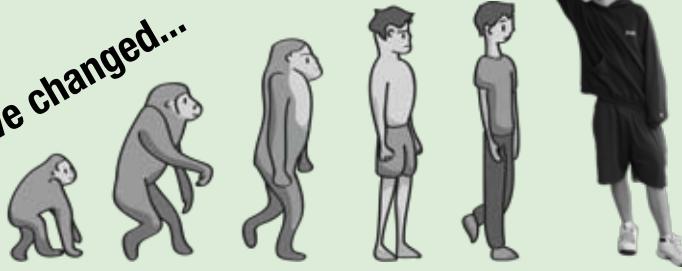


I've changed...



## SCHOOL SCOPE

Students share how they've evolved over time

pg. 14-15

Saratoga High School | Saratoga, CA  
An Independent School Publication

saratogahigh.org

Friday | November 6, 2009

Vol. 50, No. 3

# the saratoga falcon

## HOMECOMING WRAPS UP



### CALENDAR EVENTS

**LUNCH:** Senior class members present their quad day dances and presentations

**TONIGHT:** The football team faces off against Cupertino High School at Benny Pierce field at 7:30 p.m. for the Homecoming game

**HALFTIME:** Marching band will perform; Homecoming court announced

**TOMORROW:** Homecoming Dance held in the Saratoga High School Gym from 8-11 p.m.



Left: Senior Eda Isik paints for her class's quad day decorations. Above: Senior Chris Renalds adds the finishing touches to the house from the movie "Up."

### THE BREAKDOWN

How Homecoming points are decided:

#### DECORATIONS:

How well the theme is carried out  
Quality of the decorations  
Clever ideas and visual effects  
Diversity of decorations

#### QUAD DAY:

How well the theme is carried out  
Number of diverse performances  
Number of students involved  
Entertainment value

### VISIT ONLINE

[www.saratogafalcon.org](http://www.saratogafalcon.org)

FOR FINAL  
HOMECOMING  
PHOTOS, RESULTS

## Safe Rides receives green light to begin

For the second year, the program will offer students rides home

by Amanda Yi

The school has decided to run Safe Rides for the second year in a row.

Starting Nov. 14, the Safe Rides committee, consisting of about 20 juniors and seniors, will meet at St. Andrews Church every second and fourth Friday and Saturday of the month from 10 p.m.-2a.m., answer phones and give rides to students who need them.

"The purpose of Safe Rides is to provide transportation home for Saratoga High Students who are in potentially dangerous situations, no questions asked," said co-coordinator Tiffany Mo, a senior.

Mo and senior Kevin Rollinson have been planning Safe Rides

through the school's leadership class. Last year's leadership class sought approval for the project from the school district and the city.

"[Last year,] it was difficult for us to start the program because the city was completely against it," said Mo. "They thought it would support teen drinking, but we try to make it as clear as possible that we're just there to provide a confidential ride home for students in unsafe situations."

Safe Rides has been much easier to put together this year.

"[Kevin and I] had to get a new phone number; we're using Google voice," said Mo. "But other than that, we just have to talk to the insurance people, recruit volunteers and make sure this thing stays organized."

For the first Safe Rides meeting held in early October, only six people came because it was not well publicized.

see SAFE RIDES, p. 4

### OVERCOMING LANGUAGE BARRIERS

## A senior's SHS journey

by Amanda Yi

Think back to your first day of high school. You may have nervously entered Saratoga High, encountering new faces, heavier workloads, a bigger campus and more pressure. Now imagine going through all this while not being accustomed to the English language or American culture and not knowing a single soul.

That is what senior Wendy Mei went through during her freshman year. In December 2005, at age 14, Mei, her mom and older brother left behind everything they were familiar with in Taiwan to move to the United States. Mei's older brother, Hank, was starting high school and Mei would be a freshman soon after, so Mei's mother thought it was the perfect opportunity for a "fresh start" in America.

Then, not even a year after she arrived, Mei went to high school.

"Because the age going into each grade level is different here than in Tai-



#### MEI

Senior moved to the United States at age 14 from Taiwan for high school.

wan, I skipped a year of middle school when I got here," said Mei. "I didn't feel prepared at all and could not believe that I was going to high school."

The first month of school was excruciatingly difficult. While she was trying to adjust to her new life in the U.S., Mei did not have the support of any friends because she went to Hyde Middle School before moving to Saratoga.

"I didn't know a single person at school and Saratoga did not have a lot of immigrants as opposed to Lynbrook, which was where I was going to attend, or other Cupertino area schools."

see MEI, p. 15

## OPINION

Homecoming spirit?

pg. 8

## IN-DEPTH

Learning styles

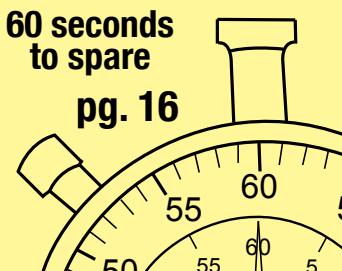
Teaching methods

pg. 12-13

## ENTERTAINMENT

60 seconds to spare

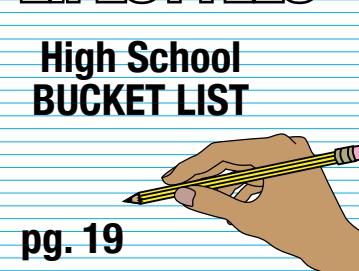
pg. 16



## LIFESTYLES

High School BUCKET LIST

pg. 19

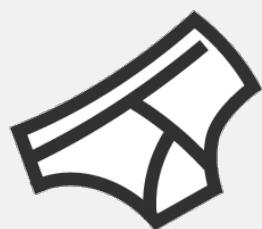


## SPORTS

Teachers and their passions

pg. 27

# NEWS BRIEFS



## Students and staff profit from new ATM

Anyone walking around the guidance area of the main office will now notice a new ATM machine resting against the wall. The ATM machine was just installed at the end of September and has proven to be popular.

"We just figured it's a real pain [to not have a machine on campus]," said principal's secretary Susan Dini. In particular, it proved difficult when students need money but could not leave campus to go to the bank.

Now with the easy access to the ATM machine, teachers benefit as well. If they forget money, they can head to the office to get money for lunch.

As a new installation to the office, the school does not need to worry about the upkeep, which the company, ATM Concepts, handles.

"The company does it all," said Dini. "They give us a little bit of money off of the machine and the rest of it they take care of [by putting money in and servicing the machine]."

Although it has not yet been well publicized, students are proving the new machine.

"I haven't used the ATM that is in the office yet, but it's a good thing to have around campus," said senior Wendy Mei. "I don't think many students know about it, but I think they would feel the same way."

—Alicia Lee

## Holiday Boutique provides extra funding

In an effort to raise more money for the school's budget during the middle of a tough year, the Saratoga Sports Boosters are holding their annual Holiday Boutique on Dec. 5 in the little gym.

The boutique, open from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. in the gym, is run by the parents involved in the Sports Boosters program and headed by PTSO parent Kelly Berman.

The Holiday Boutique is mainly targeted to help raise funds for Athletics, ASB, Cheer and Music Boosters. A wide assortment of crafts, jewelry, topiary, ceramics and other household items will be available for purchase. Clothing and SHS spirit wear will also be available at the boutique at lower prices than usual.

Parents and students are encouraged to come and finish their holiday shopping early while helping out school programs at the same time.

The boutique will also be hosting the Cheer team in order to help them promote their gift wrapping fundraisers.

"I think it's great that we're having an extra opportunity to sell our gift wrap because we could really use the extra crowd to help raise as much money as we can," said junior cheerleader Erin Wong.

—Pia Mishra

## Ceramics Souper Bowl set for February

In the cold days of February, there will be no better way to build a warm sense of community than to have a "Souper Bowl," a fundraiser by ceramics teacher Leah Aguayo's classes that will sell hot bowls of soup.

Students will help out with the event, to be held on Feb. 10 in the school cafeteria, by making over 300 ceramic bowls in the next few months, while parent volunteers will have vegetable chopping parties and bring the soup-making ingredients prior to the event.

On the day of the Bowl, Aguayo, with the help of parents and students, will make her famous soup recipes, which include Chicken Noodle, Vegetarian Minestrone, Black Bean and a fourth to be decided later.

Proceeds from the event will go to the school's ceramics program.

"The funds have been used in the past to buy something special for the class," said Aguayo. "Some years it was a new [throwing] wheel or a Raku Kiln."

At the Souper Bowl, guests will pick a bowl of their choice and fill their bowl with soup from the various crock pots in the cafeteria. Later, when they are finished, they will be able to clean their bowls at a washing station and take the bowls home.

The price, which is to be determined later, will include a handmade bowl, soup, bread and drink.

Aguayo began the Souper Bowl 12 years ago. Because the event takes a great effort on all parts, it has not been held in recent years. However, Aguayo decided to reinstate it this year after she was approached by parents at Back to School Night with questions about whether the event would take place.

"I can't do it by myself, so the offer of help is making it happen," said Aguayo.

—Alicia Lee

# Mock trial chooses team, begins competition prep

by Saniha Shankar  
and Abhi Venkataramana

**T**wenty hopeful students nervously sat in history teacher Margarita Morelle's room on Oct. 13 waiting to be called in by mock trial head coach Dr. Hugh Roberts to try out for roles on this year's team.

For tryouts, each student had to act out the role of a prosecution attorney, defense attorney and witness based on an evidence packet that had been given out earlier. Roberts posted the team's line-up Oct. 16, and the 17 members went straight to work the next Tuesday.

The pre-trial attorneys chosen were senior Girish Swaminath and junior Synthia Ling. The prosecution attorneys chosen were seniors Saniha Shankar and Flora Chang and junior Vijay Menon. Defense attorneys are juniors Shannon Galvin, Navneet Ramesh and Soorya Rangan. The defendant of this case will be played by freshman Rohan Cota.

The witnesses will have to learn how to assume their assigned roles and transform themselves into believable witnesses. To reach this goal, three of the witnesses who will be playing

by the harsh critique of Preston Palmer. Palmer writes a scathing review and posts the critique on a site known as Yell-Up.

Soon after, Bratton loses much of his business and can't book a club to let him perform. On April 13, Palmer is found strangled to death on his driveway. The prosecution will set out to prove that Bratton committed the crime, while the defense will defend his innocence.

"I'm really looking forward to this year because we have a really strong team," said Ramesh. "We just started the case, so we have a lot of work to do before now and the trial."

The biggest change for this year's team is the addition of Morelle as the teacher coach to replace English teacher Bill Peck.

After taking on poetry after former English teacher Judith Sutton's retirement, Peck did not have enough time to continue coaching mock trial.

"It really is rewarding to see

how many of last year's team came out again this year. A real loss is Mr. Peck, but his lack of time is understandable considering he took over the poetry program which is an enormous new load," said Roberts. ♦

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# Students expand their horizons by attending CCOC

by Lillian Chen  
and Olivia Chock

**T**he bell rings at the end of lunch on a typical block day. Instead of rushing to their afternoon classes hoping they won't be tardy, sophomore Onie Wongkham and junior Dennis Rosenthal head out to the front of the school to wait for a bus to take them to San Jose for their three-hour afternoon class.

The team will compete in its first invitation in January. The three months leading up to the tournament in February will be spent writing, practicing and memorizing their roles.

Roberts believes that the strengths of the team lies with "experience and a larger base of talent." According to Roberts, in the past, the main areas of weakness have been tied to objections and witness control for the attorneys and witness believability for the witnesses.

To improve these areas, Roberts is planning to spend much more time until these areas equal the rest of the abilities.

"It really is rewarding to see how many of last year's team came out again this year. A real loss is Mr. Peck, but his lack of time is understandable considering he took over the poetry program which is an enormous new load," said Roberts. ♦

Wongkham takes computer animated graphics, which is similar to CAD (computer assisted drafting). Rosenthal is studying auto body.

"Instead of only taking an hour of CAD, CCOC lets me take a class for three and a half hours," Wongkham said. "We still get out of school at 3 p.m. though."

CCOC students can take a range of 30 classes, including interior design, catering, mechanical engineering and forensic science.

Rosenthal already knows he wants to be a car engineer in the future, so going to CCOC helps him get a feel of how it's really like to work in this area.

"It helps me understand the basics of a car because we are working at an auto shop, and we take cars apart and put them back together. By the end of the semester, we get to paint and fix the cars by ourselves," Rosenthal said.

Not only is it helpful to them, it is also free for students. The class is open to adults as well, but it costs over \$600 for them.

"There are about 80 people in my class. They're all students from other schools in the area," Rosenthal said.

Both students recommend this program to other students if they want more hands-on experiences in a career they are interested in.

"It's a totally different world," Weaver said. ♦



Junior Dennis Rosenthal and sophomore Onie Wongkham board the bus for the CCOC. The two choose to take specialized classes at the center to prepare for potential careers.



Vincent Huang performs with the other percussionists for halftime of a football game.

## Music showcases talent

by Kyumin Shim

**A** busy schedule is ahead for all the members of the music department. The marching band, choir and orchestra are all refining their skills in preparation for upcoming events.

### Marching band rocks at Clovis

The marching band had a competition at Clovis Oct. 24, competing head to head against rivals. It won first in all categories and received sweepstakes overall, a remarkable placing at the competitive event.

"It's the largest competition of the year and it was great," said music director Michael Boitz.

To make sure that the band would perform its best on the date, Jeff Fackle, the creator of the band's drill sets, flew in from Ohio to work with the students for three hours on Oct. 22.

"He watched us and commented on our show," said junior Regina Lee. "And he reinforced what [director] Mr. [Duane] Otani tells us during practice."

### Orchestra joins forces with Lynbrook

The school orchestra performed a concert Oct. 31 along with Lynbrook High School. Both groups performed individually and then ended with a joint performance in front of a large crowd and make improvements on its show.

The music department is looking forward to a great year with the first performances and concerts underway.

"Everyone's working so hard, and it's finally that time of year to show the great progress we've been making," said Boitz. ♦

initial rush period, which is often the first 20 minutes of lunch. After the line dies down then they can leave. For their efforts, they get an entrée, a drink and a side for free.

Lunchtime may be the time when most people interact with their friends, but Fang has not seen this as a major problem, saying he still has time to hang out with his friends on Tuesdays and Thursdays after his work.

"The lunch ladies are nice, and it's OK, since it's only half of lunch," he said. "Although my friends wouldn't choose to do what I do during lunch, the benefits of helping the school outweigh my spending of time with my friends."

Because Fang lacks experience in the job, one of the cafeteria workers watches over him to make sure he does his job correctly until he is able to do so himself.

"The first day, one of the lunch ladies watched me while I gave change to the students," he said. "I still don't know all the prices for the food though."

As of right now, Fang does not know how long he will keep his position, but he hopes to keep it as long as possible. Since he began volunteering, another student has started to help out as well.

"I plan to work as long as I can," said Fang. "I'll [try] to do this next year as well." ♦

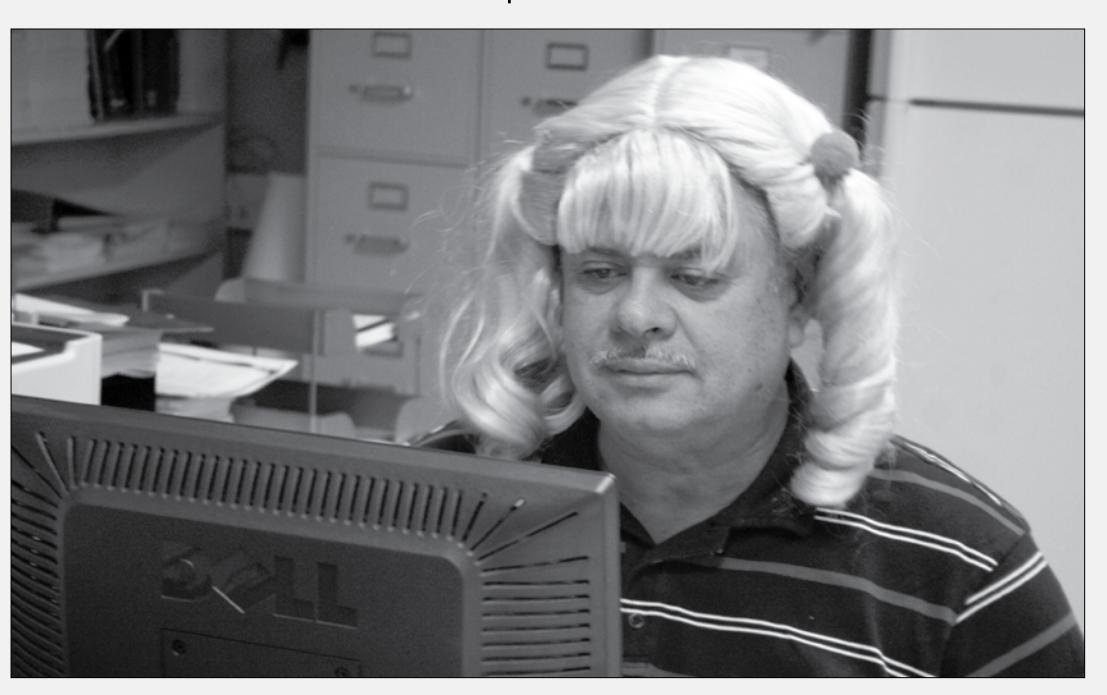
## THE BIG IDEA

### Student Lunch Helpers

**FOLLOWING EXAMPLE:** For the past five years, Los Gatos has had student helpers work in the cafeteria.

**BENEFITS:** Lunch helpers receive community service hours and a free entrée, drink and side.

### Falcon Photo of the Week | by Tiffany Mo



Spanish Teacher Arnaldo Rodriguez dons a blonde wig in honor of Halloween on Friday, Oct. 30.

# New cracks form on repaved courts

**TENNIS PLAYERS STILL HAPPIER THAN LAST YEAR**

by Parul Singh and Jason Wu

Although the school recently invested money into resurfacing the tennis courts, cracks have already formed. While the cracks raise questions about the long-term durability of the tennis courts, the purpose of the renovations were to make the courts "playable" again, assistant principal Joe Bosco said.

"We did a \$24,000 emergency safety repair in anticipation of a full-scale renovation. The courts are now safe and that was our first priority," said Bosco.

Even with their minor cosmetic flaws, the newly resurfaced courts still represent a huge improvement from the weeds and dirt that grew from the cracks in the courts last year.

"I think that renovating the tennis courts was the best thing to happen to the Saratoga tennis program, since after playing on them for six years, I've seen how badly they have degraded," said senior Eric Gast, a member of the varsity boys team. "Last year was probably the worst out of them all—I

remember slipping constantly on the courts when I was playing, so even though there may be a few cracks now, the courts are still better than they've ever been during my time here."

Despite their tradition of excellence, boys' and girls' tennis teams have long been pushing for renovations to the old courts so many of them view the recent resurfacing as a victory in itself.

"We've been CCS contenders every year, and it was a little embarrassing that our courts weren't very good," said senior Andrew Hsieh. "I think it's great that we finally have courts that we can really be proud of."

However, several players are worried that the courts have already begun to display signs of wear.

"I was happy that they resurfaced the courts, but I do think that the school wasted a lot of money unnecessarily. I feel like they may have done a poor job on it," said sophomore Lisa Asai.

Nonetheless, many tennis players are still enjoying the new courts.

"I prefer the new courts over the old ones because they tend to slow the balls down a bit and that helps my game," said sophomore player Crystal Yen. "I do think the cracks are bad but they're really small right now, so for the moment it doesn't really matter." ♦



Players say even with the cracks, shown in the inset, the courts have improved from last year.

# RIDE | Safe Rides program restarts, lack male members

continued from pg. 1

"Kevin put up flyers and put in an announcement but that was only a few days ahead and I don't think people knew about it," said Mo. "Since then, they have set up a Facebook group for the committee, improving communication."

Currently, the group needs more boys to sign up. Every car needs a male and a female, but only about five or six

males showed up to the first training meeting, Mo said.

"The turnout was lower than before but we're glad that people showed up but we need more guys," said Mo. "We have about 15 girls and five guys but we can't run if we only have 10 girls."

Safe Rides only provides rides home when students are in an unsafe situation. A driver of a car may have consumed alcoholic beverages and the people in the car may not have a reliable ride home, or a girl may be on a date that she feels uncomfortable on.

There are over 650 other Safe Rides programs in the United States all with the same goal: to reduce the number of drinking and driving fatalities.

The Safe Rides committee is hoping that students will take advantage of the program rather than risk the possibility of a dangerous situation.

"Everything is confidential," said Mo. "There are chaperones in the room with us but no adults will ever know who we pick up." ♦

# Current Homecoming traditions different from years before

by Christine Bancroft and Mac Hyde

Saratoga, 1977. Previous Homecomings had been lackluster and unenthusiastic. There was a Thanksgiving football game, but none of the decorations, quad dances and other festivities that came to be associated with the event.

That year, assistant principal Karen Hyde was in her first year at the high school and hoped to bring major changes to the autumn event. Having previously taught at Los Gatos, where Homecoming was a much more significant production, she helped the classes start the tradition of quad decorations and performances, as well as the tradition of float building. In that decade, she brought what many thought was a large dose of spirit for a school that had previously been all but void of school spirit.

"It wasn't 'my' idea," said Hyde. "I just borrowed it from when I was over at Los Gatos."

Prior to Hyde's coming to the school in 1977, Homecoming consisted of a Thanksgiving football game against Blackford High in San Jose, an event that disappeared within the school's first decade since the game was no longer being played by the time Hyde came to the school.



Third in an occasional series

Following the reworking of Homecoming in the late 1970s, an event students today would recognize started. The entire week was devoted to spirit events and themed days, with both staff and students dressing up.

"It would start on a Tuesday, and the night before the freshmen would come and set up for their day. Everyone had one day and it had to be all taken down after school when your day was over," said Arnaldo Rodriguez, Spanish teacher and world language department head

who has taught here for more than 30 years.

Every class had only one night to set up their entire area, which covered the whole quad, unlike the quarters today's classes have to grapple with. In addition, they would then have to dismantle everything that evening or else they would be docked points, or worse, the next class would demolish their decorations for them. That

Friday, there would be a special rally bell schedule, and every class would have a float prepared to be driven down Highway 9 to the football field at Los Gatos High School.

"I remember one year when a float fell out of the truck," said Rodriguez. "It was a gingerbread house onto Highway 9. That was just 'stress city' trying to get those over to Los Gatos."

It was quite a hassle, and then everything

needed to be marshaled in the parking lot outside of the field, along with the cars to carry the Kings and Queens around the track. Directing traffic around the track was also a nightmare. Floats were always breaking down and requiring last-minute repairs. But even with all the troubles, there were some lighter moments too.

In 1982, then-senior Eric Leonard decided to play a prank during the Homecoming court's procession across the field. "My dad and his friend were dressed in a nice suit," said current senior Jordan Leonard of her father. "My dad borrowed one of his friend's dresses. He wore this yellow dress, and he and his friend walked across the field as if nothing was wrong."

Around the year 2000, the tradition of floats was discontinued because they were causing too much stress, and the quad was divided into four quarters to more evenly distribute the ever increasing load of work to be done as the numbers of students helping dwindled. Since then, the quad days and dances have come to be the main feature of Homecoming.

"I do not know if [reducing the amount of decorations] was a bad thing, given the large number of kids that do not help. In terms of ecology it is a better thing; we killed tons of trees by using so much cardboard and paper," said Hyde.

Around this time the school also stopped inviting the previous year's cheerleaders back for the game since so few were showing up. Hyde said the school is looking to bring back some of the old traditions and maybe even bringing back floats to go around the field during halftime of the football game. ♦



Students voted Christina Robert, 2009 alumna, as Homecoming queen last fall.

## FALCONFOCUS

# Percussion teacher by day, cage fighter by night

by Anoop Galivance and Jason Wu

Ryan Masterson is a percussion teacher for the marching band, pianist, composer and... a cage fighter? Smashing the stereotypical mold of the dainty musician, the tall, athletic-looking Masterson trains for cage fights in his spare time.

Cage fighting, also known as mixed martial arts, is a sport in which nearly anything goes inside the ring. According to Masterson, however, acts such as kicking opponents in the groin area or stomping them on their head are forbidden.

Although Masterson once trained at the American Kickboxing Academy in Campbell, he now mainly practices with friends and isn't actually fighting matches right now because he currently lacks

health insurance and doesn't want to sustain an injury that would require treatment. Sometimes he trains at the gym at Saratoga High, where he keeps a full bag of his gear in the percussion storeroom.

"You guys are welcome to join if you want," he said to the two Falcon reporters interviewing him.

In addition, Masterson also said training and fighting provide an important outlet for stress.

"[Mixed martial arts] is very therapeutic, and even just training for it you relieve so much stress," he said. "Plus, you're in great shape and you feel healthy—your face might be bruised a little bit but you

## Teachers find a balance

Babies and schoolwork find a place in new parents' busy lives

by Karen Yang

For assistant principal Brian Safine, being a parent and an administrator at the same time is very different from his life before he became a dad. As an administrator, he often spends nights away from his 1-year-old son Eli to chaperone at dances, oversee football games and attend guidance parent nights.

"Having a child involves so many constraints of time," said Safine. "It's a double whammy because I'm busy with school, I'm spending time with [Eli], and I'm also losing sleep."

One of Thomson's primary concerns with parenting while teaching is the need to miss school days when her son is sick.

"I almost feel bad saying my son has to come first," said Thomson, "but for the first couple years you have to prioritize if you have a baby at home. Your kid has to be your number one concern even when you have a whole class of kids that you care about as well."

Despite the challenges of working while raising a child, Thomson finds the experience to be priceless. She describes her second "job" as even though she doesn't "get paid for it with money, [she] gets paid for it by many other really great ways."

With their being parents and staff members, both Thomson and Safine are extremely appreciative of the support of the administration, their spouses, and their students.

"My prep time, my lunch time, the time after school when my kid is at day care—those are really the only times I have to prep," said Thomson, "so I have to be much more efficient at doing work at school."

Since she is teaching a new course to

showed up, I realized that the gym actually trained people for fights, and it turned out to be really fun."

Even though getting "kicked like crazy" in the ring by other fighters with the force of somebody "taking a baseball bat to your legs" hardly seems like much fun to an outsider, Masterson said the pain barely registers in the heat of the battle.

"Everyone says, 'Gosh, doesn't that hurt?' but it really doesn't," he said. "When you get hit in the face, you definitely go, 'Oh my gosh, I just got hit in the face,' but you only feel the exhilaration—the pain that is associated with impact just isn't there."

However, the adrenaline doesn't last forever, as he also says that "the next day you feel the aching pain and can't really walk."

One of the reasons Masterson enjoys mixed martial arts so much is that it gives him a chance to defy traditional social etiquette.

"Your whole life, you have people telling you to be nice and civil, he's one opportunity where two young men are just agree to go at it with each other."

—Percussion teacher Ryan Masterson



Percussion teacher Ryan Masterson practices with student Zach Galvin during school. Outside of school, Masterson trains in mixed martial arts and competes in cage fighting.

Apexha Sharma

playing the piano."

He said the level of dedication required to compete well at the professional level and "not get your butt whooped" is considerable and added that he would rather spend the time composing, teaching and playing music.

However, Masterson also said the bonds forged by his experiences in cage fighting are invaluable.

"As soon as you are done with the fight, you and the guy you just fought have just connected on a level that most people don't ever connect on, especially because you agreed to fight each other," he said.

"Once you've been through that, you are brothers." ♦

## SPEECH & DEBATE

# Novice team members show promise for team

Team triumphs at their first tournament of year, looking to the new season

by Saniha Shankar and Abhi Venkataramana

After a month of practicing, the speech and debate team officially started the season by competing at the first league tournaments of the year.

The team competed at the Novice Individual Events Tournament hosted at Los Gatos on Oct. 24 and the Fall Student-Congress tournament hosted at San Lorenzo High School on Oct. 27.

At the San Lorenzo Student-Congress Tournament, co-captain Keerti Shukla placed second place.

The Novice Individual Events tournament on Oct. 24 gave novices a chance to get a feel for the competition that they will be facing during the rest of the season.

Freshman Ishaan Kolluri placed sixth in Domestic Extemporaneous Speech. Freshmen Neil Prasad and Shahab Moghadami placed first and sixth, respectively, in Foreign Extemporaneous Speech. Freshmen Kion Anderson, Rohan Cotah, Brian Kim,

and Venkat Kuttilla, Parth Shah and Sanjna Verma all advanced to semi-finals in Extemporaneous Speech. Sophomore David Eng advanced to semi-finals in Expository.

"All the [novices'] hard work, researching articles and practicing and giving speeches finally paid off in this tournament," said Extemporaneous Speech captain junior Vance Lindholm.

"I am extremely proud of how they did, especially since it was the first tournament of the year."

Junior Vance Lindholm

competed at the Fall Individual Events tournament at Leland High School on Nov. 1, but due to printing deadlines, the results could not be printed.

The team will be competing next at the League Fall Debate tournament hosted at Milpitas High on Nov. 15.

"In terms of the novice, I am very happy with the results," said head coach Erick Rector.

"What was very impressive as a team was that many of the novices broke to semi-finals in their very first extemporaneous speech tournaments," said Rector. ♦

## FALCON FOCUS

# Former homeschooleder feels at home at SHS

by Karthik Sreedharan

**W**hen sophomore Patrick Sobrak-Seaton was asked like other new students where he transferred from, he, unlike most others, replied, "my kitchen table."

Sobrak-Seaton, the first of his four siblings to go to high school, was drawn to SHS when he moved to Saratoga this year and learned about the Media Arts program. He originally lived in Felton near Santa Cruz where he was home schooled by his mom, who received her teaching credentials in Santa Clara.

"I heard from friends about what a great school Saratoga High School is," Sobrak-Seaton said. "And I really wanted to experience what it's like to go to high school and I'm really enjoying it so far. The switch involved a lot of curiosity."

Sobrak-Seaton said that several of his classmates here were surprised by his talkative and outgoing demeanor.

"Lots of people have this home schooling stereotype," said Sobrak-Seaton. "They think that home schooled students are a bunch of anti-social kids sitting at home who might not even be doing any work and just sit around. They were surprised that I could speak to them."

He believed being home schooled was a "liberating experience," because he was free to decide his daily schedule; he could work, play sports or hang out with friends at any time of the day around his academic schedule.

"My parents decided to home school me because they wanted to have more control over my curriculum for a more personalized education," he said.

Sobrak-Seaton feels one of the main differences is the extremely competitive nature of SHS.

"When you're home schooled you have a lot more opportunities to fight the flood and try not to do your work," said Sobrak-Seaton. "But I know I can keep up with the competitive side of Saratoga High. I'm just a little nervous about math."

One of his main goals for his education here is to get a head start when applying to colleges. He plans to use the numerous resources that the College and Career Center offers.

He said one of the main disadvantages of being home schooled is that if a student does not receive a high school diploma from the school, it is tougher to get into college.

"This being my first year here, I'm just testing the waters a bit," he said. "I'm not doing any sports this year because I wasn't quite sure what to expect. I'm trying to get the big picture to get the most out of my education at Saratoga."

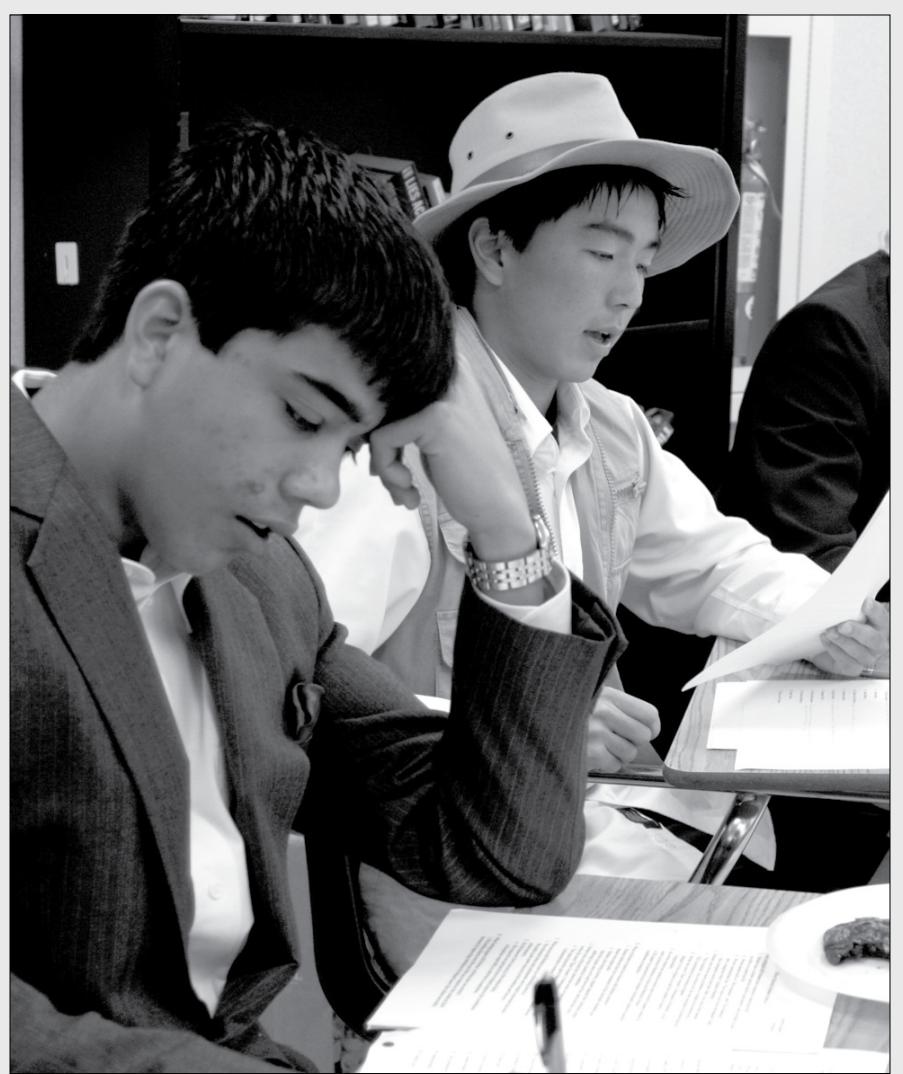
So far, however, Sobrak-Seaton is enjoying his first experience at SHS. He appreciates the kind and welcoming nature of teachers and students. He is extremely impressed with the school and likes the fact that there are so many subjects to pick from.

"There are so many options here so I can choose the direction to go for the future," said Sobrak-Seaton. ♦



Sobrak-Seaton

## APUSH students talk reform over tea party



Amanda Yi

Juniors Carlos Kasik (Left) and Stephen Louie (Right) take on roles of famous U.S. reformers in a "tea party" in Matt Torrens' fourth period class on Oct. 28. This is one of the many role simulations in which students participate in mock historical events.

## Time conflicts mean smaller audiences for 'On the Razzle'

by Christine Bancroft  
and Mary Mykhaylova

**T**he drama department successfully showcased fall play "On the Razzle" during the weekend of Oct. 22-25 at the McAfee Center, despite difficulties such as illness, issues with scene changes and cues and a smaller audience turnout than had been seen in the past.

"There were a lot of bugs going around during rehearsal," said sophomore Natalie Berg, who played a Scottish woman.

"Everyone was in really close contact. It was hard not to get sick."

The play, by British playwright Tom Stoppard, was directed by drama teacher Chris Mahle.

Despite the smaller audiences, the cast loved performing the play and enjoyed working together. To keep up a positive atmosphere, actors continued rituals to keep the cast close and friendly with one another.

Senior Chris Renalds, who played Christopher, said that a common one was going to Jake's Restaurant after performances and before-school coffee runs. "We wake up an hour early and do homework," said Renalds.

"On the Razzle" was scheduled for an already busy weekend with the Los Gatos football game and a band competition, so many students who would have otherwise enjoyed the production were not able to make it.

The show managed to go on after an extremely rigorous "hell week" of late-nights that included dress rehearsals and stage set-up in preparation for the performances. The audience turnout, however, was a bit of a letdown. Unlike sold-out productions of "Romeo and Juliet" and "Grease" last year, this Stoppard farce drew a smaller crowd because it wasn't as well known as these classic productions, and it suffered from poor timing.

First-time cast members also enjoyed the experience, including freshman Moriah Chermak, who played a citizen. She had acted in several of Redwood Middle School's plays and musicals but found working with older students to be a rewarding experience.

"It's really exciting. It's so different from Redwood," said Chermak. "You have props, so you don't have to pantomime. I loved working with the upperclassmen and learning all the jokes, and they told you how not to mess up, so you don't do it again. I had a lot of fun this show!" ♦

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## FOOTBALL RIVALRY WITH LG NEEDS SERIOUS RE-THINKING

by Tiffany Tung

**T**he rivalry with Los Gatos has been a part of Saratoga students' lives for the past half century. Sure, Los Gatos may not be a competitor academically, but athletically, the Cats are our major rivals in every sport, even football, where we just racked up our 30th straight regular season loss. Given this depressing statistic, is the LG-Saratoga game worth watching?

Perhaps so. Is the rivalry overrated? Yes, it is. But it's just a football game, and the Los Gatos team has been proven

to be superior. That's all there is to it. Although we rally on about how we'll beat them in every year, we're always let down. At the very least, we should treat the Los Gatos game just like any other one and not suffer too much when we lose.

After all, there's no denying that when it comes to size, Saratoga is generally lacking in its supply of Godzillas, while Los Gatos consistently churns out players that easily could pick up and punt most anyone on the Falcons.

Along with their intimidating size, Los Gatos players seem to be much faster and stronger than the Falcons. Sometimes they even seem to be made up of bulletproof NFL material. And if this wasn't daunting enough, close observation of the players on the field shows that Los Gatos footballers have only gotten larger through the years, perhaps feeding on the Saratoga spirit that leaks out of the team's tank before, during and after a game.

Though in general SHS has a lack of school spirit, the truth is that the Saratoga vs. Los Gatos football game should not be able to receive any special treatment. If teachers assign less home-

work on Fridays against Los Gatos to allow students the time to attend the game, they should do it every Friday. If teachers give extra credit to attend the LG football game, they should give extra credit to students who choose to attend any football game.

Friendly competition between schools is good, but this kind of rivalry is another thing. Although Los Gatos has been Enemy No. 1 for ages, there is a time when one must admit defeat. To tell the truth, it might be best to think about ending this lopsided rivalry once and for all. ♦



## Europe gets an education; U.S. pursues relaxation

AMERICAN SCHOOL EXTENSION PLAN SPURRED BY RIGOROUS ACADEMIC SYSTEM FOR EUROPEAN KIDS

by Alex Ju

**M**any people, notably President Obama, have voiced their frustration with American education, annoyed with how the country's performance on international standardized tests is always trailing on the coattails of European countries. As a result, the President has recently proposed a radical plan that would increase the length of the school year.

Though this may seem like a nightmare for American students, a longer school year is the reality of life in other countries. On average the United States has a mere 31 school weeks, compared to 38 in Finland, according to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Finland regularly finishes near the top when it comes to education, ranked second in mathematics, first in science and second in reading by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2006 survey. America's students, who did not even place in the top 20 for any

of the categories, continue to watch from the bleachers.

However, implementation of a longer school year would surely lead to problems in the school system.

To their credit, American schools produce more well-rounded students than those of Finland. Most Finnish schools do not offer many extracurricular activities, some even lacking sports programs. The reduced amount of physical activity resulting from such an extension of the academic week could have seriously negative impacts on the already questionable health of American youth.

The larger, and arguably more important, dilemma with this proposal lies in the resulting financial strain on schools. Obama has lofty ideals, but he should be concerned about the already emaciated budgets available to fund such goals.

Extending the school year would require paying teachers and staff for the extra time, not to mention the cost of maintaining school buildings. These expenses will undoubtedly burn up money the government does not actually have in

easily, and though it would, admittedly, take a chunk out of America's already thin budget, it would be far less wasteful than what Obama's original proposition demanded.

According to *The Economist*, America comes "behind Asian countries that spend less on education but work their children harder." This is the sort of example Obama should look to for reference, a solution that improves performance without affecting budget or negatively impacting the activities that make American students so well rounded and unique. Although some of the methods of education employed by many Asian countries are questionable, it is possible to take the best of both worlds.

Extending the school year, however, is not the answer to America's unsatisfactory standardized test scores. Instead of using a blunt club to hack away at America's educational fallacies, it may be best for Obama to use a more finely shaped instrument to shape the minds of American students so that they can compete with the world's best and brightest. ♦

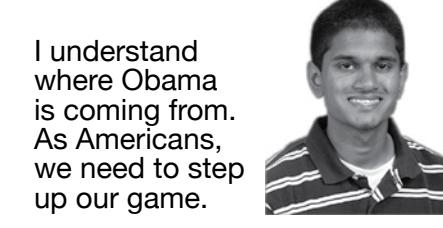
For instance, the current California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) only covers up to eighth grade math. With the majority of students surpassing this level, the exam should be more challenging. Raising the requirements would encourage students to work harder, and encourage teachers to use their time more efficiently to cover all the material. These changes can be made

## TOGATALKS

Is extending the school year a good plan?



I don't think it's necessary because we're all doing really well with our current school schedule. sophomore Steven Sun

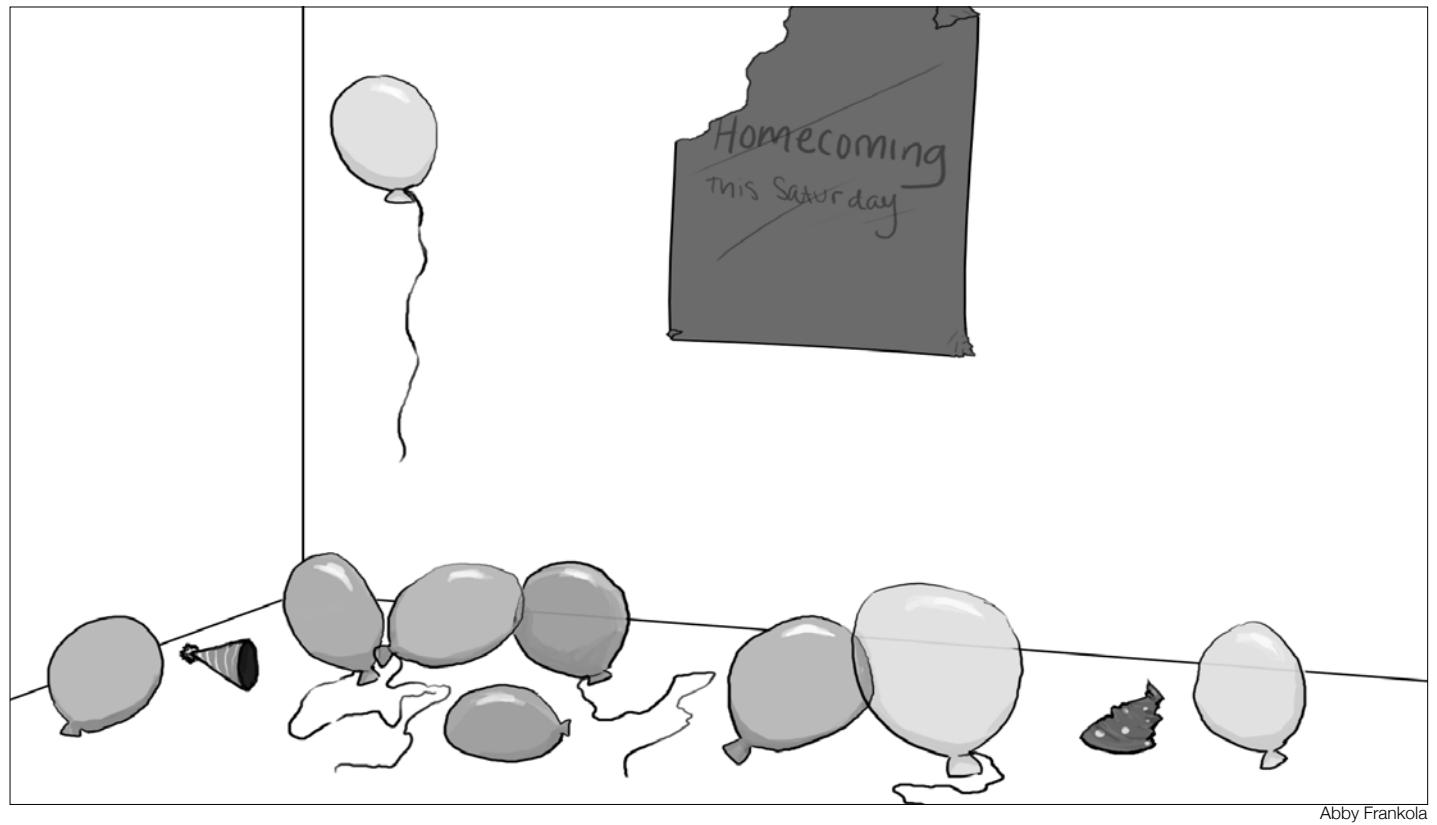


I understand where Obama is coming from. As Americans, we need to step up our game. junior Soorya Rangan

I don't think it's an issue of time as much as it's a matter of instruction.



senior Sonia Siganporia



## Homecomings past show real spirit

by Karthik Annaamalai and Ren Norris

Students sometimes hear their parents talk about their high school experiences filled with spirit days and dances. Their academics did not seem as daunting, the activities and sports were not as intense and, overall, the environment of high school was far less stressful.

But most importantly, students hear about the events that galvanized the older generation into becoming a united and spirited school. With so many challenges being thrown at them, modern students have lost that spirit that came along with traditional activities.

Homecoming used to be a week in which the entire school geared up for the big game and dance. In the week prior to the Homecoming weekend, there used to be dress-up spirit days every day—a tradition still carried on by other high schools, such as Los Gatos.

The school does have quad days to rally the school but almost never has

a wide showcase of spirit. This lost practice may have to do with the more rigorous academics at Saratoga. With many tough classes to keep up with, having a whole week dedicated to spirit may seem impossible.

Even though the school has kept many of the same Homecoming activities, like decorating the school with different themes, playing a big football game, crowning Homecoming royalty and having a dance, there have also been many important customs lost over time.

In the old days at many schools, there were school-wide bonfires and parades with floats made by each class that the Homecoming royalty would ride on. By creating more spirit events, such as parades and float contests, the school can rekindle its spirit.

Simply having these events, however, will not generate spirit as the students themselves need to forget about their academics for one week and bask in the enjoyable environment created by their peers. ♦

## Afghan war devolving into Vietnam fiasco

by Vijay Menon and Abhi Venkataramana

Since taking to the campaign trail, President Barack Obama has continued to stand steadfastly behind America's policy in Afghanistan, defending it as a "war of necessity."

However, in light of recent developments, including the resurgence of the Taliban and the corruption-laden re-election of President Hamid Karzai, it is looking more and more like this "war of necessity" is slowly starting to devolve into Obama's Vietnam.

Obama's stated objective in Afghanistan is to drive out the forces of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban while establishing a safe and peaceful democracy.

However, the newly minted Nobel Peace Prize winner seems to be failing on both accounts, leading many to believe that he is fighting a losing battle.

As Obama struggles to salvage Afghanistan, many politicians fear that he is losing focus on his domestic agenda and jeopardizing ambitious goals. It's true: The war in Afghanistan is often unfairly credited to Obama while in reality he is simply the unhappy recipient of a dusty heirloom of former President Bush's grievances.

However, America elected Obama to fix the countless errors made by the previous administration. As much as right

wing conservatives may enjoy bashing Obama as he continues thumb-twiddling over the issue of American involvement in Afghanistan, it is time to start pulling out.

**As much as right-wing conservatives may enjoy bashing Obama, it is time to start pulling out.**

All of these things, however, would take approximately five years, cost approximately \$20 billion and require more and more troops from America's over-worked army that is already overstretched on several war fronts across the Middle East.

Furthermore, focusing on nation-building and creating an army, although necessary, would take troops away from the front lines and only exacerbate the problems of the burgeoning Taliban base in Afghanistan.

As the death toll, already at 642, rises, Obama has a difficult choice—support Karzai, despite the blatantly corrupt nature of his election or allow infiltration of the Taliban into Afghanistan's government once more. Just as America was forced to

work with a stubborn and corrupt South Vietnamese government during the Vietnam War, America will have to decide whether or not to work with Karzai, or jeopardize the "war of necessity."

Despite increased American efforts and the deployment of more troops in the country, the Taliban is still making a resurgence in Afghanistan. To combat this, Obama wants to send 21,000 more troops and focus more on nation-building and implementing an independent Afghan army.

This may be the time to politely wave our caps at Afghanistan and stand as concerned yet reserved spectators as the country continues its long but necessary struggle to unite internally and rally behind their government.

If Afghanistan is able to pull together as a nation, presided over by a leader who is actually supported by the public, then America will be more than happy to throw its two cents in.

As Obama vacillates on this decision, he faces a stark reality. His inherited War on Terror is running out of public support and financial capital, making his goals to establish democracy and drive out the Taliban seem unrealistic. In reality, the "war of necessity" may have devolved into anything but. ♦

The Saratoga Falcon  
November 6, 2009

## The Saratoga Falcon

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The Saratoga Falcon is published five times per semester by the Advanced Journalism classes of Saratoga High School, 20300 Herriman Ave., Saratoga, CA 95070.

Views expressed in The Saratoga Falcon are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the administration, faculty or school district.

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Printed by FolgerGraphics in Hayward  
Printing is paid for by advertising and a PTSO donation.



The Saratoga Falcon  
November 7, 2009

## The Saratoga Falcon

by Ben Clement and Mira Chaykin

Hamas fires a rocket from a school blacktop aimed arbitrarily at Israel with no regard for whether the target is a military or civilian location. The Israeli military pinpoints the origin of the attack and fires back. What does mother UN do? Issue a report equating to a slap on the wrist for Hamas and a belt to the behind for Israel, an injustice that is difficult to tolerate.

The report, named after the lead investigator Richard Goldstone, accused both Israel and Hamas of committing crimes against humanity during Israel's defense operations in Gaza last winter. These allegations are preposterous and 100 percent biased.

### Israel has legitimate defense reasons

Many proponents of the report cite it as an end to Israel's immunity from international law. However, Israel has never been immune to international law, and is in fact, subject to far greater international pressure than any other country. If the United States had suffered terrorist attacks as consistently and brutally as Israel has, the whip of retaliation, if responses to Iraq and Afghanistan aggression are any indication) would have stung far greater than Israel's display.

### Report makes an unfair allegation

This myopic report fails to make a distinction between the aggressor and the defender. Israel suffered multiple rocket attacks on a daily basis for months on end before being forced to defend itself. It

is important to define certain standards; namely, a terrorist act can be considered an aggressive attack in which violence is employed against innocent civilians.

Firing rockets filled with metal bearings intricately designed to shatter into the greatest amount of shrapnel arbitrarily toward towns possessing no military installations certainly falls under the category of terrorism. Israel, despite suffering such attacks for an extended period of time, is reproached for defending itself. It is galling, to say the least, to sit and watch while the U.N. vilifies Israel's rational impulse toward self-defense.

### The rockets Hamas fired into southern Israel, in contrast, possess no targeting devices.

These cannot ensure that the intended target is indeed hit, but since Hamas terrorists tend to bulls-eye civilians anyway, their crude and inhuman methods of intimidation are self-serving in all facets. When Hamas wants to hit a military target, then they use rockets with targeting devices.

### A report with terrible repercussions

In this global economy, one nation cannot get away with waging war against another for fear of serious economic repercussions. Terrorists, however, are not bound by such restrictions, as they serve no constituency, and widely take advantage of this by practicing some of the most abominable tactics of warfare.

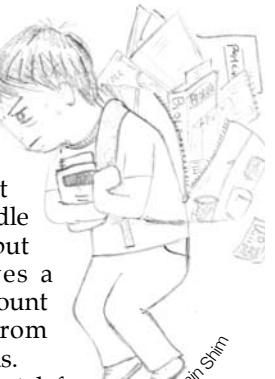
With the publication of this report, terrorists around the world can sleep more easily, comforted by the fact that regardless of how cruel their acts may be, they will not be condemned or held accountable by at least some in the international community. ♦

## CARRYING KINDLES LIGHTENS BURDENS

by Roy Bish and Brandon Yang

With the world transitioning to a more electronic one, many aspects of daily life are going digital. Such advances should be invested in education in the form of the Amazon Kindle.

The Kindle is an e-reader program that allows users to download books for a more convenient read with its search function, lightweight nature and portability. As opposed to a three or four inch textbook, the largest Kindle is less than one third of an inch thick and weighs only about 10.3 ounces. Not only is the Kindle more useful, but it also relieves a significant amount of pressure from students' backs.



## Flu vaccines increasingly pressing

by Christine Tseng

Some use the phrase "only when pigs begin to fly" as an expression to describe the impossible. In California, though, it's not the pigs that are flying, it's the flu. Must any more be said? Swine flu: one of the most pressing issues today. The recent outbreak has hit hundreds of cities across the U.S., and there have already been 219 deaths reported just in California from this disease.

A pressing question now is whether teachers should be required to get vaccinated against the flu. This is a simple choice: All teachers should be required to be vaccinated. The swine flu is easily spread and if people are not careful, this flu, which has always been a threatening next-door neighbor, could become a regular resident in Saratoga. Many students have already gotten sick recently and there have even been a couple of confirmed cases of H1N1 in

the school.

One reservation some teachers have for getting the shot is not unfounded—many fear that they are susceptible to contracting another disease accidentally if the needles are unclean, or if the resultant lowered immune system proves to only

be a gateway for other types of infection. Vaccines, after all, are said to briefly lower the body's ability to fight unfriendly invasion prior to producing antibodies. However, the vaccine has been developed in the form of a nasal spray. With a couple of puffs in the nose, it can have the same effect as jabbing a needle into the body.

Others say that adults are showing more resistance to the flu than children, and therefore adults should not be a priority. However, most adults do not come in contact with nearly as many children as teachers, and the circumstances are obviously different. Also, even if a teacher might not contract the disease, he or she could carry it and then pass it on to an un-

suspecting student in a later class. While all students should seriously consider getting the shot, there is no way to enforce school-wide vaccination.

It is highly disappointing that health care workers, teachers and other individuals who hold jobs that demand frequent contact with people are not already required to receive the vaccine. As mentioned before, California has had the most H1N1 related deaths of all the states. The next closest is humid Florida, with 121.

New York, after a big increase in flu-related cases including that of an assistant principal, has already made the shots mandatory for health workers and teachers, and the results are showing. So far, New York has only had 89 deaths, despite its crowded conditions in many places.

California, also with a big population, should follow suit.

If the flu has already been flying around at this rate, who knows? Perhaps the next in line will be pigs. Or, maybe it's best to nip the threat in the bud and bring the flu back down to earth. ♦

Especially with wi-fi on campus, Internet access is no longer limited to the computers in the library. Of course, this new technology will require training to maintain and repair such devices. In addition to having a repair team at hand, staff members should be familiar with equipment. They must aim to keep up with the advances to provide education deserving of the leaps and bounds that students and teachers are taking into the 21st century of digital renaissance. ♦

**WHEN MATH GOES 2 FAST**by Lillian Chen  
and Alex Ju

Saratoga High School students, trapped in a competitive environment that excels in academics, are under constant pressure to get ahead. For everyone from the many students who take geometry during the summer before freshman year to those who go through intense tutoring, the goal is the same: to get through as much math that they can, as quickly as they can.

After a crammed six-week geometry course, students often find themselves struggling in their new advanced math classes, lacking a thorough grasp of the foundation upon which their new class is based. In addition, this allows students to better understand proofs and theorems when they come up again later in trigonometry and other math classes. Math is purely constructive, with one concept building upon another. This is why it is so important to have a sound foundation in the subject.

**THE BIG IDEA****Students skipping ahead in math**

**PROCESS:** Most students take geometry over the summer to get ahead.

**PURPOSE:** To impress colleges with advanced math level.

**PROBLEM:** Students are cramming a year's worth of knowledge that will be important in future math classes into 6 weeks.

Many students following the aforementioned mathematical trajectory are doing so to get calculus done in junior year, allowing them to take AP Statistics as a senior. However, many universities prefer that students retake calculus as part of their undergraduate studies because they feel it is an important topic. This makes the push to finish calculus as quickly as possible even more pointless.

Teachers strongly discourage the parents of eighth graders at Redwood Middle School from putting their children in a geometry course over the summer. The department warns that at the end of the summer course, their children may not even make it to the Algebra 2 Honors, since they must pass a geometry test administered as a prerequisite to enroll in higher-level math class.

California standards are also moving forward. Set to take place this school year, 2009-2010, all eighth graders will be required to complete Algebra 1. This change is because several eighth graders have been permitted to take an assessment, which covers sixth and seventh grade math instead of Algebra 1. This assessment system was not up to par with the United States Department of Education Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, which approves everything that is taught to elementary and middle school students.

However, the rising standards are just increasing the pressure on students to get ahead. Many of them are trying their best to go beyond what California expects of them. Moving the standards just intensifies student stress.

Despite the negative side effects, it seems unlikely that students will stop pushing to get ahead. Perhaps some parents will realize that their students don't need to rush through such a critical subject and that it is better to pace oneself in matters of education than to build skyscrapers of knowledge on a foundation of sand. ♦

**WHEN MATH GOES 2 FAST****It's time to fix nation's health care wreck**by Anoop Galivance  
and Jason Wu

"The Daily Show" host Jon Stewart considered the public option component of President Obama's health care package so appealing that he believed Republicans disliked it only because of the way the Democrats described it. Surveys conducted by pollster Frank Luntz showed that the public disliked the plan when it was called the government option, but supported it when it was called the public option.

The Republicans would probably have less of a reason to oppose the plan if it was called AIDS-American Insurance Department Solutions," he quipped.

But it seems as if Mr. Stewart's sentiments were not echoed by enough of the nation's policymakers, as the public option seems to be near death. Liberal pundits are fretting over this development, but they shouldn't. The health care plan can still be effective in its current incarnation, even without the public option.

The Baucus plan is only one of many proposed health care plans waiting to be presented on the House floor. In fact, most of them exclude the public option—some because they hope to snare moderate Republicans and others because they believe that the success of such an ambitious proposal will not be feasible. Regardless, the overarching aim of these plans is not particularly affected by the absence of the public option.

This lack of the public option is actu-

ally quite intuitive. The only real effect it would have, if executed perfectly, would be to keep the prices of private insurance lower and quality higher. But this can be achieved through more stringent regulation, evidently something far easier to pass than the public option.

Without the public option, the bill would still guarantee health care for all. The Baucus plan, proposed by Sen. Max Baucus of Montana, has omitted the public option from the start. Instead, it proposes the establishment of a "Health-care Exchange" that would have citizens without coverage shopping for health care policies in a transparent marketplace.

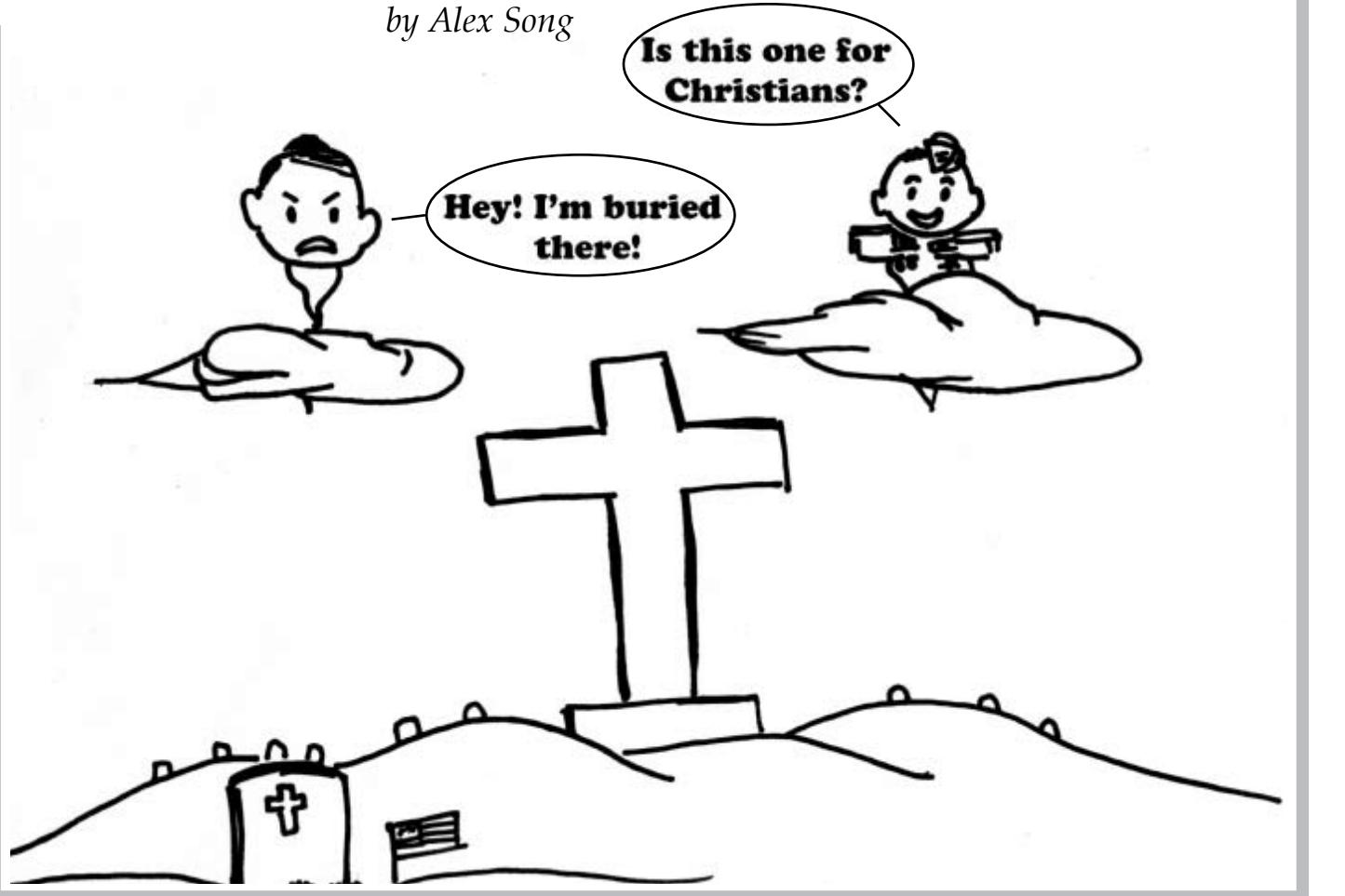
**Obama's health care plan can still be effective in its current incarnation, even without the public option.**

The primary purpose of the public option was to increase competition in the industry, ensuring that insurance companies that charged too much be forced to either meet equilibrium prices or die. It would have established an entirely government-run health care plan that would have been a direct competitor to

gun accidents and auto accidents, that the United States actually is better than other countries?" With or without the public option, American health care needs to be reformed... and quickly. ♦

**CANDID CARICATURES**

by Alex Song

**Employee cross over religious symbol**

by Girish Swaminath

A new Supreme Court case has sparked discussion about the principle of the separation of church and state: Salazar v. Buono. In 2001, Frank Buono, a National Park Service employee, challenged the presence of a cross in the Mojave National Preserve in California, which is considered federal land.

A district court ruled in his favor, and it looked as if the cross would be removed. But in an end-around maneuver, Congress designated the cross a national war memorial, and it remained.

The cross is the most common symbol of the resting place of the dead," said Scalia. "What would you have them erect? Some conglomerate of a cross, a Star of David, and you know, a Muslim half moon and star?"

"I have been in Jewish cemeteries. There is never a cross on a tombstone of a Jew," said Eliasberg. "So it is the most common symbol to honor Christians."

"I don't think you can leap from that to the conclusion that the only war dead

that the cross honors are the Christian war dead," said Scalia. "I think that's an outrageous conclusion."

Scalia argues having the cross erected on federal property is not a violation of the Bill of Rights since it is such a common symbol in America.

Years ago, the National Park Service denied permission for a Buddhist symbol to be placed within the Mojave Desert. The park service cannot allow the cross to remain.

The cross does not help Americans uphold and maintain Jefferson's intentions when laying the judicial foundation of this great nation. America loses its nickname, "the land of the free," when it promotes one religion over another.

The partial treatment of religious groups in the nation serves as a detriment to the unity of the people. ♦

**Parents due for dose of equality in parking lot**

AS TICKETING RATES INCREASE, STUDENTS DEMAND SAME TREATMENT TO BE SHOWN TO ADULTS

by Apeksha Sharma

By 7:40 a.m., the school's front parking lot is overflowing with seniors and juniors trying to park their cars in time to make the first bell. Just as they turn off Herriman Ave. and breathe a sigh of relief at seeing the school, they find a sea of parents parked in minivans and other cars blocking their way, seemingly content with where they are and reluctant to move an inch.

Parents have always been well-meaning, and it's important to understand, if not empathize with, their need to drop off and pick up their kids. However, not only do many parents take up room, but they also feel as though they have the right to block cars by stopping in the middle of the parking lots and waiting for their child to cross and reach the safety of the quad.

The delay caused by these sitting ducks often cause students to be late to their first class when, in reality, they were on school grounds well ahead of time. This problem has become so bad that it's time parents were subject to the same consequences as students in the parking lots: being levied with fines for idling.

The school makes it clear that the junior and senior parking lots are restricted to parents as pick-up and drop-off zones. Parents are to follow the lanes leading to the front of the school, but due to morning traffic, they find it easier to grace the upperclassmen parking areas with their presence, blocking the oncoming junior and senior cars.

Worse still, parents also block the way of many students who try and walk through the parking lot. By creating a line of cars that sometimes stretches to the school entrances, the bumper-to-bumper situation causes pedestrians to get stuck behind them too. If parents feel the need to skip the lines in the front, they should at least use the far back parking lots, which would prevent conflict between students and parents,



since students are only allowed to use the front lots for parking.

Although these violations are quite irritating to the students, some are worse than others. For example, stopping in the middle of the parking lot is far more serious than idling in a student parking space. Therefore, those committing more egregious offenses should have a

greater fine than the rest to compensate for the delays in the parking lots.

However, not all of these violations occur in the morning. Many times after school, a student waiting to back out of their parking space is halted by a car waiting for their child. Although fewer students care after school, it is still a nuisance to have to wait for a parent to

watch their child safely buckle themselves in before being able to pull out.

Even though the administration has tried to curb parents' behavior through communication and signs, the school needs to be firmer with its policies. Some parents aren't getting the message. Maybe a dent in their pocketbooks will get through to them. ♦

**Lack of communication wrecks student letters**

Applying to colleges and anxiously waiting for a reply at one's mailbox is hard enough without being blindfolded. The content of recommendation letters has been kept under lock and key—so much so that they have become a thing of mystery and anxiety to seniors.

The current system is understandable—if not to students at least to teachers. It prevents kids (or their parents) from taking up arms and going to their teacher's house, knocking on their front door and demanding a recommendation letter more complimentary to their college repertoire.

During these brief meetings, they could candidly discuss their college applications, and students could gain some clarity as to where they stand for a letter.

But for students, asking for a recommendation letter leads to the possibility of placing their college prospects in the hands of an ostensibly generous teacher. The current recommendation system is essentially a gamble for the college.

**THE BIG IDEA****Reforming Recs**

**PETITION:** The current rec letter process is too opaque

**PROPOSED CHANGES:** Students would meet with teachers to discuss their recs

**POSITIVE IMPACTS:** Teachers would be under less stress and students would be more sure of their future

**STAFF EDITORIAL**  
Opinion of *The Falcon*  
editorial board

**TOGATALKS**

How do you feel about the school's current letter of recommendation system?

I like it, but it's rough on junior teachers. It would be so much easier if colleges allowed online rec letters.

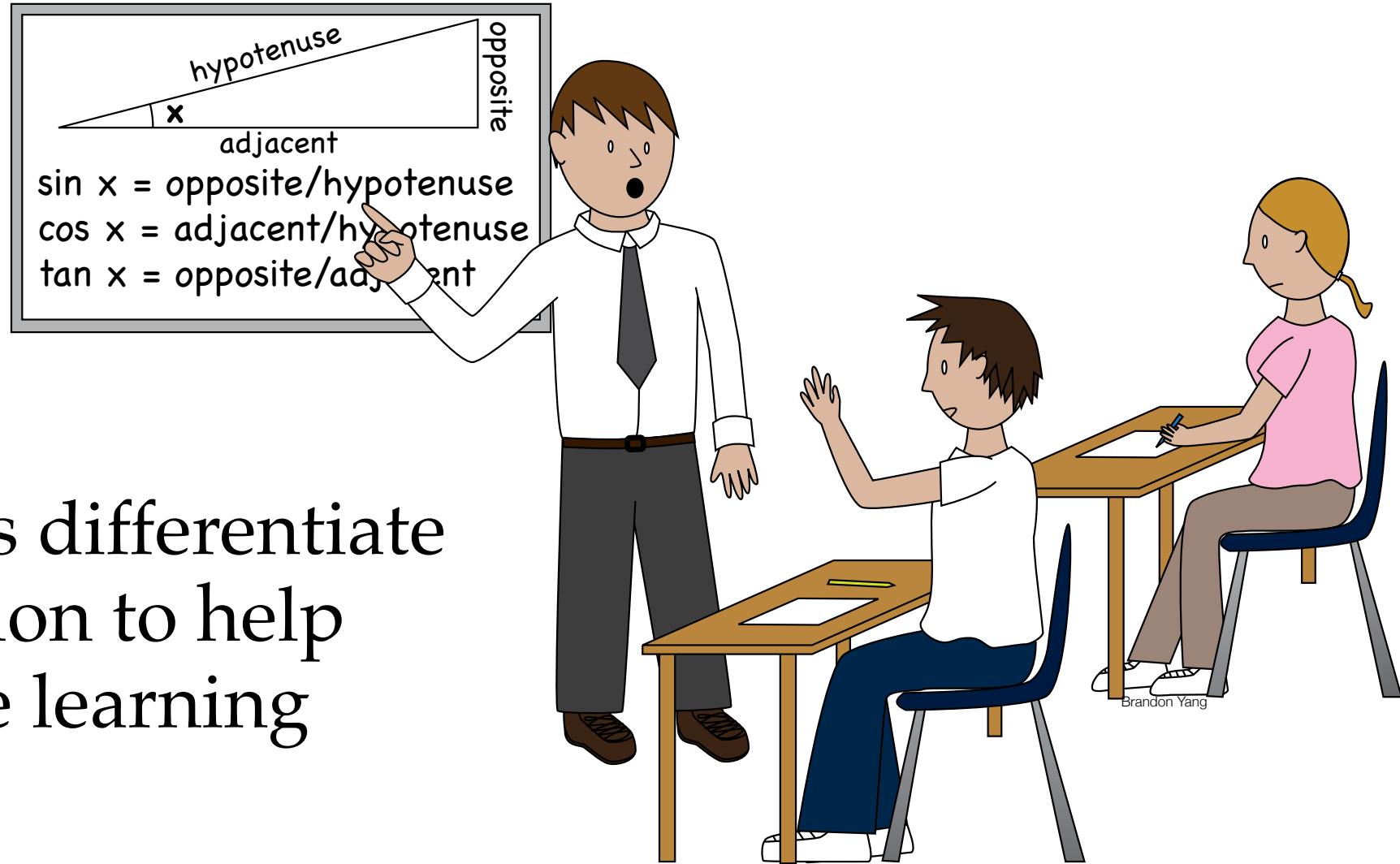
teacher Natasha Ritchie

I enjoy being able to go to bat for my students. I wish we had 2 or 3 workdays so that we could work on them.

teacher Michael Boitz

# Learning Styles And Teaching Methods

Teachers differentiate instruction to help improve learning



## Davey keeps history fresh in the classroom

by Denise Lin  
and Christine Tseng

**H**ead bobbing up and down, world history teacher Mike Davey sings along to his favorite songs while working during tutorial. The posters on the wall, which sport The Beatles, Lord of the Rings and Audrey Hepburn along with the soft, patterned beige sofa in the corner make Davey's classroom a comfortable place for students to relax and do work, though Davey does much more to help students learn.

Sophomore Kristal Kung, who is in Davey's world history class, remembers one simulation in which he acted as King Henry VIII and yelled at Kung, who was playing the role of another character.

"He grabbed my arm and yelled at me like what the bad king did to whoever I was," said Kung.



Davey

Davey, who teaches in the Media Arts Program and American government in addition to world history, implements several classroom tools including role plays in order to keep the history alive during class.

"History allows you to do fun things like historical simulations and debates to get your message across," said Davey. "The student [gets] to live that historical event to a certain extent so it makes it more fun."

Davey also makes examples about the history using students in class. He attempts to connect historical events to those more pertinent in the lives of students.

"I apply things to what students' everyday life might be like," said Davey. "I try to take historic events and personal-

ize them as if they were students. I use examples every day in class based on what that would be like during history."

One of the many problems that teachers have is dealing with different learning styles. In the classroom, Davey tackles this problem by using various methods of teaching to reach all groups.

"I think you try to teach the different intelligences as much as possible. There are some students that learn audibly the best and some that learn visually the best and different intelligences," said Davey. "You try to tackle each one as you go along. Some students learn best through lecture; some learn best by acting out, the kinesthetic learners."

When asked what his favorite part of the class is, though, Chiang responds with a very unique answer: music.

"I like when he plays music when we do work," said Chiang. "We don't have to work in those weird awkward silences."◆

For example, Davey appeals to kines-

thetic learners with simulations. Kung enjoys his teaching methods and feels they are both fun and instructive.

"I learn best with both motion and lecture," said Kung, "and Mr. Davey really gets that in class to everyone. We do simulations; he explains things interestingly."

Sophomore Alex Chiang, also a world history student, agrees with Kung.

"I think his teaching methods are pretty good," said Chiang. "He doesn't lecture and he doesn't just make us copy down the PowerPoint. He makes us pay attention in class with jokes about the class and the actual material."

When asked what his favorite part of the class is, though, Chiang responds with a very unique answer: music.

"I like when he plays music when we do work," said Chiang. "We don't have to work in those weird awkward silences."◆

## Guidance department focuses on personality types

by Vijay Menon

**W**ith a dropout rate exceeding 20 percent in 2008, California's high schools are in a state of disrepair causing administrators throughout the state to search for a fix to the educational system.

Across the country, schools have put increased emphasis on using different styles of teaching to accommodate students and promote a classroom environment that would be most highly conducive to student learning. This phenomenon of understanding learning styles and applying the findings to teaching has occurred at SHS where teachers and administrators have made attempts to assess learning styles in order to provide the best classroom experience for students.

Assistant Principal Brian Safine believes teachers here are well trained to handle student learning styles.

"Many teachers on campus are highly skilled in incorporating a number of different learning styles into their lessons," said Safine. "I see our teachers tapping into bodily kinesthetic learning styles, musical learning styles and verbal linguistic learning styles."

**Teachers are doing their best to accommodate different learning styles"**

—Assistant principal Brian Safine

students to discover new opportunities and future career paths that they might not have considered.

"Doing those surveys on Naviance from scratch could allow students to pursue areas of study and maybe even

future careers that they hadn't considered before," said Safine. "I think the best job we can do as the guidance department in terms of using Naviance as a tool is to expose students to

careers and majors they haven't thought about."

Since last spring when the guidance department conducted a presentation on Naviance, the school has been making a concerted effort to not only help students discover their own individual learning techniques, but also to apply differential

teaching in a classroom environment.

"Last year we spent quite a bit of time on differentiated instruction where we looked at how students learn and teachers were trained in ways to address different learning styles," said Safine.

Safine believes that Saratoga's teachers are acutely aware of the need to address a variety of different learning styles within the classroom. This is a point that is especially important given the drawn out 95-minute block period schedule.

"The teachers have been doing a good job of differentiating and varying the instruction," said Safine. "I've visited about 15 classrooms this year, and I would say the longest I've seen one teacher stick to a particular activity would be about half an hour."

According to Safine, the initial goal of the Naviance program was to get students to understand themselves better. A secondary step that has evolved over time is for teachers to interpret and in-

clude teaching in a classroom environment.

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"We encourage students to understand what kind of learner they are and what kind of personality type they have," said Safine.

He believes these surveys can help

teachers to better accommodate different learning styles.

"Other teachers are doing their best to accommodate different learning styles," said Safine. "I see our teachers tapping into bodily kinesthetic learning styles, musical learning styles and verbal linguistic learning styles."

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### THE BIG IDEA

#### TEACHING METHODS

**ENGLISH/WORLD LANGUAGE:** Teachers encourage groupwork and communication

**MATH/SCIENCE:** Visual techniques help students grasp difficult concepts

**WHAT'S NEXT:** Teachers plan to continue studying and incorporating varied instruction

or a Sketchpad program on the computer helpful in understanding difficult concepts as it allows for visualization. In geometry, for example, students use laptops to create geometric structures on the computer.

#### Varied instruction pays dividends

Junior Neya Vishwanath has found that when she is taught a concept in a couple of different ways, it is easier for her to grasp.

In classes that require drawn out learning and rote memorization such as AP Biology, for example, Vishwanath finds that she needs multiple methods to understand concepts.

"Especially in classes like AP Biology, both reading a concept and looking at a diagram helps me understand it better," said Vishwanath. "Mostly, I do better on [science teacher Bob] Kucer's tests when I have learned a concept in different ways."◆

Some classes have also found the use

## Students develop unusual studying habits

Individual methods of learning allow for adaptation to classes and ensure greater academic success

by Denise Lin  
and Synthia Ling

**L**ooking at her planner at 9:30 p.m. on a Thursday night, junior Kaitna Shankar feels overwhelmed. She has an environmental science exam, a math quiz and an English essay due tomorrow. But after a harsh day of school and Color Guard practice in the evening, she feels her eyes begin to droop as she lethargically sifts through a chapter about global warming. Shankar, frustrated by her lack of focus, decides to hit the sack and sets her alarm for 5 a.m., at which time she will wake up and I then study."

Juggling Color Guard and a hectic junior year schedule, Shankar finds she is often too tired to stay up late. "I'm exhausted at night because I have really long days," said Shankar. "So I will just wake up early and do it because I just can't focus otherwise."

While some students study best in the early morning hours, others require a particular type of environment to work. Junior Katie Gifford incorporates both auditory and visual techniques into her learning. She studies in her room and makes flash cards, but also needs a one-liter water bottle always by her side.

"I like drinking something so I can keep hydrated and so I don't get thirsty," said Gifford. "It's really bad of me because I do it all the time now," said Shankar. "My schedule is usually going to bed and then waking up early."

Studying seems like a simple task of just opening up a textbook, but some students such as Shankar have unusual methods to prepare themselves.

Shankar's schedule developed because she would simply be too tired to study or complete homework at night.

"I like drinking something so I can keep hydrated and so I don't get thirsty," said Gifford.

She also enjoys playing iTunes

at night when I'm really tired, I just go 'Oh, I'm going to read this on my bed,'" said Shankar. "Then I just fall asleep on my bed. And then I just wake up early and do it."

At first, working in the morning was difficult for Shankar.

"The first couple of times I wouldn't wake up early and I'd be [unprepared]," she said. "Then I started waking up early and it got easier for me. I just take a shower to wake me up, and I then study."

Although the prospect of waking up at 5 a.m. may seem strange to some, it has become a part of her daily schedule.

"I do it all the time now," said Shankar. "My schedule is usually going to bed and then waking up early."

While some students study best in the early morning hours, others require a particular type of environment to work. Junior Katie Gifford incorporates both auditory and visual techniques into her learning. She studies in her room and makes flash cards, but also needs a one-liter water bottle always by her side.

"I like to listen to music a lot like Beyoncé or Taylor [Swift]. When I do my APUSH homework I like to listen to the [soundtrack of] 'Last of the Mohicans,'" said Gifford. She fell in love with the theme song from "Last of the Mohicans" after she



Junior Katie Gifford attempts to study with music playing in the background to focus her attention.

Synthia Ling

watched the movie in teacher Kim Anzalone's APUSH class. "If I listen to music I like it makes me more motivated," said Gifford. "I don't want to do my homework, I listen to an upbeat song and then I just feel more motivated to get done."

## Teachers adapt lessons to fit student learning styles

by Parul Singh  
and Nandini Ruparel

**H**ow many times do you wish for a different type of learning in your class? Many students absolutely despise simulations, while others are enthusiastic and dress up for them like it's Halloween. Similarly, while diagrams may help one student learn, lectures appeal to another.

**Projects designed to help students**

The world languages department uses many of the same methods. World language students often do group work and projects. Department head Arnaldo Rodriguez stressed that skits are also a common practice.

"Some kids are auditory learners, and some kids write better than they speak," he said. As a result, Rodriguez works to provide an environment in his classes where both types of students can feel comfortable learning new foreign material in an understandable way.

**English emphasizes verbal learning**

Teachers often try to account for these learning styles in their lessons. And, contrary to popular belief, many teachers were students once themselves and reflect their own distinctive learning styles through the way they teach.

English department head Jason Friend is one such teacher.

"I am a verbal and social learner," said Friend, "and that certainly influences the way I teach." Friend believes in group work and tries to get the students to communicate as they learn. "In a small group, students can work together to build off each other's ideas or will be challenged to face opposing views," said Friend.

**Activities contribute to environment**

Other English teachers also incorporate games and have their students act out scenes of plays in class. These types of activities tend to be helpful for visual learners.

Physics teacher Kirk Davis tries to present different strategies to help his students learn concepts that are difficult to grasp.

According to Safine, the initial goal of the Naviance program was to get students to understand themselves better. A secondary step that has evolved over time is for teachers to interpret and in-

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## Best friends conquer high school together



Seniors Simin Ghahghahi and Mira Chaykin maintain their close friendship through sleepovers and cheerleading.

by Tim Rollinson

To say seniors Mira Chaykin and Simin Ghahghahi are close would be a vast understatement. The two have been best friends throughout all four years of high school and do everything together.

Chaykin and Ghahghahi met in seventh grade from mutual friends but did not become close until eighth grade.

"We were on the same soccer team and one day she asked to carpool and we realized we lived really close to each other," said Ghahghahi. "We found out that we really had a lot in common and became fast friends."

The closer they became, the more they realized how much they enjoyed each other's company and needed each other to get through high school. When so many things were changing, it was comforting to know their friendship would always hold constant no matter what.

"We have had a couple [of] fights during high school," said Ghahghahi. "We really try to stay out of drama with each other because we know

the fight won't last."

Chaykin also considers Ghahghahi's house a second home. Because she lives 25 minutes from the school, Chaykin goes to Ghahghahi's house after school to do homework and hang out. Over the past four years they have also, due to spending so much time together, bonded with each other's families.

"Simin and I will always be there for each other. When she's sick I bring her sick baskets, and when I miss lunch she brings me all [of] my favorite foods in a pretty bag," said Chaykin.

Similar activities and interests also brought the two together.

Both are on the cheer team and they bond over similar tastes in clothes, music and movies.

With such a close friendship comes a new level of trust as well. The two tell each other everything about their respective lives. They provide relief for each other when they are having a hard time.

The friends also say that their journey is far from over. While most friends usually grow apart after taking divergent routes out of high school, the two plan on staying very close in college and beyond.

"I trust Mira so much and I can't imagine us not being best friends. We will definitely stay very close in college." ◆

—senior Simin Ghahghahi

I was playing video games with her little brother. Her little siblings are really funny. I always have a really good time with her family."

While many students have a particular group that they tend to hang out with, Ghahghahi said they have never been a part of a tight group. Because of this, Chaykin

and Ghahghahi knew that they had to, and always could, rely on each other. They discovered that only during hard times were they able to discover who their real friends are.

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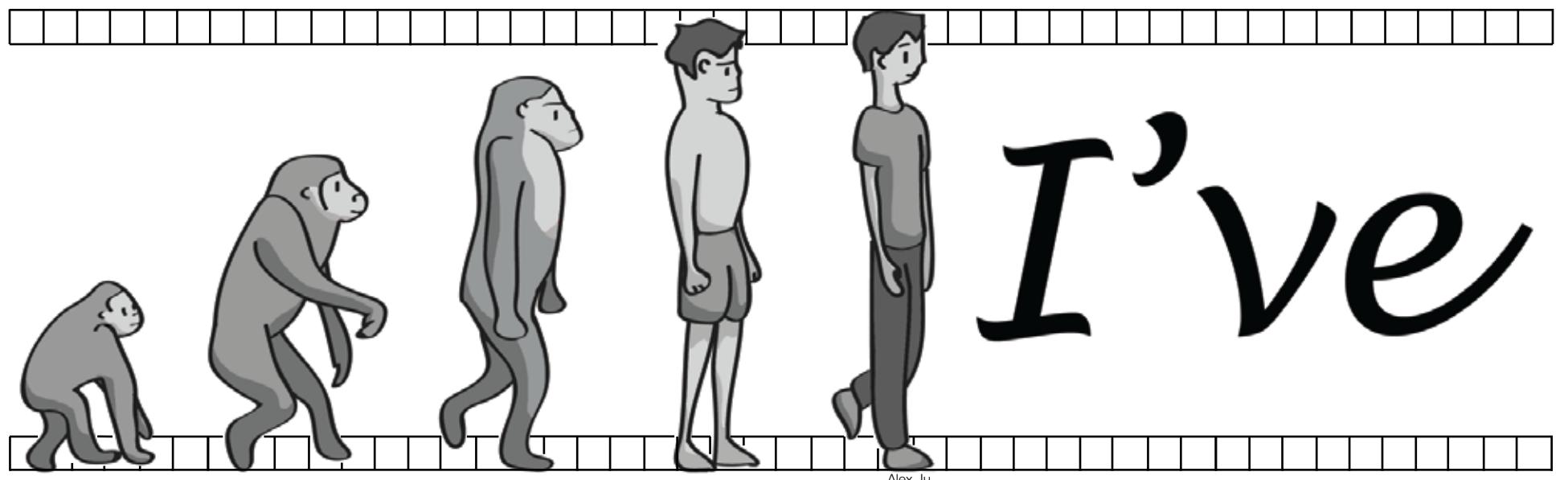
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## From 9-12: my adventurous journey

### TOGATALKS

#### How has your high school experience affected you?



"I recalled how far I had travelled."

Girish Swaminath

I used to be shy in middle school. But now, my social skills are better than they were a couple years ago.



Senior Andrew Wei

I am a lot more confident now, in my senior year, than I was when I was a freshman.



senior Nick Olsen

too lightly; there was no balance. To be concise, I was simply clueless.

#### Sophomore year: feeling better

I was heading on the right path, though I still had room to mature academically and mentally. My classes were a lot easier and more relaxed since I took no advanced classes. I decided only on a select few activities to pursue throughout high school.

I have many fond memories of this year. I will never forget those hilarious speech and debate meetings, during which we could be found doing anything from doodling to prank-calling. Other memories include laughing at Mr. Peck's jokes during the mock trial meetings and the strange conversations we had on the rides to and from the courthouse. Although my parents were clearly not happy that my team dinner at BJ's lasted until 11 p.m. on a weekday, I loved every minute of the experience.

#### Freshman year: a blur

I signed up for nearly every club on campus. Since I had never been offered such vast opportunities, I explored all on-campus clubs, whether it was drama or speech and debate. However, since I didn't recognize that committing to several activities was impossible, I could not perform as well academically as I had expected. Adjusting to the varied expectations of different teachers and taking Algebra 2 Honors as a freshman seemed incredibly difficult to me at the time. I took things either too seriously or

More than in any other class, I

gained such skills in newspaper, for which I had to meet short deadlines and contribute significantly. I can never forget the night before my AP Biology lab final, during which I had to study for a precalculus test and review a multitude of labs. I was talking to a few of my friends and we suddenly drifted into topics irrelevant to biology, after doing a decent amount of quizzing. I cannot recall what exactly we were discussing due to its absurdity but it still brings about good memories. Though I only had 30 minutes of sleep that night, it was one of the most nerve-wracking but memorable nights of my life.

Another highlight of my junior year was my fifth-period French class, during which Madame Bergkamp's way of saying "peut-être" and all those "mais Madame's" created constant echoes of laughter. Debates and role simulations, such as the Constitutional Convention in APUSH and the final project in English 11 Honors, exposed me to more pragmatic, interactive learning methods, which allowed me to expand my horizons and become a better critical thinker.

By putting my own sense of individuality into assignments, learning during junior year turned out to be quite fun. I came to really value my education.

Senior year: already?!

## Junior changes attitude toward academics

by Roy Bisht

When colleges look over a student transcript, admissions officers focus mainly on a student's sophomore, junior and senior years. Although still taken into account by colleges, freshman year is more of a "freebie."

Junior Tim Lycurgus tried to beat the system freshman year by slacking and procrastinating more than he wishes he had; now he knows the error of his ways.

"During freshman year I was just happy to be done with Redwood [and] in high school," said Lycurgus. "I didn't really care that much because college was far off and the [freshman] classes were easy."

Freshman year was also overwhelming for Lycurgus in a sense that during the final weeks of school each semester he was stressed by the pressing desire to raise his grades through finals. Last year, that was not the same case, as Lycurgus did not need to cram as much at the last moment.

"When I got back a poor Algebra 2 test that year, I realized high school wasn't so easy," said Lycurgus.

As a student who generally received A's on tests, he was crushed by the grade. That test was the motivation Lycurgus needed to get himself more focused on his grades and on his future after high school.

Lycurgus' academic life may have changed a lot since freshman year, but socially, he's the same person. ◆

"After that, I started studying way more than I used to," said Lycurgus. "Then last year it really hit me because I realized colleges would look at every single grade I would be getting for the next three years."

Since that bad test, Lycurgus claims that his grades have improved, and he attributes that to his newfound perspective.

"I've paid more attention during class and began to take more thorough notes. I also make sure to review my notes and study before a test," said Lycurgus. "Now I come into every test I take feeling confident that I will get an A."

Freshman year was also overwhelming for Lycurgus in a sense that during the final weeks of school each semester he was stressed by the pressing desire to raise his grades through finals. Last year, that was not the same case, as Lycurgus did not need to cram as much at the last moment.

"We always look forward to Thursdays now," said Lycurgus. "The themes were created just for the purpose of making Thursday as enjoyable as Fridays."

While his group of friends may have not changed much since his freshman year, he's known he has improved as a student and is ready to take on tougher courses.

"I like having good grades, and I take pride in my grades," said Lycurgus. "But in general, I just feel much more confident and better about myself." ◆

"Since freshman year, I haven't really changed who I hang out with. It [has] been the same people that I'm always with," said Lycurgus. "I think that we can attribute that to the fact that we are really close."

Unlike many long-term friendships, Lycurgus and his friends have not hit any roadblocks since they became really good friends in middle school.

"If anything, our friendship has gotten much stronger over the course of high school. We are really close and I think that it will stay that way until we get to college," said Lycurgus.

One of the many ways that Lycurgus and his friends bond is through the spirited Thursday themes that they dress up to.

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Junior Tim Lycurgus said a bad grade on an Algebra 2 test helped him reorder his priorities.



Senior Wendy Mei has adjusted well into life at SHS.

Students reminisce on how previous years at Saratoga High have transformed them.

# changed!

## MEI | Taiwanese senior overcomes language barrier

continued from pg. 1

Mei's older brother was attending Lynbrook; however, Mei's mother moved her children to Saratoga because she felt that there were too many immigrants there. She wanted her children to practice English instead of simply speaking Chinese to their friends.

"I hated school, but later, I got used to it and everything became better. I made friends and knew what the teachers wanted,

and I was not nervous about school anymore," said Mei. "But without my mom and cousin, I could not have survived the first weeks of high school."

Aside from her family, Mei believes that having a tutor and teachers were the most helpful in her English learning. During 9th and 10th grade, Mei hired a tutor who not only helped her academically but would have conversations with her to improve her English. She also made a point to attend tutorials regularly and was thankful that her teachers would go out of their way to explain each assignment step by step.

This language issue forced Mei to change her study habits. She stayed up until 3 a.m. every day just to complete her homework, not leaving her time to do any other activities. However, her mom and cousin supported her while she studied. Mei's cousin, who is nine years older and who lived at her house at

"My teachers definitely helped a lot, especially [English teacher] Mr. [Bill] Peck," said Mei. "In middle school, I wasn't in a regular English class so I was nervous, but Mr. Peck would always be patient and stay after class to explain what to do and how to do it."

By watching TV, going out with friends, and simply communicating with others, Mei picked up American culture quickly and had no problems fitting in. In the years

"I made friends and knew what the teachers wanted, and I was not nervous about school anymore."

—senior Wendy Mei

ing her with little leisure time. "English 11 honors actually helped me because we did a lot of reading and wrote many essays, so it improved my English to another level," said Mei. "I have a hard time [with AP], but at the end I still manage to survive the class and I can tell that I have learned a lot."

Through Mei's high school experiences, she has learned that friends and family are vital. They support her when she is down, and they are there for her no matter what the circumstance.

Mei believes that high school has changed her in a positive way. Besides helping her improve her English and making new friends, Mei has become a harder worker not just in school, but in everything that she does and realizes that her true potential is much more than she initially sees it as. Also, through high school she has found direction for the future. She is hoping to major in something related in business when she attends college.

"I totally didn't know that I could survive in such an intense high school and actually get A's in classes," said Mei. "I did my best and everything paid off." ◆

## THE ARTIST OF THE ISSUE: Eric Wang

**W**ho is Eric Wang? Most people know him as an intense water polo player. Some people know him as a fanatical baseball player. Others know he loves singing and is in an acapella group and in choir. What most people don't know is that this multi-talented guy is also an avid blogger.

**Q: What made you want to start blogging?**

A: It was kind of spontaneous actually. One day I was just like I should write my thoughts down somewhere so I did.

**Q: Do you write because you can vent your feelings or so you can remember when things happened?**

A: It's both. But sometimes I'm relaxed when I'm writing and sometimes I'm intense; it all depends on what it is.

**Q: Do you ever read your own blog?**

A: Sometimes. When I read what I wrote, it feels really weird. It kind of feels like someone else wrote it. I don't recognize my own writing at all.

**Q: Do you recommend other people to start writing in blogs too?**

A: Yeah for sure. Especially now, people are getting really busy so it's hard to remember everything. Writing in a blog is a really good way to remember every exciting thing that's happened. If they're stressed they can write about it and have other people read it. It's also really good for academics. When you practice writing, you improve.

**Q: Is your blog kind of like a journal for you?**

A: I guess a blog is more like specific topics and it's more directed towards an audience rather than kept to myself. I usually don't write about my day. I don't really think anyone would find that interesting and I don't really enjoy writing about my day either.



Eric Wang writes about his daily interactions and activities on his blog.

## Online anecdotes prove comedic

by Mira Chaykin

**T**oday, my girlfriend dumped me proclaiming she wanted someone more like "Edward." I asked her who Edward was. She held up a copy of her "Twilight" book. She was talking about a fictional vampire.

This anecdote comes from the popular website FML.

Today I installed a program and it asked if I had read and agreed to the terms and conditions. I hadn't, but I clicked "yes" anyway. The program didn't know I lied, and began to install.

This one is from the equally popular site My Life is Average (MLIA). FML (full name not spelled out because of its profanity) has entries that describe humorous situations where ironic misfortune befalls the author.

"I like (FML) because it's always great to laugh at the misfortune of others," said senior Kirin Kumar, who showed his support for the site by wearing an FML T-shirt to school, fallaciously assuring any skeptical teachers that the acronym stood for "Future Medical Leaders."

MLIA satirizes FML by describing similar situations in the same abrupt tone, but without misfortune or anything

particularly extraordinary occurring at the end. These two websites offer comedic relief and take only a few seconds to read. They are great time savers when juxtaposed with movies and television shows, as you can read as many or as few as you like. They are available on convenient websites, and on certain phone applications, like the FML application on the iPhone.

The quips are simple to remember and thus easy to repeat and they have become prominent in day-to-day conversation, rendering them even more widespread and trendy. It is not uncommon for someone to repeat a particularly funny MLIA or to hear someone say "FML" when they are overloaded with work at school.

There have been other websites that have attempted to replicate the concepts introduced in FML, like fwymhe.com among others but none have garnished nearly as much attention as the original FML or MLIA, the original spin off.

As freshman Yifat Amir put it, "FML and MLIA can be really funny and sometimes the FMLS make me feel thankful that they didn't happen to me." ♦

**TOGATALKS**  
Which one do you like better, FML or MLIA?

"I like both actually because they're both funny in their own way. I also like some of the other sites as well."

junior Joyee Woodrow



"I love MLIA because it's all about people who are just like me and always do embarrassing things."

junior Katie Gifford



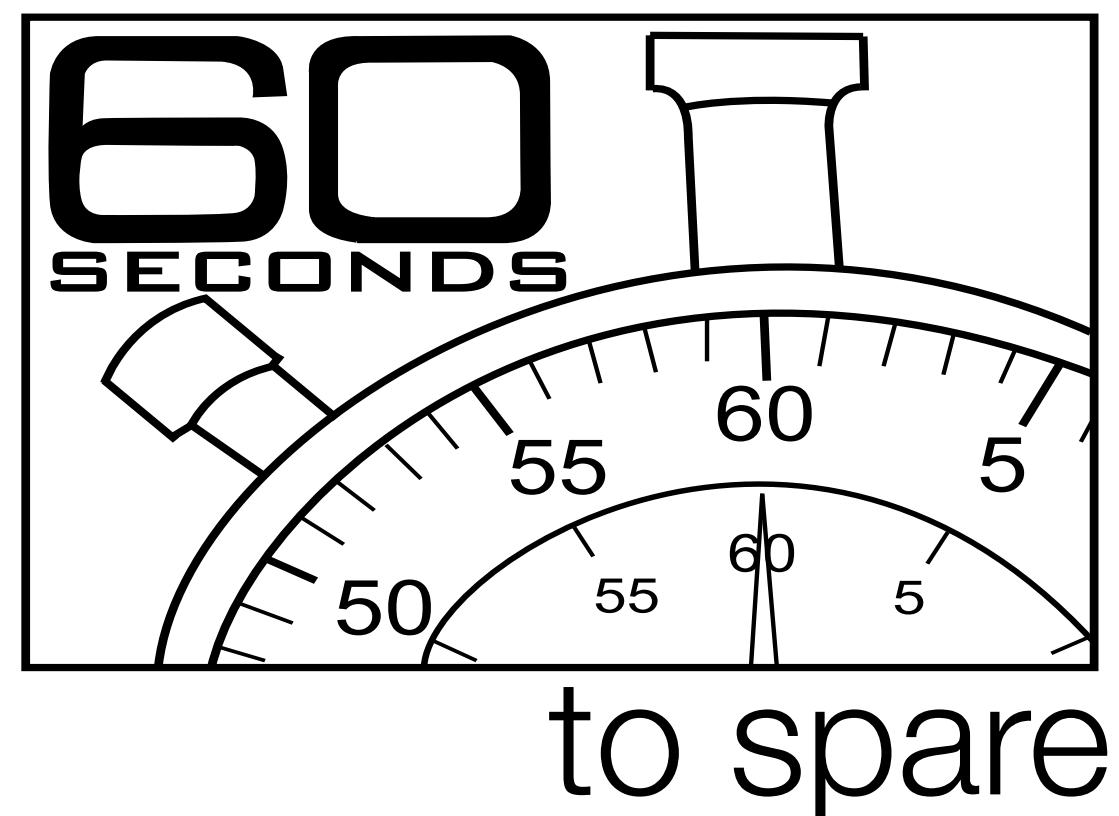
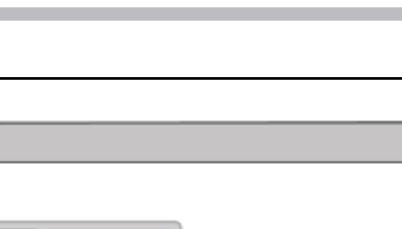
"I like FML because I love laughing at the embarrassing ordeals that happen to other people."

freshman Neil Prasad



"MLIA, definitely because it reminds me of my friends and family who do stupid things all the time."

senior Ameeka Shenoy



A cure all for your boredom

## AUDIO



## FILES

**Subject:** Senior Kevin Rollinson  
**Weapon of Choice:** iPhone  
**Genres:** folk

**1. Love Vigilantes : Iron and Wine**  
Memorable Lyric: "I've got to go home I've been so alone, you see"

**2. Don't Think Twice it's Alright : Bob Dylan**  
Memorable Lyric: "I ain't sayin' you treated me unkind. You could have done better but I don't mind"

**3. Ain't No Reason : Brett Dennen**  
Memorable Lyric: "I can't explain why we live this way, we do it everyday"

**4. The Only Living Boy in New York : Simon and Garfunkel**  
Memorable Lyric: "Half of the time we're gone but we don't know where"

**5. Hey Ya : Obadiah Parker**  
Memorable Lyric: "Oh, you think you've got it, but got it just don't get it"

## UP&amp;COMING

## John Mayer: Battle Studies

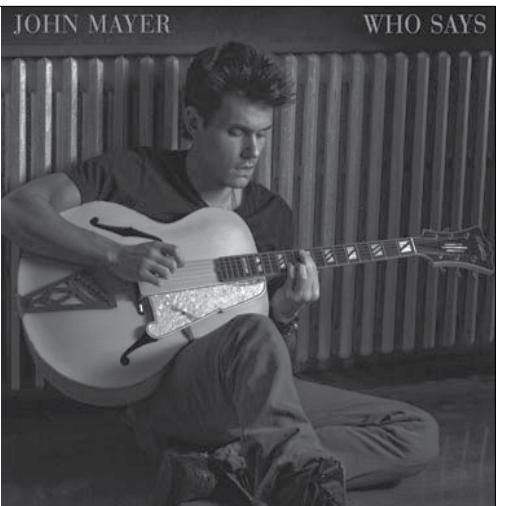
**J**ohn Mayer's new album, "Battle Studies," is hitting the shelves soon and has quickly become one of the most anticipated albums of the year.

Mayer has hinted at yet another reinvention of his style—incorporating a new method of songwriting and changing the approach that he took in his most recent success, "Continuum." Mayer said it involves advice, observations and lessons that he has learned over the years.

Mayer has said he is attempting to experiment with the new approach he is using this album to gauge audience reaction.

Though changing styles after such a successful album may seem to be a risky change, Mayer definitely has the talent to pull it off. One of the most successful blues-rock musicians of his time, he has shown the world that in a musical age of mostly fast-paced music such as hip-hop, rock or pop, he can still top the charts with slower-paced, bluesy music.

With his entertainment credentials, expect the new "observant" styled album to be a top seller come Nov. 17.



## ALBUMS TO WATCH FOR:

**Leona Lewis: Echo (Nov. 17)**

**Justin Bieber: My World (Nov. 17)**

**Rihanna: Rated R (Nov. 24)**

**Timbaland: Shock Value (Nov. 24)**

**Lil Wayne: Rebirth (Nov. 24)**

TOPFIVE  
YOUTUBE VIDEOS

**5. Won't Even Start: David Choi:** This is one of David Choi's original songs. It has catchy lyrics and a melody that will repeat in your head

**4. The Fuplers Thrivable: Matt Koval:** This video is one of the few Fuplers videos out on YouTube. It's guaranteed that the watcher will laugh while watching this. Again, a truly talented guy who can make

**3. Love Story Taylor Swift Cover: gabebondoc:** Gabe Bondoc has one of the sweetest voices on YouTube. Along with this song, his other OTS videos are great covers to listen to. What are OTS's? Just

**2. Poser! The history and evolution of the "Peace Sign": WongFu Productions:** The three creators of WongFu, Phil, Ted, and Wesley, are on their way to Hollywood as they

**1. Harry Potter with ADHD: take180com:** This username is also connected to the website, take180.com. And this particular spoof is cleverly created, with a



Stressed? Take a chill pill, because the answer is a matter of minutes

**W**hen students, or anyone else, for that matter, need a good laugh or crave a romantic moment but simply don't have the time to watch a full two-hour movie, YouTube is a perfect remedy.

"If I'm doing homework or I'm just really busy, I'll stop and watch YouTube for 10 minutes then go back to homework," said sophomore Clara Chao. "It's a quick way to relax and get my mind off work for a while."

A frequent "YouTuber" might recognize these popular names: kevjumba, happyplip, shanedawsonTV and nigaigiga, some of the many popular stars of the Comedian Category on YouTube.

Each star has different styles of videos; kevjumba uses a form of rant and speaks his thoughts in a re-enactment, or just talks to the camera on what seems like a one-on-one conversation. And this unique characteristic of YouTube videos allow "friendships" to be formed between the stars who are often just normal, everyday people and the viewer.

In addition to nascent comedians, debuting music artists such as davedays, gabebondoc or davidchomusic can easily share their music instantly to the thousands of watchers around the world. The next day, people will be

humming that song in class or listening to it on their iPods. "I like listening to covers from davidchoi because it's really interesting to hear a different version of a mainstream song," said junior Yuning Yang. She likes listening to music online through YouTube instead of from the radio in the car because she can listen from the comfort of her home.

Many of these clips always provide the audience with amusement, laughter or even tears. Some clips seem like a regular series, like "smosh," "whatthebuckshow" and "take180com." All these clips have a title screen and a regular routine, evoking the sense of a real TV show in a condensed form.

What makes these YouTube clips different from regular TV is the role played by the creators. "ShanedawsonTV," for example, asks viewers to submit comments on random questions of the day to interact with them. Take180com asks the viewers to give them ideas for new shows and in return, they receive a handsome prize of a laptop or iPod or any other popular gadgets.

With so much to watch, it's easy to see why YouTube videos are addictive; it's the perfect and ideal mini-entertainment for people with short attention spans. ♦

— by Kyumin Shim

1:15 / 3:35

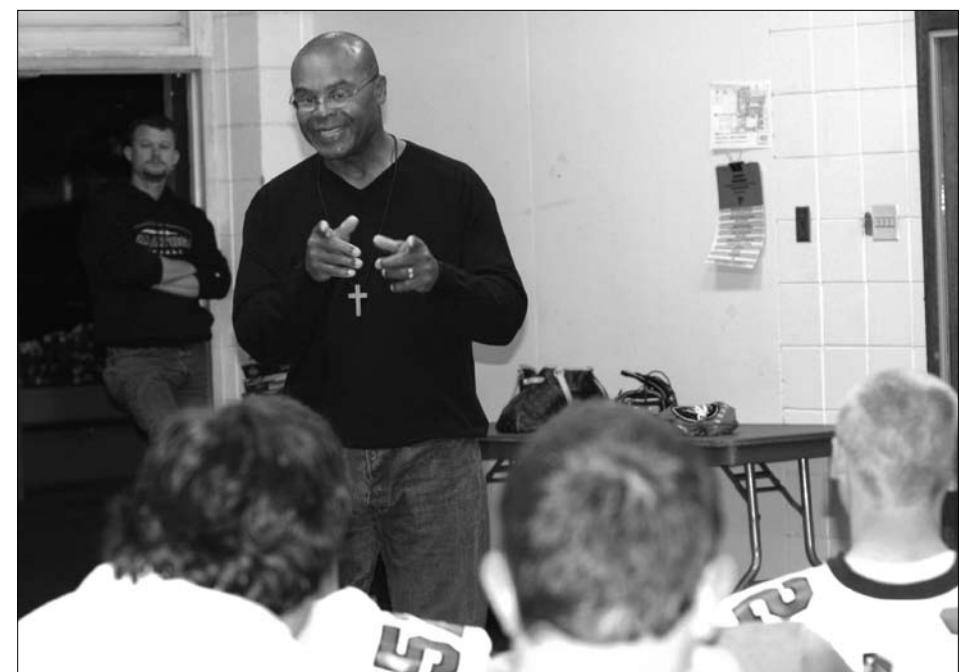




INSIDE: Field hockey fights hard to stay in CCS playoff contention, p. 21  
Find out what sports your teachers enjoy doing outside of school, p. 23

The Saratoga Falcon  
November 6, 2009

## FOOTBALL



Courtesy of Caroline Doles

## Singletary speech not enough to beat the Cats

by Karthik Annaamalai  
and Abhi Venkataramana

**N**ot even an inspirational speech from 49ers coach Mike Singletary could provide enough fire for the football team to avoid its 30th straight regular season loss to Los Gatos on Oct. 23. The final score was 47-0.

The day before the big game Singletary came to campus and spoke to the team during its Thursday night dinner. Parent Mary Guercio, who is currently organizing the wedding of Singletary's daughter, offered to ask Singletary to speak to the team.

"Coach Singletary is an amazing man and a powerful speaker," said Lugo. "The message he gave our players was that you have to believe in your teammates and believe in yourself that you can win games. Play the game for each other and not for yourself and you can win."

With a new-found inspiration the team walked on to Helm Field looking to end a 29-year-old losing streak. The Los Gatos Wildcats managed to score first and never looked back. Los Gatos senior quarterback Nick Hirschman, who has

signed to play for Colorado University next fall, threw three touchdowns for a total of 181 yards in the first quarter. From then on, the team managed to improve its defense but Hirschman still managed to throw in two touch downs. In the third quarter and fourth quarters, the Falcons put up a strong defense and let in two runs. By the end of the game, Hirschman had thrown for five touchdowns and over 400 yards.

"There's a reason why [Hirschman] is going to be playing on Saturdays at Colorado University next fall," said Lugo. "He stood at the line of scrimmage and checked his pass protections to our blitzes and there aren't many high school quarterbacks who can do that."

In order for the team to make CCS they must win the remaining games. Despite a tough loss to Los Gatos, Lugo is proud of the team and is confident that his players will earn a spot in the CCS playoffs.

"We've worked too hard to quit and I know our guys won't. You learn something about yourself every time you get knocked down and have to get back up. Our guys will get back up and play the game of their lives on Friday night."

The team played the Mountain View Spartans on Oct. 30, winning 28-26. ♦



Top: 49ers coach Mike Singletary delivers a speech to Falcon players in the cafeteria on Oct. 22; Bottom: Quarterback Vinny Carstens escapes Los Gatos defenders on Oct. 23.

## BOYS' CROSS COUNTRY

## Fukui paces Falcons at Crystal Springs course

by Vijay Menon  
and Jordan Waite

As the season nears its end and CCS looms on the horizon, the Falcons continue to post successful results, but they have also been consistently hampered by setbacks. Lacking any real veteran leadership, the team has had to rely upon its youth to overcome the rigors of a demanding season.

The team competed in the Crystal Springs Meet on Oct. 22. Junior Kyle Fukui placed first among Saratoga boys with a time of 17:17 over 2.95 miles closely followed by fellow junior Garrick Chan, who finished in 17:31 and posted a personal best 30-second time. Freshman David Zarrin was the third Saratoga competitor to cross the finish line at 18:45.

The team was pleased with their overall performance but also feels that there is room for improvement before the CCS competition.

According to Fukui, the team as a whole didn't meet its goals at Crystal Springs.

"It's disappointing that we didn't reach our goals, but as we begin tapering for the end of the season, I expect that our times will improve," said Fukui.

Coach Dan Hodgins isn't worried about his team's re-

sults.

"This is a building year, so I am more concerned with effort and attitude than I am with race results," said Hodgins.

The team suffered another blow when sophomore Lawrence Liang was out with a back injury. "It's hard to have [Liang] injured," said Fukui. "I hope he'll be able to race at the end of the season."

One of the bright spots of the team so far this season is that the underclassmen on the

squad have stepped up in the absence of senior talent. While Chan and Fukui have led the team throughout the season, Zarrin along with sophomore Eren Veziroglu are continuing to meet the challenge and present glimpses of real talent.

"[Zarrin] and [Veziroglu] are really improving," said Chan. "They continue to make significant strides."

The team competed in the Lynbrook meet on Oct. 29 and the DAL meet on Nov. 3 but results could not be included due to publication deadlines.

The team is currently training for the upcoming CCS meet on Nov. 14 and is hopeful for the future.

"We are a very young team and if we can keep our younger runners progressing we will make a lot of waves in the cross country world," said Hodgins. ♦

## GIRLS' GOLF

## Windy conditions spell trouble

by Uttara Sivaram

**T**he golf season slowed to a gradual halt mid-October, as the Falcons finished last-minute matches to allow time to train for the CCS tournament around the corner. Although the girls found themselves playing tougher teams as the year went on, they managed to push their scores enough to finish fourth in the Mt. Hamilton league.

One of the bright spots of the team so far this season is that the underclassmen on the squad have stepped up in the absence of senior talent. While Chan and Fukui have led the team throughout the season, Zarrin along with sophomore Eren Veziroglu are continuing to meet the challenge and present glimpses of real talent.

"[Zarrin] and [Veziroglu] are really improving," said Chan. "They continue to make significant strides."

Rancho Cañada.

Before the CCS qualifiers, Saratoga was suffering defeat after defeat—a succession that had until now, been alien to the girls.

"It was weird—all of a sudden, we were playing girls who shot two, three over par," said Epsman. "The season got harder and harder."

The Falcons were soon pitted against the No. 1 school in the Mt. Hamilton league: Leland.

Their first match against Leland was on Oct. 19 at the Saratoga Country Club. Even though other teams had canceled mid-match, both Leland and Saratoga plowed on.

Saratoga won on Oct. 13 against Lincoln at the Los Lagos course. ♦

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The Saratoga Falcon  
November 6, 2009

## FIELD HOCKEY

## TEAM UPS GAME IN HOPES OF MAKING CCS

by Synthia Ling  
and Ren Norris

**A**fter placing second at the CCS finals last year, the Lady Falcons may not be able to live up to last year's success this season. A rough start and several disappointing losses are pushing CCS hopes beyond reach. To qualify for the playoffs, they need to win almost all of the remaining games.

Beginning that difficult task, the team managed to improve its CCS prospects with a 1-0 overtime win at Los Altos on Oct. 22. Both teams had five short corner plays each, but the Falcons pulled through in the end.

Saratoga managed to keep the ball in Eagle territory for the majority of the game, creating numerous chances to score, but the Los Altos defense was able to shutout the Falcons and force the game into overtime.

On Oct. 20 on Saratoga territory, the team faced off against the Wildcats itching for redemption against the team who edged them out of a CCS championship trophy last year.

In the first half, the Cats' Taylor Comeau scored from an outside shot. Los Altos almost scored again, but senior goalie and co-captain Madeline Rothenberg and junior defender Colleen Garland saved Wildcat's breakaway.

During the second half, Los Gatos scored off of a short corner and led 2-0, but Saratoga upped the intensity. After a short corner, the ball rebounded from the Los Gatos goalie and Leonard hit it into the goal. Despite further efforts from Saratoga to tie the score, Los Gatos managed to hold their lead, ending the game 2-1. Although the girls were disappointed with the loss, they



senior Jordan Leonard, on right, competes for the ball in a home game against the Los Gatos team on Oct. 20. The Falcons played an intense game but lost to the Wildcats by a final score of 2-1.

were thrilled with how well the team played during the second half.

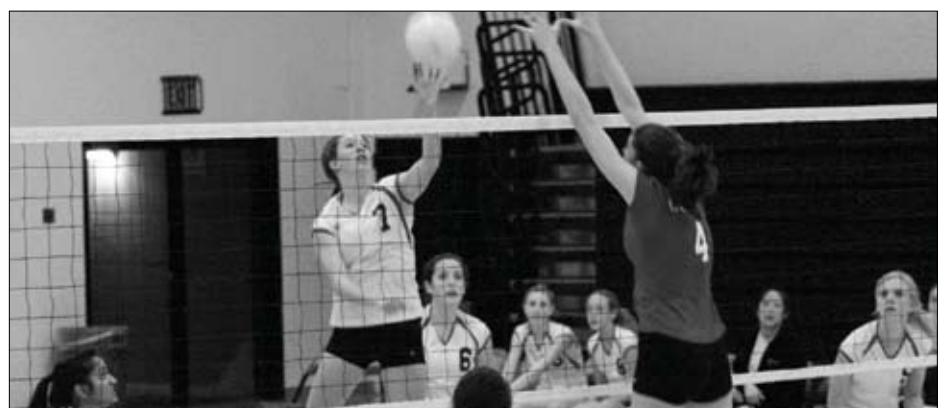
"I'm really proud of the second half, there was no contest in that half," said coach Kelli York. "We dominated and made them very anxious and the game was really fun to watch." The girls also lost a disappointing game to St. Francis on Oct. 29, as the Lancers scored with only 30 seconds left in the game, winning 2-1.

Despite the challenge to make CCS, they believe a playoff spot is within their reach—players say they just need to stay focused and motivated.

The games against St. Ignatius on Nov. 3 and two games against Presentation on Nov. 4 and 5 were the deciding games in whether the team makes it to the playoffs.

"If we use our good skills, stay motivated, play smart and play to our strengths, we will be unstoppable and can definitely make it all the way to CCS," said assistant coach Amber Wilson. ♦

## VOLLEYBALL



Amanda Yi

Senior outside hitter Nicole Gragnola jumps up, aiming to spike the volleyball.

## Seniors savor their last few games

by Amanda Yi

**W**ith the completion of Senior Night on Nov. 3, the Falcons' four seniors are counting their days as members of the Falcon squad.

"It's really sad because I know I'll never play volleyball here again," said senior co-captain and outside hitter Nicole Gragnola. "But we do still have club volleyball and CCS."

The seniors (Gragnola, Alyssa Patel, Emily Baba and Chelsea Sabella) have gone to CCS every year since freshmen year, and this season will be no different.

"We're definitely going to CCS this year; we got second in our St. Francis tournament and we're doing pretty well in league," said Patel.

Sabella does not think she will be playing college in the future, but senior libero Emily Baba would like to continue her career.

The Falcons played their senior night game against Mountain View on Nov. 3 and their final league game at Palo Alto on Nov. 5, but due to printing deadlines, the results could not be printed. ♦

## GIRLS' WATER POLO

## Team ends season hopeful despite disappointing record

by Pia Mishra

**D**espite a tough season, the Lady Falcons are trying to make the best of their difficulties by maintaining high spirits and good team morale. The girls continued their fight during the league finals, which started Nov. 2.

Compared to previous years, the team has struggled with a disappointing record of 3-17. Despite the losses, players have enjoyed being on the team and getting to know each other. The girls celebrated their senior day on Oct. 26 with their last home game against Los Altos.

"I know that we have the potential and talent. All we need is the practice, which will be possible if we start our season training earlier."

The game was extremely close with goals by seniors Murabito, Borsum and Courtney Chaffin—all top scorers this season. The team decided to change things up a little by switching goalie Sara Knish into field and moving her younger sister, sophomore Alison Knish, into goal. Coach Courtney Crase is looking into holding winter and summer practices to help the girls have a stronger season next year.

"I know that we have the potential and talent," said Crase. "All we need is the practice, which will be possible if we start our season training earlier."

The team competed in the league tournament on Nov. 2 but due to printing deadlines, the results could not be included in this issue. ♦

BOYS' WATER POLO

## Struggling team fights to stay afloat in league



Junior Tim Rollinson sets up for a pass to his teammate as his brother senior Kevin Rollinson anticipates his next move against Fremont on Oct. 21. Falcons won in 12-5.

by Karthik Annaamalai  
and Tim Rollinson

**W**ith a new strategy in mind, the 4-6 Falcons are currently in the middle of the El Camino League standings. Recently, water polo coach Christian Bonner implemented a system in which the starters would be determined by effort in practice rather than raw ability. The new system paid off on Oct. 21 as the Falcons won their game 12-5 against the second-place Fremont Firebirds.

"Our goal is to beat Lynbrook in the league tournament," said Doyen. "If we play like we can it is achievable."

At the Oct. 27 Senior Day game, Harker got out to a strong start, and by the end of the third quarter, victory looked like a guarantee for the Eagles, leading 12-7. Yao, a key player for the Falcons, was kicked out three times in the first quarter, eliminating him from the rest of the game. But the Falcons did not give up hope, scoring five consecutive goals to force the game into a 12-12 tie and overtime. In overtime, the Falcons were leading until officials flagged Chen with a brutality foul, giving Harker a penalty shot and possession. The team was unable to come back from this deficit, losing 17-16. ♦

mont," said Bonner. "It was the first time we played the way we are capable of playing."

Lynbrook, the only remaining undefeated team in the El Camino Division, came to Saratoga on Oct. 22. Three early goals by the Vikings put the Saratoga behind, but a comeback led by Chen and Doyen made the game a closer contest, with a final score of 18-14 in favor of the Vikings.

"The game against Fremont was the best we have played all season," said sophomore Nic Doyen. "It felt good to beat such a quality opponent by so much."

Although the starting lineup looked similar, sophomore Tyler Borch was brought in to replace senior leading scorer Kevin Rollinson, who was out with a sinus infection. The Falcons dominated the game. Junior goalie Gavin Peake had a stellar performance, letting in only five goals against over 25 Fremont shots. The offense was paced by senior captains John Chen and Kevin Yao and Doyen. The team was unable to come back from this deficit, losing 17-16. ♦

GIRLS' TENNIS

## Falcons gear up to face Monta Vista, Mitty in CCS

by Lauren Kuan  
and Denise Lin

**F**ollowing two close losses to their toughest competitors, Archbishop Mitty on Oct. 21 and Monta Vista on Oct. 20, the Lady Falcons hoped to regain some ground before the upcoming CCS tournament, which will take place at the end of November.

"Losing 4-3 to the top two teams in CCS [despite] having our opportunities in both matches should hopefully get the girls fired up and ready [to start winning]," said head coach Tom Uyehara.

The team started to regain momentum by beating Los Gatos 6-1 on Oct. 22, a day after losing to Mitty.

"It's always nice to get a win against the district rival," said Uyehara. "Los Gatos is in a rebuilding process so it gives me the opportunity to play around with the lineup a bit and try out new doubles teams."

In the match against Mitty, the team got off to a good start, with most players winning their game's early match; however, Mitty pulled through and ultimately won 4-3.

Uyehara said the key to CCS success is having everyone stay healthy and play well with each other.

"Every match down the line will be equally important in achieving our goals," said Uyehara. "We have been off by a little bit in these big matches, but come CCS I know the girls will be fired up and ready to play, which will make us a very dangerous team to contend with." ♦



Senior Christina Doo volleys the ball back to Mitty on Oct. 20.

GIRLS' CROSS-COUNTRY

## 'Sweet' season finally coming to an end

by Kyumin Shim

**T**he girls pump their arms up and down as they made their way up "Skateboard Hill," the highest hill in Saratoga. It's not one of the easy courses to run, but it is the best to practice for tough hilly terrains like Crystal Springs. On Oct. 27, the girls ran their last training run of the season as their ponytails swung with each step.

"The season has been really fun and all the girls are super sweet," said senior captain Sophia Cooper. "We've had some tough workouts, but I think everyone enjoyed it a lot."

Cooper suffered injuries from the beginning of the season and could not participate in a lot of the runs, but she was always there for the girls, cheering them on.

They had two meets before the league finals. On Oct. 22, they scrimmaged against Wilcox at Baylands Park. On Oct. 29, the girls had their last meet at Lynbrook.

At the Lynbrook meet, senior Karen Wai and sophomore Emily Williams received medals for their times of

13:07 and 13:11, respectively. Freshman Caroline Chou ran a 13:42, junior Hannah Harter ran a 14:16, sophomore Kristine Johnson ran a 14:38, sophomore Lou Guy ran a 14:47 and junior Mansie Chung ran a 14:51.

"We didn't have official results since it was a scrimmage against Wilcox," said Cooper. "But it was a nice way for the girls to practice a 3-mile course in preparation for finals."

There will be six girls who will be running at CCS on Nov. 14: senior Karen Wai, freshman Courtney Scholssareck, sophomores Emily Williams and Kristine Johnson and juniors Hannah Harter and Mansie Chung.

"On Mondays we have a Neon day and Ninja days on Friday and we just have fun," said Chung. "We had a great season because everyone improved," said Chung. "Coach [Danny] Moon always encourages us to do our best rather than telling us to improve on our ranks."

The girls also raced at SCVA on Nov. 3, but due to printing deadlines The Falcon was unable to print the results. ♦

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GIRLS' CROSS-COUNTRY

## Physical Education

HOW STAFF MEMBERS STAY FIT WHEN THEY AREN'T AT SCHOOL

## Shared interest in biking paves way for friendship

by Olivia Chock



Special Education aide Michael Morrison, English teacher Erick Rector, math teacher PJ Yim and a friend of Yim bike together every Monday and Thursday.

along Highway 9.

When the two teachers aren't biking, they enjoy talking about bikes, discussing teaching strategies and talking about life in general.

The teachers' profound love for biking has given them the idea to start a Saratoga Road Cycling club at Saratoga. They think it would be an enjoyable way to get a group of people to bike together every once in a while.

Rector

said it is important to find someone to ride with not only because it's more enjoyable but for safety reasons and for committing to a workout regimen.

This club has not been started yet

and is still at its "preliminary stage"

but should be started soon, said Rector.

Yim believes biking with Rector

has inspired him to bike more on his own.

He believes it has made him "healthier, allowed him to lose 20 pounds, made him more alert while he's at school and at home with his family, and has given him a habit of waking up earlier back into good physical health," said Yim. ♦

## Passion for running fuels math teacher

by Vijay Menon  
and Abhi Venkataramana

**W**hile many teachers feel exhausted after a long and stressful day of teaching and prefer to just go home and relax, math teacher Audrey Warmuth has a completely different way of recovering following her last class.

Ever since she was a teenager, Warmuth has been running and has found the sport to be a valuable source of relaxation, especially after a long day of work.

"I always ran around as a kid and then I always did sports in high school," said Warmuth. "I've essentially been running and jogging since the age of 13. It gives me time to just think about things."

Warmuth trains anywhere from three to five times a week. Sometimes she trains with fellow teachers such as science teacher Kelly Nicholson.

"We both participated in San Jose Fit, which is a program where you go down to the Los Gatos track and meet once a week to do runs together," said Warmuth.

However, she prefers to train for marathons alone.

"Even though I sometimes run with the groups, I think I actually enjoy running by myself the best."

Warmuth continues to challenge herself by participating in difficult events and marathons including the Silicon Valley, San Francisco, Big Sur and Avenue of the Giants marathons.

She has participated in one mara-

thon a year for the last four years. One of her most memorable events was the Night and Day challenge in San Francisco, a seven-hour run of approximately 30 miles through the city.

"It's an orienteering event, which means that you're given a map with points that you have to go run to," said Warmuth.

According to Warmuth, orienteering events give runners a couple of options on how they want to compete.

"You can either go to all the different points that are called controls and then the person who gets back first wins," said Warmuth.

"Or you can be given a set amount of time and then choose which controls you're going to go to," said Warmuth.

Although Warmuth enjoys all running events, she enjoys orienteering events most, particularly because they allow the entire family to get involved.

"It's a lot of fun to do together because there are four people looking at the map and then there is usually a big discussion as to which route to take," said Warmuth.

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Courtesy of Debra Troxell

## Troxell finds solace in the sea

by Anoop Galivance  
Jason Wu

**I**t's a bird, it's a plane... no, it's a nudibranch! The nudibranch (pronounced noo-duh-brank), a type of sea slug, is one

of math teacher and avid scuba diver Debra Troxell's many favorite underwater organisms. Nudibranchs come in all shapes and sizes, which is why they are still considered a novelty to Troxell despite the fact that she inevitably sees one on every trip.

Troxell first started diving in 1981 as a sophomore at Florida Atlantic University when she became certified in warm water diving.

"I tried diving since I was a very good swimmer," said Troxell, "and I've been hooked ever since."

After getting married in Florida, she and her husband moved to California where they continued to dive.

"My husband and I took some classes that year at West Valley College and we both got certified in cold water diving," said Troxell.

The difference between cold water diving and warm water diving is about 20 pounds of weight."

Cold water divers must wear a very thick wet suit for thermal protection and a 60-

pound oxygen tank in addition to 20 pounds of diving weights, while warm water divers can wear a much thinner suit.

On a typical dive, Troxell sees a variety of sea creatures, ranging from squid eggs and fish to octopi and crabs.

"My favorite diving place is Thumbs Up in Carmel, where we see entire walls of beautiful strawberry anemones," she said.

On each outing, Troxell dives two times for a period of 45 minutes each at a depth of 50-90 feet. She and her husband take about 50 dives a year from their two kayaks into the Monterey and Carmel areas. She has also dived in place like Tahiti, Belize and Bonair.

They also volunteer at Reefcheck, an international organization dedicated to the conservation of tropical coral reefs and California rocky reefs.

"This is my third year volunteering at Reefcheck," she said. "Looking at the mess we have made of the oceans and the world, I felt like I had to do something to help."

As part of her work as a volunteer, she collects data regarding the sea floor. Most importantly, scuba diving also offers her a peaceful environment.

"When I'm underwater, I feel like I'm in a zen-like mode just sitting and watching," said Troxell. ♦

## The Skinny

### What's Hot Online

[saratogafalcon.org](http://saratogafalcon.org)

-Photo Gallery: "Watch for Homecoming week photos

-Opinion: "Obama must exercise caution in crafting Guantanamo Bay exit plan" by Vijay Menon and Abhishek V.

-PC: "Poetry slam surprises family" by Sarah Menard

### TOPTEN

#### REASONS FOR INSTITUTING SCHOOL BUSES

**10** Parents who make you miss a light. You're paying for the hole I punched in my dashboard.

**9** Parents who stop randomly. You're the reason I'm going to become a bitter cop.

**8** Parents who drive unnecessarily slow. Your kids are going to get thrown in trash cans.

**7** Parents who cut you off. Where's Deputy Cutforth when I need him?

**6** Parents who take forever to get out of the lot, backing up traffic. It's called the accelerator. Use it.

**5** Parents who take your parking spot. Let the air out of their tires... see if they ever do it again.

**4** Parents who glare at you when you honk. Because you totally didn't deserve it or anything.

**3** Parents who let their kids out on Saratoga-Sunnyvale. It's a bus stop! NOT A DROP OFF LANE!

**2** Parents who bottom out over every speed bump. Why does my insurance cost more than yours?

**1** Parents who drop their kids off in the senior lot. Those people have their own special place in hell.

—Ben Clement and Sulmaan Hassan

### THE CRITIC

#### Paranormal Activity

The best horror movies are those that exploit our anxieties about real life situations. "Paranormal Activity" does just that.

It's easy to forget you're watching a movie, and not home video footage. Every swipe of the camera has you nervous that something is lurking just beyond the periphery of the lens light. In a scene where the bedroom door moved just an inch, the whole theater gasped in fear.

The movie employs realistic common ground to make it feel personal. Anyone who watches this movie will go to sleep with one eye open. ♦

- by Sulmaan Hassan

# Saratoga Snapshots



Synthia Ling



Amanda Yi



Amanda Yi



Jordan Waite

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: **Painting Nemo** Juniors Erin Wong and Chris Chung paint the juniors' "Finding nemo" sign for homecoming decorations on nov. 1. **i want candy** Senior abe rooy and teacher kirk davis pass out candy to preschoolers while junior alex sturge helps out Oct. 30. **Guilty as charged** Junior Ricky Chiu questions witness junior leah capek in the scarlet letter trial in Kerry mohnike's English 11 H class on oct. 28. **up, up, and away** Seniors Amy Wang and Jodi Huang paint the seniors' "Up" House in the quad on nov 1.

## buzzworthy

### The Ethnicity Ball? Get your tickets!

**I**t was an ethnic epiphany that resulted in the conception of "The Ethnicity Ball." A group of junior friends are holding the series of recreational football games this month on the school's football field. The games, which are two against two with an all-time quarterback, will be played by four teams—Team India, Team China, Team USSR and Team Ireland.

"We used to play football in my driveway and at Congress Springs park last year," said Aditya Dev, a member of Team India who is organizing the league. "My friends and I randomly got this idea about how to take our games to the next level."

The "league" consists of Chris Chung and Tyler Jew, comprising Team China; Karthik Anaamalai and Aditya Dev, making up Team India; Brandon Pierce and Tim Rollinson, of Team Ireland; and Tim Lycurgus and Kevin Darchuk, representing Team USSR.

"When we first started playing together,

we broke into these teams," Dev joked. "We called it the ethnicity showdown. That's where the name 'Ethnicity Ball' came from."

Dev and Lycurgus frequently joked about organizing their football games to include spectators, until they realized in late September that it was a possibility. They made fliers and created a Facebook event to promote their idea. But through the entire endeavor, the players have kept their original priority in mind.

"The whole point of Ethnicity Ball is to have fun," Lycurgus said.

They played their first game this past Sunday. ♦



Synthia Ling

—Anoop Galivanche

# Shhh... I'm spying here!

" Maybe they'll make a movie about me, like James Bond."



Nandini Ruparel

Why does spy-themed entertainment hold such a great attraction for people? There are so many books, movies and shows about espionage that it is surprising that that genre still makes money. Thing is, they probably get most of their market from me.

#### Obsessed with spying

I'll admit that I'm a complete spy nerd. I've watched all the "James Bond" movies, and "The Bourne Identity" is another favorite. I just love spies and secrecy. I even went to the FBI Agent lecture during Career Day last year. During World History, we learned about spying used in World War II. That night, I secretly (like a spy!) stayed up late reading about different people who were spies and their techniques. Unfortunately, that only served to increase my obsession with spying and undercover operative work.

#### Some spying obstacles

When I was little, I always used to watch "Spy Kids" and wonder what it would be like to become a spy. Obviously, I'd have to change my name, because my name, unfortunately, is not the most common. And saying "Ruparel. Nandini Ruparel." isn't quite as impactful as when James Bond says it. Also, because I couldn't drive, I would probably have to get a chauffeur who could do all the crazy stunts for me. Lastly, because of my aversion to violence, I could probably only go after criminals who do not own guns or who do not know martial arts. Needless to say, being recruited by the CIA is a long shot.

#### Spy museum infatuation

A couple of summers ago, I visited my cousins in Maryland. Naturally, noting my obsession with spies and the proximity of my cousins' town to Washington, D.C., I insisted on going to the National Spy Museum. As soon as we stepped in, I knew that I had come to the right place. We started out by getting "secret identities" we were supposed to keep to ourselves and remember through the visit—which I most definitely adhered to.

I also dragged every member of my family to each of the rooms and made them sit and watch the interesting spy movies. Some of the highlights of the trip were when I got to climb through a secret tunnel (not so secret, as there were 20 other people in the tunnel as well) and when I saw James Bond's Aston Martin ("You mean it doesn't drive underwater? Are you sure?") At the end, they quizzed us on our secret identities and ruled me as a definite potential spy. Maybe it wasn't such a good sign that my cousins all groaned at that.

Although I'm not living at the spy museum right now (believe me, I tried to convince my parents), I still want to be immersed in this secret world. Nobody will know me when I'm doing my work, of course, but after I retire people will remember me as one of the greatest spies of my day. Maybe they'll make a movie about me, like James Bond. Don't tell anyone, though—I don't want to be too obvious; otherwise, they won't accept me into the CIA. ♦