

Colombian student wants to come to U.S.

By Kathryn Burke
The Goodland Star-News

Sixteen-year-old Juan Velasco could pass as a normal American teenager as he lounges in a leather couch in the living room of his host family, the Swagers.

“My friends said I didn’t seem like a foreign exchange student,” he says.

His iridescent dark blue shorts are matched with a white T-shirt with a Sprite logo on the left side. A thin, colorful anklet wraps around his dark tan bare feet and legs.

“Hi,” he says, hardly a trace of an accent.

Although the U.S. seems a perfect fit for him, Velasco said America hadn’t even been his first choice for a year of high school. Been there, done that. He spent a year in the U.S. when he was 9, attending schools in Maryland and Buffalo, N.Y.

“I wanted to go to Germany,” he said, adding that he was a year too young for the American Field Service, the agency that handles exchanges, to send him there.

“I didn’t choose Kansas or Goodland,” he said, “but I’m glad I got here.”

He said it was an adjustment coming from Popayán, Colombia, a city of about 200,000 people, to a small one like Goodland. Velasco said he’s learned to like the open spaces and quiet.

The weather here was another adjustment for the South American. “In my city, the highest it gets is 75 (degrees) and the lowest is 60 or 62,” he said.

Living in a more moderate climate, he said, he didn’t pack for the

winter. He learned to walk on the ice and snow this year, falling four or five times on the walk from the high school to the Max Jones Fieldhouse.

“It was pretty cool,” he said. “I had to buy a coat.”

Food in Colombia is basically the same as food here, Velasco said. McDonald’s and Pizza Hut are the only fast food restaurants back home, so he enjoyed the variety in Goodland.

He said high school here was easier than in Colombia because the teachers care more how students do.

“You have to study,” he said of school back home, adding that students who don’t get it are just left behind.

Velasco, not the top student in his classes, said he spent his time here hanging out with friends and playing sports.

Sports are roughly the same here as at home for Velasco, but what they call football is what we call soccer. He did join the football team at Goodland High and learned a lot about the American sport. He said he hadn’t even watched our football on television before coming here.

“It was pretty hard at first,” he said.

Velasco joined the wrestling team, another sport he wasn’t familiar with before coming here. Although his season record was 5 and 40, he did well his first time out.

“I won the first match,” he said.

After one more year of school back home, he said, he wants return to the U.S and attend Wichita State University or Washburn University in Topeka.

Velasco said he fit in with his host

family. Harvey, the high school principal, Donna, Melissa and Jessica feel like his own family, he said.

“I got pretty close to this family,” he said. “I’m gonna miss a lot of people.”

Living with the principal of his school wasn’t too hard, he said.

“He doesn’t treat me like the principal (would) at home,” Velasco said.

He said being away from home for nearly a year wasn’t as hard as he thought it would be. However his mom, Maria Maya, and his dad, Juan Cristoval, are anxious for his return.

“I think now I’m a little more responsible and independent,” he added.

He said at first he worked to fit in because he didn’t want to seem like a foreigner. As he made friends, he said, he asked more questions and learned more about the American language and the culture.

“I think I learned a lot,” he said. “I think I got pretty good.”

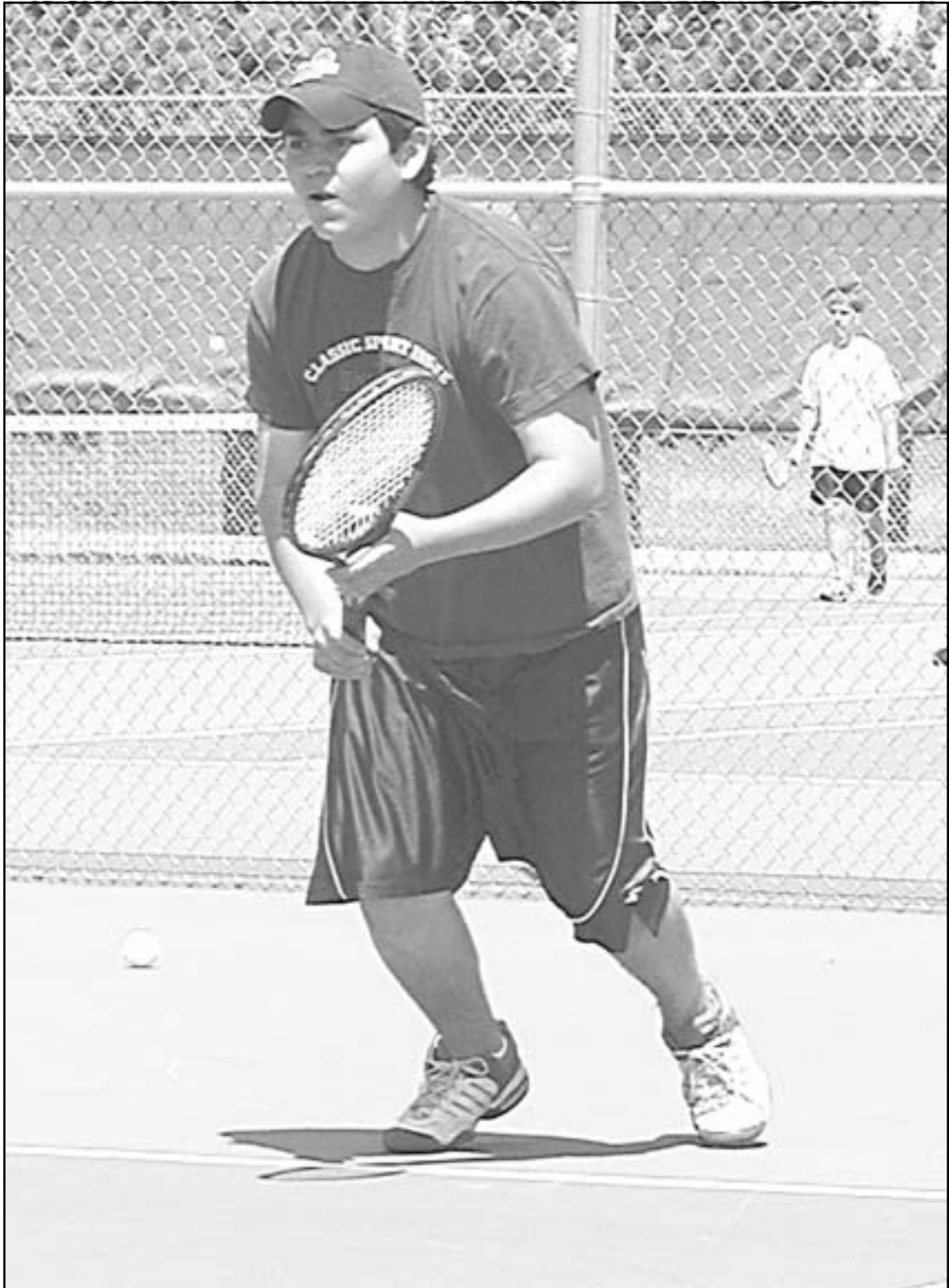
This year, he traveled, visiting California, Nebraska and Denver. He visited Kansas City, Kansas, and went to nearby towns for sports events.

While he knew he would get close to his host family here, he said he didn’t think he would make as many good friends at school.

“I’ve gotten really close with a lot of people,” he said. “It’s gonna be pretty hard to say goodbye.”

Velasco said he plans to come back for a few weeks over Christmas next year.

He plans to keep in touch with his friends through e-mail and telephone conversations.



Exchange student Juan Velasco worked on his tennis moves at a practice this spring. Velasco, from Colombia, played on the Goodland High football, wrestling and tennis teams.
Photo by Greg Stover/The Goodland Star-News

Drug testing may start with first day of school

Drug testing at Goodland High School may start with the first day of practice this fall.

Principal Harvey Swager told school board members Monday that as the drug testing committee looked at different plans, they decided to do a test at the beginning of the year.

For the first test, he said, the school could do on their own in-house at \$3 per person. He added the tests are instant and could be administered by coaches.

A positive on that test, he said, would only warrant a caution, but would ensure that same student would be tested the next five times.

“For the previous three months,” he said, “they would not have been under our jurisdiction.”

Board members asked how many students they could test.

“We have very few students not involved in (activities),” said board President Jane Philbrick.

Penalties for positives

Goodland High School students found positive on drug tests will face the following punishments:

- First time**
- Suspended from the activity for two weeks
- Miss at least two contests or activities.
- Submit to five follow-up drug tests.
- Participate in a chemical assessment program, with the cost the responsibility of the student or parent.
- Second time**
- Barred from all extracurricular activities for the year.
- Reinstated positive results from program recommended by certified substance abuse professional. Treatment costs are the responsibility of the student or parent.
- Third time**
- Barred from all extracurricular activities for the year.
- Fourth time**
- Barred from all activities for remainder of high school career. Graduation will be the only exception.

pool, or 10 kids, per month.

He said a vendor used by the Brewster schools quoted a price of \$9,180 per year if school officials administered the test. If the company provided a collector, the cost

would rise to \$13,320 per year.

Swager said they figured the totals on an estimate of testing 200 students out of about 293 in the high school.

To save money, he said, the school could go down to testing 25 percent of the pool, or five per month. That would cost \$4,590 per year if the school administered the tests. If the company provided a collector, it would cost \$6,660.

The school-administered tests would cost \$48 each through a vendor and those administered by the company would be \$68.

Swager said the company’s test include a more sophisticated analysis of the drugs than the \$3 tests. The less-expensive test only indicates a positive, while the more expensive one can determine a level of drugs. He said the \$3 test can’t detect as many drugs and won’t look for cigarettes or alcohol.

Board members agreed that hav-

ing the company come out and administer the tests would be best. Students, parents, teachers and coaches would know the tests were administered fairly.

Board member Marty Melia asked if the company selects the students to be tested.

Swager said they come to school, randomly pick a name and administer the test.

Board member Dick Short wor-

ried that the administration could not make sure every student was subject to testing.

“Will there be some kids we miss completely?” he asked.

Swager said while not every student is involved in activities, if he or a teacher suspects a student of doing drugs, they can test that student.

“It’s a policy that we already have,” he said.

Graduation to stay on Saturday

By Kathryn Burke
The Goodland Star-News

Goodland High School students will don their caps and gowns and line up to graduate next spring on a Saturday, just like previous classes.

School board members agreed Monday to a Saturday graduation next year, despite a request from a

class sponsor to change to Sunday.

Mary Porterfield, senior class sponsor, had asked the board in May to change the day.

She said Saturday graduation conflicts with state sports events. Students sometimes have to chose between going to the state competition or graduation, she said.

Board members made the decision to stay with Saturday based on a survey by Debbie Martin, a senior parent, mailed to parents.

“Most want to leave it the way it is,” said Superintendent Marvin Selby, saying 70 percent were in favor of keeping graduation on Saturday.

corrections

The Goodland Star-News will correct any mistake or misunderstanding in a news story. Please call our office at (785) 899-2338 to report errors. We believe that news should be fair and factual. We want to keep an accurate record and appreciate you calling to our attention any failure to live up to this standard.

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RULES

- Write down as many words (at least 3 letters) that you can think of using the word “Sunshine”
 - Do not use proper names
- Bring your completed list to The Goodland Star- News office at 1205 Main or at our booth at the Fair by 12:00 p.m. by Monday, August 8th

Winners will be announced in the Friday, August 12th edition

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18. _____	43. _____
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