



Computer science industry is becoming oversaturated



Junior places 2nd in Congressional App Challenge



Sports legacies: 2 athletes follow the footsteps of family members

THE saratogafalcon



AN INDEPENDENT HIGH SCHOOL PUBLICATION

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Saratoga High School Saratoga, CA

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PROM 2024

Venue to be held on triple decker dinner cruise in San Francisco Bay

BY AnikaKapasi

Juniors and seniors will board the San Francisco Hornblower Cruise ship for their prom on May 18 and see sights such as the Golden Gate Bridge and Bay Bridges during their 4-hour cruise around the Bay.

"We were looking at many different venues and [the cruise] just seemed like the most interesting," senior class president Paul Hulme said. "It was the most out-of-the-box idea and all the other ones seemed more basic."

The ship has three decks: the first deck is reserved for dinner and drinks provided by the cruise line company, the second deck will be transformed into a dance floor and photo booth and the third deck is an open outdoor area meant for pictures and sightseeing the San Francisco night skyline.

Inspired by the boat's triple-deck structure, the senior class officers decided to make the prom theme "Princess and the Frog."

While the school

>> PROM on pg. 3



This year's prom venue, held onboard the California Hornblower, can accommodate 488 passengers total.

Courtesy of ISARA CHANKHUNTHOD

Winter Perc to attend championship in Ohio

BY AnthonyLuo

As a judge signaled them to start, members of the school's winter percussion World ensemble set up their instruments and props in the Titan Gym in Fullerton on March 24. They had performed in the same place the day before and made it to the finals round of the Winter Guard International (WGI) West Power Regional.

This performance, which earned them 7th place out of nine schools, was a precursor for a trip the 37-member group will be taking from April 13-20, where they will fly to Dayton, Ohio, to perform at the WGI World Championships at the University of Dayton Arena.

These showings mark a historic year for the program, as it is the first time in history they are competing in the highest division, Percussion Scholastic World (PSW), and the second time ever that they travel to Dayton for the World Championships. Winter percussion previously attended in 2015 in the

Percussion Scholastic Open (PSO) division.

"Whenever you see videos of drumlines online, they're always performing at Dayton," junior quad drummer Tanuj Siripurapu said. "So it's a cool experience to be able to play and compete alongside them and make a name for ourselves."

The 37-member group will perform at the WGI World Championships in Dayton, Ohio, from April 13-20.

Earlier this season, the group, led by directors Sean Clark (who is in charge of the battery percussionists) and Chavadith Tantavirojn (who leads the front ensemble or keyboard percussionists), performed in two local preview shows and three competitions

as a part of their local circuit, the Northern California Percussion Alliance (NCPA).

Clark and Tantavirojn decided to move the ensemble up to the PSW division after they dominated the PSO division last year. They won first place in every single NCPA competition they attended in the PSO division, including the championship, earning historically high scores along the way.

So far this season, despite facing stiffer competition in the PSW division, the ensemble has continued its winning streak with a 1st place win at Fremont High School on Feb. 10 and 2nd place finish at American Canyon High School on March 2. (Due to printing deadlines, the Falcon was unable to cover their third NCPA show, which occurred on March 30 at James Logan High School.)

The show itself tackles themes that the members can relate to as high school students, Clark said. This year's show, "Facade,"

deals with discovering one's identity behind the masks one wears throughout life.

Clark and show designer KK Rasmussen used this theme as inspiration for how to design the other elements of the show, including costumes, props and the floor.

"When you think of a facade, you think of something that is meant to conceal," Clark said. "We took that idea and thought about how it applies to specific shapes, colors or patterns."

The show floor is filled with bright, neon colors meant to appear artificial. Six large props, shaped like triangular prisms, rest on top of the floor and move around on rotatable bases throughout the show.

Each member's costume is also filled with harsh edges and contrasting colors as if concealing something, and the members wear LED masks that switch between different designs. Most of the musical

>> PERCUSSION on pg. 5



Siripurapu

Davis to retire after 17 years

BY EmmaFung & KathyWang

After 17 years as physics and business teacher, Kirk Davis will retire at the end of the school year.

With Davis's retirement, Intro to Business has been discontinued as a class offering, while Regular Physics will most likely be taught by science teacher Jennifer Lee, Davis said.

Prior to his mid-career switch to teaching, Davis worked in the

healthcare industry and business field for almost 30 years. He recalls that his inspiration to begin teaching was sparked by his children's poor experiences with math and science teachers, who he thought usually explained class content poorly and contributed to a lack of understanding.

In 2007, he stepped away from his career in industry and tried his hand at teaching Physics and Introduction to Business at the school.

>> RETIREMENT on pg. 4



Davis

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Annual Martha's Kitchen competition is live

The school is again participating in the Martha's Kitchen Food Fight, a friendly competition among six private schools and SHS which aims to raise awareness for and help alleviate food insecurity. The event — run by Martha's Kitchen, a soup kitchen in San Jose that provides almost 250,000 meals a month — is taking place from March 25 to April 30.

This year, the school will be competing against Valley Christian, Notre Dame, Bellarmine, Presentation, Saint Francis and Harker. Participating students can earn points for their respective schools by volunteering with Martha's Kitchen (8 points per hour), donating cans of food (4 points per pound) and creating and donating snack packs (1 point each).

Other ways to earn points include creating social media posts (1 point each) and making financial donations (1 point per dollar). The Prathima and Nagaraj Murthy Family Charitable Trust will match donations up to \$10,000. Assistant principal Kristen Cunningham encourages students to create snack bags, whether it is in clubs or even in friend groups, and drop them off at Martha's Kitchen. In addition, she hopes more students will register for volunteer sessions with Martha's Kitchen.

"This is one of two times our community specifically comes together to give back ... it's a great way to be aware of those who are food insecure," Cunningham said. ♦

— Jane Lee

Engineering lab to receive new computers

The district board recently approved funding 72 upgraded Lenovo laptops for the school's engineering program.

The new computers — which arrived on March 28 — cost \$165,240 along with a \$360 recycling fee, for a total of \$180,884.

The new Lenovo P1 G6 I7 laptops sport a more powerful GPU and CPU while also hosting a far larger display — with a 16-inch screen and a refresh rate of 165 hertz, compared to the old P51 models' 15.6-inch screen and 60 hertz refresh rate — meaning these new computers can display moving objects on-screen more smoothly.

Engineering teacher Audrey Warmuth expressed her excitement for the equipment upgrade, emphasizing the importance of having a set of more powerful computers than traditional classrooms have.

"We have been very lucky in the engineering lab to always have these nice computers, which are completely different from the sets in other classrooms," Warmuth said. ♦

— William Cao and Eric Shi

New math books to be implemented next year

Following California's mandate to reevaluate textbooks every seven years, the school's math department has chosen Big Ideas Math as the textbook provider for the Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II (AGA) courses starting next school year. A major reason for switching to the Big Ideas series is that it offers improved technological compatibility compared to the current textbook company, math department head Kristen Hamilton said. The new Big Ideas textbooks will replace the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH) textbooks currently in use.

AGA teachers conducted a "pilot program" during the fall semester to evaluate two possible textbook publishers, Reveal Math and Big Ideas Math.

During this pilot period, AGA teachers incorporated modules from both Reveal Math and Big Ideas textbooks into their existing curriculum.

As a result, Big Ideas Math will be adapted into all AGA classes next fall. According to Hamilton, much remains to be done to smoothly incorporate the new curriculum into current AGA classes and teachers must overcome many challenges to restructure their class lessons. ♦

— Alec Guan

picturethis


Spring Strings | Junior violinist David Kim performs his solo concerto on March 7 in the McAfee Center.

Debate duo advances to nationals

by Emma Fung
& Anthony Luo

As they walked out of Dwinelle Hall and into the sprawling campus of UC Berkeley, public forum partners Ashish Goswami and Leonardo Jia felt confident about their success in their third and final round of the day.

After arguing for and against a ban on all single-use plastics throughout the weekend of Feb. 17-18, they had gone undefeated in the preliminary stage of the annual UC Berkeley Cal Invitational and consisted of 12 teams. They were split into two 6-team pods.

Goswami

Every team in either pod faced off against the other teams in their pod in rounds with two judges each — the teams with the most ballots made it to the elimination rounds. Although the duo did not see great results, receiving just 2 of 10 possible ballots, they still found the experience to be more than enough to get them ready for the prestigious Berkeley Invitational the following weekend.

Despite our results, we were able to gain insight into the topic [of banning single-use plastics] and how the Berkeley tournament would go," Jia said. "As a result of that, we were able to prepare our arguments well and have really good preparation going into the weekend."

Those efforts paid off, as the pair was able to win all six of their preliminary matches at Berkeley.

Since those rounds only had one judge, who was often a parent or a more inexperienced judge, the two opted to speak slower in order to focus on their rhetoric and persuasive skills.

The tournament was structured with three preliminary rounds on Saturday, the other three on Sunday and all of the elimination rounds on Monday.

Usually, tournaments will squeeze most preliminary rounds into the first day and run more efficiently as a whole, but the Berkeley Invitational's massive attendance forced organizers to space everything out.

As a result, many teams felt fatigued by the long, drawn-out days — which is when Goswami and Jia's extensive experience as debate veterans took the spotlight.

Being juniors and having been to so many in-person tournaments gave us an edge because we knew how to conserve our energy compared to some of the younger teams, who maybe haven't debated in person as much," Goswami said.

Moving into the elimination rounds, the two had to shift their debating style to suit more technical judges, many of whom were coaches or former debaters.

As these judges were familiar with the topic and the technicalities of debate overall, the pair transitioned to faster and condensed speaking to overwhelm their opponents with arguments.

"We started to prepare responses to more unique arguments, which might not sound as perceptually convincing, but work on a technical level," Jia said. "Additionally, we prepared various strategies to improve our efficiency, allowing us to [focus] on a larger amount of arguments in our case."

However, as the day went on, the duo started to feel the effects of fatigue catching up to them. By the time the semifinal round arrived at around 5 p.m., they were exhausted and thus prone to making mistakes, some of which ended up knocking them out of the bracket.

"The tiniest things will give you an edge and lead to wins."

JUNIOR Ashish Goswami

The biggest lesson we learned is that though debate is a mental activity, you have to be there physically as well," Goswami said.

Goswami and Jia said they are excited to compete at the TOC in April, but they also acknowledge how competitive and difficult it will be.

"When you go to these national tournaments, everyone is roughly about the same skill level, so the only thing that affects whether you win or lose is how you perform on one day," Goswami said. "That's when the tiniest things will give you an edge and lead to wins." ♦

PROM

continued from pg. 1

By William Cao
& Neal Malhotra

hosted a prom in 2002 on the Hornblower, the senior class officers ran into a roadblock at the beginning of the planning process: the venue's high price. The officers then sought sponsorships from the community and found two who greatly reduced the cost: the company Humanize Her and local realtor Andy Tse.

"It's rare these days with all the venue and busing costs being less than \$200 a ticket. So the fact that we were able to get it to \$130 is incredible," assistant principal and activities director Kristen Cunningham said.

From the week of April 1-5, tickets were \$130 with ASB and \$150 without ASB. Starting after spring break, prices will increase by \$20 each week, and sales will close on April 24. Due to venue capacity, the number of sales is limited to 488. As a result, Cunningham encourages students to buy tickets early.

Team 95071X consists of sophomores Adit Sharma, Richard Lee and Bryan Zhao, junior Luke Zhang and seniors Kai Otsuka and William Cao. It is one of six VEX teams on campus.

In preparation for Worlds, the team's members are working on updating their Engineering Design Notebook to include tournament analysis from nationals, fine-tuning their driving, programming their autonomous skills routine and testing other prototype robot builds.

"So far, this season has surpassed everyone's expectations," said Lee, the robot's driver. "We have strong momentum after winning the Excellence award states and Tournament Champions at nationals, and we're looking forward to mimicking

This year's game is "Over Under," in which robots in teams of two are tasked with scoring green, acorn-shaped balls into goals and climbing onto a pole. All teams also have the opportunity to play in the Drivers Skills Challenge, where robots

compete individually to score as many points as possible.

While the team's first build swept the Central Valley Regional tournament held in Ceres, Calif., on Dec. 9 in an alliance with team 77787B — which qualified them for the U.S. Open — members were dissatisfied with their robot's overall heavy weight and speed. Following the regional, the team redesigned their robot toward a lighter design, creating a more maneuverable robot.

"Our original robot was more for skills," Otsuka said. "We



wanted to be better at match play, so we tried to decrease the weight of the robot and we ended up dropping from 18 pounds to 16.5 pounds."

Quick turnarounds have also been a strength for the team this season. While the team only had three days to prepare for the U.S. Open nationals, they took full advantage of the little time. The team's ability to adapt their robot to different challenges continued to give them an edge.

On the first day of the U.S. Open, they had the opportunity to attempt the Driver Skills Challenge. The team ended up placing second at the event with an autonomous score of 183 and a driver score of 226 out of a maximum total of 250 points.

The team later went undefeated during their qualification matches. They earned first place in their division after the qualifying rounds.

This year, the 95071X team was made to be the collection of the best members in the club to create a "super" team. Otsuka mentioned that each person brings a specific strength to the team and over time they were able to put everything together.

Otsuka hopes that the team can carry their strong performance to Worlds in April.

"As long as we don't go too ambitious on the robot [remaking big subsystems] and we refine what we have, we will do well at worlds," Otsuka said. ♦

this performance at worlds."

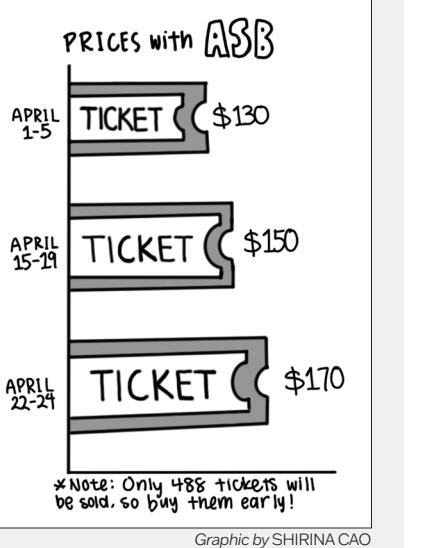
The 6 members compete in the VEX Robotics Competition (VRC), an organizing league that holds robotics competitions worldwide. VRC releases a brand new game every April, which dictates what challenges teams have to build their robots.

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Graphic by SHIRINA CAO

Graphic by SHIRINA CA

Choir goes to National Concerts Festival

BY ANGELA TAN

Unfamiliar, enchanting harmonies of "From Scorched Earth" by Katerina Gimon echoed throughout Benaroya Hall in Seattle, enveloping the audience with a beautiful blend of voices that captivated the meaning of a written poem into a moving musical performance.

On March 25 and 27, SHS choir students performed a seven-piece set as part of the National Concert Chorus (NCC), an approximately 175-person combined choir with four other schools. They were also one of three combined choirs that performed in the National Concerts festival, each performing separate music sets.

The NCC's performance included "From Scorched Earth" by Gimon, a piece specially written for the NCC and based on Vancouver poet Saphron Ma's "Wildfire." The poem and music composition call attention to the catastrophic effects of climate change and the rebirth of hope that arises from both nature and human healing.

The group also performed other works from varying cultures and periods, including Hela Rotan's "Traditional Indonesian Folksong" arranged by Ken Steven, modern pop artist Aurora's "Apple Tree" arranged by Gimon, and "I Love You/What a Wonderful World" by Larry Norman and Randy Stonehill, a work inspired by early contemporary Christian song.

The choir students flew to Seattle on March 22 for the 5-day trip. All SHS choir groups, including the Concert Choir and the Chamber Choir, participated in the festival, and most students who did not have prior conflicts chose to attend.

In the days leading up to the festival, the group rehearsed in 2-4 hour blocks in the hotel ballroom, working intensively with guest conductor Dr. Giselle Wyers from the University of Washington and "From Scorched Earth" composer Gimon.



The National Concert Chorus performs on the stage at Benaroya Hall in Seattle on March 25.

The trip was a partnership with National Concerts, a company that organizes similar-style performances at Carnegie Hall.

Nitzan was hesitant to have the choir attend a festival as its own ensemble, as the SHS choir struggles to maintain an adequately sized roster even with all its grade levels.

"We are small, especially compared to band and orchestra. Doing a whole tour on our own was tentative because of the numbers and not being sure how many people were going to sign up. I wanted to make sure we did something that was combined with other people for just a little support," Nitzan said.

Unlike other music-related trips, the process of applying to attend the festival did not require a competitive audition. Instead, Nitzan reached out to National Concerts expressing interest and was asked to send in videos of recent performances and their rehearsal process.

Although she does not consider it a prestigious festival, Nitzan believes that traveling as an ensemble, no matter the prestige of the event, is valuable for music students.

"They can work with a guest conductor over a more extended period than just having somebody come into the classroom for a day or two," Nitzan said. "It can also be a really powerful experience to meet others who you know are doing the same thing as you but have a different background or experiences that they bring to the table."

For senior Hannah Shaw, this trip was a opportunity to form bonds with choir students she previously didn't know as well.

"Normally [in school], students in Concert Choir and Chamber Choir only see each other through passing periods, tutorial rehearsals and concerts," Shaw said. "It's kind of hard to form connections. So this trip really brought a lot of people together, which I really love, especially with people who sing in the same section and who ended up standing next to me."

RETIREMENT

continued from pg. 1

"I liked it, and then decided I would do it, but I only wanted to continue doing it as long as I was still really enjoying it," Davis said. "I still get a kick out of the kids; it's just that other things in my life have taken priority."

After the recent birth of his first grandchild, Davis has decided to spend more time with his family. Since all his children live relatively far away, Davis said he wants to allocate more time to traveling and visiting them.

Davis also hopes to spend more time pursuing his hobbies.

"I like to bike and golf so I'll be able to do that a little bit more often," Davis said. "I also have taken up woodworking so I've got a little woodworking place in my garage. I'm gonna do a lot more stuff and just have more time to relax."

Davis said he will miss the business projects his students create, including an activity where students create a business proposal for any real-world product. One of the most memorable efforts was a binder made of Kevlar that would be highly durable as a result.

While Davis looks forward to what retirement holds, he hopes his students will continue to grow both academically and socially. Davis mentioned he has tried to be empathetic and reasonable to foster an engaging and inclusive environment where his students can feel comfortable.

Junior Eunice Ching, who takes Physics with Davis, said she greatly appreciates Davis's ability to connect with his students.

Ching, who is on the gold team, recalls that Davis would always put an effort into starting conversations regarding their shared interest in golf.

"In class, he would always bring up golf with me, so I think it's cool that he tries to find similarities between students and talk about them, and he does it with other students as well," Ching said. ♦

The Saratoga Falcon

April 5, 2024

Drama prepares comedy musical 'Something Rotten'

BY EMMA FUNG

During performances that run from April 26 to May 4, a cast of 24 actors will step out onto the McAfee Center stage to perform the well-liked musical "Something Rotten."

The musical, written by John O'Farrell and Karey Kirkpatrick in 2015, tells the comedic tale of two brothers, Nick and Nigel Bottom, both aspiring playwrights in the late 1500s competing with one William Shakespeare.

In order to beat him at something, the brothers go to a fortune teller, who tells them to write a musical, something they had never heard of. They decide to name the musical "Omelet," a parody name for Shakespeare's "Hamlet."

According to drama director Benjamin Brotzman, the musical was built on a myth that many of Shakespeare's ideas originated from Greek writings and mythology, which is shown in the musical.

"It's such a funny show and there are so many easter eggs for all the theater fans out there," Maheshwar said. "I really wanted

copying other works were circulating at the time, the play sort of portrays Shakespeare as a shady character," Brotzman said.

"The whole message of the play is 'to thine own self be true,' and it's honestly such a beautiful message."

TEACHER Benjamin Brotzman

The two main characters, Nick and Nigel, will be played by juniors Apollo Burgess and Maheshwar. Maheshwar said she auditioned for the play as it is one of her all-time favorites — she first fell in love with the play after watching it on Broadway in 7th grade.

"Because rumors about Shakespeare

NEWS 5

to finish off senior year with a bang, and I knew that this would be a perfect role for me."

Alongside the two main protagonists, the musical will feature a variety of interesting characters, such as Shakespeare, who will be played by junior Ryan Backus, as well as Nigel's wife Portia, who will be played by junior Niraali Garg.

During daily after-school rehearsals in the Thermond Drama Center, Brotzman has used a system called "skeleton blocking," in which he plans out the itinerary and goals of the day. The point of this is to keep rehearsals on track, and it is crucial for mastering choreography and singing over the weeks leading up to the play, he said.

"I do this so that the production can move smoothly and according to schedule," Brotzman said, "especially because the cast has a lot of choreography and singing to learn over the course of the next couple of months."



Maheshwar

For the auditory aspect of the production, choir teacher and music and vocal director Elizabeth Nitzan will organize the musical numbers. Although most of the cast members have extensive experience in drama productions, students with no musical background are always welcome to audition for musicals.

"A lot of us are actually doing a musical for the first time this year," Maheshwar said. "It's perfectly fine if you don't have previous singing experience; the whole thing is just supposed to be fun, and there's no pressure if you're not a good singer either."

The drama team is excited to perform for their audience and leave an impact on them. "The whole message of the play is 'to thine own self be true,' and it's honestly such a beautiful message," Brotzman said. "I think it also pertains to our whole team, because theater is a place that brings so many different kinds of people together, and it's where we can just be ourselves." ♦

Lost and found items now being donated to teen charity

BY DIVYA VADILAKONDA

is not an abnormal amount compared to previous years, Torrens said.

As for the most commonly lost belongings, Torrens said water bottles — currently two buckets worth — are the most frequently lost and unclaimed items. Jackets and shirts are the next contenders.

Water bottles and Falcon merchandise not picked up by the end of each 6-week period are washed and given to the Green Team to sell and promote their message of sustainability. Highly expensive items, however, such as AirPods, phones and wallets, are kept in the office at the front desk until they are claimed.

If any of these items sound familiar, consider retrieving them from the lost and found. ♦

>> THE bigidea

Lost and found donations

The following items will be donated if not claimed:

- 1) Backpacks
- 2) Batting Helmets
- 3) Booster Seats
- 4) Jump ropes
- 5) Pencil Sharpeners
- 6) California Drivers-Ed Handbooks
- 7) Leather Jackets
- 8) Nike Shoes
- 9) Badminton rackets
- 10) Berets

They will go to Teen Challenge, which helps teens recover from addiction.

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The current presidential electoral process threatens democracy, must be overhauled

The 2024 presidential election is approaching, bringing with it a Biden-Trump rematch. This close matchup between the incumbent and previous president is revealing the seismic cracks in America's electoral system.

The one-candidate ballot undermines candidates who would otherwise be a good second or third choice; the Electoral College, which allot a whole state's electors as bloc to the winning candidate, means the presidential race comes down only to six or seven battleground states, utterly ignoring the popular vote; and caucusing — like the Iowa Caucus that kicks off the election year — gives an extreme representation of the rest of the country's demographics and core issues.

It's time for the country as a whole to look toward other voting systems, such as ranked-choice voting, as a replacement for the Electoral College.

The system of allowing voters only one vote to cast puts an additional, irrelevant factor for voters to consider — electability — not the candidate's policies or personality, but their predicted chance of winning against the opposing party's nominee.

This November, one Democratic and one Republican candidate will clash, and voters will have the choice between the two, or may vote for a third-party candidate — someone who, realistically, has no chance of winning. From 1892-2022, the only third-party candidate to gain more than 10% of the electoral votes was former President Theodore Roosevelt in 1912, with 16.57% as part of the Bull Moose Party — nowhere near the number of votes needed to win. In fact, America hasn't elected an independent candidate since George Washington.

Effectively, third-party candidates take away votes that would otherwise have gone to major party candidates. This year, although a record number — 63% of voters — say they would prefer a third-party candidate, only

17% say they would actually vote for one. And those 17% are evenly divided, so as voters face an unpopular rematch between Biden and Trump, third-party voting may factor into the final outcome. Although it is an idealistic demonstration of democratic principles in America's voting system, casting ballots for third-party candidates is essentially throwing away your vote and possibly helping your lesser-known candidate win.

Furthermore, the issue of electability has historically undermined female candidates in presidential elections. Although it is not a focus for Republicans in 2024, a poll in 2020 suggests that many voters skew their votes away from female candidates because they believe that they have lower chances of leading the winning party — with 76% of Democratic respondents stating that they believed it would be more difficult for a female candidate to beat Trump.

But perhaps an even more self-evidently flawed institution is America's Electoral College system.

The vote counting system is out-of-date and historically fails to accurately represent the popular vote; five of 46 presidents have been elected with a win in the Electoral College, but a loss in popular vote — since all states also get a minimum three electoral votes, small states like Wyoming are given a disproportionately large weight in elections, in comparison to their population.

(Wyoming's population is 600,000 compared to the nearly 40 million Californians.)

In addition, according to Pew Research Center, the Electoral College stimulates an effect called electoral vote inflation — where, on average, the difference in Electoral College votes is 1.36 times greater than the difference in popular votes.

In all but two states, there are winner-takes-all elections: Whichever candidate wins a majority of the popular vote in a state is awarded all the electoral



voting power that state has, essentially discarding every vote for the losing candidate.

The only benefit of the Electoral College is that the winning candidate will always have a simple majority of electoral votes, in comparison to popular voting — but this also means that third-party candidates winning a state's electoral votes is statistically near-impossible, with only three candidates in the past 100 years having ever won even one state.

And if a presidential candidate without the greatest number of popular votes can win through the Electoral College, but a distorted majority, how can we claim that this is the best voting system?

A possible solution: ranked choice voting and primaries instead of one vote per person and caucuses

Given the Electoral College's problematic one-person one-vote system, ranked choice voting, a system where voters rank all presidential candidates — so that if their candidate is eliminated, their vote is immediately

Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

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The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 27-2 in favor of this article.

High school and healthy sleep do not mesh

By Sarah Zhou

24 hours the CDC recommends for teens ages 13-18.

Despite constantly being chided to report to bed earlier for better long-term health, many SHS students still find themselves only getting into bed in the wee hours of dawn. From personal experience, despite certain benefits to sleeping earlier, it's not realistic for students to change this habit.

In elementary and middle school, I was generally fast asleep in bed before 8 or 9 p.m. and getting at least 9 hours of sleep a night. Sophomore year, however, I consistently tucked into bed at 1 or 2 a.m., while waking up at the absolute last possible moment (8:12 a.m.) to get to school in a sort of on-time-ish way. This was already pushing the limits of the 8-10 hours of sleep per



Graphic by TARANATARAJAN

Whether it's procrastination (senioritis is definitely real) or the genuinely unmanageable workload that came with taking seven classes in junior year, I found myself nodding off in my classes to get myself closer to the daily recommended sleep amount, but the quality of sleep isn't as high when you're constantly trying to dodge your teacher's

watchful eye.

Also, the 3-hour naps I took after school — whether they came at 4 p.m. or 10 p.m. — were never refreshing.

In the past month or so, in an effort to get my life back on track, I have begun reverting to something similar to my elementary school sleep schedule. I go to bed around 10-11 p.m. and wake up at 6 a.m.

My friends all know my most productive time period occurs around 2 a.m., and a 6 a.m. cram session simply would not be as effective. Though I'm enjoying this sleep experiment while it lasts, along with most normal students, I consistently save my work for the last minute before tests, and having a 10 p.m. bedtime is not conducive to effective study sessions, and likely isn't something I will be able to consistently hold up in college. For now, though, I'm waking up at dawn and I'm more than OK with it. ♦

by William Cao
& Nikhil Mathihalli

With over 5,999 college options in the U.S., seniors face a daunting array of possible directions; merely choosing colleges to apply to can feel like navigating a maze in the cornfields, blindfolded.

From our experience in the past several months, the most critical sifting device in the decision-making process has been well-known college ranking systems, such as U.S. News & World Report and Niche.

College ranking systems offer a standard and comparative framework, enabling students to assess the academic reputation and resources of institutions and determine which colleges fall into these categories.

This consistency allows for a fair evaluation across a plethora of colleges, aiding in the process of choosing those that align most closely with individual educational goals. When examining college lists, it's also reasonable to infer that higher-ranked institutions have more meaningful resources for their students.

A particularly prominent example of this is using them to find top-quality faculty and greater access to research and internship opportunities, leading to higher graduation rates and post-college job placement due to name recognition from a recruiter standpoint.

Ranking sites provide plentiful statistics about job placement after graduation and major-specific rankings can aid students in determining which colleges offer the best resources and align with their academic pursuits.

Moreover, these college ranking systems are useful for choosing which schools to commit to post-college decisions: In particular, we researched the engineering programs at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and the University of Michigan.

There's an abundance of online resources readily available to help with college re-

togatalks

What do you think about college ranking lists?

"I didn't use any; I mainly went off of prior knowledge from extended family when applying."

senior Emily Ta

"College ranking lists are very useful; through them, I was able to find schools good for my major."

senior Naina Tallak

"I applied to a lot of schools, but I never really looked at any. I don't think you need them."

senior Shrey Jain

The computer science industry is becoming oversaturated

by Richard Fan
& Alec Guan

young people all across the world are studying hard to get into prestigious universities with top-tier computer science programs.

However, the computer science job market is shrinking as tech giants reduce costs in two ways: outsourcing work overseas and using AI to do work once done by people.

Let's start by looking at why they're outsourcing their work to small firms overseas in China and India. Simply put, it is because the price of labor is vastly cheaper in those countries than here. Why would a tech company pay workers \$200,000 a year plus benefits to do work someone overseas can do for \$20,000?

As layoffs suggest an alarming new reality for CS jobseekers: With the further advancement of AI technology and cheaper sources of labor abroad, the job market for CS majors is not only volatile but also oversaturated. Computer science has been regarded as the most lucrative undergraduate major since the '90s, with over 30% of all undergraduate students in the U.S. selecting it. However, despite its three-decade reign as both the most sought after and competitive major, CS is no longer the road to riches that it used to be.

In the past, the main appeal of pursuing a CS major are the wide variety of high-paying entry-level job opportunities available upon graduation. The average salary for an individual with a bachelor's degree in computer science is a staggering \$121,000 a year, far above the national average of \$59,000. Thus, it is unsurprising that millions of

baristas? Not so fast. Instead, they should shift from CS and pursue similar majors such as engineering or mathematics. Those fields still support jobs such as aircraft design or electrical engineering — at least within the near future — AI cannot do. ♦

>> falconfigures

30

11

25

4

percent of US undergraduates major in CS

percent decrease in job offers for computer programmers

percent predicted increase in tech stocks for 2024

percent decrease in salaries for computer scientists in 2023

While controversial, college ranking systems are instrumental in constructing college lists



Graphic by AMY MIAO

the overall rankings, the perception can vary significantly depending on the specific field of study.

For instance, if you intend to pursue a nursing-related degree, Emory University might emerge as a top choice despite not being as prominent in overall rankings of schools.

Despite the bad reputation college ranking lists sometimes get, college ranking systems offer enormous benefits for overwhelmed seniors.

It is crucial to delve into the programs offered by different universities and assess their strengths and resources in your desired major, as long as you don't solely rely on the perceived prestige of the institution's rankings. ♦

Our TREASURED TRINKETS COLLECTIONS GALORE!

In fevered pursuit of Happy Meal Smurfs: a quest for the ages

When my family first moved to California, little did my mom know that a significant portion of her time would be spent driving to every McDonald's store around town in search of Smurfs.

My obsession with Smurfs started with the mobile game "Smurfs Village." Much like "Hayday" or "Stardew Valley," "Smurfs Village" is a village-building game where players can collect revenue from growing crops or running shops and use it to expand their territory. The game is surprisingly well developed; each Smurf even has a unique mushroom hut design, and it launches a mini-game when you click the hut. Huddled over the shared family iPad, my sister and I spent hours fawning over our growing village and the little blue people who worked in it. So it's little surprise that when McDonald's launched a new Smurf figurine series, I jumped at the chance to get a set of all 16. It included all of my favorites from "Smurfs Village," from Jokey who would deliver the daily prizes in his gift box to the Painter Smurf where you could play his mini-game and color drawings of the other Smurfs.

Fueled by our Ahab-like obsession, my mom, my sister and I dutifully bought countless Happy Meals and awaited pulling out the smiling Smurf inside the red box. I became so skilled at judging 6-piece chicken nugget meals — back in the days when they still had a decently high percentage of real chicken — that one glance was enough for me to tell whether the complementary apple package would be sweet or sour. However, we quickly ran into an issue with our Smurf collecting system. Each

Emily Wu

McDonald's only had a few types, and some of them were much more common than others. With the small number of McDonald's stores located by our old house in San Jose, we only had access to a small fraction of the total collection. We were determined to overcome such limitations. Even on vacation to Las Vegas, we left the main Strip attraction to drive from one McDonald's to another through the suburbs. I was surprised to see that just a few blocks out from the center of Vegas it almost seemed the same as any regular town.

After months of afternoon trips and eating hundreds of chicken nuggets, we tracked down 14 of the 16 Smurfs featured in the Happy Meal series. Sadly, we were unable to find Papa Smurf and Jokey. In retrospect, though, I realize getting all 16 wasn't the point of the experience. Instead, it was the good times I made, two big realizations: First, you didn't actually need to buy the whole Happy Meal package to get the toy — you could pay a smaller fee to just get the Smurf. Second, calling ahead to confirm if a McDonald's had a Smurf we were missing was an essential step as we narrowed our search for the gaps in our collection. Typical conversations went like this:

"Hello, is this McDonald's?" "Yes, what would you like to order?" "Do you have the Brainy Smurf?" "Draw! Draw! Draw!" "Smile! Smile! Smile!"

Carefully following the YouTube video on my dad's phone, 7-year-old me metaculously used a crochet hook to wrap rubber bands on top of each other around my plastic loom, I had fallen in love with this bracelet — appropriately named Rainbow Loom — and spent all my afternoons poring over designs and untangling rubber bands.

My experience with Rainbow Loom began the day my mom first took me to Michaels — probably a mistake on her part, as soon after, countless little colorful bands began to fill up the corners of our home.

Whenever I had time after doing my second grade homework, I used our family computer to look for tutorials on making different types of bracelets. I

Jane Lee

started with learning the simple fishtail bracelet but worked my way up to the ladder bracelet and the starburst bracelet, which were my proudest achievements at the time. Proudest Of course, weekends were filled with bracelet-making and bonding time with my family and even if my parents grew tired of helping me and my older sister move bands over the loom and buying even more rainbow bands, I spent hours working with my loom, looping white rubber bands over each other on the sides and using my favorite colors in the middle to create bracelets.

Some of my favorite memories from elementary school were receiving Rainbow Loom bracelets from my friends. I treasured them endlessly (at least, for the few days before they disappeared

Reminiscing on Rainbow Loom

and I had several new bracelets on hand).

Looking back now, I realize how much this activity is responsible for sparking my current love for crafts, including crochet. My interest in knitting and crochet started because Rainbow Loom kits advised me to get a crochet hook for an easier experience. Although I likely contributed a small percentage to environmental issues due to the sheer number of rubber bands I used, it was worth it. Coming across Rainbow Loom bracelets in random drawers and plastic storage containers always takes me back to the highs and lows of elementary school and the magical Rainbow Loom kits that accompanied me throughout my childhood journey.

Splurge diaries: living a double life as a squishy collector and aspiring YouTuber

"Hey guys! Welcome back to another squishy video! Today we'll be doing the slow-rising challenge."

Surrounded by a sea of squishies, my friend and I finished setting up our iPad next to the disorganized chaos and our filming commenced.

The challenge consisted of several elimination rounds to reveal a final champion: for each round, my friend and I held up a squishy and squished it intensely, and the squishy to finish rising to its original shape was the winner. Despite the squishies being picked at random, somehow my friend won every single round and we laughed at the confusing phenomenon.

Moments like these were common during my elementary school squishy phase. At first glance, my closet seems to be cluttered with old clothes hangers and boxes stuffed with past keepsakes, but upon closer examination there lies a treasure trove within: a large clear plastic box, brim with an astounding number of the sky-high price tags.

Starting small, I first set my sights on more familiar and affordable stores, exploring online options like Amazon and TaoBao and Daiso. While stores dedicated to squishies were un-

Jessica Li

squishes collecting dust but still oozing with childhood memories, these pieces of soft foam, which come in the shape of everything from food items to cute animals, consumed my waking hours during fifth grade. I used to endlessly binge squishy YouTube videos, fawning over their whimsical designs and appealing color combinations. Their irresistibly soft texture, coupled with the satisfying slow rise after each squeeze, had so avidly captured my attention and offered a sensory experience like no other, bringing joy to my days.

Through watching YouTube I became well versed in the art of squishy collecting. High-quality squishies had to be especially squishy, very slow-rising and extremely soft. Brand culture was also huge in the squishy world, and many brands gained exposure by sending PR packages to squishy YouTubers for them to review. Brands such as iBloom, Puni Maru and Kibru were well established in the community and highly regarded by fans and content creators alike. I frequently window-shopped on their websites, drooling over their coveted products but knowing that my mom would never approve of the sky-high price tags.

Conveniently, my dad had a business trip planned to Tokyo, Japan, which is where the iBloom headquarters happened to be located. I knew I had to snag this sacred opportunity to inch closer to amassing my dream collection. He agreed to include a trip to the official iBloom store in his itinerary and promised to FaceTime me to let me handlepick my favorites. I acquired the top five stars in my collection: the signature medium iBloom peach,

LIFESTYLES

'Us': A sinister thriller film that leaves you curled up in fear and questioning your mere existence

BY EmmaFung

Editor's note: Spoilers ahead.

During quarantine, I finally mustered up the courage to leave behind my anti-scary movie ideals and watch my first horror movie, Jordan Peele's 2019 thriller "Us."

I was immediately hooked when I first read the plot summary, which revolves around a family facing a sudden attack by masked killers. Sounds like a typical home invasion movie, right? But wait, there's a twist: The killers look the same as each of the family members. So naturally, my curiosity got the best of me as I just had to find out what happened next.

I ended up getting a lot more than I bargained for — after finishing the movie, I was left huddled against my twin sister while the credits rolled, neither of us daring to move.

There are so many aspects of this movie that set it apart from other horror movies, but one main element is how Peele twists a basic horror concept to convey a much deeper message. The ultimate meaning behind "Us" is that we are our own worst enemy. While we live in fear of those around us, we don't take into account how the deepest monsters are created within ourselves. This concept is brilliantly executed in a much more literal way, as the killers that look identical to the family members turn out to be a botched government experiment called "tethers" who live underground mimicking their human counterparts and are unable to speak, re-

sorting to making grunting noises as a form of communication.

Peele does a phenomenal job in revealing the connection between the family and their counterparts, showing how although the tethers experience the same lives as their human counterparts, their lifestyle is much more brutal. For example, while the main character, Adelaide, gave birth to a beautiful baby girl, her underground tether, Red, went through a gruesome labor and gave birth to a "monster."

Additionally, the tethers are forced to copy their counterparts' every move but in a much more violent, inhumane manner. The comparison between the two is shown through vertical pan shots between life above ground versus the tethered life underground.

For example, while people above ground are shown eating food and chatting happily, their tethers are shown eating raw meat ravishly while making animalistic sounds.

The concept of the "tethered" represents all of humanity's dark characteristics.

This contrast can also be seen as a representation of the upper and lower classes of society, and raises a chilling question: If we also lived under harsh, inhumane conditions, would we also become tether-like?



Courtesy of ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

The tethers finally make their appearance, signature scissors in hand.

The concept of the "tethered" represents all of humanity's dark characteristics, such as violence and ferality. No matter how much we try to conceal them, they will always resurface. The binding between humans and their tethers is symbolized through the tethers' weapon of choice: a pair of scissors, two identical blades permanently bound together.

Another noteworthy element of the movie is its soundtrack. Its most popular song is a remix of Luniz's 90's hit "I Got 5 On It," titled "The Tethered Mix." Luniz's song is first shown in its original form at the beginning of the film when the family is introduced on a road trip to Adelaide's hometown. The catchy melody and memorable lyrics effectively set up the family dynamic and start the movie off on a positive note. ♦

As their tethers, Lupita Nyong'o, who plays both Adelaide and Red, steals the show as she nails the task of alternating between a paranoid, protective mother and a deranged, inhumane woman. Nyong'o was also nominated as Best Actress for the movie at the Academy Awards.

Additionally, at the end of the movie (MAJOR SPOILER WARNING), it is revealed through a flashback that Adelaide was really Red the whole time, and that she had forcefully switched places with the real Adelaide and left the underground while she comfortably assimilated into Adelaide's real human family. As viewers try to process this sudden discovery, it is also interesting to look back on the movie and watch as "Adelaide" slowly becomes more beastly throughout the movie while protecting her "family" from the tethers. This subtle yet powerful performance by Nyong'o not only enhances the entire movie but also makes the rewatch much more fascinating as viewers try to look for signs of "Adelaide's" true identity.

An example of Peele's masterful foreshadowing of the plot twist is how Adelaide's clothes gradually get soaked in blood — becoming redder and redder, matching her real name.

Although the film is definitely not for the weak-hearted, "Us" is tastefully made and has so many hidden layers that I would highly recommend it for those looking for a horror movie that offers more than cheap jump scares. But be warned: It will make you scared of your own reflection. ♦

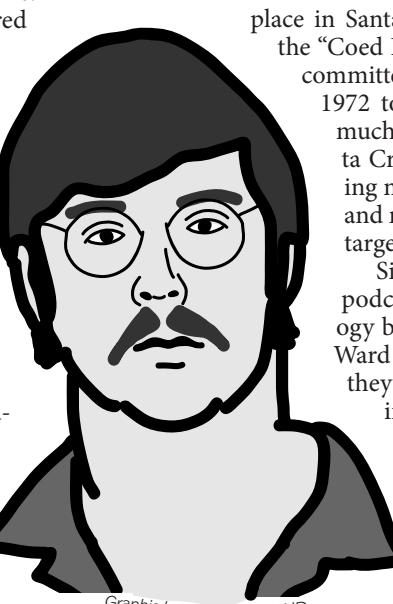
'Mind of a Monster': a compelling true crime podcast that analyzes serial killer psychology

BY AnamikaAnand

"How do you begin to make sense of such a blatant disregard for human life, let alone catch those responsible?" I felt chills down my spine as the voice of criminal psychologist Michelle Ward filled my ears. As Ward described the crimes of killers like Ted Bundy and Jeffrey Dahmer, it was almost like I could see the gruesome scenes playing out in front of me.

I've recently entered the world of podcasts with "Mind of a Monster," a podcast that recounts the crimes of various serial killers, hosted by Ward. Some of my favorite shows are true crime documentaries, so when I came across "Mind of a Monster" when browsing through podcasts on Spotify, it seemed right up my alley.

The podcast consists of six seasons, each containing six episodes that focus on the lives and victims of one to two serial killers who went on killing sprees from the 1970s to the 1990s.



Edmund Kemper

The stories themselves are extremely compelling, but it's the way that the aspects

of the podcast come together that conveys the ideas brilliantly. Ward narrates events in chronological order, describing the events herself but also incorporating expert interviews to help tell different parts of the stories.

Each season first focuses on the setting of the murders, making it easier to understand the context and how the murders affected the community.

Take Season 1 for example, which takes place in Santa Cruz where Ed Kemper — the "Coed Killer" — and Herbert Mullin committed a total of 21 murders from 1972 to 1973.

Santa Cruz was very much a college town, with UC Santa Cruz and other colleges attracting many young people to the area and making them easy hitchhiking targets for Kemper and Mullin.

Since a key purpose of the podcast is to analyze the psychology behind the murderers' actions, Ward describes the environment they grew up in and the years leading up to their crimes.

She notes that Mullin grew up in a stable home and did well in school, but grew mentally unstable as he got older and experienced unhealthy relationships.

On the other hand, Kemper grew up with an abusive mother and showed unhealthy signs like killing his pets, eventually ending up in a mental institute before his release at 21.

My favorite aspect of the podcast is the

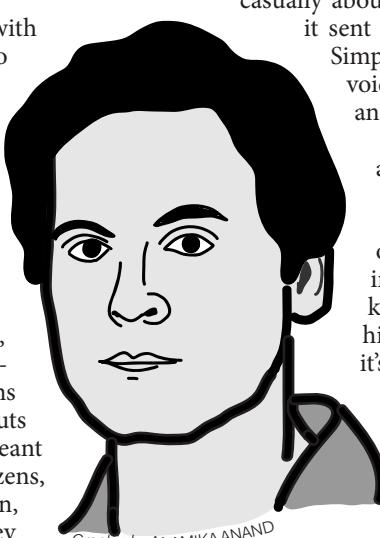
interviews. Ward includes snippets from her interviews with various people involved in the case or who lived in the area at the time.

In Season 1, she speaks with detective Terry Medina who worked on the case, and with author Emerson Murray to gain insight into the killers' childhoods, along with countless other people.

These interviews provide the details required to understand the context of the murders. For example, Murray explains how California's mental health systems experienced large funding cuts in the 1960s; these cuts meant thousands of mentally ill citizens, including Kemper and Mullin, failed to get the treatment they needed.

For me, the most compelling interviews are those with the victims' loved ones. One of Kemper's first victims was 15-year-old Aiko Koo, who hitched a ride with Kemper and was murdered. Ward interviews her close friend Hazel, who described the type of person Koo was and the impact of her death.

The podcast sometimes includes exclusive audio tapes from the killers themselves. Season 3 includes an interview between Gary Ridgeway, a.k.a., the Green River Killer in Washington state, and the lead investigator of the case, former King County Sheriff Dave Reichert. They talk about how the



Ted Bundy

Another aspect of the podcast is the music, which helps set the stage of the murders and convey the emotions of interviewees. Sinister music accompanies Ward as she speaks, while suspenseful orchestral music plays as interviewees describe the harrowing details of their experiences.

After finishing the podcast, I decided that I enjoyed it more than watching serial killer TV shows.

Somehow, simply listening to these stories and hearing the voices of the many who were affected by the actions of one person is more immersive and real than any documentary could be. ♦

Denis Villeneuve's 'Dune: Part Two' blows the sci-fi genre completely out of the sand

BY AnthonyLuo

Editor's Note: Minor spoilers for "Dune: Part Two"

When I recently walked into a fully packed IMAX theater to watch "Dune: Part Two," I had high expectations, given it was following up one of the most innovative movies of the past few years. Ten minutes in, I had already been blown away by the first scene alone, leaving me waiting in anticipation for what was to come.

Additionally, at the end of the movie (MAJOR SPOILER WARNING), it is revealed through a flashback that Adelaide was really Red the whole time, and that she had forcefully switched places with the real Adelaide and left the underground while she comfortably assimilated into Adelaide's real human family. As viewers try to process this sudden discovery, it is also interesting to look back on the movie and watch as "Adelaide" slowly becomes more beastly throughout the movie while protecting her "family" from the tethers. This subtle yet powerful performance by Nyong'o not only enhances the entire movie but also makes the rewatch much more fascinating as viewers try to look for signs of "Adelaide's" true identity.

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more engaging throughout in order to capture audiences' attention. And there's no doubt that he succeeded in both.

From the very first shot of the movie, cinematographer Greig Fraser re-establishes his dominance over the medium of film, having previously worked on "Dune: Part One" and 2022's "The Batman." From massive wide-angle shots of the vast sand dunes on Arrakis to disorienting dream sequences, Fraser makes the beautiful fantasy universe look like it could exist on our planet.

What stood out the most to me was the planet of Giedi Prime, home to the main antagonists of the film, the Harkonnens. The grimy and industrial world is captured by some of the most creative uses of black and white



Graphic by LEYNA CHAN

film that I've seen to this day, and fits in perfectly with the rest of the movie.

Chalamet delivers a stunning lead performance as Paul, staying reserved in the beginning of the movie only to release all of his emotions in the third act after a turning point in the story and his character. His powerful monologues, especially towards the end of the movie, command entire scenes, but he can just as easily draw back into tender moments of connection with his co-stars.

Alongside him are Zendaya and Rebecca Ferguson, who play Paul's partner Chani and his mother Jessica, respectively. Both actresses, especially Zendaya, provide nuanced perspectives on the women not just in Paul's life but the Dune universe as a whole, representing two important groups in the story — the Bene Gesserit nuns and the Fremen.

What especially drew me in was Zendaya's growth throughout the movie and how her relationship with Chalamet evolves. What begins as a playful rivalry slowly turns into a mentor-mentee relationship and finally blossoms into a love story.

The ending of the movie only cements Zendaya's ability to portray both internal and external conflicts within her character, marking a performance that rivals that of her in "Euphoria."

Supplementing these three lead performances is Javier Bardem playing Paul's mentor-turned-follower Stilgar, who provides genuine comic relief that helps balance the tone of the movie. The rest of the cast is still no joke — the main villains, played by Stellan Skarsgård, Dave Bautista and Austin Butler, all deliver frightening portrayals of their characters, and Butler gives a standout performance as the psychotic Feyd-Rautha.

Without a doubt, "Dune: Part Two" is a complete success and is sure to be a major contender in next year's awards season. But even more than that, Villeneuve's epic is a testament to the ability to tell stories through the medium of film. ♦

'Avatar: The Last Airbender' live action series is rushed but overall saved by stand-out castings

BY KavyaPatel

While most people's favorite TV shows are popular series like "Friends," "Stranger Things," "Outer Banks," I am not even slightly embarrassed to say that my go-to comfort show is "Avatar: The Last Airbender." Yes, it's meant to be a kids' show — and I don't care.

In Season 4, a voice actor portrays the notorious killer Jeffrey Dahmer. He easily and openly describes shocking details of how he killed and dismembered his victims, as if he thinks it's normal behavior. Hearing the killers talk about what they did shows just how psychologically disturbed they were.

Another aspect of the podcast is the music, which helps set the stage of the murders and convey the emotions of interviewees. Sinister music accompanies Ward as she speaks, while suspenseful orchestral music plays as interviewees describe the harrowing details of their experiences.

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the original series and a similar live-action was bound to be disastrous. Also, there are only eight episodes in the first 2024 live-action season while the animated show had 20, so I knew that the series was going to feel rushed.

When the show finally came out on Netflix, however, I was immediately hooked. I finished the series in two days and enjoyed it overall, but I definitely have mixed feelings about some of the remake's plot changes.

Upon watching the first two episodes, I thought the casting for the show was on point, especially with Gordon Cormier as Avatar Aang, Dallas Liu as Prince Zuko, Daniel Dae Kim as Fire Lord Ozai and Monona Tamada as Ty Lee; their acting and body language mimicked the animated version to an uncanny degree of accuracy.

My favorite episode by far was No. 2, "Warriors," where Aang, Sokka and Katara visit an island home belonging to one of the previous avatars, Kyoshi. Sokka and one of the "Kyoshi warriors," Suki, have a tension-filled romance in this episode. Without a doubt, Suki is one of the best casting choices in the whole series — Maria Zhang successfully portrayed her as someone with confidence and high self-esteem, while also capturing how awkward and inexperienced Suki is with romance after being cut off from the rest of the world.

Though the show is meant for children, I take no shame in my obsession with it; I spent all of quarantine and my freshman year in Zoom classes binging the show over and over again.

When I heard the live-action for the series was coming out in February, I was excited but also worried — the previous live-action movie released in 2010 was nothing like

sodes proved to be entertaining and were enhanced by the CGI included in the fight between the Northern Water Tribe and Fire Nation soldiers.

Many fans of the animated series pointed to some of the fight scenes being unconvincing — but that doesn't mean the live-action is terrible. I would give the show 3.5/5 Falcons; it doesn't hurt to watch, especially if you're a fan of the original series. It's nice to relive the feeling of watching a beloved animated show for the first time in a live-action production while not knowing exactly what to expect. ♦



Aang, Katara and Sokka on a journey to the Northern Water Tribe to defeat the Fire Nation.

Senior grows up on historic family-owned vineyard

BY SamBai

Imagining a home in the city of Saratoga, the first thought that might come to mind is the picture of a suburban landscape, uniform homes with grassy backyards lined up in rows and columns.

Growing up in Saratoga, senior Ryan Cagliostro has had an experience vastly different than most students: He grew up on a large ranch at the base of the Santa Cruz Mountains, being introduced to horseback riding and learning the ins and outs of wine-making. For him, the farm is not only his home, but also holds a rich history of its own.

Cagliostro is part of the Garrod family, who co-founded Garrod Farms with the Cooper family. Living close to Saratoga High School, many of Cagliostro's siblings also attended the school, including Gianna, Sarah and Danny Cagliostro.

David Garrod founded Garrod Farms started in 1893, originally focused on farming and selling prunes and apricots, growing from 66 acres to 240 acres by 1916. Stables were opened in 1962, beginning the equestrian business while replacing the orchards. Vineyards were planted in 1972, beginning with the farming of Cabernet Sauvignon.

The ranch is split between Garrod Farm Stables, the equestrian stables with around 50 horses, and Cooper-Garrod Vineyards, the winery split between six different vineyards. Garrod Farms spans 28 acres and has been in operation for 129 years.

"We have a team of people who work at the ranch to take care of the horses and run the winery," Cagliostro said. "Living on the ranch has made me appreciative of everything nature has to offer."

The winery offers wine tasting and monthly shipments of wine. A single wine



With a wide variety of scenic views and vineyards as well as activities such as horseback riding, Garrod Farms provides a memorable experience for all who decide to visit.

The juice is then fermented before getting barreled to age.

In total, about 1,800 cases of wine are produced each year with eight different varieties: Viognier, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot, which is brand new and not yet on shelves. Although the wines are tart, the grapes can be individually picked and are very sweet.

In addition, Garrod Farms creates six proprietary blends named after Cagliostro's great-uncle, George Cooper. Garrod Tasting Room and Wine Club Manager Cory Bosworth said. Cooper flew as a Test Pilot for red wines, the grapes are harvested, de-stemmed and fermented with the skin's native yeast to create the signature red color. After fermentation, the grapes are squeezed into juice and placed into barrels to age. The wine is then aged for at least a year before being bottled.

For white wines, however, grape juices are pressed first before fermentation to prevent the color of the skins coloring the wine.

for NASA's Ames Research Center at Moffett Field, just below San Francisco Bay.

Beyond its winemaking services, Garrod Farm Stables also allows customers to stable their horses. A stall or space in the pasture can be rented out, and clients gain access to all of Garrod Farm's trails and horse arenas.

"About 3/4 of the horses on the property are privately owned, and the rest are ours," Bosworth said. "The horses that Garrod Farms owns can be used for both trail rides and horseback riding lessons."

Garrod Farms also offers summer camps where people can learn how to train, ride and clean horses. People can reserve horseback riding sessions.

Living next to the ranch, Cagliostro enjoys seeing horses walk by the road and truck drivers pick grapes off the vineyards.

Cagliostro said he loves having easy access to "so much land" outside his door. He can hike up his backyard trail a couple miles for a breathtaking view.

"Growing up on a ranch encouraged me to learn equestrian vaulting for a bit," he said. "That was my family's thing where everyone in my family did it."

Cagliostro has not been involved greatly in the family winemaking business, being more interested in acting or dermatology, but he occasionally helps out around the ranch when needed. His brother Danny, who majors in soil science, plans on continuing helping the family business once many of the older family members retire.

Cagliostro feels grateful for everything his family has built for themselves and other people. He appreciates how much love was put into the ranch.

"I've grown up there my entire life and it's so fun seeing people enjoy the wine we made and go on tours around my home," Cagliostro said. ♦

bottle sells for around \$45.

While all grapes are harvested once a year in the late summer and early fall, the wine making process is different for red and white wines.

For red wines, the grapes are harvested, de-stemmed and fermented with the skin's native yeast to create the signature red color. After fermentation, the grapes are squeezed into juice and placed into barrels to age. The wine is then aged for at least a year before being bottled.

For white wines, however, grape juices are pressed first before fermentation to prevent the color of the skins coloring the wine.

>> falconfigures

129 years in the running

128 acres of land consisting of stables, the ranch and the winery

45 dollars per bottle of wine

1.8K cases of wine produced each year

Junior places 2nd in nationwide Congressional App Challenge with self-designed water conservation project

BY AmyLuo

nationwide."

Hoping to alleviate this problem, Siripurapu began to create Droplet. After working on his project for five months, he submitted it to the Congressional App Challenge — an annual application software development contest offered to middle and high schoolers nationwide.

Siripurapu ended up placing second in California's 16th Congressional District, tied with two other contestants.

"Honestly, I was a little bummed I didn't get first," Siripurapu said. "But I was still very happy to be recognized for a project I worked hard on."

His project consists of four parts: a water meter and a user-friendly mobile app that tracks water usage, code that sends the data from the water meter to a central database and machine learning models that recognize leakages (irregular water data usage).

While creating Droplet, Siripurapu said the biggest challenge he faced was figuring out what type of machine learning model to use for effectively detecting water leakages. It took rounds of trial and error with various different methods (neural networks, z-scores, etc.) before he concluded that the local outlier factor algorithm was best suited to the task, given it wouldn't flag routine usages — such as long showers — as leaks.

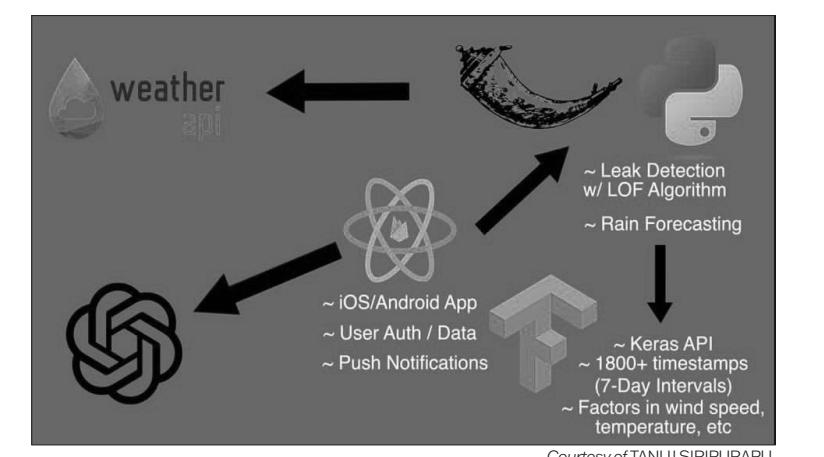
He submitted his project to the Congressional App Challenge in hopes of reaching a district-wide, and later state and nationwide, audience.

"I had done hackathons in the past, but they were all small and local," Siripurapu said. "So I was looking for bigger competitions for me to showcase my skills and ideas, and the Congressional App [Challenge] is among the biggest hackathons."

Now, with this recognition and

confidence in his project's ability to create a positive real world impact, Siripurapu hopes to continue refining the scope of his project. He's looking into internships with water companies such as San Jose Water Company and the Santa Clara Youth Water Commission, as many companies are focusing on these same problems.

"I didn't even realize how prevalent water leaks were before," Siripurapu said. "If we can apply some solutions to reducing the leaks, I think we can save money as a country by combining machine learning and water usage." ♦



A simplified diagram of Siripurapu's "Droplet" shows the app logistics. Suited to the task, given it wouldn't flag routine usages — such as long showers — as leaks.

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Disney Dysmorphia

HOW A BELOVED CHILDHOOD FRANCHISE INSTILLS UNREALISTIC BEAUTY STANDARDS AND GENDER NORMS

BY ShirinaCao
& EmilyWu

from "Aladdin." Many villains also feature plus-sized bodies, such as Ursula from "The Little Mermaid" with her round belly and obscure neck.

By reserving these characteristics for villains, Disney animators draw an unconscious association between long noses and large bodies and evil and ugliness. Just as the characters who are ugly on the inside, they are also stereotypically ugly on the outside.

In a study conducted by James Madison University, researchers analyzed the three eras of Disney princess movies: the "housewife" era, the "transition" era and the most recent "girl

Disney princesses flaunt "perfect," unattainable bodies and facial features

On the opposite side of the spectrum, Disney princesses seem to fit the same body shape: thin waists, tiny hands, dainty feet and doe eyes. This approach contrasts with other animation companies like Studio Ghibli, who feature more realistic bodies.

Also, princesses like Ariel and Jasmine primarily wear revealing clothing such as Ariel's seashell bra and Jasmine's tight crop top, highlighting their unrealistic proportions.

Traditional Disney villains often display undesirable characteristics such as long, crooked noses, pointed chins and plus-sized bodies — vilifying certain physical characteristics and potentially propagating body dysmorphic disorder (BDD), a mental health disorder in which sufferers are upset with their appearance to the extent that it interferes with their everyday life.

During adolescent years, BDD can be one of the most important contributors to self-esteem, and negative self-image is linked to depression and anxiety. If a child notices that their facial features appear only in villainous characters, it can turn those features into upsetting ones.

Being exposed to models and conventionally attractive people with thin bodies in the media can induce body dysmorphia, especially in young girls who often idolize Disney princesses.

Sophomore Sophie Qin is among the millions of girls who grew up enamored with Disney princesses. When she visited Disney as a child, she remembers wanting to be like the princesses.

"These princesses have been brought to life, and they feel like something that could be achieved," Qin said. "But their body proportions in the cartoon movies were not made to be realistic. The Ariel movie further pushes the idea of an ideal body and gender stereotypes."

To try and achieve these looks, some girls and women eventually turn to cosmetic surgery. In 2022, according to Statista, all aesthetic procedures (surgical and nonsurgical) generated \$11.8 billion, of which \$8.5 billion were generated from surgical procedures.

Sophomore Mridhula Vudali, who has watched every single

Disney princess movie, emphasizes the danger of disseminating stereotypes of what makes a girl a princess.

Disney princess movie, emphasizes the danger of disseminating stereotypes of what makes a girl a princess.

Movies like this strengthen biases like pretty privilege.

SOPHOMORE Sophie Qin

"sitting duck" princesses in the first era who lack agency in their own stories, Mulan is a powerful warrior who saves her country after stepping in to relieve her father of his war duties.

But while some aspects of the transition era lean toward female empowerment, outward beauty remains important.

For example, in "The Little Mermaid," when the protagonist, Ariel, loses her voice in order to gain the ability to walk on land, she meets her love interest, Prince Eric and he instantly falls in love with her, only from her physical beauty, as she is unable to speak and reveal her personality.

In the third era, which began only in 2009 with the release of "The Princess and the Frog," many princesses start to embody a more "girl boss" attitude. The main storyline of these movies often go beyond finding a dream man. For example, Tiana, the movie's protagonist, speaks her mind and knows what she wants, working two jobs to pursue ambitious dreams of opening her own restaurant.

Disney attempts to promote different body types through new short film

After increased pressure from the public, Disney has introduced more films with body inclusivity to battle the restrictive beauty standards in their earlier movies.

The studio's recent short film "Reflect" — which was released in September 2022 — tells of the struggles of a young, plus-size ballerina due to prejudice within the dance community.

Dancers are often expected to have a skinny frame, much like those of Disney princesses. The protagonist in "Reflect" battles these expectations by accepting herself and finding joy in dancing. However, despite the initial joy of featuring a plus-sized main character, many Disney enthusiasts like Vudali were left unsatisfied.

"The whole point is that you want these body types to become normal," she said. "If you draw attention to the fact that they are plus-sized, you are separating them and acting like it is out of the norm."

Despite Disney's unclear motives for these changes, many hope that changing the unrealistic beauty standards presented in Disney films will help promote body inclusivity among adolescents.

"You cannot change the classics," Verma said. "Everyone knows Snow White and Cinderella. But going forward, Disney should bring more diversity to change the next generation of kids." ♦

boss" era. The "housewife" era includes "Snow White and the Seven Dwarves" (1937), "Cinderella," (1950) and "Sleeping Beauty" (1959); the "transition" era includes "The Little Mermaid" (1989), "Pocahontas" (1995) and "Mulan" (1998); and the "girl boss" era includes "Moana" (2016), "Brave" (2012) and "Frozen" (2013).

In the housewife era, researchers say female Disney characters often played a role similar to one most women of the time held: household cook, cleaner and caregiver. Cinderella, for instance, spends her time cleaning the house, cooking and serving her evil stepmother and stepsisters.

In contrast, the second era of princesses demonstrates greater female empowerment, including characteristics of independence, determination, mental and physical strength. For instance, unlike

THE THREE

ERAS OF

DISNEY PRINCESSES

THE HOUSEWIFE ERA

Disney princesses often

played a role similar to one most women of the time held: household cook, cleaner and caregiver.

time giving.

THE TRANSITION ERA

Disney princesses lean towards female

powerment, though outward appearance still remains important.

THE GIRL BOSS ERA

Many princesses start to embody a more "girl

boss" attitude, featuring movies that go beyond finding a dream man.

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