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THE saratogafalcon



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An Independent School Publication

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SCHOOL-ISSUED LOCKS

Changed locker policy induces mixed reactions

BY Sabrina **Chen**
& Maya **Ravichandran**

Examining the bright yellow activities form he received in early August, junior Aria Hooman noticed spaces to fill in the number of locks he would need and the total cost of those locks.

At first, he thought that these school-dealt locks were optional; however, at schedule pick-up day, he realized that he would have to pay the mandatory fee of \$7 for a new lock if he wanted to use a locker.

In previous years, many students needed locks cut off because students forgot their combinations and left locks on their lockers after the school year ended. This year, the school decided to provide locks with keyholes, attendance secretary Julia Peck said. The office holds the key in case of any emergencies.

Hooman said he is not fond of the new locker policy because it forces all students to pay for a punishment only a few students caused.

"This policy is pretty much pointless," Hooman said. "Instead, there should be a monetary punishment [for getting your lock cut off.]"

According to Peck, the office now also has combinations to every lock in the school. That way, students who forget their combo can simply go down to the office to check instead of having their locks cut off.

Peck said that students only need to buy a lock if they would like to use a

>> **LOCKERS** on pg. 4

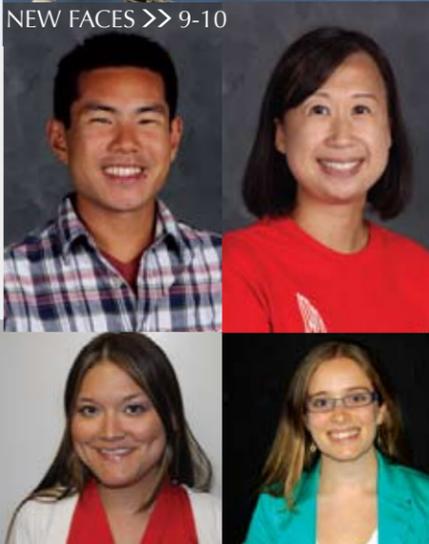
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NEW PLACES, NEW FACES

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BY Jonathan **Young**

At the Falcon Fest on Aug. 9, students discovered a new policy that required them to purchase their locks from the school. As they frantically searched for their lockers, they noticed repainted walls with the brand-new red numbering.

Making their way to the office, they caught a glimpse of new faces in the administration, principal Paul Robinson and assistant principal Kerry Mohnike.

They also saw another new face in the office: Mandy Armes, now an attendance secretary, who graduated from the school in 1998. She worked here as a substitute for six years before joining the staff.

"As a substitute, you're never really part of the staff," Armes said. "When I saw a job opening where I could be here full time, I jumped at the opportunity, especially because I know this place."

Armes is not the only graduate returning this year. New drama teacher

Sarah Thermond and music teacher Jonathan Pwu both graduated in the class of '07.

The school year is bringing a variety of changes, including curriculum changes and new rally regulations. In response to complaints about jokes in previous years, the administration has placed new limitations on the rally commission's content.

With all these adjustments and more, the school looks forward to a year marked by significant change. ♦

FACULTY CHANGE

Longtime member of SHS family retires from teaching

BY Nikil **Ramanathan**
& Candice **Zheng**

While the big story on campus last year may have been the retirement of longtime assistant principal Karen Hyde, the school saw another one of its longtime staff members announce his surprise retirement over the summer.

After 33 years as a teacher—the last 17 and a half at Saratoga—Chemistry Honors and AP Biology teacher Robert Kucer formally retired last June. Kucer decided to announce his retirement in an inconspicuous way.

"I wasn't sure if I really wanted or was able to retire. I still had some financial questions to get answered and think about," Kucer said. "I wanted to see how I felt about retiring once the year was over, and I wanted to see what my teaching schedule would be."

Kucer said that the major reasons for his retirement had to do with the amount

of time he would need to adjust the AP Bio course.

"I knew that I would retire for sure within the next three years," Kucer said. "With the College Board changing the curriculum, and with our current text needing replacement, I knew I would be doing a lot of work to prepare the class the way I wanted. I just didn't see the rationale for doing all this work and then immediately retiring."

Although students often found Kucer's courses to be among the hardest on campus, many would agree that he had a knack for making them fun and developing everlasting bonds with his students.

2011 SHS graduate Eric Chuang said, "It's like the big brother who tortured you all the time suddenly went away. It hurt, but it was a special bond that hurt in a loving way."

Senior Lauren Chu said, "Kucer leaving was very unexpected for everyone,



Courtesy of SHAHNOOR JAFRI

Robert Kucer, shown here with his Chem Honors class, taught at SHS for over 17 years.

especially when he has always talked about how he's going to do this and that differently next year."

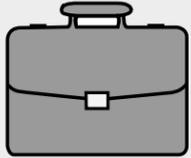
Although Chu found Kucer's AP Bio class challenging, she regrets that future students will not go through "the Kucer experience."

"He was a good teacher who knew his subject well," Chu said. "His class

is really interesting with his stories and randomness, but he also prepares you really well for the AP test."

Longtime teacher and head of the science department Jenny Garcia said that Kucer will be deeply missed from the science department. After the sudden

>> **KUCER** on pg. 4



news >> briefs

Cutting-edge courses rejuvenate curriculum

With the start of the new school year, the school has made several changes to the curriculum in order to better serve the diverse student body. These changes include the addition of an AP European History course and a Trigonometry/Precalculus course.

According to social studies teacher Jerry Sheehy, AP European History, which was last taught four years ago, has made its comeback in the school's course offerings because of student demand.

"Students have been asking for it the past few years," Sheehy said, "particularly this year's senior class."

He aims to ensure that this year's students enjoy the class and "pass the word on so [the school] can have this class next year and the year after."

Other changes to the curriculum such as the Trigonometry/Precalculus course are new additions. According to math teacher PJ Yim, the math department felt that the disparity between Trigonometry Math 4 and Trigonometry/Precalculus Honors was too great.

Thus, the department created the Trigonometry/Precalculus class to serve students who are strong in math but don't have the time and energy for an honors course.

Yim remarked that the rumor that Trigonometry/Precalculus Honors will be harder than before because of the addition of the new class is wrong.

"While we will review, the level that we go back to review will change a little bit, so it gives us more time to explore current concepts with further depth," Yim said. "We will utilize our time more effectively."

— Sabrina Chen and Ashwini Velchamy

>> homecomingthemes

Freshmen "Home Alone"

Sophomores "Sherlock Holmes"

Juniors "Indiana Jones"

Seniors "Pirates of the Caribbean"

M-SET open house sets stage for season

Hoping to draw new student and parent volunteers, the Mechanical Science and Engineering Team (M-SET) held an open house on Aug. 26.

M-SET vice president Todd Nguyen expected "five to 10 people to show up, but at least 60 people [went]."

The event was held in the corner of the music quad. M-SET officers set up stations for people interested in rocketry, the FIRST tech challenge and for parent volunteers. The open-house gave students a chance to have their questions answered and sign up for the team before Club Day.

"The event was a huge success," M-SET president Stanley Yip said. "The quad was packed with students and their parents who were interested in the program."

The team was eliminated in the semifinals of the FIRST robotics competition last March. This season, they hope to make it to the finals in St. Louis, Mo.

Although M-SET is well-known for its success in the field of robotics, the program encompasses different types of rocketry, engineering, marketing and web design.

Yip said that new members must learn that robotics is "not like learning from a textbook, where there is only one right answer. You really have to imagine the possibilities before you make a final decision." This year, he hopes to develop more sophisticated subsystems for the robot.

"We're really just trying to continue our forward momentum after last year's success," Nguyen added.

— Aashna Mukerji

>> upcomingevents

Sept. 18 Sophomore Parent Night

Sept. 20 Freshman Parent Night

Sept. 21 Football vs. Monta Vista/
Red Pride Tailgate

>> picturethis

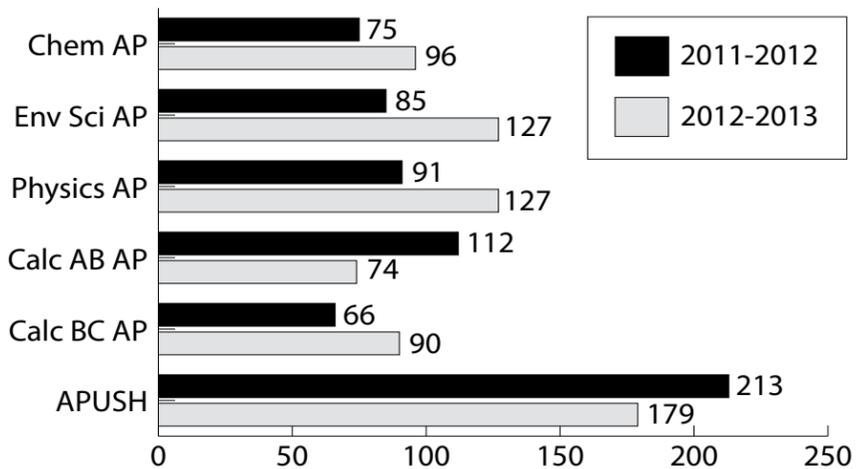


TALISMAN // JASON LI

Senior Henry Wei and junior Michael Fitzsimmons tug it out at the Aug. 24 rally in hopes of advancing in the multi-class battle for tug-of-war supremacy. Fitzsimmons triumphed against Wei in a close match.

>> falconfigures

Number of Students in AP classes



— Deepti Kannan

RALLY

Commission works around new inside joke restrictions

By Akshara Sekar

In the first rally, students were surprised at the amount of self-deprecation by commissioners. After numerous complaints about jokes made in previous years, the rally commission's freedom on its material has been limited.

This year they will only be allowed to deride themselves in an attempt to stray away from inside jokes. Each script must be reviewed by the administration, and all participants in activities must be told the night before the rally that they will be called to participate, said academic adviser Eileen Allen.

Although in past years scripts were revised, jokes were allowed as long as they were run past the person in reference. After a few incidents of failure to approve jokes by their respective students, the commission is no longer allowed to include any jokes targeting others.

The objective of this goal is to reduce bullying at the school. The administration believes that school is a place where all students should feel safe and comfortable, not a place to be singled out.

"The teachers on staff have heard a lot of reactions from

students worrying that they were going to get called out or called down on a rally and not wanting to be part of the games," said Allen, who is helping the rally commission this year.

Nevertheless, the commissioners, who include seniors Neal Siganporia, Amin Mirzadegan, Amanda Schwartz, Megan Doles and Tyler Tanaka, juniors Rohan Jhalani, Clark Rothenberg, Bronwen Bowen and Tony Capek and sophomore Natalie Miller, say that these new rules may have even brought the group closer in its efforts to keep up and even exceed expectations of previous rallies.

"Not being able to make [the same kind of] jokes was tough, but we put the team on our back and pulled together in the end," Siganporia said.

Students who attended the rally had varied opinions on this new approach.

"They did a good job of handling the obstacle of no 'student jokes' by pumping up the crowd with lots of energy and creative games," senior ASB president Sasan Saadat said. "I think it gives rally the opportunity to come up with funny, clever jokes that don't have to be at someone's expense."

Others, however, were sad-

dened by the change.

"One part of the rallies has always been listening to funny jokes that have to do with various campus drama and when you take that away, it can really limit the rally commission from making rallies even better," said senior Fred Feyzi.

However, the commission believes that the changes put forth this year are capable of creating a more friendly, collaborative environment for students.

"I'd say the biggest change would be the increased camaraderie within our group [rally commission]. Being more unified made us put on a better rally rather than mocking people," Tanaka said.

The commission hopes to work with the administration throughout the year to reduce students' fears and increase student participation.

"Rallies are about creating school spirit about sports and the things that we offer at school. They're not about individual events that happened over the weekend," Allen said. "[Assistant principal] Mrs. Mohnike and I wanted to get the rally commissioners to the point where the scripts and jokes that they are making are universally funny to everyone." ♦

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS

Gratitude for Hyde blooms in park

SHS STAFF CONSTRUCTS PARK FOR HYDE'S 36 YEARS OF SERVICE TO SARATOGA HIGH

BY Megana Iyer

All is quiet in the little area behind the library. Red flowers surround circular tables and benches, forming a serene area, and two students eat at one of the black tables. In the middle of this tranquil area, a street sign proudly states "Hyde Park."

This area, symbolizing all the work and the commitment of former assistant principal Karen Hyde, is a tribute to her many years of teaching and guiding students.

After 36 years as an administrator at the school, Hyde retired last spring.

Numerous celebrations and ceremonies were held at the end of the school year to say goodbye to this dedicated administrator, who made a difference in the school as well as in many students' and teachers' lives.

Assistant principal Kevin Mount was one of many who wanted to find some way to thank Hyde for all that she has

done.

"One day, I was just driving past, and I thought, Hyde Park," Mount said. "All of us talked it over and began planning."

The process started in December of 2011, Mount explained. The SHS Foundation donated the money needed for the park's construction.

Volunteers helped clear all the previous concrete and rocks in the area.

"We chose to do a park because it was appropriate; Mrs. Hyde loves to garden," Mount said. "It made the place a little more beautiful."

Plant operations supervisor Brian Moran and maintenance crew member Bart Fitzgerald played a major part in the construction of the garden.

According to Mount, they contributed to the preparation of the concrete for a path and helped get the space ready for gardening.

Planting and beautifying the space was finished by ear-

ly May, just in time for Hyde's departure.

"It was this big secret," Mount said. "Mrs. Hyde seemed really surprised."

At the end of Hyde's 36-year term, a heartfelt ceremony took place on May 30.

The parents had a celebration out in the quad for her, and the staff gathered at the park, Mount said.

The entire staff and students said their good-byes to Hyde, celebrating the many great efforts she has given to the school.

"Mrs. Hyde taught me that at the end of the day, the reward is that you've made a difference, even if it's not on a plaque somewhere," said ASB President Sasan Saadat. "Mrs. Hyde is the best example of this kind of leader."

Saadat explained that Hyde Park was a little way of repay-



Hyde Park was formally opened on May 30 during a large ceremony. Parents and staff attended the celebration to thank and say goodbyes to Hyde.

ing Mrs. Hyde for the "huge debt of recognition the school and community owes to her."

"Her commitment was clear, she loved working with teenag-

ers, she wanted the best for the kids, all of them," Mount said. "She truly loved SHS and her presence on this school will be missed." ♦

CONNECTIONS

Colorado shooting sparks awareness of violence

BY Allison Chang, Grace Ma & Karen Sung

In one hour, less than the span of one block period, you can drive to Oakland, the sixth most dangerous city in the U.S. according to 24/7 Wall Street. In a mere 25 minutes, the time it takes to drive to Chipotle and back, you reach East Palo Alto, which once had the highest homicide rate in the country.

Despite the proximity of these locations to Saratoga, students often find it difficult to relate to the violence and crime that plagues those cities. However, with the news of the Colorado shooting on July 20 during a showing of "The Dark Knight" and the increased controversy over gun control, students have begun to realize that anything can happen, even in sheltered communities such as Saratoga.

For junior Priyanka Krishnamurthi, the extensive coverage of the shooting brought other lesser-known but equally devastating crimes to light.

"Several articles about the shooting mentioned other crimes which have happened over the past few months," Krishnamurthi said. "I was pretty astonished to hear about those because I had no clue about any of those events."

Thus far, Saratoga has not been the site of any well-known crimes, but the image of peaceful serenity was temporarily disrupted last fall when a quarry worker at a cement plant in Cupertino shot 10 individuals, three of whom died.

Even then, Saratoga students only expressed moderate concern; many were even completely unaware of anything out of the norm happening.

"I remember going into psychology class and Mrs. Ridge asked us if anyone went anywhere near Cupertino," senior Jasmine Tan said. "I was very confused, until I went home and saw the newspaper."

This lack of awareness creates an illusion of absolute security that students often possess.

While the crime rate index for Saratoga is only 496.07 in comparison with the USA average, 1776.27, according to USA.com, random violent incidents have still occurred here.

For example, on Jan. 15, 2011, a murder-suicide in Saratoga by the El Paseo De Saratoga Shopping Center left two men dead next to Peet's Coffee.

Student ignorance can be attributed to their lack of interest in important local news, choosing

instead to spend time on other social networking sites.

"I don't know anything unless it is on Yahoo! News

or Facebook," sophomore Audrey Sun said. "Facebook is like my newspaper. Aside from big events, I'm not aware of any crime that happens."

The mental impression of Saratoga's isolation from the outside world may also contribute to a false image of safety.

Chang attributes the "mental moat" to the socioeconomic status of Saratoga.

According to Chang, being in a higher economic strata than neighboring cities can cause students to separate themselves from the conditions of other cities.

Nevertheless, students have begun to attempt to open their eyes to violence after realizing just how dangerous the world outside of Saratoga can be.

Junior Erica Tran believes that being more aware of one's environment and community early on is beneficial for dealing with violence and crime later in life. Freshman Stephen Law agrees.

"Sometime in life you will encounter a situation with crime or violence and you have to be prepared and ready for an event like this to happen. The minute you aren't ready is the time you will be hurt," Law said. ♦

Students' ignorance can be attributed to their lack of interest in important news.

CLASSES

Woodshop chopped

COURSE NOT OFFERED DUE TO LOW ENROLLMENT

BY Allison Chang & Trung Vandinh

As students rush to the the science building, few notice room S01 across from the music room, nestled in the back corner of campus next to the weight room. Even fewer have noticed that the woodworking class, which once convened there, is now gone.

Since fewer students signed up for the classes than needed, woodworking will not be offered in the course selection starting this fall.

"There is a formula they use to determine whether they have enough students enrolled in a class to warrant the cost of the class," assistant principal Kerry Mohnike said.

"And if they don't, they try to keep the electives running but if the class dips below 20, it is really hard to keep the class running."

Other applied art classes have also been cut before because of low enrollment. SHS once had a whole host of applied arts classes, ranging from engineering and computer-assisted design (CAD) to autoshop, which are no longer offered.

According to Mohnike, today's students are placing more emphasis on academic classes rather than on applied arts, a major reason for the loss of hands-on applied arts courses.

"Over the years we lost funding for them and now we don't have them," said Mohnike. "We have had this huge push from our student population to take the more academic classes, so we offer more APs than we used to have. It has just been a cultural shift."

Junior Ivan France, who took woodworking last year, questions the lack of applied arts classes that challenge students explore beyond academics.

"It is kind of pitiful that we don't

have anybody that actually wants to gain some hands-on experience," France said. "[Woodworking] was the only practical hands-on class that we had, and now it is gone."

France believes that in contrast to the numerous visual arts electives that are offered, hands-on applied arts are more important.

"It is a very practical class, as opposed to art, where you draw some stuff and it is gone," France said.

Media Arts teacher Tony Palma previously taught woodworking his first few years as a teacher at SHS and also believes that the loss of the woodworking class prevents students from experiencing many of the benefits of learning these skills.

"I think [woodworking] is a great program to have on campus and a great opportunity for students to learn," Palma said. "There are a lot of great things that can come out of it, it is personally rewarding, gives students the opportunity to learn life skills that will be valuable to them and to express themselves."

Palma's experience with students over the years has shown him how rewarding and practical

the class can be for students. "One student brought in a cabinet door—his parents were out of town, and he had broken it," Palma said. "So he came in with the door and said, 'I have to fix this before my parents get back,' so we reassembled it and fixed it and it was a lot of fun and I enjoyed it."

Palma hopes that the program will return if signups increase next year. If there continues to be no interest, the woodshop may be dismantled and used for other purposes.

"We are going to evaluate over the course of the year and decide what to do with that space and with that class," assistant principal Brian Safine said. ♦

>> bigidea

Woodshop basics

Why woodshop was cut

The number of signups did not meet the minimum threshold

Students' new preferences

Students are placing a higher emphasis on academics rather than applied arts.

Other cut courses

Previously cut applied arts classes include autoshop and pre-engineering.

LOCKS >> Students voice opinions about new policy

continued from pg. 1

locker. Additionally, the lock can be used for all four years of school and passed on to younger siblings or friends.

"We haven't, as of yet, cut off any [store-bought] locks," Peck added. "Hopefully everyone understands and follows our new policy."

Some students, like freshman Chester Leung, have no issue with the new locks.

"It saves you the trouble of having to go out and get your own lock," Leung said.

Other students, like sophomore Adrienne Kim, are not happy with the new policy.

"I think if they are for sure

keeping this policy for next year, [the school] should let [the students] choose a lock color, something that will make [our] lockers unique," Kim said.

Similar to Kim, junior Cassidy Crichton feels that the policy restricts individuality.

"It's a hassle to know which locker is which because you can become easily confused by identical locks," Crichton said.

However, Crichton believes that the policy is reasonable, "considering all that the school has to provide."

"It is just a bit of a hassle," Crichton said, "because now there's a lock at home [that] has no use." ♦

It saves you the trouble of having to go out and get your own lock.

>> Freshman Chester Leung

TEACHER >> Longtime member of SHS family departs for new ventures

continued from pg. 1

announcement of his retirement, the school had to scramble to hire a new Chemistry Honors teacher.

"The hiring had to be done in the summer, which is not the ideal time to hire teachers," Garcia said.

"The good news is that we are thrilled with Ms. [Janny] Cahatol and she has been a great replacement for teaching honors chemistry."

On a more personal note, Garcia shares her thoughts about Kucer's departure.

"I'll miss his quick wit in our conversations and department meetings," Garcia said. "I'll also miss how we would trick the students into thinking he'd be teaching AP physics or AP chemistry the following school

year, as well as his wardrobe consistency."

In terms of post-retirement plans and adventures, Kucer said that he plans to do a bit of tutoring, as well as subbing here and there.

"I don't have some any big plans although I am hoping to go see the polar bears in Churchill, Nova Scotia, in the fall of 2013," Kucer said.

"Mostly, the plans are to stop the incessant mental push and learn to not care if something takes me an extra 30 minutes to complete."

Kucer admits that he does miss a number of aspects of

teaching.

"I miss the laughter with the students and I miss writing challenging test questions to see how the students will do." Kucer said.

"I miss finding new labs for both Chem H and AP Bio students."

But most of all, Kucer said, "I miss my personal thought that goes something like this, 'I wonder which

students are really getting what is going on in here? Which students are realizing they have to change how they approach studying to get through this class?' I miss seeing 'the change.'" ♦

I miss the laughter with the students and I miss writing challenging test questions...

>> Former teacher Robert Kucer

Link Crew makes changes

BY Sarah Finley

Link Crew, which has welcomed freshman classes for eight years, has become a Saratoga tradition. However, the program still continues to evolve, using student input to help improve the program.

According to Link Crew co-director Michael Slone, who works as the school's psychologist, Freshman Focus, the meeting of Link groups during the first two Monday tutorials, adopted some new practices this year. For example, leaders received outlines of discussion topics ahead of time.

"The discussion items were developed this year based on SHS students' feedback on what they felt would be helpful to freshmen, as well as input from school staff and administrators," Slone said.

Slone said that changes were made to many sections of the outline, such as ways freshmen can get involved with the school and the guidance department's procedures.

Link Crew commissioner Courtney Ruppel said another change made to this year's Link orientation on Aug. 17 was that each Link group was not assigned a classroom. The change was made due to unfavorable situations in past years.

"For example, profane drawings [on the whiteboards and] lists of 'good and bad' teachers, so not having classrooms this year prevented that," Ruppel said.

According to Link Crew co-director Eileen Allen, other changes to the program were incorporated this year as well.

"[We shortened] orientation by one hour," Allen said. "In our evaluations from last year we heard resoundingly that the program would be more effective if it was one hour shorter."

A final change involved the way in which the over 100 Link leaders were trained. The activities were taught in stations instead of with the large group.

Already, Allen has begun to consider changes for next year's program.

"I might consider changing the training to be two days before orientation in order to have time to iron out the wrinkles that inevitably arise," Allen said.

Nevertheless, Allen thought the program this year went smoothly.

"I think that this year was fantastic," Allen said. "The leaders were great mentors and I was so impressed with them as I watched them with their freshman students." ♦

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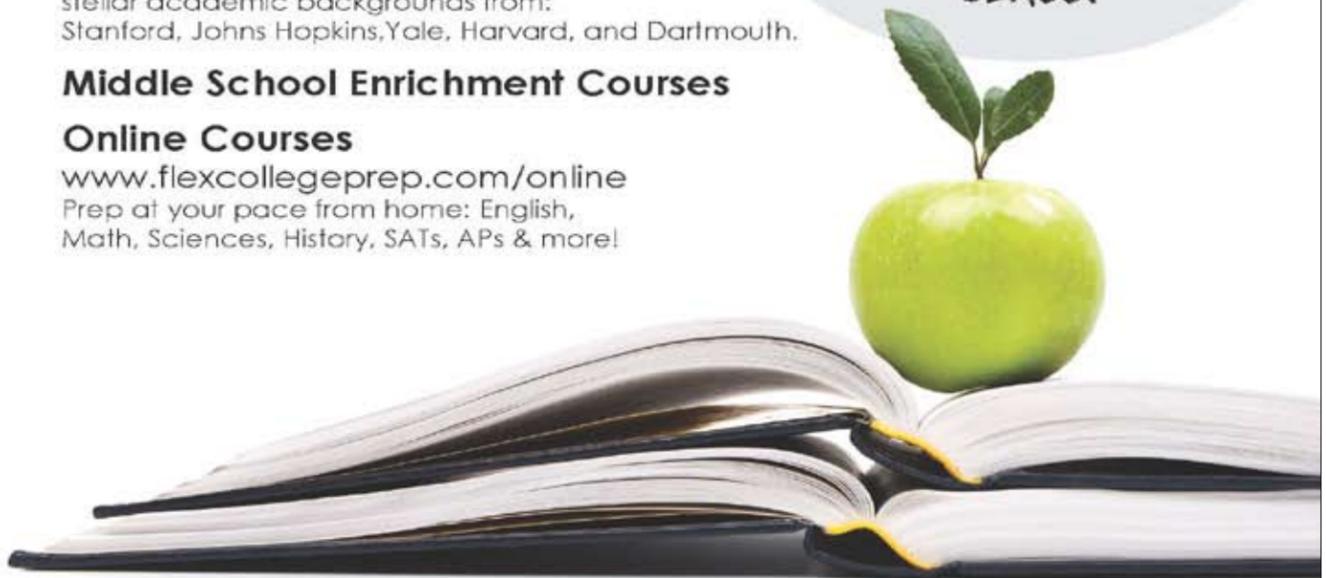
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STRIDE FOR SUSIE

Run for lung cancer raises over \$100,000

BY Jennifer Jin & Jonathan Young

The third annual Stride for Susie run was held on Aug. 26 to honor Susie Nagpal, a former Saratoga councilwoman who died from lung cancer in 2010.

The event coordinators, consisting of friends and family of the Nagpal family, also chose to honor Smita Patel, a family friend of the Nagpals, who died of lung cancer five years ago.

"[Nagpal's family] chose to honor Smita Aunty this year because their family went through a very similar experience as ours," Tarini Ullal, a relative of the Nagpals and a friend of the Patels, said. "My aunt's and Smita Aunty's stories help eradicate the stigma that lung cancer is solely associated with smoking."

Over 500 people participated, almost doubling last year's participation. The community participated in the five-kilometer run that took participants around Redwood Middle School and across Shadow Oaks Way, then back to the school.

"We predicted that Smita Aunty's family would bring together even more people for this important cause and make this event an even bigger success than it was last year," Ullal said. "We more [than] doubled the amount of money we fundraised last year and recruited almost 200 more people."

Many students decided to

participate due to the connection the event had with the school.

"I liked that we were doing something for a good cause and go out with friends at the same time," sophomore Anjali Manghani said. "It makes you feel good about what you are doing, especially compared to a completely random cause."

Senior Neha Vellanki, who helped organize the event, had a personal connection with Susie and her daughter Shriya Nagpal, who graduated last year.

"Shriya Nagpal, Susie's daughter, played basketball with me, and I knew Susie since I was in elementary school," Vellanki said. "Stride for Susie is a great way to raise money for lung cancer research and show the family our support. I've participated in the event with the basketball team for the past three years."

The event raised over \$135,000, surpassing the goal of \$111,000. The proceeds go to the Bonnie J. Addario Lung Cancer Foundation, which tries to help bring awareness to lung cancer and provides money for cancer research.

"The community of Saratoga is such a great and warm community," Andrea Parks said, the

director of special events at the Bonnie J. Addario Lung Cancer Foundation. "It's a really fun and special event that many people have close ties with."

Ullal was deeply involved in the day's events.

"The entire day is so special for me and the rest of my family. Everything is fun, from the kids' dash to the run through

scenic Saratoga to the lively zumba session to the closing award ceremony," Ullal said. "The days leading up to the event, although rife with hectic event-planning, fundraising and publicizing are just as meaningful."

Ullal is still surprised at the success of this year's event.

"I keep looking at Facebook

pictures and the Bonnie J. Addario website, just appreciating how many people came and just how much money we raised," Ullal said. "Just thinking about how much our family, friends and Saratoga community has come together and shown support for this cause moves me in such a deeply emotional way. It is hard to explain in words." ♦



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

Cheerleaders congratulate Stride for Susie participants as they race to the finish line. The race was five kilometers with over 500 walkers and runners participating in the event on Aug. 26.



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FALCON FOCUS

Junior exhibits artistic flair in costume design

BY Meganalyer & Sherrilyn Ling

The audience listens to the crisp sound of ripping paper as a judge at the Los Angeles International Thespian Society (ITS) tears open an envelope. It is an intense competition between creative students and their costume designs. Fingers crossed tightly, junior Annelise Nussbacher, along with 50 other students, excitedly waits to hear the judges' decision. The judge clears her throat and picks up the microphone.

"And [the judges] called the names, and it was me," Nussbacher said. "I received a medal for first place."

Nussbacher has long had a knack for arts and design. In March, she won first place for costume designs at the state-wide ITS competition.

"It was great to win first place out of 50 contestants from all over the state, especially as an underclassman," Nussbacher said.

Nussbacher drew out her designs, but never actually hand made or created them. Her winning pieces were based on the musical production "Barnum."

According to Nussbacher, "Barnum" is a story about a circus, and the costumes were elaborate and difficult to depict. She chose the Broadway musical because she wanted to challenge herself after sketching only simple designs as a freshman; with a circus, she could "make it crazy but make it work."

"Not only is it a very stylized time period, but it took place at a circus as well, making the designing process very

difficult," Nussbacher said. "I looked at how the costumes would look in real life, drew in details to them, and made them darker. That is what really made my pieces stand out to the judges."

Nussbacher explained that the procedure took an enormous amount of research. She researched circus apparel from the 1830s and analyzed each character for whom she created a design. She also referred to costumes in Tim Burton's film "Sweeney Todd" for ideas to make the pieces stand out in an obscure way.

"I had to take all the research I did and find a way to employ it effectively into my designs until I could find a cohesive feel that worked," Nussbacher said.

After the process of illustrating the designs, she had to work on a write-up and answer questions in front of the judges in five minutes.

"These are all people in the costume design profession, and they know what they're talking about," Nussbacher said. "So it would be very clear to them if you didn't."

Nussbacher said that though the design industry is difficult to get into as a career, she hopes that having the ITS competition in her background "gives her an edge."

She has not yet decided a future in design for herself; nevertheless, Nussbacher said she will definitely compete in ITS this year, as well as next year.

"If I could make a successful career out of [costume design] in the future, that would be wonderful," she said. ♦



Nussbacher

Ryan: VP candidate, anti-feminist

BY Aashna Mukerji & Akshara Sekar

>> candidcaricatures

In 2008, U.S. citizens trembled at the thought of having a lipstick-wearing pitbull in the White House. Thankfully, such a fate never materialized, and blue states all over the country wiped away their tears of joy as Sarah Palin walked off the national political stage.

But like every fairy tale, there's always a villain lurking in the shadows. In this case, it's Wisconsin representative Paul Ryan, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney's running-mate. He's big, he's bold, he's like Sarah Palin with man-parts—only without something called "human decency."

Ryan decided to follow in Missouri Congressman Todd Akin's fumbling footsteps in early August and offend the public with his woeful, ignorant misogynistic comments. While Akin, who succeeded in becoming the 2012 Republican primary for an open Senate seat, voiced his thoughts on how the female body could avoid pregnancy in cases of "legitimate rape," Ryan declared that rape is just another "method of conception."

To all the women slaving away on their keyboards, lawsuits or retail counters, life hasn't progressed much since winning the right to vote in 1920, in Congressman Ryan's mind. After he voted against the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act in 2009, he might as well have publicized his desire for women to never leave the kitchen, or if they're lucky, the laundry room.

The Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act establishes the idea that women deserve to earn the same pay as men for the same work. Women, on average, are paid close to \$431,000 less than men over a lifetime for doing the same work according to American Progress, an independent nonpartisan educational institute.

Even if we dismiss this monetary disparity as male chauvinism, when it comes to abortion some might see Ryan as incomprehensible. His simplification of rape to conception was part of the defense of his belief that there are no excuses for abortion. He has voted pro-life a



FALCON // CAROL SUH

grand total of 59 times. Incest, rape, imminent death for the mother, you name it—nothing justifies abortion in Ryan's eyes.

Perhaps Ryan's most impassioned fight has been against Planned Parenthood. He hopes to eradicate the nation's leading sexual and reproductive health care provider and advocate, which would leave millions of underprivileged women without the necessary means to a healthy life, including preventative care and protection services.

Ryan must really adore babies, because unlike our current president, he believes that birth control should be outlawed. If the Romney-Ryan ticket wins, free birth control will have had a short, savory run among American women.

But fear not, women of the universe! Ryan found his inspiration in a woman, a thinker, a guiding light and, not sur-

prisingly, one of the most anti-feminist females to exist: Ayn Rand.

"I grew up reading Ayn Rand, and it taught me quite a bit about who I am and what my value systems are and what my beliefs are. It's inspired me so much that it's required reading in my office for all my interns and my staff," Ryan said in a 2005 speech.

For those who aren't familiar with Rand, she was a Russian philosopher and author whose perspective on gender roles was incredibly controversial in the mid-20th century. According to Rand, an "ideal woman is a man-worshipper, and an ideal man is the highest symbol of mankind."

Ryan refers to Rand as the only clear-thinking woman he has ever met.

At a 2005 Atlas Society speech, Ryan said, "[T]he reason I got involved in public service, by and large, if I had to

credit one thinker, one person, it would be Ayn Rand. And the fight we are in here, make no mistake about it, is a fight of individualism versus collectivism."

Ironically, Ryan almost seems to promote collectivism in his latest speeches. "We are all representatives of the American people," Ryan said. But are we? Are the elitist women of the Upper East Side and the 12-hour work shift single mothers who struggle to pay rent identical in any way? No. But do they deserve the same opportunities when it comes to incidents of rape, incest or reproductive preventive needs? Absolutely.

So, Paul Ryan, from the bottom of our hearts: Perhaps it is safe to say that you should not include yourself in this false representation of the American people. Sincerely, the struggling teen and single mothers, rape victims and women all over the world. ♦

Popular vote should replace Electoral College

BY Katherine Chang & Jennifer Jin

In the upcoming presidential election, some seniors have to face the decision of choosing the best candidate. However, what they don't know is that their vote for Obama or Romney or anyone else will hardly matter.

Despite being taught from youth that the United States is a democracy and every citizen is created equal, the voting system says otherwise. The archaic system of the Electoral College does not promote equality, but rather takes away voting power from large states such as California, Texas and New York.

When the Electoral College was created in the late 1700s, it was the most effective way to efficiently elect the president. With transportation of information going at a snail's pace, most citizens

didn't have access to the latest news.

Therefore, it made sense to have the informed few to make decisions on behalf of others. Now, with information travelling so quickly, there is no need for others to make "informed" decisions for us.

The Electoral College gives direct votes to states instead of people, so votes count more in some states than in others. If electoral votes were divided evenly among the whole country's population, an electoral vote would represent about 580,000 citizens.

In California, there are 37.7 million residents and 55 electoral votes, equating to 685,000 residents per electoral vote. In Wyoming, on the other hand, there are 568,000 residents and three electoral votes, equating to 23,000 residents per electoral vote.

Additionally, because some states

like California are almost guaranteed to vote for the same party each election, presidential candidates rarely visit those states, preferring to visit swing states, that no candidate is assured that he or she will win. These states include Florida, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Ohio. The main reason candidates may visit large states with a heavy leaning toward one party is simply to raise money.

Although some people claim that a popular vote would force candidates to visit only populous places, the top 10 most populated cities only account for 7.9 percent of the U.S. population, not nearly enough to win an election.

A candidate only needs over 50 percent of a state's popular vote to gain the all of the electoral votes of that state. Therefore, the popular vote would not necessarily be the winner of the election.

In the 2000 election between Al Gore and George Bush, Gore won the popular vote with over half a million more votes than Bush, but Bush won the overall election.

Instead, the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact would guarantee that the candidate that won the national popular vote would become president. States that are part of the compact would give all their electoral votes to the candidate that wins the national popular vote.

The compact will be enacted once 270 electoral votes are amassed by the states. So far, nine states have signed this compact into law, but their combined electoral votes only add up to 132 electoral votes.

The United States prides itself on being a democracy. In order to actually be one, the presidential election should be reflective of the popular vote. ♦

>> falconfigures

37.7 Million residents in California

7.9 Percent of U.S. residents live in the 10 biggest cities

270 Electoral votes needed to enact Interstate Compact

132 Combined electoral votes of nine states that have signed the compact

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STAFFPOLICY

The Saratoga Falcon is published 11 times per year by the Advanced Journalism classes of Saratoga High School, 20300 Herriman Ave., Saratoga, CA 95070.

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MISSIONSTATEMENT

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.

LETTERS OF THE EDITOR

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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AP U.S. history weighting creates accurate grading

August 2011 was filled with the cries of juniors who had just been informed of horrible, life-changing news: AP U.S. History would become a weighted class for the first time in its recent history. More precisely, a homework point would no longer be equal to a test point, and excellence on exams would become more vital than completing homework.

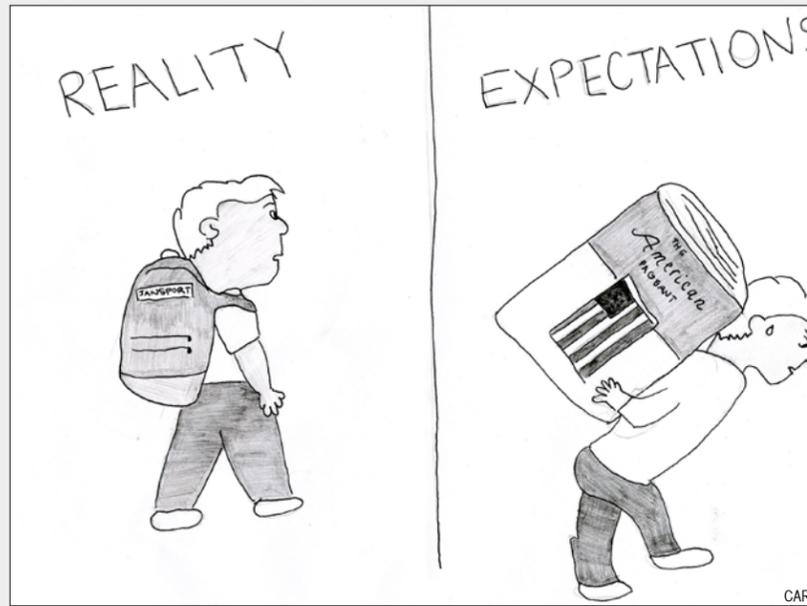
The public outcry by the class of 2013 was warranted. After all, last year's juniors were indeed experiencing a more different grading scale than previous classes. However, as APUSH teacher Matt Torrens pointed out many times last year, the change was not nearly as drastic nor sadistic as many students made it out to be.

According to Torrens, while the grades were lower with the weighted system, it was a slight decrease and wasn't necessarily a bad thing.

Upon entering junior year, many students had heard that the class would be overly simple, since turning in homework could make up for poor exam performance. Many of the same students would, however, agree that tests do offer a more accurate sense of a student's knowledge than homework.

The truth is, the decision to make APUSH weighted was long overdue. The prior system may have been an easier version of the course, but if students evaluate the issue objectively, increasing the difficulty of a course does

>> candidcaricatures



not necessarily make the class a worse or less productive experience.

Almost every academic course that students take in high school has a weighted system in which tests and quizzes are weighted more than homework. This again goes back to the general understanding that tests tell more about a student's progress than homework.

When a class does not have a weighted system, a homework point is equal to a test point, which is equal to a

participation point, which is equal to a point on the final exam. In a college-level

course, this system simply provides a little too much breathing room for students; they slack off on studying for tests, because they can "make up" points by doing homework.

Especially in a class with such a massive curriculum, success on a test is a better indication that students are retaining the information than success in any other aspect of the class. If the class now demands better performance on exams, students will have more of the content and thus have to cram when finals and AP exams are around.

AP classes, especially with the competitive academic environment at this school, should make students earn the extra point on their GPA. The current weighted system simply does a better job of making each student's grade just that. ♦

>> Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

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Jackie Gu

Opinion Editor
Paul Jung

Backpage Editor
Aasim Naqvi



Tensions between Israel, Iran create threat of impending nuclear war in Middle East

BY Ashwini Velchamy

It is September 2012, and the apocalypse is coming.

Many would rather consider this prophecy as nothing more than a fairly disturbing fantasy; however, considering that the world might actually be on the brink of nuclear war, the Mayans might be right after all.

According to nuclear inspectors, Iran, as of late August, has installed three-quarters of the centrifuges it needs to produce nuclear power. These centrifuges, which are used to enrich uranium, are located near the holy city of Qom.

Iran claims that it is not attempting to create an atom bomb, but rather to generate electricity without having to use its oil supply.

However, this news is still worrisome to most countries, especially Israel, a country Iran has threatened to destroy on multiple occasions.

So it is no real surprise that Israel is considering a strike on the Iranian nuclear facilities—a fact confirmed by the prime minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu.

Israeli leaders fear that as Iran's facilities have doubled their number of underground centrifuges, Iran is arriving at a "zone of immunity" where an air-

Netanyahu and Israeli defense minister Ehud Barak view the nuclear programs of Iran as a threat to Israel's survival. Israel has repeatedly threatened Iran with military action—an act that mirrors the events leading up to Israel's bombing of Iraq and Syria's nuclear facilities years ago.

Netanyahu will speak at the U.N. General Assembly about Iran's nuclear

would not stay within Iran and would engulf Western countries. First of all, Iran would respond with nuclear warfare—not just aimed at Israel but Israel's allies as well. Iran has the power to close the Straits of Hormuz through which currently pass 20 percent of the world's oil supply, and would rack up oil prices—a blow the U.S. economy does not need. Furthermore, the U.S. is also allied with Hezbollah, a group with the power to commit terrorist attacks across the continent.

The most blatant reason that Israel's policy really should be reconsidered is the sentiment of the Israeli people. Fifty-eight percent of the nation is against the war, even without the support of the United States. Fifty-eight percent.

Now, the United States, along with the other Western countries, is trying to resolve the matter through diplomacy, placing economic strain on Iran. Iran hopes that it will halt its nuclear program. America does not need another war in the Middle East and really should not engage in a preventive war.

Additionally, the entire concept of preventive war is illogical. It is exactly the same as punching another person because you think that someone might punch you first.

Their logic is flawed, and

America does not need another war in the Middle East and really should not engage in a preventive war.

weapons in September.

Despite the seemingly extreme measures Israel is taking, the country's sentiments are understandable. In fact, Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad recently called Israel a "cancerous tumor that will soon be excised."

However, the consequences of an attack on Iran's facilities must be considered. Such an action would probably fail to annihilate Iranian nuclear weapons, considering that most of them are underground. While Iran may be set back by several years, the backlash is almost

New drama and English teacher brings unique experience to staff

BY Simi Srivastava

Drama teacher Sarah Thermond takes a deep breath as she prepares to perform, her heart racing as she tries to calm her nerves. As the bell rings, she turns to face her newest audience: an English class.

Thermond, who currently teaches drama and 10th grade English, is excited to call this her first year in a formal school environment.

After working at the California Theatre Center as a professional actor, director of school shows and administrator, Thermond decided to become a teacher.

"I became a teacher mostly because the job I had for the last year involved a lot of different things, and one of the big ones was going into schools, doing outreaches and workshops, directing students and all of that, and I found myself finding it very consistently rewarding," Thermond said.

Not only is Thermond an exciting addition to SHS's staff because of her experience in theatre, she also is an alum of SHS, having graduated in the class of 2007.

That also makes Thermond, a 2011 college graduate, one of the youngest teachers on campus.

"I've kind of decided to just embrace it, instead of trying to pass myself off as this older person who has worked in many school districts," Thermond said. "That's not who I am, and I think that's OK."

Thermond majored in drama and English in college at USC. She thinks the two are interrelated and considers them her two main interests.

"For our last AP Lit project [in Cathy Head's class], we took our whole class into the theatre and performed the unfinished murder mystery that Charles Dickens died before he could complete," Thermond said. "It was very intense, but it was really cool, and it was a nice moment of combining drama with my English class."

Sophomore Jack McCarthy, who has been directed by Thermond three times in conservatory summer camps, thinks Thermond is different from drama teachers in the past because instead of lecturing, she allows her students to use their creativity while practicing skills that they have learned in class.

"Ms. Thermond is a really creative, fun person who lets us experience things for ourselves, rather than talk about them to us," McCarthy said. "She's really ensemble oriented, and she includes everyone and makes them all a part of what she is doing."

As well as being part of the English Department, Thermond is also looking forward to being in charge of productions in the McAfee Center such as "The Crucible," which will be performed Nov. 15-18.

"I'm very excited to direct shows in that space with all of the talent that we have in this department," Thermond said. ♦

>> teachertalks

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Past Jobs: Student teacher at Sequoia High School in Redwood City, teacher at Bentley Upper school, crafter of sandwiches at Quizno's.

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[Students pause, then laugh]

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FRESH FACES at SARATOGA HIGH

A dream comes true for Jonathan Pwu

FORMER SHS CLARINET PLAYER, FROM CLASS OF '07, RETURNS AS BAND DIRECTOR

BY Allison Chang

"You look really tired, but why are you still smiling?"

This was a question posed to Jonathan Pwu, the new music teacher, over dinner by one of his friends. His only reply was, "It is just easier to smile," illustrating a defining feature of Pwu's personality: his cheerfulness.

"It's actually really hard for me to form the frowning muscles," Pwu said.

His exuberance has contributed to the respect that both his students and peers show him.

"Mr. Boitz always tells a story about Mr. Pwu of how as a freshman, he had surgery and all the people from the band came to see him," junior Robert Eng, a clarinet player, said.

Pwu is an alumnus from the class of 2007, who returned shortly after graduating from UC Davis to take up his new post on campus.

Aside from his joviality, some other notable aspects of his personality he believes will serve him well as a teacher are his optimism and open-mindedness, which can be seen in his view on different genres of music.

"[I think] there [isn't] any good or bad music, just different music for different occasions, I think that applies to many things in life," Pwu said.

"There isn't one specific best way to do something or one best idea, but just

different ideas for different times."

Pwu notes that one of the most dramatic changes at since he graduated is the physical appearance of the school.

"The campus is definitely much prettier than when I was here," Pwu said. "We didn't have as many colors, or grass."

Band members already have positive impressions of Pwu, having met him over past summers as a summer band director.

"I think he is highly respected among everyone in the band," Eng said.

"I like him more than an agglomeration of chocolate cupcakes."

Pwu's interest in teaching first took form during his sophomore year at SHS, when he attended a summer camp called The Bands of America Summer Symposium.

"It was what really made me want to pursue a career in music and in music education," Pwu said.

The lessons he learned at the camp continue to resound with Pwu and his influence his outlook on life, connecting music to everything he does.

"[They] taught how music can apply to the work ethic, teamwork and all the time management skills you develop through the music program," said Pwu. "It is all applicable through someone's everyday life, even if they aren't in an orchestra or band anymore."

The program made such an indelible mark on his life that he attended the summer camp as an adult this summer.

"I went to the directors' portion this year because I had such a good experience with it in high school," Pwu said.

"It [had been] life-changing when I was in high school."

In high school Pwu played clarinet as part of the marching band, and classified himself as a "band geek." His weekday hangouts consisted of long, winding drives with friends and delving into the world of music. He was also a drum major.

During college Pwu continued to pursue his passion for marching band and music by participating in the Blue Devils Drum Corps.

"It is like marching band on steroids," Pwu said. "Essentially, it is professional marching band and you travel around for a whole summer performing for a whole bunch of audiences."

One of his most memorable experiences with the Blue Devils occurred when he went to play at the Lucas Oil Field in Indianapolis during the Marching Music's Major League finals.

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sheer amount of people."

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"Some buildings you look from the outside and it is really big and you go inside and its like 'Oh, its not that big,' at Lucas Oil Field you are looking from the outside and you go inside and you are like 'Boom, its still a really big building,'" Pwu said.

Pwu has had a rapid and smooth transition from being a student in college

to joining the workforce and becoming a teacher at his former high school, but he still finds it working alongside his former teachers to be a very unique and new experience.

"Calling [the teachers] by their first names is definitely the strangest part," Pwu said. "Some of them I still can't bring myself to call them by the first name. So when I see them I still say 'Hey! Mrs. A!' instead of saying 'Kim.'"

Awkward moments aside and old memories aside, Pwu is extremely grateful that he was able to transition into a job with music so quickly after graduation.

"It has always been my dream to come back [to SHS] and teach," said Pwu. "I just didn't realize I'd be here so soon and so quick." ♦

"I like [Mr. Pwu] more than an agglomeration of chocolate cupcakes."

>> Junior Robert Eng



Pwu

New drama and English teacher brings unique experience to staff

BY Simi Srivastava

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He was especially struck by the sheer size of the stadium when he entered it with his team.

"Some buildings you look from the outside and it is really big and you go inside and its like 'Oh, its not that big,' at Lucas Oil Field you are looking from the outside and you go inside and you are like 'Boom, its still a really big building,'" Pwu said.

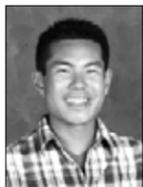
Pwu has had a rapid and smooth transition from being a student in college

to joining the workforce and becoming a teacher at his former high school, but he still finds it working alongside his former teachers to be a very unique and new experience.

"Calling [the teachers] by their first names is definitely the strangest part," Pwu said. "Some of them I still can't bring myself to call them by the first name. So when I see them I still say 'Hey! Mrs. A!' instead of saying 'Kim.'"

Awkward moments aside and old memories aside, Pwu is extremely grateful that he was able to transition into a job with music so quickly after graduation.

"It has always been my dream to come back [to SHS] and teach," said Pwu. "I just didn't realize I'd be here so soon and so quick." ♦



Pwu

I like [Mr. Pwu] more than an agglomeration of chocolate cupcakes.

>> Junior Robert Eng

New A-F counselor 'a breath of fresh air'

BY Sabrina Chen

As students enter guidance counselor Monique Young's office, they are greeted with two grinning jack-o-lanterns and a small ceramic pumpkin dish filled to the rim with chocolate Hershey kisses.

"Halloween is my favorite part of the year, so I always have my pumpkin stuff out early," Young, Saratoga's new guidance counselor said.

"One of my most elaborate costumes was as Tim Burton's *The Corpse Bride*. I had full make-up, blue yarn wig and all," Young said. "Come by [my office] in October, and my window will probably be decorated with Halloween stuff, and it's very likely that on Halloween day I'll be all dressed up."

Eager as Young is for Halloween this year, she is even more looking forward to working at a new high school.

"I'm very excited to be working in an amazing place like Saratoga where there is a full counseling staff, and it's evident that students and parents value the counselors," Young said.

"[Young] is going to be a real breath of fresh air," assistant principal Kerry Mohnike said. "Anytime you bring in someone from a different school site into a position like that, you bring a new

perspective, and that's always a good thing."

Young worked as a guidance counselor at Pioneer High School in San Jose for six years. Though she didn't always enjoy her own high school experience, she greatly enjoyed working at one as an adult.

"I found myself really enjoying, for the first time, the school spirit of the students and the staff," Young said. "I loved participating in the themed Homecoming weeks or volunteering for staff games or dances for the rallies."

Young said that although Pioneer High School was fun to work at, she is excited for the change in atmosphere.

"I came from a school where I was the only counselor for 1,600-1,700 students," Young said. "So I'm really excited to be able to service just my small group of kids, having close relationships and being with them for all four years."

Young said that although she doesn't have a favorite student, the handful of students who stand out most in her memory have all experienced extremely difficult obstacles in their lives.

"I find that I am able to sometimes be their one cheerleader," Young said. "I can sometimes see the true potential in those students and help motivate them to see it

themselves."

Outside of school, one of Young's favorite places is Disneyland because its carefree, childlike atmosphere brings her



THE CORPSE BRIDE Counselor Monique Young dressed as Tim Burton's *"The Corpse Bride."* Young is a Halloween enthusiast.

back to her own childhood.

"I try to go [to Disneyland] at least a couple times a year," Young said. "I have watched almost all the Disney movies, but I'm not 100 percent up to date on the newer movies. I really love *'The Nightmare Before Christmas.'*"

Additionally, Young was excited to announce that she recently became engaged and will be getting married this year.

"My fiancé—he's an educator too," Young said, smiling. "We'll have a whole family of educators, and that's pretty awesome, so I'm really excited."

Assistant principal Brian Safine said the best thing about Young is her eagerness to connect with students.

"She is an excellent team player," Safine said. "She wants to do right by her students, and has shown that she has done the work to really get to know them as best she can."

Safine added that Young is experienced in terms of presenting her ideas and extremely spirited, making her the perfect choice for a new guidance counselor.

"Finding a new counselor that really gels with students, parents and teachers is challenging," Safine said. "So far, Ms. Young is showing that she's gelling well with each of those three groups." ♦

Inspiration: My inspiration is my mom and grandma. My grandma lived in Dortmund, Germany, during World War 2. The government broke her father's legs. In addition, my mom lived in Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Her older brother was killed in the war fighting against the Vietcong. Both my mom and grandma are strong individuals, having moved to the United States for a better government and life. They inspire me to work my hardest and not take life for granted."



math teacher Rachel Perkins

Past Job: I was the Event Coordinator for a local golf course. It was my job to book, plan and execute weddings, parties, lunches, etc. I loved my job, but I was ready to make a change to education."



counselor Monique Young

Past Job: I worked at the UCLA Center for Human Nutrition and was a nutritionist for patients with chronic diseases. After working with my patients for four years, I realized that I wanted to go into teaching to help inspire youth to embrace a healthy lifestyle."

PE/health teacher

Science teacher sees the world

BY Catherine Tang

Off the coast of Zanzibar in the Indian Ocean, a school of dolphins circled around a snorkeler as if serenading her. The sun glistened and reflected off the water and the dolphins' bodies.

Amidst a ring of dolphins, new science teacher Janny Cahatol rose out of the crystal-clear water and removed her goggles.

"The dolphins were curious to see what I was, and I was curious and slightly frightened to see what they were," Cahatol said.

Because of longtime science teacher Bob Kucer's retirement over the summer, Cahatol has joined the Saratoga High staff to fill the demand for a chemistry teacher.

Cahatol enjoys backpacking, snorkeling and just being outdoors. She attributes her love of the outdoors to her father. Growing up in the Central Valley, Cahatol and her family often traveled to Yosemite on the weekends.

While a student at the University of California, Berkeley, Cahatol met some adventurous friends who also liked to snorkel and backpack.

One summer after teaching AP Biology abroad in Zanzibar, Cahatol and a college friend backpacked through other parts of Africa including Zanzibar, Porcelanosa, Zambia and Botswana.

According to Cahatol, she met a variety of interesting people throughout her trip with whom she exchanged travel stories at the hostels, which are dormitories with bunk beds and a shared bathroom that ranges from \$10 to \$25

per night.

"It's a great thing that we speak English. If you can speak English, you can basically get by anywhere," Cahatol said.

One night in Zanzibar, Cahatol stayed at a hostel with a missing wall. Before going to bed, she left two mangoes on the table. She was woken by a noise in the middle of the night.

"When I woke up I saw a half-eaten mango. I was like, darn, I just lost two

mangoes to a monkey," Cahatol laughs. "It was like living out in the wild," she said.

In Maasai Mara, Cahatol and her friend went on a safari on a jeep.

"We weren't all wearing safari hats like in the cartoons, but we were on a jeep," Cahatol said.

They drove to a watering hole and watched the wild animals drink water. Cahatol said it was as if all the animals, including the giraffes and elephants,

were all one big family.

However, as the lions were approaching, all the animals stopped drinking and stampeded, trying to avoid the lions. The giraffes looked like they were running in slow motion because of their long legs and necks, Cahatol observed.

"It looked just like *'The Lion King'*," Cahatol said.

Going on a safari was nothing like going to the zoo because all the animals were roaming free and there were a much greater variety of animals, Cahatol said.

Cahatol went on many different safaris in Africa, but she was not always lucky enough to see the animals.

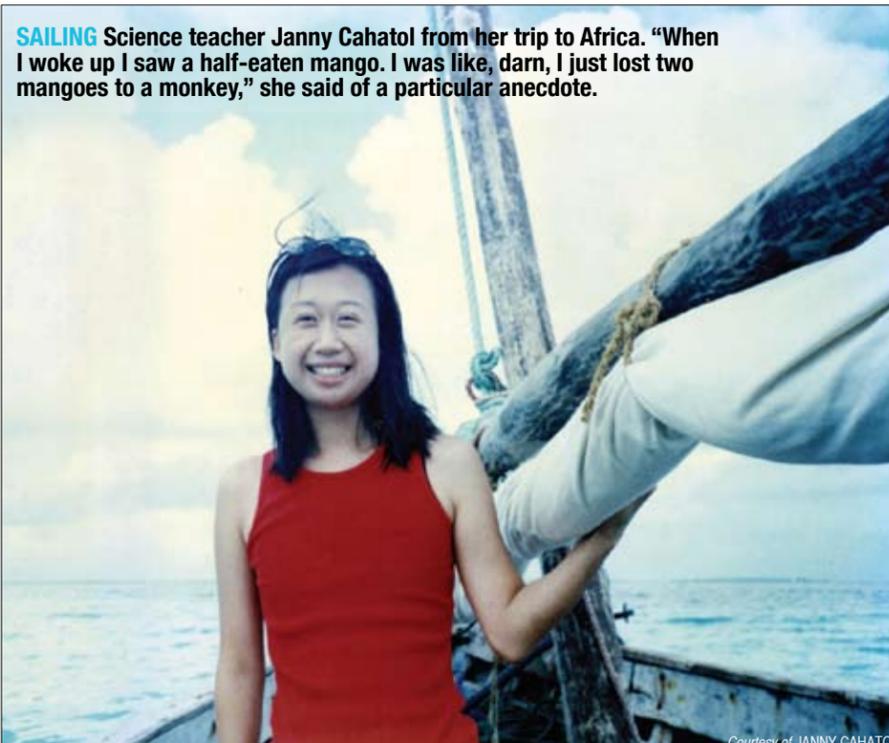
"It's an experience that is very unlikely if you were to look at me. You wouldn't think I was so adventurous," Cahatol said.

Cahatol's adventures all began in college. She has an undergraduate degree from UC Berkeley in biochemistry and two masters' degrees, an M.A. from Stanford in education and an M.Ed from Columbia in educational leadership.

Over this past summer, before she knew about an opening here, Cahatol wasn't even in the job market. She heard about the position here from a friend and teacher at Leigh High School, where she has taught chemistry for seven years.

Cahatol decided to apply on a Friday night at midnight. The following Monday she got an interview and was offered the job a few days later as the new Chemistry Honors teacher.

Now that she's settled down and married, Cahatol doesn't have very much time to travel, but she still enjoys hiking in the hills around the Bay Area. ♦



SAILING Science teacher Janny Cahatol from her trip to Africa. "When I woke up I saw a half-eaten mango. I was like, darn, I just lost two mangoes to a monkey," she said of a particular anecdote.

Courtesy of JANNY CAHATOL

14, 2012

First-year history teacher finds his niche

BY Maya Ravichandran

A crowd of sophomores gathers nervously in front of room 506. It's the first period of the first day of school. But this day is as important to history teacher Jim Chin as it is to the students — it's his first day, too.

Chin, one of the many new staff members this year, teaches World and U.S. History. He said he had been interested in history all throughout middle school and early high school.

"I think world history was my favorite [subject], although I wouldn't think my teachers would say that because I was the smart-alec in the corner," Chin said. "I would correct them and say 'Well actually, this is what happened...' Sometimes I was right, but sometimes I would be wrong."

Chin said he is "pretty awkward" and that students would probably describe him as a "nutty professor." He is passionate about teaching and is happy to help his students "grow as writers and critical thinkers."

According to his students, Chin has odd sayings and tells entertaining stories about his life.

"[Chin] told us about how in sixth grade, he was put in the Sparta city-state and was really sad about it, because Athens was supposed to be better," sopho-

more Gerlou Shyy said. "But then he was like 'but I got over it,' and it was funny."

At another point during high school, Chin gained some notoriety around campus when he did a Gollum impression in class.

Chin said that during his English class, he decided to act like Gollum from "Lord of the Rings." He spent the entire day crawling around in his classes and "imitating the gravelling, high pitched and grammatically confused voice of Gollum." Though he didn't wear a costume, Chin said he acted like a typically eccentric high school student.

"I don't know why the teacher didn't report me for psychiatric care, because it was very weird thing to do," Chin said. "I think that was the weirdest thing I've ever done in a class."

After high school, Chin chose to become

a teacher, but couldn't decide whether or not to become a professor and take Ph.D. courses. He received his teaching credential from Stanford University.

"I settled more into teaching high school students because you could potentially make more of a meaningful impact," Chin said.

He bases his lessons on primary source documents. He hopes to teach a college-styled class with more assigned writing.

"Students can go to the source but also figure out what the reading is doing to them without getting suckered in," Chin explained.

Chin himself does a lot of writing outside of school, having written short non-fiction essays and some one-act plays.

According to Chin, writing, acting and

directing have always been his passions. During high school, Chin played the part of Friar Lawrence in his school's performance of "Romeo and Juliet."

"[Theater] is an opportunity to create meaning for audiences and performers in such a visceral way," Chin said.

Chin has had the "good fortune" of having two of his plays, a film noir shadow play and a romantic dramedy, produced and performed in college. He also had the opportunity to co-direct a one-act play called "World Without Memory."

According to Chin, the play is about a father and daughter dealing with Alzheimer's.

"A lot of audience members were moved, but none more so than the family of all the cast members, who all somehow found each other after the performance and were struck by what their sons and daughters achieved on stage," Chin said.

Before Saratoga, Chin worked as a teacher at Bentley Upper School in Lafayette for one and a half years.

Chin is excited to be working at SHS and so far has had a great experience with the students and teachers.

"Saratoga is a great school where history teachers have some degree of freedom to teach what they are really passionate about," Chin said. "I'm really looking forward to seeing students develop." ♦

>> history teacher Jim Chin



Words of Wisdom: "Be open minded to anything and everything. Last year I needed a place to live on very short notice and found a home on Craigslist with 7 other people, and it turned out to be one of the best living experiences in my life and I met a whole new network of friends/people

because of it. I'd also like to say, try everything at least once. If you like it, try it again, and then a third time, just to be sure..."

Favorite Quote: "Sometimes I pretend to be normal. But it gets boring. So I go back to being me."



attendance clerk Mandy Armes

Inspiration: Too many names too list, but I am inspired by the unsung heroes that don't necessarily make it into conventional texts or our collective memory—the extraordinary individual who is willing to stand up for principle and as a result helps us to grow as a society. These folks include those who refuse to be bystanders and stand for principle—often paying a high price for their stance."



social studies teacher Maureen McCorry

Favorite Quote: "I am humble because I am incomplete."



English teacher Carolyn Bohls

Principal Robinson: dedicated educator at heart

BY Aashna Mukerji & Sierra Smith

"M&M's peanut butter candies are a favorite, as are Reese's cups," said Paul Robinson, the school's new principal. "I also love chocolate chip cookies. These are the reasons I ride a bike and play basketball."

From the glass bowl of tempting rainbow M&Ms on his table to the blue bike that hangs vertically behind his desk, there is much more to this Oklahoma City-born man than meets the eye.

In college at Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego, Robinson's friends recognized him by his long, beach-blond hair. He occupied his spare time by writing short stories, poetry and song lyrics—when he wasn't playing sports.

"I'm not an avid cyclist, but I like to ride to stay in shape and see the countryside," Robinson said. "Athletics have always played a huge part of my life."

Robinson played football, basketball and tennis in high school and continued to play the latter two in college. Basketball helped pay for his education, and he played on a USA national team one summer, touring South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand. Even now, he continues to play basketball because of his love for the game.

Robinson credits his coaches and teachers with his decision to become an educator.

"Because my dad died when I was 2 years old, many of my teachers and coaches became the dads I never had," Robinson said. "No telling what I would be without them in my life."

Now as an administrator himself, Robinson has become the type of role model that he looked up to as a student. Principal's secretary Susan Dini describes Robinson as relaxed, kid-friendly and down to earth.

"He's a really, really nice man and great to work with," Dini said.

Robinson was previously the principal of Rancho Bernardo High School in San Diego, where he had lived most of his life. His wife is currently the principal of a San Diego elementary school.

"We see each other every other weekend, but we call, text and Skype every day," he said.

His daughter is married to a youth minister in Georgia and has two children: a 2-and-a-half-year-old boy and a 14-month-old girl.

Robinson had an aptitude for literature and writing in high school and was able to combine that with his love of sports as an educator.

"Teaching English and coaching were a natural fit," Robinson said. "I taught English for 17 years until they made me put a tie on and move into the office as an administrator."

Throughout his career, maintaining a close relationship with his students has been very important to Robinson. About seven years ago, Robinson received an unexpected email from a curious former student named Bobbie who was wondering if she had reached her former mentor.

"I wrote back to say I was, and that I remember pulling her off of a young man she was beating up one day in elementary school. I told her that one day she would

like boys," Robinson said.

Bobbie went on to become Robinson's teaching assistant for two years and kept the statistics for the basketball team that Robinson coached. After Bobbie graduated, Robinson changed schools and they lost touch for over 30 years until they were reunited by Bobbie's email. Bobbie shared with Robinson what a positive influence he had been in her life.

"She also wrote that she was thankful I had been there for her when she was battling her mom's alcoholism," Robinson said. "If it wasn't for me she never would have gone to college and pursued her passion—art."

Today, Bobbie is a successful watercolor artist in the Seattle area and two of her works hang in Robinson's office. One of her paintings, of a lighthouse, is dedicated to him.

Because he had lived in San Diego for so long, Robinson had a tough time settling into Saratoga at first.

"It was hard, but I'm very excited to be here and make new friends," he said. "I'm



NEW PRINCIPAL "I get to go to school every day with the brightest and best students and staff members in America," Robinson said. "It doesn't get any better than that."

excited to learn more about NorCal life. I love the history of the area, and the rich culture of art and performing arts," he added.

In terms of personal goals, Robinson hopes to help wherever he can.

"I want to serve our students and staff in any way they need me," he said. "I plan on being here a long time, and I want it to really count."

He added, "I get to go to school every day with the brightest and best students and staff in America. It doesn't get any better than that for an educator." ♦

The hidden music tastes of SHS

BY SherrilynLing

As senior Kristen Zung walks down the halls, she changes the song on her iPod with caution. She does it when no one is around her, embarrassed that someone may see what she is listening to. Although Zung is ashamed of her guilty pleasure, she cannot stop herself from replaying these songs again and again.

Zung is hooked on all the classic Disney tunes. She explained that when she hears an old Disney song, she reminisces about all of the positive memories from her childhood and is filled with a "magical feeling inside." Despite this, however, she is too afraid to admit this guilty

pleasure to her close friends.

"I don't let my friends know about it because Disney music can make me bawl like a baby," Zung said.

While Zung has a hidden obsession with Disney music, sophomore Amanda Le confessed that she has all the Hannah Montana songs downloaded onto her iTunes account.

"I think her songs are really catchy," Le said.

Le and Zung are not the only ones

with embarrassing music addictions. Defying popular opinion, sophomore Uma Kumar is a big fan of the song "Call Me Maybe" by Carly Rae Jepsen. While others call the song "annoying and repetitive," Kumar can play the song on repeat.



senior Kristen Zung

Most people like to keep their guilty pleasures hidden, so having others find out about them can often be a mortifying experience. Senior Wesley Park has always enjoyed listening to Korean pop on his iPod, but one day while singing along at school, a passerby

"made a weird face" at him.

Although Park had a bad experience with others discovering his guilty pleasure, not all people do. Sophomore Jessica Uong knows the lyrics of all the songs from the popular Nickelodeon show "Victorious." Despite the potential embarrassment this may cause, Uong still plays the songs with her friends over.

Instead of giving her odd looks, Uong's friends learned to sing along with her. She said that even though it's a strange obsession of hers, she's glad her friends understand.

"We have even made dance routines for some of the songs," Uong said. "I think my guilty pleasure may be starting to get out of hand." ♦



Sophomore eats and eats and eats

BY DevinZhao

When one imagines a glutton, someone plump usually comes to mind. Sophomore Anish Srinivasan's lean 6 foot, 140-pound frame makes one think quite the opposite.

"When no one is watching, I generally sneak up to my refrigerator," Srinivasan said. "My parents are often surprised to see a fraction of the food left."

Srinivasan consumes enormous quantities of food on a regular basis, no matter his mood. He generally enjoys Indian food, but appreciates food of all cultures.

"I like eating because each [type of] food tells a different story in terms of how it is spiced," Srinivasan said. "My

parents say that I'm a growing boy, so I'm trying to get something under these skin and bones."

Srinivasan enjoys eating at home, but he also fancies eating at restaurants, especially at buffets and all-you-can-eat joints.

"When mealtime approaches, I'm generally starving," Srinivasan said. "So when I see food, my mouth is watering, and my stomach is rumbling."

According to Srinivasan, he does not splurge on food to be polite. However, when he is alone, he says his hunger becomes unbearable, and he lunges at the nearest sandwich.

"Hunger gnaws at me at every opportunity," Srinivasan said. "I try to control it at school, but when I get home, I go all

out with it, and it isn't very surprising to find me with a snack."

Srinivasan also takes joy in the prospect of having more food than his friends.

"I remember at one of my friend's birthday parties, I ninja-ed my way to get three cookies when others only had one," said Srinivasan. "It was immensely satisfying to have more than anyone else, but I also felt sorry for others."

Srinivasan said that he will try to fix his issue of mass food consumption.

"It won't happen immediately, or within a week," Srinivasan said. "I will assure you that one day, I will get this issue solved. Hopefully, by that time, I will look more solid and muscular in my chest and arm areas." ♦

TV offers escape to personal heaven

BY AasimNaqvi

With the rising popularity of online streaming, an episode of just about any TV show can be just a click away.

Senior Ishaan Kolluri's guilty pleasure takes literally three clicks of the mouse. One to open the browser, another to click his bookmark for the show "Angel" and a third to choose the episode.

"Angel," a spin-off of the program "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," depicts a convicted vampire as he endures numerous murder trials.

"He was a cool vampire because he was more than a man," Kolluri said. "He was a superhuman who had dark, conflicted feelings about his identity."

However, Kolluri believes the overwhelmingly popular "Twilight" series has emasculated vampire fiction.

"Now guys aren't supposed to watch vampire shows, because they're stigmatized as flowery and emotional," Kolluri said.

While Kolluri enjoys his world of vampires, senior Johnny Chang derives his guilty pleasure from the program "American Greed."

"It's a show that highlights some of the biggest corporate and white-collar crimes in history," Chang said. "It's an important part of my identity now."

As the show does have a historical angle to it, Chang considers it a guilty pleasure because his intention while watching it isn't exactly to get a history lesson.

While "Angel" and "American Greed" are relatively obscure programs among the high school crowd, certain popular TV shows still make students feel sheep-

ish when they click that alluring play button on their computers. Senior Arush Shankar's guilty pleasure is the medical drama "Grey's Anatomy," which has a nationwide fan-following.

Shankar considers it "a girl show," which could make any male viewer want to keep his fandom private.

"The main character is played by a girl, and a large part of the show's story is about her emotions," Shankar said.

Kolluri and Shankar agreed that programs that focus on characters' emotions can be guilty pleasures for males; modern-day society often subliminally teaches that excessive emotion is related more to the female gender than male gender, Kolluri said.

At the end of the day, however, television is for entertainment, Shankar said.

"I watch [Grey's Anatomy] because it's a good medical drama and a good show," Shankar said. "It's good. That should be the reason why anyone watches any TV show." ♦

I'm a Belieber!

A couple of years ago, you may have heard me uttering something along these lines: "Justin Bieber sucks! He sings like a 10-year-old girl! What has our world come to?"



PAUL
JUNG
Junghnam Style

However, as Justin Bieber's voice has developed (and acquired a lower pitch) over the years, so too has my appreciation for his music. Once a vehement

Bieber hater, I am proud to say that I have recently been converted to Bieberism and am now an avid Belieber.

It all started with "Boyfriend." As I listened to it for the first time on the Internet, I was disappointed with the intro that seemed to lack substance. However, when the guitar entered the song, I was mesmerized for the next three minutes by the smooth flow and catchy rhythm that Bieber had managed to create. With this mature yet playful song, I felt that perhaps Justin Bieber did not deserve the abuse I had given him in the past.

Then, "As Long as You Love Me" was released, and it was this song that fully converted me. Bieber proved that, with two

songs in a row, he could skillfully blend his uniquely high voice with a powerful, modern beat. I was impressed, and with these songs Bieber gained my respect. It also helped his image to bring Big Sean onto the track for a couple lines; when people think you sing like a girl, it's a good idea to bring a well-respected rapper into one of your songs.

Perhaps another, more shallow reason I respect Bieber is his ability to ensnare as fine a specimen as Selena Gomez. Since the days of "Wizards of Waverly Place" on Disney, I've had a soft spot for this demigod. The fact that Bieber and Gomez are official gives me one more reason to salute the Biels.

Although the ghost of horrible songs such as "One Time" and "Baby" will forever haunt Bieber's past, he has a promising future ahead of him if he can manage to continue on the path that he is on. Like Justin Timberlake, if Bieber can utilize his high voice strategically, then soon the world will begin to appreciate his music, and will stop comparing him to the likes of Disney princesses. Swaggy, Justin Bieber. Swag on. ♦



Courtesy of IMDB.COM



Kolluri



Chang

Coach. Teacher. Hero.



GRAPHIC BY SABRINA CHEN, MEGANA IYER AND MAYA RAVICHANDRAN

TEACHER-COACHES HAVE A UNIQUE IMPACT ON PLAYERS AND STUDENTS

History teacher doubles as basketball coach

BY Sabrina Chen

Imagine walking into history class on the first day of school to see a teacher who already knows your strengths and weaknesses. He knows your shooting percentage, your mile time, and for the past summer, he has been charting every lay-up you've missed. He even knows your after-school schedule.

For senior Neha Vellanki, this isn't much of a stretch. After all, it has happened to her twice: once as a sophomore in World History, and again as a senior in U.S. Government.

The teacher? Mike Davey.

Vellanki, like a handful of Davey's students this year, is also a player on his varsity girls' basketball team.

"[Davey] is really into both teaching and coaching. He's dedicated and passionate," Vellanki said. "I've gotten to know him really well being on his team and being his student."

Davey said that having students both on his team and in his classes lets him get to know them much better.

"[By] having my basketball players as students, I build really great relationships because I get to see them for an extra couple hours a day, in a team situation, driving for goals together," Davey said. "I know them so well that when it comes time to writing letters of recommendations, I really know their skills and strengths, so I can do a good job."

Senior Kimberly Chou, who also takes a class with Davey and has him for a coach, said she is happy that she has a teacher who knows her outside of school.

"I see him off and on court, outside and inside of school," Chou said. "[Davey] and I talk after school too sometimes, so there is a lot of interaction."

According to Davey, students who are also his basketball players also have an academic advantage when it comes to getting to spend more time with their teacher.

"Occasionally at practice, they'll ask, should I come to tutorial about this, I'm a little confused about that," Davey said. "Because of the common contact they are able to ask what they need."

Vellanki also said that Davey likes to tease the basketball players when they do not show up to practice.

"When I walk into class the next day, [Davey] will say something like, 'Someone didn't show up to practice.' Then,



Above: Basketball coach and history teacher Mike Davey exercises with his players during one of the team's off season workouts.

Right: Davey explains his lecture during a U.S. Government class.



FALCON // WREN SUTTERFIELD

he'll start coughing and murmuring my name like 'eh hem, eh hem, Neha?'" Vellanki said with a smile.

Furthermore, Vellanki and Chou agree that Davey shares similarities between the way he coaches basketball and the way he teaches history.

"His really loud voice, for sure," Chou said. "And his passion to teach others."

Ultimately, Davey believes there is always a deeper relationship created between his basketball players who double as his students.

"I do think there is a special bond,"

Davey said. "Even with my former boys players, I do continue post-high school contact. I've even been to weddings of my basketball players who were also my students, because we spent so much time together before."

Davey also said he admires students who are able to balance basketball with their academic life.

"I do believe that basketball is part of the educational experience," Davey said. "So I really have a lot of praise for [those students], because they are able to balance a variety of activities." ♦

Time strain challenges coach



Tennis coach Yuko Aoki talks to sophomore player Chichiger Shyy during practice.

BY Karen Sung & Ashwini Velchamy

For the majority of her waking hours, chances are PE teacher and JV tennis coach Yuko Aoki is either in the weight room or on the tennis courts.

When Aoki first came to the school 14 years ago, she taught Japanese and coached the girls' JV tennis team. She was not coaching the boys' team at the time, unlike now, because she herself was competing in tennis during the boys' season in the spring.

"It was busy," Aoki said. "It's still the same way. For first period I come in at 7:30 a.m. and tennis is usually until 5:30 p.m. or so."

Now, she coaches both boys' and girls' JV teams and finds it increasingly difficult to allot time for everything.

"Coaching two seasons is quite hard and at the same time, I have an 8-year-old son who has after-school classes," Aoki said.

Currently, Aoki only teaches PE, since the Japanese program ended with the last school year. She considers teaching PE and coaching similar.

"So, to me, it's working on the students' health aspect and fitness aspect that is very fun," Aoki said.

Aoki remarked that she has always loved tennis and played for her high school team.

"I know it was a very important part of my high school life, and I would like to let students have a great athletic experience here," Aoki said.

When contrasting the two roles she plays at the school, Aoki shared that her relations with her students varied with those of her players.

Despite the limited two-month season, she quickly forms a strong connection with her tennis players.

"You spend time not just coaching, but off the court, too," Aoki said, "so you get to know each other."

According to Aoki, bonding with her Japanese students was different since all her interactions with them were during school.

"I had some of the students for four years, so I developed a very nice relationship [with them]," Aoki said.

Despite the long hours and the sacrifices she had to make to allow her to be a teacher-coach, Aoki said that the opportunity has been "very fun and very exciting."

"My favorite part [of both teaching and coaching]," Aoki said, "is sharing wonderful time with the students." ♦

Abe appreciates similarities, differences between jobs

BY Dylan Jew

When comparing a teacher to a coach, the two seem extremely similar. Teachers are responsible for the academic growth of their students; coaches try to pass on skills and knowledge of their sport.

World History and U.S. Government teacher Kirk Abe has experience with both. Abe became the head coach of wrestling at Saratoga High in 2005 and stopped in 2009 due to health issues.

Some key similarities between teaching and coaching are in the goals and mindsets required for both, according to Abe. Both have daily goals that the mentor sets for the student.

"Like setting up a year's schedule for a class, coaches have to also set up a schedule for the team," Abe said. "The team's progress and improvement has to be taken into consideration, how far the team has gone with the skills learned and the teamwork developed. I think it's the same in the classroom; lessons build off of the previous."

Abe said some other areas of overlap include the expectations, which must be clearly defined to help promote success.

"Assessment is a key factor in both," Abe said. "In the classroom there are both informal and formal assessments via activities and tests. The same is true

with the team. Assessing the team on the playing field is done through drills, scrimmages and the actual competition."

Abe believes a major distinction between the two is the amount of time spent together with teams compared to classes.

"On an athletic team you spend a lot more time with a smaller amount of students," Abe said. "You reach a level where you know each of their goals and can share in their experiences. It's possible to individualize your coaching for each player."

By comparing the 125 students seen in a two-day block to the 10 to 15 players on a team, it is clear that coaches have a better opportunity to develop relationships with players.

"As a student-athlete, with the daily practices and the weekend tournaments, you end up committing a lot more time to the team compared to the time committed to any one class, almost like a second family," Abe said. "I think that's a major difference."

Whatever the medium, being engaged is vital, according to Abe.

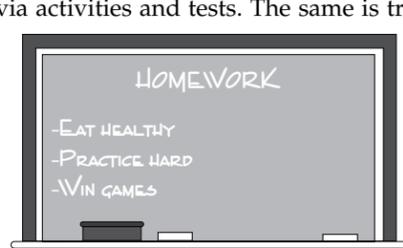
"Having a passion for what you do is important in both settings," Abe said. "When you are really into it, I think the students catch on and kind of feel it."

Ultimately, the importance of each activity boils down to how much students are able to get out of it.

"You're not going to change every student into a rocket scientist," Abe said. "You're not going to help every player become an NBA star. I guess the thing we strive for is to help athletes and the team reach their potential." ♦

Having a passion for what you do is important in both settings.

>> Kirk Abe



GRAPHIC BY GRACE MA



NBC: bully of the London games

We remember images of the terrorizing bully on the playground, right? The kid who kicked others off the swings, teased the first graders and the kid who, instead of playing tag, just pushed everyone over?



GRACE MA
Oh Ma Goodness

But no, this story is not about the traumatizing effects of childhood bullying, but rather, about a much larger bully—NBC.

Why is this all-American news broadcasting station terrorizing the playground? The answer lies in the way it broadcasts the London 2012 Olympics—and, in fact, most recent Olympic games.

NBC does not broadcast live; instead, it relies on taping all events, and it only plays the most popular sports of the day in the evening.

Not only does this result in record-shattering races being played hours after the actual event, but also in the unequal amount of airtime for less popular sports.

NBC's hidden motive in replaying popular games during prime-time is its desire to pay off its multi-billion dollar contract with the Olympic Committee, which secures NBC's rights to broadcast the Olympics for the next eight years. With more viewers watch-

ing during prime time, NBC can raise advertising fees to raise its revenue.

Because of this, under-the-radar sports in the U.S. like badminton, sailing and judo received much less coverage from NBC, a result from "pushing over" these sports' air time to make way for the nightly coverage of fan-favorite sports.

My inner badminton player-self adamantly argues that all athletes should be treated equally; in this case, they should all be granted equal coverage. The only way to solve this would be for NBC to air all the events live and later replay some of the more popular sports.

The live coverage would prevent spoilers for the American public, who, at the London Olympics, received coverage five hours later than countries in the Eastern European Time Zone, like Britain and Portugal. Additionally, replaying important races and games during prime-time would bring even more advertising money straight to NBC's pockets.

During the London 2012 Olympics, I spent the first week in the United States cheering for team USA alongside the rest of the country.

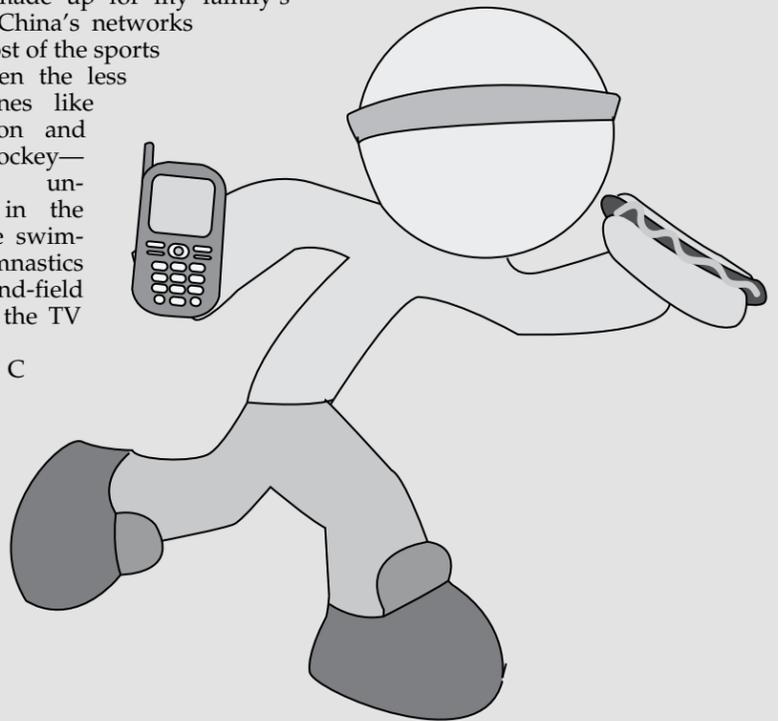
The second week was also spent wildly shouting encouraging remarks

at athletes on the screen—but this time in China, where my enthusiastic comments only received menacing glares from my extended family.

Despite the fact that my pro-U.S. comments were not welcomed in China, equal airing time for each sport definitely made up for my family's bitterness. China's networks covered most of the sports equally, even the less popular ones like the triathlon and field hockey—something unheard of in the U.S., where swimming, gymnastics and track-and-field dominated the TV stations.

NBC should learn from this example. In a survey done by Gallup Economy in August 2012, 71 percent of American

Olympics viewers stated they would prefer the games to broadcast live than to have to wait until the evening to watch the day's most popular sports. But sadly, rarely does the bully ever listen to the complaints of others. ♦



Students quickly send tricky text message

BY Meganalyer

Xylophones run around clumsily as monkeys eat bananas.

Four students mouth the words slowly as their thumbs begin to move rapidly from one letter to the next.

"Done," they shout in a matter of seconds, some astonishingly fast.

As part of the Saratoga Olympics, the Falcon held a texting contest in which one student from each grade competed to send a difficult text as fast as possible.

Freshman Fiona Sequeira finished in six seconds, sophomore Jonathan Oh in 25 seconds, junior Vanessa Wang in 12 seconds and senior Sujay Khandekar in 15 seconds. Sequeira had the Droid 3, Khandekar had the touch screen iPhone 4S, Oh had the slide out keyboard Samsung Intensity II and Wang had the slide out keyboard LG Cosmo.

"[The challenge] was kind of strange, but I found it applicable to the technological advances of today," said Oh.

Many students find texting faster and easier than other methods of online communication.

According to the company CellSigns, Americans send an average of 75 billion text messages every month.

"Texting is the most efficient way of communicating," Sequeira said. "I text a lot."

"The challenge was weird," Sequeira said, "because a lot of the letters were really far apart, and I don't use the word 'xylophone' very often."

Regardless of the fact that "xylophone" is a difficult word, all the students were able to send the text in under 30 seconds.

"I thought it was quite interesting because I had to type something unusual," Wang said, "but I didn't really feel stressed out about trying to type quickly because I'm used to it."

Wang explained that she texts every day and can often find herself pulling out her phone every few minutes, even when she is not expecting a text message.

Wang, like Sequeira, agrees texting is more convenient than other forms of electronic communication.

"It's easier and more efficient," Se-

queira said. "On Facebook you have to go online and sometimes people appear to be online but they really aren't."

The students agree that there are many advantages of texting, such as the quick responses and the convenience compared to having to establish a connection with the other person and the ability to communicate almost anywhere with anyone as long as there is sufficient cell coverage.

"If you are looking for quick conversation, calling or chatting is more useful," Wang said.

"But not as convenient as simply pulling out your phone and texting people." ♦



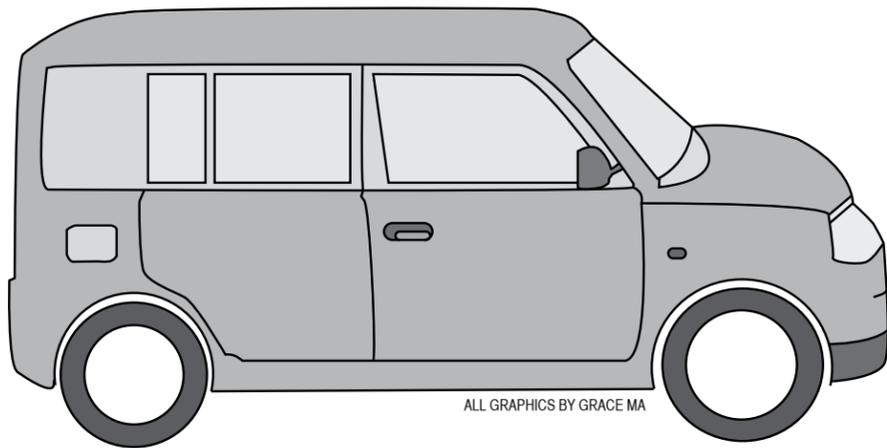
FIONA SEQUIERA



From left to right: Sophomore Jonathan Oh, freshman Fiona Sequeira, junior Vanessa Wang, senior Sujay Khandekar.

FALCON // ANSHARA SEKAR

STUDENTS COMPETE IN PARALLEL PARKING, QUAD RACING, HOT DOG EATING AND SPEED TEXTING EVENTS



Fearless upperclassmen parallel park

BY Ingrid**Hong**

In spirit of the summer Olympics this year, four students were selected to participate in a parallel parking competition. The students were asked to parallel park in between two cars of the other competitors, making the pressure of the successful parallel parking even more intense.

Parallel parking is one of the most daunting skills for a driver to master.

The competitors were junior Sana Ali and seniors Ankita Chadha, Sasan Saadat and Tyler Bakke.

The participants were scored based on speed, confidence of driving and overall quality of the parking job on a scale of 1 through 5 (1 being worst, 5 being best).

In first place was Saadat, second place was Ali, and third was Bakke. Chadha was disqualified due to incompleteness of the parking job.

Bakke was first to parallel park in the

high school parking lot. He used Chadha's car (1994 740il BMW), which he was not familiar with, immediately giving him a disadvantage. Another disadvantage was that Chadha's car was longer than most cars, giving her a harder time squeezing into the tight spot.

"I thought it I could have done much better if I had my own car, but that was the best I could do," Bakke said.

However, Bakke gave his full effort and came out with a score of 4 for speed, 3 for confidence and 3 for overall parking job.

Next was Ali, who drives a 2012 Ford Escape XLS, a medium-sized, maneuverable car. She has had her license since December 2011, but has only parallel parked once before.

"I had practiced once with my driving instructor, but I [only] vaguely remember her instruction," Ali said.

Ali took her time adjusting into the correct position to reverse. Her patience and perseverance paid off in the end, scoring a 3 in speediness, 4 in confidence and 4 in overall parking job.

Chadha was next to parallel park. Having only had her license for three months, Chadha felt like a novice compared to the more experienced drivers.

Chadha was, unfortunately, unable to complete her attempt, which disqualified her from the competition; she was not given a score.

"As I was parallel parking, I felt very nervous and scared as I hoped I wouldn't

hit the other cars or the curb," Chadha said. "I also didn't realize how hard parallel parking actually is."

Although she was unable to complete the challenge, Chadha gained new knowledge from this experience.

Unlike Chadha, Saadat, the winner of the competition, breezed through the parking job. Even though it did not show in his driving, Saadat felt uneasy coming into the competition.

"I was a little nervous with the competition," said Saadat. "I had no notion of the other drivers' capabilities so this made me a little wary."

He scored a 4 for speediness, 4 for confidence and 5 for the overall quality of the job itself.

For Saadat, a difficult aspect of the competition was the pressure of the other drivers watching him. However, the pressure was not enough to steer him wrong as he scored the highest scores.

"I feel really pleased with myself, [but] I cannot credit the win entirely to my superb parking abilities," Saadat said. "My Box (Scion xB) has a very comfortable shape that fits into parking spaces with the ease of the square piece in Tetris."

Saadat offers advice to novice drivers learning how to parallel park successfully.

"Sit up straight, utilize your mirrors, and don't let staring onlookers shake your confidence." ♦



From left to right: junior Sana Ali, senior Sasan Saadat, senior Ankita Chadha, senior Tyler Bakke.

Olympic appetites

CHALLENGER EATS NINE HOT DOGS

BY Trung**Vandinh**

Despite a heavy lunch and fierce competition, sophomore Randy Tsai crushed all obstacles and claimed victory by scarfing down nine 4-ounce hot dogs in the Olympic challenge for competitive eating.

On Aug. 24, The Falcon approached several students with an opportunity for glory in the Saratoga Olympics. Those who were convinced of their ability to digest accepted the challenge and began inhaling hot dogs.

Participants had as much time as they needed to finish as many hot dogs as they could eat consecutively, and each hot dog eaten contributed one point toward their score.

Tsai, the winner, was tentative to compete because he was worried about others' reactions.

"I don't want to look like a pig," Tsai said. "But I know I can win this."

In the midst of the battle for supremacy, junior Kevin Tran had achieved the score to beat, seven hot

dogs, and was unrivaled for a good length of time. "I only stopped eating because I didn't think anyone could [score higher] than me," Tran said. "But even though I was proven wrong, I should have eaten as much as I could."

Even Tsai did not expect to overthrow Tran as the point leader, since he accepted the challenge 30 minutes before his swim practice. Later, he claims he felt sick because of all the food he had to digest.

Sophomore James Freeman also had afternoon plans in the pool and did not participate. "I have water polo [practice] after this, so I better not eat too much," Freeman said.

By the end of the challenge, no one was able to match Tsai's score, crowning him the champion.

"I regret joining [the competition] but not winning [it]," Tsai said. "I have always seen myself as an able eater, but I wouldn't know for sure since I don't have any siblings to compare myself to." ♦



RANDY TSAI

Contestants race from lockers to math quad

BY Wren**Sutterfield**

The average Saratoga student knows all about running. Whether running the dreaded mile in PE or racing back on campus after off-campus lunch, hurrying to get around is a vital part of the day.

With the obvious similarities between the televised events and those taking place every day on campus, it seemed natural to include running in the Saratoga Olympics.

The challenge: Beat two other sprinters in a race from the quad side of the girl's locker room to math teacher Kristen Hamilton's room, 106, in the math quad. This path is infamous for being one of the most difficult distances to traverse during passing, because students have to cross the entire school.

The contestants: junior Jennie Werner, sophomore Andrew York and freshman Michael Ren.

After resolving a few complications concerning how exactly to determine the winner, the runners were told to sprint to the math quad. The race was short and sweet, lasting approximately 40 seconds after seventh period.

Werner sprinted to the winner's podium, with Ren completing the race only a

fraction of a second later.

Though this is likely the longest distance a student would ever be expected to travel during the passing period, several factors made the race simpler, Werner said.

"During passing period it can be hard to walk through crowded hallways," Werner said, "but we raced through an open campus."

It is also very rare to find students sprinting through campus on a given day, unless they arrived extremely late to school or were kept late in their last class. This is also not usually an issue except on Mondays, which have multiple classes without breaks in-between.

So how does this modest little Saratoga competition compare to the real Olympics?

"The race was nothing like the Olympics," Werner said. "Not only did we lack an official timer and starting gun, but we had no fans!"

Even without the added encouragement of knowing millions of people were watching her triumph at home on their televisions, Werner said she still enjoyed her victory.

"I love competition, so it was fun to win," Werner said. ♦



JENNIE WERNER



Graphics by GRACE MA

WHO

Seniors cast votes

BY Sarah Finley

Growing up, birthdays often correspond with important milestones in a young person's life—each one special in its own way. One's 18th birthday is especially momentous, for it is the year a child turns into an adult, a transition that comes with responsibilities and rewards, including the opportunity to vote and thereby voice opinions on the government.

Senior Eric Castronovo plans to take advantage of his chance to vote in the upcoming election this November.

"I'm 18 and I can [vote] so I might as well ... but do I know anything about voting?" Castronovo said. "No."

According to Castronovo, he plans to learn the ropes and gain experience for the next time he votes.

Castronovo said there is "practice that I want to get in...so when I go to vote later I know how. It's better to learn now than when I'm 22."

Castronovo feels it is necessary that he use this opportunity.

"I think it is important to vote because I have the right to vote, and if I don't vote then I feel like I am just wasting an opportunity to make myself heard," Castronovo said.

Although many of his friends are not old enough to vote, Castronovo said he is comfortable voting while still in high school.

"I feel like everyone's going to vote sooner or later so it's just normal," Castronovo said.

Senior Gabby Crolla will also be 18 by the election and, like Castronovo, has decided to vote.

"I decided to vote because I felt that, as a person, by voting I could contribute ... to my community and government by doing my part to choose a good leader," Crolla said.

Crolla said that she is very excited about the process, but it does have some drawbacks.

"I'm looking forward to actually casting my vote," Crolla said. "I'm not looking forward to what might happen if the person I voted for didn't get elected."

Nevertheless, Crolla sees the necessity of voting.

"It is important to vote because as a person you can make a difference for the good of the country and government," Crolla said. "One vote can mean tipping the balance of who wins the election."

Crolla feels that she knows enough about the candidates to make a responsible decision.

"I have already educated myself on the election simply by watching the news for a couple minutes or just engaging in conversation with my parent about it," Crolla said. "Sometimes I go by what I learn in school and in history class."

Senior Corinne Moran is also planning to vote in the upcoming election.

"My family is pretty political and talking about politics all the time so...I think it's just something that interests me," Moran said.

However, Moran said she does not feel pressured by her family or friends to vote in any certain way.

"My dad is a really big advocate of researching stuff for yourself," Moran said. "[My parents] don't like to put too many of their opinions on me, so I do my own work and figure it out for myself."

Interestingly, Moran feels that among her peers only some are serious about their candidate choices.

"I think voting is a very personal thing," Moran said. "But I do think if you're going to vote, it would be smart to know what exactly you're voting for."

Moran said she had mixed feelings about this new opportunity.

"It's kind of cool," Moran said. "I feel a lot older because I'm an actual adult now, but it's also kind of weird at the same time." ♦

Liberal or conservative: who helps us decide?

BY Sierra Smith

Generally speaking, parents have a huge influence on their children's day to day lives. They have a say in what their children eat, when they eat, what classes they take, what TV shows they watch and when they watch them. Parents also have an influence on their children in more subtle ways, such as shaping their political views.

"Obviously your parents' political beliefs affect you a lot," sophomore Morteza Rohaninejad said.

Rohaninejad, who has frequent political discussions with his family, is usually in the same range of the political spectrum as his parents and brother, junior Mostafa Rohaninejad.

Yet, despite supporting the same party, Morteza and his parents often have political disagreements.

"We don't necessarily share all of the same beliefs," Morteza said. "[For example], our parents believe that the revolution [in Iran] should have happened. My brother and I somewhat believe that it shouldn't have happened."

While most students agree that their parents influence their political beliefs, many are encouraged by their parents to think independently and maintain their own opinions.

"I have a unique situation in which my dad refuses to share with me any of his political opinions so as not to influence mine," senior Elyse Berlinberg said. "While my mom will share her opinions if asked, my dad will not say a word about whom he is voting for or what he believes."

Berlinberg, who had been frustrated by her dad's restraint in political discussions when she was younger, has come to appreciate his decision to let her form her own

opinions without his bias.

In Berlinberg's family, political discussions are almost nonexistent, as political beliefs are considered private. Yet, even with the absence of such debate in her home, Berlinberg recognizes a relationship between her parents' views and her own.

"My parents influence me politically because of their careers," Berlinberg said. "My mother works for a school, and therefore money for education is very important to me. My father is a doctor, and therefore my opinions on health care and professional education are swayed."

Similarly, for senior David Zarrin, family political discussions aren't an usual occurrence.

"Politics aren't incredibly prominent in my family, although we always keep up to date with ongoing events," Zarrin said.

Zarrin's entire family, however, supports the same political party. While Zarrin believes that his beliefs would have been the same without the influence of his parents, he still acknowledges a relationship between his parents' beliefs and his own.

"My parents have raised me to be slightly liberal, but I personally think I would be like this regardless of my parents' political position," Zarrin said. "I don't think that goes for everyone."

Although the presence of politics at home varies widely from family to family, there is definitely a connection between parents' political beliefs and those of their children.

"As much as we like to think as youths we decide what political stance we take in our world today, our parents do in fact play a major role in deciding where exactly we actually stand," Zarrin said. ♦

CARES?

A CLOSER LOOK AT STUDENTS' POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT DURING AN ELECTION YEAR

Speech and debater knows his politics

BY Deepti Kannan

Although many students may be anticipating the premiere of the new season of "How I Met Your Mother" while frantically trying to catch up on the previous season's episodes online, senior Neil Prasad tunes in to a different sort of website: Google news.

With the elections coming up and issues such as jobs, the economy and medicare being hotly debated, many students are left bewildered as to which sides to take and what opinions to form. Prasad, however, has already solidified his political opinions for the forthcoming elections.

"I expect that [the election] will degenerate into more talking, and I doubt that any productive ideas will come from it," Prasad said. "No one wants to cut military spending, no one wants to make serious entitlement reforms, and no one wants to deal with social issues like gay marriage and abortion."

In order to form informed opinions about political issues, Prasad has read countless articles with an open mind.

Motivated by his desire to understand current events, Prasad strongly believes that research is the key to discovering the right path to take in politics.

"It's our civic duty as citizens of the United States [to stay informed], because every decision that politicians make affects us," Prasad said. "If we don't have any idea what they're doing, we're essentially giving up our vote. So it's important to follow politics to at least have some idea of what's going on in the country."

Prasad is also driven by his desire to succeed in extemporaneous speech, a speech and debate event in which each competitor gives a 7-minute speech about a current issue after receiving and preparing the topic only 30 minutes beforehand.

"In order to do well in extemp, you have to know what you're talking

about," Prasad said. "So you need to have a large knowledge base."

Last year Prasad placed sixth in California and 23rd in the nation in international extemp. However, he said he has been interested in politics long before he entered high school. Joining speech and debate has only broadened his knowledge.

To build his knowledge base, Prasad stays updated daily on current events with the help of websites such as Google news and Politico.

"Every time you read a new article, you have to come in with the belief that you don't know anything about the subject," Prasad said. "That way you can evaluate the article purely on its merits."

Although his opinions are strong, he does not like to impose them on others.

>> thebigidea

Neil Prasad is politi-cool

How he stays updated
Browses articles on Google News and Politico.

Why he values politics
Citizens must fulfill their duty by contributing to the fate of the nation.

Speech and debate's role
Extemporaneous speech furthers his knowledge in his desire to do well on the team.

Students widely vary in their political interest

BY Candice Zheng

With the whirlwind of vicious political campaigning surrounding the country at the moment, how involved are Saratoga students in this national event? Although there is a misconception that high school students generally turn a blind eye to anything related to politics, SHS awareness during the 2012 election season ranges greatly.

Inevitably, there are always students who have no interest in the elevated political activity. One such student is freshman Matthew Li.

"I don't know anything," said Li. "I don't watch the news. For someone my age, I don't think politics has much impact on my life as of now."

On the other hand, sophomore Bianca Oliveri's knowledge falls in the a more modest range.

Oliveri, who is pro-Obama, feels that our country's situation would change negatively if Mitt Romney becomes president because she feels he doesn't identify with the general public.

Junior Omkar Gaitonde, however, disagrees; he believes that Romney has

the ability to re-energize the economy.

"What Obama tried to do [for the economy] failed every single time," Gaitonde said. "I feel like if we get a guy like Romney with a strong, practical plan, the economy will begin to prosper and this country will do well."

The actions we make will influence our lives, and that's why we need to be aware of the decisions these politicians are making.

>> Junior Omkar Gaitonde

Other students, such as senior Fred Feyzi, fall into the narrow category of those who not only have strong political views but are also deeply involved in the campaigning. Feyzi recently launched a website with senior Shahab Moghadam called thepoliticalstudent.com, where he hopes to inspire students to become involved in politics.

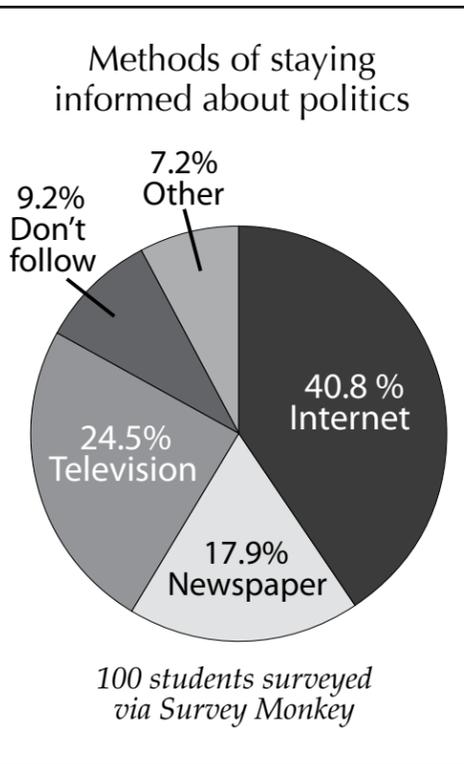
"I am personally a mainstream liberal," Feyzi said. "I'm socially and economically liberal, and I support Obama because he's definitely helped out the public even though he's made some mistakes in his first effort."

As Feyzi's partner and friend, Moghadam has been involved in politics since the age of 10. He has also met many prominent politicians.

"I stood behind Michelle Obama in a primary election rally and got a letter from Obama and got to see him speak," Moghadam said. "At that moment, I felt for the first time in my life that my country was going in the right direction."

Moghadam is currently working for the Obama team "making phone calls to swing state voters."

"I think that [students being involved in politics] is important because it's their future at stake," Gaitonde said. "In the future our generation will have to make a lot of tough choices; the actions we make will influence our lives, and that's why we need to be aware of the decisions these politicians are making." ♦



>> togatalks

Why should students care about politics?

"We're going to be adults soon. It doesn't just affect our parents; it affects us too."



junior Mohith Subbarao

"The decisions affect students. We already feel the direct effects of budget cuts."



junior Jennie Werner

"If we don't, we're relinquishing our right to exercise the free expression granted to us."



senior Venkat Munukutla

FALL SPORTS

BOYS' CROSS COUNTRY

Coach: Dan Ambrico

2011 recap: The boys' team ultimately qualified for the state meet for the first time in over a decade.

Star player: Sophomore Steven Sum

Key additions: Sophomore Samuel Junqua

The new season begins with minor changes to the basic operations of the team, with coach Dan Ambrico adding three junior captains to help keep tabs on the large team, composed of over 60 boys. Juniors Drew Bryan, Sam Guy and Daniel Johnston are the junior co-captains, along with senior captains Kabir Chandrasekhar and David Zarrin.

All seven boys who made the state meet last season are still with the team: seniors Aasim Naqvi and David Zarrin, juniors Samuel Guy, William Guy, and Daniel Johnston and sophomores Andrew Harter and Steven Sum.

Zarrin believes that this year will be just as successful, if not more so, than last season.

"I'm confident we'll make state again this year," he said. "The seven guys who made it last year are still around, and we're only going to get faster."

—Aasim Naqvi and Derek Sun

GIRLS' VOLLEYBALL

Coach: Brad Fredrickson

2011 record: 8-11

2011 recap: Key player and 2012 graduate Talia Sisco racked up many points for the team as an outside hitter, but the team ended with a losing record.

Star players: Juniors Julia Lee and Katelyn Mollahan

Key additions: Sophomore Catherine Tang, senior Bianca Zakerani

Key matchups: Harker, Cupertino, Wilcox

Having lost only one player from last season, much of the team has had at least one season of varsity experience. Yet with four new additions for a total of 12 players, the girls will have to earn their chance to play.

"The team this year is pretty equal defensively and offensively, so much so that girls have to fight for whatever spot they want on the court," middle blocker senior Ramya Swami said. "It allows for some healthy competition and pushes us to try harder."

Preseason games will take place until October and give the girls opportunities to get used to playing together and to make final adjustments before the league season begins. The team played Branham on Aug. 30 in a pre-season game, Kings Academy on Sept. 4, and Willow Glen on Sept. 6.

—Sierra Smith and Catherine Tang

BOYS' WATER POLO



FALCON // WREN SUTTERFIELD

Junior Brandon Busse swims after junior Cameron Borch in practice on Aug. 30.

Coach: Courtney Crase

2011 record: 11-2

2011 recap: The Falcons had a strong season, but ended second in leagues after losing to Lynbrook.

Star player: Junior Steven Cho

Key opponent: Lynbrook

In the wake of last year's successful season, the Falcons hold high hopes for the upcoming season. They kicked off the season with a tournament at Lynbrook and Mountain View on Sept. 7-8, and the first league game was at Harker on Sept. 11.

"Our team is really tightly knit and unified like last year, which helps us communicate more and win games together," senior hole set Neal Siganporia said. "Also, we have the deepest bench with countless players with talent, so we can wear other teams out endurance-wise."

With the return of coach Courtney Crase, the team can expect to work hard under her strong leadership and guidance. According to Siganporia, practices are being taken seriously, and the Falcons will be a force to be reckoned with in the De Anza league this season.

"We have a lot of utility players that can play multiple positions," Siganporia said. "All in all, we're definitely one of the top teams in the league."

—Paul Jung

FOOTBALL



FALCON // WREN SUTTERFIELD

The team prepares for its game against Birmingham, which Saratoga won 21-17.

Coach: Tim Lugo

2011 record: 2-8

2011 recap: The Falcons were plagued by injuries in the 2011 season, resulting in a mere two wins. Injuries to star players Jerrick Lee, Troy Doles, Mitchell Faylor, Henry Wei and Sean Walsh all impacted the team greatly.

Star player: Senior wide receiver Kyle Dozier

Key additions: Junior quarterback Jonathan Walters, junior defensive tackle Mike Fitzimmons, sophomore free safety Joey Medieros

Key matchups: Los Gatos, Homestead, Palo Alto

After a nightmarish 2011 season, the Falcons look to have more success in 2012. This year the team will be running a spread offense, as opposed to the traditional wing-T offense. The reason for this change is because while the team may not be the biggest, or most physical team, they have lots of team speed as well as a good quarterback.

The Falcons will be turning to quarterback junior Jonathan Walters this season, who had a great JV season last year and senior linebacker Henry Wei to lead the defense. The team has high expectations for this year's season and look to make it back to the CCS playoffs after missing the last two years.

"My expectation is to make CCS this year," junior wide receiver Travis Stokes said. "I have no doubts that the team will make it, and it is sure to be a season that will long be remembered."

The falcons will be playing in the De Anza division this year and will have to win against teams like Mountain View, Homestead and Wilcox in order to make the CCS playoffs.

The team started off the season well by playing toe-to-toe in a scrimmage against the St. Francis Lancers on Aug. 24. On Aug. 31, they scored a big 21-17 victory on the turf of the tough Burlingame Panthers.

Sporting a new, no-huddle, fast-paced offense, as well as a tough, stingy defense, the Falcons look to make this one of their best seasons yet.

—Nikil Ramanathan

GIRLS' WATER POLO

Coaches: Rafael Alapont (new coach), Nick Berg

2011 record: 9-6

2011 recap: The varsity team improved with hours of practice and determination. With teamwork and well-planned tactics, the team triumphed in more than half of their games.

Star players: Junior Nikki de Roos, seniors Stephanie Chen and Elyse Berlinberg

Key additions: Sophomore Amanda Moriarty, junior Jackie Taysi, sophomore Madison Gress

Key match: Fremont High School on Sept. 18

With a new coach and game plan, the girls' water polo team has begun its trek to victory. The team is focusing more on strategic maneuvers for the upcoming games with one of the most demanding schedules of the fall season, with practices every afternoon and mornings on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The new coach, Rafael Alapont, is still getting to know all of the players on the team, but said he would try his hardest to lead the team to success.

"The goal for our season is to improve at each practice and game throughout the season," Alapont said. "Also, [Nick Berg] and I are trying to build a sense of community in which all administrators, teachers, parents and students support our sport."

Last year, the girls opened the season with great scores, winning four out of their first five games.

Players are excited to start playing games, ready to beat last year's record.

"There is a lot of strong talent this year and with a great new coach, this upcoming season will be nothing shy of fun or excitement," sophomore Mackenzie Rosenthal said, who plays point for offense and set D for defense.

—Maya Ravichandran

PREVIEW 2012

FIELD HOCKEY

Coach: Lifon Huynh, entering second season as head coach

2011 record: 4-4-4

2011 recap: The team beat some of its top opponents such as Saint Francis and Los Gatos, each with a score of 1-0. The girls made it to CCS but were defeated in the second round.

Star players: Seniors forward Megan Doles and midfielders Amanda Schwartz and Jenni Miller

Key additions: Junior forwards Risha Shah, Monica Saripella and Sana Ali, junior defender Melissa Szenda, junior goalie Lena Jewler

Key losses: Forward Anna Ashe and goalie Abby Williams

Key games: Oct. 4 at home vs. Los Gatos; Nov. 1 at home vs. Gilroy

The Falcons have tough games ahead of them, but head coach Lifon Huynh believes the girls have what it takes to accomplish their goals for the season.

"The keys are working together as a team on the field and moving the ball while maintaining possession," Huynh said. "Trusting one another's abilities on the field will be the key to any success on the pitch."

Huynh said there are still some areas that the players can improve in. "[Their] weaknesses are mental toughness when mistakes are made and not playing as hard or consistently as they are capable of doing at practice [to help] prepare for those big season games," Huynh said. "[But] there is still plenty of time to grow throughout the next couple of weeks."

Huynh said she sees potential for the players on this year's team. "I hope the team will work hard and still want to make it to the finals throughout the season, not just through their words, but also [in their] actions during practice play," she said.

—Sarah Finley and Ingrid Hong

GIRLS' TENNIS



FALCON // WREN SUTTERFIELD

No. 1 singles player junior Kalyani Narayan hits a forehand at practice on Aug. 30.

Coach: Ashvin Soin

2011 record: 21-5

2011 recap: The girls placed second in CCS, losing to Monta Vista by six games. They also finished second in the De Anza League and at the CIF NorCal Championships behind Monta Vista.

Star player: Junior Kalyani Narayan

Key losses: Crystal Yen, Lisa Asai, Sarah Lum

Key games: Sept. 5 at Menlo, Sept. 19 vs. Archbishop Mitty, league matches vs. Monta Vista

After the loss of key seniors from last year, including No. 1 singles player Crystal Yen and the No. 1 doubles team of Sarah Lum and Lisa Asai, the girls' tennis team is attempting to rebuild with the help of new coach Ashvin Soin.

Soin, the former coach of the boys' tennis team at Leland, took the job after the vacancy of the position by Tom Uyehara, who had coached both the girls' and boys' teams for six years. Uyehara was promoted to a co-director role at Lifetime Tennis's new location in Sunnyvale.

"Coaching the girls' team is completely different from coaching the guys' team," Soin said. "I was just looking for new challenges."

Soin is trying to aid the doubles' teams by implementing the serving and volleying method.

"If we figure out how to play doubles the correct way, then we have a chance to compete against Monta Vista," he said. "If we play doubles from what I've seen so far, the normal way, one up, one back, we have no chance."

He expects the team to place second in the league behind powerhouse Monta Vista. Senior doubles player Cori Posadas echoed Soin's sentiments.

"I'm looking forward to spending time with the team and having fun in Fresno, and my expectations are to be second right behind Monta Vista or miraculously be number one," she said.

In their first match of the season on Sept. 5, the team played Menlo and lost 7-0.

The team participated in the annual California High School Tennis Classic in Fresno on Sept. 7 and 8. The girls began league matches with an away game against Palo Alto on Sept. 11.

—Evaline Ju

GIRLS' CROSS COUNTRY



FALCON // WREN SUTTERFIELD

Senior Maya Nag, who qualified for the state competition last year, and senior captain Courtney Schlossareck lead the team at practice on Aug. 30.

Coach: Danny Moon

2011 record: The team placed fourth at CCS.

2011 recap: Each of the 20 returning athletes had a minimum of five personal records throughout the season.

Star players: Senior Maya Nag, sophomores Carolyn Qi and Christine Schlossareck

Key additions: Freshmen Fiona Sequeira and Stephanie Ouchida

Key upcoming meets: Crystal Springs in Belmont (2.95 miles), Baylands in Sunnyvale (5K), CCS in Toro park on Nov. 10

After a successful season in 2011, the girls' cross country team ran its first meet on Sept. 5 at Lynbrook High School with almost double the number of last year's athletes and perhaps even double the excitement.

"We have a very excited team," coach Danny Moon said. "I think everybody wants to have fun and they know we have fun out here as a team."

Cross country captain, senior Courtney Schlossareck, said there are 65 girls on the team this year, a substantial increase from last year's 38 athletes.

"It's the most people we've had while I've been on the team," Schlossareck said. "I think the increase will bring a lot of competition to varsity, which is good because it'll help the team train harder."

The other two captains, juniors Susanna Lee and Casey Takahashi along with Schlossareck, look forward to leading the team to success.

"I'm really excited about this season because we have a big team and everyone is really committed to improving," Takahashi said. "I can't wait to see the great things this team will accomplish."

In order to prepare for the season, Moon said the girls have been training hard since Aug. 13 by running long distances daily and doing core workouts after runs.

In addition to training, Moon said the team has "become a single unit" by running together in groups, and participating in spirit days.

"Our team is the universe, and all the athletes are the stars up in the sky," Moon laughed. "And I'm the moon they revolve around."

—Deepti Kannan and Sherrilyn Ling

GIRLS' GOLF

Coach: Dave Gagnola, returning to coach the girls' team for the second year in a row

2011 record: 7-5

2011 recap: The Falcons placed third in the Blossom Valley Athletic League and sent three players to CCS. Every player improved at by least five strokes.

Star players: Seniors Samika Kumar and Sara Pettersson

Key additions: Freshman Ankitha Sarvesh

Key match: Los Gatos

In 2010, the Falcons lost 14 matches. Last year, they only lost five.

The 2011 girls' golf season featured a new coach, a new course and a smaller, younger team. This year, the players plan to demonstrate how much they have improved as a result of these changes.

"Most of us were here as freshmen, so we have really experienced people now," senior Samika Kumar said. "I think we could make it to CCS as a team."

Although three girls from last year chose not to play this year and key player Halle Champion is attending a different school, the Falcons have high hopes for this season.

Tryouts took place throughout the second week of school starting Aug. 27. The team now consists of four seniors, three juniors, one sophomore and three freshmen. Freshman Ankitha Sarvesh has been playing for four years and is looking forward to playing in matches with her team.

"I can't wait! I'm really excited to play with the rest of the girls," she said.

Coach Gagnola put it best: "Saratoga is the favorite in 2012."

—Aashna Mukerji

polaroids



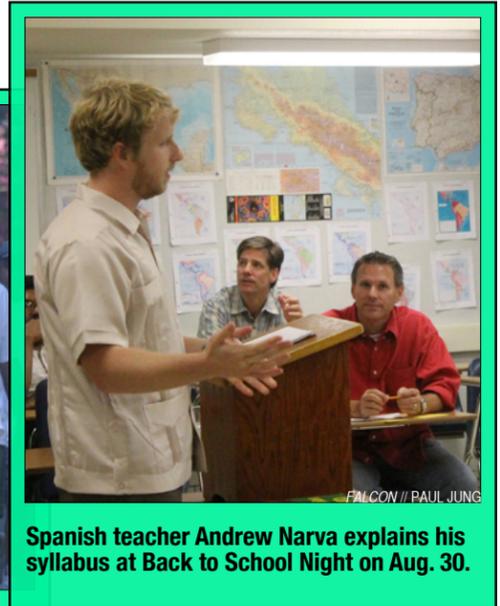
Senior Courtney Lee attempts to pull down her opponent at the Aug. 24 rally.



Servers place burgers on hungry parents' plates at the PTSO Barbecue on Aug. 24.



Seniors Geneva Fairchild and Madison King walk during Stride for Susie Aug. 26.



Spanish teacher Andrew Narva explains his syllabus at Back to School Night on Aug. 30.

A letter to the ruffian who stole my Obama sticker

Listen, I don't want to judge you for what you did.

It's hard not to laugh, though, when I imagine some guy wearing a rubber Mitt Romney mask (only \$6.95 at Party City! The Obama ones are \$9.95, I checked) running around town wielding a metal spatula.

The masked vigilantes of my childhood certainly didn't go around scraping Democratic bumper stickers off innocently parked cars, but I guess times have changed.

In my imagination you've donned a suit, because anyone who has on a Mitt Romney mask has to be wearing a suit. It's pretty remarkable, therefore, that your look seems somehow more ludicrously inappropriate than all the other self-proclaimed superheroes championing social justice. I mean, they're the ones dressed in spandex onesies.

You've really outdone yourself. Congratulations!

I'll be honest, though. I'm a little peeved that you didn't even deign to

leave a note.

I'm 95 percent sure (the last 5 percent would prefer to continue to think you a loser) that you don't actually resemble the image I described above, but you didn't exactly leave me any great leads.

I'm stuck grappling with thin air, with nothing at all—except, I guess, the super gross glue residue still occupying a 3-by-8-inch rectangle on the rear of my car. I can only speculate on your motives and your identity.

But realistically, what am I even supposed to think? Do you fancy yourself a real-life champion of grand theft auto? (Hint: you're not doing it right.)

Or did you actually steal it for your own use—are you some diehard Democrat too broke to afford your own bumper sticker? If so, 1) I sincerely doubt scraping mine off did you any good,

because you left all the glue on my car (thanks) and 2) really? I don't intend to

offend the fiscally oppressed, but that sticker was free.

And if not, what else could your motives be? Do you hate Obama so fanatically that you can't even bear to scorch your vision with his propaganda?

Are you a member of that strain of the American public that despises him almost beyond reason? If so, why didn't you just club my car instead? (Not that I advocate anything like that. Please don't.)

But seriously, you've had four years to adjust. And what are you doing in Northern California? Please, for your own sake, move to Texas. Or better yet—Saudi Arabia.

So, in the end, I'm still thoroughly bewildered. It doesn't make sense that you took it for yourself—obtaining your own can't possibly be as labor-intensive as scratching someone else's off.

Or, if you really are going around destroying Democratic propaganda in the form of car décor ... I am positive there are more productive ways you could be helping the Republican campaign. They'll thank you, and so will all the other Obama/Biden bumper sticker owners who'll know they can now sleep soundly at night.

Best of luck, Jackie

P.S. If you need a pointer on where to begin, I hear Mitt Romney is desperately in need of a personal assistant ... to make sure his limos always run on time and his breakfast caviar isn't too salty, you know. Always trooping through True American Suffering, that man. ♦



JACKIE GU
Governatorial



buzzworthy >> Twibling bond

By Matt Foley

This year's freshman class contains an influx of twins, containing three pairs of twins and one set of triplets. Amongst the freshman class are the Hunger twins (Gwenever and Gwenith), the Harris twins (Sonia and Nina), the Asai twins (YuKaren and AiMarie) and the Malwankar triplets (Jui, Jayee and Ojas).

YuKaren and AiMarie Asai transferred from the Los Gatos School District to Saratoga High for their freshman year.

"My sister is basically my best friend," AiMarie said. "We do everything together. We have the same sets of friends and we like to do the same things."

Despite their companionship and the fact that they are identical twins, YuKaren said that there still are significant differences between her and her sister. An example of this differences is their academic preferences.

"Everybody says that they can't tell the difference between us, but my sister and I are very different," YuKaren said. "For example, I like the sciences and math, and my sister prefers English."

Both sisters admit that their connection has a deeper relationship than they would ever have with anyone else. Beyond being siblings, they connect with

each other as best friends and have a unique sibling bond.

Their choice in each other as doubles partners in tennis exemplifies this relationship.

"I play both singles and doubles, but I prefer to play doubles since I know how my sister plays," AiMarie said. "We have been playing with each other for a while so we know how the other one plays."

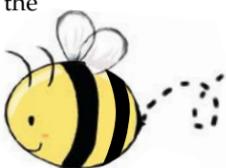
This companionship extends off the court and reaches into their school lives, which can be seen in their common group of friends.

On top of this, the sisters are taking the same classes as one another, even if they don't study together.

"The only reason I don't do homework with her is that she works much faster than I do," AiMarie said.

In the end, while many twins do not like to be viewed as the same person as their twin, YuKaren and AiMarie embrace their similarities and consider themselves best friends.

They cherish the companionship which they have shared since birth and look forward to their next few years together in high school. ♦



topten

BAD EXCUSES FOR NOT TURNING IN YOUR GOLDEN RODS

- 10 "Dude, I'm a freshman." Congratulations, dude, the time of your life in which you're considered completely useless begins now!
- 9 "I'm in band." At Saratoga High, being in band is a viable excuse for just about any possible blunder.
- 8 "I already destroyed the textbook. Sorry." My list of damages unfortunately does not fit in the allotted space.
- 7 "Mr. Yim has it." I used what I thought was an otherwise useless paper for my scratch work on the last Algebra 2 Honors test.
- 6 "There are seven golden paper airplanes in my room." They're not aerodynamic because the school couldn't even use 8.5"x11" paper.
- 5 "I messed up my signature." Now I don't think it's an accurate measure of my sincere agreement to this life-changing contract.
- 4 "Sorry, my brain filters out useless junk." Come on, no one actually cares about half sheets of paper with each student's made-up nonsense.
- 3 "I'd turn it in but SHS doesn't accept forged signatures." There's no way anyone's actually making their parent sign eight of these.
- 2 "My parents didn't agree to the terms." Especially the part about not being able to play rugby with the Bio book.
- 1 "They were out of toilet paper in the stalls." Luckily, my last golden rod was there to save the day!

>>> Aasim Naqvi