

THE ORANGE COUNTY BETA REGISTER

Math teacher uses beach cruiser as motivation

BY [PARISA MAHDAD](#)

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HUNTINGTON BEACH - Patrick Donegan, 14, is the proud owner of a new bike he got for doing his geometry homework and having the right teacher.

During her eight years at Huntington Beach High, Elizabeth Hoffman, who teaches accelerated geometry and algebra, struggled with motivating her students to do their math homework.

For the past six years, she held small raffles that awarded students who completed their homework with mittens, scarves, or glow-in-the-dark bracelets. But when she told her students this semester that she

would be raffling off a new beach cruiser, they didn't seem to believe her until she rolled the bike into her classroom.

Hoffman said she continually asked herself, "How do I get these students to want to do their homework?" A bike seemed the most enticing choice given that her students are not at the age to drive but still need a means of transportation.

Hoffman independently financed the bike, a Schwinn beach cruiser. It's painted white on the top and orange across the bottom, with pinstripes complementing the black tires. Needless to say, the bike features the school's colors of orange and black.

Hoffman opened the raffle to her three geometry and two essentials of algebra classes and distributed stamp sheets to every student in her class. When a homework assignment was due, she circled around to each desk to verify that the student completed the majority of his or her assignment.

If the student's homework appeared to be complete, the student would receive a stamp. There were 16 spaces representing 16 assignments on each stamp sheet. If a student filled all 16 spaces on a stamp sheet, he or she received a ticket that would immediately be placed through the slit of a clear locked box.

Hoffman distributed four stamp sheets throughout the semester, so a student could receive, at most, four raffle tickets.

At the end of the semester, Patrick, a freshman in Hoffman's fourth-period geometry class, won the raffle. He had two tickets in the raffle box among the estimated 60 tickets from all five classes.

"I wasn't really expecting to win," he said. "There seemed to be a lot of raffle tickets already in the box."

Patrick got the good news when he came into Hoffman's classroom after school on Jan. 28 to pick up his math test. Hoffman drew the winning ticket after she collected her last class' stamp sheets right before Donegan entered the classroom.

"Funny you came in," she said, pointing to the bike that had an envelope with his name and raffle ticket inside.

The raffle was specifically organized to motivate Hoffman's essentials of algebra students, who struggle with tests and are somewhat "mathphobic," according to Hoffman.

"Their grades should be based more on how much effort they put in," she said.

Hoffman is uncertain whether she can afford to hold another raffle of this kind again for the current semester. In the future, she wants to hold two separate raffles, one for her geometry students and the other for her algebra students because the two classes display different levels of motivation, she said.

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