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AUHSD's Teacher of the Year

By Diane Claytor



Katherine Walton, Acalanes High School

Photo Diane Claytor

Katherine Walton loves her job. That's apparent the minute she starts talking about it. As both a special education teacher and leadership advisor, Walton proclaims that she has her dream job. "It's the perfect blend for me. I get to teach special ed, which I dearly love and where my heart is," she said, "but I also love student activities and the culture they create on campus. And I get to do them both!"

This year, Walton, after only five years at Acalanes, received quite an honor: she was named the Acalanes Union High School District Teacher of the Year. She is one of only 22 TOYs in Contra Costa County — and that's out of approximately 8,400 teachers educating our children in the county's public schools.

"I'm super humbled," Walton stated. "It really goes back to the

staff I work with. No award nor work is done in isolation. For me, with both my roles, I really depend on my peers and I'm lucky to have colleagues that have allowed me to learn from them, depend on them and grow with them."

Born and raised in Southern California with a mother who was a special education teacher, Walton was convinced she didn't want to follow that same path. She got her undergraduate degree in political science and a master's degree in higher administration. But while undergoing a medical treatment, she "suddenly had a revelation of what I wanted to do with my life." Admitting that she wasn't interested in going back to school and wanting to experience life somewhere different, Walton was accepted to Oakland Teaching Fellows, a program that recruits, selects and trains college graduates

and working professionals to become educators.

"Moving to Oakland is probably the best choice I've made — besides my husband," Walton said with a twinkle in her eye. She was able to get her credential while teaching special ed at Oakland's Castlemont High School and proudly said she was fortunate to work with an amazing staff that supported and mentored her.

Admitting that "I'm never complacent with where I am and always want to build and grow and become better," Walton moved to Acalanes to gain a different experience and learn even more.

Obviously it was the right decision.

In her primary role as the special ed teacher, Walton works with students who have mild to moderate disabilities, offering additional support to help them succeed in their general ed classes. Working with these kids one or two periods a day, she designs a curriculum that addresses their specific needs, such as reading, writing or organization skills. "I'm also in constant communication with their general ed teachers to make sure the students are doing well or determine if they need extra help." She typically has these students all four years. "That's one of my favorite parts of this program," noted Walton, who's pregnant with her first child. "I get to see them come in as freshmen, work with them, watch them develop and grow and then cheer them on as they graduate."

As the leadership advisor, Wal-



Are you interested in becoming a School Board Member?

The Lafayette School District has four Governing Board seats up for election in November 2018. Three seats are a four(4) year term and one seat is a two (2) year term.

To learn more about the role of a Governing Board Member, please attend an information workshop on Monday, June 4, 2018 at 5:30 p.m. in the Lafayette School District Board Room, 3477 School Street. Contact Sharon Carman at (925) 927-3502 or scarman@lafsd.org for additional information.

ton also works with all four grade levels, which she believes provides the students with a great opportunity to know others they wouldn't necessarily get to meet. "Kids have often told me that one of the best parts of leadership is that they're able to create relationships across grade levels," she stated.

Leadership, with student government at its core, is the group that provides most of the extra curricular activities on campus, including school dances, lunchtime activities and freshman orientation. But it's so much more, Walton emphasized. "For me, it's all about developing the skills the kids will need after high school — skills like organization, communication, working with a team. As I tell my students, 'I want you to walk out in June having stronger leadership skills than you had when you entered in August.'"

With 45 students in each of her two leadership classes, Walton is definitely busy. But she firmly believes that "if a student wants to be a part of something, wants to find a way to serve their community, it's important for me to help them accomplish that."

"Katherine is by far the hardest working teacher on campus," exclaimed Marissa Meadows, Acalanes' Academic Counselor. "She has a crazy amount of energy ... she never seems overwhelmed and is always willing to add something else to her plate. She is one of those people who can do all the things and do them well." Noting that Walton "gives 150 percent everyday," and calling her "the energizer bunny in human form," Meadows exclaimed unequivocally that Walton "absolutely" deserved to be selected AUHSD's Teacher of the Year.

PG&E on track to start work on June 7

By Sophie Braccini

St Marys Road Replacement Project
June–August

For more information, contact Julian Lacson at 1-925-459-8097

PG&E Together, Building a Better California

Project map Provided

The replacement of one mile of PG&E gas pipeline under St. Mary's Road and the closure of the arterial during the summer are in no way as controversial as the tree removal project in Lafayette (see article page A3) and the recent Lafayette information session on May 23 did not draw crowds.

Residents on both sides of the Lafayette-Moraga borders have questions, however, mainly pertaining to access routes and detours.

The town of Moraga and the city of Lafayette have confirmed that the utility agency secured the required encroachment permits to start work on June 7, closing the

arterial Monday through Saturday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. until Aug. 14. The construction plan has been updated to permit street access at all times for residents whose only outlet is St. Mary's Road.

The three-phased approach will start by closing two sections of road between Lucille and just

south of Rohrer Drive, and below Driftwood Drive to Wallabi Court, north of Cattle Chute Road. The scheduled time allocated for this first phase is June 7 to July 12. The small section between Camino Colorados and Driftwood will stay open, giving Driftwood residents a detour through Camino Colorados, Rohrer and Merriewood Drive. Residents from Cattle Chute Road and south of that road will have to travel on Rheem Boulevard and Moraga Road to reach Lafayette.

Phase 2 from July 6 to Aug. 3 will close the road between Wallabi and south of Bollinger Canyon Road, just before Rheem Boulevard. Phase 3 will address the small section starting north of Camino Colorados to Driftwood. The repair of the valve at Lucille Lane should not impact traffic.

Julian Lacson of PG&E confirmed that first responders would have access to any part of the road at any time. The road will not in fact be dug across its entire width, and Lacson said that clearing a passage for emergency vehicles should not add any delay to their response time. PG&E representatives are scheduled to meet with emergency services this week. The dynamic will be the same for residents reaching or leaving their

homes if no detour is available, but no through traffic will be permitted.

Electronic signs were installed along St. Mary's Road mid-May to alert motorists of the impending closures. PG&E representative Tamar Sarkissian said that approximately 3,500 customers in the Moraga and Lafayette areas have received letters from PG&E outlining the work. A second public meeting will be held tonight, May 30 from 7 to 9 p.m. at Saint Mary's College in Claeys Lounge at the Soda Center.

Additionally, Sarkissian said that PG&E representatives will be canvassing the Bluffs area and other homes located off Bollinger Canyon Road in Moraga to alert customers and address their questions.

The Lafayette and Moraga public works departments explain that this is not their project and that questions should be directed to PG&E. The contact person is Lacson, who can be reached at (925) 459-8097. He confirmed on May 25 that the agency would have a page available on its website for updates. The agency's information team has also posted on social media and asked if it could access Nixle, the emergency response text messaging system.

Lawyers battle over Measure L at Lafayette city council meeting

... continued from page A1

"Virtually every item that the city attorney has detailed to you tonight is incorrect," said Gary Garfinkle, attorney for Save Lafayette. Garfinkle asserted that the apartment complex has never been approved, and would face the same obstacles as before if the developer elects to revive the project — including a "devastating 2013 environmental impact report," rejection by two city commis-

sions and the possibility of a referendum.

He insisted that the Terraces cannot be approved without a general plan amendment, because if the apartment complex is resurrected, the project would be inconsistent with the city's general plan, making the development subject to a referendum.

And if the city did approve the apartment complex anyway,

the development would be subject to a referendum, "one of the most precious rights of our democratic process," Garfinkle wrote in a letter to the council.

According to Mayor Don Tatzin, the only certainty over the Deer Hill measure is further legal action. "I don't know how Measure L will do," Tatzin said. "I don't know what the developer will do if it fails, whether to



Measure L combatants: different messages, different delivery styles.

Photos Nick Marnell

negotiate a new project or bring back the apartments. Any decision after that will not be made

by this council but made in court, because whoever doesn't win is going to sue."