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2009 Senior Grad Night Plans are Underway

By Jean Follmer

Instead of heading to San Francisco for a wild night of partying, most Lamorinda seniors choose to spend a clean and sober graduation night at their high school. "Grad Night" is the thing to do and the place to be. Given the incredible array of offerings, why would the grads choose to be anywhere else? Some of the past activities have included blow-up games, pinball machines, hypnotists, magic shows, an auction and rock-climbing walls. There is always a DJ and food and non-alcoholic drinks are available throughout the night.

Grad Night is an enormous undertaking that requires numerous volunteer hours on the part of parents; preparations for the 2009 events are already well underway. The Grad Night Committees have to lease the facility from the high school district, hire security and janitors, and arrange for all of the activities and food. They also have to hold safety meetings with the local police and fire marshal. The Grad Night Committees have already picked the themes for 2009, but they're keeping them under wraps to surprise the seniors in the spring. We were able to speak with the Committee Chairs at Campolindo and Miramonte but the Acalanes committee was unavailable for comment.

Campolindo High School traditionally has about a 98% participation rate. "This year, 260 of the 308 seniors signed up already," said Campolindo parent and Grad Night Coordinator Margo Isaacs. Acalanes and Miramonte High Schools also have very high senior participation rates.

Along with coordinating and running the event, the Grad Night Committees also have to decide how to pay for it. It's an expensive evening - the cost is about \$60,000 at Campolindo. Each high school handles the cost in its own way. At Campolindo, "we ask local vendors for donations and for gift cards for the auction", said Isaacs. The Class of 2009 also has the option to gift Grad Night leftover money from the Senior Ball. Each Campolindo class begins raising money during freshman year to pay for the Senior Ball. Any funds that are leftover can be gifted to the school or to Grad Night. After all is said and done, the admission price to the Campolindo 2009 Grad Night will be \$195 per student. Isaacs acknowledged that could be hard to come by for some families this year. "If anyone is having a hardship, there is a scholarship available. I want them all there because it's their last time all together," said Isaacs. Isaacs also said one way to look at the cost is "it's \$19.50 an hour for 10 hours" to make sure seniors are safe on graduation night.

Miramonte students also start raising class money as freshman. "Miramonte Marketplace has been a big fundraiser. Families make handcrafted and handmade items. This is the first year we haven't done it," said Miramonte parents and Grad Night Coordinator Tina Ross. Everyone class does its own fundraising and the class uses a portion of it for Senior Ball, a portion for Grad Night and the rest for other activities or donations. Ross said the admission price has hovered around \$100 in the past and they hope to keep it in that area. Ross cited rising food costs as one of the uncertainties. Miramonte held Grad Night off-campus last year, but it will be back on-campus in 2009. "We're back at the school this year. We're a sentimental class and are really focused on a hometown atmosphere before they go off into the brave new world," said Ross.

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