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Rocklin High School
NSPA Writer of the Year Portfolio

Fingers casting long shadows over the keys in the slanted light of the desk lamp, I sat hunched over my laptop, pouring over any relevant legal codes and court decisions I could find to equip myself with the necessary knowledge to hold my school accountable.

Rocklin High School is currently facing accusations of inaction in regards to reports of ongoing harassment on campus. I wrote a piece on this situation from publicly available recordings of the school board meetings at which the allegations were first raised, but I grew curious as to whether disciplinary records maintained by the district could validate or refute them. I made a public records request just to see how it would go.

I met with the principal to discuss my request, and he told me that no student journalist had ever requested student records during his time at the school; this information was surprising to me, but it only increased my resolve to see the process through to the end, whether I end up with the records or not.

Through this process, I've learned about the importance of public records in investigative journalism and the laws pertaining to their release. I've learned not to succumb to self-censorship and to focus coverage on what is important to my audience.

Writing the initial story, in which facts were lacking while allegations were flying, impressed upon me the importance of covering news in a completely unbiased manner. At first, my advisor and editors were reluctant to cover these allegations at all, given the heated debate in the community. The department head told my advisor not to touch the issue if he wanted to protect the program and his career. I believe I succeeded in writing the story in as factual and impartial a manner as was possible with the available information, allowing us to cover the issue confidently and without fear.

As an incoming Editor-in-Chief, I want to demonstrate to our readers that our publication does not shy away from the stories that really matter; I want to create a publication that readers turn to for reliable information on the issues that directly affect them.

I will continue to pursue this story and others like it to make this dream into a reality.

Item 1:

<https://rocklinhsflash.net/7172/news/localnews/sophomore-alleged-non-consensual-recording-distribution-of-sex-video-by-football-player/>

When I saw the recording of a sophomore from my school speaking to a room full of adults about her experience of sexual harassment and calling them out on their failure to protect her, I knew someone needed to cover it. Though our final magazine was nearly finished, I pounded out a draft of the story within a few days in hopes of making the cut. There were hurdles to overcome in securing approval from the editors, though, and the article ended up being published online only. Even so, this piece is important in that it addresses an issue of direct importance to our school; our publication would be incomplete without it. I plan to further investigate this issue over the summer and hopefully shed some light on the allegations before the start of next school year.

Item 2:

<https://rocklinhsflash.net/7045/stories/artificial-as/>

AI-assisted writing has impacted nearly all of my classes, and its rapid growth in power and popularity is a pressing issue for schools across the world. I felt it necessary to examine teacher's diverging responses to these changes in order to better understand how students' lives will be affected.

Item 3:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1S1YuP6JemXw6S6jPa141sJ6it-G_bYrB/view?usp=drivesdk

This was the cover story of our media program's annual Senior Tribute magazine in which we honor the legacies of graduating seniors under-covered in the yearbook. This was the first magazine I worked on as an Editor-in-Chief and I believe that this story embodies the intent of the magazine, which is to give seniors something by which to remember their high school experience.

Item 4:

<https://rocklinhsflash.net/6935/stories/beyond-figures-and-formulas/>

This story started as an attempt to highlight a student's high level of achievement in an academic subject, but it quickly became a discussion of a different way of thinking about and learning math. What students often consider a dry subject came to life in an interview with someone passionate about it.

Item 5:

<https://rocklinhsflash.net/6995/stories/seniors-vote-in-the-midterm-elections/>

The 2022 midterm elections were predicted to change the direction of US politics, and 18-year-old seniors who chose to vote would have a voice in them. This story describes what it is like to vote for the first time and demonstrates the direct impact these votes would have on students' lives.