

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Cultural differences put additional pressure on one teen despite outstanding achievement

By LAUREN MURPHY  
Of the Keizertimes

Gian Carlo is not an average high school graduate. He is going to University of Oxford this fall on a full scholarship and he's currently homeless.

"I've come here (to the shelter) because my parents kicked me out as soon as I turned 18," he said.

Gian Carlo is one of a half-dozen residents at Taylor's House, the first space in Salem-Keizer dedicated to homeless youth in more than a decade. Keizertimes spoke with him as part of a continuing series giving voice to youth experiencing homelessness.

Before Gian Carlo found himself without shelter, he was responsible for paying for everything. Cultural differences dictated he take responsibility for himself and, more or less, mandated he leave home at 18.

His desire to further his education compounded the costs. The international baccalaureate (IB) exam, college application fees and rent were just a few of his expenses. Despite opportunities, he didn't go on many college visits because plane tickets are expensive.

"I only managed to go to one in Iowa because they (the school) paid for it," he said.

Between work, school and sleep, Gian Carlo was running out of time and money.

"I went into this economic

breakdown. It was much better, much more convenient for me to not be at the house," he said.

Though most don't take kindly to being kicked out of their home he takes it in stride.

"It was a good thing," he said.

Now that he has moved out and graduated, he saves the money he earns from his job as a cook in addition to the work he does as a tutor and a guitar teacher. Gian Carlo is saving his money for school.

"I'm going off to the University of Oxford in the fall, I'm quite excited about that," he said.

He is also saving for a quantum biology convention in Mexico.

Gian Carlo grew up in Panama. Raised by his aunt, uncle, grandmother and great-grandmother since his father abandoned him at birth and his mother was always working.

"I was lonely most of the time," he said.

The river next to his aunt and uncle's house was one of his favorite places.

"I spent a lot of time in the river, running around, running wild," he said. That's where he discovered his interest in quantum biology.

"I've always been more intuitive, trying to figure out how fast does the river go? I'd look up at the clouds and classify them," he said.

His attention to detail drew him to the molecular level, which is quantum mechanics.

"The systems that fascinate me the most are biological systems because they are essentially physically impossible," he said. He talked about plants defying gravity by pulling water up from the ground and bacteria living at 100 degrees Celsius; things that shouldn't be possible in theory but exist anyway.

Gian Carlo also likes to play his guitar, which he named Romeo. "I don't sing and I don't know any songs, I just kind of improvise," he said.

He had a teacher for a little while, but was mostly self taught. He started learning classical music and then studied flamenco. He learns by ear, picking out chords that sound good together.

"People think I'm crazy because I carry my guitar around everywhere," he said. "But most people wouldn't call Albert Einstein crazy for needing a piano to write mathematics equations."

Though initially guitar and biology don't seem connected ,Gian Carlo sees connections everywhere, "The more you think the easier it is to see that everything is connected somehow. Musical thinking is another part of mathematics."

He has a very holistic world view; he could find a connection in everything from Shake-

speare to calculus. He applies this to science by bringing physics and biology together in his ideal profession.

"The scientist needs to get over the stereotypes and realize, as a scientist, they aren't studying just physics or biology, they're studying nature," he said.

Part of this is because of his education. In Panama, he said, "They focus a lot on discipline, the students are afraid of thinking out of the box."

The Panamanian education system is more rigorous. When American students are learning algebra their counterparts in Panama are learning pre-calculus.

When they moved to the U.S., Gian Carlo didn't speak English, but he quickly learned. He found America strange because of how disconnected its residents are from their communities.

"In Panama, you do know your neighbor, you at least know their name," he said. "When we moved here we lived in an apartment and I didn't know my neighbor's name."

He felt the school system was similarly disconnected.

Gian Carlo said he may retire to be a teacher or professor; but as of right now he just wants to be a scientist. "I want to know every single detail of everything. The more detail the better," he said.

Knife-wielding preteen may face charges

By ERIC A. HOWALD  
Of the Keizertimes

An 11-year-old girl was referred to the Juvenile District Attorney's Office (JDAO) after brandishing a knife at adults in two locations Friday, Aug. 2.

Keizer police officers first responded to the Pour House Saloon on River Road North, at 9 a.m., after a report that three children had climbed on top of the building's roof. When confronted by an adult, the caller reported a young girl had brandished a knife and threatened them.

Officers were unable to locate the trio, but a second report of a disturbance between "a group of adults and several juveniles" came in at 10:13 a.m., this time in the 4700 block of Elizabeth Street North. Initial reports were that the kids were threatening an older male with a knife.

Police responded to the scene and one of the juveniles was taken into custody and referred to the JDAO for consideration on a charge of unlawful use of a weapon based on the first incident. She was released to a guardian. Charges in the second incident had not been recommended as of press time.

Museum shines light on forensics

CSI: Salem is a historical look at fighting crime. As the capital city, Salem has long been at the epicenter of crime fighting activity in the state. Explore how methods for solving crime overtime has

changed. Exhibit is open until Saturday August 31.

Admission is \$8 at the Willamette Heritage Center, 1313 Mill Street S.E. Suite 200 in Salem.

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