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**"I've matured and become more social. Now, I see things in a more realistic light."**

—senior Jason Lindstrom

**How have you changed during high school?**

# winds of change

Time passes us by, forcing us to adapt to new environments and move on to the next stage of life. As we do, the more we realize that the only constant in life can be found in the inconsistent **winds of change**.

## Foreign exchange students experience a new lifestyle in school

by **Christine Chang**

August 12, 2008, marks the day sophomore Anna Warnking took her first steps on American soil. She'd arrived to the Bay Area as a foreign exchange student from Vechta, Germany, eager to spend the year in a country that was so popularized by the media.

But Cupertino turned out to be nothing like the "High School Musical" life she'd seen on television. During Warnking's short stay at Lynbrook High School before transferring to MVHS, she was unexpectedly approached by Asian students who seemed mesmerized by her entirely blond hair and asked to touch it.

That was a far cry from the shades of America she had imagined.

But Warnking, who is staying with junior Jessica Simmons for the year, has gained invaluable experiences as a foreigner to the cultures of Cupertino, which differ starkly from her life in Germany. Similarly, sophomore Stephanie Fischer, who is an exchange student from Sion, Switzerland, has expressed surprise in the steep social learning curve that she's had to overcome at MVHS this year.

"The pressure here and what parents expect of their kids is like...wow. I'm shocked. I've started to appreciate my life [in Switzerland] so much more after seeing all the stress students go through here," Fischer said.

Although European students still excel in academics, Warnking and Fischer describe the compe-

tion there as a lot "less intense." According to Fischer, maintaining perfect grades and test scores are usually not the average high school student's priority in many European countries.

"Where I come from, if you ask students what they're doing over the weekend, they'll probably tell you they're partying or going out to the movies or hanging out at cafés with friends," Fischer said. "Schoolwork is probably one of the last things they'll mention. But here, the first thing people say they do on weekends is always homework or studying."

Warnking and Fischer have gradually adapted to MVHS' academic-heavy environment, but they are still not fully accustomed to the pressure placed on students. The overwhelming emphasis on academics at MVHS as opposed to that in Europe is perhaps the greatest change they have experienced over the course of this year.

"In Germany, everybody has a social life. At MV most people just talk about school. Everything is about school. The social life feels a lot more limited here compared to [that] in Germany," Warnking said. "But I also learn a lot here because I see everyone working so hard and doing so much around me. There is just so much motivation and spirit. When I'm at MV, I want to do more. I want to try this and that. I want to be creative."

Though Warnking's experiences in the Bay Area have been a novelty to her, they have guided her in growing psychologically. One of the most challenging aspects of spending a year as an exchange student is

the fact that Warnking has to handle living in a new place, with new people.

"This is the first time I've been so far away from home and my parents, which is so different from anything I've ever done before," Warnking said. "But you gain so much self-confidence after living on your own in another country. I think this year has brought me more learning than I've had in my whole life."

Both Warnking and Fischer agree that their time spent at MVHS has been one of the most valuable experiences of their lives in terms of becoming more mature and gaining perspective on a completely different culture. It has been a year of adjusting and transitioning and learning they will not soon forget.

"It's a whole different lifestyle here. I can go back and tell people, 'Oh this happened, that happened.' But you really have to deal with it to understand it," Warnking said.

So while MVHS may not resemble the High School Musical lifestyle Warnking and Fischer were expecting, they still admire the unique sense of involvement and character that permeate our student body, as the European schools Warnking and Fischer attended did not share this same kind of exuberance.

"[MV] rallies are amazing. The first time I went to one I was like, 'Wow. No way! I had never seen this before in my life,' Fischer said. "I really love it here. I will definitely miss all the school spirit."

"I've learned how to interact with a variety of people. I have better communication skills."

—senior Bryan Nguyen

"I'm not as shy and am able to be more open when I talk to people."

—senior Felicia Hung

"I have learned a lot about other people's perspectives."

—senior Blake Fitzwater



**"Because of all the opportunities I've had, I am more open-minded, have gained a new perspective and am more confident."**

—senior Shivani Sharma

Pull-out section