



# Celebrating the Holidays



## DISTRICT BUDGET

# Finances worsen

by Rebecca Nguyen and Anna Shen

After a Dec. 8 school board meeting, district officials have concluded that the earlier projection of a \$1.6 million budget deficit for next year has increased to \$2.75 million because of a re-adjusted estimate of local property values.

"Where we are now is [figuring out] what are we going to do—that's what we're negotiating now," principal Jeff Anderson said. "We are working with the board to figure out where we should save money and where that money is going to come from."

The initial \$1.6 million deficit resulted from cuts in state categorical funding and less revenue from local property taxes, which had slowed from a 6.6 percent assessed value growth rate to an estimated 3 percent. However, new data showed that the assessed value growth rate for properties in the district will be 1 percent, not 3 percent, thus resulting in a bigger deficit.

Anderson said he hopes property values will soon return to previous levels once the economy rebounds.

Over the course of the next year, LG-SUHSD will be looking for ways to save money. Multiple changes could occur next year, such as fewer classes and electives, teacher and staff layoffs, reduced programs, larger class sizes, alignment of Saratoga's and Los Gatos' schedules and reduced summer school options, among other possibilities.

"[Purchasing of new equipment and materials] will be on hold," said Anderson. "We might have to get by with the white board pens we have or the textbooks we have because we simply can't buy any next year."

The district also expects to use money from the district's 4 percent and 10 percent emergency strategic reserves—rainy day funds to help weather financial crises, said superintendent Cary Matsuoka.

Despite the many changes that could happen, Anderson said the main goal is to make sure that the education of students at Saratoga and Los Gatos High Schools will not be hurt in the long run.

"Hopefully, [students'] education will not be impacted at all, but there may be some things that will be different from the way they were in the past, in terms of the number of programs and availability," Anderson said. ♦



Amanda Yi

# SORTING IT OUT

## College app season comes to a close

Guidance secretary Sharon Fong prepares seniors' college application packets to send in the mail on Dec. 10 in the office.

# Seniors' college early decisions arrive

by Olivia Chock and Saniha Shankar

As the holidays approach, some seniors are looking forward to all the usual traditions—trees with colorful lights, gingerbread cookies with warm milk, red-nosed reindeer and a much-awaited envelope in the mail with a college admission decision.

For students who applied early, this will mean either acceptance at their top school, being deferred

until later or being rejected on Dec. 15. Last year, 54 students applied for early admission; this year 72 students have applied early.

Students who decided to apply early said this was a way to tell the colleges they were their first choice.

Senior Maddy Renalds is applying early action to Georgetown as a way of easing the pressure of the admissions process.

"I'm really excited and a little

see COLLEGE, p. 6

## FALCONFIGURES

**72** Number of students who applied early this year, compared to 54 last year

**39** Percentage of Class of '09 that went on to attend a UC

**28** Percentage of Class of '09 that attended a private university

**300** Approximate number of seniors applying to private schools

# Alum is school's 4th Rhodes Scholar in 10 years

by Saniha Shankar and Christine Tseng

Henry Barmeier, a senior at Princeton University and 2006 SHS alumnus, was recently named one of the 32 Rhodes Scholars in the U.S. for this year. Barmeier becomes the fourth Saratoga High graduate to be honored as a Rhodes Scholar, joining the ranks of former honorees Ankur Luther



Barmeier

(Class of '99), who went to UC Berkeley, Betsy Masiello (Class of '99), who went to Wellesley and Chelsea Purvis, (Class of '01) who is currently attending Yale Law School.

"It is nothing short of remarkable that a school as small as Saratoga High School that has only been around for 50 years boasts four Rhodes Scholars," said assistant principal Brian Safine.

The Rhodes Scholarship is

funded by the estate of Cecil Rhodes, a wealthy businessman who died in 1902, to bring exceptional students from across the world to study at Oxford University.

Barmeier is majoring in public food and agriculture policy and has minors in environmental studies and Spanish. He plans to continue his studies at Oxford University, where he will spend the next two years.

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When I was your age...

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Athlete of the Issue: Henry Wei

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NEWS BRIEFS



Students see a new world in 3D graphics

Gary Sasaki, the founder of a digital entertainment consulting company known as DIGDIA, gave a fascinating presentation on the future of 3D movies and television at the second Industry and Academia Connections Program (IACP) meeting in the library on Dec. 9.

Sasaki described different forms of 3D visuals and how they could be viewed.

Senior Christine La was one of ten students who attended the presentation.

"We learned quite a lot about the glasses people use to view 3D items and [Sasaki] even proposed that people can see 3D graphics without glasses," said La.

La learned that future 3D technology can diminish the occurrence of headaches.

The presentation was organized by sophomore Arnab Dugar, head of the IACP, in collaboration with assistant principal Brian Safine.

"The goal of having presentations such as these is to bring people from various industries and to build interest in students," said Dugar.

Dugar also believes that such presentations provide great opportunities for networking.

"The program gives students a great way to meet people and learn about what they are doing," he said.

He also said the topics complement school curriculum by covering modern topics in more depth, giving students an opportunity to talk to ask questions to those knowledgeable in the field.

"The discussions scratch the surface of what is happening in various fields today," said Dugar, "giving students an opportunity to dive deeper into whatever sparks an interest."

—by Girish Swaminath

Railing damaged after back lot crash

During Thanksgiving break, a driver crashed his or her car in the back parking lot.

According to maintenance supervisor Brian Moran, the driver was parked next to the fence and hit it while backing out.

"The railing sustained minimal damage," said Moran. "It wasn't a big problem."

However minor the accident, the culprit was not caught, despite the presence of several security cameras near the accident scene.

Recently, the back parking lot has also received other improvements such as the addition of a painted area for disabled parking access as part of a continuing effort to minimize traffic problems. Though traffic issues remain, Moran said the school is lucky to have little vandalism compared to other schools.

"People vandalize but vandalism is very rare at this school," Moransaid. "We're really fortunate to have such honest students."

—by Anoop Galivanche

1st National Service Day scheduled

The school will host its first version of National Service Day, a nationwide event in which people do a variety of community service projects. It will occur Jan. 18 on Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday.

"All students and community members are welcome to join in the activities," said Dory Albert, a member of the Parent Teacher Student Organization (PTSO), who is helping organize the event.

Students can participate in several charity services including cooking dinners for the needy and assembling care packages for American servicemen and women in combat overseas. In addition, activities for the benefit of the school will take place, such as a campus clean-up and the planting of trees and an organic vegetable garden.

The event will take place from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Because it is a national holiday, school will not be in session but students are still encouraged to attend. All school clubs, local charities and NCL, National Charity League, will also be involved in the effort. Albert said the PTSO expects a greater turnout from the Key and Interact clubs.

Recently, an online survey was sent out to all students about the community service work day, with questions regarding how many students would be willing to participate and other ideas for the betterment of the community. 250 students responded, though results say that less plan to attend. Prior to Jan. 18, donations to the Red Cross—specifically, Operation: Care and Comfort, which ships supplies to the troop—will be welcome. Collection boxes are located in the office. Suggested supplies for care packages are prepackaged snacks such as granola bars, sample personal hygiene bottles, used CDs, DVDs and electronic games. To give donations for troops overseas, please write checks to ARC—Operation Care and Comfort.

—by Christine Bancroft



Amanda Yi

senior Sharon Kikinis talks to senior Molly Jordan while making a candy Eiffel Tower as a part of a competition to construct an architectural marvel on Dec. 3 at the Saratoga-Los Gatos French bonding event at SHS.

Rival schools' French Clubs unite for cultural event week

by Denise Lin and Parul Singh

A crowd gathered at the top of the quad steps Nov. 30, waiting in line to buy plates of chocolate, whipped cream goodness. Students got a good taste of French culture through gooey mouthfuls of crepe, a traditional French food. The crepe sale put on by the French club also included items such as hot chocolate, cookies, large cookies and pieces of baguette with Nutella.

Junior Cassie Tran, who helped out during 6th and 7th period, said she decided to sell crepes because they usually "sell really well." The crepe sale had a nobler purpose, however.

"The money we raise goes to an organization called Doctors Without Borders; 70 percent of our profits go there," said Vicki Huang, one of the co-presidents of French Club.

Doctors Without Borders, also called *Medecins sans Frontieres* in French, is a French-based organization that sponsors doctors

to go provide aid in countries without good medical care.

"We chose this organization mostly because it is French-based but also because it goes to a good cause," said Huang.

National French Week was celebrated by French clubs all across the country Nov. 30-Dec. 2.

"We decided to make it more inclusive," said French teacher and club adviser Laura Lizundia. "Traditionally, there is a set week that it is done, but it can be celebrated any week. The idea is to raise awareness about French culture."

Sophomore Meghana Rao, also part of the club, was excited for the week's activities.

"I enjoy being part of National French Week because I like learning about French culture. But I have to say the crepes are the best part," she said.

The club organized a variety of different sales and activities in honor of National French Week. Members made French T-shirts and watched a French movie on Dec. 2. They held the crepe sale on Monday, Tuesday and Friday

of that week.

As an extension of the celebration of French culture, students from both Los Gatos and Saratoga French classes got together to eat desserts and talk on Dec. 3 in the SHS French classroom. Teachers from both schools including Lizundia and the other French teacher Kim Bergkamp cooperated to create a relaxed atmosphere conducive to mingling and inter-school bonding.

The evening began with an Eiffel Tower competition, where students were put into mixed groups and created the monument out of just licorice and the gummy candy, dots.

The evening progressed with the Bouche De Noel competition. The teams were asked to decorate the traditional French desert to the best of their ability.

Children of the various teachers served as judges for the event.

The French club is in good shape financially because sales from previous years have raised enough money to sustain it. So far, the club has raised at least \$150, according to Huang. ♦

Faithwalk has Nativity play

by Denise Lin and Parul Singh

The crowd admired junior Tim Rollinson as he gracefully "floated" into the middle of Lisa Cochrum's science classroom on roller skates as the angel Gabriel and wined skillfully in and out of the tables. He swooped into center stage and beckoned for a couple of actresses to kneel.

They giggled, and after composing themselves, glanced at their scripts and played along. Although this description may seem strange, it is just one of the scenes from the Christmas play put on by one of Saratoga's Christian clubs, Faithwalk.

It was a relaxed gathering, and the audience enjoyed free pizza and drinks while observing their peers act out Biblical scenes.

The play was acted out in a casual and fun manner with actors often breaking out in laughter

every couple of minutes as they read their lines from a script. The play lasted about 25 minutes each day.

The members of the club put on their annual Christmas play this year Dec. 4 and Dec. 11.

**The play was acted out in a casual and fun manner with actors often breaking out in laughter every couple of minutes.**

The 11 regular members of the Faithwalk club took on roles in the story of Christ and acted it out to an audience of around 60 people during each of the two days. Perhaps because free pizza and drinks were provided, many people showed up to watch.

"All the leaders [participate] every year," said senior Kirin Kumar, a club member. The purpose of Faithwalk is to

learn about Christianity and the Christmas play is one of the main events the club hosts in the year.

Kumar has been in Faithwalk for three years now. One of the reasons he enjoys being in the club is because a lot of his friends are in the club as well.

The cast had the chance to perform the play and "make it our own," said Kumar. During the play, Kumar took on the role of Joseph, senior Samantha Lotti played Mary, senior Kevin Rollinson played the shepherd and senior Jordan Leonard played the Prophet.

The cast, which included students of all grades, was dressed in bright yellows, browns and purples of that time period. Some students even wore long flowing robes with headresses to set the mood for the play.

"It's a very easy way to explain the story of Christmas," said teacher Lisa Cochrum, the adviser of Faithwalk. ♦

NEW CLUB DECA GETS RIGHT DOWN TO BUSINESS

by Lillian Chen

Junior Karthik Annaamalai first learned about the DECA club from some friends at Monta Vista High School. Inspired by Monta Vista High's huge DECA program, Annaamalai believed DECA would be a great club to start here.

With the help of juniors Harshil Sahai, Pia Mishra and Cassie Tran and friends at Monta Vista, Annaamalai worked to add DECA (which is in fact not an acronym) as an official club this past October DECA helps students who have an interest in business, managing, marketing and entrepreneurship gain more experience in the business world.

Similar to other competitive clubs such as Speech and Debate and Model United Nations, DECA competes against other schools throughout the school year. According to Annaamalai, there are different levels of competition based on how students perform.

In January, a competition in Northern California is usually hosted. If some DECA members do well in the NorCal competition, they can then compete in the state competition. From the state competition,

students can then earn the opportunity to compete internationally.

"Just like track and field, there are different events in DECA for what you want to compete in or what you like doing," said Annaamalai.

Events range from debate to marketing. Each event has a different standard and different books to study.

DECA club members practice by using the resources on the DECA website and by staying up with their reading.

Another upcoming event DECA has planned for second semester is a tour of the popular video game distributor and marketer Electronic Arts, or EA Games. DECA members will get the chance to talk to employees at the company and learn how the company markets and runs their successful business.

In addition to EA Games, the club will also receive a tour of Apple's headquarters in Cupertino.

Silicon Valley DECA also hosts an annual fundraiser fashion show where all the Silicon Valley clubs come together.

"DECA is a great environment where students can practice marketing and entrepreneurship," said Annaamalai. ♦



Olivia Chock

Cultural displays in the office represents holidays from many different countries.



Olivia Chock

Junior Karthik Annaamalai actively shows details on the DECA website on Dec. 10.

Displays emphasize many different holidays

by Girish Swaminath

The winter holidays aren't only about Christmas.

That's the message the leadership class is trying to convey this month with numerous posters around campus about other winter holidays such as Boxing Day, St. Stephen's Day, Las Posadas, La Befana, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa.

"[This project] was a joint effort of several clubs, including Italian Club, Spanish Club, Diversity Task Force and Multicultural Club," said senior Rebecca Amato. "We just wanted to create more awareness about other holidays and encourage people to celebrate other holidays in addition to Christmas."

The leadership class held this project last year as well.

"Last year was the first time we started this project, but this year, we decided to get other clubs on campus involved," said Amato.

The displays are located in the main office and have added a lot to the festivity to the appearance of the office, while bringing together the different cultures present at SHS.

"[These displays] look good in the office and have brought [all SHS students] together as a community," said senior Hashim Hyder. "It's great that we have things like this that encourage us to embrace diversity."

In addition to the displays, the leadership class is running the One Warm Coat Drive, encouraging people to donate coat to be given to the needy and homeless during the holiday season. ♦

BARMEIER | 4th Rhodes Scholar

continued from p. 1

"I get more excited about studying for two years at Oxford every time I talk with people who have been there," said Barmeier. "I expect the academics to be superb, but even more importantly, I expect to get a lot out of spending time with the incredibly diverse, talented and ambitious Rhodes scholars and other Oxford graduate and undergraduate students from around the world."

Even as a high school student Barmeier had a busy schedule, participating in everything from drama to sports.

Besides being the valedictorian of his class, he was editor-in-chief his senior year of *The Falcon*, made varsity cross-country, was part of Senior Video and Diversity Task Force and held a lead role in drama. He also played nationally in competitive roller hockey, though not at SHS.

"[Barmeier] was a really strong character with good ethics. He looks at not only what is fair and honest when it comes to his individual perspective on life but also when it comes to larger global issues," said Safine. He called Barmeier the kind of person "who is capable of being

president."

He continued his involvement in school activities in Princeton and is currently part of the Greening Dining Committee, Outdoor Action Program, Pace Center Breakout and Slow Food Princeton. He is also on the Princeton 2010 Class Day Committee.

With so many activities, it is a wonder how he manages to finish everything. The secret? Two key words that students have heard again and again: time management.

"Time management is crucial, and you really can't do everything," said Barmeier. "Some pretty important things, like keeping our room tidy and following the news can fall off my radar during busy stretches."

He said the Rhodes Scholarship is an immense honor.

"Throughout the application process, I really didn't let myself seriously consider the fact that I might actually win a Rhodes because of the extraordinary improbability that it would happen," Barmeier said. "In the meantime, however, I feel extremely grateful for having wonderful mentors and opportunities both at Saratoga High and at Princeton." ♦

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# Leadership starts YouTube channel

by Girish Swaminath and Nandini Ruparel

Lack of communication and publicity about on-campus events? Perhaps not anymore. YouTube will soon play a role in raising awareness by informing about school events. The Leadership class, aided by members of the new Multimedia Journalism class (MMJ), is creating a YouTube channel that will provide updates about dances, fundraisers and other happenings on campus. The YouTube channel will consist of a series of newscasts.

Junior David Mandell, a member of the Leadership class, said students break up into small groups with one leader to discuss school issues while getting the word out about upcoming events and addressing problems such as school diversity.

The Leadership class has already worked on several projects this year, including the school's 50th Anniversary celebrations and Challenge Day, to be held in March. Now, they are focusing on becoming more technologically advanced with the new YouTube channel.

"The technological age is advancing, and we're advancing with it," said junior Kent Paisley, a member of the MMJ class. Pais-

ley, who was asked to help with the channel, works hand-in-hand with the Leadership class and aides in the technological aspect of the project. He maintains the YouTube channel and edits most of the broadcast segments. Paisley and the members of the Leadership class work on the project after school, as the MMJ class meets during third period and Leadership during lunch.

"Getting the word out was the goal," said assistant principal Karen Hyde, who teaches the Leadership class. "It was, 'what do kids listen to and what do they watch?'"

"We want to provide some entertainment and humor to lighten the load," said senior Maddy Renalds, a member of the Leadership class working on the project. "We're hoping to raise the school in spirit."

One video, featuring "Mad and Mad" (Madeline Renalds and Madeline Rothenberg) has been posted to the YouTube channel. Both girls talked about school events (upcoming and already happened), charity events and even an Economics class midterm that many seniors were going to take at the time. Within the broadcast are quips and one-liners that are designed to amuse.

Things did not run as smoothly



Students in leadership get together on Dec. 9 at lunch to discuss upcoming events and ideas for the school.

as hoped the first time around because of scheduling issues in the sharing of equipment with MMJ, but Leadership hopes to work them out for next time.

"Next time, we hope to have scripts and more people involved," said Renalds. The next broadcast will focus on college applications, Winter Ball, holi-

day drives and winter sports. People can access the channel by accessing the following URL: <http://www.youtube.com/user/TheSaratogaFalcons>.



Junior Charlie Laufman, sophomores Jimmy Zhang and Isabel McPherson, all part of Jazz Band II perform Dec. 10 in the McAfee Center.

# Saratoga music department brings in the holiday spirit

by Kyumin Shim

If the members of Chamber Singers returned home with scratchy voices this past Wednesday, it was easy to see why. In an annual fundraising tradition, they delivered Carol Grams from class to class with holiday spirit and undiminished energy.

And as the holidays get closer, the Chamber Singers aren't the only ones spreading holiday joy. Recently, the music department has been hard at work getting prepared for its annual Winter performances. A group of student leaders are working to pull it together.

"In the winter time, the music department is definitely busy but really fun, too," said sophomore Hansen Qian, one of the orchestra managers. The orchestra also performed at its Winter Concert on Dec. 9.

The Symphonic Wind Ensemble members joined the Saratoga Strings Orchestra for the concert to create a Symphonic Orchestra. The string players performed pieces such as "Masters in the Hall" and "Sleigh Ride." The Saratoga Symphony also premiered a composition by Boitz called "The Morning Star: A Chorale Prelude."

**"In the winter time, the music department is definitely busy but really fun, too."**

—sophomore Hansen Qian

"We only had a short time to rehearse with everybody," said junior Debbie Lin. "But I think we made a lot of progress and I think it's going to be great."

The Chamber Singers also had their winter performance on Dec. 2 at the Filoli Center in

Woodside and sang at the Saratoga Country Club on Dec. 10. They performed at the faculty Christmas Luncheon on Dec. 11 as well.

The choir embarked on its annual over-night trip to San Francisco from Dec. 17-18.

"The SF trip is one of the most anticipated trips of the year for the singers," said choir director Jim Yowell. "They are with their friends and always singing and making people happy."

The different choirs will carol at popular Christmas hot spots, such as Union Square and Fisherman's Wharf. They also plan to watch the popular musical "Wicked."

"It's a time for us to hang out and eat together," said senior Victor Wong. "When I was a freshman, we watched 'Jersey Boys'. I'm pretty excited to watch 'Wicked.'" ♦

## FALCONFOCUS

# Junior changes sound with different section

Petite flute player decides to take up 25-pound tuba

by Amanda Yi and Kyumin Shim

Standing a mere 5 feet 2 inches, junior Neya Vishwanath strolls into the room to pick up her instrument. With her small hands, she finds her case, opens it and pulls out her... tuba?

At the beginning of the 2008 season, Vishwanath decided to stop playing flute for marching band and instead try the tuba.

"Freshman year, flute was really fun and I really liked the section, because I played flute for SWE, [symphonic wind ensemble], as well, so I figured I should do something different for marching [band]," said Vishwanath.

She chose the tuba because it is much more unusual and unexpected than the flute.

"Not many people would pick the tuba, and it seemed so different and really fun," said Vishwanath.

That is hardly the only difference between the two instruments. Vishwanath's flute, which she has been playing for eight years, weighs 14 ounces. The tuba is 25 pounds.

"I guess you would think that a tuba player has to be a big burly guy who can lift a big instrument, but it's really not like that," said Vishwanath. "I don't think my height or size has to do

with much." The biggest shock for Vishwanath is how much lung power it takes to play the tuba.

"Tuba doesn't seem like a hard instrument on the outside because there's only three keys and the notes are slower, but when you actually pick up and have to blow through it, you realize how much lung power it takes," said Vishwanath. "My lungs have probably expanded these last couple of months."

In addition to switching instruments, Vishwanath also switched sections.

"The tuba section is different," she says. "They're a really goofy bunch of people and they're a little bit rowdy sometimes, but I like that about them."

Although Vishwanath felt a noticeable change in the characters of the old and new section, her new section mates had no problem with including her into the tuba family.

"We saw how hard she was working, and her enthusiasm was really infectious, so she had no problem fitting in with us," said senior section leader Steven Sung.

After a few months, however, Vishwanath has gotten used to her section's unique character and enjoys the time she regularly spends with them.

"We'll stand in a big circle and put our arms over each other and do chants before we go out to perform," said Vishwanath. "They're a fun group to be around. They always make me smile and laugh." ♦



Vishwanath

# PTSO parents 'just do' what needs doing

by Anoop Galivanche and Jason Wu

Four new MacBooks, a 65-gallon aquarium and 120 performance chairs currently grace the SHS campus—but who is the mysterious benefactor behind these gifts?

Answer? The Parent Teacher Student Organization (PTSO) and the group's role on campus goes far beyond helping to fund various programs.

The PTSO morphed into being three years ago after Shinku Sharma, the mother of junior Appeksha Sharma, proposed that the group sever ties from the state-run Parent Teacher Student Association and form their own nonprofit organization. Sharma, who also runs a technology firm with her husband, started out as a member of the board but eventually became co-president.

"We were paying dues to PTSA of about \$2,500 a year, which was a lot of money for us at that time and they had some very strict guidelines as to how we should operate," said Sharma. "It was all very restricting, and it felt like we weren't benefiting from what they had to offer to us, so it really made sense to break away."

However, the PTSO really took off with the successful "Just Do It" campaign in which parents were asked to donate \$100 to help programs and facilities at the school.

"We just asked people to pay a certain amount of money and that really changed our whole financial situation and gave us enough money to pay for our grants," said Sharma.

With this money, the PTSO was able to fund grants that it had previously been forced to reject because of financial limitations.

Prior to the campaign, Sharma said, the PTSO had about \$12,000 to \$15,000 to distribute and nearly \$40,000 in grant requests. Now, they have about \$50,000 to distribute and can cover many more requests. PTSO grants were the source of funding for several recent additions to the school, including new chairs for the band. The chairs alone cost in excess of \$12,000. But the cost was worth it, Sharma said. "Our overarching goal with the grants is to provide teachers with things that can enable them to work with you guys better in the classroom," she said.

Much of the work the PTSO does is behind the scenes, and students usually only come in contact with the polished end result.



Parent volunteers from the PTSO make a special school-wide lunch possible on Aug. 28.

"We had about 50 people doing the first day packet, which is about half an inch thick and it really takes an army of people to put it together," said Sharma. "We worked on making them for about three hours before they were able to go to the post office."

Part of the reason the PTSO is able to provide all these services is the network of parent volunteers they turn to for manpower for nearly every project.

"We recruit parent volunteers that are able to help the staff and that's why from your point of view everything is proceeding smoothly," said Sharma. "If we didn't have these volunteers, I really don't know how the school would be doing these types of things. Roughly 65 percent of SHS parents and more than half of the teachers

are members of the PTSO and they would like even more participants.

"This year, we called everybody who was not a member and gave them the information necessary to join," said Sharma.

Being a co-president of the PTSO also requires a significant time commitment from Sharma and Kasik.

"I spend a little more than 10 hours a week on PTSO," said Sharma. "One week, I worked about 40 hours and it's a 24/7 thing because we don't have office hours."

Sharma sums up the mission of the PTSO as such:

"We look at what's missing and what can be improved on and go from there." ♦

# Junior dancer goes national

by Mira Chaykin and Synthia Ling



MATHER

Saratoga junior travels to perform with national dance company on the weekends.

"There is one dancer in this room whose performance has excelled far above the rest, whose passion and enthusiasm for dance stands out from the rest."

These were the words of Christian Vincent, of "So You Think You Can Dance Canada," at a LA Dance Magic convention of 1,000 girls last January.

He then pointed to junior Lauren Mather, whose cheeks turned bright red. She was overwhelmed from being singled out in the immense group.

Since she started putting on dancing and singing shows at age 2 for her parents, Mather has devoted her life to dancing and has earned herself chances to dance with and assist celebrities like Vincent, 32 dance scholarships and several professional job opportunities. Her talent has also earned her a prestigious spot in the national team LA Dance Magic Company.

As a part of Dance Magic, Mather has traveled across the country to places like Houston, Denver and St. Louis. It sounds exciting, but being part of a national team is a lot of work. She also dances with the Dance Academy USA (DAU) Production Company in Cupertino.

In addition to practicing regularly at DAU, she travels about once a month for Dance Magic to attend multiple day conventions.

"At the conventions we often have to practice from 6 p.m.-1 a.m.," said Mather, "and we spend the rest of our time assisting choreographers from shows like 'So You Think You Can Dance.' Once we even

danced for 42 hours in four days."

Dancing is a clearly a huge time commitment, and it can also present some other challenges.

"DAU can be really competitive," said Mather. "There's also an age gap. The youngest person could be the one receiving the most praise

have the right look," said Mather. "It helps separate work and emotion and take corrections."

Her talent in dancing is a result of her commitment and passion for dancing.

"I think that Lauren is such a good dancer because she truly is in love with dance," said good friend junior Laura Mighdoll. "She is so dedicated and it's something that's been close to her heart since she was a little girl."

Mather appears on her way to the big time, having performed live on Fox News this past summer after "So You Think You Can Dance" in a segment that spotlighted young aspiring dancers.

Mather does plan to continue dancing throughout her college experience and to pursue some form of dance throughout her life.

"I want to eventually either move to L.A., which I know will be difficult considering how sporadic dance jobs are there, or open up a dance studio," said Mather.

Either way, Mather is one to watch for. Who knows, you might turn on "So You Can Think You Can Dance" in a few years and see her on center stage. ♦

**"I love dance because it's the only way I get to put myself out there and let go. When I dance, I become vulnerable."**

—Junior Lauren Mather

and we have to compete for scholarships."

The competition is sometimes a mixed blessing in that dancers can become jealous over the awards handed out.

The negative aspects of dance, however, are clearly overshadowed by its benefits and her passion for it.

Mather loves the friends she makes, but the real perk is the dancing itself.

"I love dance because it's the only way I get to put myself out there and let go," said Mather. "When I dance, I become vulnerable. I grow as a person and an artist."

In addition, dancing has served as a major learning experience for Mather. "I've learned to deal with rejection, because often the best dancers aren't chosen for a part because they don't

# Students embrace relaxed 'net filters, access to YouTube

by Ben Clement

If students are spending more time watching YouTube videos and clips on school computers this year, it's because the school decided to reverse an earlier decision to block the popular site at school.

Previously YouTube was open only for teachers, but administrators made changes when these restrictions proved to be inefficient when, in example, students were unable to access sites that teachers wanted to use in lesson plans.

"We were spending a lot of time managing who could and could not access material that was mutually beneficial," said principal Jeff Anderson.

Aside from giving teachers more freedom with lesson plans, the looser restraints are very popular among students.

"I don't have a lot of time in class to fool around on the computers," said sophomore Talia Sisco, a member of the new multimedia journalism class. "It is nice to be able to watch videos with friends during tutorial though."

Last year, many students had complained about the strict filters, often without giving the filters' purpose any real thought.

Junior Aditya Dev, however, acknowledges that the initial

filters are understandable. "A lot of layout artists in yearbook get frustrated when their partners are fooling

## THE BIG IDEA

### Internet Filters

**DRAWBACK:** Students are easily distracted.

**TEACHER BENEFIT:** Students are able to access websites teachers want to use in lesson plans.

**STUDENT BENEFIT:** Greater freedom to browse internet sites of choice without impositions.

around on YouTube or game sites," said Dev. "It's not a big deal if you're responsible, but some people get distracted too easily."

Anderson also points out that many students forget the reason they have restricted Internet access at school is to maintain a productive educational environment.

"We want to give the students as much freedom as we can, but we have to be able to trust them," said Anderson. "So far, there have not been any abuses of the new filters and hopefully it will remain that way." ♦

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# Learning by doing

MAP classes go to Steinbeck country; astronomy travels to local planetarium

by Girish Swaminath

This year, Saratoga High astronomy and MAP students have experienced the real-life applications of their courses' curricula by embarking on field trips.

MAP English 11 and MAP English 11 Honors students visited the Monterey and Salinas area on Nov. 23 in order to gain background information about the life of internationally-acclaimed author John Steinbeck. According to English teacher Kerry Mohnike, the students visited three locations: the National Steinbeck Center, a farm run by Chris Bunn and Cannery Row in Monterey. They also were able to watch a biographical video about Steinbeck's life and learn about agriculture as they physically worked on the fields.

Mohnike hoped that students could gain some knowledge by stepping into Steinbeck's shoes and experiencing the conditions of his life, as they read "The Grapes of Wrath," one of Steinbeck's most popular novels.

"After going on this trip, I hope that [the students] comprehend the biases and nega-

tive stereotypes held against farmers, especially during the early 20th century," said Mohnike. "Farmers are often thought of as ignorant but as students have embarked on this novel and had the experience of working on the farm, I hope that they appreciate them for enduring the struggles they have recently faced."

The astronomy classes went on an excursion to the De Anza planetarium on Dec. 3 so students could get a chance to better appreciate the study of astronomy. Science teacher Jill McIntyre truly enjoyed the trip.

"The students laid back and watched a show on black holes on the dome-shaped screen," said McIntyre. "They also were able to see the night sky with all the stars and constellations, which is projected by a massive million-dollar machine owned by the [college]."

McIntyre felt that students truly loved this experience.

"Students appreciated the beauty of the night sky and the complexities of the arrangement of constellations," said McIntyre. "We had to cancel our star party and this was a good substitute for that." ♦



Instructor Tony Crapo demonstrates the audition routine to prospective Winterguard members on Dec. 3.

# COLLEGE | College application season coming to end

continued from page 1

bit stressed because it's a countdown," Renalds said. "I think about it every day and I hope it's there in my mail on December 15. If it's not, I'll be mad."

Why are so many seniors applying early? Assistant principal Brian Safine points to insecurity over the weak economy as well as how competitive college admissions have become. In the past 30 years, the number of

applicants to CSUs, UCs and Stanford have doubled.

"I try to show parents [the acceptance rates] to show that it has gotten a lot harder to get into the college of their child's choice since their time," said Safine. "Even in the past 25 years, it has drastically changed."

This year, more students are not only applying early but also applying to more private schools. Around 250 students applied to private schools last year, while

this year the number seems to be reaching 300.

"Even though there are rumors flying around about how students aren't getting in, when looking at our numbers we see that our students are doing just as well, if not better," said Safine.

From the class of '08, 24 percent went on to attend a private university, while 39 percent went on to attend a UC and 8 percent went to a CSU. From the class of '09, 28 percent went to a private

university, 39 percent went to a UC and 9 percent went to a CSU.

For seniors in the middle of the college application process, many believe the competition for UCs is getting tighter, as colleges, such as UC Berkeley are proposing to stray away from the master California Education plan, which involves giving priority first to community college transfers and then to students from California high schools. Student fear that UC Berkeley

wants to start admitting more out of state students who pay higher tuition fees to help the deficit in their own budget.

"I think the application process is really stressful—especially for UCs because almost all students from California apply to these schools," said senior Alysia Patel. "If the UCs start cutting down the number of in-state students they accept, it adds on so much more competition for the senior class." ♦



Juniors Tim Rollinson and Karthik Annaamalai enjoy a laugh before the flamenco dance showcase begins at the San Jose Hoover Theater. The Spanish 4 Honors and AP classes watched to fulfill a requirement Dec. 5.

# Spanish students visit flamenco show

by Pia Mishra

More than 50 Spanish 4 Honors and Spanish 5 AP students attended "Juerga," a flamenco performance put on by the Flamenco Society of San Jose on Dec. 5. It was a cultural experience quite different from what they usually see in class.

"I think I was so excited to go because it was a change from what we do in class," said junior Sara Padash. "Flamenco was invigorating and enjoyable to watch because it was something different."

The show took place at the Hoover Theater in San Jose, as it does every two months. The first half included performances by students of Koko De la Isla, the association's main flamenco dancer. Both students and their parents displayed their skills in front of an admiring, mainly Saratoga audience. Dressed in bold, colorful flamenco dresses, female dancers took the stage in multiple numbers including a performance to the well-known "Gypsy Song." The dancers were

accompanied by live musicians including singers, Virginia Juan and Albert Moyoli and guitarist Alberto Marques.

"The students were inspiring," said junior Senem Yilmaz. "I kept wondering how long it took them to learn those steps and how hard it would have been for me to learn them."

However, a more intense second half followed as De la Isla and a fellow professional male dancer took the stage, impressing the audience with their intricate steps and dance patterns.

De la Isla has been based in the Bay Area since 1997 and performs her own shows all around San Jose. She has performed for a number of charity organizations and has conducted flamenco performances at local colleges and community organizations as well. Her shows have been lauded for their high quality and originality.

"It's important for students who are learning foreign languages to be exposed to the culture," said Spanish teacher Arnaldo Rodriguex. "It gives them a chance to enjoy flamenco, a popular dance and still learn at the same time." ♦

# Winterguard to begin season with split teams

by Alex Ju

Members of the Winterguard are looking forward to a promising season after placing 4th during field season at the Western Band Association Championships in Clovis on Nov. 21.

"I couldn't be more excited about the outcome of the season and am really happy with the improvement all the kids have made," said instructor Tony Crapo, who is new this year to Saratoga High.

Winterguard differs from Color Guard by moving off the field and to an indoor floor. More up close and without the band, it focuses solely on the guard. "It's so much more intense," said sophomore Andrea Liu.

For the first time, this year's Winterguard has been split into varsity and JV teams. The main reason is that a guard can have no more than 30 members on a floor to be allowed to compete because of safety

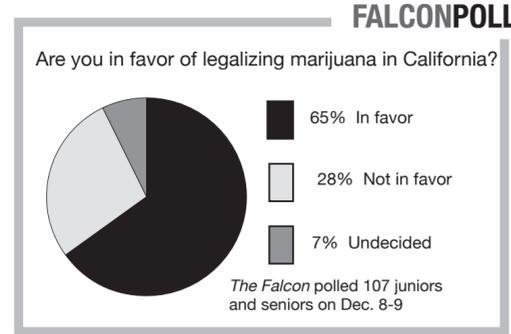
issues; 36 people signed up. "I'd like everyone to have an equal opportunity to perform, as opposed to cutting people and making Winterguard an exclusive group," said Mr. Crapo.

The change has received mixed reactions from guard members. "I feel stressed by the two Winterguard thing, but I can see its potential," said sophomore Christine Liu. "It's just really sad when your friends are in a different guard."

The guard held auditions, after which 12 members were placed in varsity and the remaining 24 in JV. The JV is to compete in class A and the varsity in the higher class AA.

"My goals this season aren't necessarily competitive," said Crapo of his ambitions for this year's Winterguard. "I just want this activity to get more exposure on campus so that in the future we can have more numbers for field season. My goal is to eventually have 60 people in Color Guard." ♦

# IS IT FINALLY TIME TO 'WEED' OUT OLD POLICIES?



An unlikely establishment graces South Monroe Street in San Jose, mere blocks from the posh Santana Row that patrons flock to for fine dining and expensive clothing stores—the San Jose Buyers Collective, a medicinal marijuana dispensary. Customers on Yelp lament how the dispensary is "overpriced" and how many of them can get "better stuff in San Francisco."

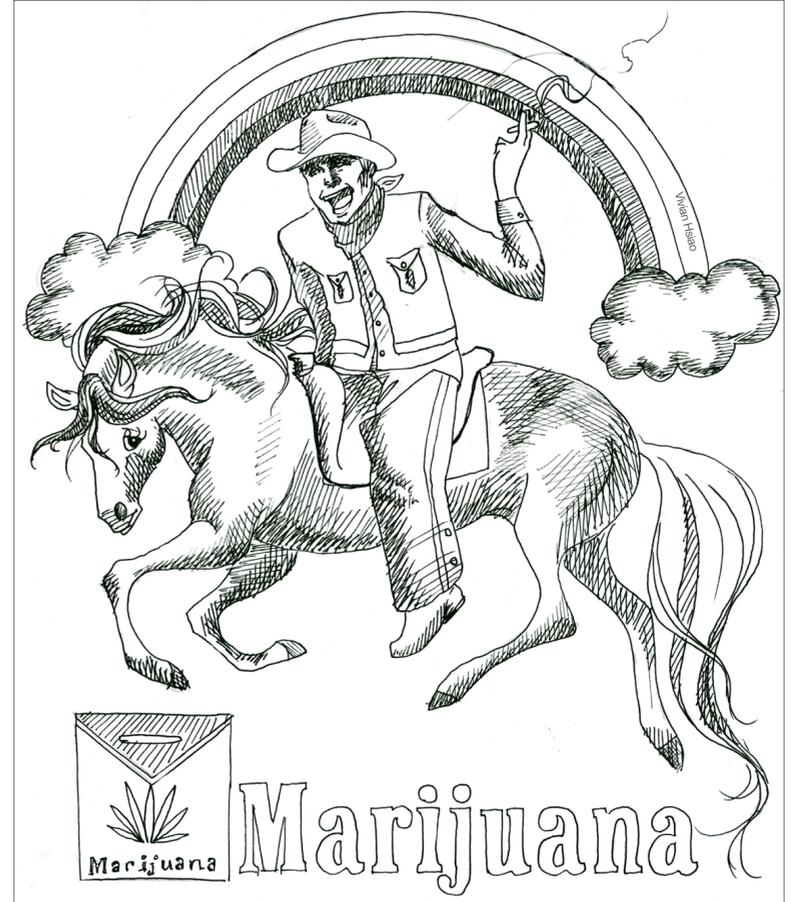
While this may say something about the dispensary itself, it also exemplifies how marijuana, which has long been considered a taboo in most law-abiding circles, is gradually insinuating itself into society. Perhaps it is time California acknowledges marijuana as a relatively harmless drug and look to adopt policies that will harness this re-emergence of marijuana rather than perpetuate the taboos regarding it.

After all, the medical marijuana industry has become a force so extensive and ubiquitous that raids carried out by Drug Enforcement Administration, or DEA, can be likened to fighting with a many-headed monster—each beheading just results in an additional head, perhaps one even more elusive. Los Angeles is especially notable for its population of such dispensaries, where, according to a statistic put in the

field by Fortune Magazine, the number of medical marijuana stores outnumber the number of Starbucks.

Southern California is not the only region taking advantage of the loophole offered by California's 1996 Proposition 215. The legislation tolerates the use of marijuana only if it is recommended by a doctor in order to alleviate the pain of patients suffering from cancer, AIDS, anorexia and like conditions. However, with the passage of time, this requisite for marijuana intake has broadened to include insomnia, asthma, autism and other disorders without a shred of legal documentation to support it.

Even the FBI has eased its policies concerning the usage of marijuana, creating considerable confusion among law enforcement institutions. Rules are being bent left and right, much to the dismay of the flustered police. Clearly, the influx of marijuana is a force too great to be quelled under paper labels of illegality. Just this past summer, Oakland voted overwhelmingly to tax the sales of medicinal marijuana, becoming the first community in the country to do so. Considering the massive \$40 billion rift in California's budget, it's time for other cities to start following in Oakland's footsteps. Taxing



the estimated \$14 billion marijuana industry could potentially generate over a billion dollars in tax revenue a year and help with California's budget woes.

In the words of comedian Katt Williams, "It's just a plant...and if you should so happen to set it on fire, there

are some effects." While Williams may be understating these "effects," which included lowered blood pressure, increased heart rate and hallucinations, marijuana, by medical standards, is the least harmful narcotic, with transient short-term effects and virtually nonexistent long-term effects.

Although this editorial is by no means advocating the usage of marijuana, the acknowledgment of its comparatively tame characteristics by the state is worth discussion.

**Perhaps it is time California looks to adopt policies that will harness this reemergence of marijuana rather than perpetuate the taboos regarding it.**

As marijuana has sneaked into the lives of many Californians, it's time the state face the new reality created by the drug. Perhaps our policy makers need to look back to the ironic 1940 proverb, "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em." After all, it was a cigarette company that coined it. ♦

# Lawyers beg leniency for their juvenile charges

FATE OF TEENAGE RAPIST POSES DILEMMA TO CRIMINAL SYSTEM; POTENTIAL FOR REFORM ARGUED

by Brandon Yang

In 1989, 13-year-old Joe Harris Sullivan broke into a 72-year-old woman's home, robbed and raped her. Witnesses testified that Sullivan did commit those crimes. On Nov. 9, 20 years later, this case went before the Supreme Court, along with another case, in which Terrance Graham, then 17, was arrested for trying to rob a restaurant.

At first glance, neither defendant seems to have much of a reason to be back in court. The evidence is solid, and the courts of Florida where both events occurred declared them guilty. However, instead of trying to prove their innocence, they are trying to prove that their pun-

ishments—life sentences without the possibility of parole—are unconstitutional because they are "cruel and unusual."

While even the harshest penalty is deserved for crimes of such barbarity, the scenario is not quite as conveniently "black and white" once minors, like Graham and Sullivan, come into the picture. Juveniles offer the gray part of the moral spectrum. While justice must always be served, the idea of young teens banished to prison for the rest of their life is unimaginable, even if they

committed such heinous crimes. They should be given the chance to reform, as wasting reparable lives by locking them in a prison cell helps no one.

**Unlike mentally mature adults, teens are have a much higher chance of correcting their behavior.**

Unlike mentally mature adults, teens are have a much higher chance of correcting their behavior. Scientists have proven that the brain and behavioral maturation of teenagers continues until early adulthood. Since they are still impressionable, minors have a much higher chance of transforming than their adult counterparts with proper guid-

ance and counseling. The state of Florida seems to think otherwise, since it currently boasts 77 prisoners who were sentenced to die in jail as a minor, more than all the other states combined.

Of course, allowing parole does not mean that former dangerous juveniles can return to society whenever they want. They need to show proof of personal reform to be approved for parole after serving a significant period of time in jail. Minors can still serve their whole lives in prison if they continue to cause trouble.

Although economics should hardly be considered in the case of seriously misguided teens, there is absolutely no point in spending taxpayers' money on

keeping reformed teens in jail for life when they could be continuing their education or earning money to support their family.

The only question remaining is where the line should be drawn. Sullivan's lawyer argued that children under 14 should be offered parole for crimes while Graham's believed that anyone under 18 should have the chance. It is ineffective and arbitrary to assign random privileges to specific ages. Since each case is different, parole hearings should still be offered in order to more closely evaluate each minor.

Kids need the chance to redeem themselves, rather than allow their life to be wasted away for mistakes made at such a young age. ♦

# 20 YEARS LATER, WALL'S FALL STIRS NOSTALGIA

by Uttara Sivaram

It's been 20 years since the fateful fall of the Berlin Wall. Two and a half decades since Ronald Reagan very publicly and politely mentioned that it would be most kind of Mr. Gorbachev to tear down that bothersome little fence separating Germany into Eastern and Western sectors. So when the wall did finally fall, torn apart by hands and cranes alike, West Germans skipped into East Germany, East Germans hopped over to West Germany and President George H. W. Bush, who had inherited this issue from the leftovers of the Reagan administration, sat back in his plush Oval Office sofa and celebrated privately, for he knew that this was essentially America's victory, and therefore, his victory.

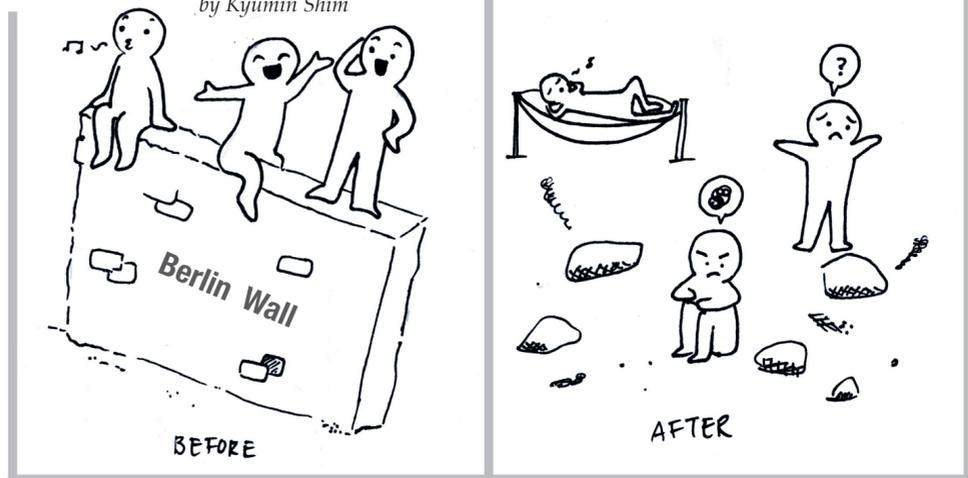
Glass-clinking and celebratory toasts aside, the European and global impact of such a Western victory was unexpected. The fall of the wall took the Soviet Union off the map and put Russia on the bleachers indeterminately. While that feisty nation has continued to alternately churn out power-packed small, bald presidents and hairy, swarthy presidents, it has sunk lower and lower in the hierarchy of the global power list.

Germany, too, did not fare as well as people like to believe. In a poll posed to 1,000 Germans on Nov. 2, the New York Times reported that eight of 10 want the wall to be erected again, separating East from West Germany. This surprising onrush of nostalgia has resulted in a demand for Eastern German products, such as the unreliable and unappealing Zeha shoes, which had ended its production line shortly after the wall's demise. And while these all seem fairly innocuous, as simple displays of fondness for the good old times, the truth is: America's assessment of what German people truly needed may have been slightly skewed by the party confetti.

No one is denying the good that came out of the Berlin Wall's destruction. Divided families could reunite. The country became one again. But the newly liberated East Germans barely stayed afloat amidst the detritus from a crumbling

## CANDIDCARICATURES

by Kyumin Shim



Soviet Union.

Thus, this victory stained Germany with Western ideals—equality, democracy, but also capitalism. While this type of private- and corporate-fueled economic development suited America, Germany's switch to capitalism ruined a government-controlled economy that once had been basic, simple and to the common man, predictable. The independence thrust into the hands of people not yet ready to hold the reins of their own economy proved to be detrimental to the social conditions of post-Wall Germany. One could say that while East Germany may have needed capitalism on training wheels, it rolled to them on a motorcycle.

**While East Germany may have needed capitalism on training wheels, it rolled to them on a motorcycle.**

Germany's economic mishaps followed those of Russia, a country that retreated into itself after the wall fell, frantically trying to deal with the global implosion of Communism and the fluctuations in its own economy. The USSR's rapid decline

production controlled by the government, the U.S. watched as the confused East German citizens suffered temporary price shocks from the absence of administrative supervision in nationwide pricing. The absence of Western economic support in Germany's precarious position inevitably led to rampant inflation that decreased the buying power of already dwindling wages. NBC's Mike Boettcher may have put it best when commenting, "After four decades of standing in communism's food lines, capitalism has created a new place to wait: at the unemployment office."

Germany's economic mishaps followed those of Russia, a country that retreated into itself after the wall fell, frantically trying to deal with the global implosion of Communism and the fluctuations in its own economy. The USSR's rapid decline

fueled America's ascent, and soon, the U.S. was the only real superpower in the world.

1989, then, was a marker for a number of events that were to shape the peaks in the political terrain. The global shift of the bipolar era would irreversibly start to Westernize the entire world. However, the influx of Eastern poverty wrought by abrupt unification could have easily been averted if the U.S. had taken the time to follow up on its moral crusading.

Germany would never quite recover from the burns inflicted by the Soviet Union, topped off with the peroxide that the U.S., knowingly or not, poured on their still-raw wounds. And Russia continues to valiantly fight for its lost status as a world power, itching for a fight but still painfully aware of its festering weaknesses—weaknesses that began accumulating on the days that Germany celebrated with tears and songs, commemorating the fall of a barrier with implications far beyond those of liberty. ♦

# Rampant student protests will not help UC budget crisis

by Vijay Menon and Abhi Venkataramana

Hundreds of students stormed into UC Berkeley's Wheeler Hall on a mid-November morning and took control of the administrative building, dumping piles of week-old trash, barricading the hall and ignoring police requests to relinquish control of the building.

Using loudspeakers to address the crowd of students and policemen gathering outside the window, protesters angrily voiced their complaints over a recent university announcement that tuition fees would be hiked by 32 percent at the university.

**Tuition increases are the only way that the UC system can manage to offer the same quality of education.**

While UC students are justified in their indignation over the increased fees, they must understand that their protests will do nothing to solve the problem. The decision was not one of choice, but rather one of necessity for a school with a \$535 million budget gap.

Although the tuition hike will hurt middle-class families who depend on the UC system for an affordable college education, the increases are the only way that the UC system can manage to offer the same quality of education.

The tuition hike strikes the best compromise to California's budget crisis. Undergraduates, who now pay around \$7,800 a year, will have now have to pay around \$10,000. Although this is already

difficult to swallow for some families, so-called victims of the tuition increase must understand the circumstances surrounding the move and remember that they are still receiving a quality education for a relatively low cost, especially in comparison to many other Californian private schools.

UC Berkeley has had a long tradition of protest, dating all the way back to the People's Park protests in 1969. In fact, these current protests were a success in terms of their nonviolence and ability to bring attention to a significant issue. However, the state of California and the UC administration are in a bind and students parading outside of classes, taking buildings hostage and piling garbage into stacks is not only being counterproductive in reaching their eventual goal, but they are also establishing a certain belligerent and distasteful reputation for a once-dignified university.

As tough as it may be for parents and students alike to reach into their already overstretched wallets to pay off the UC system's \$535 million deficit, it is important to come to terms with the fact that this is the best way to solve the crisis.

It's time for protesters to put down their banners, turn off their loudspeakers and accept the hike in UC tuition. After all, there is no other realistic alternative road to preserving a world-class education system in sinking economic times. ♦



## The Saratoga Falcon

### STAFF POLICY

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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The staff of The Saratoga Falcon is committed to objectively and accurately representing the diverse talents, cultures and viewpoints of the Saratoga High School community.

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# Privatizing of prisons unwise

by Ben Clement

The recent recession has had many unfortunate side effects. It's impossible to open a newspaper or watch a news show without hearing a heart-wrenching tale about the millions of newly unemployed.

As if these reminders of the recession didn't create enough anxiety, Arizona residents now have another reason to fear for their safety and security. In mid-October, the state announced its intention to sell nine of the state's 10 medium to high-security prisons to companies in hopes of garnering a small sum: \$100 million to be exact. This money will help alleviate the state's nearly \$2 billion budget shortfall.

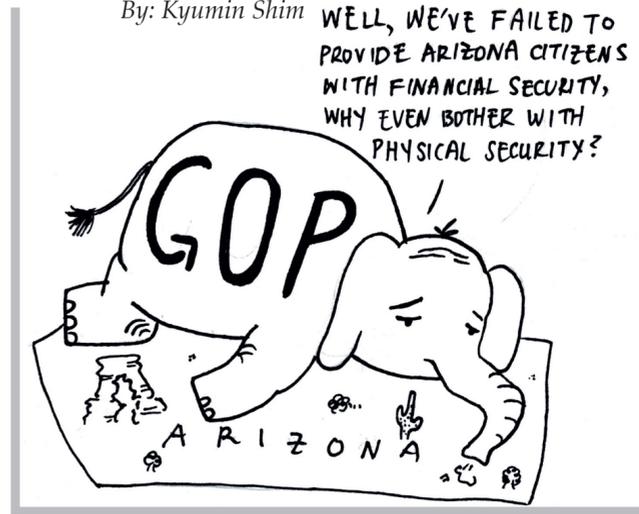
While political cartoonists could hardly ask for a better scenario in which to exercise their artistic abilities, the situation becomes less simplistic and humorous in lieu of the serious budget crisis most states are suffering. While Arizona's "privatizing of prisons" may sound ludicrous, the context of these desperate measures make them seem less desperate after all.

However, the problem with this plan is the assumption that private companies will be able to manage the prisons in a less expensive and better manner than the state does. These companies will already be in the red because of the ante they will have to invest in order to assume control of the prisons. Any savings accrued by these companies would have to be split with Arizona, which would then pay on a per-prisoner basis.

If they wish to make any profit out of this venture, these companies are going to have to cut costs. The first thing to go will be inmate education programs, followed closely by pay cuts among the prison staff. While the experienced peace officers may have the luxury of

## CANDIDCARICATURES

By: Kyumin Shim



walking away from such a salary slash, lower-ranked officers will not, leaving the security of the prison to inexperienced and underpaid employees.

There is a reason it is called a "corrections" facility. The idea is to educate the inmates and provide them with incentives to obey the law. It's already difficult enough for a former inmate to find a job dragging along a criminal record. Life without a livelihood or potential to contribute to the community can easily boomerang an ex-convict back in prison, where conditions may be friendlier than those among society.

One of the biggest fears shared by opponents of the experiment is that the private companies are not equipped to

handle high-security and death row inmates. Prison wardens in the private sector, who right now only manage low to medium security prisoners, are currently paid less than their public counterparts. This may explain why there have been so many incidents of high profile riots and escapes since the private prison surge in the mid '80s.

Economics teacher Todd Dwyer often states, "We regulate business because business cannot regulate itself," meaning business often sacrifices morals and ideals in order to make money. Based on this postulate, is it really in our best interest to allow the corrections system to come under private management? ♦

## TOGATALKS

Do you think stacking is fair?

Of course I think it is unfair... it makes their lineup deeper and it is harder for our doubles players to win.

doubles player Sarah Lum



I think it was a cheap shot, and showed just how much MV wanted and needed to win.

doubles player Mary Edman



## Saratoga Speaks

# Tennis tactics 'stack' up problems

by Mika Padmanabhan

In an inspired leap for gold, the Falcons made school history by defeating chief rival Monta Vista 5-2 in the CCS Championships last month. With victory still fresh in the girls' minds, they made it to the finals of the Northern California tournament, ultimately squaring off against Monta Vista once again. Unfortunately, the Falcons were defeated 4-3 this time, and while Monta Vista has always been a worthy opponent, Falcon players voiced concerns over unfair play by the Matadors. However, the bitterness the Falcons felt following the match was more serious than just a case of sour grapes.

During the NorCal final, the Falcons thought Monta Vista coach Gene Fontino employed a line-up tactic known as "stacking." Tennis matches are formatted such that there are four singles

and three doubles, defining a victory to be a minimum of four wins out of the seven matches. By stacking, the stronger singles players are placed in the doubles, so the weaker players take their place in the singles matches. Monta Vista used this strategy, placing their fourth singles player in doubles and replaced her with a weaker player who normally plays in the two doubles spot.

**Singles players must play singles and doubles players must play doubles—no switching players at the last minute.**

Ironically, Fontino has often expressed his negative view on other teams stacking and once even pushed for an "anti-stacking rule" for the league. He has made numerous claims that his team never had to stack and never will. The NorCal tournament proved otherwise.

Fontino is also the head of the SCVAL league and the representative for CCS. If he, as head coach of the league, stacks, then does this not tell other teams that this unfair practice is acceptable?

To be fair, stacking is perfectly legal. But putting stronger players on one team against the weaker of their opponents is a tactic that does not even look good on paper, much less in practice, leaving both teams with a bad taste in their mouths.

What can be done to ensure fairness of matches in the future? It's time to implement the "anti-stacking rule" earlier supported by Fontino. Singles players must play singles and doubles players must play doubles—no switching players at the last minute.

Opponents of this rule change argue that it doesn't allow for doubles players to get an opportunity to play singles if they are good enough to do so, and it doesn't allow tired singles players to take an easy match in doubles. However, with the growing prevalence of teams that stoop to stacking in an effort to win, this rule may be the only method to contain a spreading virus that threatens fair play. ♦

Senior Mika Padmanabhan was the No. 1 singles player on the girls' varsity team this year.

# Ringling in the Holiday Season

DIFFERENT CELEBRATIONS OF THE HOLIDAYS BRING SPIRITS TOGETHER.

## Families united by traditions

by Lillian Chen

They stealthily tip-toe to their neighbors' door step on Christmas Eve, making sure nobody spots them in the act. Being as silent as they can, they drop off the secret gift in front of the door, ring the doorbell and scurry away as quickly as they can. The neighbors excitedly open the gift, but to their surprise, the elderly man and his son find a spoon. A round, silver spoon.

This has become a tradition for junior Mckenzi

Toh and her family every year when they fly to Singapore to spend the holidays with relatives. Each year, they give a different random item, something that can be found anywhere, as a gift to their neighbors. Their neighbors also counter Toh and her family's gift-giving act by giving them a random gift such as a tree branch in return.

"We thought they would get mad, but we opened the door and found a nicely wrapped up gift," said Toh. "It ended up being a sock."

Many different families have a huge variety of their own traditions for the holiday season. Some get the opportunity to cut down their own Christmas tree with an axe as opposed to selecting an already chopped down tree from a local Christmas tree farm or even a plastic tree.

Sophomore Nicole Borda and her family drive into the Santa Cruz Mountains every December to pick out a Christmas tree. There is a designated area in the Santa Cruz Mountains called Crest Ranch Christmas Tree Farm where anybody who wants to is given an axe and is allowed to cut down an evergreen tree to take home as their Christmas tree.

"My family has been doing

it since before I was born," she said. Besides cutting down their own tree, the Borda family celebrates the Jewish holiday Hanukkah. Because Hanukkah is before Christmas, she and her family are able to celebrate both holidays, having a dinner on Christmas Eve and exchanging gifts, as well as lighting the Menorah and saying prayers. Borda's mother's side of her family is Jewish whereas her father's side is Catholic.



Borda

To commemorate this Jewish holiday, which lasts for eight days, Borda and her family go over to her grandmother's house where a huge family gathering takes place. Then, after saying prayers for about an hour, they eat a grand dinner every night for all eight days that the holiday lasts.



Olson

For sophomore Amanda Olson, tradition is visiting Disneyland every year for Christmas and her birthday, Dec. 21, because the days are so close to each other. Ever since she was 3, she and her father have spent quality time together at Disneyland with roughly four fun days.

Olson and her father still continue their ongoing tradition of watching the Christmas Parade where famous figure Mickey Mouse would appear and fireworks would explode throughout the sky.

"When I was little, I would sit on his shoulders and watch the parade, but that stopped when I turned 10," Olson said.

### HOLIDATES

- Hanukkah**  
Dec. 11-19
- Christmas**  
Dec. 25
- Kwanzaa**  
Dec. 26- Jan. 1
- New Year's**  
Jan. 1

## 'FANTASY OF LIGHTS' DAZZLES VISITORS

by Roy Bisht

By day, Vasona Park is full of happy parents and energized children enjoying the vast expanse of trees and grass while circling the fields on the steaming miniature train that makes its rounds throughout the park. But at night, the park is transformed. During the holiday season, it is a different world—cars cruise through the paved roadways while families admire the dozens of luminescent decorations that cover the park.

The joyride, named Fantasy of Lights, features life-sized figures of many holiday characters shining with lights and playing holiday music. Visitors to the park

are greeted by lifelike models of Santa Claus and Rudolph the Reindeer. For people looking for a way to spend time with family while adding a holiday

flavor, Fantasy of Lights would be the place for them. A slow cruise around the lighted park is perfect for helping jump-start the holiday spirit.

It's not all about Santa, either. There are also decorations for the other holidays, such as Hanukkah and Kwanzaa. With all types of cultures celebrated, the atmosphere can make any visitor feel welcome.

Starting Nov. 27, guests can pay \$15 for the ride. Though it may seem overpriced, it is well worth it for the holiday spirit that comes with the trip. The park is open from 6-10 p.m. every night until December 31st but the lines leading up to the entrance can get very long later throughout the night.

Being one of the most entertaining holiday events in the area, it doesn't come as a surprise that the drive is often full of visitors. Depending on the amount of traffic, the trip through the park can take about 15-25 minutes to view

all the of the decorations. Many of the decorations are sponsored by another company, which provides the event with the majority of their funds. Though the sponsorships and company logos plastered next to every decoration take away from the holiday spirit, it is still a great place to spend one's night over winter break.

With the current economic situation in the United States, layoffs and foreclosures throughout the country are increasingly common and celebrating the holidays is a great way to forget about everything and just have fun with life. Spending a night cruising by the brightly-lighted decorations in Fantasy of Lights is an exuberant way to enjoy the holidays. Plus, you get a candycane at the end.

**There are decorations for Hanukkah and Kwanzaa. With all types of cultures celebrated, the atmosphere can make any visitor feel welcome.**

# Can you...?



## ... CONDUCT SECRET SANTA GIFT-GIVING WITHOUT TELLING THE RECEIVER?

by Alex Ju

Secret Santa gifts are a popular tradition around the holiday time. Whether between friends, classmates or sports teams, giving and receiving anonymous gifts is always fun.

But what if one tried to give someone such presents without any formal establishment? Could one accomplish this? How would the target react in response to the spontaneous gift-giving? I decided to find out.

For the receiving end of my trial, I chose Jennifer Rios, a freshman in Color Guard with me. I had always loved her for how kind and polite she was, and she is a valuable guard member. However, she was also very shy and I didn't know her

very well, leaving me not knowing what to expect in her reaction.

I began on Monday. I stapled a note to a pack of fruit snacks explaining that I was neither a stalker nor a secret admirer, but merely someone who wanted to brighten her day with a Secret Santa gift.

After this first note, I continued to send her gifts at lunchtime for the remainder of the week. Each time I would watch her reaction from across the quad as she looked in every direction in hopes of spotting whoever her Secret Santa was. Besides fruit snacks, I also sent her bath salts, cookies, socks and at the end, fruit snacks again.

Finally, on Friday, I approached her in the hall to personally present the final gift.

"Wait, it was you?" Rios asked me, surprised, when I told her what I had been doing.

I nodded, to which she responded, "That was so generous of you! Thank you so much!"

I was completely startled by this reaction. I had braced myself for questions and confused looks. But while Rios's friend added that Rios had worried about me being either a creeper or secret admirer, Rios said that the gifts did make her a bit happier each day.

In the end, I learned you can send Secret Santa gifts to anyone at any time of the year, even someone you don't know that well. And while they may find you a bit strange for doing so, your generosity will definitely live up their day.

## A Christmas Delight : Apple Cake

### Ingredients:

- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1 cup sugar
- 4 eggs
- 2 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 2 cans of pre-sliced canned apples
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons sugar



### Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
2. Whisk together oil, eggs and sugar in a mixing bowl until mixture is smooth. Add flour and baking powder and stir well.
3. Use half of the dough to make a thick layer on the bottom of a 13 inch by nine inch pan, making sure to cover the entire bottom of the pan. Spread the apples over the dough evenly, and later, the rest of the dough over the apples. Try to layer the dough so that none of the apples show through the top of the cake.
4. Mix cinnamon and sugar in a separate bowl and sprinkle it over the dough.
5. Bake the cake for 40-45 minutes or until the entire top layer is golden brown.
6. Use a toothpick and poke a hole in the middle of the cake, only going through the first layer of dough. If the toothpick comes out clean, the cake is ready. Serve warm and enjoy!



Looking for a delicious holiday treat? Try Apple Cake for a change this winter season. When mouths are full of candy canes and chocolate treats galore, Apple Cake will surely tone down the sugar but leave mouths watering, eager for another serving.

With a crunchy top layer covered in a cinnamon and sugar sprinkle, this cake will make a great finish to any meal.

The inside boasts a layer of warm, cut apples held together between soft layers of cake. When heated, the apples ooze out, mixing with the cinnamon's flavor. This is less sweet, yet still maintains the traditional taste of apple and cinnamon. For those who are ready to taste a different spin on classic apple pie, Apple Cake is for you!

-courtesy of Katie Park

-Alicia Lee and Sanitha Shankar

**When I was your age...**

I was in the musical | I took poetry | I was on the chess team | I played water polo | I was in Color Guard | I was on the football team | I was on the newspaper staff | I was in yearbook | I walked to school in the rain | I was on the tennis team | I stayed up all night studying | I was in marching band | I was on the robotics club | I was in orchestra | I volunteered | I didn't have a computer | I was a cheerleader

**Four teachers recount their own high school experiences**

**Many differences in Costa Rican high school**

by Kyumin Shim

Longtime Spanish teacher Arnaldo Rodriguex remembers only happy moments of his high school life in his native Costa Rica. When he thinks back, he recalls blasting music while sprawled around the room with his friends and studying together as they shared the most recent edition of the encyclopedia.

"They were like the technology of back then," he said. "We would always beg our parents for the latest version [of the encyclopedia]."

Rodriguex attended the Liceo de San Jose High School in San Jose, Costa Rica and graduated in 1967. The school provided him with a varied education and taught him other life skills as well.

"School wasn't really stressful for me because I knew that this was what I had to do," said Rodriguex. "Of course when we had tests and projects we had to work hard, but being together with my friends really helped."

The high school he attended was a five-year school with a six-day week. The school system in Costa Rica then was much different from that of SHS today. High school for Rodriguex started with freshman year, in a main "homeroom," along with 30 other kids who stayed with him in that classroom until they graduated.

"You basically stayed with the same

kids for five years and they were like family to me," said Rodriguex. During the school's two-hour lunches, Rodriguex remembers going to eat together and hanging out with his friends. When they would come back to school, though, the students would work hard and try to enjoy as much of school as possible.

Because he attended high school in Costa Rica, his experiences are quite different from those of other teachers' here.

"One big thing is that all of the students had uniforms and [there were] strict rules about them," he said. "It sounds weird now but all the students were so proud to be in them."

The uniforms allowed students to feel like they represented the school and they were always in their best behavior while wearing the school colors: red, white and blue. And every morning as students filed into the school, teachers and other staff were there to check for the right color of socks, clean fingernails and dirt free ears.

After entering the school, the students began singing the national anthem as the school's flag and the Costa Rican flag went up the flagpole. All of the students would be gathered in the quad area and after this morning routine, they would be dismissed off to class.

"And now you wouldn't want to be late to school," said Rodriguex. "The gates locked at seven o'clock sharp and if you were late, the principal dealt with you."

**ALL ABOUT RODRIGUEX**

**High school:** Liceo de San Jose High School

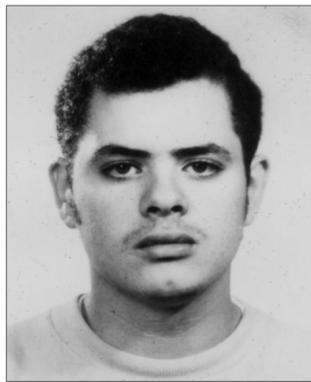
**Location:** San Jose, Costa Rica

**Favorite subject:** biology

**Length of lunch period:** 2 hours

**Technology of his time:** most recent edition of the encyclopedia

**Motive for not being late:** the gates locked at seven o'clock sharp



Courtesy of Arnaldo Rodriguex

**Arnaldo Rodriguex will never forget marching in the honor guard in Costa Rica.**

Rodriguex remembers another aspect of high school—marching. Liceo de San Jose High School made sure all the students participated in this event. They usually practiced on Saturdays, preparing for independence day parade and other national holidays.

"I was in the honor guard, the higher level of the marchers," he said. "I really enjoyed that. I'll never forget walking in different patterns and practicing with my friends."

"The students had pride in their room and always tried to keep it clean for the teachers," he said. "We left nice things for them sometimes, like flowers."

His favorite subject was biology.

While in college, Rodriguex studied Industrial Chemistry, following his father's wishes. Because he needed a minor, he decided to take a Spanish course. Captivated by the professor's teaching style, Rodriguex discovered his own passion for teaching.

"I enjoyed my professor's teaching style of transferring the culture to others through language," he said.

Having learned so much and had so much fun set him up for his eventual career.

"High school was an amazing experience for me and I don't remember a time [when] I was unhappy," he said. "I loved everything." ♦

**TOGATALKS**

**Do you still keep in touch with high school friends?**

Yes, some of them are still my closest friends.



English teacher Jason Friend

I made some very good friends in high school. I've been to every reunion.



science teacher Kirk Davis

Yes, I do keep in touch with three or four of my close high school friends.



media arts teacher Tony Palma

**Rector had such a great SHS experience, he returned**

by Brandon Yang

Less than 10 years ago, English teacher Erick Rector had a much different role here than he does today. He was one of the students participating in teachers' lessons and doing homework. As both a student and a teacher, Rector was recognized as an amusing, funny person, but he was not the popular person he is today among students. In fact, he said he was the opposite.

"I would definitely be in the losers' group," said Rector. "I was kind of active in sports, because of cross-country, I tried to take an academic course load, but I was never super popular, though I always had my close friends."

Rector and his friends participated in school activities and worked on homework together, much like many students here today.

"We were really, really loyal, close friends," said Rector. "We did a lot of schoolwork together, ran cross country and track together."

Rector was also a member of the speech and debate team, which inspired him to become its current head coach. However, of all the extracurriculars he participated in, cross-country was what he enjoyed most.

"Cross-country was a way for me to be active, gave me a lot of school spirit and let me be part of the team and represent the school," said Rector. "The coach at the time, Marshall Clark, was also a phenomenal coach."

In academics, Rector liked a lot of the classes he took, including calculus, poetry, and AP US history. Science, however, was his favorite subject.

"I really liked taking biology and AP bio. I really like science," said Rector. "My dad gave me good advice, to take a fun class every quarter that would help complete graduation requirements," said Rector. "I really liked the English classes, and when I was working a financial company while being a sub teacher, I hated the job at the company and loved being a teacher."

Rector also attributes his wide range of academic interests to both the material

**"He was definitely not shy and was a very goofy guy. I guess he hasn't changed very much, has he?"**

—history teacher Kim Anzalone

**ALL ABOUT RECTOR**

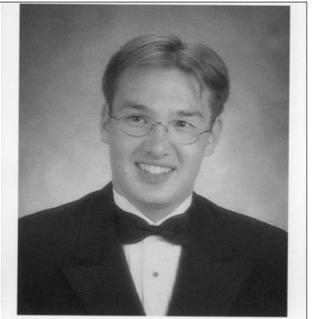
**High school:** Saratoga High School

**Favorite subject:** biology

**Most enjoyed activity:** cross country

**Years since graduation:** nine

**Biggest regret:** not participating in more activities than he already did



Erick Miles Rector

*My strength lies in my tenacity.*

Courtesy of the Tallisman

taught and the teachers teaching it. Teachers like history teacher Kim Anzalone, science teacher Bob Kucer and English teacher Kerry Mohnike made learning exciting, said Rector. Several teachers who still teach at SHS, including Anzalone, still remember what Rector was like when he sat in her class.

"Mr. Rector was the class clown in APUSH. He loved all of our role simulations and jumped right in with every discussion or debate," said Anzalone. "He was definitely not shy and was a very goofy guy. I guess he hasn't changed very much, has he?"

Rector said he thoroughly enjoyed his high school life, since he could participate in several different activities and learn a

A former member of the speech and debate team, Erick Rector is now its head coach.

variety of subjects. There is one thing he wishes he could have done differently.

"If I could become a high school student again, I would try to participate in more extracurricular activities," said Rector. "There's so much stuff you can do on campus. I would like to try a little bit more, like be in a play or [get involved in] music, or maybe even do a math competition." ♦

**Torrens: the 'Popular Kid'**

by Parul Singh

It was the first day of school at Petaluma High School in 1987. All the students were wearing the stylish outfits they had carefully picked the night before—everyone, that is, except a tall senior boy who was wearing a cow costume.

The oddly dressed senior boy was history teacher Matt Torrens, who wore the cow costume as part of his campaign for senior class president. His farm animal get-up succeeded in attracting attention from the students body since shortly after he was elected to the office.

Torrens loved his time at Petaluma High School in Sonoma County. He was smart, excelled in sports and was involved in clubs and student government. The question was not what he did do, but rather what he didn't.

Known by teachers as a "good kid," Torrens received good grades in high school and frequently participated in class, raising his hand and asking questions. With his classmates, Torrens held a variety of different nicknames including "Alfalfa" and "Freckles."

"They called me 'Alfalfa' because I had that stringy hair and freckles which made me look kinda like alfalfa sprouts," said Torrens.

Torrens believes that many of his history teachers influenced him to be what he is today through the activities they did in class.

"I always loved history; now I do the same things in class as my history teachers did when I was a student," said Torrens.

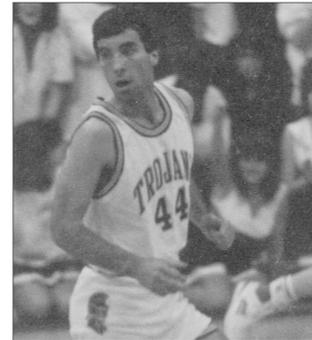
Torrens' teachers made a lot of noise to keep the students interested and they brought veterans in to speak with the students.

Torrens also enjoyed participating in clubs like Interact and German club. In fact, he even became president of the German Club.

In addition to his many activities and commitments, Torrens was the captain of both the football and basketball teams.

He recalls how his team scored touchdowns on three consecutive plays—an almost unheard of feat.

Torrens also said he and his friends



Courtesy of Matt Torrens

**Matt Torrens was the captain of both the basketball team and the football team.**

**ALL ABOUT TORRENS**

**High school:** Petaluma High School

**Location:** Sonoma County

**Favorite subject:** history

**First-day-of-school outfit senior year:** a cow costume

**Reason:** campaigning for senior class president

**Nicknames:** "Alfalfa" and "Freckles"

used to go to the school's volleyball games, which had lower attendance rates, to cheer on the players.

As someone who did well in school, Torrens had many career choices. Even so, he was sure early on of what he wanted to do.

"I knew all along that I was going to be a history teacher, all along," said Torrens. ♦

**'Science nerd' also sang**

by Mac Hyde

"Don't laugh when you see the pictures of me and my big hair," cautioned science teacher Lisa Cochrum.

Thus began a trip down memory lane to Palo Alto High in Palo Alto, Calif., circa 1988. The high school that Cochrum attended was very similar to high schools today. However, academics in the 1980s were not as emphasized. Still, Cochrum took every opportunity to study science, her biggest interest and current career.

"I was a big science nerd, and took every science class they offered," said Cochrum, "but not an AP class. I never, ever took an AP class."

Although she has gone through a few physical changes since high school, like a more tamed hairstyle and smaller glasses, Cochrum has maintained her vibrant personality and her well-known sense of humor.

"According to my friends, they remember me being funny," said Cochrum. "I couldn't have told I was funny. I was never popular, ever!"

Another aspect of Cochrum's high school that differs from today is the more dominant authoritative power of upperclassmen.

"On campus there was [a] wall that you got to sit on if you were a big fancy senior," said Cochrum. "I would actually go completely around the other side of campus to avoid that wall because I was afraid of the jocks, even as a senior."

Cochrum described her high school self as a "choir nerd." She was in the school choir and was accepted into the Madrigals group as a senior.

"We dressed up in 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century clothing, and we sang songs from the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries," said Cochrum, referring to Madrigals. "Around Christmas season we would have a high tea, and we would sing Renaissance Christmas Music. Choir made high school for me."

Outside of high school, Cochrum spent a lot of time with her youth



Courtesy of Lisa Cochrum

**Studying science and singing in her school choir were two of Cochrum's passions.**

**ALL ABOUT COCHRUM**

**High school:** Palo Alto High School

**Favorite subject:** science

**Senior perk:** sitting on a wall

**Self-proclaimed titles:** "science nerd" and "choir nerd"

group at church. During the winter she became a champion Broom Hockey player. On one such winter her friends dared her to go ice blocking, sledding with a block of ice, on the Saratoga Country Club's lawn.

"I insisted that they take me right home because I said that someday I was going to be a teacher. And if I did this I would be arrested, and you can't become a teacher with something on your record," recalled Cochrum.

So while the Cochrum today may be louder today than she was as a student, she is much the same person as she was in high school. Her classroom is by the choir room, she still cracks jokes, and she still enjoys science. ♦

# Twins battle for channel changer

**“We are forced to share things like any other siblings.”**  
Christine Bancroft

I have a twin. This does not mean that we love the same things, do everything together and wear the same clothes. We are not identical. This is mostly because my twin is a boy.

We hardly refer to ourselves as twins. We are brother and sister and we are forced to share things like any other siblings. For example, a night at our house often runs like this:

Michael is a freshman. He finishes homework first and walks to the couch to watch television. An hour, or perhaps hours, later I finish. I walk downstairs. My brother is a fan of AMC, the movie network that only plays “Mad Men” and old cowboy movies, as far as I can tell. I walk up to my brother. I take the remote. He protests. I change the channel and ignore him.

Perhaps that makes me the bad twin, but I think it’s a good system, though he might disagree.

Of course, he can’t complain that much. I do not watch “Say Yes to the Dress” or “Gossip Girl” or even “Desperate Housewives.” I prefer the gory crime and fast-paced mystery shows, like “Criminal Minds” and “House.”

**I take the remote. He protests. I change the channel and ignore him.**

When I choose to watch the more upbeat and humorous shows, like “Psych” and “The Office,” he actually seems to like them.

And it’s not like he leaves when my conquest of the remote and the couch has been completed. Michael watches with me, and to his credit, he doesn’t talk much during the show. Forgive me, dear brother, if I’m mistaken but I think I also see the faintest ghost of a smile on your solemn and sullen face when you watch with me, and even the elusive chuckle once in a while.

The rare times that he manages to keep the clicker within his grasp, I just retreat to my room or I watch “The Soup” with him. If it’s a old-time black-and-white cowboy movie and he refuses to let go of the remote control, he knows that I have no choice but to leave him alone for an hour and a half until I begin my battle again.

Of course, when it comes to the master of the remote, we must bend to our mother’s will. If she wants to watch her soap opera, we have to decide between watching her ridiculously far-fetched favorite, “General Hospital” or vacating the premises to entertain ourselves, which leads to Michael going to the computer for Facebook for 15 minutes, until my next conquest, this time, of the computer, begins.

On the off-chance that our mother enters and does not force us to watch “her program,” it will likely be either the new “Flashforward,” which Michael has refused to watch, “Lie to Me,” one that I introduced to her, or “the Amazing Race,” all of which convince Michael to return to the computer or retreat to his room, his last safe-haven in the house that has been invaded by a family of women.

So I must apologize for my bloodless

# His & Hers

Futile fights over the remote are settled as both sexes explore new shows



A bride on the TLC’s “Say Yes to the Dress” beams as she tries on dresses in front of her family.

## Columnist says no to dress show

**“I found myself struggling to stay awake.”**  
Tim Robinson

Forced to watch “Say Yes to the Dress,” a TLC show about choosing a wedding gown, in order to write this article, I gathered around the television with my little sister and mom hoping for the best. The show documents brides in New York City and their experiences at the bridal salon, Kleinfeld.

The first thing I noticed was how annoying the wedding dress consultants were. Seriously, a chihuahua in a hurricane would make a less annoying noise than those consultants. They blab on about how difficult and dramatic it is to help people pick out a dress. If the goal of the show is to portray how ridiculous and useless of a profession being a wedding dress consultant is, mission accomplished. The petty fights between consultants occupy most

of the screen time while I attempt to not pull my hair out.

But even the focus of the show, the dresses, was disappointing. One was wider than a mack truck and made the bride look like a linebacker. Another dress looked like it had less clothing than is needed to get into a Saratoga High dance and still had a hefty \$8,000 price tag.

The highlight of the show occurred when a customer walked away from one of the most annoying consultants, Claudia, in favor of another store. I felt victorious watching the woman sulk and whine about her lost client. This may sound cynical but watch it for yourself and you will understand.

I know the show is a portrayal of this supposed “magical” experience in a woman’s life, but I found myself fighting to stay awake. Next time I think I will stick with SportsCenter and leave the wedding dresses for the opposite sex. ♦

## TOGATALKS

**Who controls the television in your family?**

My brother does and I get annoyed because I want to watch my shows but he hogs it.



sophomore Darisha Jhutti

Usually my dad does. We don’t watch too much TV though, so its not that big of a deal.



junior Rex Sakamoto

## Okay... maybe sports aren't so bad

**“I used to always wonder what guys saw in sports.”**  
Olivia Chock

Usually, when there are football games at school, my friends have to drag me to them. Watching any kind of sports game is extremely unexciting for me, which is why I was surprised to somewhat enjoy watching the San Antonio Spurs vs. Dallas Mavericks NBA Basketball game.

**I was surprised by how excited I was when Dallas won.**

Once I finished my homework, I spent a good amount of time trying to find the ESPN channel because, before this, I never had any reason to find this channel. At first, I was curled up on my couch, wondering what I was thinking when I agreed to do this article. A few minutes into the game, I decided to get into the game and root for the Dallas Mavericks because of their amazing player, Dirk Nowitzki, who didn’t seem to miss a shot.

It was a close game, but Dallas beat San Antonio 97-94, and it was obvious who the star player of the game was. I’m not sure how

many times I saw Nowitzki’s stats during this game, but I was happy I had been cheering for Dallas because Nowitzki would fly across the court making every one of his shots, not to mention the numerous assists that he made.

I was surprised by how excited I was when Dallas won. For the 150 minutes of the game, I got really attached to the team. Every time Dallas made a shot, I started clapping impulsively. I tried to imagine how much more excited I would be if I spent hours and hours watching every single game they play and keeping track of their stats.

Before, I used to always wonder what some of my guy friends saw in sports and why they were so obsessed with memorizing the scores of games. Now that I actually sat down and took the time to watch an entire game, I guess I understand a little bit of why they spend so much of their time watching every single game that their favorite team plays in. But honestly, I’d still rather watch Teddy make a pass at Silver on “90210” than watch Dirk Nowitzki make a pass to his teammates any day. ♦

# THE ARTIST OF THE ISSUE: Zach Smead

Senior Zach Smead is more than your average band member. With knowledge of more than three instruments under his belt, he stands out as one of the most talented musicians in SHS, a feat hard to achieve.

**Q: How long have you been playing?**  
A: I’ve been playing the guitar for five or six years now. I’ve played other instruments, like the piano, for maybe 10, 11 years now.

**Q: Why did you choose to play the guitar?**  
A: Well, actually I just thought it looked really cool so I decided a couple years ago to try it out. My brothers also play the guitar so I was interested in seeing what the fuss was about.

**Q: Why do you like to play the guitar?**  
A: It’s a really good way to relieve stress, and it’s fun. And it helps me to clarify my thoughts and ideas.

**Q: Do you play by yourself or in a band?**  
A: I’m part of a band called Ocula Vora and we get together to play our stuff with each other but otherwise I rely on

myself to get in my daily practice.

**Q: How much do you usually practice?**  
A: Well I practice every day for an hour or two. Like I said, its a nice way to relax so its something I try to get into everyday.

**Q: Has your band played in any shows?**  
A: The band I was previously a part of, the Last Stand, performed at a couple of charity events around the bay.

**Q: What other instruments do you play?**  
A: I play the piano and a little bit of drums too.

**Q: Do you write your own music?**  
A: Yeah, I do. I get inspiration from everything around me, just people I see or things people do.

**Q: Why do you write your own music?**  
A: I write my own music because other people’s music doesn’t satisfy me all the time and I have things that I need to express that I can’t just say in words, so music helps with that.



Senior Zach Smead performs the piano, something he still enjoys after many years.

—by Olivia Chock

## A bit of light reading: Kindle-phobe turns aficionado

**“I couldn’t imagine reading a book using electronics.”**  
Nandini Ruparel

I have always been skeptical of the new e-book fad. As a book lover, I couldn’t imagine reading a book on an electronic device—I had never seen electronics that way.

Recently, though, I had the chance to try one of these devices and, surprisingly, I like it. My parents became annoyed of my tendency to haul tons of books on trips. So they suggested the Kindle.

Of course, I tried to argue my way out of it: They’re too expensive, I said; they’ll destroy my eyesight; or they won’t have all the books I would want to read. But soon I realized that my arguments were growing weaker and weaker. So when my parents surprised me with a Kindle, I decided to give it a fair chance. After having my Kindle for a month

or so, I could see myself become part of a generation of e-readers. I really do like my Kindle. It’s sleek, shiny, user-friendly and simulates the fun of reading. There are some definite pros and cons to having my Kindle.

**1. Pro:** It has cheap(er) books. Apart from being addicted to books in general, I’m also a book-shopaholic. However, books are extremely expensive, and a new book costs anywhere from \$20-25. These new books are nearly impossible to find at the library (145 requests? You’re kidding, right?), so I end up spending lots of money on my books. The Kindle, however, has these same books for \$9.99. Call me stingy, but I’m thinking a 50 percent or more discount adds to their value.

**2. Pro:** It downloads your books. The Kindle has a feature called Whispernet that allows users to search the Amazon Kindle website for books and buy them directly from the device. Now, not only do I not have to waste time

and energy going to the book store, but I don’t even have to go to my computer to obtain the books that I want. It’s almost like an iPod Touch for books.

**3. Pro:** It has a built-in dictionary. Ever read a book and didn’t understand a word you were reading? With the Kindle’s handy Oxford American dictionary, all you have to do is click on the word and it will define it for you.

**4. Con:** You can’t “borrow” books. Unfortunately, there’s no Amazon Kindle library. I have to spend money to get books on the Kindle. Without a library, it almost seems like while buying all of those cheap books, I’ll be spending all of the money I’d normally spend on expensive books at the bookstore by buying books that I could get for free at the library.

**5. Con:** The Kindle is delicate. The Kindle is a small device and is extremely thin. These features also make it very prone to accidents. If I drop my Kindle accidentally, I may

**After having my Kindle for a month, I could see myself become part of a generation of e-readers.**

### THE BIG IDEA

#### Amazon’s Kindle

**COST:** \$259 for Kindle 2; \$489 for Kindle DX  
**STORAGE CAPACITY:** 1,500 non-illustrated books.  
**SIMILAR PRODUCTS:** Barnes & Nobles Nook, Sony Reader, iRex iLiad, Jinke Hanlin e-Reader,

just not have a Kindle anymore. The Kindle I have, which is the smaller 6-inch version, is \$259 on the Amazon website, while the larger version (the Kindle DX) is \$489. Buying a Kindle case is a good option, but of course those are just extra expenses on top of a book light (the Kindle does not have a backlight), books and the Kindle itself.

**6. Con:** The Kindle only comes in one color. Maybe a pink Kindle would be gaudy, but white is certainly not a good color for a device that is generally always used by grimy, dirty

### WEBSPOTLIGHT

#### Eric and Will’s Infinite Playlist

Eric and Will’s Infinite Playlist, a Facebook group started by sophomore Eric Wang and junior Will Tang with over 150 members, gives students the opportunity to share music through wall posts and discussion boards. Although still lacking the abundance of song suggestions that the group hopes for one day, this concept of an online playlist is useful any time students are in need for something new to listen to.

“You open yourself to different types of music that other people listen to,” said junior Kaitna Shankar.

On the discussion board, topics range from nostalgic music to music listeners can nod off to. By categorizing different songs, the site feels more organized and each response to a post of a song is accompanied by a link to YouTube, which makes previewing a song faster than searching for it online. People can

easily discover interesting new music through the site.

Another positive aspect of the group is that it discusses every genre of music. Students with different musical tastes and styles all come together to make a list of songs that others would not have otherwise taken interest in. For example, a student who likes country music would not regularly look at the popular rap songs. This group allows its members to broaden their musical horizons.

The inspiration for the group was simple—both Tang and Wang were in search of new music to listen to.

“We started it because of a simple exchange of ‘dude I need more music,’ ‘Me too,’” said Tang. “We just thought, instead of wasting all the time trying to find a few good songs, why don’t we just have other people do it for us.” ♦

—by Apeksha Sharma & Kyumin Shim

### TOPTEN

#### SONGS FROM ERIC AND WILL’S PLAYLIST

- 10** “Starlight”- Muse; the most epic song ever, the piano rift is fantastic and the vocals are impossible.
- 9** “Stolen”- Dashboard Confessional; it’s really sentimental and it’s a good song to listen to when I sleep.
- 8** “Very Busy People”- The Limousines; it was my theme song for the summer of 2009, I just like it.
- 7** “Fill Me In”- Craig David; probably one of the only R&B song on the play list and it has a really cool background.
- 6** “Clocks”- Coldplay; I like piano rifts and I also like falsetto.
- 5** “Walking Away”- Lifehouse; another really sad song and it has an original tune.
- 4** “Is it any wonder?”- Keane; about the war in Iraq but I don’t think about that when I listen to it, it’s really creative.
- 3** “Sex on fire”- Kings of Leon; it’s really good and I like the background music a lot.
- 2** “I Need Some Sleep” - Eels; it’s also a sleeping song, its very relaxing.
- 1** “Sometime around midnight”- Airborne Toxic Event; it’s really emotional.

—by Apeksha Sharma

# The Ancient Art of Feng Shui



Explore the meaning of an ancient Chinese art to the Saratoga community

## Junior feels cultural bond with mom

by Apeksha Sharma

When most people hear the term Feng Shui, their thoughts are immediately drawn to rooms being rearranged by experts of the practice. However, Feng Shui is much more than that: It is a culture.

This tradition has impacted the lifestyle of junior Nina Mohanty as she recalls her first interaction with the art.

"My mom is Chinese, and she's into feng shui, so we're definitely into that in our household," said Mohanty. "We even had a professional 'feng shui' come and arrange our furniture when we first bought our house as well as when we got a lot of new furniture."

Mohanty has also "feng shuied" her room to allow the flow of peace within her living space.

"My room is set in a way that 'chi' can flow easily throughout the room," said Mohanty. "My desk is by my biggest window

so as to promote chi for thinking." Despite her experiences, Mohanty is not a true believer in the concept.

"I am not so 'gung ho' about it. I definitely think there should be a 'flow' in a room but that could just be a combination

**"My room is set in a way that chi can flow easily throughout the room."**

—Junior Nina Mohanty

of my OCD-ness and my love of interior design," said Mohanty.

She also does not follow the proper technique of a feng shui with regard to her schedule, which her mom credits as the reason for her aches.

"I don't really arrange my activities in a certain way," said Mohanty. "To be honest, my schedule is probably the farthest

opposite of feng shui. My mom says I hurt myself because my body was complaining and my chi was not positive."

Mohanty credits her Chinese heritage for her raising in this technique.

"Feng Shui is more of a culture thing as well. If I was not Asian, I probably wouldn't believe in it much either!" said Mohanty.

Still, her household goes as far as to rearrange furniture and possessions.

"This [rearranging] might be because my dad is Indian and so it's not such a predominant aspect of my life," said Mohanty. "But I know many Chinese families that feng shui their entire life."

Despite this, Mohanty still believes in the deeper meaning of the art.

"I think there has to be [a deeper meaning]. Otherwise, so many people wouldn't do it," said Mohanty.

Mohanty strives to gain the positive chi, which will create the peaceful atmosphere in her daily activities. ♦

## Glossary of Terms

**Feng Shui:** an ancient Chinese system of aesthetics believed to use the laws of both Heaven (astronomy) and Earth (geography) to help one improve life by receiving positive chi and energy

**Chi (Qi):** The circulating life energy that in the ancient Chinese philosophy is thought to be inherently present and flowing in all types of items and is needed in order to obtain proper Feng Shui

**Qi Gong:** an internal Chinese meditative practice that often uses slow movements and breathing methods in order to promote the circulation of qi within the human body, and enhance a practitioner's overall health.

-Wikipedia

## Expert evaluates school for proper Feng Shui

by Christine Tseng and Kim Tsai

When students do poorly in school or just feel less energetic than normal, they usually attribute it to homework, family or outside activities. However, these problems might not always be the cause. In fact, it could just be a case of bad Feng Shui.

Feng Shui, an ancient Chinese practice, is designed to improve one's life by receiving positive energy. It directly translates to "wind-water" in Chinese and can be used to improve health, luck and finances.

"Feng Shui is just feeling, energy," said Wilson Sun, a Feng Shui professional from Sunnyvale. "If something is very beautiful, it will have energy there."

Sun, a native of China, started practicing Feng Shui 23 years ago when his uncle taught him a few tricks of the trade.

Sun said his uncle is well known as a practitioner of Feng Shui in China and is a master of arts such as Qi Gong.

"He taught me Feng Shui, Chinese astrology, Qi Gong, and Kung Fu. I really liked Kung Fu and Chinese medicine [when I was a child]," Sun said.

Sun agreed to come to Saratoga High and evaluate the Feng Shui of the campus. First, he gave some background information about Feng Shui.

### Feng Shui in a nutshell

For a school, promoting learning is the most important consideration, and to do this, good Feng Shui in the landscape is needed.

"You must check your roads and environment," said Sun. "Check your trees, grass, and plants. The grass is just like people's hair. If your health is strong, the hair is good. If [plants] are very green and very fresh, the Feng Shui is good. Also, in [Saratoga High], there are some mountains holding your school, which is good Feng Shui."

Mountains, according to Sun, shouldn't be yellow, because just like green plants provide positive energy, dead plant life gives off bad energy. The mountains "hold" the school and make sure only "very few winds" can get inside.

Color matching is also vitally important as different colors serve to represent the different elements in Feng Shui matching up with wood, fire, water, earth, and metal.

"If you want to research something, a green or blue color is good. Green with blue is good for memory," said Sun. "A lighter green color is good for studying."

For music, Sun said, red would be a more compatible color. Red helps to generate ideas and feeling.

In general, he liked what the school had done but said it could improve.

### Areas to improve on

Based on these rules for good feng shui, Sun suggested some possible changes to the campus.

"This school has few flowers," said Sun. "If [Saratoga High] got some flowers, it would give a happy feeling. [The school] should plant more flowers. When [stu-



Clockwise from top: The mountains surrounding the school display proper Feng Shui by "holding" it in place. The lack of flowers in the school suggests a lack of student happiness. Tall trees provide an effective Feng Shui environment for student learning.

dents] see flowers, they will feel happy, so they will like to study."

### Positives

Overall, Sun said the school has good Feng Shui for learning. Sun said, "In Feng Shui, if you get high trees and is very straight, it's good for your learning."

Saratoga, Sun said, has many tall trees and as a result, has a good learning environment.

Sun said the school had good water movement which is attributed to movement and flow. In the front of the school,

the busy roads bring people towards the school while in the back, the music buildings balance out the "water element."

"For southeast area, there is music here. That is very good because music, in Feng Shui, is water," Sun said.

Sun feels that Feng Shui can measure the balance between energy and feeling.

"Feng Shui is just energy," said Sun. "Energy cannot be measured, but Feng Shui is a device to measure the feeling. Maybe later, there will be some device that can measure it. Now there is no device, but you can feel it." ♦

## ATHLETE OF THE ISSUE

# Freshman fills up hole on wrestling team

by Tim Rollinson

Last year Saratoga High had its best finish at the wrestling state meet in history. But the team was forced to bid farewell to two key seniors, Jasper Loren and Nathan Nguyen, who are now attending Lindenwood University and Westpoint Academy, respectively.

However, some new faces on the wrestling mat are looking to fill the huge holes left by the two former CCS champs and among them is freshman Henry Wei.

Wei leads a strong freshman class entering the 2009-2010 seasons and is likely to earn a spot on the varsity roster. He currently weighs in at 160 pounds but plans to wrestle in the 154-weight class this season. He has been wrestling for the past four years and has become a standout wrestler in that time.

He attributes his success to "dedi-

cation and trying my best." He also said going against more experienced wrestlers has helped him develop his technique.

"Henry is already an accomplished wrestler coming into high school," said assistant coach Kirk Abe. "But he also has great dedication and work ethic. He has a very bright future."

Wei made an immediate impact on the team and has enjoyed the opportunity to learn from some of the older wrestlers on the team.

"The upperclassmen are a huge help," said Wei. "They have a lot of experience and they help me on my technique and give me tips on how I should wrestle."

Older wrestlers on the team are also enjoying the addition of Wei.

"Usually it is the older wrestlers that want to push and keep going, but Henry is highly motivated and always wants

to keep working," said senior wrestler Chris Hui.

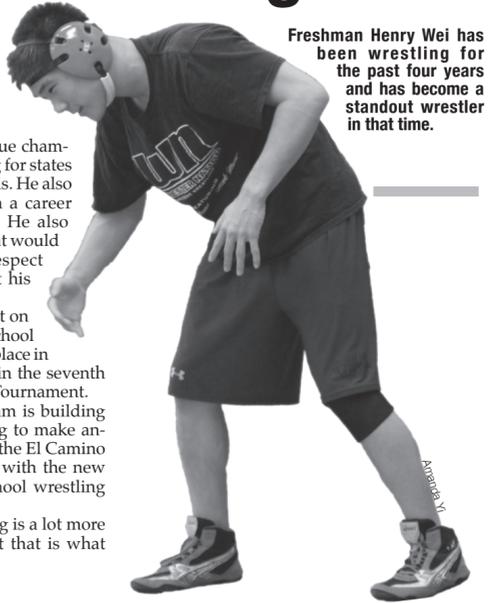
Wei looks forward to a promising career at Saratoga High as well.

He lists winning league championships and qualifying for states as some of his future goals. He also expressed an interest in a career beyond Saratoga High. He also has one personal goal that would most likely win him respect from the team: "to beat his coach."

In his first tournament on Dec. 5 at Overfelt High School in San Jose, Wei got first place in the 160-pound division in the seventh annual Taz Frosh-Soph Tournament.

For now, with the team is building a new roster and looking to make another strong showing in the El Camino Division, Wei is excited with the new challenges that high school wrestling presents.

"High school wrestling is a lot more difficult," said Wei. "But that is what makes it so fun." ♦

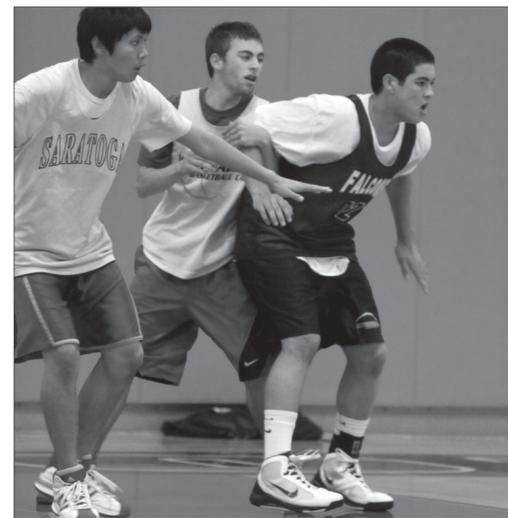


Freshman Henry Wei has been wrestling for the past four years and has become a standout wrestler in that time.

## BOYS' BASKETBALL

# Underclassman duo take on varsity challenges

by David Eng and Jenny Zhang



From top to bottom: Freshman Kyle Dozier swiftly dribbles past junior Chris Guengerich to the hoop. Freshman Stevie Berman boxes out juniors Patrick Soung and Shai Segal at practice on Dec. 6.

It's not every year that a freshman gets to play on a varsity team. This year there are two freshmen on the boys' basketball team: forwards Stevie Berman and Kyle Dozier. Neither expected to play at the top level, but both ended up donning varsity jerseys.

"I got moved up in the summer [league], but I didn't think I would make it," said the 6'1" Berman, who has been playing basketball since third grade.

Coach Trevor Naas decided to include Berman and Dozier on the varsity team after seeing the way that they played over the summer and during tryouts.

"They play hard, they're coachable and they're both physically ready to play at the varsity level," said Naas.

Both freshmen have strengths that will benefit the team. A strong player in the post, Berman uses his body well and is a great rebounder, said Naas. With great basketball instincts, Dozier moves well without the ball and is a good passer and shooter, he said.

Now that they have both survived the cuts, Berman and Dozier are still finding ways to become adjusted and to playing with all of the older players on the team.

"It's kind of intimidating playing with upperclassmen, but it's still fun and I enjoy it," said Berman.

Naas understands the difficulty in playing varsity so young.

"Playing varsity basketball as a freshman is a tough thing to do, but they're here for a reason. I expect them both to be big contributors on our team this year," said Naas.

Such an age difference in any sport would be difficult to get adjusted to, but Dozier said that the upperclassmen on the team have been very helpful.

"[Senior] Andy Johnson gives me words of encouragement and tells me if what I'm doing is right or wrong," Dozier said.

Berman said the adjustment to playing with his older teammates on varsity was made slightly easier because he already knew several of the seniors through his older brother, Andy, who attended Saratoga High.

Johnson said he's enjoyed playing with the freshmen.

"I've known both of them for a long time, so it's fun teaching them how to play. I don't think anyone thinks of them as a bad thing," said Johnson.

As the freshman duo becomes acclimated to their new junior and senior teammates, they also must prepare for the tough competition they will face.

"It's a lot faster. Everybody's a lot bigger and it's not as easy," said Dozier, comparing varsity to eighth grade basketball.

Berman added, "It's hard playing against bigger, faster and more athletic people than me."

Making the varsity team, however, does not come without hard work. After all, it is usually a daunting task by itself to make the varsity boys basketball team as an upperclassman, let alone as a freshman.

While Berman trains outside of school with his Asian League team, the Ninjas, Dozier practices basketball twice per week on his own to be more valuable to the team.

Being one of the younger members on the team, Dozier also emphasized his motivation on and off the basketball court.

"I try to be the best that I can be so that I don't hurt the team or myself," he said. ♦

## THE SCORES

### Boys' Basketball

Coach: Trevor Naas  
Captains: Daniel Chou and Andy Johnson  
League: El Camino  
Record: 1-4-0

12/1: Saratoga 54, Prospect 50

12/3: Westmont 54, Saratoga 34

12/4: Leland 48, Saratoga 34

12/9: Leland 49, Saratoga 55

12/10: Willow Glen 49, Saratoga 35

GIRLS' SOCCER



Amanda Yi



Amanda Yi



Amanda Yi

Clockwise from top: Freshman Amanda Schwartz breaks away on Dec. 8 vs Los Gatos; sophomore Antara Rao fights for position; senior Jordan Leonard blows past a defender.

# Learn now, win later

by Ren Norris  
and Olivia Chock

Preseason is usually a time for teams to gear up for regular league season by starting off against less competitive opponents. However, the girls' soccer team this preseason faced daunting teams from the upper division right off the bat.

Early games against strong lineups from Presentation, Los Gatos and Los Altos in the preseason are serving as a way to prepare the girls for playing weaker teams in the lower El Camino Division season that begins Jan. 7.

"Playing tougher teams will get all the girls who don't play competitive soccer year-round to get more acclimated to the speed of game we're going to have to play in the season," said senior co-captain Sarah Guy.

The team's chief goal is to win the El Camino Division, which would snag them a spot in CCS. Head coach Kim Anzalone believes that playing the higher league teams is a good test because she anticipates competing against these teams again if the Falcons do earn a CCS bid.

"Playing against these tougher teams in preseason will make our regular season seem like a cake walk," said Anzalone. "It helps us to play at a higher level and get physical with these teams which helps us improve before regular season."

Not surprisingly, the team's first few preseason games were anything but a cake walk, as the Falcons lost a hard-fought

game against powerhouse Los Gatos 4-0 on Dec. 8 after suffering a 1-0 loss to Westmont on Dec. 7.

The team also struggled in the Dec. 1 and 3 Palo Alto tournament games against upper-division teams Los Altos and Santa Teresa.

They lost 2-0 against Los Altos, and 2-1 against Santa Teresa, with the lone goal scored by junior forward McKenzie Crase off a corner kick by Guy.

"This game was an overall disappointment. At the beginning [of the game against Santa Teresa], we were up 1-0 but it seems like we gave up at the end," said assistant coach Brandon Chow. "We should have kept the pressure on them. We had a lot of opportunities, we just need to capitalize on them."

The team lost 5-0 to one of the toughest teams around in CCS, Presentation, during the preseason Palo Alto tournament on Nov. 30.

"Even though the score was 5-0, there were a number of bad calls and the score didn't reflect how well we played; we really came out strong, especially in the first half," said Anzalone.

The girls are happy to take their lumps in preseason if it pays off later on.

"Our past couple of games have been learning experiences for us, since we're getting used to how everyone plays and trying out people in new positions," said senior co-captain Jordan Leonard. "Now we're starting to solidify each person in what position they're best at." ♦

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

# Gragnola shatters school record with 42 points vs. Pioneer

by Apeksha Sharma

The Pioneer defense wasn't the only thing that got shattered during Saratoga's 59-54 win against the Mustangs on Dec. 8. In addition, senior forward Nicole Gragnola broke the school record for most points in a girls' game putting up 42 points along with 15 rebounds, three steals and an assist.

"I just run the court," said Gragnola. "We get a rebound and I try to just sprint down the court so that our wings can pass it up and beat the other team's defense. We focus a lot in practice on finishing layoffs and sometimes it's a problem, but we've been focusing a lot on post moves, layoffs and getting points."

Gragnola started playing basketball when she was in fifth grade and has continued ever since then.

"I started doing [National Junior Basketball] in fifth grade, but it wasn't serious or anything, and then I played all three years at Redwood and since then I've been here," said Gragnola.

In addition, Gragnola credits her father, who helps her improve her game and gives her tips to use in games, as the main reason behind her success.

"While we're watching TV and a commercial comes up, my dad will usually say, 'Stand up, I'll show you a move that you should do,'" said Gragnola. "On weekends he makes me go outside with him to shoot around and shows me stuff he's noticed in games I can work on."

Despite her strong offensive performance, coach Mike Davey said Gragnola's defense is her greatest strength.

"Last year she was our defensive stopper,

we would find the best player on the other team and put [Gragnola] on her because she is such a tremendous defender, but this year her offense has blossomed too," said Davey.

Despite her stellar performance during the game against Pioneer, Gragnola believes that pulling off a repeat performance may be difficult.

"Since 42 points is a lot, I don't think I can ever beat that again," said Gragnola. "It's not all about numbers, we just want to play the best so we can keep the team moving and be successful."

Davey also believes that Gragnola has the qualities to lead the team.

"We have nine seniors so we have a lot of different people to look to for leadership," said Davey. "She's still our best defender and right now she's our best offensive player so she's certainly leading the pack right now so to speak."

Gragnola's leadership and strong offensive play have led to a strong start this season.

The team managed to bring home a second place trophy during the team's first tournament at Fremont High School on Dec. 2, beating rivals Leland 52-38 and Leigh High School 55-42 but losing to Mercy High Schools 69-40 in the finals.

"It was a good way to start of the season [getting rid of] first game nerves and getting us more confidence going into our next games," said Gragnola.

Gragnola anchored the offense with 22 points in the game against Leigh with senior Anna Schroeder adding eight assists. In the Leland game, Gragnola had 19 points and senior Baylee Yates added 12 points. However, Davey still believes



Amanda Yi

Senior forward Nicole Gragnola dribbles around teammate Arya Parhar on Dec. 10

there is room for improvement for the tougher opponents.

"We did not play our best against Mercy and they were an excellent team

which resulted in our lopsided loss," said Davey.

The Falcons' next game will be on Dec. 19 at Prospect High School. ♦

## ■ Scores

### Girls' Basketball

**Dec. 8 vs Pioneer:** 59-54  
**Game Details:** Gragnola scored a school record 42 in the huge win.

**Dec. 2 vs Leland:** 52-38  
**Game Details:** Gragnola and Yates scored a total of 30 points.

**Dec. 2 vs Leigh:** 55-42  
**Dec. 2 vs Mercy:** Gragnola scored 22 points and Schroeder had 8 assists.

BOYS' SOCCER

# Nine sophomores look to lead team to victory

by Roy Bisht

After securing a 5-5-2 record and a seventh place finish in the El Camino league last year, the sophomore-heavy team and a new coach are looking to make improvements and maybe even capture a league title. In order to combat a lack of upperclassmen this year, new coach Adam Clarke resorted to pulling up many of the sophomores who tried with the juniors and seniors at the varsity level.

"The sophomores really work well with the rest of the team," said senior goalie Kevin Benzing. "They compete as well as any other team in the league."

Bringing together a team made up of mostly young sophomores with only five seniors— forwards Billy Minor and Dale Everett, midfielder Sean Ashe, defender Sawan Shah and goalie Benzing—can be difficult.

However, Clarke has brought the team together "in such a short time," said sophomore midfielder Rajiv Ramakabir.

"[Clarke] really understands us well and gets along well with everyone," said Ramakabir. "He's very flexible yet his main goal is improvement."

The sophomores on the team include defenders Jonathon Junqua, Manish Raghavan, midfielders Nabil Arbouz, Max Darling and Stanton Ho, Ramakabir and Manuel Stimmer, goalie Paras Unadkat and forward Troy Doles. The sophomores

have adjusted to the older competition and are ready to compete.

"We have come pretty far since the first practice and we have a lot of confidence with the players and talent that we bring to the field," said Ramakabir.

A few of the sophomores have also taken on leadership roles on the team, such as Raghavan, a returning varsity player who is one of the few captains on the team.

"[Raghavan's] a very good team leader," said Shah. "Even as a sophomore, he doesn't just tell us advice, he also shows it to us when he's playing in a game situation."

Clarke's coaching abilities and his youthful team were challenged Dec. 1 against Los Gatos. The Falcons played a strong defensive game, allowing in only two Wildcat goals. Ashe launched a penalty kick in for a goal in

hopes of sparking a late game comeback, but the team could not capitalize, eventually falling to the Wildcats 2-1.

When the league season begins in early January, the players think they will have a good shot at being competitive, even against bigger and stronger teams of the El Camino Division.

"We already feel a lot more productive as a team, and this season seems like it is going to be a lot more optimistic and successful than last year," said Junqua. "We are all really looking forward to the rest of our games." ♦



Amanda Yi

Sophomore midfielder Rajiv Ramakabir outruns his defender during a JV game last year. "[Clarke] really understands us well and gets along with everyone," said Ramakabir.

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The Skinny

What's Hot Online  
saratogafalcon.org

- **News:** Green Tea Party generates ideas to makes schools more environmentally friendly by Emily Williams

- **Opinion:** Anniversary of Berlin Wall's demise inspires conflicting emotions by Uttara Sivaram

- **PC:** Twin easily beats out brother for channel changing power by Christine Bancroft

TOPTEN

EXCUSES FOR BEING TARDY

10 "I remembered after showering that I didn't do my laundry." "All I had was a sock."

9 "My sister used up all the hot water." "So I waited."

8 "My little brother ate my homework." "It was an appetizer before his entree of crayons; he's a freshman"

7 "I tried to get here on time..." "But officers take road rage very seriously."

6 "My left turn signal was out." "So I had to make only right turns to get here."

5 "The CIA abducted me..." "They swore it wasn't racial profiling; only a random security screening."

4 "Family issues." "My dad said I had to go to school."

3 Heidi Klum (and/or Brad Pitt) refused to let me go.

2 "I suffered severe head trauma last night..." "I got hit with a broom for a B+ in AP Bio"

1 "USC app crashed again..." "I kicked the computer and missed the priority deadline, so I dare you to mark me late."

—Ben Clement and Sulmaan Hassan

THECRITIC

Glee: The Music Vol. 2

Sadly, the popular show "Glee" will not be airing until April. "Gleeks" around the world will be at a loss. Fortunately, Volume 2 of the Glee Soundtrack is the perfect way to pass the time.

Listening to the songs will remind people of great scenes like the song "Jump" from the Mattress dance.

For both hardcore Glee fans and those new to this show, this CD will make the best present and these songs will be on repeat in iTunes.

—Kyumin Shim

Saratoga Snapshots



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: **Spreading the holiday joy** Freshman jaya narasimhan and Sasan saadat buy candy cane grams for their friends at the quad steps on dec. 10. **All wrapped up** junior DAVid Mandell and sophomore chelsie steele wrap toilet paper on teacher sarah vorhees during a competition in the winter rally on dec. 11. **Once upon a december** Senior Casey Dahlbeck, Junior James Hadid and Senior Sam Li live it up during winter ball on DEC. 12. **cookie crazy** Freshman shauray agrawal, eric fu and Chris luo enjoy cookies at a holiday cookie decorating event hosted by the link crew on dec. 10

My 'other' older brother

"So who is this impostor who has infiltrated my family?"



Tim Rollinson

With my mom, dad, two older brothers, one younger sister and I, there are already six people in my family, but I'm never surprised to find a seventh sitting at the table several times a week. At family movie nights there is usually an extra chair set up.

I consistently find a old 1965 blue VW bug sitting outside my house, in the same place every time. So who is this impostor who has infiltrated my family? Well, I like to call him my "brown brother"—a reference not only to his Indian heritage but also my own family's very pale skin.

From my brother's friend to family

Senior Kirin Kumar has been my senior brother Kevin's best friend for about four years and over this time he has become like a third brother to me. So why is he any different than any other close friend who hangs around the house a lot? Here are a few reasons.

First of all, he doesn't just hang out with my brother. Sometimes it doesn't even matter if Kevin is home. I recall one instance when Kevin decided to go to the gym while Kirin was over but instead of leaving at the same time, Kirin conversed with my mom for a few minutes.

Afterwards, he and I drove around town for about two hours blasting music in his tiny VW bug. Even when my brother was in China this summer for two weeks, Kirin continued to stop by the house or pick me up for trips to Dairy Queen.

Second, my family loves having him around. If he is over at dinner-time, there is no awkward exchange between him and my mom about whether he is staying. It's just expected. And if my dad walks into my brother's room at 11:30 on a school night and sees Kirin, my dad simply greets him and doesn't wonder why he is at the house so late.

My older brother

The third reason is he acts like he is part of the family. Although he teases me and gives me "noogies" just like any big brother, he is also extremely helpful, often giving me advice on English papers (loving the A on the "Othello" essay).

One day I got a text saying he lost his phone and needed me to call it. I called him immediately to help him out, then I realized in order to send me that text he needed his phone. I got grief for that one from him for weeks. He stands up for my 11-year-old sister Anne when I pick on her. He helps himself to food in the cabinet without my mom even noticing.

Now, it may sound silly saying that he is my brother just because hangs out with the whole family or mooches our food but it's more than that. We can tell Kirin anything that we would tell the rest of the family.

Sometimes Kirin is the first person I go to for advice. The memories and experiences that have come from this relationship have been a joy and a pleasure for all of us. Regardless of how much changes in other aspects of our lives, Kirin has always been there.

Next fall, when the graduated seniors part for college I won't only be losing my blood brother Kevin, I'll be losing my brown brother Kirin as well. ♦

—Roy Bisht and Anoop Galivanche

**buzzworthy**

Multimedia debuts first broadcast

After months of hard work, the multimedia journalism class is scheduled to air its first broadcast today. The broadcast, to be shown in lieu of announcements when teachers click on an e-mail link and show it on their projectors during at the start of fifth period, is the fruit of many hours of interviewing, filming and editing done by the class since September.

"The included video segments mirror the style of other journalism stories, except they're visual," said junior Jenny Zhang, who executive producers along with junior Mikaela Burton.

Delays forced the class to push the first broadcast back several weeks.

"We wanted to have a school-wide broadcast in the first few weeks and every six weeks from there. It didn't work out," Zhang said. Namely, the class had trouble adapting to the new technology.

"We really had trouble deciding how to frame the producing process. The first few weeks were just experimentation to see what worked and what didn't," she said.

Zhang expressed her hope that the class can surmount these starting obstacles and streamline their production to the point that a broadcast can be aired on a "semi-regular" basis. Multimedia journalism itself is a new offering this year. Existing journalism students and new Journalism 1 recruits joined students from the Media Arts program to form the staff last year.

The broadcast today will include video segments on dancing crazes and an examination of Homecoming week.

"I've realized that we have a lot of potential," said Zhang. "I'm really happy with how the segments turned out." ♦