



Upcoming CHS Events

CHS Fashion Show
February 24, 2017
6:00pm – 8:00pm

The 4th annual Fashion Show features local food and clothing businesses from Monmouth and Ocean counties. See CHS students, teachers, and staff's children walk the runway and model fashions from local clothing stores to help raise money for senior prom.

CHS PSFA 13th Annual
Dinner Gift Raffle
"Under the Sea"
Jumping Brook Country Club,
Neptune, NJ
Sat., March 25, 2017
Basket Viewing 6pm
Dinner/Raffle 7pm – 11pm

[You're Invited!](#)

Click on the link to view your invitation and access the reservation and raffle ticket information. Invitation can also be found on page 5 of the newsletter. Reunite with friends and fellow alumni and sit together at a table reserved just for you. We hope to see there!

Next Issue

Our next newsletter will be published [May, 2017](#).

Happy New Year!

Welcome to our second issue of *CHS Alumni News* and best wishes for a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year! We thank you for your support and look forward to connecting with more of you throughout the year. Please help us spread the word to your friends, family, and acquaintances that attended CHS. We would love to share your photos, stories, and memories in our newsletter. Please contact us via email at alumni@chs-psfa.org.

Also, if you haven't already done so, please take a moment to answer our [online survey](http://chs-psfa.org/alumni/) (<http://chs-psfa.org/alumni/>) so that we can better serve you! All responses will be kept strictly confidential and will be used for planning future alumni events and initiatives. Thank you!

- Carol Pardee and Vivien Cheng, CHS-PSFA Alumni Committee Co-Chairs

Company Spotlight – Custom Video Productions

Each issue features an organization where our alumni either mentored or were employed. This month, we highlight Custom Video Productions, Inc., located in Red Bank, NJ, and Frank Farrell, Founder and President.

Custom Video Productions offers a wide range of multimedia services for all types of businesses, from corporate clients such as Bartlett Tree Experts, Meridian Health Care, Bayer, Lilly, and CareOne, to advertising agencies like Thinkso Creative. Special video capabilities include aerial drone cinematography, time-lapse videos, quick draw videos, as well as web development.

Their creative team of directors, editors, scriptwriters, and designers handle the entire production process and each client gets a custom video production that meets their budgetary and creative needs. CVP's hands on approach helps to shape a client's ideas and message into an engaging visual experience.

Frank Farrell, Founder and President of CVP, was kind enough to answer some questions about his business and his experience with the CHS Mentorship Program.

Q: When was your company established? How did your business come about?

I launched my business in 1978, while a junior in high school. As a kid, I was always drawn to audio, video, and electronics. I love storytelling and communicating with the people around me so starting Custom Video Productions was a natural extension.

Q: How many employees do you have currently?

2 full-time and many freelancers and permalancers.

Q: Where do you see your business in the future?

I see us as the "go to" for all a client's media needs. We are like an ad agency without the traditional hassle and expense. In terms of technology, the business is moving towards virtual reality and augmented reality.

Q: What would you say are some of the key elements for starting and running a successful business?

I would say discipline is the most important element. I would also suggest that you take a few business classes as well.

Q: How many years have you been involved with the CHS Mentorship Program?

8 years.

Q: How many students do you mentor each semester?

We are currently mentoring two students, one from CHS and one from Collier High School.

Q: Describe a typical day for the mentee.

There is no typical day as it depends on the mentee's willingness to learn. It's important for them to come in with a clear purpose in mind.

Q: Have any mentees been hired as full-time employees?

Yes, many students have been hired. One of our team members, Chris Demarest started as an intern from CHS and now oversees our day-to-day operations.

Q: In general, what qualities and skills are beneficial for employment at your business?

You have to be able to tell a story and you have to know how to use the tools (e.g., Adobe Premier and Final Cut Pro).

Q: What advice would you give to our current senior class?

First and foremost, have a goal! Take some business courses in addition to your film courses and definitely apprentice or intern to get hands-on experience. Know where you want to be in the future!

Q: Would you be interested in speaking at our next Career Day?

Yes, definitely!

Alumni Reflections

Rachel Belli, Class of 2012

Associate Producer, News 12 New Jersey

Rachel graduated from Florida Southern College in 2016 and began working at News 12 New Jersey shortly thereafter.

I didn't think it would be possible for me to enjoy work as much as I enjoyed school, but after five months in the broadcast industry, I stand corrected. I work as an Associate Producer (and Producer, some days) at News 12 New Jersey. My primary responsibility is to help shape the content of our newscasts, including writing the scripts that the anchors read on-air. I am in awe every day of how fortunate I am to do what I love, and it is because of CHS that I was able to take this path.

Being a graduate of CHS taught me to thrive in the fast-paced, high-pressure environment that is the field of television news. My classmates and I would joke (but really, there was more truth to the statement than anything) that we "grew up" in the broadcast studio at Communications. We learned so much more in that studio and on our trips to STN than just technical aspects of broadcast journalism. We learned to be detail-oriented and exceptionally accurate with our facts. We learned to work well under deadline, not only as individuals but also as a cohesive team. We learned to stand up for what we believed in and find a way to tell the stories that needed to be told. And most importantly, we learned to be ambitious and especially brave. We were given the tools we needed to thrive in one of the most competitive fields (and regions) of the communications industry and for that, I am forever grateful. With every shift I work at News 12, I think about CHS and how it helped launch me into my dream job so early on. From using AP Style, to picking a perfect sound byte, there isn't a day that goes by that I don't use a skill I was taught at Communications High School. To all of our teachers and staff who made our four years so wonderful: "Thank you" doesn't begin to cover it.

Tara (Strazdas) Dunn, Class of 2007

Marijuana Communications Specialist, Colorado Dept. of Public Health and Education; Part-time Dance Instructor

You know when you're a little kid and people tell you that you can be anything you want when you grow up? I don't know if I ever really believed that until now – just a short five years after graduating college and four jobs later.



Tara and a handful of her CHS '07 friends at her bridal shower last March. From left, Stephanie Tuazon, Allie Blom, Jessie Shabin, Tara Strazdas, Christina Tobia, Katrina Tuazon, and Amanda Gruskos.

It's been nearly ten years since I walked out of CHS for the last time, but the experiences I had and the friends I made are still helping to shape what comes next for me. I am so impressed by the collective success of our grade because we all have gone on to do the things that mean the most to us – even if that means straying from the norm. From graphic designers turned acrobats to marketers turned first grade teachers, it's exciting to see everyone find their niches. Others, like me, are still trying to find that perfect balance and a way to combine two very separate lives into one.

Rewind to high school and the consensus was that I was going to be an Irish dancer when I grew up. It didn't matter that Irish dance wasn't a normal career choice. That's just what I was going to be. Jump to present day and four jobs later and the only consistent thing in my life has been Irish dance. Since college, I've worked in public relations and marketing—becoming an expert in industries I knew nothing about. But, being a part-time Irish dance teacher, I've also been lucky enough to do something that just feels right.

As I look at my former classmates who have taken the plunge to pursue their passions as full time careers, I predict it's only a matter of time until I follow suit. Moral of the story? Do what you love, and try not to wait too long to do it.

Amanda Vega-Malinowski, Class of 2004

Director of Communications and Marketing, New Jersey Charter Schools Association (NJCSA)

Amanda joined NJCSA in August 2014 and is responsible for the organization's strategy and execution of communications and marketing. Before joining NJCSA, Amanda was a founding teacher of the Paulo Freire Charter School for high school Spanish and a 2012 Teach for America Greater Newark corps member. Prior to teaching at the Paulo Freire Charter School, she was a junior publicist at Scholastic Children's Books in New York City. Working in both publishing and academic settings provided Amanda with opportunities to work with children, the media, and educational organizations, where she was able to blend her passion for strong communications with her strong belief in an equitable and excellent education for all students.

In May 2011, Amanda completed a master's degree in communications at New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development. She graduated from Fordham University's Lincoln Center campus in 2008 with a dual-degree in communications media theory and Spanish literature where she was first exposed to communications developed for children.

Seniors are submitting their college applications and I strongly encourage you to explore study abroad opportunities beginning in your Freshman year. Visit the office of Student Affairs and ask to be connected with seniors who have returned from being abroad to get perspectives on different cities and experiences-and which majors can transfer credits. There's a lot to be said for traveling in the fall of junior year (instead of the spring). For me, it meant I could graduate earlier which allowed me to get ahead of the May/June college graduate employment rush. Regardless of how you schedule study abroad, it can be one of the greatest opportunities, and there are many programs available to help you do it within your budget.

Career Day Recap

The following article, written by Grace Badger, is a reprint from the December 4, 2016 issue of *The Inkblot*.

Annual Career Day brings wide range of jobs to CHS

An actor, a golfer, a politician, a lawyer, and a crowd of other professionals walk into a school. Three hours later, they leave having shared their work experiences with hundreds of ambitious students. That is precisely what happened on December 2, at the Communications High School Career Day organized by the SkillsUSA club.

"It had been a long process and the club worked so hard to bring this event to fruition. We had to find speakers, assign a SkillsUSA member to every speaker and organize everything from t-shirts to gift bags to desserts," said President of SkillsUSA Senior Sarah Lynch of Interlaken.

After four condensed periods and a regular lunch, students clamored to find room to hear from professionals from various career areas. Rooms were overflowing with enthusiastic students. Many students had to be ushered out of the rooms of popular speakers due to limited space.

Junior Katie Gibson of Wall noted the prevalence of the type of speakers selected.

"My experience at career day was great because there were so many different careers that I was interested in like graphic design and advertising. It fit very well with the theme of the school," said Gibson.

More than half of the 17 speakers worked in the communications field including keynote speaker and CHS alumni Rachel Belli.

"In my presentation, I talked about the path I took to land a position at News 12 immediately after graduation and the obstacles I encountered along the way. I really wanted students to understand that there is a way to 'do it all' and get a dream job right after college. I also wanted to explain what it takes to make it in the industry and how students can set themselves apart as they begin the job search," said Belli

Belli's alumni status was commented on by Sophomore Vivian DeRosa of Ocean.

"I loved that our speaker was from CHS. I thought it was great to see what we could become in the future."

Many of the other speakers were also affiliated with the school in some way or another. According to SkillsUSA advisor Mrs. Maher, there were seven alumni and six family members of the students or faculty including Software Engineer and alumni Nick Bobryk of Vydia.

"It was really fun to be back at my high school, get the chance to share my experiences with the students, and catch up with my old teachers," said Bobryk.

13th Annual Dinner Gift Raffle Invitation



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