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Campo's new principal is no stranger to Moraga

By Vera Kochan



Campolindo's Principal Pete Alvarez with his extensive "Mr. Potato Head" collection Photo Vera Kochan

Campolindo High School's new principal, Pete Alvarez, officially took over the reins on July 1 from John Walker, who was promoted to Acalanes Union High School District Associate Superintendent of Educational Services after a 10-year run at the school.

Born in San Francisco, Alvarez is Bay Area home-grown, going to high school in Napa. His first stint in Moraga came when he attended Saint Mary's College, earning a BA in history and an MA in educational leadership. Before coming to Campo, he spent 12 years as the principal for a high school in Colorado.

"I never thought that I'd be back here," Alvarez commented. "Nothing much has changed, but I was surprised to see that the bowling alley was gone." While at SMC, he took a bowling class that was worth a quarter of a credit.

Commenting on the rest of Moraga, Alvarez stated, "It's relaxing and offers a lot of the things people are looking for, especially the schools. When I was coming back from Colorado, I wanted to find a school that was special and Campolindo was it." He also believes in challenges, and after 12 years he felt it was time for a new one.

Speaking of challenges, Alvarez contracted COVID his first week on the job. Once he was able to assume his duties, he set about gaining the trust of the community and getting to know his students and staff. Uppermost on his mind was, "Campo is so high-performing, how do you get the needle to move higher?"

When asked how receptive the students have been to him, Alvarez replied, "The students have been awesome. I've been a principal for 19 years. I like to be around students, and staff, and parents. I feel incredibly blessed and am building relationships more and more every day. I love high school!"

Alvarez has plans to initiate some new programs at Campo. "One of the things that I'm looking at is, what are our needs? I want an increased and improved peer tutoring program. I also want every family to be able to participate in every program that Campo has to offer regardless of their financial status." He also wants to expand the Woodshop Program to offer a focus on engineering to give kids an added career benefit from the class. Another item on his wish list is to expand the school's Wellness Program in order to meet the social and emotional needs of the students.

Looking to build trust with the students, Alvarez spends as much time as possible in and around campus and being accessible to them. In the works is a Principal Advisory Group that will include 16 students who are tasked with the job of being the pulse of the student body and sharing their findings through conversations with Alvarez. By doing this, he hopes to become aware of what his campus' needs are and what is important to the kids.

Expect to see Campo's students become more visible in the community through philanthropic efforts such as their Leo Club and the more recent Moraga Community Service Day.

Alvarez got to exercise his acting chops recently with his appearance in "Campo Night Live" (a spoof of TV's "Saturday Night Live"). Admitting that he was terrified, he added, "It was my first time on the stage. I had a monologue with my black lab, Steve, about our journey from Colorado."

All in all, Alvarez's excitement is evident and infectious. "It's great to be back in Moraga. It feels like coming home, and with the education level - it's still a special place."

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