

Valerie Chun

The opening and closing of water bottles. The fingers furiously typing on a keyboard. The pens writing and highlighters highlighting. It's all music to my ears! Although most may describe their favorite sounds as raindrops or wind chimes, my favorite sounds have always been those in a library. Libraries have always been my sanctuary, as I am surrounded by like-minded book lovers, studiers, and families. The Ripon Memorial Library has always been precisely that.

Although I have only lived the past six years in Ripon, my tie to the Ripon Memorial Library is strong. I grew up with the Stanislaus County Library, but my appreciation for literature, social gatherings, and community has always been prevalent, regardless of what library I attended. When I was little, I would beg my mom to take my brother and I to the activities the Stanislaus Library held, and that didn't change at age 11 when we moved to Ripon; I vividly remember one of the first activities in our new town was attaining a library card.

Throughout the years, I attended the library's events such as the Poetry Cafe and summer reading programs. However, what makes the Ripon Memorial Library so meaningful to me is that although I didn't grow up as a young child with it, the library has been there for my four years of highschool. It has seen it all— thick and thin. It has seen my club meetings in the study rooms, where we planned with national education consultants. It's seen by my AP Environmental Science study groups, where we stressed over upcoming tests, did homework together, and shared laughs. It's seen my love for reading as I picked up and returned my favorite books and discovered new ones. It's seen me study alone for six hours straight in the "silent reading" section, furiously typing on my computer, opening and closing my water bottle, my pens writing and highlighters highlighting. I studied for my AP exams there. I brought my friends there. I called the Ripon Memorial Library home during all my ups and downs of high school, and to this day, I know it's waiting for me on a Saturday afternoon for a study session.

What makes the Ripon Memorial library so special, what sets it apart from my childhood library, are the smiling faces and warmth that comes with it. Not only do I get excited to be tranquil and study without distractions, but I am excited to walk through the door and be greeted with kindness. There is always someone with a smile, someone willing to help, or someone simply making a brief glimpse of eye contact. There are families that are growing up with the library, children of young ages, teenagers studying– the community always feels alive. Alive in my sanctuary. I will forever love the Rion Memorial Library for that.