



Schiff's 'Report' rapport

By GENE MADDAUS
STAFF WRITER

Rep. Adam Schiff played straight-man this week on "The Colbert Report," a Central Comedy Channel show that, in its "Better Know a District" segment, strips away whatever dignity may be left in Congressional service.

Host Stephen Colbert introduced Schiff's 29th district, lightly mocking such venerable local institutions as Caltech and the Rose Parade. But the prime target was Schiff, D-Pasadena. Here is a representative sample of the interview:

Colbert: After you were elected, did you pass legislation banning the very sort of unregulated donations that helped you win?
Schiff: Yes.

Colbert: Isn't that the political equivalent of sleeping with a prostitute and then strangling her to hide your shame?
Fortunately for Schiff, he was in on the joke. But still, how is a self-respecting representative to respond to that? Much of the rest of the interview was taken up with Colbert attempting to give Schiff a \$100 bill, and Schiff declining.

When people talk about "the clowns in Congress," they aren't talking about their comedic skills. And when matched with a professional improvisational comic, a congressman really has zero chance of seeming funny. About the best he can hope is to escape the experience without getting flustered or saying anything dumb (By that test, Schiff succeeded).

Given that, why do the program?
Observers often cite the political advantages of opening oneself to mockery on a show that young people consider their primary source of news.

But Schiff's district has been safely gerrymandered. He won his last race by 34 points, and will probably win by a similar margin this year. Among representatives who have appeared on the program, the average margin of victory in 2004 was 44 points (That doesn't count the three who ran unopposed). Do any of these people need to worry about the youth vote?

More likely, they do the show simply because it is fun. Schiff told reporter **Lisa Friedman** that he had "a blast."

"You have to go into it with the right attitude," he said. "You can't take yourself seriously at all."

Consider the implications of this. If one's incumbency is so well protected as to make political considerations essentially negligible, why not push the envelope of self-mockery a bit further?

Last year, MP **George Gallo** way pretended to be a cat on the British version of *Celebrity Big Brother* (The viewers later voted him off the show, and he returned to Parliament). Most innovations in reality television start in Britain or Scandinavia before coming here.

AROUND PASADENA



PITCHING IN: Muir High School student Joel Ramirez, 16, employed through the Mentoring and Partnership for Youth Development program, throws waste into a Dumpster Friday at the Lincoln Crossing construction site on Lincoln Avenue in Pasadena.

Construction program builds futures for teens

By EUSE KLEEMAN
STAFF WRITER

ALTADENA — Not everyone is in agreement about the progress of Lincoln Crossing. The architect and developer are still battling between themselves about the design, and some local residents are also at odds.

One thing that everyone has agreed on, though, is that community leaders have had great success in finding jobs for Altadena residents, both in construction and in the newly erected businesses.

It's not just the adults that are reaping the rewards. For three hours every day after school and three more on Saturdays, a band of high school kids don hard hats and steel-toed boots and get to work sweeping, scrapping, sanding, and putting things in order.

"I'm getting paid — keeps me looking good for all the girls," said Scott Escoc, a 12th grader at John Muir High School, who has been working on the site for five months. The pay isn't much — \$7 an hour — but the benefits go beyond the money.

"We are really seriously trying to build some real men here," said Tecumseh Shackelford, a retired light equipment operator for the city of Los Angeles.

Shackelford — "Shack" to the teens and many others who know him — is the tireless force behind a movement to get younger members of this mostly minority community off to a good start.

His efforts go well beyond the job site.

Each of the eight boys working at Lincoln Crossing signed a contract that they would maintain a C grade point average or risk losing their jobs. Shackelford also arranged a series of extra classes he requires them to take.

Every Saturday morning, they return to school at John Muir where the head janitor teaches them about working in maintenance — from buffing floors to which cleaning chemicals not to mix.

'I learned you have to be responsible, that's the most important thing.'

Jorge Meza,
John Muir High School senior

In addition, every second Thursday they learn general employment skills like the significance of a good handshake, how to fill out a job application, and respect for an employer's property.

"I had to start teaching them how to work together, how to come to work every day, how to call when they can't come to work," Shackelford said of the boys when they first started.

He's since recruited Cheryl Walters of the non-profit organization Friends It Is to lead the classes.

"I learned you have to be responsible, that's the most important thing," said John Muir senior Jorge Meza.

"I think it's good because you're more competitive," said 10th grader Ishmael Bracy about applying for jobs. "You learn what to do and what not to do."

These students are only a small subset of many teenagers that Shackelford works with — including the 60 John Muir boys in the mentoring program he chairs.

The program, Mentoring & Partnership for Youth Development, matches each teen with an adult in the community. It also provides daily speakers at lunch time, free tutoring, and monthly fieldtrips, pancake breakfasts and round-table lunches that emphasize job opportunities, personal responsibility, and self-respect.

In turn, the student's respect for Shackelford runs deep. Whenever he talks, they listen, and suggestions he makes are heeded without question.

"The best [part of the program] is working with Shack," Escoc said.

"It doesn't matter where you come from," Meza said. "If you're rich or poor, you can do whatever you want — like Shack."

This Friday night at the job site, though, thoughts were on much more pressing matters: finishing work, rushing home to shower, and heading out for some fun.

euse.kleeman@sylvn.com
(626) 578-6300 Ext.4451



CLEANUP CREW: Teen workers Justin Wallace, left, and Scott Escoc, both 17, employed through the Mentoring and Partnership for Youth Development program, sweep a grocery store in the Lincoln Crossing construction site on Lincoln Avenue in Pasadena on Friday.

PUSD parer forceer Scram Open enro process hit

By GRETCHEN E
STAFF WRITER

PASADENA — An overabundance of options due to boundless school closures is to blame for errors in this year's C process, Pasadena Unitric officials said this week.

Open Enrollment at apply to up to five candidates in their neighborhood school year's process, almost listed five choices got 1 selections.

This year, however, parents' choices from among the seven most popular candidates, Don Benito Fundamer Sierra Madre School, were strike out.

At McKinley School elementary school, for example, students being enrolled siblings and kindergarten Ayala, the district's district support services.

In other cases, children's left off waiting lists not automatically given District officials in forums Thursday and if the problems with parent for the confusion. Some such as the waiting lists rected. But other families been told that their best their neighborhood car wasn't one of the school's.

"What happened this had some things that we had that certainly put system," Superintendent dozens of parents at Thursday.

"A system that was impractical with a whole lot more Clark told parents the into their first-choice spaces will open up. The portation, and some parents decide to have their child school closer to home among the families grant of the remaining busses, notified about transport month.

Rosa Dominguez's child being bused to Field Elementary now, but under the new plan they would go to elementary school. She ter-in-law, Irma Dominguez, send their children to Valley School, which is homes than Field, but we waiting list.

"Either way you have own transportation," Rosa said. "To me, it's kind of Denise Johnson, a teacher at elementary school, who campuses to be closed elementary school children her this year. They live in elementary school hours applied to five schools if Enrollment process.

But the campus closure caused the situation, John know where she'll be, she assumes the vacancies a one of the lower performing that case, she would prefer

JPL's Mars craft adjusts orbit