

Luncheon Session Held for Former Foster Youth at Cal State East Bay

By Anne Cunningham
Staff Writer

A meet and greet luncheon was hosted Wednesday in the Biella Room of the library at Cal State East Bay to bring former foster youth together for networking and to get to know the new program coordinator of the Renaissance Scholars Program.

Kevin Bristow, program coordinator of the Renaissance Scholars Program, understands the problems and obstacles that former foster youth have getting into college and completing their degrees because he was once a foster youth himself.

"Over 4,000 people emancipate out of the foster youth system in California each year," said Bristow. "Only ten percent of these young adults ever get to college, and of those that do, only one percent actually graduate."

Once a foster youth turns 18, they are basically on their own with very few resources to even support themselves, much less think about higher education. In fact, Bristow said that at least 36 percent of the country's homeless population is former foster youth.

The Renaissance Scholars Program is a bridge to college for former foster youth that provides them with scholarships, housing assistance, counseling and emergency funds.

"My hope is that my experiences, both personal and professional,

within the foster care and education systems will allow me to be a friend and mentor to these students," said Bristow.

FAFSA search," said Bristow.

These scholars have demonstrated their self-reliance, determination, and commitment to succeed, despite their difficult circumstances.

Derrick Easterling is one student who beat the odds. The freshman is a former foster youth whose high school counselor had told him it would be virtually impossible for him to get into a university like CSUEB.

Overcoming drug addiction, he was first inspired by the Independent Living Skills Program in Alameda County. He went on a tour of the CSUEB Hayward campus with other foster youth and heard for the first time that he could enroll.

"I want to become a professional fighter, starting my own academy some day," said Easterling. A specialist in Brazilian jujitsu, he hopes to someday earn his black belt and be able to teach others the discipline. Currently studying kinesiology, he is also thinking about adding some classes in entrepreneurship.

Living on campus with no car, he said one way to help students would be to improve transportation on the hill, adding more shuttle busses. He also sees a need for housing for single mothers to live with their children.

Tempest Jones is another Renaissance Scholar who said the program has been a great help to her, but on-campus housing for her and her young son would help a lot.

Charvett Blincoe, another Renais-

sance Scholar, had her daughter when she was only 16. She said nobody ever told her that college was an option. "I just needed to hear somebody tell me that I could do it. I had never heard that before," said

Blincoe. Blincoe will graduate next year, and her kindergarten-aged daughter will be there to watch her role-model mother walk the big walk as she completes her degree.

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"I will provide them a shoulder to lean on or cry on if they need it. I can totally relate to what they are going through and will get them support and referral services when appropriate. My goal is to create a family atmosphere so they don't feel they are going through this alone."

Bristow said the California Youth Connection, an advocacy group for foster youth, has put forth legislation to waive tuition for former foster youth in California to assist these young adults in future success through the college experience.

"Eighty-three people on the Hayward Hills campus have been identified as former foster youth through a



Renaissance Students: Students who attended the meet and greet and luncheon in the Biella Room at Cal State East Bay today were (from left to right): Derrick Easterling, Kevin Bristow (program coordinator), Donte Rodgers, Charvett Blincoe and Delmarche Elston.

Photo/ Anne Cunningham

Christian Rock's Just Like the Other Type—Only Different

By J. D. Sarginson
Staff Writer

As Chris Tomlin and his band took the stage at the San Jose State Event Center earlier this year, it would have been hard to differentiate his act from any other contemporary rock group.

All the pieces were there: electric guitars, multimedia, dark room, stage lighting. Even amps cranked up to 11.

The difference is that when Tomlin steps up to the microphone, he sings about God.

To a growing number of fans, the difference doesn't really matter. In fact, it makes the music even more attractive.

"It was louder than I expected, and I didn't think there would be so much production value," said Alicia Watkins, who attended the concert. "The lights, the video—all of it was really well done."

The San Jose show was just the fourth stop on Tomlin's "How Great is Our God" tour, a concert that features music from Tomlin's latest album "See the Morning." Also featured on the tour is highly touted Christian songwriter Matt Redman

and speaker Louie Giglio.

Giglio, the leader of a large annual Christian conference called "Passion" that is aimed at college students, is perhaps the greatest giveaway that this is not just another rock and roll show.

After all, how many rock concerts break for 20 minutes so an otherwise un-involved party can take the stage and deliver a message?

But God-talks aside, the gap between popular Christian music and popular culture (in both quality and style) seems to be growing ever slimmer, and much of the stigma attached to Christian music seems to be fading.

To be sure, Tomlin is well beyond the popular Simpsons joke that characterizes Christian music as simply pop music with all of the "babies" changed to "Jesus."

"I love Tomlin's music because of the lyrics," said Sean Cullenward, a Tomlin concert attendee and budding worship leader himself. "It's definitely not the same

old trite 'church-ene' that you usually associate with Christian music."

Regardless of the perceived quality of the lyrics, they are indisputably overt in their intention, and in fact Tomlin himself has been quoted as saying that

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he thinks of himself more as a worship leader than a musician or rock star.

But Christian music as an industry, which collectively sold about 45 million albums last year (up 3.4 percent from 2005), is quickly broadening its influence and, in many cases, further blurring the lines between Christian and secular music. In short, a lot of

emerging Christian acts aren't so obviously Christian.

Though there are many to choose from, perhaps the best two examples of this are Relient K and Switchfoot.

Both have attained reasonable success in the secular music market while maintaining obvious and overt Christian themes and songs (though of the two, only Relient K actually lists itself as a Christian band). In fact, both groups have toured with secular acts, have received play on MTV, and feature songs about non-religious topics (including girls).

And their concerts, like Tomlin's or countless other Christian acts bursting onto the scene, look nearly identical to their mainstream counterparts, right down to the multitude of guitar changes, the thematic stage effects, and the pit area directly in front of the stage jam-packed with concert-goers.

"I got almost all the way up to the stage, and it was a really powerful experience," said Cullenward.

"I've been to concerts before and connected with the music and with fans, but I really felt like there was something bigger than all of that happening tonight."

Settlement Averts Walkout at Cal State East Bay, Other CSUs

Strike, from page one.

CFA Vice President Lillian Taiz pointed out that there are other remaining important issues that the California state university system must face.

"Student fees will be raised by the CSU Trustees if more money is not found this spring. Working to stem the rise in student fees will be important for CFA. Also, new policies are needed on compensation for top CSU executives as well as accountability and openness in how the CSU is managed," said Taiz.

"The CSU administration did the

right thing by agreeing to a contract, based on the fact finder's report, and avoiding a strike. We hope to work together on rebuilding our university after years of tight budgets, growing class sizes (and) loss of teachers. The relationship will improve as the administration shows that it values the faculty and places a top priority on the instruction of students," said Travis.

In the following weeks, the tentative agreement must be finalized into a contract that can then be ratified by the members of the CFA.

Bottom Line Is Black Ink for New Dublin Tattoo Parlor

Tattoo, from page one.

keep giving quality service to the public and be reputable to the tattoo community. He said even if you are good, you can always get better.

"You don't want to keep producing the same thing," he said. "You want to expand, improve, and do different things."

Aside from opening up shop, Groebler has taken on an apprentice, another first for him.

"There's enough tattoo artists in the world, Steven just bugged me a certain way, so I'm teaching him to do tattoos, not become an artist. There's

a huge difference," said Groebler.

Another aim for Stay True is to create a comfortable environment for anyone that walks into the door.

"I do tattoos and even I get intimidated by the people sometimes," says Groebler.

Unlike some shops, Groebler said "Stay True doesn't forget we provide a service. It's a service industry."

After leaving the shop and looking at the sign, it becomes clear the shop name is parallel with the shop ethic, Stay True.

Registration Holds Are New Wrinkle in WST

By Neda Way
Staff Writer

Only 600 students took the Writing Skills Test (WST) in the Fall quarter, compared to 1,200 students who registered to take the test during the Winter quarter.

There was a reason for the sudden jump:

"When I went to register for classes, there was a hold placed on my enrollment status," said Brook Wilt, a Cal State East Bay junior. "This is how I found out about the test."

For many students, registration holds have been their introduction to the University Writing Skills Requirement (UWSR), which is a writing requirement that must be met prior to graduation.

The university requires its students to begin fulfilling the UWSR during their junior year. Students who fail to take action by the end of their first quarter have had holds placed on their registration for the next quarter.

However, starting last quarter, the Testing Office instituted a new process to reduce the surprise element for its junior-standing students.

Instead of placing a hold on students' registration in the second quarter, explained Jeanne Ekdahl, CSUEB's interim director of testing, students will receive a letter by mail informing them of the requirement, how to fulfill it, and that they have one quarter in which to begin taking action.

Students have several options available to them for fulfilling the UWSR: taking the WST, enrolling for one of the specified courses or requesting a waiver to defer the requirement for one quarter.

Then, if students do not take action during the second quarter, a hold will be placed on students' registration preventing enrollment for the next quarter.

This new process offers something of a "grace quarter," said Ekdahl, so students have more time to realize

and fulfill the requirement.

"The registration holds are for students," Ekdahl said, "not for us."

The reason for the change is to encourage students to get the requirement out of the way early instead of being on the verge of graduating only to discover they may need an extra quarter to fulfill the requirement.

Also, last quarter, the Testing Office started advertising the WST and its workshop. Fliers were posted around campus to increase awareness of the writing requirement, and notices ran on the lighted billboard at the top of the Carlos Bee Boulevard entrance.

With these new measures in place, the process will become easier for both students and the university.

"Our job is to make sure you graduate as soon as possible," said Ekdahl. "If we didn't press you (to fulfill this requirement), we wouldn't be doing our job."

The requirement does come with a fee, however: the WST costs \$25 to take, and the courses cost \$25 on top of regular quarterly fees.

"It's a waste of money," said Junior Chris Nguyen, who took the WST this quarter. Undoubtedly, many students agree.

Ekdahl said she isn't surprised students have complained about the fee. She said the \$25 covers a variety of costs: the administration of the test, the reading and scoring of the essays, taking care of calls, and writing reports. It also covers placing holds on student accounts and later withdrawing them manually.

Just gathering all the professors together on a day to score the essays takes a huge amount of logistics and time, said Ekdahl.

"The State isn't giving anybody anything right now," said Ekdahl, and that necessitates passing the costs to the students.

The next round of the WST is scheduled for later this month and the deadline for registration is Friday.

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