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The CIZ Newsletter-A Student Produced News Source in Lamorinda

By Andrea A. Firth



The CIZ staff: Standing (L to R) Marshall Danese, Sidney Liu, Austin Chiao; Seated (L to R) Kyle Chan, Kelly Zhang, and Steven Zhou Photo A. Firth

Steven Zhou's friends describe him as a big idea man. But Zhou is not all talk-he is a man of action. As a ninth grader at Campolindo High School, Zhou has already had more success in the publishing world of the world wide web than many twice his age, and his success has nothing to do with a Facebook page or a social networking site. Zhou is a legitimate news publisher having launched the Congregation of Intelligenz (the CIZ newsletter), a weekly student-produced newsletter in Lamorinda.

Zhou recruited a handful of energetic friends from several Lamorinda schools to serve as contributors and technology support for the CIZ newsletter, which is distributed by email to over 120 students and a few parent subscribers. The newsletter provides school news for Joaquin Moraga and Orinda Intermediate Schools; Acalanes, Campolindo, and Miramonte High Schools; along with community news; and CIZ extras such as riddles, strange facts and jokes.

What motivates Zhou and his staff to work on the CIZ newsletter in addition to the academic demands of middle school and high school? "I guess I'm having a lot of fun," states Zhou, who as editor of the newsletter and the reporter for Campolindo spends about three to four hours each week on the newsletter. He then quickly segues to plans for more special editions, further evidence of his boundless ideas and energy. "I went along with this because Steven has crazy ideas but they work out," adds Austin Chiao who also attends Campolindo and helps with IT support.

Culled from a variety of sources, the goal of the CIZ newsletter is to

communicate news from all the schools in the area and to help students keep current with important events and happenings. "I think it is cool to see what is going on at the schools," states Kelly Zhang, an eighth grader and the CIZ reporter for OIS. "My parents are kind of relying on me for news now," adds Marshall Danese, the CIZ Artistic Designer and Acalanes reporter.

All of the CIZ newsletters are posted at the CIZ website, also created by Zhou and his CIZ team. The website has recently launched a new and unique feature, the CIZ Homework Organizer. According to Zhou, the Organizer is designed to help students by taking the webpages of each of their teachers and putting them on one single page to access and view. Using the Organizer is free. Once a student registers, they can log in at anytime to view their customized master teacher webpage.

Although Zhou believes that he has become more informed through the process of generating the newsletter, he does not see the venture as a purely right-brain activity. "It's a creative outlet. We are doing something different," states Zhou. To check out past issues or subscribe to receive the newsletter go to www.freewebs.com/ciznewsletters/index.htm

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