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Siren Calls of Careers Tantalize Teens on Journey Fueled by Indecision

By Julie Khidekel

Acalanes High School senior Megan Ellery is a wanderer. Unlike many of her peers who have concrete plans for their distant futures - college course selections, majors, and meal times included - Ellery is unsure of where her future will lead her. In a society where many pre-teens already have specific dreams of entering the field of medicine or the fast-paced world of professional sports, Ellery seeks to embrace the freedom that comes with youth and not constrain herself to a particular career.

"There is way too much pressure on high school students to decide what career path they want to follow," said Ellery. "The pressure is especially taxing and unnecessary due to the fact that kids at that age constantly change their minds and interests, and therefore are generally unfit to make such concrete decisions."

Such pressure rears its head in a variety of forms, but typically instills the same fear among teens grappling with indecision. From headstrong students who plan to become Astrobiologists to the countless talk of jobs, majors, and career fairs that pervades the high school scene, students who don't have a definitive plan for the future often feel alienated.

"This pressure gets to me and many of my friends especially around this time of year when we start applying to colleges," said Campolindo High School senior Mimi Ericson. "I always feel like I'm not good enough to live up to the expectations that are put on kids in high school. This stress also causes me to question potential careers because I feel like it might be better in the long run to pick another that would give me more money and so-called greater success in life."

But, while some students find this pressure to be destructive and unnecessary, others thrive on it.

"I'll end up with an engineering or science degree and just roll with it, taking whatever job I get that isn't too dull," said Acalanes senior Erich Ellsworth, already anticipating a career in science.

According to Ellery, high school career dreams are by no means iron-clad. While the pressure to choose a career shows no signs of relenting, students and ideas change daily. Teens who preach their devotion to the world of finance one day may find themselves pursuing performance art or accepting indecision the next.

"Bottom line, I still have time to decide," said Ellery. "Societal pressures or not, anything can happen."

Julie Khidekel is an Acalanes High School senior. She is Editor-in-Chief of the Acalanes Blueprint newspaper and loves Lafayette.

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