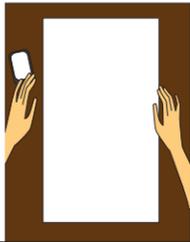


what'sinside >>



IN-DEPTH | 18-19
Cheating escalates in classrooms



LIFE | 12-13
Students and teachers reveal their heroes

THE saratogafalcon



Vo. 51 >> Issue 6 >> Friday, January 14, 2011 >> Saratoga High School >> Saratoga, CA >> saratogafalcon.org

PARCEL TAX

Board to vote on parcel tax

BY Anshu Siripurapu

After receiving data from a new voter poll, the Los-Gatos Saratoga Unified High School District board is expected to vote on a proposed parcel tax measure that would help the district alleviate the budget crisis and preserve programs at its meeting on Feb 1.

The new survey was conducted by EMC Research, a market and opinion research firm based in Oakland. The survey polled 600 district residents of the district by phone between Nov. 29 and Dec. 4. This is the second poll to be conducted about the parcel tax since the one conducted by the Center for Community Opinion last May.

The poll ascertained voter support for two proposed parcel taxes, one at \$49 per parcel and the other at \$89. The survey indicated that the \$49 tax has enough support to meet the two-thirds threshold for passage, but the \$89 tax falls short.

If the \$49 tax passes, it is expected to generate approximately \$800,000 annually in revenue for the district. Currently, the district is facing a deficit of nearly \$1 million for the 2011-2012 school year, the district's total general fund expenditures was \$34.8 million for 2010-2011. Most likely, the board will have to make some spending cuts, but it has not yet decided where such cuts will be.

The survey indicated that a concern over the economy as well as a lack of understanding over the true need for money contributed to the lack of support for a larger parcel tax.

Of those polled, 60 percent expect that in six months, the economic situa-

>> **PARCEL** on pg. 6

>> upcoming events

Tonight SHS Soccer vs. LGHS
Come out and support the boys' soccer team as they face the Wildcats at 4/7:30 on the field.

Jan. 18-21 Finals Week
Don't let finals sneak up on you—study and end the semester well.

Feb. 4 Decades Dance
Groove it up to your classes decade at this fun dance from 8-11.

inside THE falcon

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ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES

Cerbone to be replaced by English teacher

BY Anoop Galivanche

Assistant principal Chris Cerbone has been transferred to the NOVA alternative education program, while current NOVA administrator and English teacher Kevin Mount will soon assume Cerbone's position as assistant principal, principal Jeff Anderson said.

This semester, Mount has been both the principal of NOVA and taught two English 12 classes at Saratoga High. He previously taught AP English Language and Composition here before taking a position at the district office in 2006-2007.

"[Mr. Mount] taught here for years and is familiar with Saratoga High students," Anderson said. "He has a great teaching background, and will be great for the school."

Mount's appointment and Cerbone's transfer were decided at the Jan. 11 school board meeting, which voted 5-0 in favor of the change.

Cerbone's conspicuous absence from campus since the end of winter break has been a cause of confusion for students, parents and faculty alike.

The reason behind the change is a question that has yet to be answered by the administration, who declined comment citing confidentiality concerns.

School board meeting agendas indicate that board members discussed the "discipline/dismissal/release" of a Saratoga High employee before winter break but could only address the issue after school had resumed.

In addition, the Saratoga police blotter in the Saratoga News reported an altercation that occurred on Dec. 13 at

8 a.m. between two Saratoga High employees, in which one party apparently wanted "to prosecute the other." The Sheriff's department also declined comment because the case, which had been marked as "battery," had not been adjudicated yet.

Meanwhile, assistant principals Karen Hyde and Brian Safine, as well as principal Jeff Anderson, have assumed Cerbone's duties until Mount formally replaces him. The assistant principal position that Mount will hold is in charge of student discipline, facilities and athletics, among other duties.

Cerbone gained attention when he first arrived at Saratoga High this fall through his unique background, which included a stint as an undercover narcotics officer for the NYPD and his experience as the owner of two wolves. ♦

M-SET

Building the perfect robot

BY Anoop Galivanche

Following last year's groundbreaking trip to the FIRST robotics competition in Atlanta, the Mechanical Science and Engineering Team (M-SET) has initiated the development of several new projects, including a robot for this year's competition.

"The topic [what the robot will be doing this year] was announced on Jan. 8, but we won't actually compete until mid-March," said M-SET's president, senior Cordell Hollingsworth. "We're waiting until then to start up the development."

The team is poised to repeat last year's successes, having recently received a \$5,000 grant from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to bolster its budget, according to Hollingsworth. "NASA's grant is going to be the first of many exciting developments that are coming our way," Hollingsworth said.

The team, which has nearly doubled in size from last year to around 20 participants, is looking to take part in not only the usual local competition but also one in Seattle. Hollingsworth indicated that the majority of the budget will go toward expanding the team.

On Dec. 10, M-SET signed a letter of commitment with the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) to participate in a multi-school robotics program that would have Saratoga participate in a two-year program involving univer-

sity collaborations and extensive investments in the team. Hollingsworth said the details of the program are still up in the air, but that DARPA hinted that they would be investing "substantial amounts of money" in the team. Saratoga is one of four teams on the West Coast to be engaged by DARPA, with the other three teams being Palo Alto, Lynbrook and Homestead.

"DARPA is a widely recognized college robotics challenge, but it's still not very clear why they are interested in us," Hollingsworth said.

Junior Rod Jafari, who has been on the team for the past two years, said he is excited about the fiscal developments for the team.

"We had some trouble last year raising money that we can avoid this year, which is good because money is really key," he said. "It's an expensive club."

Jafari said the team is also working on an \$18,000 automated podium for the marching band, which they hope to have completed by the next season. Almost all of the funding for the podium was raised by sponsors.

By putting fiscal concerns on the back burner, the team has been focusing on the challenges it plans to take part in this year. Last year, the then-rookie team surmounted organizational obstacles and growing pains to earn a chance to compete in Atlanta. Jafari is optimistic the team can repeat their successes this year.

"We are technically strong and we all love robotics. That makes for a good team," Jafari said. ♦

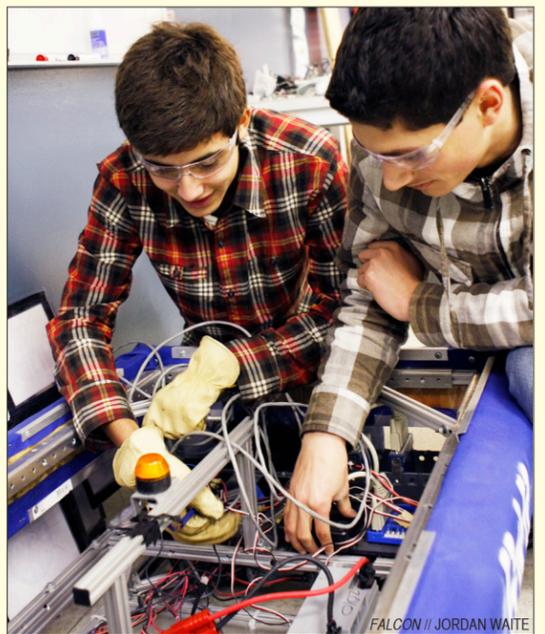
>> THE big idea

M-SET

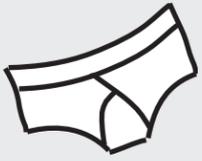
Participants: the number has nearly doubled from last year to around 20 members

Grants: \$5,000 from NASA

What's next: a competition in mid-March



Top: Juniors Rod Jafari and Michael Zuccarino refer back to last year's robot design for inspiration. Bottom: Senior Cordell Hollingsworth steps back to take a good look at the robot.



news >> **briefs**

Ready for break spirit day

"Twas the day before vacation, and all throughout the school, students were dressed in bright red, purple, green and blue.

This year the spirit commission decided to create a "Ready for Break" spirit day in which students were invited to wear comfortable, laid-back clothes to school, such as "onesies," sweatpants and pajamas on Dec 17.

Some students even brought teddy bears and other night time accessories to school.

The spirit commission decided to host this day as a way to lessen the stress from all the pre-break tests students were given.

"We had many requests over the months to have a PJ day so we thought it would be perfect to incorporate it with a holiday theme," head commissioner Shir Nehama said.

Although the spirit day did not count for class points, there was an increased amount of student participating in these spirit days as the race for the class cup is getting more fierce; with the winning class receiving a trophy.

The current class rankings so far are the seniors with 261 points, juniors with 220, sophomores with 105 and freshmen with 53.

—Grishma Athavale

Mock Trial enters first competition

Already on the ground and running after a relaxing winter break, the mock trial team is preparing for their first tournament on Jan. 15 at the San Jose County of Education.

"It's a chance to get a run through of the entire case," senior president Vijay Menon said.

This tournament acts as preparation for the real competition, which will happen during the second week of February. The team will have a chance to improve their delivery and work in a higher pressure environment than in school practices.

Other schools from the Bay Area will take part in the tournament as well.

The trial consists of 16 roles, and the team currently only has 12 people, 10 of whom are upperclassmen.

"It's a little bit tougher for all of us because some people have to double up on roles, but we'll hopefully be prepared by February," Menon said.

The team meets every Tuesday night for practice from 7-9 p.m. in history teacher Jeffrey Scott's room.

—Sabrina Cismas

Students develop close bond with waste

To better realize the amount of waste an individual produces each week, the AP Environmental class got down and dirty, collecting and carrying their own garbage during and after school for a week, starting Jan 4.

"It's pretty gross," senior Simrath Ratra said. "But it's actually eye-opening to see how much we all throw out without even thinking."

As a merciful gesture, APES teacher Kristen Thomson told her students that they didn't have to throw out all their trash; items with traces of food could be disposed in garbage bins, while scratch paper, empty plastic bottles and clean wrappers would make up the majority of the students' collections.

"I'm so relieved that I didn't have to throw my In-n-Out wrappers or plastic utensils in my bag," senior Parth Dholakia said. "My [bag] has already started to smell a bit, even though I've only thrown out chip packets and empty bottles so far."

Students were required to check in with Thomson every day, regardless of whether they had class that day. Thomson checked each bag and stamped their lab sheets. The project culminated in the thorough examination of each student's trash collection, with written reflections on individual wastefulness.

"I'm actually curious as to how much trash all of my classmates will end up with," Ratra said.

—Uttara Sivaram

>> **picturethis**

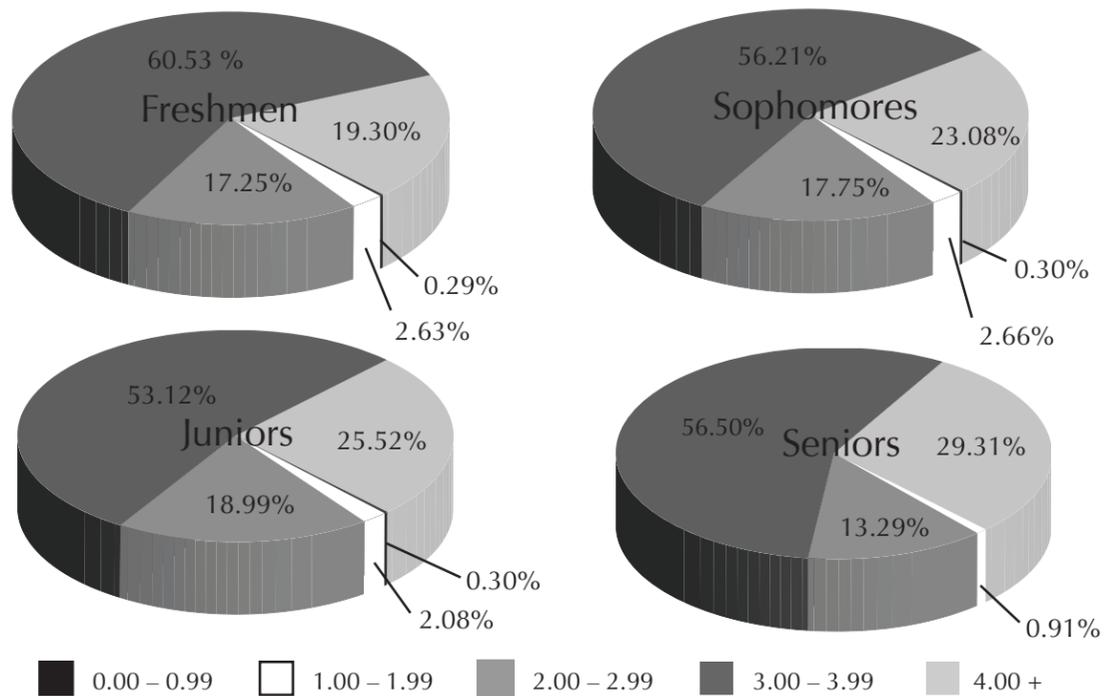


FALCON // GRISHMA ATHAVALE

From left to right: seniors Tim Lycurgus, Kevin Darchuk and Gregory Johnson attended in support of the boys' and girls' JV and varsity basketball teams as they took on Milpitas on Jan. 7.

falconfigures <<

Spring 2010 weighted GPAs for each grade



—Arnav Dugar
Courtesy of registrar Jeanne Jamieson

>> **falconfocus**

Freshman finds passion in diving

BY Giulia **Curcelli**

Two years ago on a sunny March afternoon, the emergency room at Good Samaritan Hospital was the last place Maya Srinivasan thought she would find herself.

Srinivasan had been a level nine gymnast—one of the top 60 gymnasts in the nation—and with the possibility of going to the Olympics only two levels away, her dreams were in sight. But that morning, her hands slipped off the bar.

After falling and landing on the edge of a foam pit where it met the concrete, Srinivasan broke her left ankle and was forced to endure a grueling 10-month recovery with two cast boots, a cast and a surgery. While slowly coming back, Srinivasan rolled and cracked her right ankle just one year later.

"Almost immediately, I knew I had broken [my right ankle]," said the petite but muscular freshman. "I knew this would be the end to my gymnastics career because my

body, mostly the lower half, could not take the intensity anymore.

"I had spent nine years of my life sacrificing many things to come to the level I was at, and I couldn't bear the thought of having to stop."

Having been home-schooled in sixth and seventh grade to accommodate her hectic training schedule, Srinivasan had to adapt to the absence of a large part of her life.

"It was extremely difficult [to adjust] because it felt like a huge something was missing in my life every day," Srinivasan said. "There were no long car rides to the gym when I would do my homework. Something just didn't feel right sitting at home doing nothing physical."

As an eighth grader, Srinivasan resumed regular schooling at Redwood Middle School. Quickly making friends and adjusting to new classes, she realized that she hadn't learned as much in her years homeschooling as she should have.

In addition, Srinivasan wasted no time finding a new sport to channel her athletic competitiveness into: diving. She began the sport because it required many similar skills used in gymnastics, yet put less strain on her body.

"I'm inclined to sports that flip and take a risk," said Srinivasan. "I love flipping and twisting and going through the air. Diving was the natural progression from gymnastics."

Having been such an elite gymnast, Srinivasan continues to challenge herself, placing first in her first diving competition last October with the Santa Clara Diving and advancing quickly to Regionals and Zones, a competition between divers in four to five states. She is eager to begin her next season in March. Srinivasan also plans to join the school team.

"I think I'll probably dive in college and hopefully make it to nationals by junior or senior year," Srinivasan said. "I think that's probably as far as I'll go. If I could, though, I'd go to the Olympics." ♦

>> **correction**

In the Dec. 17 issue, it was incorrectly reported that the girls' basketball team played Prospect High School on Dec. 18. They actually played Pioneer High School.

In addition, the article incor-

rectly stated that seniors Leah Capek and Allison Buchanan took a year off from playing basketball for the school team. Capek actually took two years off, while Buchanan joined the team for the first time this year.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Green tea sipped, green ideas proposed

BY AmyJan

Though implementing eco-friendly measures can be difficult and expensive, a select group of students is striving to make waste reduction and sustainability Saratoga High's cup of tea.

These students met at the Green Tea event, hosted by the Green Team, Priyanka Arunkumar, Ruchie Bhardwaj, Zara Sheikh, Anshu Siripurapu and Mac Hyde, and Jane Marashian from the district office, in the library on Dec. 13 to discuss long- and short-term goals to be more green.

"One of our questions for discussion was about the problems that students see on campus in terms of not recycling or wasting energy," junior Zara Sheikh said.

"Then we talked about ways those issues could be solved and any other ideas to make the school more green."

Even though the school has recycling bins set up around campus, many students still throw away recyclable items in the trash cans.

The conference brought attention to this growing problem and explored ways to spread awareness among students and faculty.

Sophomore Shireen Kaul said several

students brought up the point of how the school as a whole needs to prioritize being green.

People from the district office were also invited to attend. Superintendent Cary Matsuoka and registrar Anne Kolb from Redwood Middle showed up to share their ideas, too.

>> THE bigidea

A Green Campus

Signs of Waste: Leaving the heater on, Lack of recycling, Excessive paper use...

Possible Solutions: Solar panels, Compost, Online Lecture Notes, More Recycling/Green Awareness...

"They were invited originally to participate in the groups and also to throw out ideas, but when they came, they decided not to and just listened because it seemed like the students were relying on them for ideas and holding back theirs," Sheikh said.

Small groups of four or five sat around a table and discussed their ideas with peers. Then students circulated to other tables and discussed with different groups what they had come up with in their previous circles.

"I really enjoyed just sitting with different groups as they discussed ideas because every table had different ideas and they were so interesting to hear," Sheikh said.

A few of the ideas students suggested include putting lecture notes online, requiring students to turn in essays online, creating a green roof on the school and adding a green fact section in the news-



FALCON // ARNAV DUGAR

Junior Anshu Siripurapu leads and facilitates the Green Tea event discussion on Dec. 13.

paper to raise awareness.

Of the many ideas brought up, the superintendent took a special interest in implementing thermal water heating because it takes just three years to pay off.

Inviting students to talk over suggestions and build off of each other's ideas

about how the school can be more eco-friendly proved to be a productive session.

"I thought it was great," Kaul said. "It was cool to see other kids who were really passionate about being green, and it was definitely productive." ♦

Obscure textbook room offers volumes of help

BY WillEdman & KellyLiu

On the shelves of the small textbook room in the library are roughly 31,000 textbooks, according to librarian Kevin Heyman.

Getting those books into the hands of students, repairing damage, keeping track of lost books and assessing fines is a massive job shared by staff members and parent volunteers.

The number of textbooks has increased over the years because of the constantly evolving curriculum. The library tries to replace textbooks whenever a department needs updated ones, but it depends on the school budget, Heyman said.

According to textbook technician Nada Macesic, one of the oldest school books is "The Scarlet Letter" for the English department. Some of "The Scarlet Letter" books are about 22-30 years old, but not all are since the textbook staff buys new batches from time to time.

It takes one person to run the room most days: Macesic works in the textbook room from 8-11:30 a.m., when it is open to students, and Gordon Blancett, audio-visual technician, keeps working there after the hours it is open to students.

"Macesic is responsible for organizing and running the book room," said Heyman. "She works very hard and is extremely effective in circulating

and maintaining an inventory."

Using student I.D. numbers, workers in the textbook room are capable of tracing every loaned textbook to a student so that none are lost.

Additionally, the textbook room requires that every student turn in a "golden rod" paper for each textbook, detailing damage on the book when it is obtained so additional damage can be assessed when it is returned.

Irreparable damage of a textbook can be fined from \$15 to the cost of the textbook, which can run up to \$180. Any form of writing in the book can be fined \$3-\$10. Torn or missing pages are \$3 per page.

"I fix all the books that are destroyed or damaged as much as possible," said Macesic. "[It involves] taping them, gluing them [and] putting them together. I clean [the covers] using rubbing alcohol to keep them completely clean."

Textbooks can also be provided outside of the school year. In the summer, many students use the textbook room to check out a textbook to study courses they want to accelerate. Each textbook costs \$5 to check out.

"The importance of having a textbook room that operates as smoothly as Saratoga's cannot be underestimated," said Heyman. "I have worked at three different high schools in my 22-year career, and Saratoga's book room is by far the best." ♦

FINALS WEEK

Fall finals altered

BY AllisonToh

This school year, students are seeing more changes concerning the days they have off and a new finals schedule.

Instead of the typical four-day semester break after finals, there will be a three-day break for all students except those with a seventh period.

Students with a seventh period will have to come in for two hours in the morning on the last day, Friday, Jan. 21, to take their last final.

According to principal Jeff Anderson, the switch was due to the Columbus Day break students received in October.

"I think that the gain that we realized with the day we took in October outweighs any potential inconvenience for students with a seventh

period," Anderson said.

However, even with this discrepancy in first semester finals schedule, second semester finals will go according to how the schedule has been in the past years, Anderson said.

Sophomore Tyler Bakke, who has a seventh period, thinks that having the seventh period final last is unfair.

"I find it inconvenient that we have to come in when other students don't," said Bakke.

However, junior Daniel Hsu is not bothered by the minor change in schedule though he has a seventh period.

"Honestly, I don't mind [having to come in an extra day] that much," said Hsu. "No one really plans to do anything on a Friday morning, so I won't be missing out on much." ♦

EDUCATION BACKGROUND

Parents share cultures with staff in new lunchtime speaker series

BY CeciliaHollenhorst

Gaining a new appreciation for cultural diversity is even easier for staff members this year with the addition of a Brown Bag Lunch speaker series.

According to assistant principal Brian Safine, the program is "a series of conversations between staff and groups of parents in the community" that finds parents with specific ethnic backgrounds who are willing to discuss their culture with teachers during lunch.

"The clear goal of the program is to raise the understanding of the staff as we work with families from different parts of the world," Safine said.

So far, the new program has

had groups of parent volunteers speak representing India, Taiwan and China. About 15-20 teachers attended the first few speaker sessions of the program and their response was extremely positive.

"Even though I've observed classes in other countries, it's different than being a student," said science teacher Lisa Cochrum, who has attended all lunches so far. "The parents brought up a lot of points I never thought of before."

The hope of the program is for parents from every country of represented in the student body to be invited to share backgrounds and concerns with teachers.

"With this program, teachers can understand how the up-

bringing in different countries is different or similar to ours," said Safine.

Parents discuss a variety of issues such as the difficulties of living in a different country and comparing the education system of America to that of their country of origin.

"New immigrants sometimes can't articulate how I can help them," said Cochrum, who plans to implement the speakers' tips for helping students transition in her daily teaching.

Sessions are held as informal discussions in the teachers' lounge. Safine plans to invite two to three more groups of parents to speak before the end of the school year. No date has been set for the next group of speakers. ♦

MUSIC



FALCON // JORDAN WAITE



FALCON // VIVIEN LU

On left: Freshmen Alex Renda, Simon Spector and Mihir Iyer play the marimba for Winter Percussion.

On right: Junior Michael Woodruff, sophomore Valerie Doyen, Freshmen Amy Han and Morgan Webster, and Junior Amber Kingery practice flag basics in the dance studio.

Winter Guard and Percussion face changes

BY KellyLiu & MichelleShu

The music department has begun its Winter Guard season along with a reintroduced similar winter activity: Winter Percussion.

According to Michael Boitz, chair of the music department, Winter Guard and Winter Percussion are both similar to the athletic part of marching band. The only difference is that Winter Guard is dance movement with equipment and Winter Percussion is movement with percussion instruments.

Many committed students have dedicated themselves to these activities: 20 students enrolled in Winter Guard and approximately 26 for Winter Percussion. Students of all levels are welcomed, even without a musical or dance background, music director Seth Jones said.

Winter Percussion is led by off-campus

instructor Kohei Mizushima who graduated from Monta Vista High School, performed in the Santa Clara Vanguard and taught various high schools and groups, including the Santa Clara Vanguard Cadets, for about 10 years. The group is made up of a battery section for students who march actively on the floor, and a pit section for students who play instruments in place at the front of the floor.

"We're calling the show 'Bent,' driven from a visual idea of that whole bending idea," Mizushima said. "We're going to portray that musically and visually. There will be a lot of pitch bend and sound incorporated in the show, as well as body motions that will portray bending motions. That's really the heart of the show."

Many percussion members involved in marching band have easier music in concert band so they have no opportunities to learn and grow. With Winter

Percussion, those students can improve their musical skills, which will benefit the next year's marching band season.

Winter Guard, much like Winter Percussion, will also be more difficult in terms of skill because they perform at a much closer distance. Winter Guard gives Color Guard members a chance to improve and maintain their skill in order to ensure a stronger field season in the next year.

"We go to more competitions [than we do in marching band]," said off-campus Color Guard instructor Tony Crapo said. "We're able to get to know each other better because it's a tight, close-knit group of people."

Unlike last year, Winter Guard has not been split into varsity and JV, but rather kept all 20 members in one guard, which is "a healthy number," according to Jones. The guard plans to have the theme "Dirty Little Freaks" with flags,

rifles, sabres and dance.

"This year's Saratoga show is a fun and fresh twist on the current pop song 'Raise Your Glass' by Pink," Crapo said. "It's sure to be a real crowd pleaser."

Although the two activities are mainly separated, there are around two competitions and their senior night when both groups will be performing and traveling together.

Both Winter Guard and Winter Percussion work hard to "really represent [our shows] the best way that we can," Crapo said. He believes the activities are difficult in the sense that they combine multiple skills for performance, but the challenge is what makes them both so enriching.

"I think [both activities] are beneficial because you use so much of your brain for it," Crapo said. "We really need to represent [our shows] the best way that we can." ♦

Choir spreads holiday spirit in San Francisco trip

BY VivienLu

Almost like a holiday tradition, hotels in San Francisco hire the school's choirs to come and spread the Christmas spirit.

This year, the group consisted of about 100 students, who spent Dec. 16 and 17, their last two days before winter break, entertaining guests.

"This trip has blossomed, as we used to go to only one or two hotels," music teacher Jim Yowell said. "Now we go to more because hotels hear about us and invite us back."

After performing at the hotels, the choir students were treated to free food provided by the hotels. The choirs sang a wide variety of carols from Hanukkah music to Christmas jingles.

"It was a good way to have everyone in choir bond because we're usually separate," junior Valerie Peterson said. "This trip gave us a chance to be together and work as a team."

On the first night, the group enjoyed a nice dinner on Fisherman's Wharf and saw "Shrek," the musical.

Then, the students hopped on the bus to stop at several hotels after a complimentary breakfast the next morning.

Some hotels that the choir sang at were the Hyatt Regency, Palace Hotel, Fairmont Hotel and Mark Hopkins Hotel.

Although they had their work cut out for them, students were still given the opportunity to enjoy the city.

"My favorite part was the free time to walk around and shop downtown," Peterson said.

The choir provided entertainment for the holiday high tea, an elegant event where people relax while being served fancy desserts and tea.

"It was a full day of singing, but everyone loves to do it and it was a good opportunity for everyone to see the sights of the city," Yowell said. "Also, it was a great way to end the first part of the school year, and everyone seemed to appreciate it."

Also in the holiday spirit, Symphonic Wind Ensemble and Orchestra had a concert in the evening of Dec. 7 in the McAfee Center. The students played Christmas music such as the "Dance of the Gester and Sleigh Ride."

"'Sleigh Ride' was my favorite piece because it was really cheerful and there was a skit involving the music teachers and some seniors who played out a scene of the the Grinch," junior trumpeter Thomas Ishikawa said. "It was the first concert for SWE and it went pretty smoothly." ♦

"It was a good way to have everyone in choir bond."

>> Junior Valerie Peterson

>> THE bigidea

Choir SF trip

What: Choir students went to San Francisco on a two-day trip to perform at various hotels.

When: Dec. 16 and 17

Number of students: about 100

Hotels they sang at: Hyatt Regency, Palace Hotel, Fairmont Hotel, Mark Hopkins Hotel and more.

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ENGLISH PROJECT

Motif Fair explores novel through displays

BY Lillian Chen & Denise Lin

One group created a large 3-D display constructed with PVC pipes covered in black trash bags. Another group broke mirrors and other shiny objects into pieces. A third group spray painted an entire refrigerator box black.

All were students in English teacher Suzanne Herzman's English 11 Honors class who took part in a motif fair, in which they created presentations focused on key ideas in the novel "The Scarlet Letter" written by Nathaniel Hawthorne.

The novel takes place in Puritan Boston and focuses on scorned adulteress Hester Prynne and her journey of repentance. Herzman came up with the idea of the motif fair at a National Council for Teachers of English Conference.

"Schools are always doing science fairs, so I thought it would be fun to do something similar with literature," Herzman said.

For Herzman, one of the best parts about the motif fair is the opportunity to express their ideas visually.

"But my favorite part is when the classes visit the fair after everything is installed. I love hearing [students say]

'Oh, I hadn't thought of that,'" Herzman said.

Motif fair participants were judged based on a 40 point rubric. The judges, who were staff members, remained anonymous during the fair and students were not allowed to include their own names on their displays.

Junior Talia Sisco's group emerged as the winners of the fair with a eye-catching display decorated with shards of a broken mirror and other reflective objects. They focused on the usage of reflective surface in the novel, which represented self-reflection.

"[We] really wanted to make the entire thing reflective and stand out," Sisco said.

The motif fair turned out to be an interesting experience for Sisco.

"It helped me learn more about ["The Scarlet Letter"]. I like to do hands-on types of art projects for English," Sisco said.

Because of the motifs presented at the fair, Sisco got to better understand the symbolism of "The Scarlet Letter."

Junior Michael Chen's group came in as a close second after the judging. The runner-up group focused on the usage of sunshine in the novel.

"Sunshine basically [guides] you



FALCON // ARNAV DUGAR

Junior Jonathan Koo takes notes on a Motif Fair presentation for his English 11H class.

throughout the novel to show you how Hester changed from an adulteress to a much more humanitarian and kind person," Chen said.

The display consisted of a PVC pipe construction, a double trifold and 3-D pictures for an eye-popping effect.

Chen appreciated both the end product and the fair itself.

"[I] think the display turned out well;

[it was a] solid job," Chen said.

The fair enhanced Chen's knowledge of "The Scarlet Letter."

"The fair helped us with our understanding of [the book] and writing analysis," Chen said.

Although all of Herzman's students toiled long hours to achieve their final displays, they were rewarded with an interesting and informative fair. ♦

GRADUATION

Grad Night goes green

BY Grishma Athavale

As second semester approaches, many seniors begin to anticipate graduation, and, often more importantly, the fun-filled Grad Night afterparty.

Grad Night was created in 1984, to have a safe and sober way for students to celebrate their graduation. According to Grad Night co-chair Shinku Sharma, SHS was one of the first in the area to offer this event, establishing a precedent for other high schools.

"It is a chance for seniors to spend one last night together on campus before parting," Sharma said.

Like previous years, parents will secretly transform the cafeteria, quad and gym into an arcade-like area with games, prizes and food.

This year, however, seniors will expect to see around the same decorations from previous years because Grad Night committee wants to make Grad Night greener, they are reusing old decorations and games.

"Senior year is already expensive enough for families, as college applications run from \$40-\$60 each," said Sharma. "In order to cut the cost [of Grad

Night] we took away souvenirs, which traditionally included the senior year DVD, and re-use old structures."

Some students, however, are not happy about not getting souvenirs, even though it means a drop in the price.

"Senior DVDs are a nice memento of high school years," said senior Jackie Bae. "I wouldn't mind paying a little more, if it meant receiving them."

According to Sharma, the only major difference this year in Grad Night is the price. This year, Grad Night's starting cost was \$155 up to Oct. 28, \$185 up to Feb. 28, and \$205 after, compared to last year's starting price of \$180. The increase in price is due to the deposits needed for various contacts to make Grad Night successful.

Grad Night co-chairs Patty Buchanan, Kat Mandell, Donna Paisley and Sharma have been planning the event from May of last year and working over summer to make the night spectacular; decoration planning will start in January.

According to Sharma, the focus of this year's Grad Night, which will take place on June 16-17, is "fun and friends with food and lots of activities." ♦

HOLIDAY FESTIVITIES

Special Ed hosts celebration

BY Megan Benzing & Aanchal Mohan

For the past five years, students and teachers of Saratoga High School and West Valley College have coordinated their Special Education Departments to host the Annual Alumni Holiday Celebration. On Dec. 15, the Sixth Annual Alumni Holiday Celebration, a potluck, was held at Saratoga High School, in the cafeteria.

According to Saratoga High Special Education teacher and girls' water polo coach Courtney Crase, the celebration was started by Holly Wade, the former director of Student Services, and Kathy Erickson, the mother of a former student.

"There are over 100 people who attend the event," said Crase. "We invite alumni, current students and their families, and other people that positively influence us from school and the community."

Assistant principal Karen Hyde says the department has its own database to

keep contact with past and present students and their parents for events such as these.

"Every year we have been doing it off campus, but this year we moved it on campus," said Hyde. "It's just a way for those kids to connect and stay in touch with each other."

The present students and the past students use this event to create and reinforce relationships.

"Though it's festive and fun," said Hyde, "the connections made between the attendees are truly touching."

"What is most satisfying each year is that we get such a great response. I have many fond memories of students over the past 12 years, so being able to visit with those who attended the Alumni Holiday Celebration is always very touching," instructional aide Jeanne Watson said. "For those older students who once attended the SHS Special Ed program, those who were once students I helped, I now call them my friends. I am very proud of all our past and present students." ♦

HISTORY DAY

Club attendance increases

BY Olivia Chock

With an overwhelming number of participants in History Day this year, the club's advisers are busy keeping up with all of the recent presentations.

There were three to four groups per category last year, but this year there are eight to nine groups.

"The difficulty is the county competition, which only accepts three groups for each category," said librarian Kevin Heyman, the main general faculty adviser. "So the history department has to eliminate groups by Feb. 19."

Last year, AP US history teacher Matt Torrens, who is also the adviser for History Day participants, asked Heyman to help out with History Day, since Heyman had access to the library and had been a history teacher for 10 years before he became the school's librarian.

While Heyman helps out with managing the school website, Torrens organizes how the extra credit will be given, advises the participants and accompanies them to presentations.

"It's clearer to students what they get out of doing History Day, so we have a lot more participants this year," Heyman said.

Torrens has been busy with a total of 30 to 40 groups scheduled to present their bibliography and annotations.

"On the History Day page in the school website, I organized deadlines for students to meet," Heyman said. "Hopefully, it will help students manage their time."

The upcoming History Day county competition will be held in San Jose, and the state competition in Pasadena. Torrens and Heyman could not provide the exact dates for these competitions. ♦

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SPIRIT

Cheer team extends support to wrestling

BY Pia Mishra

For 14 weeks a year, the cheer team never fails to impress even the biggest critics in the bleachers with their rigorous routines at each football game.

As per tradition, the girls have always cheered during football season, but this year, following a request from wrestling coach Joe Pele, they have begun to show their support for other teams, including boys' wrestling and have continued

their support at boys' and girls' basketball games.

"The wrestling coach e-mailed me asking if the girls would be interested in coming to a couple of matches to show some support," cheer coach Larissa Ridge said. "Of course, it's always nice to have some school-wide support, so we didn't hesitate to send girls to the matches."

The cheer team switches off by sending around 10 girls to each match.

"It's fun to go out there and show our classmates we care about what they're doing," junior Anika Jhalani said.

Apart from wrestling, the team continues to voice their support at home basketball games for both the boys' and girls' team.

"We do modify the routines for the indoor games since according to CCS rules, the girls must cheer on the bleachers," Ridge said.

The girls continue to practice and per-

fect their routines for these games along with routines for regional competitions. The girls recently qualified for nationals in Anaheim, and they are preparing to compete in the large novice division in the spring.

"Although it does feel like we're not always appreciated at times, it is nice to get to cheer at all these different games," Jhalani said. "Sometimes it really can make a difference, and that's when it feels good." ♦

Earning the Eagle Scout



Courtesy of KARTHIK ANNAAMALAI

Senior Karthik Annaamalai completed his Eagle project at Argonaut Elementary on June 20.

BY Paul Jung

This past summer, junior Vikas Nookala spent roughly 100 hours creating a database for Argonaut Elementary in an effort to achieve the highest possible rank in Boy Scouts, the Eagle Scout.

Nookala had to complete this project as well as meet various requirements to show leadership and community service.

Most Boy Scouts begin working toward earning this prestigious rank in the last few years of high school.

"It's important because it teaches you all about how to work well in a group," Nookala said. He relied on help from fellow scouts to complete his project during the summer.

To achieve the Eagle Scout rank, a Boy Scout must demonstrate leadership and spirit, receive a minimum of 21 "merit badges," complete a review conducted by the "board of review," and lead a service project that benefits the community before turning 18. This service project, the Eagle Project, is run mostly on donations and is led by scouts to emphasize leadership.

Junior Kyle Schulz, who has been a scout for 12 years, is also working on his Eagle Project, which he hopes to com-

plete in the summer. He plans to install cameras in the band locker room to prevent thefts of instruments. According to Schulz, being a Boy Scout is important because of the lessons they learn.

"It's really useful because it teaches you a lot of skills and prepares you for college," said Schulz.

Senior Nick Renda, who earned his Eagle Scout over the past summer, constructed uniform racks for the school marching band, which he says required strong leadership and teamwork.

"I got a lot of experience with leadership and teaching people how to do things," said Renda. "Group delegation and dynamics were also important."

Renda thought the uniform racks, which are still in use, were very helpful during the marching band season and saved a lot of time.

"We used to spend a lot of time waiting in line to get our uniforms," said Renda. "With the racks, we could just roll them out and get them quickly."

Schulz, though soon turning 18 and leaving Boy Scouts, feels close and bonded with his fellow scouts.

"To me, being a Boy Scout means being with a certain group of guys," said Schulz. "We just chill out and do things and learn together." ♦

Government classes cast ballots in mock election

BY Sabrina Cismas

Major shakeups of congressional seats and gubernatorial posts from the U.S. elections dominated the news in early November. The students in history teacher Mike Davey's U.S. government classes, however, just finished the long and mudslinging-filled campaigns in their realistic presidential election simulations on Jan. 3.

"The [simulations] include the whole gamut of having presidential candidates visit states and regions, give speeches and the whole process for electing the president," Davey said.

The seven-day project, which stretched over three weeks since only part of class time was devoted to it, centered around one Democratic and one Republican presidential candidate per class, each of whom campaigned for the office seat.

The candidates from Davey's regular government class were Chris Burse (R) vs. Will Tang (D), while Arya Parhar (D) and Jason Shiuan (R) faced off in Davey's MAP government class. Tang beat Burse by 306 to 232 electoral votes, while Shiuan stole a small victory of 274 to 264 votes from Parhar.

"It's was fun to have a little competition against Arya," Shiuan said. "Our pride is at stake."

The Republican candidates were chosen through the Iowa Caucus, Davey said, because it was the first one in the country during the presidential primary season. The National Convention chose the Democratic candidates.

"It actually costs money to do the commercials so [the candidates] have

to raise the money," Davey said. Presidential candidates present these influential radio commercials, television commercials and press releases in class to sway the student voters.

"It's pretty intense," Shiuan said, who had his first debate on Dec. 9. "It's a lot of fun to make commercials and to find ways to make money and to try to convince other people to vote for me," Shiuan said.

Burse said he looked at past presidents' policies for tips on how he could improve his own campaign, and by presenting opposing viewpoints toward President Obama's.

While the candidates were busy preparing their campaigns, the rest of the students engaged in classroom activities, current events and lectures on the presidency. Others even joined in to help the candidates.

"I have a team of students who help me with my campaign—

Arya has a team, too," Shiuan said. "The remaining students represent the different states and they decide who they want to vote for."

Once voting time came, Davey made the process similar to reality, with the media calling the elections for each candidate and the states lining up by their party colors to turn in their ballots.

"We try to have it as comprehensive as possible so students really understand the whole process," Davey said.

Like in real campaigns, the candidates and media in the simulation clashed head on.

"I heard in the MAP class that CBS was accusing NBC of trying to manufacture stories," Davey said with a laugh. ♦

"It's a lot of fun to make commercials... and to try to convince other people to vote for me."

>> Senior Jason Shiuan

PARCEL >> Support high for \$49 tax

continued from pg. 1

tion will be the same or have worsened. Only 11 percent believed that the district was in "great need" of money, 37 percent believed there was "some need" and 22 percent felt there was "no need."

"The problem with high-performing districts [like LGSUHS] is that you're doing such a great job and have excellent test scores...that people feel you must not need money," said Ruth Bernstein of EMC at board meeting on Dec. 7.

Perhaps more worrisome for the district was the erroneous belief among some residents that a parcel was already in place. Only 21 percent of parents and 16 percent of all voters correctly answered that there was no parcel tax currently in place.

The survey further indicated that, despite voters' reluctance to impose a new parcel tax, trust in the district remains high, and most voters believe the district

is doing an excellent job in educating high school students. Eighty-nine percent of voters said they felt the quality of education was "excellent" or "good." Ninety percent believed that both high schools adequately prepare students.

In addition, EMC's poll showed that voters trust the district to manage its money responsibly. Forty-six percent said that the district's management of money was either "excellent" or "good," one of the highest approval ratings in the state. Because of the strong belief in the district's responsibility, some voters are willing to pay additional taxes to support the district but others remain opposed to any new taxes.

Although the survey indicates that there is sufficient support for a \$49 parcel tax, the board must still decide on an appropriate time to hold the election for the measure. Estimates indicate that holding a special election for the ballot measure in May would cost the district

\$442,000 which would be paid out of its reserve fund.

Despite the cost, EMC recommended holding such an election because it would give singular attention to the parcel tax measure. Putting the measure on the general ballot in November would be cheaper, but at the risk of having it shot down by voters overwhelmed with the numerous other measures and propositions on a typical ballot.

"[The advantage of] getting a little bit of distance from that November 2010 election is that ... if we're looking at electoral opportunities, a special election looks like a good one because you avoid some of that negativity [in a general election]," Bernstein told the board.

The board took feedback by the public at its meeting on Jan. 11. In addition, there will be a town hall meeting held at the SHS library on Jan. 20 at 7 p.m. and one at Los Gatos High's library on Jan. 25 at 7 p.m. to discuss the parcel tax. ♦

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Students step up for Giving Tree

BY Aanchal Mohan

For the past few years, the school, with the help of the Giving Tree Foundation, an organization that receives wishes from families, has tried to bring holiday cheer to those families who are not as fortunate. This year, so many students and teachers wanted to help out the community that the school had to order more cards with wishes on them.

"It's a great opportunity to give back to the community," ASB president David Mandell said. "Plus it's an easy way to fulfill a child's Christmas wish especially with this economy."

Though the recession may not have affected Saratoga as severely many other places, many children in other parts of the Bay Area do not have simple pleasures such as books and toys.

"In a place like Saratoga where we are so fortunate, it's really good to give back," Mandell

said. "A small \$15-\$30 gift means so much to those children and families."

Saratoga High originally received 100 wish cards, ranging from simple toiletries to toys, but within a week all cards were taken. In fact, they called the Giving Tree Foundation to order 75 more cards.

"I'm really happy to say that all 175 cards were taken," Mandell said. "It shows how generous our school is."

Of the numerous students who have picked up cards off the giving tree, junior Alison Knysh's family has made this a tradition of giving to needy families every year.

"A few years ago my family and I decided that each year we would pick a family and buy gifts for them," said Knysh. "Instead, this year we picked the cards off the giving tree and decided to buy gifts for them instead of a single family." ♦

LINKed with cookies

BY Will Edman & Amy Jan

In recent weeks, Link Crew leaders have been trying to re-establish connections with the freshmen they are helping guide through the first year of high school.

In the first event, leaders worked with freshmen to decorate cookies on Dec. 15.

In addition to the cookie decorating event, LINK staged the annual Coffee & Cram in the cafeteria on Jan. 12. LINK members worked alongside freshmen to help them prepare for their first high school finals. Various snacks were also served while the upperclassmen tutored the freshmen and gave them a little background on the finals process.

The purpose of the cookie decorating was for the freshmen to get a chance to check in with their LINK leaders

and discuss the upcoming finals week.

"We decorated cookies because it was so close to the holiday break and it gave everyone something fun to do while they caught up with each other," guidance counselor and Link Crew adviser Eileen Allen said.

Around 80 freshmen attended the event and quickly filled up the small room where the cookie decorating took place. Freshmen sat around tables and passed gumdrops and sprinkles to one another.

"[It was a] good turnout. Lots of people showed up and at one point, it was so crowded that it was hard to move around," junior LINK leader Megan Yen said.

The cookies and hot chocolate lured many students to go to the event. Although not everyone's LINK kids went, the event was still a success.

"We were very excited because there were tons of freshmen that showed up to see their LINK Leaders," said Allen. "We even caught some sophomores sneaking in to eat cookies."

Yen got the opportunity to re-connect with a few of her LINK kids. Still, she saw how far her freshmen had grown since the beginning of the year.

"[They] seemed to be really comfortable in high school. They didn't need help anymore," said Yen. ♦

>> THE bigidea

Cookie Decorating
The Event: Link Crew held a cookie decoration on Dec. 15.
Purpose: Link wanted to give freshmen a chance to check in with their Link leaders.

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Shoes waiting to be delivered are stored in the central hallway of the science classroom.

Students donate shoes and warm coats in drive

BY Will Edman

From the end of Thanksgiving break until the start of Winter break, hundreds of shoes filled the usually sterile central storage area of the science wing as biology teacher Kelly Nicholson led a group of students in organizing the footwear.

This influx came from a used shoe drive, a holiday event staged from Nov. 29 to Dec. 17 by the freshman class. Unlike many on-campus fundraisers, the Shoe Drive was an entirely humanitarian effort and did not financially benefit the freshman class.

"[The shoe drive] is purely to help others, and working on it has been pretty fun," freshman class president Nikhil Goel said. "It feels awesome to know that you helped someone in need."

Nicholson, an avid long-distance runner, was inspired to create the drive at a November marathon in the sign-up area.

"I saw a man with a booth titled 'Shoes 4 the city,'" Nicholson said. "He was giving his old shoes to the underprivileged. I told him that I was a high school teacher and I was willing to put the word out to my students, and that was how the Shoe Drive was created." ♦

Much of the drive's success has emerged from offers of extra credit from teachers such as Nicholson and chemistry teacher Jenny Garcia. Nicholson also gave extra credit to students who volunteered for the drive after school.

"Ms. Nicholson gave us the idea for the Shoe Drive, and [freshman] Abigail Small and I did most of the publicity," Goel said. "Abigail made posters, I made announcements, we put up both and we have been getting a lot of shoes ever since."

Goel and Nicholson both said that they considered the Shoe Drive a resounding success, as well as an opportunity to give to the needy.

"I worked for extra credit, but I also just wanted to help out," freshman volunteer Isabelle Zuccarino said.

In addition to the shoe drive, the Leadership class organized a coat drive entitled "One Warm Coat" to benefit St. Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco. Coats were donated to the office and would be given to the church and subsequently given directly to needy people in the San Francisco area. According to Coat Drive organizer Mac Hyde, the number of coats is upward of 100. ♦

'Copter' parents need to hover higher

BY Rohan Rajeev

"How was school today?" Many high school students are asked this question daily by their parents, and usually, if the student actually chooses to reply, it is with little interest, and silence follows.

But some parents are different. They ask not only this question but every question relative to a child's life, questions like "Who are your friends?" and "Who are you talking to on the phone?" and sometimes even, "Should I be talking to your teachers about these missing homework assignments?"

These parents are known to high-schoolers as "helicopter parents."

Helicopter parent is a term to describe parents who coddle their children to such an extent that it affects their social life.

It's not as politically correct as "over-protective," and probably would not be welcome at the next dinner conversation with your parents. However, for today's generation—and at Saratoga High—it is no rare occurrence.

Helicopter parents are usually easy to spot in large herds of parents at a family party, as they constantly chime into the conversation with boastful, over-comparative statements such as, "My eighth-grade son is in accelerated math and is practicing for his SATs. How's your son doing?"

The latter sentence is usually said with a slight tinge of sarcasm to another parent, exposing their true helicopter

identity.

It's disappointing that helicopter parents exist at all. Some friends of mine still live under their parents' tough leadership and are never "available" to spend time with their peers.

For the parents, the child is their whole life, and they guard him or her like it. Everything the child does is monitored and evaluated by the parent, a situation that can indirectly stunt a child's growth.

High school should be a time to transition from being partly dependent on one's parents to full independence. Parents cannot prepare their child for adult life ahead by pampering them.

Giving the children independence not only would benefit the child more, but it would also allow more freedom for the student to experiment and make his or her own choices.

Of course, helicopter parents are certainly well intentioned. They believe that what they are doing is for the best of the child. It is better to be overprotective than nonexistent. Their hearts are in the right places, but they are simply too involved.

Since it may be hard to change a protective parent's views (or for that matter, any parent's), it may be wiser for victims of helicopter parents to request slightly more independence and privacy, little by little.

The parent might slowly begin to agree and start getting used to giving their child more independence. Just a thought. ♦

>>> candid caricatures



'F' grade necessary for healthy learning

BY Aanchal Mohan & Allison Toh

Immerse yourself into the quad of Saratoga High School, and you will most likely hear students complaining about their grades, an impossibly difficult test or the immense amount of homework they have to tackle.

The truth is, the possibility of failing motivates most students to do their best in school.

But at West Potomac High School in Virginia, the school board removed the grade "F" to make failure impossible for its students. Students will instead receive an "I," standing for incomplete.

With this letter grade, students are given the opportunity to redeem themselves by catching up on the material throughout the year. Students can retake the class that they have failed in order to receive a better grade. At the end of the academic year, students who earned an "I" will receive an actual grade from the original A-F scale.

Removing this failing grade, however, would result in negative consequences for the school. Students would no longer feel the need to work diligently as they would have without the possibility of receiving an "F" hanging over them.

Also, many students who receive a grade that dissatisfies them, but does not fail the class, are put at a disadvantage because only failing students are given the option of retaking a course for a better grade. In reality, the results of this new system would differ depending on the school environment.

At a school like Saratoga High,

such a system would have little to no significant impact. Most students here are motivated by the fear of not getting into their dream college, and will continue to work harder even if there were no "F"s. The only difference would be a slight downgrade of pressure for a certain class, because an "F" can be replaced.

But at a school where the dropout rate is high, this new system would have a more significant impact.

Some students would now feel less pressured to drop out now that they know they still have the opportunity to retake the class and not have to worry about an F being on their transcripts. Because of this new system, dropout rates could potentially be lowered, benefiting everyone. Although there are benefits, teachers would lose one of their primary tools for motivating their students to learn; instead, teachers are forced to reward students who slack off.

Because tests would be a less accurate source of the students' understanding, teachers would not know what they need to work on to improve their teaching skills and curriculum. Even though the idea of not receiving an "F" sounds appealing, the harms created by the alternate system far outweigh the few benefits it provides.

The United States is falling behind in education to countries such as China and India and, by removing the failing grade, we will only be digging our students into a deeper hole.

Second chances may be favorable in certain conditions in life, but schools need to keep the grade "F" in place to motivate students to excel. ♦

Facebook misused to criticize teachers

BY Alex Ju & Elijah Yi

An emergency medical technician for a Connecticut-based ambulance service was fired in November for ridiculing her supervisor on Facebook. The worker's termination ignited a national controversy, with the National Labor Relations Board deeming the supervisor's actions illegal. An administrative judge is slated to hear the case on Jan. 25.

Breaches of privacy in the corporate world are inevitable byproducts of the proliferation of social networking users; however, similar issues have arisen from student use of these outlets to criticize teachers and school employees.

One student attending a high school in Florida was suspended from her school in 2007 for creating a Facebook page that criticized her English teacher.

Along with a suspension, the school proceeded to drop her from an advanced placement English class into a regular English class. Later, the girl filed a lawsuit against the school and won.

The First Amendment protects students' free speech about teachers and administrators via Facebook, Twitter or other forms of communication. However, any content deemed threatening or disruptive to the educational process can evoke the administration to intervene.

The First Amendment allows students to express themselves rather freely, including harsh, critical comments. However, just because they can make these remarks doesn't mean they necessarily should.

Through gossip and other remarks, a false image can be made of a teacher

even before being in his or her class, causing the teacher to lose credibility. Some teachers may be labeled "hard," while others may be deemed "teachers that don't teach," placing unfair labels based on gossip and not experience.

Usually, however, there are few consequences for discussing teachers online, as most comments aren't so severe as to become an administrative issue.

Ultimately, whether or not a student chooses to ridicule their teachers using their Facebook status or a tweet depends solely on their personal sense of right and wrong.

"The First Amendment protects students' free speech about teachers and administrators..."

While it is not unusual for students to be unhappy with their teachers, it is not necessary to vent using Facebook, which allows for all friends, and

often the teacher in question, to see the what has been posted.

If nothing else, it is insensitive for a student to go to those lengths to make fun of a teacher. It may also not be in the best interest of the student to be known for criticizing teachers.

If a student has a serious issue with an educator, it should be handled with the administration so that a solution can be reached.

An alternative could be to cope with the teacher's style of teaching, (which is usually the foundation for the criticism) or to transfer out of the class. Sharing one's personal issue by ranting to peers and complaining does not achieve much for the student.

Most of the comments are merely petty complaints, often with unnecessarily harsh, sardonic qualifiers attached. Such posts are of absolutely no value. Far from constructive criticism, they serve only to insult. ♦

Student merit trumps college prestige

BY Sabrina Cismas & Aanchal Mohan

The holiday season is the most wonderful time of the year for most, but for seniors, it's a time of nail-biting and anxiety as they begin anticipating the results of their applications to college. Students refer to days as Yale-day or Columbia-day, based on the life-changing letters that they will find in their mailboxes that day. However, is this all necessary?

The undergraduate college that you go to will not haunt you forever. Most students don't know what career they want to pursue as undergraduate freshmen or the type of graduate school they want to go to.

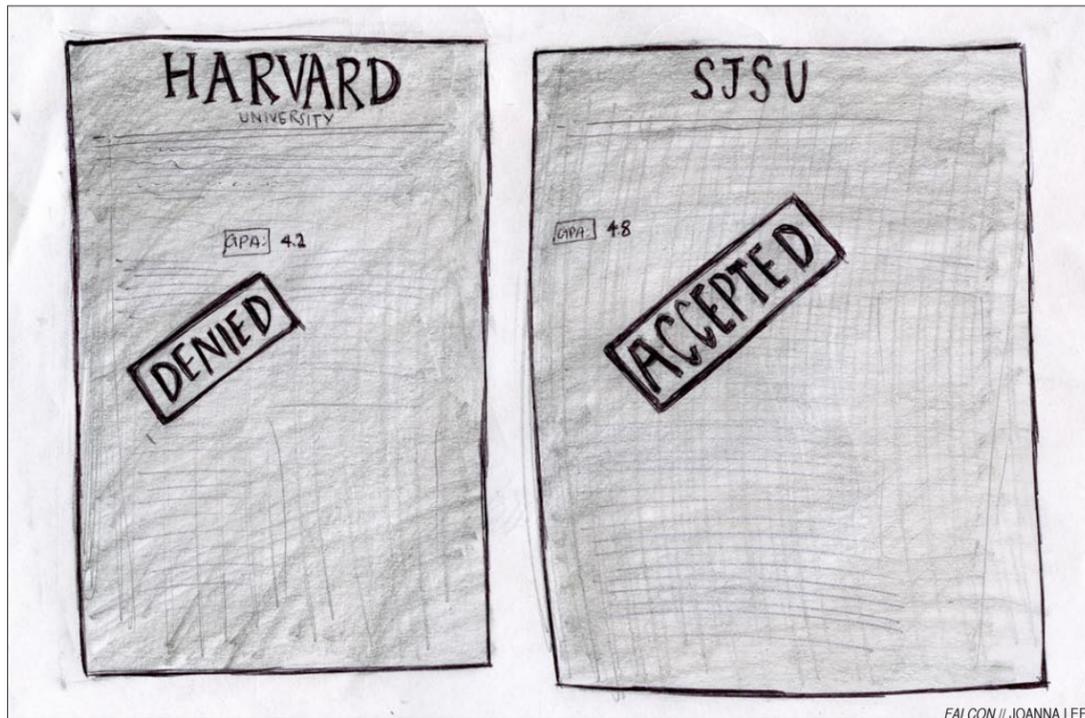
When graduate schools look at applications, they are looking to accept the student, not his or her school. What a student achieves in undergraduate college—good grades, research internships, volunteering and high marks on their graduate school entrance exams, such as the MCAT for medical school—far exceed the caliber of school ranking.

Students need to choose colleges that will suit these

needs and help them achieve these goals. According to Businessweek Magazine, graduate schools will only resort to looking at the ranking of an undergraduate institution when the students lack these criteria, especially when no work experience is present. One can be sure that graduate admissions officers will not put special interest in an application from an Ivy-league student that is dotted with C's and D's.

Wanting to get into a prestigious undergraduate school should not be frowned upon, yet the amount of pressure placed on students to attend one is overwhelming and influences many to believe that getting into a good undergraduate college is the main factor of a successful life.

Undergraduate college is like freshman year in high schools. Students are taught the basics that will prepare them for future courses, but the degree of importance in these general education courses is, on the larger scale, minuscule. Students should set their sights on school ranking more in graduate education, since this is when they have narrowed their



FALCON // JOANNA LEE

focus on what profession they want to pursue. The specialized courses that they take in graduate school, which target their chosen area of expertise, are the ones that take on a defining role in laying out one's future. Students who are so concerned

about their lives after all schooling should perhaps take this into account before sweating too much over their applications to their undergraduate colleges.

According to Forbes magazine, "Where you go to [un-

dergraduate] school is not as important as what you bring to the school where you go." In the end, a student should attend a college based on what suits them as a person, not on previously formed opinions made far too quickly. ♦

School budget deficit leaves few options

It's time to face the harsh reality. The Los Gatos Saratoga Union High School District is projecting a deficit of nearly \$942,000 for the 2011-2012 school year and more deficits in the years beyond. Though a parcel tax that voters are likely to see on a special ballot this spring may raise significant funding toward bridging this gap, the school has already dipped into financial reserves, and the district will most likely have to make cuts in the years ahead no matter what.

The decision over cuts presents a tough problem: whether to increase class sizes across the board, or to make targeted cuts to a specific program or positions. Essentially, the choice comes down to having as many as 35 students in history and math classes or perhaps cutting popular electives like drama or music programs. While both options present possible benefits and detriments, increasing class sizes is the better choice.

The school's current budget situation won't last forever. With prudent budgeting and practical decision-making now, the school board can circumvent fiscal problems that may arise down the line.

Cutting programs now is akin to throwing money down

an ever expanding hole. This choice only serves to undermine the quality of education by reducing class variety and letting go of the very teachers who comprise the crux of the school.

Although cutting programs would solve the financial problem, these programs would be much more difficult to resurrect once the budget situation has stabilized. For example, if the school were to cut the drama

program, all the drama students would not have the opportunity to take the class. In addition, if the school were to revive the program, they would have to rebuild it from scratch. Decreasing class sizes, on the other hand, is an easy task in the future when the district has sufficient funds.

Of course, neither increased class sizes nor targeted cuts to programs are decisions that should be taken lightly. The only way to weather this budgetary storm is to stick together. That will necessitate compromises by the administration, students and staff. In the long term, the school will be better off for trying to preserve the rich diversity of programs that have made Saratoga and Los Gatos High School places where parents want to send their children. ♦



STAFF EDITORIAL

UC tuition ruling helps state

BY Anshu Siripurapu

At the end of November, most seniors breathe a long sigh of relief when they finally submit their UC application. Saratoga has a long tradition of students attending the competitive UC system, but recently, tuition increases in the UC system have made many private colleges seem like a more inviting option. For undocumented immigrants, however, the UC system is now a much more promising option after they were granted in-state tuition benefits, a welcome step in immigration reform.

On Nov. 15, the California Supreme Court ruled unanimously that undocumented immigrants may receive the same reduced tuition as other in-state residents. The case was brought to the court after the law guaranteeing in-state tuition was challenged by Kris Kobach, the architect behind the Arizona immigration law SB 1070, who has filed similar cases in several states. Kobach brought the case on behalf of U.S. citizens who did not receive the same in-state tuition break. A lower court ruled in favor of Kobach but the decision was appealed and struck down by the state Supreme Court.

Currently, illegal immigrants are still barred from receiving federal financial aid to pursue higher education. Without lowered in-state tuition, college would simply be unaffordable for many immigrants. In order to allow illegal immigrants a chance to achieve a higher level of education and place them on a path to citizenship,

we must allow them the same benefits that we give to other residents.

A common misconception is that the law doles out money to illegal immigrants to attend public universities—it doesn't. It merely extends the lower tuition to illegal immigrants who meet the requirements as legal residents and who have attended a California high school for at least three years and graduated. Students, regardless of their residency, should be encouraged to pursue higher education if they are eligible. California should not punish hard working students for circumstances beyond their control.

Furthermore, it is crucial

Illegal immigrants can be extremely successful when admitted to institutes of higher education.

that we maintain the meritocracy that brought the California system of higher education to its zenith. A student's immigration status should not bar them from pursuing higher education if they meet the requisite admission standards.

If we make higher learning unavailable to undocumented immigrants, we risk losing valuable assets to American society. Illegal immigrants can be extremely successful when admitted to institutes of higher education. Pedro Ramirez, the student body president at Fresno State University, is just one such example. Ramirez immigrated from Mexico when he was just three years old,

a plight similar to many undocumented minors.

Despite this, he has excelled in his community and gone on to play a dominant part in his university. If California denies in-state tuition benefits to illegal immigrants, students like Ramirez may be unable to afford college or contribute their skills to society.

Allowing undocumented immigrants to receive in-state tuition will place them on the pathway to citizenship. Legislation such as the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act has already proposed such a path for illegal immigrants to become citizens.

The crux of the DREAM Act provides that undocumented minors who serve in the military or attend college for two years would be granted "conditional" immigration status and eventually, if they continued to meet eligibility requirements, permanent residency. The act passed through the House but was defeated in the Senate on Dec. 18.

Despite the Senate's block, there is still strong support behind the DREAM Act and for good reason. As President Obama said, the act would fix "one of the most egregious flaws of a badly broken immigration system ... that forces children who have grown up in America, who speak English, who have excelled in our communities ... to put their lives and talent on hold." The California court's decision to grant undocumented immigrants in-state tuition is a great step in the right direction. ♦

>> Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

The Saratoga Falcon voted 26-6 for increasing class sizes instead of cutting programs in making budget cuts

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Uttara Sivaram
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Karthik Annaamalai

Anoop Galivanche
Anshu Siripurapu
Jason Wu

Vallejo's project 'Respect For All' includes gays

BY Denise Lin & Priyanka Nookala

Rochelle Hamilton got up in the morning, just like her peers. She got ready for school and later arrived at Vallejo High School for just another school day. However, to some of the students and staff at the high school, she did not fit into the ideal of what a female student should be.

Hamilton was lesbian. And that was enough to nail a target to her back. She was told by her school counselor to "change" her sexual orientation, for being lesbian was "a sin," and would cause her to "go to hell."

Ultimately, embracing "The Respect For All Project" would be a great step for the Vallejo community.

Eventually, Hamilton went to court, which settled the case in her favor. The Vallejo City Unified School District agreed to adopt a curriculum, called "The Respect for All Project," that aims to reduce harassment and discrimination regarding sexual orientation and gender identity. The curriculum is mandatory for students.

While this may seem like a victory for the LGBT, or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community, the curriculum faces some heated opposition. Some feel that requiring students to attend the tolerance classes is an infringement on

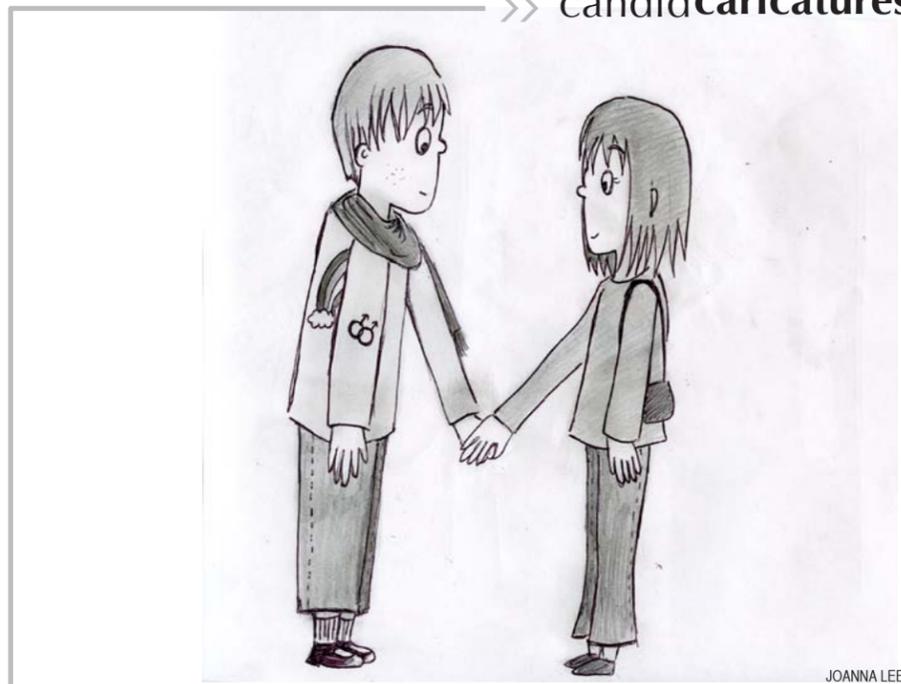
their rights.

In particular, parent Helenmarie Gordon declared that the curriculum offends her Christian beliefs and that she is unprepared to discuss homosexuality with her son.

Gordon is especially concerned with three films being shown as a part of the curriculum, including: "That's a Family!," a video for elementary students that raises awareness about non-traditional families; "Let's Get Real," a film designated for middle school students to address harassment caused by factors such as race, religion, sexual orientation and immigration status and "Straightlaced—How Gender's Got Us All Tied Up," a film for

high school students that addresses how societal gender role norms lead to anti-gay harassment, risky sexual practices and violence. While Gordon's concerns have some merit, it is important to recognize that the films in question are not solely focused on homosexuality. Much of the films also address issues of race, religion and the traditional family structure.

Gordon and other parents need to realize that accepting the diversity of people's sexual preferences and gender identities entails education on the sub-



JOANNA LEE

>> candid caricatures

ject of diversity and tolerance.

As for Gordon's hesitance to discuss homosexuality with her son, it is imperative to realize that homosexual people are just as much a part of the world as heterosexual people are. They are here, and they are part of our community. It would be insulting not to recognize them.

In modern day America, previously scorned groups, such as women and African-Americans, now enjoy basic rights.

It is the duty of the Vallejo school district to endure all criticism and institute "The Respect for All Project" as a mandatory and permanent course. Educators must address discriminating behavior to create a learning environment where students feel safe and respected.

Ultimately, embracing "The Respect for All Project" would be a great step forward for the Vallejo community. Even in

schools like Saratoga High where tolerance for diversity is promoted through clubs like the Gay Straight Alliance, this program would provide further support and education.

If all schools have such programs, it will be a small but significant step forward for America, so that one day the country may accept all of its people. ♦

>> THE big idea

"Respect for all"

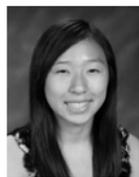
Goal: To reduce harassment and discrimination regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.

How it started: Rochelle Hamilton goes to court after being told to change her sexual orientation and wins the court's favor

>> togatalks

Does SHS have enough programs to support diversity education?

Yes, we have Asian Culture Club, Christian Club, and all these other clubs. There's something for everybody.



sophomore Michelle Won

Yes, because there's something for whatever you're interested in.



senior Roshan Sriram

Unconstitutional actions found in border patrol laptop search

BY Grishma Athavale & Megan Benzing

When 26-year-old Pascal Abidor, a dual U.S. and French citizen, boarded a train from Canada to New York in late May, he did not expect Custom and Border Patrol (CBP) officers to confiscate his laptop for 11 days. After he showed an Amtrak official his passport, Abidor was ordered to move to a cafe, where officials questioned him about his Hamas and Hezbollah rally pictures and forced him to unlock his computer without a search warrant.

Even after explaining that these photos pertained to his doctoral degree in the modern history of Shiites in Lebanon, Abidor was handcuffed and then jailed for three hours while the authorities looked through his computer.

Although he was eventually released, authorities still kept his computer for an 11 additional days. With the increased number of home-grown terrorists, the U.S has tightened its se-

curity measures at the airports near its borders.

Federal agents are given the right to approach any traveler and search belongings, including laptops and cell phones, without warrant.

Technically, these officers do not even need a probable cause to confiscate and roam your computer at their own will.

According a New York Times editorial, in a disappointing ruling in 2008, the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in San Francisco said that agents at a border need not meet even the low threshold of reasonable suspicion to justify a warrant-less laptop search.

If this is not an invasion of privacy, then what is? Most people store their entire lives on their computer. Anyone looking through it could come across intimate e-mails or photos, business plans and most viewed Web sites.

The Fourth Amendment says that people have the right to be secure in their persons, houses, papers and against unreasonable searches and sei-

zures. It also states that no warrants can be issued, but upon probable cause.

Our persons, houses, papers and effects should be safe against all unreasonable searches and seizures. This means that our laptops should be safe from officers at our country's borders. If the police want to search it, they should be required ask for consent.

Even if the owner denies the policeman access to his belongings, the officers should have reasonable cause to search it, which, if national security demands, trumps consent. In that case, and in any case, there must be a reason behind the warrant.

According to the New York Times, the challenge "is to strike a balance that grants sufficient leeway to protect the nation's borders without allowing the intimate details of people's lives and work to be searched, seized and copied on a whim."

By allowing the authorities to search laptops at will, the Supreme Court has diminished the Fourth Amendment rights of individuals and has set a dangerous precedent for future rulings. The government must curb its tendency to commit infringement upon its citizens' rights. ♦

If the police want to search it, they should be required to ask for consent.

THE saratoga falcon >>

FOURTH PERIOD

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.

MISSION STATEMENT

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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The Saratoga Falcon welcomes all signed letters of opinion, which are subject to editing for length, accuracy and grammar. Please send them to editors@saratogafalcon.org. For ad information, phone (408) 867-3411, ext. 222.

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Say 'bonjour' to new cafe

REVIEWERS VISIT LOCAL CREPERIE, ENJOY WARM AMBIANCE AND FRIENDLY SERVICE

BY Apeksha Sharma & Pia Mishra

Apeksha's take

The smell of warm Nutella and baking batter fills the air in Bonjour Crepes, a small bakery located in Cupertino. The menu, which offers a range of sweet and savory crepes to grilled sandwiches and beverages, has the perfect recipes to satisfy any craving.

The restaurant itself is very quaint. Although it can be hard to catch it when driving down Stevens Creek Blvd., the atmosphere embodies the warmth of any normal cafe. The tables are set up perfectly for pairs to chat and watch the passing pedestrians. There are even sitting areas set up outside of the restaurant for when the weather is just right.

The service of the restaurant is very friendly. The girl at the counter was always smiling, and the restaurant was very clean, with a few nice touches, like flowers and magazines on the tables.

From the dozens of crepes offered, I opted for a banana and nutella crepe. Within minutes of ordering, a large crepe was set on the table with whip cream on the side.



Courtesy of RAJ ABHYANKAR

Bonjour Crepes



(OUT OF FOUR)

Where: 19929 Stevens Creek Blvd., Cupertino, CA, 95014

What: Breakfast, Lunch, & Dessert Crepes

Top Pick: Strawberry & Nutella Crepe

The only trouble was that this restaurant was self-serving, so the costumer had to get his or her own forks, knives, and napkins before eating.

Pia's take

Walking into Bonjour Crepes, I was immediately taken with its charming ambiance. Christmas lights brighten the warm yellow walls and a set of comfortable chairs and a sofa makes the cafe feel even more intimate.

The menu boasts a wide variety of crepes, including a rare selection of breakfast crepes, among the many other dessert crepes. I chose to indulge in a blackberry and whipped cream crepe for the reasonable price of \$6.95.

Apeksha and I chose a cozy corner table with a nice view of the street. After a couple of minutes my crepe was delivered to our table by a cheerful waitress, but I did have to grab my utensils on my own.

The atmosphere is casual but quaint, and feels perfect for a date or quick snack with a friend. With good service, reasonable prices, and great food, Bonjour crepe will definitely be a recurring delight for my sweet tooth. ♦

STYLE FILES

McKenzi Crase, 12



Shirt, Nordstrom Rack, \$30

Watch, Nordstrom Rack, \$80

Jeans, Nordstrom, \$30

How would you define your style?

Sophisticated, classy, and sporty at times.

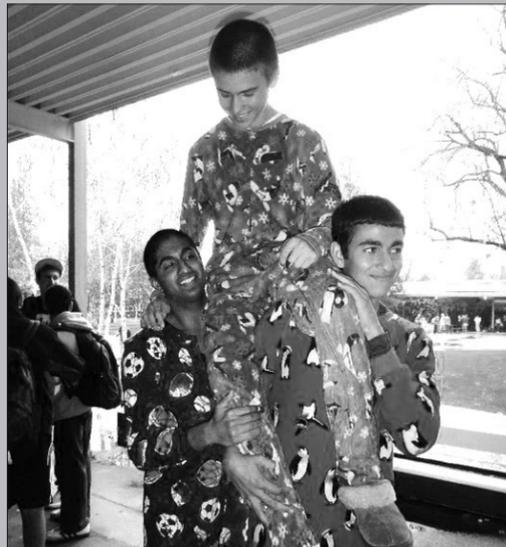
Where do you usually shop?

My favorite place to shop is a little store in Tahoe City. I also like out of the ordinary boutiques and bargain shopping.

What's your favorite piece of clothing?

I don't have one favorite piece of clothing, but I do really love my shoes.

The Saratoga Scene: Holiday Happenings



Courtesy of KENDALL CHICANOWIZ

Sophomores Neal Siganporia, Trevor Hanks, and Amin Mirzadegan show off their spirit by dressing up on Dec 17.



TALISMAN // JAYA NARASIMHAN

Chamber Choir singers Hannah Harter, Erika Lowdermilk, Varsha Ramesh, and Victor Zhang carol around classrooms on Dec 12, spreading some Christmas cheer.



Courtesy of JOYEE WOODROW

Senior Krista Chow walks through Christmas in the Park located in Downtown San Jose on Dec 21.



The Heroes Among Us

togataalks

Who is your favorite super hero?

Spider-man because he climbs up walls, even though spiders really freak me out.



senior Alison Buchanan

Batman because he is the man.



senior Tim Lynch

Green Lantern because senior Karthik Annaamalai rocked that for Halloween.



sophomore Amin Mirzadegan

From the classroom to the corps

2010 ALUMNUS JOINS MARINES TO HELP COMMUNITY

BY Anshu Sirapurapu

The Marine Corps Recruit Depot or MCRD in San Diego is an alien world within the bustling city. A stone's throw from the San Diego International Airport, the Marines are just within sight from the rest of the world, but completely isolated. Recruits are allowed no contact with the outside except for letters and are held to the highest standards of discipline and conduct. This is what 2010 alumnus of Danny Baldwin stepped into.

"It plays this crazy mind game with you," said Baldwin. "You can see civilization right there and yet you're stuck in boot camp with absolutely no contact with the outside world while getting screamed at."

Baldwin enlisted in the Marine Corps after the recruitment office came to visit SHS. The process is both complex and deeply involved. The initial enlistment requires over 40 pages of paperwork including, but not limited to, extensive background and drug checks.

"I remember when I enlisted, the first day when I swore my oath—it was a pretty great feeling," said Baldwin. "But I didn't end up going into boot camp until about six months after that."

Baldwin entered into the Delayed

Entry Program, which most high school recruits take. This allows more time to get in shape and learn more about the corps before basic training. Six months after enlistment, Baldwin was sent to the MCRD where boot camp began.

The Marines basic training is not only five weeks longer than that of the Army but also requires more training and discipline, said Baldwin.

"Most athletes at Saratoga would probably be able to handle the physical aspect of the training," said Baldwin. "But it's a lot of mental stuff; they break you down mentally and emotionally. The first five weeks they just break you down, and then you spend the next seven building yourself back up, and when you leave, you're more confident, you're strong—it's amazing what they can do."

A typical day at boot camp begins at around 4:30 or 5:30 a.m.

"They wake you up and scream at you to get your stuff on," said Baldwin. "You get dressed—completely dressed—and with your bed made all under two minutes."

After that, Marine recruits go to "chow" where they again are under

strict time constraints.

"They give you a dinner tray, about the size of a textbook and you have to eat an entire meal in about two minutes," said Baldwin. "But the food's pretty good."

After chow, depending on the phase of boot camp, Marines can go to a variety of activities: physical conditioning, classes, Marine martial arts training and drill, where they learn marching and rifle manuals.

"Everyone is different because we're all in different platoons with different drill instructors. There are even two different recruitment depots. But all of them will train you to be a Marine," said Baldwin.

Baldwin said his boot camp experience was very different from that of which he expected.

"I expected it to be a lot more physically challenging but the mental aspect caught me off guard," said Baldwin. "They're always yelling at you and making you yell back but being loud all the time makes your core stronger, gives you more lung capacity and prepares you for actual war when there's noise all the time."

Despite the difficulty of basic training, Baldwin said basic training has made a huge impact in his life. Along with increased physical strength,

greater attention to detail and more confidence, his outlook on life also changed.

"[Being in the Marines] makes you really evaluate what's important and what's not," said Baldwin. "You put yourself aside and you just do what you need to do to get the job done. You have to adapt and overcome."

After his stay at MCRD, Baldwin was sent to the Military Occupational Specialty School in North Carolina, where Marines learn specific career fields ranging from mechanics to pilots. After he finishes in February, he will rotate home for four years and be stationed as a reserve out of San Jose. After those four years of reserve, a time when he can also attend college, he will then go on active duty for two years.

"People think if you join the Marines you can't go to college, but that's [untrue]," said Baldwin. "Active duty Marines can go to college wherever they want completely for free."

Baldwin is the perfect example of a local hero. His bravery shows as he risks his life for the defense of his community.

"I would definitely encourage SHS students who are interested to enlist," said Baldwin. "Joining the Corps was the hardest things I've done but a great decision." ♦



Baldwin

Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Super Mom!



>> **Apeksha Sharma**

So imPEKable

As I surround myself with the various college applications, one question seems to appear on every one.

Who inspires you the most?

My first thought is Batman, with that catchy jingle and amazing batmobile. However, upon further contemplation I have reached my final conclusion, my mom.

Before you call me out on how cliché my response is, take a moment to see why exactly my mom can be credited with such an honor.

Whenever I attend any event

with my family, we are always regarded as the children of Shinku Sharma. The joke has become well-known. Indeed, my dad has been introducing himself as Mr. Shinku Sharma for quite some time. This is not to say that my mom is controlling and aggressive (well...not all the time, at least), but rather that she has taken pride in involving herself in various activities and events around the school. She has been involved in various organizations ever since my eldest sister came into high school in 2002.

Besides being one of the super heroes for the school, such as serving as co-president for the PTSO as well as being a co-chair for the 2011 Grad Night Committee, my mom is my own hero because of her ability to relate so well with me. As I go through the

daunting process of college applications, she has been incredibly supportive.

Another reason she can be considered one of the coolest moms ever? When searching for stations on her Sirius XM radio station, she stops at Hits 1 and dances along to everyone from Usher to Ke\$ha and proudly declares her favorite

musician to be Lady Gaga. The best part about all of this is that she even knows the words to Poker Face, which makes

singing along in the car that much more enjoyable.

In addition, my mom loves to challenge people, sometimes in all seriousness, but mostly just for fun. We once had a bet on the spelling of a certain word. Of course, knowing her use of grammar, which she still insists is spelled "grammer," I took on this

bet knowing I would prevail \$20 richer. However, to my dismay, she turned out to be correct and would not let her victory go for a week. In this sense, our relationship is more than the traditional mother-daughter bond. We are also the best of friends.

With all the good, comes bad. My mom and I don't get along all the time. In fact, there isn't one day when I don't get mad at her for something, or vice versa. But eventually, we both forget what it was in the first place that was upset us, and continue with our lives—me, to senior year; her, to the impossibly tiring job of sustaining a family while making our school a decidedly better place.

Although my mom doesn't have supernatural powers, she still saves my day all the time. This just goes to show that a hero can be anywhere, even if he or she is in the car with you, singing to the radio with your 20 bucks in her pocket. ♦

In this sense, our relationship is more than the traditional mother-daughter bond. We are also the best of friends.

Hockey mom doubles as hockey hero

BY Cecilia **Hollenhorst**

Junior Kelly Leslie skates across the ice, passing the hockey puck to her teammate, and looks to a familiar face. As usual, her mother Theresa Leslie is busy analyzing the game.

Mrs. Leslie attends nearly every one of Kelly's games, but to Kelly, her mother is more than just a parent spectator—she is a constant inspiration, role model and coach.

Although she no longer coaches Kelly's team, Mrs. Leslie, a current hockey player on both Team Abby and in the Northern California Women's Hockey League, can always understand Kelly's worries and successes in the sport.

"She tells me how I can improve my game," said Kelly. "[She also] boosts my self-esteem when it is low after I have a bad game or practice."

With hockey experience starting in her mid-20s and seven seasons of coaching with the San Jose Jr. Sharks, Mrs. Leslie's tips are an important part of Kelly's training.

Mrs. Leslie does not limit her guidance to after hockey games, but comes to Kelly's aid any time.

Kelly said her mother influences many of her choices, ranging from what to eat for lunch to what classes to take. "She is always there for me to talk to when I need to, ready to help shine a guiding light," Kelly said.

The pair's enjoyment of both playing and coaching hockey strengthens their bond and allows them to spend quality time together, despite demanding schedules. Kelly and Mrs. Leslie both help coach the San Jose Jr. Sharks 8U team and once played together in the Northern California Women's Hockey League.

"We don't have as much time as we used to," said Kelly, "but we leave some time for each other."

When Kelly is coaching younger hockey players, she tries to emulate Mrs. Leslie's

coaching strategies and make the girls laugh while explaining things in detail.

"I want to become as good a coach as my mom," Kelly said. "That's why I ask her for advice."

With her mother's influence, Kelly has developed countless similarities to Mrs. Leslie, including a deep love of literature.

"When I'm stumped about what book to read, I ask my mom for a suggestion," Kelly said. "We also used to share our journal entries with each other."

While other students' future aspirations often change, Kelly's goal has stayed simple. "I want to be as good a person as she is," Kelly said, "I want my kids to be able to say that I am their hero."

As a mother, a coach, a helping hand and a friend to Kelly, she can certainly be considered a hero. ♦



Leslie and her mom after a tournament in Michigan.

Courtesy of Kelly Leslie

The hired are inspired

TEACHERS REFLECT ON THE HEROES THEY LOOK TO FOR INSPIRATION

BY Lillian **Chen**
& Brandon **Judoprasertjo**

As a student at Aragon High School in San Mateo back in the 1970s, Caitlan Sullivan remembers the day congresswoman Jackie Speier came to speak about public safety and risk with her arm in a sling.

Having been shot just a few months ago at an airport tarmac during the 1978 Jim Jones cult investigation in Guyana, Speier had managed to survive by playing dead while bleeding to death. Through Sullivan's eyes, these actions had deemed Speier as a hero she could look up to.

"I was amazed at how elegant yet tough she was," Sullivan said. "She was super feminine with pricey clothing and I immediately doubted her intelligence. As she spoke about her life I realized how wrong I was."

After Speier's husband had lost his life, when a driver with no license or registration and a car with no brakes crashed into his car, Speier realized that action must be taken. In response to her husband's tragic accident, Speier convinced the government to pass tougher legislation regarding driving restrictions in California.

"At that time girls in the Bay Area were encouraged to become doctors and lawyers," Sullivan said. "Listening to her I realized the value of public service and helping people as she tried to help the cult members in Guyana."

"Her story meant so much to me because she weathers tragedy with such grace and does something about injustice," Sullivan said.

After listening to Speier's stories of her

life's tragedies, Sullivan knew that she had found her hero, a woman to whom she gave the fitting title, "lady justice." The term was especially meaningful for Sullivan due to the precariousness of the world she grew up in.

"I grew up in a time when the Bay Area had some scary elements—for instance, the Zodiac Killer, the Patty Hearst kidnapping and the Jim Jones tragedy," Sullivan said.

Although Sullivan prizes Speier's resilience despite her misfortunes, English teacher Suzanne Herzman holds close to her heart a hero with an adventurous personality—Indiana Jones.

"Indiana Jones reminds me to be my own stunt double," Herzman said. "He has fears, but he faces them."

Herzman has looked up to Indiana Jones ever since 1982 when she had watched Raiders of the Lost Ark. Inspired not only by his glorious victories,

Herzman looks up to the fact that Indiana Jones has faults as well. It is Jones' persistence to want to do what is right that inspires Herzman.

"There are so many truly heroic people in the world. I admire them, but I know I could never live up to Martin Luther King, Jr. or Mother Teresa," Herzman said. "There's something about Indy. He has faults, and he has to keep his ego in check. But ultimately, he wants to do what is right."

As a constant reminder, Herzman owns an Indiana Jones action figure that accompanies her on numerous sorts of adventures such as a Shakespeare Camp in Ashland, Ore., skydiving, hiking in Ireland, and with her during the summer in Senegal. Her action figure even resides on the side of the podium where students conquer their fear of public speaking. ♦

"I grew up in a time when the Bay Area had some scary elements—for instance, the Zodiac Killer, the Patty Hearst kidnapping, and the Jim Jones tragedy."

>> Teacher Caitlan Sullivan

THE ARTIST OF THE ISSUE: Yuning Yang

On top of participating in the school orchestra, taking a rigorous class load and battling college applications, senior Yuning Yang still finds time to tackle on her favorite hobby of drawing. She first started drawing and taking lessons in eighth grade when she first saw her cousin's artworks. Yang is planning on majoring in art.

Q: How did you start?

A: I was looking at my cousin's artworks and I thought, "Hmm, I want to be able to draw like that!" So she introduced me to her teacher.

Q: What do you like about drawing the most?

A: It's really calming and it takes my mind off of school.

Q: What styles of drawing do you do?

A: I paint: I do oil, watercolor, charcoal, pastel and sketching.

Q: What kind of drawing style is your favorite?

A: My favorite is oil painting because it's so simple and easy, but the colors come out so nicely.

Q: What is your favorite piece you've

drawn and why?

A: I like the mystery man/woman hiding behind the rose because I put a lot of time into it, and I'm fairly pleased with how it turned out.

Q: How often is your art class?

A: Every Saturday, I go to my teacher's house in Palo Alto for three hours. Occasionally, I go to figure drawing class on tuesday nights for three hours too.

Q: What kinds of things, specifically, do you like to draw?

A: I like drawing things that relate to nature, like animals, people, plants, scenery, etc.

Q: Are you going to pursue drawing in college? Why?

A: Of course! I really like art, and it doesn't matter to me that the industry is really competitive and it's hard to make money. It makes me happy to do it.

Q: Is the application process any different? If so, how?

A: The application process is basically the same, but the only difference is that for the art schools, I have to complete my portfolio.



Yang



Courtesy of YUNING YANG

Two of Yang's favorite pieces she's completed during her high school years.

Q: When do you find time to draw with school work and such a busy schedule?

A: Most of the time, I draw during my classes. But if I can find a good solid chunk of time, then I'll work on a piece. If I only have 20 minutes, it's not really worthwhile to set up everything and clean up everything after. But I also doo-

dle like crazy in class.

Q: Who/what do you draw your inspiration from?

A: I just draw whatever I think looks pretty. Jellyfish, roses, swans, faces, you name it. I don't really draw inspiration from any particular artist. ♦

BY Lauren Kuan

Crazy outfits result in crazy success

BY Apeksha Sharma

Imagine this. Lady Gaga wearing a pair of jeans and Ke\$ha without glitter all over her face. One would say that this is normal, whereas I would say that this is madness. Although the outfits are not something a normal student would graciously decide to wear to their prom, they do their job in turning heads and getting recognition.

Katy Perry recently appeared on Sesame Street, trying to impersonate Elmo in

her cleverly designed outfit. It was later revealed that Perry's choice in clothing made the segment unable to be aired for television.

Perry has been dressing in provocative outfits, such as a walking Candyland and casino since her arrival to the music scene.

Embodying the persona of her version of a "California girl," Perry has been evoking the teenage dream of her fans since her first single made her a star. It should not have been a surprise to the

production staff at Sesame Street to see a fashion icon such as Perry bare such an outlandish outfit.

Lady Gaga also gets quite a bit of beef (pun intended) from her various wardrobe adventures. To Gaga, it seems as though every day is Halloween—from donning bubble dress to an over-sized Kermit the frog gown, she consistently stuns (and often scares) the public.

Yet, these outfits are not only a flamboyant display of creative license, they are also an ingenious ploy to increase

publicity; indeed, if Gaga had taken the down-to-Earth country girl approach such as Taylor Swift and other mainstream artists, her popularity would not be as vast as it is today.

Half of what makes musicians such as Perry and Gaga who they are is the music they produce, but the other half is the outfit that everyone anticipates whenever they step out onto the street. This "bad romance" with conventional-ity is turning out to be just what musicians need. ♦

BANKSY WITHDRAWAL



>> Anoop Galivanche

I'm in the aLOOP

I had felt very avant garde the day I e-mailed Banksy, the graffiti artist who became an underground cult figure through his work in major metropolises and politically controversial areas. Doves of errant teenagers treat his anarchist graffiti more like shrines of congregation rather than vandalized walls.

Everything about the e-mail was obviously hip: the obscure '80s font that I had meticulously chosen from thousands available on Google. The fact that I had signed off not with a "Sincerely yours, Anoop Galivanche" but rather with a very frank and very ironic "—A"; and even the time that I sent the e-mail—3:17 a.m. on Thanksgiving. I wanted to relay to Banksy that I didn't celebrate Thanksgiving in the hope that it would be a commonality between us—he's British.

Yet, in spite of the calculated safeguards I had put in place, I knew that

Banksy received e-mails like mine every day from similarly misguided would-be delinquents who contented themselves by planning revolutions that would ultimately never be executed.

I e-mailed Banksy asking him to come to Saratoga and endow our mostly boring town with one of his marvelous creations. Granted, Saratoga probably isn't a very Banksy-worthy venue. But then again, what is? Banksy has graffitied walls from Germany to the Gaza strip, Dehradun to Dublin, Toronto to Tobago. Would he find it in his heart, I asked, to come to Saratoga?

My obsession with Banksy began as many of my obsessions do, with an innocent Wikipedia search. In this particular search, I was attempting to plan a trip to Palestine that I would likely never go on.

I take no sides in the Gaza conflict, but I do appreciate a good bowl of Palestinian hummus (which differs from its Israeli counterpart in that it is traditionally served with condiments like olive oil and pine nuts). Clicking on hyperlinked terms that looked promising led me to Banksy.

The only words that comes to mind when I see a Banksy piece are, unfortunately, unprintable. His subjects are spontaneous, his colors muted. He is a Picasso reincarnate, at once abstract and



Courtesy of FANPOP.COM

One of the many famous pieces of graffiti, by Banksy, located on the streets of London.

unpretentious. But many of his works do have a loose central theme: They are indubitably ironic.

In half of his graffiti, other graffiti artists are depicted graffitiing. Unexpected? Not really. Brilliant? Yes. Banksy is also fond of other subjects, ranging from rats to homeless children.

Half of Banksy's allure stems from his evasion of categorization. The other half stems from his evasion of

everything else. No one knows his true identity, and only a handful of reporters have ever talked to him face-to-face.

One of these reporters, Simon Hattenfield, wrote of his difficulties in getting Banksy on the phone even after he had formally procured an interview. "I called his phone," Hattenfield wrote, "and got a response...two weeks later."

I just hope Banksy is better with e-mails. ♦

earthscience.com, nasa.com

Teacher Lisa Cochrum:
"You ask why? Seriously?"



FALCON // ALEX JU

pjyim.com

Terrance Wang (10):
"I check the website almost every day because I usually don't do the homework, and so I forget the homework the next day and go back to check it."



pokemonepisodes.com

Rebecca Chen (11):
"I get to relive my childhood and watch pokemon episodes."



google.com

Nova Ng (9):
"My favorite website is Google because whenever I don't understand something, I can just google it up and find the answer right away. It comes in handy a lot when I'm doing homework."



stumbleupon.com

Olivia Whiting (10):
"You check these boxes for your interests and then you 'stumble' upon random websites that have to do with the stuff you like. You find a bunch of interesting things like funny facts, quotes, recipes and articles."



myrecipes.com

Vivian Wang (9):
"I use it when I need to make delicious dishes for dinner!"



aeries.lgsuhd.org

Ruchie Bhardwaj (11):
"It's good to check and keep up with my grades."



MY

HOMEPAGE

neopets.com

Zach Bair (12):
"I love using the lab ray to change my neopets color and species."



ellusionist.com

Wesley Sun (10):
"It's a really good magic website, and they also have a lot of interesting tricks to browse around and learn. I just really enjoy doing magic when I'm at home; it feels nice to learn new things and surprise people."



IS...

tumblr.com

Cody Cai (10):
"I like Tumblr because it is fun being able to follow your friends and seeing what they blog about on a daily basis. It gives me a chance to blog & express a different side of me that not a lot of people normally see."



fanfiction.net

Sophie Raggett (11):
"Fanfiction is literature put up by amateur authors who want to write without having to create their own characters and setting. I appreciate good writing and their universe."



teamliquid.com

Albert Gu (12):
"I like following the StarCraft scene, and the site has all the latest news related to it!"



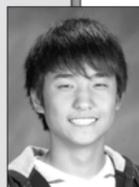
lefthandedtoons.com

Sophia Wang (11):
"It's really funny; these right-handed guys draw comics with their left hands!"



freerice.com

Yeon-ho Kim (12):
"I like it because I think it's a good use of technology to help people. With every correct question answered, the website donates a grain of rice to a poor country."



loadedboards.com

Patrick Mattes (12):
"They make the best longboards on the face of the planet and mine is a loaded longboard. They also have crazy, insane longboarding videos."



quizlet.com

Shreyas Doshi (10):
"It's extremely useful for many different things because it has online flashcards. It helps you study better than just looking at a normal sheet of paper."



Sherlock Holmes and the case of locked rooms

1. Science Wing

Science teachers forbid students to enter what lies beyond their class's back doors: the science hallway. The science hallway is a vast tunnel of assorted equipment, lab materials and chemicals.

About the only time students are permitted is when they are on fire or have come in contact with chemicals, at which point they are allowed to enter the hallway and use the nearby pull-down showers displaced every other classroom. Still, the science hallway is, for the most part, unknown to many students.

The hallway has tall wooden cabinets on opposing sides of the walls, containing equipment, replacements of glassware and lab materials.

Past a locked, black room, there is a dim circular area, similar to a kitchen pantry, that has shelves of chemicals used for labs. The long hallway has big tables littered with multiple papers, binders and books, and freshly set up labs used for the day.

Because the science hallway is so vast, sections of the hallway have a poster representing that area—more specifically, Guantanamo Bay, the Bay of Pigs, Monterey

Bay, and the Amazon River Basin.

Beyond the practicality of easy accessible equipment for labs, teachers and custodians have experienced paranormal activity in the hallway when they are staying at school late.

"I don't [believe in ghosts], but when you're here at 8:30 [p.m.], you kind of do," said science teacher Kelly Nicholson. Her first encounter with the ghost was in 2007, when her husband was in graduate school and they carpooled. She would stay at school late at night and every night starting at 8:30 p.m., Nicholson would hear three, loud and deliberate footsteps echoing chillingly from around Thomson's classroom in the hallway. Every time she peeked out to see who caused the sound, no one was there.

According to Nicholson, the ghost is widely assumed to be that of former teacher and football and track coach Ray Goñi.

Witnesses believe the ghost of Goñi, who died of cancer, walks to the school's gym, cutting through the back parking lot and science hallway because the science building was not built during his time there. ♦

2. Room 902

Located in the music quad, room 902 is also one of the lesser known rooms on campus. It has a set of back doors, a set of double doors in the English wing next to the back parking lot. However, these doors cannot be opened from the outside.

The room is used to build and store sets for plays and musicals and can be accessed from a door in the music quad, next to the robotics

room. The scene shop looks like an ideal workspace. Much of the wall is painted with intriguing figures, like a ninja and a horse.

Wooden tables sit around the room, in the middle, and against the walls on top of a tiled floor. A wooden table in the middle of the room is partially smoothed over with metal, which is part of a table saw; such equipment is used for woodwork. ♦

3. Library back room

Every day, students go into the library to do their homework, look at the computers, check out books or just hang out with friends. However, they are largely unaware of the hidden back rooms of the library, blocked by the library's front desk.

The room furthest to the left contains a bounty of periodicals, where the library's magazine archive is stored. It feels otherworldly just looking at the floor-to-ceiling shelves packed with magazines, a few of which date back to the 1940s. Most of these periodicals are now available for access on the library's online databases. The library, has nonetheless still decided to keep all the periodicals as some of the is-

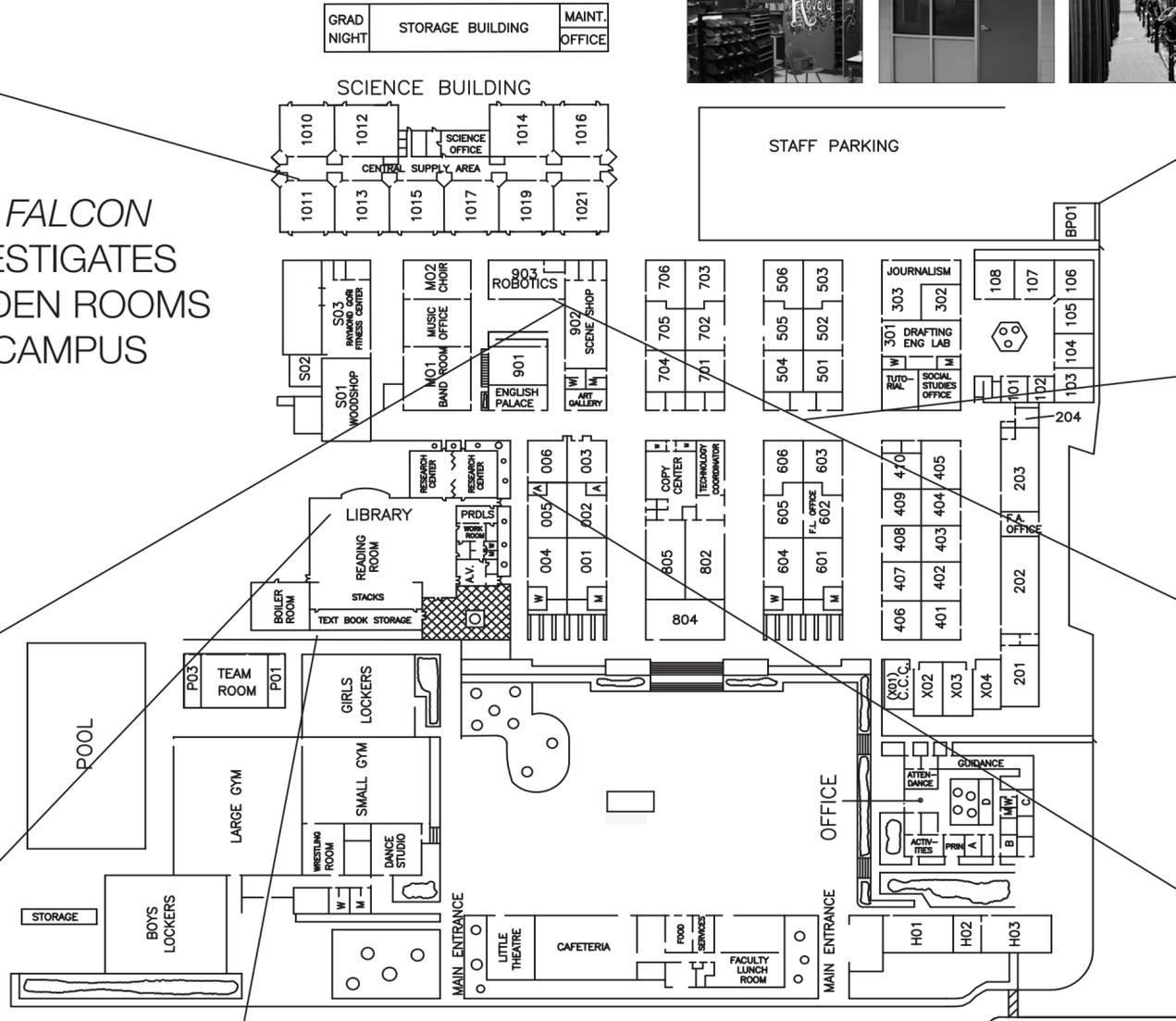
sues on the database only date back twenty years and has not found another use for the space.

There is a cabinet in the same room that contains all the school's yearbooks, beginning from the 1960 book to the 2010 book. Students can only look at the yearbooks with special permission, since they are "absolutely irreplaceable."

"This yearbook has Steven Spielberg in it," said librarian Kevin Heyman, picking up the 1965 yearbook. "If we lose it, it's gone forever. [The yearbooks] are available, but we guard them pretty closely."

Beyond the periodical room is a room full of books and a large table and then an audio and visual storage room. ♦

THE FALCON INVESTIGATES HIDDEN ROOMS ON CAMPUS



4. Boiler Room

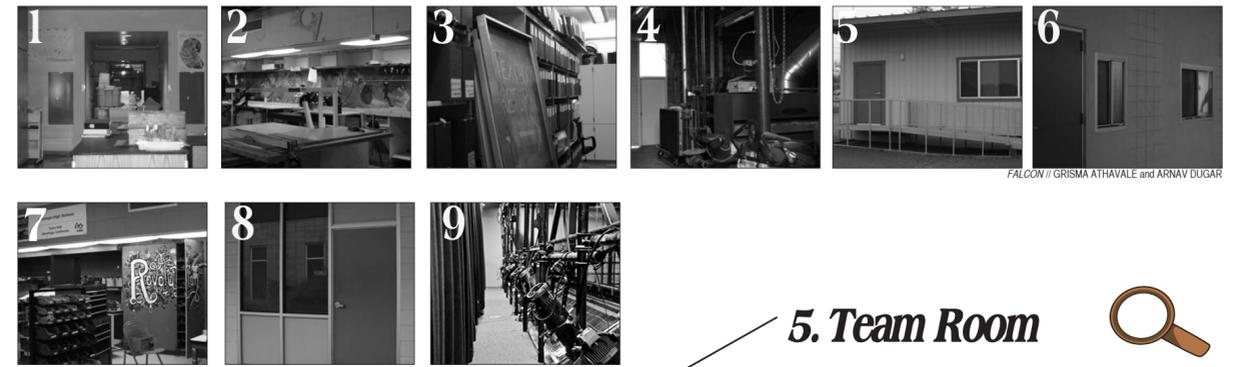
The boiler room is opposite of the Sports Medical Center building, right next to the school's swimming pool. It is a tall building about 2,000 square feet with long narrow windows covered in cobwebs. The windows are built high above the boiler room's doors, meant to stream in sunlight into the musty and dark room and to not have passerby's look into the room. Everyone who walks by it seems to gaze over its mysterious and seemingly vacant presence. It is one of the original buildings of Saratoga High.

According to Brian Moran, the plant operations supervisor, the boiler room houses two boilers that provides heat to

the cafeteria, gym complex, faculty lounge and wood shop. In 1959, the boilers heated the entire campus. The maintenance department members used to visit the boiler room daily to turn the boilers on and off.

Now, the boiler room is a storage room for risers used in the McAfee Performing Arts Center or the Little Theater for staging, electrical carts, the scissor lift, ladders, spare desks and wooden platforms that Redwood Middle School borrows from time to time.

"It's a great space to have because it does provide us [maintenance department] some additional storage," Moran said. ♦



5. Team Room

Now called the team room, the health portable is located next to the swimming pool and the girl's locker room entrance at the back of the gym. The room is currently used as a meeting place for sports teams, as well as a place for them to discuss tactics. Sports uniforms are also stored there. As most upperclassmen remember, the team room was once the health portable where health classes were held. There are still indications of its previous

use left, including old newspaper clippings of health-related stories. There are also many sub-offices in the building on both sides of the room that house miscellaneous sports-related equipment.

Even more intriguing is that before the journalism room (303) was built in 2000; all journalism classes and staffs were housed in the portable for four years in the early 2000s, after their old room was destroyed to build the library. ♦

6. Language Department Office

The Language Department "Office," is the front building of the 300 section. It is a low building with a couple sliding windows on the side and a blue door.

In previous years, the language department was the front building of the 500 wing, but due to lack of space, the school switched the teachers to their current office this year.

The room is mysterious because there is rarely anyone there. The space is also shared by the custodial and electrical

staffs, so the language teachers prefer to meet in Spanish teacher Arnaldo Rodriguez's room to escape the smell of chemicals.

Nevertheless, the room is still a storage place for the department's supplies, as well as for the junior class's props from events such as Homecoming, since Rodriguez is the junior class adviser. A smaller storage room connected on the inside to the office houses some of the custodial and electrical supplies including a mountain of toilet paper. ♦

7. Robotics room

The robotics room is located in the corner of the music quad. This room is the shop that the Mechanical Science and Engineering Team (M-SET) uses. This room contains power tools that the team uses to build the robot for the For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST) Robotics Competition (FRC) as well as other mechanical contraptions.

"It is the central location for all

things M-SET. We keep all of our supplies, tools, and technology in there," said junior and M-SET member Adrian Bedard. "It often looks messy, however everything has a place."

Very few enter the room during school hours, since most of the activity happens in the evenings after school or during the weekends. Also, most of the FIRST competition work happens during second semester. ♦

8. Office next to 005

Have you ever wondered what's really in the many rooms labeled "office" scattered around campus? There are many, yet most of them seem virtually untouched.

With the assistance of maintenance worker Barton Fitzgerald, we looked behind the door of a small office next to room 005, next to the library and re-

search room building.

The opened doors revealed a white, squeaky clean, tiny room. A rectangular table had been placed in the middle, and was accompanied by a cushioned chair. A couple shelves were filled with what seemed to be textbooks. The room, used as an extra English office, is pristine, undisturbed by the teenagers. ♦

9. McAfee catwalk

Aside from the rooms backstage, there are several hidden places within the McAfee. Above the audience, there is a catwalk in which the lights are hung. Behind the audience, there are two rooms. The bottom one contains the controls for the lighting as well as microphones and other hardware. The

top room contains the two spotlights. On the left side of the stage, there is another catwalk that gives access to the fly-in rigging. Very few people get the opportunity to see the rigging inside the theater. Adrian Stapleton, the manager of the McAfee, oversees all of these rooms. ♦

>> online extra

To learn more and see pictures of the different mysterious room on campus please visit:

www.saratogafalcon.org

contributions from: Denise Lin, Kelly Liu, Grishma Athavale, Sabrina Cismas and Arnav Dugar

The evolution of cheating

"Psst ... hey Susie, what's the answer to question 3?" reads a comic strip from Calvin and Hobbes. The comic brings back a "nostalgic" view of traditional cheating—whispered conversations and quick peeks at peers' papers. However, the abundance of technology in and out of the classroom has led to a vast increase in cheating techniques in recent years, although "old-fashioned" approaches are still widespread.

A survey of 517 students done by the Falcon suggests that cheating is most prevalent on homework.

"It's easy to catch students copying each other's assignments because they don't even try to hide it," said campus supervisor Jeanine Sevilla. "At least they should try to hide in a corner or something. It is a complete disrespect to teachers when they spend so much time creating worksheets, and students just copy them off of each other."

Sevilla said copying was the only type of cheating that she sees because she "cannot access students' e-mails and computers." However, with the advancement of the Internet, students are exploiting additional methods of cheating on homework.

The Falcon spoke to a senior who often uses cramster.com, a website that contains solutions to questions from popular textbooks. Although the site is aimed to assist stumped students and teachers, the student claimed that he only copied the solutions presented online.

"It only costs a small fee, and you have access to a bunch of textbooks," he said. "You can copy the answers and the work that goes into the problem, so your teacher could never catch you cheating. It's well worth the price."

This isn't to say, however, that cheating is limited to copying homework. With the increasing accessibility of smartphones and Internet-enabled iPods, students are capable of not only receiving unfair disadvantages through the Internet or from a friend but can also cheat on in-class activities, like assessments and group discussions. The relatively small size of such devices allow students to conceal them.

Use of technology to cheat

A junior who spoke on condition of anonymity said he uses his iPod Touch regularly to cheat on Spanish vocabulary tests. Simple flashcard applications that can be obtained for free on the iTunes App Store can be configured, he said, for quick and easy access of definitions and explanations.

"Come on, you're talking about something the size of your palm," he said. "Who's going to notice?"

The most common form of cheating on major assignments, however, is the "cheating ring" formula, one formed by students who will inform their peers on information on a test. Such a system allows for a symbiotic process where friends can receive answers on tests in multiple classes.

The problem with these cheating groups is that they are nearly impossible to catch since no student is actively cheating in the classroom. Since students obtain exam questions and answers beforehand, no cheating takes place while under teacher supervision.

As a result, such a technique is considered commonplace among many students. In the poll, 78.4 percent of students reported receiving specific exam questions in advance was the most

common form of cheating.

"Students talking about test questions and answers is pretty prevalent, especially during junior year because the classes become so much harder," said junior Ivan Lee, who has encountered many such situations in his three AP classes. "A small hint on a test can give you an advantage over others, and that can be the difference between a B and an A. But it's also unfair for the people who took the test first, especially in classes with curved grades."

Teacher responses

Teachers' attempts to limit cheating vary across the spectrum. AP and Honors Chemistry teacher Kathy Nakamatsu employs a strict testing system in which she hands out each test individually, creates different versions of each test, and prohibits students from touching their pencils before the test commences.

Other teachers, such as AP Biology and Honors Chemistry teacher Bob Kucer, employ a grading curve. Kucer's method works so that test scores are based off the highest score in each individual period. This system counteracts the possibility of higher scores in later periods. Other teachers are more hands off in their approach to combating cheating, saying that students are only hurting themselves in the long run.

Most students feel that requesting teachers to be more alert during exams would help rectify the problem of cheating.

"[Most cheating occurs] in class, and almost anything can happen because teachers usually sit at their desks and don't really notice these things," said one student in a survey. The poll indicated that 65.7 percent of students feel having teachers be more alert during tests would help alleviate the problem of cheating. But one respondent summarized the inherent shortcoming of any methods to combat cheating.

"No matter what teachers do, we'll find a way around it," he said. "The only way to stop cheating is to quell it in our own ranks." ♦

—Anshu Siripurapu and Will Edman

pertinent percentages

61.8% The percentage of respondents who cited parental pressure as the primary motivation to cheat

70.5% The percentage of students surveyed who believe that technology like smartphones, iPods, and computers has increased cheating

48.5% The percentage of students who said that they believed cheating should be addressed through the assignments of harsher punishments for those caught.

>> Anshu Siripurapu and Albert Gu



Cheating becomes the rule, not the exception

By Anika Jhalani & Priyanka Nookala

"I rely [sic] need this...or else im [sic] gonna [sic] fail," reads the first of a flurry of text messages sent by a student to a Falcon reporter during a test during a recent period.

An undertone of desperation is present in each text message, and judging by the increasing number of exclamation points in each one, the student is clearly expecting a reply.

The Falcon later interviewed the student in question. He was, at first, reluctant to discuss his dishonest habits but finally gave in after being guaranteed anonymity.

When asked about what motivates him to cheat, the student pointed to a general climate of academic dishonesty at the school.

"If everyone cheats and I don't, then I'll be the odd one out," he said. "It's a level playing field because everyone does it."

A survey conducted by the Falcon indicated rampant cheating on campus—over 70 percent of the more than 500 respondents said they had cheated at least once in their high school career. A quarter of them indicated that they cheated in school on a regular basis, citing the pervasiveness of cheating as the main reason. Parental pressure rang in as a close second.

One respondent wrote, "If I don't get a [sic] good

grade, then my parents will make my life miserable."

The root of the problem seems to be that many students do not consider many forms of cheating unethical, despite the assembly that the administration holds for every grade level at the start of each year outlining the different forms of cheating.

Cheating has gone from being the exception to becoming the rule, according to many. The survey showed that the majority of students believe that

"The thing with cheating is everyone does it. It's stupid if you don't do it. You fall behind."

>> Anonymous student

cheating is a part of school, just as studying and preparing for tests is essential to ensure a better grade. One student said, "The thing with cheating is everyone does it. It's not even immoral if you don't do it. In fact, it's stupid if you don't. You fall behind."

As teachers crack down on cheating, some students have found a new way to cope with the situation. Become better cheaters.

"Cheating takes skill. It might seem funny, but

it really does," said the same student. "It is a way to beat the system, and tons of people put more effort into cheating than they would into homework. [Cheating] just requires less brainpower."

Some disagree with the practice, but only when it interferes with their own grades.

"I hate when people cheat on tests, but don't care about it on homework," said another anonymous student. "It takes a couple minutes to do homework so it's not like they are gaining an edge. But if you are dumb enough to cheat on a test, you are dumb enough to get caught. That's what I think."

But most people at the school remain bystanders in the issue. Whether they cheat or not, they just accept it as part of the culture.

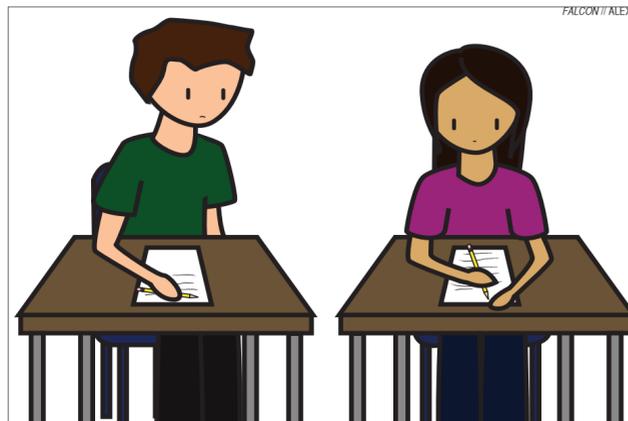
"Cheating is old news. It's like smoking weed. It happens. Get over it," he said.

Math and child psychology teacher Laressa Ridge has gone from being concerned and disappointed to being outright annoyed with the amount of cheating at the school.

"Cheating is not only unfair to students, it is troublesome for teachers as well," she said.

Ridge acknowledges that there is a group of students who refuse to cheat, and hopes that those who choose not to follow the rules are cognizant of the immorality of cheating.

"The problem with cheating is the ethical dilemma. Students who cheat have to live with the fact that they don't deserve the grade they got," she said. ♦



WHILE MORE TRADITIONAL CHEATING TECHNIQUES, SUCH AS THE STEREOTYPICAL PEERING-OVER-SHOULDER DEPICTED ON THE LEFT, ARE STILL EMPLOYED, STUDENTS HAVE ADOPTED MORE SOPHISTICATED METHODS UTILIZING SMARTPHONES, IPODS, AND TEXT MESSAGING, SHOWN ON RIGHT, THAT OFTEN ELUDE DETECTION.

Academic dishonesty irritates honest students

By Olivia Chock & Albert Gu

On a Wednesday in December, junior Sneha Shivkumar's clock indicates that it's 2 in the morning, but she could swear that it's 4. The two goals she scored at her soccer game hours before are faint memories.

Her primary concerns at the moment are twofold: finishing her math homework and maybe getting a few hours of sleep. Copious amounts of coffee prevent sleep from completely consuming her.

Shivkumar is shortly awakened by her alarm clock, and she rushes to get to school. Though her performance in first period is dubious, by break, she has acclimated to the hustle and bustle of campus. Imagine her surprise when, as she makes her way to the locker, a friend taps her on the shoulder and nonchalantly asks her if she can copy her math work. Surprise escalates to frustration when Shivkumar learns that the friend in question slept at a cool 10 the previous night.

"I could have just as easily not done the homework, and copied it off someone else," Shivkumar said, four days later. "If I can make that sacrifice, other people should too."

Cheating in school carries a heavy connotation. The term itself conjures a vision of stealing notes, buying essays and hacking teachers' computers. What many students, as Shivkumar can attest to, do not realize is that cheating also

encompasses acts as innocuous as copying a 5-point assignment.

"I think most people cheat on minor assignments, even though they are the easiest to do legitimately," said junior Sankash Shankar, who frequently spends his lunches in the library. Indeed, a short walk through the library during lunch will often reveal several students furtively copying friends' papers.

Junior Annie Barco said that she is accustomed to people asking to copy her homework but shrugs them off.

"Before it was really hard for me to know how to say no to my friends that wanted to copy homework, but I've recently learned how to just explain that I've taken a lot of time on homework and it wouldn't be fair if I shared my answers," Barco said.

Junior Rebecca Smerdon employs a similar technique when friends ask her about tests they will take that she has already completed.

"When people ask me what was on a test that I have just taken, I tell them whatever the teacher has already said," Smerdon said.

When word of test material does get out, there are sweeping implications. Students in later periods often do better than students in earlier periods, thus distorting the difficulty of the test, and robbing students in earlier periods of a lower curve.

"It annoys me when people ask what the homework is or what's on the test because I spend a lot of time studying and doing homework," Smerdon said. "If other people did too, they wouldn't need to cheat." ♦

>> togetalks

Do you think cheating has become an accepted practice?

I realize many people partake in cheating, but I still feel that it doesn't make it an accepted practice. It's just not right.



junior Krishnan Raman

I see people cheating all the time and I just can't believe they do it in public. Still, it is a big problem.



sophomore Neil Prasad

As a senior, I've seen my fair share of cheating. At first, I thought nobody did it, but now I realize many do.



senior Soorya Rangan

Sync or swim: freshman competes with 'Aquamaids'

BY Stanley Yip

With its dazzling acrobatics and incredible flexibility, gymnastics is clearly a sport, but what if it's done underwater? According to freshman Isabel Malcolmson, a member of nationally ranked synchronized swimming team, "Santa Clara Aquamaids," synchronized swimming is just like underwater gymnastics and should be considered a sport.

"People think [synchronized swimming] is just moving around," Malcolmson said. "[Synchronized swimming is about] the ability to move gracefully in the water."

Along with movement, muscle strength is also a key factor in synchronized swimming. Malcolmson said she does a lot of muscle strengthening exercises on top of practicing in the water for over 25 hours per week.

Like cheerleading, such strength conditioning is required for lifts, as synchronized swimmers are also in

danger of injuries from unsuccessful mounts.

"When [synchronized swimmers] do [lifts], people can land on other people's heads," she said.

Synchronized swimming competitions are usually held in the summer, near the end of June, Malcolmson said.

"There's not that many competitions but [the Santa Clara Aquamaids] go to a lot of out-of-the-country competitions, like in Peru or Italy," she said.

The synchronized swimming teams are judged in several ways during competition.

"In individual judging, you do a certain move and [the judges] rank you out of ten," she said. "My age group usually scores 8's and 7's."

Another type of competitive swimming is a "swim-through," or a performance, as a team.

"The judges score [the team] out of 100," she said. "My age group usually scores around the 70s, while Olympic teams score in the 90s."



Courtesy of ISABEL MALCOLMSON

Freshman Isabel Malcolmson performs a move with the Santa Clara Aquamaids.

While performing, Malcolmson said she holds her breath for around 20 seconds underwater while simultaneously doing a move. She said she can hold her breath for a minute to a minute and

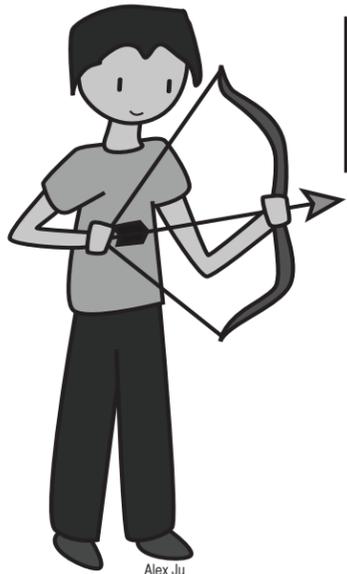
half without any movement involved. To those who say it isn't a sport, "Try holding your breath and doing these crazy moves underwater," Malcolmson said. ♦

Is that

REALLY

a

SPORT?



Alex Ju

STUDENTS DEBATE AND DEFEND THE LEGITIMACY OF THEIR SO CALLED SPORTS.



Alex Ju

Bulls-eye! Kim sisters say archery takes athleticism

BY Albert Gu

Archery—one of the oldest, not to mention toughest pastimes, is featured prominently in many legends as a symbol of strength and skill. But in modern culture, it has adopted a reputation of being a easy game.

Some people think that archery's lack of movement, physical contact and offense/defense do not qualify it as a sport.

Additionally, the absence of interaction with other competitors seems to contradict the spirit of athleticism and competition.

To many, archery seems more of a leisurely activity or hobby than a physical sport.

Sisters senior Grace Kim and junior Tiffany Kim, who have been practicing archery for about five years and competed numerous times, disagree with this label.

"A lot of people say archery isn't a

sport because they think all you do is stand there and shoot," said Grace, "but it requires a lot of strength and endurance."

According to Grace, archers need to undergo all the training conventional athletes do, including cardio and weight lifting. Strength training is particularly important for archery because it is needed both to draw the bow and keep it steady.

Additionally, a stronger bow lets the arrow fly more smoothly and helps to hit farther targets.

"I have to hit targets up to 70 meters away," said Grace. "A stronger bow helps me go through, especially if I'm shooting in the rain or wind."

Grace pulls a bow with 34 pounds of resistance but says that bows can go up to 40 or even 50 pounds.

Tiffany, who is a member of the national "Junior Dream Team" and ranked top 10 in the nation for her division last year, adds that good endurance as well



Courtesy of GRACE KIM

Senior Grace Kim shoots at her 70 meter target at the JOAD Outdoor National Championships in Pennsylvania, where she was ranked 19th in the nation.

as pure strength is essential for competitions.

"At competitions, you will be pulling for two days for four hours a day, hitting targets from varying distances" said Tif-

fany. "When you get tired, it's much harder to shoot straight."

And for those who are still unconvinced, just try archery in its original form. Rabbits for dinner, anyone? ♦

Conn. judge rules cheer not a sport; girls beg to differ

BY Aanchal Mohan
& Allison Toh

They boost spirit at sporting events and compete at competitions, and even most colleges accept cheer as a sport. But a Connecticut judge dismayed cheerleaders nationwide when he ruled cheer as not a sport during the summer.

"I'd like to look into what evidence that judge was basing their ruling on," senior cheerleader Talia Balma said. "As far as I can see there is not anything that seriously separates cheer from any other sport besides the fact we also support other sports while supporting our own."

The judge's reasoning was that cheer was too disorganized and underdeveloped to be considered a real sport.

Even at the high school level, many students say cheer is in no way athletic.

"I think that movies and TV shows have a lot to do with it," senior cheerleader Erin Wong said. "Cheerleaders have such a stereotype of being dumb and snobby and they're perceived to have no capabilities of doing anything athletic."

Students who claim that cheer is not a sport assert that cheer does not require as much athletic ability as other sports do.

"It takes legitimate athletic ability to be a good cheerleader because it takes a lot of coordination and strength to stunt, tumble and even do the dances," Balma said. "Even though we don't go to the weight room, we basically lift weights every day stunting."

While it may not be considered a sport by many, cheer has the longest season of

all the sports on campus.

"We start the season beginning of August, we don't end until nationals which is the end of March, and tryouts for the next year begin in May and we have practice for a few weeks then," Wong said.

What makes cheer qualify as a sport is that it works toward a common goal, added Wong.

To support their case in why cheer is a sport, Balma looked up the definition of the word in the dictionary; sport—noun: an athletic activity requiring skill or physical prowess and often of a competitive nature racing, baseball etc. Though the definition does not specifically state cheer, it does not state soccer or football either, making it just as qualified to be considered a sport, she said.

"There are sports like skiing and cycling that are considered sports even though they compete for a place instead of a score at the end of the game (which is what cheer does at competitions)," Balma said. "Plus, curling is awesome, but if it is considered a sport, I think cheer should be too."

Senior Kent Paisley refuses to classify cheer as a sport because he says it seems to only consist of them being on the sidelines.

"[The cheer team] is there to boost spirit, the crowd doesn't focus on them, they focus on the team," Paisley said.

When asked to define a sport, Paisley said a sport had to include the athlete reacting to its surroundings.

"In cheer they just compete, they don't really react," said Paisley.

However, Paisley does not deny the



TALISMAN // JAYA NARASIMHAN

Cheerleaders Anika Jhalani, Talia Balma and Sarah Hull pump up the crowd on Oct. 22.

difficulty that cheer requires.

"I'm not saying cheer isn't hard, it is. But it is not a sport."

Though it still bothers cheerleaders that many perceive cheer to not be a sport, many cheerleaders have learned

to move on and ignore what others say.

"It doesn't really matter to me what other people think," Balma said. "I know how dedicated I am and how hard I train to be good at it. Nothing else matters." ♦



TALISMAN // KYLIE TSENG



TALISMAN // KYLIE TSENG

LEFT: Sophomore Sanjeev Suresh marches in the percussion section during the halftime during the Los Gatos football game on Oct. 22. ABOVE: Sophomore Justin Hang plays the baritone during practice.

A sport with a different beat: Is band truly athletic?

BY Allison Toh
& Stanley Yip

Without a question, band members spend many hours practicing and attending competitions. Their hard effort has led members to believe band qualifies as a sport; participants even receive PE credit for taking this elective. However, others outside of band feel differently, which has led to numerous debates if band should be considered as a sport.

"I know a lot of people claim that it's not a sport because they've never tried it," said junior mellophone player Connie Wang. "But if you try it, it's really tiring."

The marching band is mainly recognized for its halftime shows, which entertain the crowd during the Falcons' football season. Its season lasts

from mid-August to around the end of November.

"People are like, 'Oh you just walk around the field' but it's actually fast paced," Wang said. "You have to run up ramps, jump down from stuff, pose, and play music at the same time so it's actually a lot harder than what everybody thinks."

However, some members see band as more of an activity that has some athletic aspects.

"It just take up a lot of time, probably even more than other sports," sophomore Todd Nguyen, a saxophone player, said. "We're still doing exercise, but not as much as other sports. It's not as hard as like, track or swimming."

Nguyen, who also swims, explained that because of the immense amount of strenuous conditioning required from

swimming, he sees the warm-ups in band as simple exercises.

Freshman Rohan Hardikar thinks differently. A soccer and band member, Hardikar feels as if band requires the same amount of athleticism as any other sport.

"You do a lot of physical activity along with playing [instruments] because you march around," said Hardikar. "You have to put a lot of effort into it. Band has Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday rehearsals, which is pretty much your entire fall season gone towards band."

Other than physical ability, Hardikar also said that band requires the same, or even a greater, amount of mental thinking as other sports.

Senior football player Greg Johnson thinks that although band puts many hours into what they do, it should not

be considered a sport since it lacks the degree of physical intensity as other sports.

"I greatly respect [the band] for playing at games," Johnson said. "But I can't say it's a sport because they don't put themselves through what other athletes have to go through."

To be considered a sport, Johnson said a particular activity must have a goal to strive for, but must also have competition and the sense of unity or family within the team.

"[Band members] don't really know what it feels like to share the brotherhood or family that other sports feel because band has so many people in it," Johnson said.

While its qualification as a sport is fiercely debated among students, marching band remains as one of the most popular activities on campus. ♦

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Preseason victories boost team morale

BY Karthik Annaamalai & Roy Bisht

Boys' basketball coach Trevor Naas and his team knew they had one major weakness going into the season—lack of height. But so far the Falcons have overcome this challenge through skilled play.

On Dec. 17, they tied for first in the yearly Prospect Tournament. Although the tournament was merely a preseason match-up between local high school teams, it provided a measuring stick for the Falcons to use as the regular season opened on Jan. 4. They dominated Sobrato 62-47 and later beat Prospect in a 50-49 last-second victory.

Senior guard Tyler Jew said that the team played some of its best games of his high school career during the tournament.

"[The Prospect Tournament] was the first tournament we've ever won during my fours year here," said Jew. "It was a great turn-around from our last tournament."

In addition to the morale-boosting first-place victory, the Falcons also had two huge wins, one against Mills on Dec.

17 (53-50) and the other against Los Gatos on Dec. 24 (57-47).

Jew hopes the late preseason victories will transition into the regular season, which started Jan. 4. Jew, however, was disappointed with the Falcons' first regular season league game against Fremont, a last-second 41-39 loss. Jew thought that the game was one that they should have won.

"If we play like we did against [Mills and Los Gatos] throughout the season," said Jew, "we have a very strong chance of winning the league. But that didn't happen in our game against Fremont and it is something we need to work a lot on."

The main achievement for the Falcons, however, was establishing their game in the paint, both on the offensive and defensive side of the ball.

Naas knew his players had the speed and talent required to win games in their league, but he needed someone to step up to the role of the "big man." That man was sophomore Steve Berman.

Berman, who has played on varsity since freshman year, brought his 6'1", 205-pound frame. Dominating on

both ends of the court, Berman provided the Falcons with the aggressiveness and height needed in the start of the season.

"I try to use my size to my advantage in the paint," said Berman. "This year I've been working on my inside game and it's been helping a lot."

Berman joins senior guards Alex Chan and Chris Guengerich, sophomore guard Kyle Dozier, and senior forward Jasneil Nat to kick off the regular season.

The Falcons suffered their second loss of the season to Milpitas 37-47 on Jan. 7. Despite this

setback, the 0-2 Falcons look to regain their momentum to win league. ♦



Senior Tyler Jew prepares to shoot in the Jan. 4 game against Fremont. The Falcons lost a close game with a score of 41-39.

>> togatalks

What does the team need to improve on this season?

Playing for all 32 minutes of the game because sometimes we don't play well in the beginning and break down.



senior Alex Chan

Our defense. Then we can let our offensive game start from there and we should be fine.



senior Jasneil Nat

Defense and rebounding.



sophomore Kyle Dozier

Rebounding and playing with more energy.



senior Chris Guengerich

GIRLS' SOCCER

4-1 win over Wilcox builds confidence

BY Olivia Chock & Tim Rollinson

The girls' soccer team has high expectations to live up to after making CCS last season, their first qualification for sectionals after seven years. With the departure of key seniors Sara Guy, Sam Li and Jordan Leonard, this year's squad had their work cut out for them. Posting a 2-1 record in the preseason, the team has done well to build off of last year's success.

"We play the hardest teams in preseason," junior forward Courtney Brandt said, "so it is a good sign that we did well."

In the final game of the preseason on Dec. 10, the girls beat Westmont 4-1 at home. Goals were scored by juniors Kari Clark and Sneha Shivkumar and freshmen Stephanie Ho and Lindsey Webster. With Westmont's reputation as a strong team, Saratoga's margin of victory was a pleasant surprise heading into the season.

An even better sign was the team's 4-1 win against Wilcox on Jan. 5. The girls came out strong in the first half with junior Sneha Shivkumar, who pulled off a hat trick in the first 11 minutes, bringing the score 3-0. Brandt scored a point off a cross from sophomore Amanda Schwartz. Wilcox pulled through and managed a goal in the second half, ending the game 4-1.

"We're off to a great start, and hopefully we can keep it up the rest of the season," said Brandt.

Under new head coach Molly Flannigan, the team has found a new groove. Help from the other soccer coaches like boys' varsity coach Adam Clarke, boys' Frosh-Soph coach Michael Patrick and

JV girls coach Javier Barbosa has also proven to be a valuable asset to the development of the team.

"The nice thing about the new coaching system this year is there's always at least one or two coaches we can go to," said senior co-captain Laura Mighdoll. "We got to know them all really well."

The easy access to coaching has not only helped the girls to be competitive in games, but it has also resulted in more disciplined practices. Brandt said practices feel more like high-level club sessions than high school practices because of the competitiveness and determination that the girls have shown this year.

"I'm really excited for the rest of the season. Our coaches are great and all the girls work really hard," Brandt said. ♦

>> scoreboard

PRESEASON

Dec. 13
Saratoga 0, Palo Alto 1

Though the girls matched this upper-division team, Palo Alto snuck in a goal in the last two minutes.

SEASON

Jan. 5
Saratoga 4, Wilcox 1

Junior Sneha Shivkumar led the team with a hat trick in the first 11 minutes.

Jan. 7
Saratoga 3, Santa Clara 0

Saratoga doubled against one of the toughest league competitors. Junior Anna Ashe scored off a breakaway, junior Kari Clark scored from an outside shot, and freshman Stephanie Ho finished a cross from junior Courtney Brandt.

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WRESTLING

Weight reduction remains heavy concern for wrestlers

BY Brandon Judoprasertijo & Deborah Soung

Think only women are picky about their weight? Think again. In the world of wrestling, even the smallest weight gain or loss can send a wrestler tumbling through various weight classes and training; indeed, a wrestler's dieting plan can rival the harshness of the Atkins.

Wrestlers below average weight in respective weight classes often opt to drop a few pounds and face smaller wrestlers instead of wrestlers who weigh 10 or 20 pounds more.

One such wrestler, freshman Charles Sun, is intent on dieting his way out of the 112 pound class and into the 103 pound weight class, since "there are less people [in the 103 weight class]," according to Sun.

Before dieting, wrestlers go through hydration testing, which tests the amount of body fat on an individual and the lowest weight class he can wrestle. Then, the wrestler consults his coach to find out what weight class he should wrestle in. Finally, he begins his dieting regimen, according to sophomore Henry Wei.

"[The food] is nothing good, usually just things like chicken, carbs and vegetables," Wei said. "At the same time, it's not too bad. If you do it right, then it's never too bad."

In addition to eating responsibly, wrestlers often do additional exercise to cut down on



Junior Alfred Murabito gains the advantage against a Los Gatos opponent on Dec 16.

weight.

"I usually have eggs for breakfast, a high protein lunch, and a medium dinner with lots of vegetables, meat and some carbs," said Wei. "Then you always have to work out and do a little extra running and slowly manage your weight down to the correct weight class."

Wrestlers' main complaint about dieting stems from the inability to eat what friends are eating.

"You want to have those pizza sticks, you want to have that ice cream, but you can't," Wei said.

However, sticking with the diet plan always has better results than waiting until the last

minute to cut weight.

"If you're overweight and you've been not eating, then you don't have a lot of energy when you weigh in," said sophomore Bryson Yates.

On Jan. 6, the team lost to Palo Alto 40-10 at a home match. The lack of returning varsity members and veterans attributed to the team's struggle.

"We actually lost pretty badly," Li said. "Our best guys weren't even there."

The Falcons will face Monta Vista in an away match on Jan. 20 and participate in the Mid Cal Tournament on Jan. 21-22 at Gilroy High School. ♦

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Team expects league success

JOHNSON AND NAGPAL LEAD YOUNG TEAM INTO SEASON

BY Joanna Lee

Concluding their non-league games with a record of 6-6, the girls' basketball team proved they were ready for the league season when they opened with a 43-35 victory against Fremont on Jan. 5 and a 46-45 win versus Milpitas.

While this year's team boasts many strong players, it still has to overcome the slight drawback of having

younger, more inexperienced underclassman players.

"We have a lot of key players that are also young players," coach Mike Davey said. "We're trying to cut down on our mental mistakes and turn the ball over."

With a 6-6 non-league score, the girls qualified for CCS, yet they are still looking to improve their skills and have a successful league start.

"We're a big team," Davey said. "We're also a tall team. At times we play very hard, but at other times, we get off balance. As a young team, we're trying

to learn to get better and grow together."

Despite these challenges, the girls know overcome them. Leading scorers include sophomore Hannah Johnson and junior Shriya Nagpal, who is also a key defender. Senior post Amber Arroyo consistently shows great leadership.

"[Johnson] is an essential player to the team because she always plays aggressively," sophomore point guard Kimberly Chou said.

The girls play in the Santa Clara Valley League, in the B level of the El Camino Division. Now playing teams at their level, the league season looks promising as the team's confidence rises.

"We played on a fairly difficult non-league schedule, which will hopefully prepare us for league," Davey said. "We've played a lot of A-level teams during our preseason games, so I hope we get better and do well in league when we play teams that we should beat." ♦

"We're trying to cut down on our mental mistakes and our turnovers."

>> Coach Mike Davey

BOYS' SOCCER

Keeping the momentum

INJURY-RIDDEN FALCONS ENTER LEAGUE AFTER UNDEFEATED PRESEASON

BY Anshu Siripurapu

After making it through their pre-season games undefeated, the boys' soccer team lost its first regular season game to Palo Alto 4-1 on Jan. 5 but recovered with a 1-0 win against Santa Clara on Jan. 7.

Junior forward Troy Doles scored the team's only goal against Paly to tie the game at 1-1, but defensive lapses allowed the Vikings to put the game out of reach. However, junior defender and captain Manish Raghavan gave a stirring effort as he made multiple one-on-one stops on Palo Alto breakaways. Despite the score, the game was well fought and the score was close for the majority of the game.

"We had a lot of injuries," Raghavan said. "Three of our starters were unable to play and we just didn't play our best."

The three starters were junior defenders Jon Junqua and

Stanton Ho, and junior forward Javier Llera.

This year, the team has advanced to the tougher De Anza "A" league, pitting them against fierce competition. The top three schools from the A league automatically qualify for CCS.

"Our team strategy hasn't changed much from last year," junior and outside midfielder Onie Wongkham said. "We still have [junior] Troy Doles to carry the offense."

The team has had to make slight modifications to its defense to account for the stronger teams of the De Anza Division. The team now has four backs as opposed to the usual three.

"We had to step up our defense since we moved up a league," Raghavan said. "The teams we face now are much more aggressive with their offense."

The team's strong defense is led by Raghavan, Junqua and Ho, all juniors. Ho's ankle in-



Senior Collin Yen dribbles the ball past a defender during a 4-0 win at the Prospect game on Dec. 16.

jury may hurt the team's performance but he is on his way to recovery.

The team's offense is led by Doles along with juniors Rajiv Ramakabir, Nabil Arbouz and Llera.

"Troy is crazy fast," Raghavan said. "He tied up a game for us [against Harbor] by scoring two goals in five minutes."

On Dec. 7, the Falcons defeated Santa Clara 1-0 in a close game as Doles scored another goal.

"Troy Doles can have a 'bad' game and still score a goal," Coach Adam Clarke said.

Injuries aside, the team will still benefit greatly from the fact that all but one of their players are returning. The team's chem-

istry is excellent since players have been together for one year already, something that will undoubtedly contribute to successes later on.

"So far I feel that we are on pace to achieve our goals this season which were to remain in the A division this season and qualify for the CCS playoffs," Clarke said. ♦

>> photo reel

SHS-LG rivalry mirrored in sibling relationship



FALCON // GRISHMA ATHAVAL



Courtesy of ALEX CHAN



Courtesy of CONNIE WANG



TALISMAN // JAYA NARASIMHAN

YUM, BURRITOS! SENIORS ERIN WONG, ADITYA DEV AND CHRIS CHUNG HAND OUT CHIPOTLE BURRITOS FOR THE SENIOR CLASS FUNDRAISER ON DEC. 15. **WINNING CAMPAIGN** SENIOR JASON SHUJAN, THE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE IN TEACHER MIKE DAVEY'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION SIMULATION, GIVES A SPEECH TO BEN HOEBER, WHO REPRESENTS THE STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA. MIKAELA BURTON, WHO REPRESENTS CBS NEWS, TAKES NOTES. **WALKING INTO HISTORY** JUNIORS PETER CHEN AND SALMAAN JAVED LISTEN IN DOWNTOWN SAN FRANCISCO AS TEACHER MATT TORRENS TALKS ABOUT THE HISTORY OF THE CITY ON DEC. 20. **HOLIDAY CHEER** SENIORS VICTOR ZHANG, REX SAKAMOTO AND BRANDON PIERCE STRIKE A POSE AS THEY DELIVER A CAROL GRAM ON DEC. 10.



>> Alex Ju

what ju talkin bout?

My brother is a freshman in high school this year. Chances are, however, that you haven't seen him wandering around campus.

Though my brother went to Redwood Middle School, he now attends Los Gatos High School. This strikes a number of people as odd. Why have two siblings attend two different schools?

The main reason for our parted ways is that over the summer, my family moved from Monte Sereno to Los Gatos. Seeing as my brother could walk to school and participate in the local community if he went to LGHS, he opted to do so.

My brother and I, being polar opposites, have always argued about anything and everything, and his treachery in attending LGHS has only added to our myriad of differences. We've argued Winter Guard versus tennis, Macs versus PCs, and even cats versus dogs.

Now we live the Los Gatos/Saratoga debate. Even driving to school presents a new argument, for at the Los Gatos end, the sign for the Saratoga-Los Gatos road reads Los Gatos-Saratoga road. Which is right?

We both also harass each other with the various stereotypes that exist for our respective schools.

"You go to the Asian school where no one has a life outside of studying!"

"Well, you go to the white school where no one studies at all!"

Perhaps that's only amusing to us because we're mixed race and because I, as a junior, spend hours studying for my AP and honors classes while he gets to play Call of Duty all day after finishing a meager freshman homework load. Between us, those generalizations carry a semblance of truth.

For the most part, my brother and I have managed to compromise. Before the LG/Saratoga game, I decorated an orange shirt for him after he promised to sit on the Saratoga side at halftime to watch the marching band performance. However, the peace shattered during the car ride home as a rancorous debate ensued regarding the Saratoga victory.

Ultimately, my brother is lucky to have a loving sister who didn't disown him for his treachery. Sometimes his decision even seems almost understandable. I almost always find myself accidentally wearing my Color Guard jacket or some other piece of apparel with "SARATOGA" emblazoned on it when I walk down the street or wander about the Los Gatos downtown, and I can't count the strange looks I've garnered by doing so.

Still, no matter how ostracized I am in my neighborhood, or however many points I cede to my brother, I think we all know which school is superior in the end. ♦

APUSH teacher takes students on San Francisco walking tour

BY Megan Benzing

For the past eight years, AP U.S. History teacher Matt Torrens has been taking his students to San Francisco for a walking tour of the city for extra credit. On Dec. 20, 43 students from all of his AP U.S. classes showed up at the Sunnyvale Train Station to attend his tour.

When researching the Gold Rush for his class, Torrens discovered connections to San Francisco. He then went up there for a walking tour hosted by the San Francisco Library and realized the street names, the museums, the plaques, all relate to the Gold Rush or the Mexican American War.

"Taking a walking tour is a little like a treasure hunt," said Torrens. "You walk around a strange city and have to hunt for historical plaques, buildings or museums and then interpret the history."

Junior Alison Knysh found the tour educational but also entertaining.

"I was able to see San Francisco from a new angle and learn some of the history behind the city," said Knysh. "I would definitely encourage other students to go on the trip if they

have the opportunity."

Torrens has always been known to not only be enthusiastic, but also a veritable wealth of knowledge. Junior Kushal Raj said that Torrens caught a few people's attention during the tour.

"He knew so much about San Francisco's history that a couple of random people stopped by our group to listen," said Raj.

When they got to San Francisco, the group took a bus to Chinatown.

"He made us all sing holiday carols on the bus and it was amazing," said Shadman.

According to Torrens, the trip was a resounding success. The kids were well behaved, although a few students didn't make it back to the train in time.

"Every year we have some little drama," said Torrens, "such as missing a train, running into a film crew from Amazing Race, or seeing some celebrity, but it always works out."

The trip had students walking from Chinatown to the top of the Fairmont hotel. It lasted from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m.

"I really appreciated all the effort Mr. Torrens put in to make it an enjoyable experience for us all," said Knysh. ♦



topten

WAYS TO DEAL WITH FINALS

- 10 **Actually study.** Actually..... never mind.
- 9 **Pull an all-nighter.** Of course, you might start sleeping during the test.
- 8 **Switch schools.** Now's the perfect time; their finals are already over.
- 7 **Cheat.** Our In-Depth section has good pointers.
- 6 **Hang out with dumb people.** You'll feel better.
- 5 **Hang out with smart people.** It'll rub off.
- 4 **Hit the books.** Literally.
- 3 **Sleep with the textbook under your pillow.** Maybe Mr. Kucer wasn't lying about osmosis.
- 2 **Have math genius Albert Gu take it for you.** He'll get you into MIT.
- 1 **Fill in the Scantron to make pretty patterns.** Points for creativity?

>> Aanchal Mohan, Anshu Siripurapu and Allison Toh