There should be supplemental stuff. It should come from everywhere, not just school.”

Industrial Technology teacher Ted Shinta believes that one thing that is often found lacking in a high school education is learning to apply knowledge. Shinta feels that classes like Woodshop and Drafting are good preparation for life or, in his words, “better citizenry.”

“My classes are important because a lot of the students at [MVHS] don’t get any practical experience,” he said. “[With application-based classes,] you get a real feel for it, you’re

touching, you’re seeing, you’re designing. Instead of problem solving, you’re using your problem solving skills to make something.”

Something that Shinta, D’Epiro, Lam and Ling all agree upon is the importance of having this application-based skill set, especially in making a well-rounded person.

Ling has practiced this with her children. “In order to be self-sufficient,” she says, “[my] kids have learned all of the basics, but also self-discipline.” For her, it was a teaching process that began when they were very young.

“If you don’t teach children before they leave the house, when they go to college, they still don’t know how to feed themselves, how to take care of themselves. You’d better show them, early as you can, before they leave the house,” Ling said. Her concern and views changed over the course of time.

“My husband and I have had different methods to educate our kids. At first, I was worried, ‘How can you let kids go to school by bus?’” she said. “But time proved that he was right. And the more I see them able to do things on their own, the less I worry.”

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SPECIAL REPORT

Yelp for help

Unwittingly risking my life for a great meal

by **Morahd Shawki**

Like most people who have grown up in an affluent town, I like to lie to myself and say I'm not sheltered.

Sometimes, I almost believe it, too. But if you want to bring yourself back to reality on just how coddled you really are, spend a few weeks in a city. I did just that in Chicago last summer, crashing at my sister's apartment.

Yelp was my best friend on these days, pointing me toward some of the best food in the world. I don't exactly have what you would call good social skills, or really any to speak of, so I would avoid conversations with strangers whenever I could, sticking to my phone for directions instead.

It felt like a good strategy. I mean, I could never really get in trouble with a GPS and Internet access on my phone, right? Right?

As I made my way to a cafe (four and a half stars according to Yelp!), I noticed that things were beginning to become more and more unsavory. There were more and more



cracks in the sidewalk, abandoned property and certain undesirables surrounding me.

I began to worry, but I just told myself that I was sheltered and paranoid. I mean, millions of people walk around Chicago every day who aren't shot. Well, most of them anyway. I was probably safe, right?

It became pretty clear afterward that maybe, just maybe, I wasn't safe. I took a quick inventory and realized how ridiculous I must have looked. With my blaring headphones and apparent obliviousness, I was clearly a tourist. I looked at my "Pugs not Drugs" shirt and had a scary thought:

Maybe this was a "Drugs *not* Pugs" sort

of neighborhood.

I walked quicker and quicker and heard the faint sounds of Bon Iver. Hipsters! I was finally safe. I entered the cafe and called my sister. Her friend, a Chicago native, picked up instead. I told him what was happening.

As it turns out, I chose to take a stroll in Humboldt Park, which has one of the highest shooting and gang crime rates in the city.

"Where did you say you were?"

"Uh, it says... Humboldt Park?"

There was a brief silence. "What? How are you not dead yet?"

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“IT WAS A PROCESS.”

How alumna Neesha Tambe learned to be self-reliant, successful in life through her college experience

by Anupama Cemballi and Jennifer Lee

Class of 2009 alumna Neesha A. Tambe looks to be your conventionally successful college senior: Currently majoring in sociology at Georgetown University, she is nearing graduation and already has job interviews lined up.

However, her college experience has been anything but conventional.

Instead of a four-year college after high school, Tambe studied at De Anza College for a couple of years before transferring to Georgetown.

“And that,” she said, “was the best decision of my life.”

It wasn’t always smooth sailing at either school, though. At Georgetown, Tambe experienced a steep learning curve in terms of living on

her own during the first few months. Among other things, she dealt with a month-long mice infestation after leaving food out one night and even nearly started a fire while doing her laundry.

In addition, Tambe initially struggled with making the mental leap from hometown Cupertino to Washington DC.

“There’s a time where you’re like, ‘Oh my God, if I die, today, it’s going to take somebody some time to find out,’” Tambe said. “How you deal with your life, what you do in the future, that’s all on you the second you step outside of the house. You can’t depend on anybody else. And that self-reliance, that frameshift was very hard.”

An equally significant frameshift took place during her two years at De Anza, where Tambe realized she didn’t need to follow the same formulaic route as everyone else.

While at De Anza, a close friend told her: “Be willing to be uncomfortable. Be comfortable being uncomfortable. It’s a small price to pay for living the dream.” Tambe lives by those words today.

“The best moments of your life happen when you push yourself and when you stop being like, ‘Okay, I’m going to do this status quo,’” she said. “When you transfer to another school or you take some time off — that’s when you’re like, ‘Oh my God, there’s an entire world out there.’”

Not conforming to the regular college route has led Tambe to opportunities like writing something that was read on the floor of the House of Representatives and even teaching English in Romania.

Tambe recalls that her mother once told her she was nervous when Tambe didn’t have a 4.0 GPA and decided to attend De Anza. According to her mother, sometimes people fall into a hole there.

“But I put my effort into my passion, and I became successful at it,” she said. “And that’s when my mom was like, ‘I was nervous, but now I’m not.’”

Tambe’s not sure which specific careers she plans to pursue, but she does plan on following her passions — which lie in finding ways to impact her community positively.

Whatever happens, she knows that she’s learned the practical skills to take care of herself and the mental discipline to succeed in whichever field she chooses.

“Living the dream, it can happen. But it can’t happen if you just do what you think you should be doing,” she said. “It’s about finding that passion, finding that fire inside of yourself — that you can wake up every day, and say, ‘I’m interested in that.’”

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HOW TO AVOID GETTING PLAYED

Social studies teachers Pete Pelkey and Ben Recktenwald give opinions, insight on how street savvy MVHS students are

by Ashley Ding




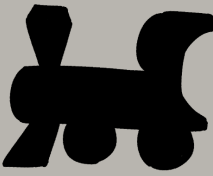
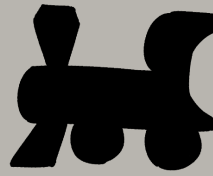


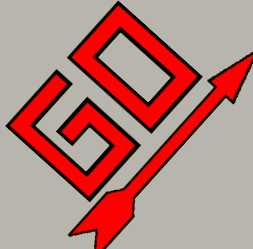
 <p>FREE PARKING</p>	<p>BOARDWALK</p>	<p><i>Community Chest</i></p> 	<p>PARK PLACE</p>	 <p>GO TO JAIL</p>
<p>Tip Get out once in a while</p> <p>Recktenwald: "Turn off the Facebook, stop studying, spend time outside of Cupertino, go to college at some school in some ghetto neighborhood."</p>	<p><i>Community Chest</i> MV's street smarts from 1-10 Pelkey: "Generally 1. Stevens Creek is not a good street to learn street smarts. It's got Target, it's got nothing else."</p>			<p>PACIFIC AVENUE</p>
				
<p>Tip Know the real value of money</p> <p>Pelkey: "[Students generally] don't know how much money is worth... So you underestimate or overestimate the value of it."</p>	<p>TIPS AND TRICKS</p> <p><i>Chance</i> MV's street smarts from 1-10 Recktenwald: "At best probably a 5. Generally [those who have street smarts are] transfer students from other neighborhoods."</p>			<p>Tip There are people you can't trust</p> <p>Recktenwald: "I have heard some stories of students who would leave their dorm rooms unlocked and people would steal stuff from them. Why wouldn't you lock your door?"</p>
<p>JUST</p>  <p>VISITING</p>	<p>Tip Be wary of credit card companies</p> <p>Recktenwald: "A lot of students spend the money and realize they have to pay it back, and their interest rates go up, and their credit rating goes down."</p>	<p><i>Chance</i></p> 	<p>Tip Student loans are worth it</p> <p>Pelkey: "Most majors appreciate in value, so you will pay off your student loan. It's just expensive to go to college. But it's one of those things you should actually go in debt for."</p>	

Illustration | Alexandria Poh

GROWING THROUGH MISTAKES

Simple stories from former high school students about adjusting to life after high school the hard way

by **Alaina Lui** and **Christopher Song**



teacher
**CHRISTY
UTTER**

A professional issue

On her first day at Dartmouth University, English teacher Christy Utter went into her early morning African American studies program exhausted from talking to her roommate all night long.

"I really respected the professor, but [once] I went up to her to ask a question and I said, 'I'm not really sure how to address you, is it Mrs. or...' and she said, 'You will call me professor like you do for all your other teachers!' I really didn't mean to show a lack of respect; I just didn't know what you called professors ... So I ended up inadvertently offending someone."

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'11 **THOMAS
YOUR**



'10 **ANYSSA
KARNKAENG**



'11 **JOSHUA
LIAO**



Doomed roomies

Dealing with roommate problems for the first time, 2011 alumnus Thomas Your was forced to learn how to adapt.

"I had a bunch of problems with my roommate last semester, and basically I couldn't do anything but figure it out on my own. The authorities don't help you; the [Resident Assistants] don't really help you. They almost have no power at all ... You can file a report with the police. Otherwise you can just talk it out, and you're pretty much on your own."

Lost in the city

Adjusting to the perils of public transportation was a difficult challenge for 2010 alumna Anyssa Karnkaeng. She got lost running a simple errand to Walmart.

"Over here, the main mode of transportation is by bus, while back home everyone had a car ... I remember the first time I took the bus to Walmart; I didn't even end up at Walmart, and it took me awhile to find the right bus stop to wait at ... and I realized that the bus I was waiting for wasn't even coming."

Controlling the cash flow

Preparing for the unexpected is important as well, as 2011 alumnus Joshua Liao realized. Money management is important; you never know what will happen.

"The second semester of my freshman year, I just fell for her. I never thought I'd be in a relationship in college, but once I did I had to learn to start to budget my money effectively. I couldn't just spend all my money to buy food because some days I would need the money for a nice date with my girlfriend."

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