

# Time will tell if more of the same or change is needed

I once had a supervisor tell me that he didn't want me to come to him with a problem unless I also came to him with solutions. When Dr. Rodriguez started his job as the Trinidad School District 1 superintendent he pointed out three areas where our educational system is failing. The first area was the food service operation. The second was our academic achievement. The third was the budget. With each of these problems Dr. Rodriguez told the school board that they could be fixed.

After years of failure in the food service operation, the state was threatening to pull funding if it wasn't fixed by last December. After some hard accountability and a controversial policy that no longer allowed students to eat now and pay later, the food service operation appears to finally be on track.

Academic achievement

## SOUND OFF



Vic Meyers is a former member of the Trinidad Independent School District #1

is a problem that will take longer to solve. Before the problem can be fixed everybody has to admit that there is a problem. The economist John Kenneth Galbraith once said, "Faced with the choice between changing one's mind and proving that there is no need to do so, almost every-

**Academic achievement is a problem that will take longer to solve. Before the problem can be fixed everybody has to admit that there is a problem.**

one gets busy on the proof." When Dr. Rodriguez brought the Compass Learning program to the district there were some who rapidly got busy trying to prove how it wasn't only not needed but that it was a bad idea. Teachers complained about it. Students then complained about it. The group called CPAC told people that Dr. Rodriguez wasted school funds on it,

even though it was paid for with a federal grant.

CSAP (now TCAP) is the measuring stick by which the state judges our students' academic success or failure. Dr. Rodriguez had his staff identify the students who most needed intervention according to CSAP and other assessment tools. He then had them placed in the Compass Learning program. In March he reported to the school board that the program was working and offered data as evidence. Still, some argued that Compass Learning is a bad thing and questioned the veracity of the data. Last week the state released the third grade reading TCAP results.

There were 90 third graders at Fishers Peak Elementary who took the TCAP test. Of those 90, 33 were identified last fall as needing help based upon their scores in other assessment tools used by the dis-

trict. 32 of the 33 completed the Compass Learning program.

Of the 32 students who made academic gains, half of them moved into the Proficient category.

This helped move our third grade students, overall, to a level of 78 percent Proficient or Advanced. The state average is 74 percent.

We'll know more when scores for other subjects and other grade levels are released in August but, so far, it appears that Compass Learning is proving to be a very valuable tool.

Where the budget is concerned, Dr. Rodriguez showed the school board where things aren't nearly as good as they'd been led to believe. He then engaged the community more than any of his predecessors. He's laid out the data and demanded accountability and responsibility in how the district spends taxpayer dollars. He'll soon propose

next year's budget for the school board. If we take him at his word then we can expect the budget to be balanced and structured around the academic needs of the students more than any special interests.

As the group calling itself CPAC prepares to launch its recall effort against board members who don't support firing Dr. Rodriguez we can't help but wonder: Will this community follow the lead of the city council and force out somebody who brings results and higher expectations? Or will they try and prove that the status quo is needed more than change is? Time will tell.

To submit an op-ed piece for consideration for publication, contact Editor Michael Hiesiger at mhiesiger@trinidadchronicle.com or at 719-846-3311, ext. 209

## LETTERS

### Reader says council will get uppance

Dear Editor:  
This letter is to address the idiocy and incompetency of the Trinidad City Council.

I have read as much information as I could get my hands on, in addition to

one on one chats with folks for and against the farcical charades of the council members.

My conclusion is thus: SHAME ON YOU (John Rino, Alfredo Pando, Linda Velasquez, Joe Bonato).

You were voted in to represent the town and people of Trinidad not to stroke your own egos or ful-

fill personal agendas.

Your actions to vilify and ultimately fire Ed Gil de Rubio, whose only "inept" action was to give Trinidad the best the budgets could offer (i.e., HIS JOB), is absolutely beyond reproach.

You four made a personal vendetta against this man, seemingly because he

scratched the exterior of your little pocket of power.

You forgot, and or ignored, the basic fact that you are representatives of the people, not your cousin, best friend, sales associates or other members of your personal circles. You have blatantly ignored your responsibilities to the city in lieu of your self-inflicted

self-importance. And that is just plain wrong.

In conclusion, true, I no longer live in Trinidad. The antics of the council had no bearing on my leaving, but it certainly has an effect on how I will describe the city to acquaintances who want to visit, and that is not favorable. I understand that Mr. Gil De Rubio

may sue the city for wrongful dismissal and or other items, and I hope he does.

You four seem to have forgotten a basic rule of life: What goes around comes around. You will get your come uppance, and you will deserve it.

Susan Miner  
Cave Creek, Ariz.

# Raton High salutatorian named as National Merit Scholar

By Tim Keller  
Special to The Chronicle-News

RATON — James Neary has been named a National Merit Scholar, one of only 15,000 high school students in the U.S. to make the cut from 1.5 million students initially evaluated.

Neary graduates Friday night as salutatorian of Raton High School's class of 2012; he has accepted a four-year full-ride academic scholarship to the University of New Mexico.

The National Merit Scholarship Corp. assesses more than 1.5 million high school juniors every year through the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. After evaluating critical reading, mathematics, and writing skills, NMSC qualifies the top 50,000 students — the top 3 percent —



Tim Keller/Special to The Chronicle-News

James Neary has been named a National Merit Scholar, one of only 15,000 in the U.S. out of 1.5 million high school students evaluated.

for recognition in the National Merit Scholarship Program.

At the beginning of the

senior year, the top 2 percent receive letters of commendation. By February, the number is winnowed down to the top 1 percent. Those students, including Neary, can then be accepted to universities as National Merit Scholars.

In the fall, Neary will move into the honors wing of Hokona Hall at UNM in Albuquerque. He plans to major in psychology or neuroscience. After earning a master's degree, he hopes to enter law enforcement, perhaps for the federal government in the field of interrogation or profiling.

His math teacher, Mary B. Mitchell, says he can do it.

"James excels in abstract thought. He applies concepts discussed in class to new situations outside the boundaries of our class discussions. He quickly

analyzes details, then generalizes the patterns to apply to new problems."

Neary's mother, Barbara Neary, says, "There's been a handful of teachers who have gone well beyond what was required of them as educators to nurture and challenge James."

She includes Raton teachers Jo Ahlm, Robert Bauler, and Leo Linsky. "Mr. Linsky challenged James, both to expand his base of knowledge and to hone his skills. He taught James how to think, as opposed to what to think."

Neary credits some of his teachers all the way back to Catherine Werbelow, his Socorro gifted teacher in grades 2 and 3.

Growing up in three areas of New Mexico, his first five years were spent living in a tiny wood-heated house in the Urraca Wildlife Area, 35 miles north of Taos. The next five years, he attended public school while living in Socorro. At age 11, Neary and his younger sister Tess joined the family's move to Raton, where father Chris Neary is now the northeast area chief of New Mexico Game & Fish.

Chris Neary credits his kids' successes to their being asked by adults for

their thoughts. "I'm pretty sure anyone would respond the same way to being appreciated for their efforts to be thoughtful," he says.

Asked which has been most significant, nature or nurture, James Neary reckons it's been 60/40 in favor of nurture.

He largely credits his family for both. His grandfather, John Neary of Tesuque, N.M., was a writer for Life magazine. "He had a metal shop and a wood shop behind his house. He'd let me and Tess build things in there."

Barbara Neary adds, "Coming from a family of scientists and journalists, James comes by inquisitiveness about the universe and love of writing naturally. His grandfather, John, encouraged James to research and support his opinions with facts, dig deeper, and consider the implications and applications of his conclusions."

James Neary is a voracious reader of books and periodicals ranging as widely as Douglas Adams and Aristotle, plus The New Yorker magazine.

"I love doing things outdoors," he says. "I hike, hunt, and fish as much as I possibly can. I camp with my family a lot, usually in

the Valle Vidal or the Pecos Wilderness.

"But, maybe more than anything, I love to write. I mess around with poetry and I write non-fiction when I have to, but fiction is definitely my greatest love, as far as writing. I do hope to keep it up. Maybe after a career, I can try to return to the mountain, live on it, after I've seen enough of the world to write anything."

With awards for poetry, non-fiction, and fiction, James Neary last week was named Writer of the Year at Raton High School's annual Eye of the Tiger Writing Awards.

After a summer spent enjoying nature, the National Merit Scholar will be off to Albuquerque to begin his university studies. With the full-ride scholarship, he'll be able to afford all the time he wants to spend on reading and writing. Given his prolific writing throughout high school, don't bet on him waiting to complete a career before he starts publishing his fiction — perhaps to include a tale of a federal agent who escapes to the Valle Vidal to live by fishing and hunting.

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## TRINIDAD & LAS ANIMAS COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

### ARMED FORCES DAY 2012

# May 19

## Trinidad, Colorado

### SCHEDULE

9:00 to 10:00-Registration at Cimino Park (Convent Street Side) Armed Forces Day Parade Line up on Convent and Modica Streets. Floats enter from Commercial and Cedar Streets

10:00 Dedication of Veterans Park Memorial On Corner of Convent and Modica Streets

11:15 Run For The Wall Bikers Arrive

11:30 Parade Starts at Animas & Main Street, travels to Walnut Grand Marshals

Commanding General Joseph Anderson, Actor Gary Sinise (Lt. Dan from Forest Gump) Vietnam Veteran Bob Ling