

The Weekly

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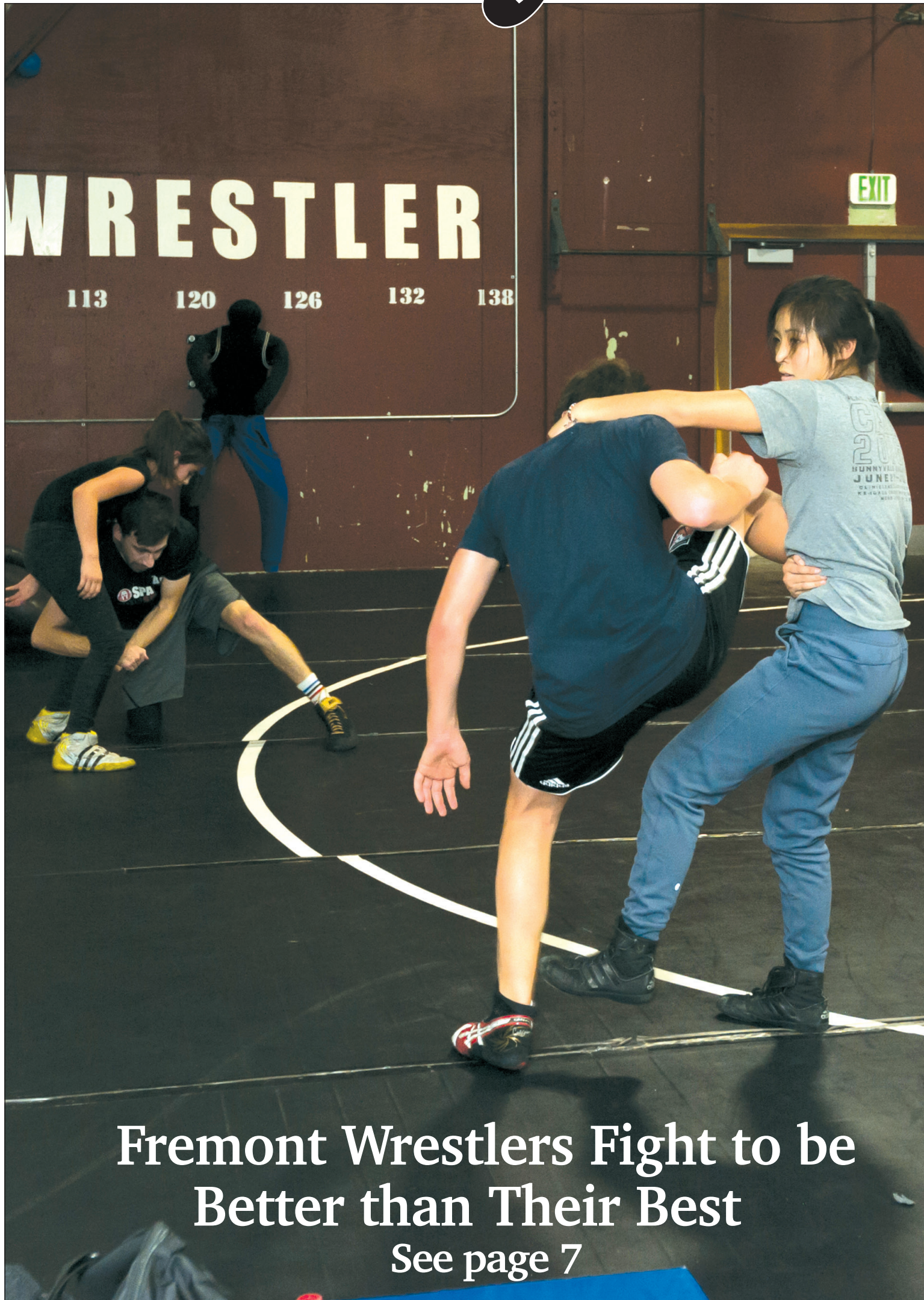


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Peterson Middle School's Bryan Osborne Nature Area Celebrates 50th Anniversary

BY CYNTHIA CHENG

Dr. Stella Kemp, Superintendent of the Santa Clara Unified School District, spoke at the welcoming ceremony of the Nov. 2 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Bryan Osborne Nature Area at Peterson Middle School. Volunteers from Wilcox High School- Emily Janusz, 17, and Sean Kim, 14- demonstrated a Native American custom of crushing acorns. Families participated in nature-inspired crafts and art, sponsored by Camp Captivate.

Bryan Osborne shared the history of the Nature Area baring his namesake, which spans almost two acres. Osborne and the late Dan Baer, who both taught Science at Peterson High School, brought the Nature Area to the school community.

"50 years ago in 1969, we started construction on what is known now as the Bryan Osborne Nature Area," Osborne said. "We didn't like the way Science was being taught back then. Most of it was out of a textbook. We wanted to show the students examples of what we covered in class. We decided that arranging a field trip is a lot of work and money. If we were to create an outdoor lab, we could go back there time and time again to see the changes occurring."



PHOTOS BY CYNTHIA CHENG

Wilcox High School students Emily Janusz, 17, and Sean Kim, 14, crushed acorns that fell from the trees at the Bryan Osborne Nature Area

Osborne explained why it's colder during the winter, a concept that has been taught at the Nature Area. Standing a brochure up on a table where he sat, Osborne pointed out that the brochure's shadow represented the area not getting energy from the sun. When the sun is higher during the summer, the

shadow that this brochure would cast would be smaller. This means that the summer sun offers more energy per square centimeter versus what it offers now.

"I appreciate that the Nature Area provides a hands-on science experience for our district's students and gives them the op-

portunity to have contact with nature in the midst of our busy urban lives," said Chandra Henry, Principal of Peterson Middle School.

Ildiko Stennis, a Science Teacher at Peterson Middle School, shared that this outdoor classroom was once a sports field.

"This was flat topography. Bryan Osborne created the hills and dug the trenches here," Stennis said. "With Dan Baer and his students, he dedicated his lunches, before school and after school time and weekends to create, maintain and restore this area. Bryan and Dan put up monitoring systems, probes, and cameras to collect scientific data."

Stennis explained that each of her student groups become experts on one of the various biological communities depicted in the Nature Area.

"I've been learning about the amphibian restoration community," said Linda Chang, 12, a Peterson student. "It's mostly these little ponds that are covered in duckweed. It looks like you can walk on the duckweed. But if you were to try that, you would sink through to the water underneath."

"I've been learning about the chaparral community," said Sean Osawa, 13, a Peterson student. "It's a hot and dry environment with shrubs and small trees. This kind of community can be a fire hazard during the summer."