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# Gato

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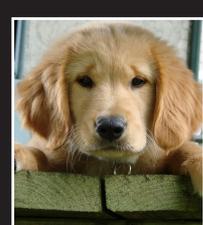
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photos courtesy wikicommons

## LGHS honors polo coach Pete Kleis

by Montana Fowler  
Editor-in-Chief

LGHS junior varsity girls' water polo coach **Pete Kleis** passed away on Jan. 22 in a car accident near his home. Kleis grew up in the Bay Area, coached JV water polo at LGHS, coached for West Valley's water polo club team, led a Cub Scout troop, and started his own company, Granite Capital Investments. Kleis was a father to junior **Katie Kleis**, past LGHS student **Maddie Kleis**, and fifth grader **Colin Kleis**, as well as a stepfather to junior **Jack Croll** and seventh grader **Chloe Croll**.

Pete Kleis went to Lynbrook High School, where he played as the goalie during one of the few years Lynbrook won a championship in boys' water polo. He went on to study at University of California Santa Barbara for his Bachelor's Degree, then got his graduate degree from Harvard University. Kleis was the CEO of his own business with his business partner. He played Masters water polo in recent years, competing internationally. "He had an awesome life," Katie commented. "If there was one word I could use to describe my dad it would be 'awesome.'"

Kleis' passion was coaching. During his life he coached water polo at West Valley, Bellarmine, and LGHS. In addition, he ran a Cub Scout troop and coached flag football. "He liked seeing people improve," Katie said. Kleis' coaching style focused on personalizing plays based on individual players' talents. Sophomore **Madeleine Klein**, one of Kleis's waterpolo players, stated, "He would decide what was good in a player and would bring it out in them." Another teammate, sophomore **Kaitlyn Cook**, said that Kleis "would tell [her] little good things about his players. He would say that Natalya is really fast, or that Paige is really strong. He had something to say for every player on his team."

In coaching LGHS girls' water polo the girls all looked up to Kleis as "he was always on the pool deck." Klein remembers Kleis having them do sprints at the end of practice when they were all exhausted. "When we thought we couldn't go anymore, he would



courtesy A. Fowler

COMMUNITY LEADER: Kleis motivated those in his life to be the best people they could be.

say, 'Come on! A few more!' He would push us farther than we thought we could go," she said.

Not only did Kleis bring inspiration to the pool deck, but he also brought a competitive edge. "My dad loved winning," laughed Katie. In his two years coaching JV girls his team only lost two games. "That's what he did, and that's what he loved," commented Klein. "He cared a lot."

Along with coaching, Kleis filled time not spent working with other activities he loved. He traveled, played adult water polo internationally, helicopter skied, and water skied. "He loved living. He was full of energy, and he wanted to do everything," explained Katie. On Kleis' Instagram bio, he describes himself as a "globetrotter, international entrepreneur, water polo player, team crush skier, big hitter, philanthropist, professional apre' skier, water polo coach." He was a natural leader that was respected by many. "We always went to him for advice," Katie said. "He was a role model to everyone."

Kleis' impact will continue to inspire his family, players, and friends. Maddie stated, "He touched so many lives; he also got to travel the world and be exactly who he wanted to be. I love my dad."

## Ms. Hesik writes teen LGBT novels

by Rachel Salisbury  
Editor-in-Chief

Most young adult novels written for teenage girls are upbeat stories complete with light humor and charmingly relatable characters. While new LGHS English teacher **Annameekee Hesik's** novels share these qualities with the rest of their genre, what sets them apart is their ability to relate to an audience that was previously unable to find themselves in this corner of literature: LGBT youth.

Hesik's series, The You Know Who Girls, has filled that gap for many young lesbian and questioning girls. Hesik, who came out at age fifteen, said, "When I was in high school, there was nothing for me to read at all. I went to the bookstore and all I could find was books on the psychology of gayness." Hesik further explained that she "wrote the book [she] wish [she] could have had."

In her third year of teaching, Hesik came out to the middle school students she taught in Monterey, and as a result many of her students became comfortable enough in the classroom that they came out as well. Hesik then became concerned with the lack of diversity in young adult fiction as she searched for books to which her students could relate. Those that she did find for her questioning and LGBT students were unfortunately serious and melodramatic and were largely based around upperclass, all-white casts of characters.

This search for relatable literature is what sparked Hesik's writing career. At the age of only twenty-eight, Hesik began writing her first novel, The You Know Who Girls: Freshman Year, which she did not publish until 2012. Her second novel, Driving Lessons: A You Know Who Girls Novel, was released this summer, only two years after she began writing it.

Hesik attributes the longer writing time of her first novel to inexperience. As a teacher, Hesik often struggles to find time for writing and is forced to work in "manic chunks of time." As far as her third novel, she has a lot of notes and thoughts on the characters, but it is still "in the percolating phase."

The You Know Who Girls aims to provide humorous, relatable literature for LGBT girls, and does so successfully. Hesik has received many letters from fans whose lives have been positively affected by her novels. This past week, Hesik received an email from a reader who came out to her mother and asked out the girl she has a crush on after being inspired to do so by Hesik's series. Hesik feels that her readers are generally "happy to have something to connect with,

something that details the experience of falling in love, but makes it funny and makes it real."

Although the series has been classified as a fourteen-and-up novel, adults have also responded positively to the series. The majority of the Amazon reviews for The You Know Who Girls are from middle-aged LGBT women who say they feel as if the series transported them back in time. While Hesik credits this to more adults writing reviews than teenagers, there is a considerable fanbase for The You Know Who Girls who shares Hesik's sentiment that the novels should have been around when they came out.

Hesik's novels don't only appeal to females and the LGBT community: "Why would an adult, straight male read this book? I don't know, but they do, and they seem to like it, and that's great."

Overall, Hesik has been thrilled with the response to her novels. There has been "nothing beyond 'I didn't like this book' as far as reviews go. It has never been banned." In fact, the LGHS library carries copies of both novels in the series. "[The You Know Who Girls] doesn't really touch on anything political or extreme, it is about love and getting through high school," explains Hesik.

Hesik has also received considerable praise for her stylistic ability to recreate teenage dialogue and inner monologue. She attributes this to her ability to pull from the teenagers she interacts with every day, her students. In fact, Hesik even pulled one of the characters from her first novel, Jake, from a student she taught before coming to LGHS. "He was a really cool kid, he played guitar, and he was just a

really funny, sweet guy, so I just put him in the book," revealed Hesik. "He doesn't know it... I think I should probably tell him."

Other than Jake, all of the other characters are products of Hesik's prolific imagination. Even the protagonist Abbey, who many assume is an autobiographical character, is entirely original. Rather than writing about herself, Hesik projects the emotions she felt coming out onto her characters in order to relate to readers with similar experiences.

As an LGHS English teacher, Annameekee Hesik betters the lives of her students with her positivity and devotion to education. As an author, Hesik's books often transform the lives of her readers entirely. **Watch out for Hesik's new releases as she continues to make meaningful contributions to young adult literature by scanning the QR Code.**



courtesy A. Hesik

PUBLISHED AUTHOR: Hesik's novels positively impact students.



Scan the QR Code above to visit Hesik's website.