

2018 School Captain Profile

Being positive

Gabrielle Patterson has used a positive mindset, learnt from past challenges, to forge her path to success at school. That, and regular periods in the kitchen where she bakes up a storm, have led to a happy life-study balance that sees her well-equipped to undertake the task of 2018 School Captain, along with her male counterpart Simon Pell.

Gaby (pictured right) grew up in Benalla as the daughter of two pharmacists – Gareth and Lisa who own and run the Amcal Pharmacy in town. She has two older siblings: Hannah (Class of 2014) who is now studying commerce and law and Fraser (Class of 2015), studying pharmacy and chemical engineering, both at Monash University.

Gaby enjoys being a staff member at the family pharmacy but is planning on a different area of study after school. “I’m interested in architecture, engineering and design,” she said. “I’m looking at industrial design with engineering or architecture with engineering at Monash, RMIT or Melbourne. I really like the problem-solving side of things. I’m not that set on having a particular job at the moment. I’m interested in seeing where it takes me. I’m sure I’ll find jobs that I never knew existed.”

When thinking back over her eight years at GVGS – she started in Year 5 from Benalla East Primary, which no longer exists – she recalls many positive co-curricular experiences. “I really enjoyed Year 10 outdoor ed camps, even though everyone complains about it,” Gaby said. “We did the Bogong High Plains and we chose the fit hike. We basically hiked from Mt Hotham to Falls Creek in a week. It was harder than we expected. Some people had gone hiking and some hadn’t; just getting through that ... everyone has different capabilities; you have to cope with the weakest link.”

Gaby used lessons learnt in Sumatra where she had taken part in the World Challenge program earlier that year. “All of the girls who had gone to Indonesia with me, we knew it was our responsibility to keep morale up. We took it on ourselves to distract the people who were having a tougher time.”

It was certainly a tough time that Gaby had experienced in Sumatra. While she was there

she had an unexplained seizure and ended up in hospital and her mother flew over to take her home. “When you’re going through a rough patch and you’re missing home, it’s very easy to be negative and think about all the bad things and get caught up in that,” Gaby said.

A school trip to France last year was happily without illness. “It was great exploring with friends,” Gaby said. “You’re a little bit more independent but you still have the backbone of the teachers supporting you, but they’re different to parents.” She again found herself in the role of morale booster. “In Europe, friends were getting negative and I was saying, ‘If you do that, it’s a downward spiral and that’s a hole you may not get out of.’”

This can-do attitude was also reflected in Gaby giving netball a try for the first time last year. “I’m a competitive person, who likes a lot of sporting prowess but it’s not as serious now we’re older. I had never really played team sport before. I think I’ve broken every rule by now.”

The 18 year old has played tennis all her life and has always been competitive in running, representing the school numerous times. She took part in school productions when she was younger and enjoyed the thrill of getting dressed up and performing on stage.

Her favourite subject at school is visual communications because “it really uses a different side of my brain. It’s good to have some respite and freedom to sit down and draw.” Her other VCE subjects are chemistry, English, mathematical methods and physics, partly chosen to suit course prerequisites. Last year she fast-tracked and finished Indonesian.

She said being school captain was a really rewarding, busy job. She and Simon have put their own stamp on the roles, creating a new event that is on its way to being a school favourite: the Pelic-nic (a combination of the words pelican, the school emblem, and picnic). “We organised a picnic for the Pelicans [the student body] and invited everyone to join us. It was all about getting outside, being with friends and inter-year collaboration.”

The idea was inspired by a national competition conducted by Y Lead, an organisation that aims to create learning experiences that empower



young people to do their best and make a positive difference. The Pelic-nic was a winner after Gaby and Simon submitted a video entry and report.

“We thought we had had enough fundraisers,” Gaby said. “Students were asked to bring picnic rugs, food, friends, games, music. The whole idea was to leave a legacy at your school. Hopefully it carries on. It’s been fun organising it.” She and Simon have made a good team. “If you didn’t have someone to talk about everything with, the role would not be as enjoyable,” Gaby said. “It’s always good to know there is someone else going through the same thing.”

Gaby urged those coming after her to try and find in their studies, something that is interesting and different. “Then it doesn’t feel like study,” she said. “It feels like something you’re learning for your general knowledge. Find a way to make it fun and interesting.”

She balances study with exercise. “I try to do something every night: a run or yoga – it gives you clarity of mind.” And then there’s the baking. “I always try and bake, usually cakes and cupcakes. I’m known for trying to bribe teachers with cakes. I bring heaps of cakes to the cake stalls; my sister did too. We really like baking in my family.”

Last year she didn’t get into the basketball team and it was jokingly suggested by Year 12 co-ordinator Mrs Chelsea Pohlner that some delicious cakes might help next time. “I still didn’t get in,” Gaby laughed.

She is grateful for the education she’s had as a student at GVGS. “I see it as a great opportunity; especially coming from a different town,” Gaby said. “I see the obvious benefits I’ve gained from coming to the school. If you say yes to most things and get involved, you’re bound to do well.”