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Anne Threlkeld & Zoe Hayward

littleJOYS

The building blocks that make up the identities of people in the Paly community



Sage Loomis



Super Fan Dan



Hailey Beck & Zoe Noratt



Olga Muys



Esther Chung & Alisha Chang



Danny Peters

Each day, Paly students pass by hundreds of their peers as they go to and from their classes, but rarely do they stop to consider who the people around them actually are.

Every person is unique, and Paly students are no exception—from the wide variety of hobbies they have to their most impactful experiences in life, each person has a different story that has shaped who they are today, and who they will become.

To explore the diverse backgrounds and ideas from a variety of Paly figures we have chosen to interview randomly selected individuals on Paly campus to share their story.

Daily Joys

For junior Itzel Torres, her passions include basketball, which she aspires to continue pursuing in college.

“I play [basketball] almost every day,” Torres said. “It motivates me to keep going in life and keep working hard.”

Although they seem simple, routine actions people implement into their daily rituals often help Paly students start and finish their days strong.

For senior Olga Muys, greeting her cat every morning is a small action that sets her day in motion.

“Just seeing him in the morning is a moment that makes me happy and helps me get ready for the day,” Muys said.

Sophomore Zoe Hayward also finds joy in spending time with loved ones, and eating dinner with her family is something that she credits with bringing a satisfying end to each day.

“It’s really nice talking to [my family], spending time with them and going over what happened in my day,” Hayward said.

In a community so overrun by academic pressure, simple everyday actions help Paly students manage the stress they face.

Paly sophomore Esther Chung has accumulated a variety of ways that she finds helpful to manage her stress.

“What I like to do to destress is to go on small walks around my neighborhood, listen to music and try to not let all [of] the things I have going on, like school, get to me,” Chung said.

Little Distressors

Chung often turns to the advice of her older sister when overwhelmed in order to remind herself of the importance of looking at the bigger picture. Doing so helps her recognize things like the fact that having one assignment not going her way will not have a significant impact on the future.

“I feel like [for] students, a lot of their lives revolve around grades and college but look at the bigger picture,” Chung said. “My sister said that you don’t need to stress about every single assignment, which can help balance your well-being and mental health, social life, as well as school.”

Sophomore Alisha Chang follows a similar approach to managing stress. Instead of dwelling on the bad, Chang is motivated to keep a positive mindset.

“What calms me down when things are getting bad is focusing on what’s going well,” Chang said.

Focusing on the positives in life can help remind someone of what is going right, rather than focusing on what could go wrong. Chang has used her strategy to help manage her anxiety and view herself in a positive way.

The different experiences students have play a significant role in shaping who they have become today.

“I think my younger self would think I’m a lot more silly than I used to be. Honestly I used to be way too serious as a child, so I don’t think it’s a bad thing.”

Olga Muys, senior

Many Past

Many students, like senior Danny Peters, have lived in other places before moving to Palo Alto.

“I moved here from Half Moon Bay when I was five,” Peters said. “It was a cool experience [to live in Half Moon Bay], but was a change from the beach vibe to more of a city vibe when I moved to Palo Alto.”

The environments that people live in can have a large impact on the events in their lives. When Hayward was starting sixth grade, she moved to Palo Alto from Alameda, which served as a major turning point in her life.

“Moving to Palo Alto when I was younger was the most impactful moment in my life,” Hayward said. “I met a lot of new

people and friends, and that's shaped who I am."

The friends and encounters students have with people often have a large influence on students' lives, from the support and valuable lessons they learn. For Torres, her mom has served as a significant role model in her life and impacted who she is as a person.

"I really appreciate how patient she is with me and my dad and all my siblings," Torres said. "She's taught me a lot of lessons throughout my life."

The birth of Torres' younger sister was a life-changing event that has heavily impacted her.

"It taught me a lot," Torres said. "I was able to learn at a young age the way people grow and develop."

Transformative events like these allow people to develop their character by pushing them out of their comfort zones.

For senior Saam Mohsenian, moments where he faced his fears have been especially important. While in Hawai'i, Mohsenian overcame his fear of cliff jumping.

"I just took it with an open mind and jumped," Mohsenian said.

The decision to face fears, small or large, allows a person to gain confidence in trying new things, which helps people discover more about themselves.

Paly's Super Fan Dan never expected to attend all of Paly's sporting events.

"I think my younger self [would] be surprised [by] who I am and what I'm doing today," Dan said. "When I was younger I wasn't an athlete."

Despite not being what Super Fan Dan expected, supporting the athletes is one of Dan's main joys in life.

"It's nice to be able to support the athletes," Dan said. "I love the athletes. It brings out the best in me."

New Beginnings

Despite the future being unknown, Paly students have a variety of different goals that they are trying to achieve. For students like senior Hailey Beck, finding a job that can ensure financial stability is their dream. However, for students like Chung, finding what that

job is, is the ultimate goal.

"I still don't know what I want to do when I grow up," Chung said. "Just finding something that I actually enjoy and pursuing it, that is my main goal."

Senior Jasmine Kapadia shares this sentiment and holds great value in doing something that will make herself proud.

"[My goal is] just making my childhood self proud," Kapadia said. "I want to accomplish the things that she wanted to do and become someone who would make all my past selves happy."

Although Kapadia has not done all the things her younger self thought she would, Kapadia still believes her younger self would be proud.

"My younger self was very ambitious, but she'd be proud that I'm at least taking steps to where I want to be," Kapadia said.

Balancing life can be hard, especially for high school students. However, pushing through the challenges they face has allowed many students to believe that their past selves would be proud of who they are today.

"I think my younger self would be proud just because I got into college," Beck said.

Growing up has also caused some students to be different than they once thought they would be.

"I think my younger self would think I'm a lot more silly than I used to be," Muys said. "Honestly, I used to be way too serious as a child, so I don't think it's a bad thing."

Chung also believes that her past self would be proud, and shares Muys' experience of growing into a new person.

"Back then, I always wondered who I would be, who I would be friends with," Chung said.

Every student has small things that shape who they are, the events and people in their lives impacting their sense of motivation and their aspirations. While outside influences can play important roles in the growth of one's identity, what is most important is to stay true to one's self.

"Be yourself," Hayward said. "That's the best thing you could do."

"I still don't know what I want to do when I grow up. Just finding something that I actually enjoy and persuing that is my main goal."

Esther Chung, sophomore



Itzel Torres



Adrian Faust



Jasmine Kapadia