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The school's Junior Olympians

Saratoga High School >> Saratoga, CA
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Performing together since they were 2, the Harris twins have tried almost every style of dance offered at their studio. **pg. 5**

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Why high school midterms — supposedly meant to prepare students for college — are unnecessary. **pg. 11**

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'Too small'

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IDOL IS BACK

THE WINNER THIS YEAR WILL SING WITH A CHARACTER FROM THE HIT TV SHOW 'GLEE'

BY Deepti Kannan

The stage is set for one of the most notable events of the year: Saratoga Idol, to take place on Nov. 14 in the McAfee Center, is back, but with a twist.

This year, lead guitarist Derik Nelson from the popular television show "Glee" will be on the judging panel along with Saratoga teachers. The lucky winner of Idol, along with last year's winner sophomore Nina Nelson, will get to sing with Derik Nelson during a fundraising concert he will be giving on the next day at 7 p.m., also in the McAfee.

"We wanted a good incentive, and drama teacher Sarah Thermond helped set it up and make it possible," junior class president Adrienne Kim said. "It's kind of

>> **IDOL** on pg. 6

Current sophomore Nina Nelson performs in last year's Saratoga Idol. Nelson went on to place first in the competition, so she is not allowed to compete this year.

TALISMAN // JASON LI

OPINION: SPECIAL REPORT

TOXINS AND TURFS

ARE ARTIFICIAL TURF FIELDS CARCINOGENIC?

BY Samuel Liu

I used to think a lot of things.

For example, I used to think the football field some sort of crowning jewel, an expanse of even green out of a Windows screensaver. I used to jog on that field, barefoot after a cross country workout, the soft, fake grass cushioning the knees and comforting the back. I used to brag to non-Saratogans about our campus, how we have both a "dream" football field and a "dream" basketball court. I don't brag about our school so much anymore.

I am the editor of this newspaper, and I am always looking for new story ideas. But when Saratoga parent Bill Breck told me that this artificial turf was carcinogenic, I refused to believe him. This was the field on which I had practiced, on which I had run, on which I had even slept (the old pre-cross country meet nap). Thousands of

>> **TURF** on pg. 8

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENTS

Old mine, new park

FUTURE QUARRY PARK HOPES TO PUT CITY ON THE MAP

BY Ashley Chen & Devin Zhao

Imagine a museum built from former quarry buildings, versatile trails that support bicycles and horses as well as pedestrians, a zip line course, a fishing pond and a playground for young children surrounded by lush, colorful flora. All of these are possible attractions for a new park in Saratoga.

Half a mile west from downtown Saratoga lies 64 acres of land that was previously used as a greywake (a mineral used for road construction) mine

from 1908 to its shutdown in 1967.

The City of Saratoga purchased that land in October 2011 from the County of Santa Clara to develop into a new community space called Quarry Park.

Now, two years later, the proposed Quarry Park, located near the Historic Saratoga Village and Hakone Gardens, has morphed into an ambitious project. With hiking routes, Quarry Park hopes to link Saratoga to the

>> **PARK** on pg. 6

STUDENT PROJECTS

Humans of New York inspires Saratoga photojournalism page

BY Sherrilyn Ling & Tiffany Zheng

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. This saying holds especially true to New York photographer Brandon Stanton. Creator of the photography blog called Humans of New York (HONY), 29-year-old Brandon Stanton goes around New York capturing a "photographic census" of the city.

It all started in August 2010 when Stanton arrived in New York. He began posting pictures of the people in the streets on Facebook with a small quote from the people.



Courtesy of HUMANS OF SARATOGA HIGH

The cover photo of the HOSH Facebook page was uploaded on Oct 21.

Along the way, Stanton began collecting short stories and bits of advice from his subjects, which provided his followers on Tumblr and Facebook an insight into the lives of strangers

living in The Big Apple. Over three years of work have shaped his blog into an artistic sensation appreciated

>> **HOSH** on pg. 6



Project Cornerstone asks personal questions

Some students who took the Project Cornerstone last month doubted its effectiveness and questioned its intent. "Why does the school need to know all these personal things about us like drug and alcohol use?" sophomore Rahul Cheeniyl said.

— Anant Rajeev and Jihau Yu

Spanish classes dive into Mexican culture

Upper level Spanish classes gained a better knowledge of Mexican culture when they took a mid-day field trip to the Mexican Heritage Plaza in San Jose on Oct. 18 to watch a theater performance of "Macario," based on a novel about a poor woodcutter and his struggles.

— Rohan Hardikar and Arman Vaziri

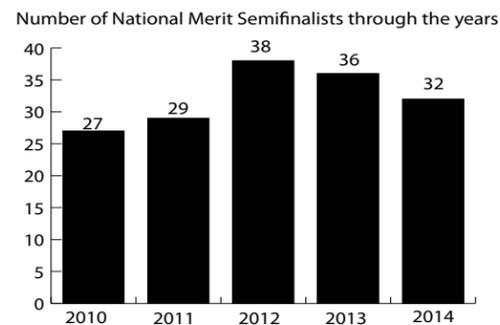
>> correction Sept. 13 issue

In the School Scope package, Michael Kim "reflects on past experiences." Mr. Kim, an English teacher, taught at Navato High School. The story stated that Mr. Kim taught at San Rafael High School.

>> correction Oct. 18 issue

On pg. 8 in the story about students balancing school with part-time jobs, the name of the veterinarian was given as Dodger Daves. It is actually Dr. Daves.

>> falconfigures



Source: Brian Safine — Devin Zhao

>> picturethis



Fall Play >> Junior Nastasya Kutuyev, senior Annelise Nussbacher, junior Bridgette Olsen and senior Amelia Troyer rehearse for 'Much Ado About Nothing,' which occurred on Oct. 19, 20, 25, 26 and 27.

DRAMA

'Les Mis' set for spring musical

By SimiSrivastava

"Lord, I could not endure a husband with a beard on his face: I had rather lie in the woollen," says senior Annelise Nussbacher in character. She looks down from the McAfee Center stage to her large audience and pauses for comic relief as the crowd bursts into laughter, then continues her monologue.

The drama department performed "Much Ado About Nothing" by William Shakespeare on Oct. 19, 20, 25, 26 and 27. Now with two successful productions under its belt for the 2013-2014 year, drama is planning for its next big production, the spring musical.

Since I knew we were going to get two weekends for the first time for both of the

shows, I wanted to do shows that could be really grand and appealing to the community and also to a lot of students involved," Thermond said.

Set around a decade after the French Revolution, "Les Mis" is a musical that follows the story of a few common people desperate to take back their country.

War, love, death, revolution, sadness and joy intertwine to create a tale of people, factory workers, schoolboys and a parolee desperate for a chance at redemption.

"Les Miserables" traditionally requires a large cast, but Thermond expects that she will not have a problem filling all of the roles.

"I have been dying to do 'Les Miserables' ever since I first saw it when I was little," junior Natalie Miller said. "Now I have the opportunity to actually be in it which is like a dream come true."

However, because this musical is in such a high demand

right now, Thermond had some difficulty securing the rights to produce this production.

"I applied to the rights in July, but we experienced some difficulty because they initially turned us down, saying that there were too many other productions of 'Les Miserables' in the area," Thermond said.

Thermond persisted and convinced MTL, the Musical Theater International company, to change its position.

Even though it is an ambitious production, Thermond is confident that both the student actors and technical crew will rise to the challenge.

"What I found about working with students is that when you pick a show that they know is a challenge, and that they know is not something every high school can produce, it actually tends to get the students more invigorated and they attack it with even more zeal and work even harder at it," Thermond said.

CITY

Does E.T. King haunt local house?

By MichelleLeung & ShreyaTumu

A two-story white house with a large red barn and no porch sits along Big Basin Way, behind Saratoga Creek.

Built in 1875, the house and the barn are one of the oldest buildings in Saratoga. And according to local legend, the house, known as the E.T. King Home, is haunted.

Every year, history teacher Matt Torrens takes students to visit this location.

"It helps them learn history better," Torrens said.

The original owner was a wagon maker, who opened his shop right behind the house. Then, in the 1890s, Erwin King, the general foreman of the Saratoga Paper Company, rented out the house and built a paper mill on the property. King succeeded with the paper mill — and then his paper mill burned down.

"The house stayed there, but he went into a deep depres-

sion and relocated," Torrens said. "He lost everything. He got insurance for part of [the paper mill], but it was worth a lot more [than he got]."

King moved to San Francisco after the disastrous fire. "And the last time anyone saw him, he was walking up

"I think it was cool. I mean, who else can say they've been to a haunted house?"

>> senior Charles Li

by The Cliff House [in San Francisco]," Torrens said. "He was on the edge of the cliff, and he jumped. He committed suicide."

According to Torrens, people began seeing the ghost of Erwin King.

"They claimed he was walking around the house," Torrens said. "Sometimes he was crying, sometimes he was sad."

Although many locals in town still say that the house is haunted, Torrens has not met anyone who has seen the ghost of E.T. King in the last hundred years.

Torrens takes his students to the haunted house during second-semester finals. Most students who have visited the house are more impressed with the story of King than with the actual house or the alleged ghost. They were excited to learn more about the house's history.

"If you went there in the middle of the night, will you actually be attacked by haunted critters?" senior Wesley Chaffin asked. "I don't think so. It's just a myth."

Senior Charles Li doesn't believe in the ghost that lives in the Saratoga local house either. However, he enjoys the idea of a haunted house.

"I think it was kind of cool," said Li. "I mean, who else can say that they've been to [a] haunted horror house?"

FALCON FOCUS

Putting food in the communist locker: social experiment scores poor marks

By SanjNalwa & NelsonWang

It would appear that Joseph Stalin has returned from the grave, and through his Facebook account, is attempting to teach Saratoga students about the communist system.

Senior Charles Li is the mastermind behind this Facebook account and has only recently confessed to being "Stalin"; many people scratched their heads in previous years as they tried to figure out who Stalin was.

The Stalin persona has appeared on and off for about three years, sometimes encouraging communism and other times, implementing social experiments.

This year Li has introduced a new social agenda: the communal locker, which is a give-and-take system. The locker, No. 277, is located near the library.

"It is a grand experiment, to embetter all the proletarians in our school, showing them that the Communist system can and will work," Li said. "It is for the greater good of the school."

Li announced his plan on his Stalin account's Facebook status on Sept. 10.

"Locker number 277 (numbered after my famous order), holds a bounty that all hardworking, re-

pressed students may take from. This includes food, candy and drinks," "Stalin" wrote.

Li said that if people don't put food in as well as take from it, then the system won't work.

"You as a person deserve food when you are hungry and that cannot be taken away by the oppressive administration," Li said.

Unfortunately, this social experiment is failing due to people taking far more food than they donated. Li has gone so far as to call them "kulaks," affluent farmers during the real Stalin's reign whom Stalin targeted for their wealth.

"Stalin" also publicly called them "enemies of the school" on his Facebook page and claimed that "as with all counter-revolutionaries, the best option is forced labor in the copying room with the AC set to HIGH. To the good students who returned to the locker gifts such as Top Ramen, croissants and chocolates, you are all heroes of the Saratoga Union (school district)."

"Stalin" said that the locker has been running low on food because of those "kulaks."

"Regrettably, the Crime of the Commons is a trait most strong, so the Glorious Communist Locker has been dwindling on supplies. Moreover, the state is out of foodstuffs to keep the Workers' Paradise alive,"

said Li. In keeping with his persona, Li has made other references as well. When someone spilled some Lennade, a specialty drink named after the communist leader, in the communal locker, he banned drinks and claimed it was due to a sabotage by Leon Trotsky, one of the real Stalin's political rivals whom Stalin eventually had assassinated.

While some may take offense at these comments, Li said that the Stalin persona (the brutal dictator killed and imprisoned millions of his own citizens while in control of the USSR) was not meant to specifically offend anyone. Li also points out the fact that he doesn't emulate Stalin because of his evil acts, but rather because of his communist ideals. Compared to Marx and Lenin, whom Li considers idealists, Stalin reveals the "sad truth" of the state and as a result, is a better leader.

Li feels that the system of having different level classes, such as APs and Honors, is not equitable. Since communism promotes equality, the school should strive to break the injustice in the system, Li said.

"I think we should all come together as one super-class, and all take the same classes and be in the same clubs, so that no one has an unfair advantage for colleges," Li said.



The Communist locker displays a photo of Joseph Stalin.

SPEECH AND DEBATE

Team gains new coaches

By DeeptiKannan & SweeyaRaj

After early successes in October, the 90 members on the speech and debate team are diligently preparing for the upcoming novice, league and Santa Clara University (SCU) tournaments in November under the guidance of new leaders.

At the Oct. 19 league tournament at Leland High School, sophomore Michael Ren and freshman Candace Chiang went undefeated for novice parliamentary debate.

"I am very impressed with the results of the tournament," junior Rohan Bhardwaj said. "I am very proud of the novices and I think they have a very successful path ahead of them."

The team's overall progress can be attributed to key new additions. Although captains have not yet been announced, speech and debate advisor Erick Rector has employed two new coaches: Chris Harris, who will be coaching Lincoln-Douglas debate and extemporaneous speech, and Allison Brownlow, who will be coaching public forum and parliamentary debate.

Harris has been coaching debate for five years at various high schools, as well as at universities such as Santa Clara University and San Francisco State. Before that, he had experience professionally judging debate off and on for 10 years.

"After judging for a few years, I've been asked by a few coaches to possibly help out and coach," Harris said. "I like [coaching because] even at the best and the lowest levels of debate, you see people competing the best that they can."

He began coaching congressional debate at the school in January of this

year. After former coach Steve Clemmons moved to Oregon for a new coaching position, Harris has now taken over Lincoln-Douglas debate as well and hopes to bring new ideas to the team.

"I would like to emphasize philosophy and current events; there's not enough in Lincoln-Douglas debate," Harris said.

He added that he plans on guiding the upperclassmen and refining their skills, so that they can motivate the novices on the team and "bring them up to par."

In addition to Harris, coach Brownlow, who has been coaching for seven years, has also added her professional background and structure to the public forum team, which did not have a coach last year.

"I really like watching my students succeed and seeing how people learn to think and learn how to be persuasive, and that's one of the primary things that I like about coaching," Brownlow said.

With this initial progress, the team hopes to use its strong new additions at the novice tournaments on Nov. 2-3, the next league tournament on Nov. 10-11 and the first invitational of the year at SCU on Nov. 15-17.

Junior Rohith Krishna, who debates Lincoln-Douglas, said the team has already begun to reap the benefits of Harris's coaching.

"We just need to look at our previous rounds and keep working at improving on the mistakes that we have made," Krishna said. "Our team is very strong and committed and with tournaments such as SCU coming up, we have to work harder and make the small adjustments that make big differences in rounds."

MUSIC

Band to go to regionals

By DevinZhao

On the frigid field of Chabot College in Hayward, the marching band received third place in its class in the seventh annual WBA Valley Christian Quest Classic on Oct. 19.

Senior and drum major Tim Casey-Clyde said that although the band placed third, they will be working hard to improve the show for future competitions after finishing behind James Logan and Homestead.

"Frankly it doesn't matter that we received third place," Casey-Clyde said. "We competed alongside two of the best bands in the state and produced a pretty fantastic show nonetheless."

In addition, over the Veterans Day weekend, from Nov. 8 to Nov. 10, the band will attend the Bands of America Regional Marching Band Championships in Long Beach for the first time.

The event will feature top bands from California, Colorado, Arizona, Texas and Oregon, according to band director Jonathan Pwu.

Pwu said the band is in good shape to take on a big challenge. "We need to keep up concentration and focus and rehearse well and with good etiquette," Pwu said. "The show design is one of the strongest shows we've ever had both musically and visually. It'll be exciting going into an event we've never gone to before."

However, Casey-Clyde said, the band will have to improve.

"I have been impressed by the consistent focused rehearsal etiquette that the band has shown over the last couple weeks," Casey-Clyde said. "The band will need to up their game even more going into regional championships. This means learning new visuals and music changes lightning fast."

Pointing to the WBA performance, Casey-Clyde said that the band's performance could have been better, and many events leading up to the performance impaired the band from doing their best.

"I think the performance was great, but far less than what we are capable of," Casey-Clyde said. "I think a combination of tiredness from Friday's football game, Saturday's PSAT and a physically taxing afternoon rehearsal contributed to a lack of energy leading up to the performance."

Pwu agreed with Casey-Clyde, and said that the band wasn't focused at the night of the competition, which led the band to disarray on the field.

"The night was just kind of an off night, and [I could tell that the focus] didn't seem like it lined up at warm-up," Pwu said.

However, Pwu said that the band did have some positives in their performance. The scores were close to first place in general effects and music, with music being one point away from first.

"I think overall, the band did really well on the things we had rehearsed the week before," Pwu said. "The color guard had a great performance, and the additions at the end of the show worked out great, really helping our general effect score."

Casey-Clyde said that only the members of the band can determine how polished the show can be at regionals.

"I will be the best motivator I can possibly be, but it is my other 220 peers who ultimately put on the show. BOA [the circuit the band is performing in] will be a brand new experience to everyone," Casey-Clyde said. "If every member in the band can personally commit to leaving everything they have on that field then I know our championships performance at BOA will be unforgettable."

PRESENTATIONS

Group opens eyes to problems in N. Korea

BY Deepthi Sampathkumar & Jihau Yu

On Sept. 19, 27-year-old Tae Woo was able to escape the North Korean dictatorship. He managed to cross the border through arduous means and go to South Korea.

After escaping, Woo did not have any money or resources to survive. However, Liberty in North Korea (LiNK), a North American organization supporting humanitarian crises in North Korea, stepped in and financially aided Woo, giving him a chance to a new life.

Woo's situation is not unique; he's an example of one of the many refugees who attempt to flee from North Korea. With the help of LiNK many refugees have hope for a better life.

On Oct. 26, LiNK held a presentation in the school cafeteria that told students about escapees like Woo. The presentation, organized by senior Jane Chang, aimed to spread awareness to students unaware of the harsh conditions in North Korea.

Chang was motivated to present LiNK to the school because of her own ancestral history.

"I planned this event because I wanted to help spread the word of the injustices and cruelties the North Korean people have to face," Chang said. "I am Korean, and my grandfather was a South Korean officer during the Korean War. My grandfather shepherded the rest of my family back to South Korea. So for me, North Korea has always been a personal issue close to heart."

The presentation included a documentary, which revolved around a refugee named Danny. At the event, presenters from the organization answered students' questions.

Chang believed that the presentation was informational as it was a topic that



Courtesy of Jane Chang

Senior Jane Chang, the organizer of the event, proudly displays her support for the Bridge to North Korea organization.

not many students know about.

"There were about 50 to 60 students who attended the event and even though most of them came initially because their history teachers offered extra credit, by the end it was clear that a lot of them were touched by the stories."

My grandfather shepherded the rest of my family back to South Korea. So for me, North Korea has always been a personal issue close to heart.

>> senior Jane Chang

Junior Brandon Nguyen was one of these students. "I think it is a really cool cause since the situation in North Korea is something we don't know too much about and it's really an eye opener that something can be happening like this right now," said

Nguyen.

Chang hopes that the effects of the presentation will stay with the students for a long time.

"By hosting a screening like this, I hope that people will learn about how bad the people's crisis really is and join me in fighting for change and freedom," said Chang. ♦

APP DEVELOPMENT

Club prepares to attend 24-hour hackathons

BY Miles Albert & Minu Palaniappan

Imagine being inside of a large building with hundreds of strangers for 24 hours straight.

Some people have their headphones wired in while intensely staring at their computer screen, others are participating in a nerf-gun war and many are scattered around sleeping on the floor.

Welcome to a "hackathon," a competition where programmers come together in teams to build the most innovative application in hopes of winning prize money.

This spring, the Application Developer's Club plans to attend these hackathons, which usually include 20-30 teams, for the first time.

The club hopes to go to around five hackathons and wants to launch several teams, which usually consist of three to four members, for this year's first hackathon, Go-pilot, which is held at the SAP center in San Jose.

The Oct. 12 event, funded by big name companies such as Facebook and Palantir, is a high-school only competition, which has led the club members to believe they have a fair shot of placing first in the competition.

However, by coming together as a team and competing at hackathons, sophomore Spencer Yen said the Developer's Club will have much better chances of winning.

According to sophomore Aakash Thumaty, also a member of the team, the club's biggest competition is Monta Vista.

This September, Thumaty was one of the 1,000 attendees at a hackathon hosted by the tech blog TechCrunch.

Monta Vista, with a team of just four high students, created an app that ended up winning the entire contest, earning them \$5,000.

"It's very unusual for [high school students] to go [to hackathons], and it's even more unusual for them to win

because there's so many higher experienced programmers there," Thumaty said.

Hackathons also provide a stage for talented developers to catch the attention of venture capitalists and angel investors.

The club plans to send teams of three developers picked based on their skills and experience.

There will be Web, Android and iOS teams, and each team will be led by the respective officer of that category.

By competing in hackathons, members hope to strengthen their team chemistry, according to Yen, another member.

"We can also recruit more members, because I know that there are some freshmen who are pretty well versed," Yen said. "I believe the more hackathons we go to as a club, the more experienced we'll get."

Thumaty also believes that hackathons are more about than just winning first place.

"If you build something really cool at a hackathon and the judges really like it, you can win money," said Thumaty. "But it's also a really good work environment if you want to just get something done by coding for 24-hours straight without sleeping." ♦



Thumaty

>> THE bigidea

Hackathons

What are they?

They are competitions where programmers come together to build the most innovative applications in hopes of winning prize money.

Who attends and when?

The Application Developer's Club plans to attend around five hackathons this spring. They are currently forming teams.

How long are they?

Hackathons are 24 hours.

Freshman helps to change the flow of life size games

BY Devin Zhao

The app Flow Free, rated an average of 4.6 out of 5 by 208,000 people on the Android Market, is a highly addictive Flash game where players draw "pipelines" connecting dots of different colors together. However, the pipelines cannot intrude on the boundaries of pipelines of other colors, and all the spaces on the grid have to be used.

Until now, Flow Free, along with many other apps, has always been restricted onto the screen of a touchscreen phone, iPad, or a computer screen. Could there be an interactive, life-size version?

Freshman Matthew Tung and two other students from local schools have made this possible. Say hello to the Grid, an 8-by-8 matrix of 19.5-inch by 19.5-inch tiles that can sense people standing on the tiles and can react based on the game being played.

The Grid, in addition to playing Flow, can also be programmed to play various types of grid-based games, such as Rush Hour, in which players attempt to move a car out of a maze of cars without removing the other cars.

The Grid won six Editor's Choice Awards and four Editor's Choice

Awards at the Maker Faire: Bay Area in May and the World Maker Faire in New York in September.

The brainstorming of the project started last November, and the group started making the Grid last January.

Tung said that he decided to make a life-size version of Flow because he and his friends wanted to have a project to take to Maker Faire, a fair hosted around the world to celebrate arts, crafts, engineering, science projects and the do-it-yourself mindset.

"At the time, we [three] played Flow, so it seemed like a great idea to build it," Tung said.

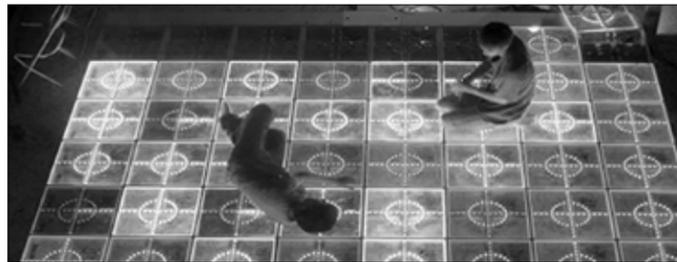
The trio recruited more friends to help with their project. However, Tung and his friends found that the

project was harder than they had anticipated. According to Tung, the group was using a modular tile design approach and used an Arduino Mega, a micro-controller, in each tile.

"The tiles have to communicate with their neighboring tiles, so we had to wire connections between tiles by hand and some connections were not as reliable as we would have liked when we tested them manually," Tung said.

Tung said the group also had trouble fundraising, but the community was sympathetic to their cause and helped.

"We had a contact at Google [who



Courtesy of Matthew Tung

Children play on the lighted up Grid in the World Maker Faire in New York in September.

was able to go in to pitch and raised some money," Tung said. "We also were able to pitch to the lumber yard owner and received good discounts on the wood [for the construction of the Grid] that we bought."

According to Tung, the group successfully used a Gofundme, an online fundraising site, to raise the money to buy the necessary supplies for the project. To fund the trip to the World Maker Faire in New York, they tried a Kickstarter campaign.

"Unfortunately, we were not able to reach the threshold to get the campaign funded, but we had a great experience working on the Kickstarter campaign,"

Tung said.

In New York, they won several Editor's Choice Awards and enjoyed talking to an audience of 100,000 about their experiences working on the project.

Tung said that in addition to learning a wide variety of physical skills, such as how to code and how to budget a project, he had a fun time working on it.

"Many times, it was very frustrating to have to work on the project as well as school and music," Tung said. "However, I continued with the project and it paid off. From this, I learned that we should always see through anything that we commit to." ♦

FALCON FOCUS: NINA AND SONIA HARRIS

Double take: twins dancing since age 2

BY Sabrina Chen & Amy Lin

Sophomore Nina Harris looked around the quad at all of her friends and classmates cheering for her during the sophomore Homecoming Quad Day on Oct. 2. She suddenly felt a little nervous. Taking a deep breath, she looked to her left, and her twin sister Sonia Harris gave her a reassuring smile.

We get to share a lot of amazing experiences. [Nina] pushes me to dance differently and act differently from her so we aren't considered the same person.

>> sophomore Sonia Harris

The song "Little Party Never Killed Nobody" began to play, and the two girls, as well as sophomores Chloe Koon and Amanda Rhee, began to dance. Nina started with some complicated turns on the Falcon mosaic and Sonia followed with fan kicks and a leap.

This is nothing new to the twins, who have been dancing since age 2. When they finished the routine, the audience burst into applause, confirming the success of the first dance they've choreographed.

"We'd never choreographed for something that big, and never something that's been performed. It was a little hard working with people who had no dance background and no training [for the all girls dance]," Nina said. "But it was a really fun and interesting experience."

The Harris twins, as they are known around school, are identical and dance competitively at Dance Academy USA in Cupertino, the studio they've attended since age 7. There, they learn and perform many styles of dance including hip-hop, jazz, contemporary, ballet and

lyrical.

"Every little kid seems to take dance classes as a way to meet people and socialize at the age of two," Nina said. "I just fell in love with it and have been dancing ever since."

The twins are not on the Falcon dance team because their competitive team at Dance Academy USA takes so much of their time.

"[We practice for about] 10 hours a week, but most week-ends as well, so it ends up being like 20 hours a week," Nina said.

Although they do participate in dance competitions, these all take place during the summer or on the weekends and do not interfere with school.

Sonia said that the twins usually are at the studio the same time. Because they spend so much time there, they are able to hang out with their friends as well as bond with each other.

"We get to share a lot of amazing experiences and have a lot of the same really close friends at the studio," Sonia said. "[Nina] pushes me to dance differently and act differently from her so we aren't considered the same person."

The twins' close friend, Koon, who danced in the Homecoming dance with the twins, said Nina and Sonia have developed different strengths and weaknesses, and their relationship has grown



FALCON / AMY LIN

Nina and Sonia Harris perform in an advanced dance during the sophomore quad day on Oct. 2.

even stronger.

"There's competition, but Nina and Sonia are different and both have their own talents," Koon said. "[For example,] Sonia has the style, and Nina has the turns."

Both twins agreed that having a sister with the same passion at times can give dance an edge, but that most of the time, the criticism they give each other is positive.

"We really encourage each other to try our best," Sonia said. "It's a really competitive atmosphere, [because] even though these girls are all my friends, each person is trying to do better, [and

Nina] always pushes me to put in the extra effort."

Both Nina and Sonia agreed that although dancing is something they both are passionate about, a career in dance would be difficult and impractical. Nevertheless, they still want to continue dancing for as long as they can.

"I want to go to a college that has a really good dance program so I can still keep taking classes," Sonia said. "Wherever I end up going, I want to be able to dance."

"I love it," Nina added. "I don't ever think [dance is] something I can give up." ♦

CLASSROOMS

The Learning Center re-envision testing format

BY Deepthi Kannan

Junior Alana Hess has always had a hard time focusing in class. Her mind wanders to amusing yet distracting thoughts, such as the happiness of Disneyland during Christmastime or the sights outside the window, unfortunately at the most inconvenient times, such as while taking finals.

"I get distracted very easily, like when somebody is walking outside the window. I say, 'Oh, who is it? Oh there's a car! Look there's a squirrel!'" Hess said.

Upon recommendation by her freshman biology teacher Lisa Cochrum, Hess was tested and diagnosed for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) at the end of her freshman year. After discussing her diagnosis with her counselor Frances Saiki, Hess became one of many students on campus who go to the Learning Center (TLC), a focused and peaceful learning environment located in a portable classroom in the back parking lot. Hess was admitted to the learning center (TLC) her sophomore year.

"For every test in any class I go to the TLC," Hess said. "I get extra time, I can get tests read to me and it keeps me on track, so I don't get distracted," Hess said.

Students admitted to the TLC are given access to extra help such as oral tests, extended time on tests and audio recordings of books in order to offset the disadvantage created by their disability.

Prior to her diagnosis, Hess struggled to finish tests on time due to her tendency to get distracted, finding herself having to guess on problems in order to turn

in the test on time. She often was the last person to turn it in.

After joining the TLC, however, Hess noticed significant improvements in her ability to focus and succeed on tests.

"I don't feel pressured to finish by other people [finishing early]. I get my own time, it's really quiet, I'm in my own zone," Hess said. "There are cubicles that I can go in where I don't get distracted by anything else."

Admittance to the TLC

According to guidance counselor Eileen Allen, the TLC is designed for students with an Individualized Education Program, which determines that they have a learning disability that "bars them from fully accessing their education."

Students who attend the TLC may also have a 504 plan, a legal document specifying medical conditions that limit a student's education. Although the number of students is something the school could not provide, those in charge have extensive procedures for admitting a student into the TLC.

For students who do not already have an IEP or 504 plan in place, such as Hess, the school begins the process with a "student study-team meeting" involving the guidance counselor, school psychologist, assistant principal Brian Safine, the stu-

dent and his or her parents.

"We gather a lot of background information about the student," Allen said. "Sometimes we determine that with a doctor's note or with some testing that has been done, but there's typically a very long process that we go through to ensure that it is something the student really needs."

In the case of Hess, she not only needed a doctor's note, but teacher evaluations about her in-class behavior before being admitted to the TLC. The school psychologist, Michael Slone, added that

the school conducts its own tests for learning disabilities on a case-by-case basis.

"Sometimes there are assessments done at our school as well that identify disability. It depends for each individual," Slone said. "We have students with learning disabilities, attention deficits, medical issues [and] physical disabilities, so it's unique for each student depending on what their disability is."

Despite these verified processes, Allen acknowledged that some students may desire admittance to the TLC when they are not actually in need of the advantages it includes.

"It's not something that we pass around like candy. Not everybody needs it," Allen said. "There are some people



junior Alana Hess

QUARRY PARK >> City designs new local attraction

continued from pg. 1

Skyline-to-the-Sea Trail in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The Skyline-to-the-Sea Trail runs all the way to the Pacific Ocean.

According to Saratoga council member Howard Miller, the project is run by the Public Works Department, while any direct citizen involvement, such as giving ideas for park components, is run by the Parks and Recreation Department.

Miller said the project has been in the works for almost 20 years, and that he and past mayors have been pushing for the creation of the park.

Miller said that when he was mayor, Saratoga became the owner of the land. The next mayor led the effort with LAF-CO (Local Area Formation Commission), the local administrative agency that oversees, among other things, what land can be in a city.

Miller said the project continues to be a daunting challenge.

"This was a huge effort that is still going on," Miller said. "We are going to annex this into the city limits. The future mayors will have the challenge of finding funding to actually develop and open the park for public use."

Currently, Saratoga is in the midst of a community planning process to develop a vision for Quarry Park. On July 9 and Sept. 10, the Parks and Recreation Center hosted two workshops to gather public input for the project.

During these meetings, participants split into three separate groups to discuss different attractions for the park. The products of these meetings are two rival future themes that are competing to be incorporated into the master plan for Quarry Park — Saratoga's Hidden



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

Playground and Digging Into the Past. At the moment, a basic master plan has been created, but it does not include either of these ideas.

While these two plans both involve a variety of hiking trails and a day use area with features like a community garden, they present different potential focuses for Quarry Park.

On one hand, Saratoga's Hidden Playground imagines the space as a community gathering area by creating multiple picnic areas and highlighting Saratoga's tree diversity with informational guides.

In contrast, Digging Into the Past dramatizes Saratoga mining history with an interpretive walking loop that would allow visitors some access to concrete tunnels of the mine and an indoor and

outdoor museum.

On the surface, Quarry Park looks like a promising opportunity for Saratoga. However, the project faces a variety of conceptual constraints, such as funding challenges and most troubling, topography.

One of Quarry Park's major planned attractions is a link to the Pacific Ocean through the Skyline-to-the-Sea Trail and Sanborn Park. This, however, requires the use of land currently owned by the San Jose Water Company. In addition, to bridge Quarry Park and the Saratoga Village, the trail must cross over private property and Hakone Gardens.

Another major hurdle for Quarry Park's creation will be funding for its construction. The City Council so far has invested \$1.4 million into the creation of



JOHN CRAMER PHOTOGRAPHY

LEFT: A section of the Quarry Park trail that is still to be renovated. ABOVE: Saratoga city council member Howard Miller, one of the main proponents of the park.

a master plan. Despite this, the outlook for Quarry Park is positive.

"The development [of the draft of the] master plan is a huge step forward, so I see big progress," senior engineer Iveta Harvanick said.

In the future, the city will work on creating a new concept plan for the construction of the park, meet with the Parks and Recreation Committee and host a third public workshop in November.

If all goes according to plan, the master plan, which started in May 2013, will complete development in March 2014, when the City hopes to have final plans approved by the City Council.

"I hope Quarry Park will provide additional outdoor experience for residents," Harvanick said. ♦

PHOTO BLOG >> Humans of Saratoga High launches



Courtesy of HUMANS OF SARATOGA HIGH

The first photo posted on the Humans of Saratoga High Facebook page depicted sophomore Michael Guo. The photo received over 100 likes on the first day it was published.

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by many photographers and followers. HONY has inspired other blogs such as Humans of Singapore, Humans of London, Humans of Vancouver and many more.

In fact, Stanton's blog has encouraged and brought together five students, who have decided to adopt his method to document SHS culture.

These students plan on keeping themselves anonymous to prevent others from requesting photoshoots.

"The focus of the blog should be on the people we photograph, not the photographers," one of the creators said.

The idea was brought up by assistant principal Kerry Mohnike.

"We were all fans of the HONY page, so when the idea for a Humans of Sara-

toga High (HOSH) page came up, we jumped on it," another creator said. "So we became a group voluntarily."

The group has made a Facebook page with short quotes, similar to that of HONY in hopes of recognizing talents, struggles and interests of students around campus.

"We're hoping to show a more human and personal aspect of [school] by revealing sides of people that you wouldn't expect just seeing them around campus," this source said. "There's a lot of diversity that goes unrecognized, and we think [HOSH] can help the students recognize and celebrate that diversity."

The group launched the Facebook page on Oct. 21 and has already begun posting regularly after gathering enough photos and interviews. In only the first night, the page received 300 likes. ♦

SARATOGA IDOL >> 'Glee'

continued from pg. 1

exciting, the idea of [the winner] performing with someone professional."

In addition to appearing on "Glee" every week, Derik Nelson has also sung on FOX's "Raising Hope" and "New Girl," CBS's "How I Met Your Mother," NBC's "Go On" and "The Voice," and his original music has been featured on the WB hit TV series "Felicity," as well as the feature film "Com-mencement."

"I think having Derik at Idol will add a new layer to the competition," Thermond said. "We have incredibly talented students who always give their best at Idol, and I think it will be wonderful for them to have a chance to get feedback from someone who has actually made a living with music."

Nelson's special performance at the school is one of 30 concerts he is giving on his Take Chances Tour of high school auditoriums along the West Coast to help raise money for their arts and music programs. According to his website, the tour was launched in order to "advocate and enforce the importance of the arts as a foundational pillar of public education."

"So many artists are inspired to start their work while they are still students themselves, and I think his team's effort to support and encourage those students is really amazing," Thermond said.

Thermond, who went to college with Nelson and has attended several of his concerts before, said she reached out to his tour and decided to combine the event with Idol. Tickets will cost \$15, and a portion of the sales will benefit the school's visual and performing arts programs. ♦



DERIKNELSON.COM

Singer Derik Nelson in his 'Take Chances' tour.

In addition to his concert, Thermond said that Nelson will also be holding a master class on Nov. 13 during tutorial to share his experiences and advice about the entertainment industry to students.

"For many of our students interested in performing or otherwise becoming part of an entertainment career, his story is really inspiring," Thermond said. "It is a very cool chance for the students to get input from someone who turned performing in high school into a successful career."

Auditions for Idol and a chance to sing with Nelson are scheduled on Nov. 30 in the choir room.

As in years past, 10 to 12 students will be chosen to compete in the show-down.

Among the prospective competitors is junior Supriya Khandekar, who participated last year and looks forward to trying out this year. Khandekar looks forward to the possibility of being judged by the "Glee" celebrity.

"I think that it is an extremely motivational incentive," Khandekar said. "We may get a lot more people to try out. All the participants will be very excited to see the lucky winner." ♦

Behind the intercom

ASB ANNOUNCEMENTS ENTERTAIN STUDENTS

By Ariel Liu & Dorrie Tang

It's a typical Tuesday, and ASB Clubs Commissioner Grace Ma enters the office during the break before second period. She picks up a sheet of paper that lists the day's announcements from principal's secretary Susan Dini and immediately scans through it.

Patiently, she awaits the rest of the group of ASB members, since three or four of them are assigned to do each morning's daily announcements in about five minutes.

Soon after, ASB Secretary Maggie Sun arrives. "Hey Grace! Can I do the jokes today?" she asks eagerly. "Let's have two jokes today, because it's Two-Joke Tuesday!"

Ma agrees, and they share a laugh, but they both soon realize that ASB Treasurer Robert Eng, also assigned to do announcements that day, is nowhere to be found.

Ma, Sun and Eng alternate with Nikhil Goel, Anup Kar, Manini Desai, Stephanie Chu, and Stephanie Tsang to do the announcements this year — a job that might seem easy but has unforeseen difficulties and involves a lot of improvisation.

The second-period bell rings, and Dini connects them to the PA and tells them to "wing it" without Eng. However, he thankfully walks in at that moment.

"Sorry guys," Eng says sheepishly as he takes his spot by the PA.

Sun says, "Good morning Saratoga High School..." The announcements are underway.

During these first minutes of the second period on Monday through Thursday, many students do not actually attentively listen to the announcements. Instead, they use the time to finish up a last bit of homework, to cram for an upcoming exam or just to take a power nap.

"In previous years, I closed my ears to the announcements," Eng said. "But now that I'm on the other side of the intercom, I realize that I can lengthen people's attention spans."

As Sun continues reading the first few announcements, Ma and Eng quietly chatter to the side. When Sun comes to an end, she

mouths, "Who's next?"

Calmly, Ma steps up and brings the PA phone to her mouth as Sun points to where she left off. Ma continues reading line by line of the announcements, and holds the PA out to Sun to take as she finishes.

However, without warning Sun hurriedly directs her to Eng.

"Oh!" Eng says, as the PA is shoved in his hands. "Uhhh, let's see..."

Eng continues. "Sophomores and juniors, don't forget to sign up for the PSAT or SAT in the CCC office. The new location is in the 500 wing — I have no idea where that is."

Ma and Sun burst out laughing, muf-

Now that I'm on the other side of the intercom, I realize that I can lengthen people's attention spans.

>> senior Robert Eng

HOME FOOTBALL

Red Zone introduced

By Ariel Liu

In an effort to increase student spirit at the remaining home football games, the athletics commission has created and will monitor the "Red Zone," a section of the bleachers where students can sit together and cheer on their peers.

The athletics commission, consisting of senior Florence Wang and juniors Madison Gress and Dani Bruno, hopes that the zone will improve the atmosphere at football games.

"We wanted to have a section where all the students could sit together and cheer because we noticed that a lot of the students sit really spread apart," Gress said. "We thought that if it was more unified, [students] would be louder and create a more spirited environment."

According to Gress, they also plan to hold promotions to increase school spirit later on for students who are wearing all red and sitting in the Red Zone. They will receive something for free such as a T-shirt or another type of apparel promoting school spirit.

"It'd be good to have a [red zone] because there would be a lot more people participating in Code Red (a team that

often run shirtless in front of the bleachers at football games) or actually coming to football games," sophomore Code Red participant Arnay Pawar said.

The commission tried it at the Homecoming football game Oct. 4, but only about seven people sat in the section.

A section was supposed to be marked off before the JV game started, but because the banner the publicity/spirit commission made could not be found, Wang had to go home after school and make another banner.

By the time the banner was ready, the JV game had already started.

"We were planning to create the section next to the band but parents were already there," Wang said. "I think it's commonly known by the students that parents sit near the band so the students also didn't go there."

Despite the lack of students at the first Red Zone attempt, Wang said they will still be doing it at every home football game, although they may change the location of the zone for games to come.

"We've learned from our mistakes, and we'll try to form a better section next time," she said. ♦

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ASB



FALCON // GRACE MA

Senior ASB secretary Maggie Sun reads the announcements after second period starts.

filing the sound with their hands. As Eng is almost done, Ma happily announces that the birthday song is next.

Soon, their joyful yet off-tune singing of "Happy Birthday" pervades through the campus.

However, in the office the chorus remains quite soft and the staff dismisses it as another daily occurrence.

Next, the ASB members proceed to read out the names of that day's birthdays, a task which is often difficult.

"Often, we don't have a lot of time before we have to make a decision about how to pronounce a name," Ma said.

"There are also those names that are long and impossible to say."

Then, it is time for the infamous ASB Joke of the Day, which is found from a variety of sources online, student submissions, or random jokes that ASB officers hear.

Some are found from YouTube videos

by the "vlogbrothers," compilations of jokes submitted by people on Twitter.

Laughing at the wittiness of their own joke, the ASB officers can't help to wonder what the student body thinks of it.

"Oh my, that was really bad," Ma chuckles.

Quickly, Sun remembers that there is another joke to be told, and returns to the PA.

"Hey Grace, how does Jack Frost get to work?" Sun asks.

"I don't know Maggie, how?" Ma replies.

"By B-icicle!" Sun reveals.

"Thank you, Saratoga, and have a great Two-Joke Tuesday!" Sun says as a conclusion.

With the day's ASB morning announcements off their plates, the three scramble out of the office and walk to their classes, waving goodbye as they branch off. ♦



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TOXINS AND TURFS >> Carcinogens present in artificial fields

continued from pg. 1

schools across the country use artificial turfs. How could we all be wrong? Yet, as he sent me study after study, I began to have my doubts. These weren't, as I'd initially assumed, nutjobs or environmental terrorists. These were high-powered doctors, public health professionals, lawyers, all concerned with this topic, and the reason I hadn't heard of it yet was because the research was relatively new.

Before I begin, I should note that this is a story without a solution. Even if after reading this you believe that the field is carcinogenic, you would have a hard time persuading the administration to tear up the \$527,000 turf it just installed last summer. You'd even have a hard time persuading them to halt construction on the two new artificial turfs, in the baseball field and the multipurpose field. And what about the school activities that live on this field? Pragmatism often trumps environmental concerns, and this isn't always a bad thing.

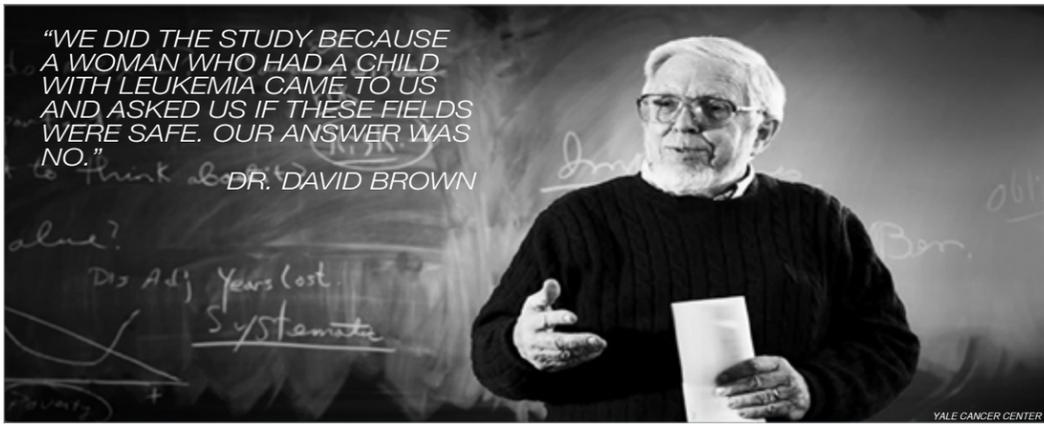
If anything, be skeptical. I am no scientist; this is no research paper. Read the studies that I cite, and decide whether or not science suggests these fields carry too high a risk.

Understand too that life is full of risks, and that most of us have a far higher chance of dying in a car accident than by inhaled carcinogens. This article only aims to illustrate the dangers of artificial turfs, and asks a simple question: Are we comfortable with this risk?

Crumbs and carcinogens

Across the country, thousands of artificial turfs blanket playing fields and playgrounds. California alone boasts more than 1,000 artificial turfs.

Standing on our field, one manufactured by the company FieldTurf, it's impossible not to notice the crumb rubber. A black, pellet-like substance the size of a cracker crumb, Styrene Butadiene Rubber (SBR) is the predominant constituent of artificial fields. Run your hand through the field, and you'll pick up black dust, similar to the consistency of pencil graphite. It's easy to spread, too, and many a morning SBR clogged my shoes as I tracked black into AP Chem-



istry. The crumb rubber comes from recycled tires, which 11 states have banned from landfills, due to their propensity for burning endlessly. The Environment and Human Health, Inc. (EHHI), a non-profit made up of doctors, public health professionals and policy experts, first investigated artificial turfs in 2006 because it was alarmed by what artificial turf companies were presenting to schools.

Dr. David Brown, a public health toxicologist and a board member at the EHHI, told me that "the problem is the [artificial turf] industry has a very, very strong marketing program — they hire studies and collect them in a huge bound notebook, and they read through and say there are thousands of papers showing that these things are safe. The conclusions [we saw] weren't supported by the evidence."

The scientists at EHHI decided to test the fields for themselves. They sent samples of artificial turf to the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, a lab associated with Yale University. There, scientists identified several harmful chemicals in crumb rubber, from Butadiene, a carcinogen linked to leukemia, to Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs), a harmful organic compound. (The full list of chemicals can be found in the sidebar.)

Dr. Barry Boyd, the director of Cancer Nutrition Health at Yale Health System and a board member at the EHHI, warned that "because artificial turf playing fields are disproportionately used by children and adolescents, these childhood exposures to environmental carcinogens may add to lifelong risk of cancer."

The EHHI is not alone. A notable critic is Dr. Phillip Landrigan of the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, who submitted a letter to the New York City Planning Department last year expressing concerns over the carcinogens in tire crumbs.

He wrote that the principal chemical components of crumb rubber are Styrene and Butadiene — Styrene is neurotoxic, and Butadiene is a proven human carcinogen that has been shown to cause leukemia and lymphoma.

"There is a potential for all of these

toxins to be inhaled, absorbed through the skin and even swallowed by children who play on synthetic turf fields," Dr. Landrigan wrote. "Only a few studies have been done to evaluate this type of exposure risk."

A 2012 study from the highly respected international journal Chemosphere identified many of the chemicals the EHHI found. The study said that many of these hazardous substances were at high or extremely high levels, and also confirmed that the particles are volatile (turn into gases) even at room tempera-

ture. "The presence of a high number of harmful compounds in these recycled rubber materials ... should be carefully controlled, and their final use should be restricted or even prohibited in some cases," the study concluded.

It's worth noting here that the previous study was conducted in Europe, which has taken a far more cautious approach to the installation of artificial turf fields. Italy's ministry of health has even proposed to ban the fields, labeling the rubber-infill fields a "potential carcinogen."

Around the world, countries are beginning to take notice of the possible dangers in these turfs. The Korea Times reported that an environmental group had found harmful substances in South Korean artificial turfs. Australia has issued a moratorium on artificial fields.

"The health of thousands of children may be at risk from long-term exposure to toxic chemicals from artificial turf," the Sydney Morning Herald wrote. "Residents in some Sydney suburbs

have successfully fought the introduction of synthetic grass."

Defending the turf When I first dived into my research, I was terrified by what I had found. Page after page of carcinogens and acronyms and Poly Aromatic Hydrocarbons and health risks — I jumped to the conclusion that I was going to get cancer.

When I first dived into my research, I was terrified by what I had found. Page after page of carcinogens and acronyms and Poly Aromatic Hydrocarbons and health risks — I jumped to the conclusion that I was going to get cancer. But it's important to understand that this is not hard science. While there is a plethora of evidence to suggest that artificial turfs may present health risks, there have yet to be any substantiated reports linking artificial turfs to cancer. Crumb rubber is not the new asbestos (yet), and I am not Erin Brockovich (ever).

There is little doubt that there are carcinogens in these fields. What is unclear is whether they are actually harmful. Ingesting these particles can be damaging; some studies suggest that just breathing the air above the tire crumbs can produce adverse health effects.

A Norwegian study conducted under scientist Christian Dye found various carcinogens that, when totaled, give a lifetime chemically increased cancer risk of 18.8 cancers per million through inhalation.

This is a troubling number. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) established that the significance threshold was one person per million — Dr. Brown said that the 18.8 figure is in the area that the Environmental Protection Agency would normally regulate.

Matthew Hagemann, a certified hydrogeologist and former director of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's West Coast Superfund program, said in an online report that this cancer risk is twice as high as the cancer risk experienced by someone living adjacent to the Chevron Richmond refinery, a manufacturer of petroleum products and other chemicals (Hagemann declined to comment for this article).

"A child playing on SBR crumb rubber as few as 30 times per year would experience a cancer risk of 19 per million — almost 20 times higher than the CEQA significance threshold of 1 per million,"

"WE HAVE PUT THE CART BEFORE THE HORSE: WE HAVE BUILT THESE POTENTIALLY TOXIC FIELDS BEFORE CLEARING THEM FOR SAFETY."



>> **bigidea**

Chemicals identified in crumb rubber

Testing by the Environment and Human Health, Inc. was conducted under mild conditions. Crumb rubber was exposed to water, and the following chemicals were identified.

1,3-Butadiene: A carcinogen. Has been linked to leukemia and cardiovascular diseases.

Benzene: Carcinogen, developmental toxicant, reproductive toxicant. Can cause bone marrow failure, and has been linked to aplastic anemia and acute leukemia.

Phthalates: Suspected developmental toxicant, endocrine toxicant, reproductive toxicant.

Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs): Suspected cardiovascular or blood toxicant, gastrointestinal or liver toxicant, reproductive toxicant, respiratory toxicant. High prenatal exposure to PAH is associated with lower IQ and childhood asthma.

Manganese: Neurological toxin. Associated with intellectual impairment.

Carbon black: Carcinogen, nanoparticles. Has shown to lead to cognitive decline and dementia. It is allowed in manufactured products because it is usually contained in a matrix that prevents it from escaping. Shredded tire crumbs, however, prove to be an exception.

Zinc: Present at high levels in tires. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has stated that zinc damages nerve receptors in the nose, which can cause anosmia.

>> **bigidea**

An organic alternative

Organic Infill Another non-toxic option is organic infill, which utilizes cork and coconut fiber. Saratoga parent Bill Breck strongly advocated a switch to organic infill. However, Saratoga consultant John Wadas wrote to the SHS Foundation, citing the "catastrophic failure" of organic turf in Santa Clara University. Breck disputed Wadas' claim over Santa Clara. Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) is using an alternative infill with the organic turf company GeoTurf.

San Francisco In its lawsuit against San Francisco over an artificial field, the Sierra Club alleged that the city "failed to even consider a design using a safe, non-toxic artificial turf."

Hagemann wrote. Dr. Brown, the toxicologist, said that, if true, the 18.8 people per million statistic represented a cancer threat similar to that perceived by a moderate smoker.

However, the cancer risk in the Dye study may have been overestimated. According to a study by California's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), the data gathered in the Dye study was overestimated because it was gathered from indoor fields, which have less ventilation.

"This suggests there is a low risk for [negative inhalation] health effects in soccer players," the OEHHA study wrote.

This is not to say that there is no substantial risk from inhalation — claims that OEHHA declared artificial turfs free of risk are prime examples of what Dr. Brown called "conclusions not supported by evidence."

The OEHHA recognized several significant gaps in data, writing that the risk of airborne metals and organic compounds has not been adequately assessed. Their disputation of the 18.8 figure did not address the airborne risk of PAH's and other particles, and the study is far from a safe bill of health.

With the plethora of studies in dispute, as is common in scientific process, the research on cancer risk is far from conclusive. In the meantime, we have put the cart before the horse: We have built these potentially toxic fields before clearing them for safety.

There are carcinogens everywhere, the cynical argument goes. But that's never been a good reason to ignore risk: By that reasoning, we shouldn't worry about any toxins at all. These fields may present a significant cancer risk — if Hagemann's comments are correct, just the inhalation risk is comparable to that of living next to a chemical refinery — and the real-life consequences of these threats have yet to be realized.

Other countries have taken far more cautious approaches toward artificial turfs. America, however, has forged ahead, rationalizing that because there have been no reported cases of cancer, these fields must be safe. We are forgetting that it takes years for cancer to develop, and decades for people to start to realize where the cancer is coming from. Asbestos killed thousands before proper national attention was raised. Lead, too, was widely prevalent in paint before this country finally banned it in 1977. And it took 40 years for people to realize that Hexavalent Chromium, Brockovich's Grendel, was tainting water and causing cancer.

Even if there have yet to be credible cases linking crumb rubber to cancer, it's imprudent to cite this in its defense, for it may take a long time to establish a link between the two. Until we have definitive proof of the safety of crumb rubber, perhaps cynicism would be better replaced by skepticism.

The turf decision

In the summer of 2005, Saratoga installed its first artificial turf. The controversy, then, was centered around the installation of the lights and how they would affect the surrounding neighborhood. A triumph nonetheless, the field

BY THE * NUMBERS

1 CALIFORNIA'S LEGAL THRESHOLD FOR CANCER RISK

18.8 ESTIMATED CHEMICALLY INCREASED CANCER RISK FROM INHALATION ONLY

BASED ON CARCINOGENS FOUND IN ARTIFICIAL TURFS

IN COMPARISON * CANCER RISK IS MEASURED IN CANCER CASES PER MILLION

33 ESTIMATED CHEMICALLY INCREASED CANCER RISK FROM RURAL DIESEL SOOT

BASED ON CARCINOGENS FOUND IN DIESEL SOOT

WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

RISK ASSOCIATED WITH INGESTION

RISK ASSOCIATED WITH LEAD EXPOSURE FROM PREVIOUS FIELD GENERATIONS, WHERE LEAD WAS PRESENT AT UP TO 5000 PPM

RISK ASSOCIATED WITH SKIN CONTACT

was met with much fanfare; for the first time, the football team could play "home" games at home instead of at Los Gatos. By most accounts, school spirit rose.

But it's possible that this turf may have contained significant amounts of lead, a developmental toxicant. In September of 2008, then attorney general (and now governor) Jerry Brown led a lawsuit against AstroTurf, Beaulieu Group and FieldTurf (the company that makes the school's turfs) for violating California's Proposition 65 by knowingly failing to disclose that their products contained lead.

The lead was reportedly present at 5,000 parts per million, more than 10 times above the legal threshold (parts per million and cancer risk are measured differently). Eventually, the three companies settled and agreed to reduce the amount of lead in their products. This doesn't, however, change that for years students around the nation may have been exposed to high levels of lead

the research about these fields being carcinogenic to the administration's attention, but each time he was dismissed. The argument, Breck said, was, "Everyone is using these fields."

School officials said they relied extensively on scientific research. After Breck's query, Wadas sought help from a FieldTurf salesman, Andrew Rowley. Principal Paul Robinson told Breck that these were "definitive answers" to his questions.

"Fields installed with SBR rubber have been proven over and over by many independent studies to be perfectly safe," Rowley, a salesman, wrote. "These studies have been done by doctors, scientists, universities, government agencies, etc. from around the world. Ninety-nine percent of all turf fields today are still installed with SBR rubber." (Interview requests to Rowley and Wadas were not returned.)

Besides not even addressing or acknowledging the presence of carcinogens in the field, Rowley's letter — and

Robinson has defended these fields vehemently. He told me that our football field was "the most advanced field in Northern California," and a "model for other schools." But when I cited my studies, Robinson told me they were "opinions" and "completely biased."

I asked Dr. Brown what he thought of Robinson's statements, and he bristled when I told him that the studies the EHHI had done were "opinions."

"[The laboratory we used] is one of the leading laboratories in the world, closely associated with scientists from Yale," he said. "One of the reasons we did the study was because a woman who had a child with leukemia came to us and asked us if these fields were safe. Our answer was no."

Perhaps a similar question can be asked to both the administration and the community: Would you, knowing what these fields contain, but not knowing the consequences, put other parents' children on these fields?

The last question

Throughout all of my research and reporting, I have hoped to be mistaken, because I know there's not much we can do. Breck told me of an organic infill that is used in Santa Clara University (he was a strong advocate of it, and it's worth looking into), but I know that the chances of this school tearing up its field and contract with FieldTurf are slim. Perhaps the only plausible area for change is with the two grass fields yet to be transformed into artificial turf.

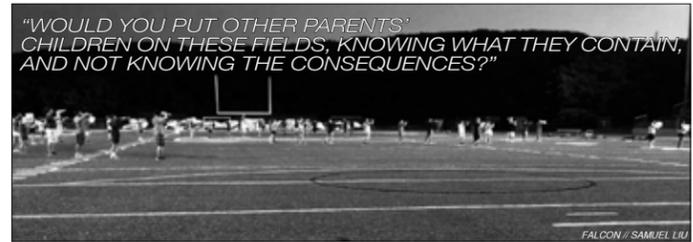
I see a school, and a country, where we're putting kids on a field of carcinogens, and assuming that they won't get cancer. We know there are carcinogens in here. We know there is exposure. The only question is — and this isn't a question we should be using kids as guinea pigs to answer — how much is the exposure?

I asked Dr. Brown when he thought that people would start to take notice of the cancer-related harms of artificial fields. Ten years? Fifteen? I expected ambiguity — he had been helpful, but he had been reserved with his words, as scientists are and lawyers are not.

"Five," he said. "Five years. Because we're putting first graders and cancerous materials together."

He continued: "And when the cancer starts, people like myself will be sorry we didn't argue more effectively." ♦

For more information, contact the writer at samuel.liu@saratogafalcon.org. To discuss the story online, go to www.saratogafalcon.org and search: artificial turf.



on the old fields.

After six years, the school's field began showing symptoms of wear and tear. In 2010, the SHS Foundation began planning and fundraising for a new field. Last summer, Saratoga (with the company FieldTurf) installed a new football field, which employs one of the newest technologies. The new turf uses Coolplay, which adds a sparse layer of cork on top of the crumb rubber. Whether this can mitigate the effects of crumb rubber is unlikely, as the SBR is present in far greater quantities than the cork, and is still easily kicked into the air.

The SHS Foundation and the administration had heard about the presence of carcinogens in these turfs prior to installation, but was dissuaded by John Wadas, a marketing and fundraising specialist working with the SHS Foundation. Last spring, Breck, the Saratoga parent, attempted many times to bring

the administration's acceptance of it — reveals a mistake of oversight, and a startling trend among American schools nationwide.

High schools are easy targets for artificial turf salesmen: There are no David Browns and Matthew Hagemanns to look into the studies put out by the artificial turf companies, and the factor of boosting sports and spirit overruns the few negative Nancies. If we don't have these fields, the feeling is, we can't compete with others, and this raw crusade "for the team" has blinded many a school. Foundations like the SHS Foundation, composed of parents genuinely looking to do good for the school, are instead tricked by salesmen because the parents lack the science background to see through the paperwork companies present. (An analysis of a FieldTurf report can be found online at www.saratogafalcon.org).

FREAKING AND DRINKING

WILL THE NEW DANCING POLICY ENCOURAGE OFF-CAMPUS MIXERS?



By Deepthi Kannan & Sweeya Raj

While a mere 150 students showed up to the Back-to-School dance in August, at least 1,000 students from local schools enjoyed a wild night at the Masquerade Mixer at the Chinese Performing Arts Center on Oct. 19, a dance organized by students and free from the restrictions of a "boring" school dance that prohibits freaking.

But with freedom comes consequence. The face-to-face policy resulted in controversy, causing some students to angrily voice their opposition on Facebook groups and boycott the first dance.

Although understandable, this overreaction may prompt students to instead go to mixers, and some people blame the new dance policy for this possible consequence.

In a survey conducted by the Falcon of 100 sophomores, juniors and seniors, 27 of 33 people who said they go to mixers do so in order to freak.

"It's better than the dance policy at school," an anonymous respondent of the survey said. "It's not that I don't like the dance policy; it's the fact that [the school is] stopping us from doing something not during school hours."

Clearly, the dance policy that is not

the problem; rather, it is the students' immaturity.

The argument for freaking, of course, is that students should have the freedom to behave how they choose. What they fail to realize, however, is that the school's primary responsibility is to create an environment where all of its students can feel included. The reality of freaking is that it makes dances hugely uncomfortable for a significant number of potential participants.

Unfortunately, students have become so entrenched in criticizing the administration that they have forgotten the purpose of attending mixers and dancers alike: to socialize and meet up with friends. Instead, they dwell on their inappropriate desires, which only bring about harsh consequences.

They're also missing out on the best parts of school dances.

"I think that those who are open to the new dance policy will probably realize how fun dances still can be," junior Meghna Chakraborty said. "I already know a few people who were surprised that they had so much fun at the last dance."

Regardless, the stubborn attitudes of pro-freaking students may have led them

to instead attend mixers, where students may partake in unnecessary and dangerous behavior. According to the survey, of 37 people who said they drink alcohol, 60 percent said they are theoretically more likely to drink at a mixer than before a school dance.

Although drinking is a serious concern, the administration cannot be blamed for this unintended consequence of the anti-freaking policy, especially because behavior at mixers is outside their control.

Additionally, no conclusive evidence proves that attendance at mixers and underaged drinking have actually increased after the implementation of the policy. Only 13 people in the survey admitted they actually consume alcohol at mixers without indicating this was because of the dance policy.

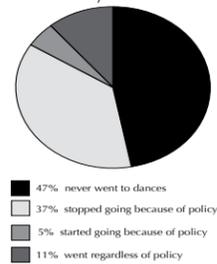
And even if it was, those who insist on freaking and drinking will find a way to do so even if freaking were allowed to resume at future school dances. That is the unfortunate reality of party culture.

What needs to change, rather, is the teenage conception of parties as a whole. The dance policy cannot solve inappropriate behavior any more than laws against killing can hope to eliminate all future homicides; however, the administration's efforts are certainly a step in the right direction.

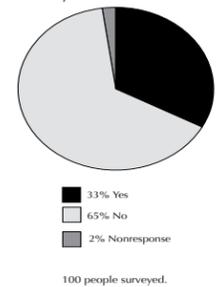
The next step is for students to make individual efforts to break out of the cycle of party culture and see dances as social occasions that are fun and safe and don't require either alcohol or freaking. ♦

>>> falconpoll

How has the dance policy affected you?



Do you attend mixers?



What's the point of midterms?

Around the halfway mark of every semester, the campus is full of upperclassmen whining endlessly about their midterms. Their complaints are completely justified.

At Saratoga High, a few AP classes, such as AP Chemistry and AP Language and Composition, have midterms, which usually count for a large percentage of grades. One bad midterm could ruin a student's grade for the rest of the semester.

The idea of midterms is to prepare students for college, since most college courses have a midterm. While midterms in college might be fine, midterms in high school are not.

For starters, most college courses that have midterms have little or no homework, so basically the entire grade is determined by a midterm. In other words, college students can manage their time however they want and don't have to take tests on a regular basis, giving them more time and a flexible schedule. After all, they are adults who need to be able to organize their activities and time.

However, in high school, classes such as AP Chemistry have midterms in addition to daily homework and occasional unit tests. AP Chem students generally have little time to constantly study for unit tests, do homework and worry about their huge impending midterm. In addition, students must deal with the homework load from other classes as well, leaving them swamped with hours of work on particularly dreadful nights.

For seniors, midterms fall near the deadline for early decision college applications, and it becomes unmanageable during this time of the year.

In addition, many colleges offer the option of dropping the class after taking the midterm in case a student did badly. Thanks to this, students will not have an F on their transcript in college.

High school midterms do not offer such flexibility since the drop deadline for AP classes is usually a few weeks before the midterms. As a result, if a high school student does badly on a midterm, he or she can only desperately struggle for the rest of the semester to increase

their grade. Otherwise they will have a bad grade that will haunt their transcript. Unfortunately for seniors, it will be just in time for college admissions.

The idea of preparing students for

>>> candidcaricatures



college through the use of midterms is a decent idea, but the way they are implemented is wrong. If classes seek to have midterms in high school, they should reduce homework and test loads to better emulate college courses and allow for students to study in their chosen way.

AP Lang is fair in this category since a majority of the work is reading and understanding the text, without the worry of unit tests. While it still involves daily work, it is a good example of the direction that other AP classes with midterms should take.

While it might not be plausible to allow students to drop classes after their midterms, teachers should strive to have midterms weigh less if they continue implementing homework and unit tests or remove the midterms altogether. The midterms might prepare students for college, but the system comes at a heavy cost to students' sleep and sanity at this time of the year. ♦

While midterms in college might be fine, midterms in high school are not.

Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

Editors-in-Chief: Sarah Finley, Samuel Liu; Opinion Editor: Sanj Nalwa; Reporter: Nelson Wang

The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 23-9 in support of the editorial.



Fixed sports fee fair for everyone

By Ashley Chen

\$275. That's how much money you're asked to contribute to play any of the sports at our school. Whether you play your sport in the pool, which costs thousands of dollars to heat every year, or are part of the badminton team, which requires athletes to buy their own rackets, the fee is constant.

Some parents and students might be wondering about this system's fairness. After all, each sport needs different equipment, which naturally costs varying amounts of money. For example, cross country seems like a relatively cheap sport due to its lack of equipment compared to water polo. However, this flat fee is the best option for Saratoga.

Firstly, it is important that the base cost of sports participation is subsidized for everyone. Saratoga High is a unified school and that means it should support each one of its aspects financially. Charging more for one sport discourages participation, which leads to a weaker program overall and punishes athletes who play more costly sports.

Secondly, much of the \$275 fee helps cover the cost of maintaining sports fa-

cilities, such as the weight room and the trainer's room. It is virtually impossible to calculate an exact figure for each individual sport.

For example, one of those shared resources is athletic trainer Liz Gilmore. In order to quantify the expense by sport, one would have to count the hours each sports team spends receiving the athletic trainer's attention.

This venture would not only be extremely time-consuming and expensive, but also provide an inaccurate portrait, as every visit to the trainer is unique. One person might be rolling an injury, while another could be using the elliptical, which is more expensive.

Also, if we want true equality, shouldn't we also charge each individual a different amount of money? After all, injured athletes require much more attention and are therefore more costly than healthy ones. This proposition, an extrapolation of the current criticism of the sports program, demonstrates the ridiculousness of suggesting separate fees.

In fact, trying to split costs is analogous to two friends sharing ice cream and trying to divide the bill by weighing the ice cream eaten by one friend while factoring in the proportion of choco-

Charging more for one sport discourages participation, which leads to a weaker program overall and punishes athletes who play more costly sports.

>>> bigidea

Fixed Sports Fee

Why is it important?
The money is used to help purchase sports equipment and help pay for the use of facilities.

Does everyone have to pay it?
Not necessarily; it is voluntary. However, the program will fall apart without athletes paying this \$275 since they need this money.

Why is it better to pay a standard fee?
Charging higher fees for certain sports can lead to a decrease in participation in these sports, therefore creating a weaker overall program.

Printed by Folger Graphics in Hayward, Calif.



*Various contributions were also made by the third-period newspaper staff

'Scratch' scantrons revolutionize test taking

BY Michelle Leung

There are two minutes left and you're staring down at the test in a panic. You've filled in answers "A" and "B" and erased them five times already. You've already eliminated "C," "D" and "E" — that should be worth something, you tell yourself. But it's not, since choosing the wrong choice will cost you all the points for that problem.

Epstein Educational Enterprises' revolutionary Intermediate Feedback Assessment Technique (IF-AT) seeks to solve this problem that has long bedeviled students. The Company's revolutionary multiple-choice test can give teachers a more accurate reading of how well students grasp a concept.

In California, the Las Colinas School District and the California State University in Fullerton have successfully begun using IF-AT.

The IF-AT is essentially a Scantron with its answers hidden beneath a layer of film. Once a student has chosen an answer, he or she scratches off the box with a special pencil. If the answer is correct, a star is printed under the film the student scratches off.

If the answer is wrong, the student can then scratch off his or her second choice. When the test is graded, partial credit can be given for answering correctly on the second try, resulting in a more accurate assessment of students' skills and eliminating the issue of receiving no credit when a student is stuck be-

tween two close answers.

Partial credit can alleviate stress and anxiety caused by tests with questions on which students can only get all or no points. Students already overloaded with homework and projects won't need to stress about the all-or-nothing grading of a test.

According to the company, by revealing the answer right away, students who choose correctly are able to reinforce their learning. Students who get the correct answer on their second, third, fourth or even fifth attempt will understand their error even as they are taking the test, ultimately resulting in a better understanding and retention of the material.

Unlike regular Scantron tests, in which students cannot see the correct answer until days or weeks later, IF-AT ensures that each student knows the answer before the test is over. Teachers don't have to waste class time going over the tests because no one will leave the classroom without knowing what they got wrong and what the correct answer was.

Additionally, the act of scratching off an answer is more interesting than simply filling in bubbles. Scratching off film rather than filling in circles makes an interactive game rather than a tedious test. This also can help students to be more focused during the examination and ultimately result in a better assessment of their knowledge.

Some may argue that IF-AT makes it necessary for all teachers to use univer-

sal sets of pre-printed answer sheets which may make it easier to cheat; teachers across the country would be using the same sequence of answers, and one leak could expose thousands of answer keys. Students could cheat even in between periods.

However, the company claims that it will provide many different answer sheets for teachers, making this concern unnecessary. Even between periods, teachers could use different answer sheets for each class.

Another possible concern is that students cannot erase answers and choose different ones. Once an answer is scratched off the choice has been made, and students cannot change their minds. But rather than limit students' options during a test, this pressure to think clearly about each problem may actually help students' thinking on the spot. Students can practice quick decision making while they take tests.

IF-AT was developed by instructors who clearly understand the need for

>> candid caricatures



partial credit on tests in classrooms and by a psychology professor who specializes in human learning and memory ability.

When students use this new, smarter multiple-choice testing method, they will seek to benefit from the immediate feedback, the partial credit on assessments and the eventual stress relief. ♦

Is the integrity of the Nobel Peace prize decreasing?

BY Ashley Chen & Arman Vaziri

The Nobel Peace Prize is an incredible and prestigious honor that gives its recipients money, fame, and achievement. Every year, a group of five Norwegians chooses a group or individual to pay tribute to with this distinction. Established in 1901, the Nobel Prize website describes the recipient as the individual or organization that has "done the most or the best work for [...] the abolition or reduction of standing armies," among other things.

This year, the awardee was the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, a deserving institution. However, not every Peace Prize winner is as legitimate. In light of recent Nobel Peace Prize laureates and even nominations, it seems that the prize has strayed from its initial purpose.

For example, this year a prominent favorite for the prize was 16-year-old Pakistani female education activist Malala Yousafzai. In the past year, Yousafzai has

spoken before the U.N., met with Queen Elizabeth II and confronted President Barack Obama about drone strikes in Pakistan. According to Time magazine, she is one of the world's top 100 most influential figures.

While this is very impressive, her elevation to fame is in reality a direct product of the Taliban's widely publicized attempt in October 2012 to assassinate her by shooting her in the head. Yousafzai, who was severely injured, spent the following three months in the hospital — leaving less than a year's worth of activism for the Nobel Prize committee to consider. Though her work to promote education is outstanding, so far it has mostly comprised of speeches, not action.

The Nobel Prize is intended to commemorate a lifetime of action, not a eight months. Her nomination for the award shows how politically motivated the Nobel Peace Prize has become; the Western world just wants to commemorate a symbolic figure.

One of the most controversial laure-

ates is President Obama, who won in 2009. According to the Nobel Prize website, Obama won because of his "extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples."

At the time, though, Obama was only nine months into his presidency and hadn't accomplished anything significant yet apart from signing the American Recovery and Investment Act, which contributed nothing to world peace.

In fact, some are arguing that in light of Obama's actions during the past few years, his award should be revoked.

A common complaint centers around Obama's drone strikes against the Taliban and Al Qaeda. In Pakistan alone, drones have killed roughly 3,000 have died over a period of nine years, including multiple U.S. citizens.

Clearly, these drone strikes are harmful to the safety of Pakistani citizens because the attacks have already resulted in the deaths of thousands of people. Far from effectively undermining Pakistani government, these strikes have led

to negative feelings towards the U.S. among most Pakistanis.

This highlights the stupidity of the Nobel Prize committee for giving him the award. Even though they couldn't have predicted he would act in this way, they should have waited until his time as U.S. president, one of the most powerful positions in the world, ended before considering him for the award.

Some may argue that Obama and Malala's cases are outliers in a string of admirable Nobel laureates, but this isn't true. Mahatma Gandhi, who led the effort to free India from British control using civil disobedience, never won the award because, to put it bluntly, the committee did not consider non-Westerners until around the 1960s.

In short, the recent decisions of the Norwegian choosing committee have undercut the integrity of the award. In the future elections, they must endeavor to restore prestige to the Nobel distinction by awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to the people who truly exemplify its ideals. ♦

A step forward: California lets minors reset online data

BY Minu Palaniappan & Nelson Wang

On Sept. 23, California's Gov. Jerry Brown signed an "eraser bill" that gives California minors the right to delete online postings on social media sites. This is the first legislation of its kind, and it will require social media sites to allow minors to clear their data from Facebook's servers starting in 2015.

This legislation aims to prevent minors from being punished too harshly for the mistakes they make in their youth. California's legislation is a great step forward and the rest of the U.S. should emulate California's measures. Even if the cleaning up of the information isn't perfect, this legislation is still an important first step.

Teenagers need the freedom to make

mistakes and not be penalized for life. After all, their teenage years are purely a learning experience for the professional life. With the magnifying glass that social networks have created, teenagers don't have space to grow since they're constantly monitored.

For instance, many minors take pictures of themselves drinking or smoking, which can hurt their chances of employment or getting into the college of their choice.

A recent Kaplan study found that one in four college admission officers checked their applicants' Facebook pro-

files and their activity on the social networking site. As a result, sometimes an applicant could be turned down because the admissions officer saw an inappropriate picture or post.

Being able to remove posts is especially important for minors, because minors have a tendency to make mistakes due to a lack of experience in life. On the other hand, adults should have enough experience not to do anything dumb and post it on Facebook. At the point where an adult makes a foolish decision and posts it onto social media, the adult should take responsibility for his or her actions.

Mainstream sites like Facebook and

As a result, sometimes an applicant could be turned down because the admissions officer saw an inappropriate picture or post.

Can you take Intro to Engineering as a junior?

I've never been great at anything to do with electronics or building and sketching. I just learned how to type with 10 fingers last year, and my only design experience is basic graphics in newspaper. Nevertheless, when an opportunity arose to try out the new Introduction to Engineering class, I thought it would be a fulfilling learning experience.



SABRINA CHEN Brina @ on

After talking to the teacher, Ms. Audrey Warmuth, and scheduling a Monday fourth-period class to sit in, I decided to do a little research to see exactly what I was getting myself into. I went online to read the class syllabus and learned that the only prerequisite was a B- in Algebra 1 because it was an introductory class.

"Introductory..." I thought. "It's just a class of freshmen who have been learning this for two months."

Ms. Warmuth started the lesson by telling the class to take out their homework to correct. Since she didn't have an extra handout for me, I tried to scribble down the questions as she explained them on the projector. Unfortunately for me, the assignment was on drawing 3-D figures; and with the exception of vectors in trigonometry

last year, I had no prior experience with drawing in 3-D.

By the time I finished sketching the question to the first problem, Ms. Warmuth had already finished going over the entire page. "Damn it," I thought. "How can I already be falling behind?"

In an effort to catch up with the rest of the class, I tried to move the paper of the girl sitting next to me in viewing distance. I craned my neck to look over at her paper and quickly copied down her answers.

However, halfway through the page, she caught me and gave me a "Wow, you really don't know what's going on" stare. Embarrassed to be caught cheating off of a freshman, I pushed her homework back to her side of the table, like nothing had happened, and turned my attention back to Ms. Warmuth.

It could have been because I was practically clueless on this subject, but I have to say that I was impressed at how much these underclassmen knew. While Ms. Warmuth explained the answers, many of the students posed super nerdy-sounding questions like, "What is the difference between an object line and an extension line?"

and "How do you account for the protrusion in the figure?"

As for myself, I had my own set of questions in mind, "Why do the box things have so many holes in them?" and "What's wrong with the lines hanging out of the cube?"

After collecting the homework, Ms. Warmuth told the class that we would be doing a simple worksheet on measuring lengths. "Ha! What a joke," I thought. "Measuring with a ruler? This is something I can do; in fact, it was something I learned to do in second grade."

I breezed through the front and the back of the worksheet, never pausing. When I was finished, I looked up, saw the rest of the class still working, and regained the confidence I had lost during the 3-D figure debacle.

After everyone had finished, Ms. Warmuth began to go over answers, and my confidence (once again) took a plunge. Out of the eight problems I had so easily completed, I had gotten a total of zero correct. I had been unaware of some important measuring techniques.

First off, I totally disregarded the precision rule which states that you must go one significant figure more than the measurement given. Instead, I based my answer off the tick marks on the ruler. In addition, I had no idea



FALCON / SIMI SRIVASTAVA

Junior Sabrina Chen works on a practice booklet about 3-D figures.

that you cannot simply round when measuring in Customary (the U.S. system of measurement) units — you must calculate the value in fractions.

While I was busy marking all of my answers incorrect, the girl sitting next to me was once again getting everything correct! It was even more humiliating when Ms. Warmuth walked around the room to see how the class was doing and saw my chicken scratch paper next to my neighbor's perfect work.

Overall, I thought my Intro to Engineering trial class had been a challenging and humbling experience. Although the class was difficult, I realized I would have liked to have take it in my freshman or sophomore year. In just one period, the

class had combined two of my favorite subjects, geometry and chemistry, in a new and enlightening way.

When the bell rang for lunch, I went up to the front of the classroom to thank Ms. Warmuth. "No problem at all," she said. "So sorry that you had to sit in on such a boring day, it's usually a lot more challenging. If you want, you're welcome to come again on Wednesday — we'll be using the software system on the laptops."

Politely told her that I would ask my journalism adviser if I could spend another period in her class, but in my head, I thought, "BORING? MORE CHALLENGING? SOFTWARE SYSTEM? I could hardly keep up using a ruler!" ♦

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November 1, 2013



Simi Srivastava (11) & Deepthi Sampathkumar (10)
ITALIAN

Sabrina Chen (11)
KOREAN

Shreya Tumu (10) & Shazia Gupta (10)
INDIAN

Miles Albert (10) & Anant Rajeev (10)
AMERICAN

Andrew Jiang (10) & Sherrilyn Ling (11)
CHINESE

>> photoessay



TALISMAN // JASON LI



TALISMAN // JASON LI



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

1. Sophomore Helen Chen samples each style of food.
2. Sophomore Aditya Chaudhry grabs Indian saag paneer made by sophomores Shazia Gupta and Shreya Tumu.
3. Sophomore Deepthi Sampathkumar and junior Simi Srivastava put together the layers of their lasagna.

First Place >> Italian food? Challenge accepted.

I really like food. Now, I know that does not make me very different from most people, but do not take those four words lightly.

Now when I say I like food, I REALLY like all aspects of food; eating food is a small part of the experience. For me, cooking food is even more satisfying than eating it. I'm that person who insists that we sit near the clear kitchen windows of fancy restaurants so I can watch the chefs work their magic. I'm also that family member that hogs space on the DVR with cooking shows like "Iron Chef America" and "Restaurant Impossible." So naturally, when I found out that my Lifestyles editors decided to do a cultural cook-off, I knew I had to participate.



Simi Srivastava
To intimacy and beyond

Sophomore Deepthi Sampathkumar and I were chosen to cook Italian food for the competition. Some of you may have "aww-ed" just now at reading about the poor Indian girl who had to broaden her horizons and cook Italian food for a newspaper project. However, I have fooled you; Italian food is one of my favorites to eat and make.

I'll be honest, I was wary when my editors told me I would be working with Deepthi. It had nothing to do with her; I just hate sharing the kitchen.

I probably get this quality from my mother who always denies me access to her culinary sanctuary whenever she is concocting something delicious, like curry. Regardless, I was determined to try something new by working together with Deepthi.

After severe confusion regarding the meeting time of our cooking session, Deepthi arrived at my house at 5:30 p.m., after running around our local Safeway to acquire all of the items on our grocery list. We started with mak-

ing the tiramisu, the dessert we 'decided' on, so that it would have time to set.

The process ran pretty smoothly, and we managed to finish making the cake in about an hour. We were only slowed down by a few distractions, one of them being that we may or may not have taken breaks to eat more ladyfingers than we actually put into our dish.

After we safely stored the dessert away, we began to work on the multi-step process of making the vegetable lasagna, our main course. At this point in the evening, around 7 p.m., my mother began to creep into the kitchen and pressure us to quickly finish our shenanigans so that she could start cooking dinner.

Deepthi and I worked surprisingly well under pressure; we cut vegetables while dancing to the rap music that Deepthi insisted we listen to, and somewhat patiently stirred our bechamel sauce for 20 minutes on the stove.

After we got our three components ready — the sauteed vegetables, the bechamel sauce and the pesto ricotta pasta — we assembled the lasagna. I'm not going to lie: it looked pretty gross. The wrinkly no-boil noodles were covered with a sticky white sauce on top of which was a chunky green mixture covering the vegetables. I was worried that our presentation would cost us some points.

However, when judgment day arrived, all of my worries went away. When Deepthi arrived to the Journalism Room where the judging took place with our freshly baked lasagna in hand, there were many "oohs" and "ahs" at our extremely ar-

omatic foil container. We opened it to show everyone that it wasn't just an incredibly good-smelling piece of foil, and someone shouted, "Oh! You guys made a casserole!" It wasn't the reaction I was hoping for, but I'll take what I can get.

My ego was boosted when we opened up the tiramisu. As soon as the cocoa powder covered whipped cream was visible, a few judges told me "I'm giving you a 10/10 already."

I couldn't wait for my editors to announce the winner of the competition. So obviously, the logical thing to do was stalk the Saratoga Falcon server to find the spreadsheet with the judges' tallies and discover the winner myself. Upon finding the results, I realized that only two of the judges kept their promise to give us the highest score.

I was extremely disappointed to find Deepthi and me in second place. How could this happen? Our dishes were obviously superior to all others. As I looked on the individual scoring from the judges, I saw that Deepthi and I were neck and neck with the Korean team, until one judge gave us a two. A TWO? OUT OF 10? We averaged a nine out of 10 for all of the other judges; this was unacceptable!

To prevent ourselves from starting a revolt of hate toward this individual (you know who you are), Deepthi and I came to a conclusion: He obviously tasted our food and was so jealous of our abilities to create such wonderful edible items that he couldn't stand admitting that we were the winners.

In all, this was a learning experience for me. I managed to not kick Deepthi out of the kitchen and actually worked together with her to make our delicious items. This was also a chance for me to make a new friend in Deepthi, and a new enemy in that unnamed judge.

We later found out that one judge procrastinated on adding in his scores to the spreadsheet, and that his addition of a high score for us and a low score for the Korean BBQ group made us the true winners of the competition. I mean, we weren't surprised to find ourselves in first place, but it was nice to have our talents recognized. ♦

Second Place >> Junior barbecues cooking competition

I'm a competitive person; ask any of my friends or family. They'll tell you that if I find out that someone is better than I am — in grades, fruit ninja or otherwise — I will try to push myself to get back to that No. 1 position. So when my Falcon Lifestyles editors Rohan Hardikar and Amy Lin told the class that we were going to do a cultural cook-off, I was already craving that first place win as top chef.

Since our newspaper staff is not all that ethnically diverse, I got stuck with the job of making Korean food. (I am 0 percent Korean). After much deliberation, I decided to make one of my all-time favorite dishes — Korean Barbeque.

Although I was feeling quite confident, I still decided it would be a good idea to scout out my competition. I took a look on the spreadsheet where the Lifestyles editors had posted what each competitor would be making.

Scanning down the list, I noticed that every group was preparing more than one dish. The Chinese group was making green onion pancakes and fried rice, the Italian group was planning to bake lasagna and tiramisu and what did the box

next to my name say? Meat and rice.

Shoot, I thought, that's pathetic. If I really wanted to win (and I really did,) I had to up my game. I decided to call up the best cook I know: my grandma. Before I finished explaining my dilemma to her, she cut me off and said, "We'll make red bean mochi. I'll be at your house at 4:15 tomorrow with all the ingredients." My grandma is a lifesaver.

The day of the cook-off, my grandma arrived with her mochi-making material. I looked at the recipe and began to measure one cup of flour, one cup of water, and half a cup of sugar. I'm one of those people who needs to check the recipe three or four times before doing anything, and after putting in the ingredients I have to check two or three more times to make sure I used the right ingredient and the right amount.

My grandma, on the other hand, is what people call a "true chef" — she bases her ingredient proportions on look,

smell and taste. So while I was checking and rechecking the recipe, she swooped in and added another cup of water.

"Nai nai!" I shrieked the phrase for grandmother in Chinese. "What are you doing? I already added the water!"

"Aiyoo," she replied calmly. "The mixture looks too solid; we have to dilute it." She went on adding a little more of this and a few more pinches of that — never measuring anything of course — while I sat back and resisted the urge to butt in. I have to give her credit though, when the mochis were finished, they looked perfect, as though bought from an Asian supermarket instead of homemade. To go that extra mile, I decided to finish off each of my mochis with a mini Korean flag.

In the meantime, my dad had been setting up the grill to barbecue the short ribs. This project had basically become a whole family affair. The smell of the barbecue coming from the window was mouthwatering and looking at my intricately decorated mochis, I had

the feeling that my dishes were first-place material.

But when I got to school, I realized that I had tough competition. The cheeseburgers from the American group looked perfectly grilled and the Italian group's tiramisu looked delicious.

I nervously watched while the judges tried my dishes. Waves of doubt filled my mind. And then, when I couldn't stand to keep my mouth shut any longer, I started to go into overdrive competitive mode.

"Guys, you like my dish the best right?" I forcefully asked all the judges. "Will you vote me as first place?"

Most of the judges either stared at me blankly or gave me weak smiles. It wasn't much to confirm my first-place standings.

So when Rohan and Amy announced I had won, I was both surprised and ecstatic. Although much of my win is credited to my family, I'm still very proud of my cooking ability. In fact, next year when I fill in my achievements and awards on my college applications, I'm sure "first place in newspaper cook-off competition" will be near the top of my list. ♦

Correction: Because one judge submitted their scores late, I actually came in second.



INDEXMUNDI.COM

Fourth Place >> Cheddar cheese, beef and the American experience

It was our first time grilling hamburgers. A pair of sophomore boys might not be ready to take on chef Gordon Ramsay, but we weren't going to let our lacking of cooking experience stop us — we had a mission. A mission to make the most delicious, mouth-watering holy hamburgers known to mankind for the judges in order to win the newspaper cooking competition.



Anant Rajeev
They call me sizzlin'

Not knowing how to turn on the grill and clean it started us off on the wrong foot. Enlisting the help of an adult trustee (Mrs. Albert) to get the show going, we waited 10 minutes for the grill to preheat and cleaned it off with scrubbers. Then it was time to get cooking.

However, we had no idea how to grill a hamburger.

After discussing a solid plan to begin, we decided to vamp up the heat on the grill and unwrap the delicious Sirloin beef patties Mrs. Albert had so generously provided for us. We tossed the patties onto the grill, but to our disappointment, some of

them got slightly burned because they were too close to the flames.

After the rough start, we decided to get our act together. We were going to win this competition.

We flipped the crispy burned patties after five minutes on one side and topped them off with cheddar cheese. About a minute later, the cheese melted onto

the burger, creating a mouthwatering aroma around the grill. We looked in despair at the patties we would never be able to consume, because they had to be saved for the judges.

After taking the cooked patties off the grill and placing them on the delicious hamburger buns, we were ready to present our masterpiece to the judges. Sadly, they did not appreciate the effort we put into our scrump-

tious cheeseburgers as much as we did, and we received a score of 55 out of 100, which placed us second to last. We came to the conclusion that

the other teams had bribed the judges. Only we could treasure the gorgeousness of our American delicacy.

Grilling burgers for the first time and reading the less-than-generouscritique, we realized what counts is the love put into its creation and not judgements of others. It's safe to say that our burgers should have won, and the judges were biased. ♦



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>> falconfigures

Average of judge ratings out of 100

82.0	ITALIAN: Lasagna and tiramisu
78.5	KOREAN: Barbeque short ribs and white rice
56.5	INDIAN: Saag paneer, riaata, rice pilaf and roti*
55.0	AMERICAN: Cheeseburgers
53.5	CHINESE: Green onion pancakes and fried rice

The food was judged by 10 members of the third period Falcon staff.

*For the story written by the Indian food group, go to the Saratoga Falcon website at saratogafalcon.org.

Bringing Pokemon back: Time to level up

I'm a huge Pokemon fan at heart, even at the age of 17. In fact, I'm writing a college essay on Pokemon. (It might not get me into college, but the admission officers will hopefully be entertained.)

Strangely, I'm not alone in my interest of Pokemon; quite a few Saratoga students can be seen on their smartphones in the world of Pokemon, playing different versions of Pokemon games.

Now, people often wonder, "Wait, aren't high schoolers too old for Pokemon?" They are mistaken.

Students are now finding new ways to play and enjoy Pokemon. Pokemon emulators, which essentially use the Pokemon software on a different gaming platform such as on a smartphone, are rising in popularity in our high school.

Some even wonder why Pokemon is making a comeback in high school of all places, but the truth is, it isn't making a comeback. Pokemon never left our hearts. The hours spent raising our precious Pokemon cannot be forgotten and when we were ready to start playing again, we find our old friends there, patiently waiting for us.

One hypothesis for this resurfacing of Pokemon interest is that nostalgia appears when seniors, such as myself, realize they're about to graduate and try to go back in time by playing Pokemon. Or maybe, in a time of insecurity, high school students need to look to an old symbol of comfort and find solace in their old Pokemon friends.

Alternatively, these hypotheses could just be over-thinking a simple matter, just like when English teachers ask why the curtain is blue. I never figured that out. But I digress.

In my case, I was just bored and decided to revisit the world of Pokemon.

And I've decided to challenge myself even further than I did when I was younger. After all, most people agree that a game designed for 5-year-olds isn't all that fun and challenging at the age of 17. That's why I have decided to take Pokemon to the next level.

For example, now my mathematical skills have advanced beyond basic addition, allowing me to examine the complex formulas behind the Pokemon game. Apparently, people can calculate the probability of finding a shiny Pokemon (an alternate color version) by looking at their ID numbers and some other data that I can't even begin to understand, despite hours trying to figure it out involving bytes and something jargon like "xor."

What does xor even mean? And more importantly, what foul demon came up with such an ungodly formula? This is a children's game for heaven's sake and even after 14 years of education, I still can't understand the mechanisms behind it.

Another more applicable example would be the catch rate formula. After being frustrated countless times watching the Pokeball shake and the enemy Caterpie break free, I decided to find out what the catch rate formula was. Yeah, I couldn't catch a godforsaken Caterpie. Apparently, I'm not the best there ever was.

Even though the formula changes for



NELSON WANG
Mandela the Liberator



GRAPHIC BY SAMUEL LIU

each game, it is still relatively simple and helps me calculate how to catch Pokemon. It looks like all the dreadful years spent on my mathematical education were worth it.

The most recent Pokemon challenge I've embarked on is the Nuzlocke Challenge. In this challenge, the basic rules are that any Pokemon who faints or is defeated must be released into the wild. Usually, players can simply heal their Pokemon after a loss, rather than giving up on them forever.

This makes it seem like your Pokemon dies upon losing a battle. After spending hours raising your Pokemon and fighting through countless battles with them, it's heartbreaking to lose them.

Or in my case, some of my Pokemon just die before I can even bond with them. May my Pikachu rest in peace. God bless him for he lived a long life from October

14, 2013 to October 24, 2013.

Another rule of the challenge is that you can only catch the first Pokemon you encounter in each area and no others. For instance, I might meet a level 3 Pidgey in one area, so it's the only Pokemon I'm allowed to catch.

These self imposed rules are meant not only to challenge the player, but also to force the player to value their Pokemon.

All in all, Pokemon is making a return for me, far from the target audience of the Pokemon franchise. I'm returning to the Pokemon world to once again prove that I am a true Pokemon master.

Now I'm off to finish my Pokemon essay. And to celebrate my completion, I think I'll buy the new Pokemon games and go on a playing marathon, while staying cooped up in my room. See you guys in a couple of months. ♦

New Zealand prodigy brought into spotlight

BY SimiSrivastava

"Gold teeth, Grey Goose trippin' in the bathroom. Blood stains, ball gowns trashin' the hotel room. We don't care; we aren't caught up in your love affair."

Now, many may wonder what this random hodge-podge means; however, for those acquainted with the new artist Lorde, these are more than words. They are a string of lyrics to Lorde's most popular song, "Royals."

Lorde is a stage name of Ella Yelich-O'Connor, a 16-year-old prodigy from New Zealand who has recently gained millions of new fans around the world.

She was first discovered by a talent scout at age 12 after a video of her singing at a talent show was posted online.

Two years later, she was signed to a record deal with Universal Studios, where she began working on her first EP, which is a mini album, "The Love Club."

Both songs reached No. 1 on New Zealand's top-40 list and also No. 1 on the United States's top-100 list when they were released.

"She has a really different voice and look," junior Nadia Younes said. "Her style stands out from all the other artists today because most artists sing about the same things over and over again, but she changes it up and takes a bunch of topics and puts them in one song."

Sophomore Shireen Haghshenas said that Lorde separates herself from other artists because of her unique lyrics that distinctively stand out compared to other popular songs.

"She has her own individual genre," Haghshenas said. "Her lyrics almost create a sort of alter ego for herself because she's always embracing royals, crowns, queens, glory, victory and gore."

Another fan, junior Rachel Menard said that "She uses her music as a way to express herself, and because of that, she's really genuine. She doesn't compromise her values to make good music." ♦



GRAPHIC BY CAROLYN SUN

Celebrities students love

HARDCORE FANATICS DISCUSS THEIR ALL-TIME FAVORITE BAND, ATHLETE AND ACTOR CRUSHES

BY ArielLiu

Most of us have one, that one actor or singer, or maybe athlete, who makes our hearts pound whenever the celebrity's name is mentioned. We know everything there is to know about that person, and perhaps even more than that.

When freshman Christine Wang was asked who her celebrity crush was, she responded, "Niall Horan," referring to the 20-year-old member of the British boyband One Direction. There was no pause, no hesitation, no second thought.

Wang was first introduced to One Direction a year ago when her friends persuaded her to watch the music video to their first hit single, "What Makes You Beautiful." She was instantly drawn to the "blonde-haired and blue-eyed angel."

Like many other fans, Wang decided to use Tumblr to stalk her beloved Irish idol.

Along with being able to endlessly scroll through photos of her "dreamy" crush, she also learned a lot of personal facts about him.

"I like Niall because he loves food," she said. "We both share an insane food obsession."

While Wang admitted that Horan is not the best singer in One Direction, she said she loves him regardless because of his wacky personality.

Wang said her crush has inspired her to stay happy and be positive since "he is literally always smiling."

Freshman Julia Vita's celebrity crush is not as popular or well-known as Horan.

Her celebrity crush is Julian Wilson, a 24-year-old Australian professional surfer.

Vita has been surfing for fun since she was young, but two years ago, she started to get more serious about it. Along with the sport came the fascination with its superstars.

"He has inspired me to try to be the youngest person in the World Tour," Vita said. "He also does a lot of charity work in Nicaragua so I'd really like to go and help out there one day."

Junior Jonathan Huie's celebrity crush is Emma Watson, the well-known star of the Harry Potter series.

"She started off as a little girl, but then by the sixth 'Harry Potter' movie it was like 'BAM!' Puberty happened and all of a sudden she was really pretty," he said.

According to Huie, Watson shined as the unique character Sam in the popular movie "Perks of Being a Wallflower" because "you got to see a completely different side of her from 'Harry Potter.'"

However, even though he looks up to her as an actor, he does not have time to stay current on her news.



NELSON WANG
Mandela the Liberator



GRAPHIC BY SAMUEL LIU

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Tribute episode for Cory Monteith causes tears for longtime 'Glee' fan

The clock read 5:55 p.m. as I sat on my couch, checking my phone every 5 seconds. The TV was already on, but the Windex and Toyota ads, which seemed to drag on and on, were unbearable to watch, blurring together the overly happy housewives cleaning bathrooms and the sleek red and blue cars speeding by.

I checked again. This time the clock read 5:58 p.m., only two more minutes, two more minutes until I could be out of the misery of commercials, two more minutes until I could be put into a whole different kind of misery, just two more minutes. I wasn't sure if I was mentally prepared to handle the emotional rollercoaster I was about to embark on.

It was the long anticipated "Glee" episode — "The Quarterback," a tribute to Cory Monteith, who starred as Finn Hudson and had passed away three months ago after consuming a toxic mixture of alcohol and cocaine.

I had been watching "Glee" since its premiere five seasons ago, but after my favorite characters graduated (with Rachel and Kurt moving to New York and Finn leaving for the army), the show added a bunch of new characters such as Jake Puckerman and Marley Rose. I had been losing interest because I felt no real connection to the new characters.

However, I decided to make an exception for this episode because it was honoring one of my favorite characters.

I still remember when I found out about Cory's death. I was in Taiwan, and my friend messaged me on Facebook saying, "OMG CORY MONTEITH IS DEAD!!!! [sad face emoticon]" My immediate response was, "LOL yeah right." He seemed like such a genuine guy, and he hid his drug addiction well. I was in disbelief.

I refused to believe that the tragedy was true until I stalked multiple Cory-dedicated blogs on Tumblr while simultaneously comforting myself with Asian ice cream. "HE'S DEAD," I sobbed.

Cory had always been one of my celebrity crushes. He was tall, handsome and charming. His smile could brighten anyone's day and when he sang, his voice melted hearts. On top of that, he dressed well, too.

As I turned on my TV, I tightly clutched a box of tissues in my lap and repeatedly told myself, "I'm not going to cry."

As New Directions, the Glee club at McKinley High, appeared on my screen singing the "Rent" Broadway classic "Seasons of Love" at Finn's funeral, I gulped. When Finn's mom broke down as she sorted his things, my eyes watered. When Finn's best friend Puck



ARIEL LIU
The Little Mermaid



GRAPHIC BY CAROLYN SUN



www.avclub.com

The cast of Glee reunites in the latest episode, "The Quarterback," to sing "Seasons of Love" from the Broadway classic from "Rent" in honor of the passing of Cory Monteith.

broke down crying to their old football coach Coach Beiste, a tear rolled down my cheek.

And when Rachel Berry, played by Lea Michele, sang her emotional solo, "Make You Feel My Love," my heart shattered. I sympathized for Lea, Cory's on-screen and off-screen girlfriend.

It wasn't until the last few minutes of the episode, when Mr. Schuester, the Glee club director, cried into Finn's letterman jacket, when I finally let the

tears fall uncontrollably. I had managed to stay so strong before that, but there I was, sitting in front of my TV sobbing into my tissue.

I know Finn was just a TV character. I know Cory never knew me, and never even knew of me or thousands of fans like me. But none of that matters. Through the numerous hours of sitting in front of the TV, Cory Monteith, or Finn Hudson, had become real to me, and my grief was genuine. We'll miss you, Cory. ♦

Seniors' childhood favorites bring nostalgia

Back in elementary school when we were sub five feet tall boisterous boys, after-school clubhouse was the highlight of our days, on Fridays especially because we got to jump into a magical fantasy world full of talking fish, flying carpets and song and dance.

One movie that really enhanced our childhood imaginations was "The Lion King," a Disney classic.

From Simba's grandiose entrance to the animal kingdom in the beginning to the gut-wrenching scene when Mufasa dies to the light-hearted song and dance segments, "The Lion King" displayed a perfect balance of jubilation and intensity.

As kids, we were thrilled by the humor interspersed throughout the movie and the upbeat musical numbers that prompted us to get up and sing along.

No matter how grown up we may pretend to be, the words of Timon and Pumbaa will constantly ring in our heads. "Hakuna Matata" tends to be our philosophy these days as our stress levels increase exponentially due to the heavy workload, AP classes and college applications.

These wise words from "The Lion King" will continue to be our guide, regardless of our age.

Another Disney favorite is the intriguing scenes, along with the rugged swordfighting, make "Aladdin" another childhood favorite.

Swimming along with Marlin, the overprotective clownfish, in his pursuit to find his son Nemo in the Pixar masterpiece "Finding Nemo" was equally engaging.

We didn't understand the term "irony" at the time, but we found it odd that Marlin is solemn in nature despite being a clown fish, the name implying that he would be funny like a clown.

Whenever one of our friends displays a small attention span, we always joked that they were Dory, the blue fish with

were exposed to the rags-to-riches miracle that magically transformed Aladdin, the "street rat," into a handsome prince that amazed with his 75 gold camels and 53 purple peacocks. Despite these riches granted by the genie, Aladdin's stealthiness, confidence and genuine character enhanced his performance to ultimately win Jasmine's heart. These emotionally

intriguing scenes, along with the rugged swordfighting, make "Aladdin" another childhood favorite.

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Whenever one of our friends displays a small attention span, we always joked that they were Dory, the blue fish with

short term memory and quirkiness who attempted to assist Marlin in his journey.

Who could possibly forget Dory repeatedly reciting, "P. Sherman 42 Wallaby Way Sydney," when attempting to address written on the scuba diver's goggles. The address has been permanently

etched into our minds. We were very startled but relieved by Dory's ability to identify Nemo as Marlin's son and reconnect the two clown fish at the end of the movie, which touched our little souls to see the father and son reunite.

Whenever we feel below average or incompetent in the Saratoga High competition, we recall the inspirational story of how Dory was always doubted throughout the movie, but pulled through to make a huge accomplishment of reuniting Marlin with Nemo at the end.

Reminiscing about these classic childhood movies removed us from the stress of college apps and senior year, and placed us back in clubhouse, where we first experienced the joy of movies. ♦



ROHAN HARDIKAR
Roblizzle my nizzle



JAY MUYLE
Juicy Jay

>> togatalks

What childhood movie do you remember the most?

"Toy Story 2" because I liked to pretend my toys could talk, too."



sophomore Josh Dey

"The Land Before Time" because the dinosaurs were so adventurous."



junior Allison Chan

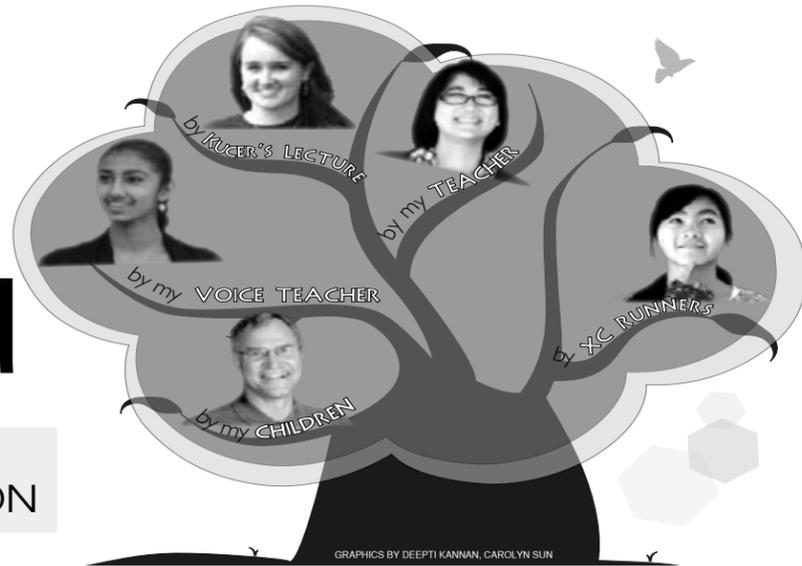
"Definitely 'High School Musical.' I still know all the lyrics to the songs."



junior Sarah Liddie

inspired

PASSION SPROUTS FROM THE SEEDS OF INSPIRATION



GRAPHICS BY DEEPTI KANNAN, CAROLYN SUN

Music: bringing sound to the inexpressable

PIANO CLASSMATE, VOICE TEACHER DRIVE SENIOR TO PURSUE SINGING

BY Minu Palaniappan

Senior Nina Jayashankar has long held a deep love for singing and musical theatre; however, this passion only surfaced at age 7 during a moment that changed her life forever.

On that fateful day after her routine piano lesson, she heard a 13-year-old fellow piano student named Jessica sing a rendition of Ella Fitzgerald's "Summertime."

"I remember being particularly drawn to her tone color and vibrato because it was so smooth and sweet despite the high range of the song," Jayashankar said.

Immediately enticed by the older girl's stunning voice, Jayashankar resolved to pursue voice and musical

theatre.

So inspired, she decided to test her abilities as a vocalist and contacted Jessica's teacher, Jennifer Notely, a former Broadway performer who has done theatre and operas.

Notely required Jayashankar to try out before agreeing to teach her.

"She was extremely reluctant to take me because she felt I was too young to learn the technique even though I could hold a tune," Jayashankar said. "After hearing her tell my mom this, I was so determined to prove her wrong. She did agree to teach me on the condition that for several months she would only teach me breathing."

After countless 30-minute breathing sessions and voice tests at Notely's house, Notely believed she was ready

to begin vocal conditioning.

"When she finally let me learn a song with her, I noticed a difference in my voice. It was more powerful and my phrases were smoother. That was when I realized the kind of singer she could make me," Jayashankar said.

After years of persistent practice, Jayashankar has found success in many music-performance venues.

She initially participated in middle school choirs and show choirs, but as she grew, Jayashankar developed a voice capable of performing on high school, state, national and Olympic choirs.

In addition to music, she also discovered a love of theatre, which allowed her to demonstrate her voice in a different medium.

Jayashankar credits her parents with her interests in the arts.

"My parents constantly played oldies for me and inspired my love of music, particularly my dad who encouraged me to try another style of singing when Carnatic [South Indian classical music that Jayashankar learned at age 4] wasn't working out," Jayashankar said.

Now, as a student prepared to enter college, Jayashankar doesn't question her decision to pursue music. She plans to audition for Broadway and later becoming a music professor.

"Whether it means earning another degree and trying to work another job on the side, I'm willing to face whatever setbacks necessary to be a performer one day," Jayashankar said. ♦

One teacher, one lecture, one alumna's career path

BY Becky Hoag

Walking through the doorway of Bob Kucer's former AP Biology class her junior year, 2008 alumna Katrin Cooper caught sight of a diagram on the whiteboard and stopped in her tracks. There, was a poster that illustrated a "fascinating" portrayal of the acid-based balance in the human body. When Kucer began his lecture, Cooper hung on to his every word.

Kucer's lecture hit home for Cooper, who was an enthusiast of both biology and exercise. In high school, she played soccer, cross country and track.

"[The lecture] really clicked for me because it talked about lactic acid build up and how the body balances that, which I could apply to how tired my legs felt when I was running miles in cross country practice," Cooper said. "I thought that was absolutely fascinating and that was the day that I decided I wanted to study exercise physiology."

Inspired by Kucer's lecture, Cooper pursued a bachelor's degree in Exercise Physiology at Baylor University, graduating in 2012. She is currently at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., pursuing her Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree.

Cooper hopes to work at a clinic after graduating, but she said it is too soon to

know for sure.

"I want to do something with the patient, where it's dynamic and athletic and you're talking to people and supporting them; as well as figuring out what exactly is wrong and using your knowledge of the human body to figure it all out," Cooper said.

Cooper's decision wasn't too much of a surprise. She has always had a passion for health science, sports and people.

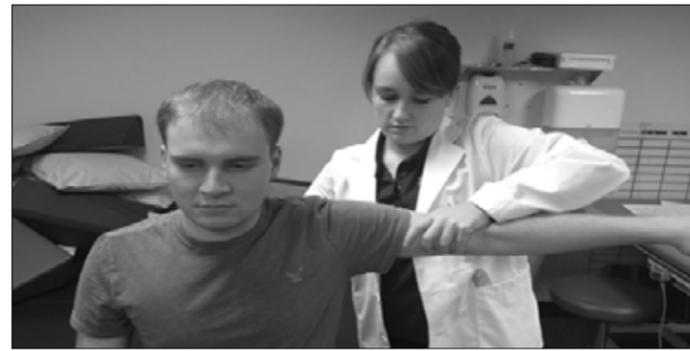
"I loved cheering for my cross country teammates a lot and helping them have a good time. That's a lot of what physical therapy is as well," Cooper said. "I knew that I really loved supporting people and even when they're having a hard time on that run, you cheer for them."

Cooper was also a leader for the Falcon newspaper as a senior, which taught her how to work with people.

"My favorite part about being editor-in-chief senior year was helping the [new reporters] with their writing and taking the time to teach them things about layout," Cooper said. "I really loved watching them improve."

Cooper also found that the skills she picked up by interviewing other students while on the newspaper staff has come in handy in her physical therapy course.

"We've been practicing patient interviews and just a lot of really basic things,



COURTESY OF KATRIN COOPER

Katrin Cooper, class of 2008, performs manual muscle testing during open lab at George Washington University, where she is now working to earn a Doctor of Physical Therapy.

but the interviewing skills that [journalism adviser Mike Tyler] taught me nine years ago, I'm using now," Cooper said.

All of these interests came together the day of the lecture.

"In the end, physical therapy was the best match," Cooper said.

Who knows what would have happened if Cooper had been absent the day

of Kucer's lecture. Her story can be an inspiration for others.

"Follow your passions and interest, because that helps motivate you during the challenging parts of working towards your goals," Cooper said. "When you know the end result is what you want, it helps get you through the tough and stressful times." ♦

Seeing a need, Davis gravitates to teaching physics

BY Ashley Chen & Robert Eng

A few feet away from physics teacher Kirk Davis' desk hangs a fist-sized toy pig held by a strand of thread from the ceiling panels. The flying pig, as students have affectionately dubbed it, not only teaches a lesson on tension and centripetal force, but also serves as an inspiration to students that the impossible is within reach.

What might not be so obvious, though, is Davis' resemblance to the flying pig. He, too, has done the extraordinary in his career by making the dramatic shift from a chemical engineer to a high school physics teacher.

"When I was 22, [I would've said] no way [to teaching]," Davis said. "I didn't dream of being a teacher, but now I am."

Davis, who graduated from Stanford with a degree in chemical engineering, worked for an engineering consulting company called ACUREX for a few years. Deciding he "wanted a bigger perspective," he went to Northwestern University to study business.

He then spent the next 25 years in Illinois and California working for various health care consulting firms like Abbott Laboratories and Booz Allen Hamilton. His projects included designing equipment for emphysema treatment and making an implantable hearing device.

"[In business], you wake up in the

morning and don't know what the challenge is going to be," Davis said. "In health care, you're motivated by profit, but you also feel like you're helping people."

Gradually, Davis found himself drawn to another profession: teaching. As his three now-adult children went through high school at Saratoga High, Castilleja and Harker, all of them ran into "really bad" math or science teachers. He then realized there was a need for more teachers who could communicate effectively.

"I felt I could do it," he said. "It's one of those things where if you have a gift for something, then you should find a way to do it."

However, he didn't have an affinity for physics in school and only took the basic classes for his engineering program. At the time, then in his 30s, Davis still wasn't considering teaching as a career, but after many years working in business, memories of his English teacher helped push him into the profession.

"We'd read 'Brothers Karamazov' [by Fyodor Dostoyevsky], and Russian novels are so complicated because every character has eight names, [but my English teacher] was able to help keep us on track," he said.

As a result, he decided to work as a substitute teacher at Redwood Middle School, but found the difference between working with venture capitalists in business politics and teaching a room full of



FALCON // DEEPTI SAMPATHKUMAR

Physics teacher Kirk Davis climbs on the desk as part of a demonstration for the class.

30 middle school students too great. "I'd kill kids; they were too young," he admitted.

After a Saratoga High assistant principal offered him a job in 2007, Davis began teaching physics and introduction to business.

His first year was a tough one. He learned the material from physics teacher Jenny Garcia and taught it a few days later, but Davis loved the experience. This was an opportunity for him to finally explore what proved to be a dormant passion for physics.

"[There's a] beauty to physics ... it explains the universe," Davis said. "Phys-

ics is fundamental to everything."

Davis also said one of the biggest payoffs for him as a teacher is helping students realize their potential.

"For kids who think they're not good at science, it's fun to make them see 'I can do this,'" he said. "Hopefully, I'll inspire someone to think: 'I can get this stuff, I can understand it, I can like it even.'"

Looking to the future, Davis plans to continue teaching for many more years.

"Teaching is [very] worthwhile," he said. "It's not as good as curing AIDS or something, but I feel teachers are needed in society. If it's worth doing, do it right." ♦

Runner follows leaders' footsteps

To be honest, my first impression of cross country when I joined the sport this year was quite negative. On the very first day, I unwisely chose to practice with the varsity group, completely clueless as to my impending doom. The captains led us on a "Marshall-Clark," a 3-mile course that eventually looped back to the school.

I spent that run in pain, with aching legs, a parched mouth and raspy breathing.

About halfway through the run, when I had finally caught up, junior Carolyn Qi joked "Look, a stop sign. I think we should take a break," to which junior Michelle Luo responded with great conviction, "Stop signs are only for cars! No walking!" It was then that I realized, with a pit of dread pooling in my stomach, that walking was not an option.

By the end of the tortuous run, only one coherent thought resounded in my head: It was going to be one extremely painful season for me. Yet at the same time, I could not help but be inspired by Qi and Luo's relentless motivation during the run.

I could not have foreseen that several upperclassmen would soon influence me greatly, changing the way I viewed running. Looking back, their enthusiasm must have overflowed and spilled over to me. If I had to record some of my experiences with them in one lab report, it would read as follows:

Hypothesis: I am going to despise cross country and experience excruciating pain in each practice.

Trial 1

Prediction: The senior with the knee braces, Casey Takahashi, appears to be injured. Even though she is a captain, she will most likely run slower than the rest of the group. I mean, she's injured, right?

Results: I have been utterly humbled. About one-fourth of the way into the Donkey Hill run, a one-mile hilly loop, Takahashi effortlessly passed me and continued to run at an incredible pace, knee braces and all. Also, during the core workouts, the number of minutes she was able to hold a plank made me doubt her validity as a human.

Trial 2

Prediction: The girl who told us not to walk, Luo, is not serious about forcing us to run. Surely it's just a case of all bark and no bite.

Results: My resolve weakened, and I took a self-granted walking break on the Canyon View run, a tough 4-mile course with a steep hill. The consequences? An eternal stamp of shame has been branded onto my skull. Not to mention that Luo's eyes blazing with fury when I confessed to my crime will haunt my dreams for the rest of the season. Despite this setback, I now know to set the standards for practices higher and to challenge myself.

Trial 3

Prediction: No one in this world is capable of making me view running in a positive light.

Results: Junior Deepti Kannan has been spending a lot of time gushing to me about the wonders of running. For example, she called running "therapeutic" and meets "exhilarating." I must say, her passion for the sport is slightly contagious; while listening, I dreamily envisioned myself sprinting up a hill without stopping. If cross country ever needed to find a salesperson, Kannan would be hired.

Conclusion: There is a comfort to running, a steady rhythm that transports my mind elsewhere. And so, my views of cross country were reborn.

After this transition, I aspired to become just like the upperclassmen, who were extremely dedicated. I marveled over how they pushed themselves to the limit with each run, and I felt inspired to do so myself.

From then on, whenever Luo yelled at us to keep on going during core workouts, I complied, embracing the challenge. I adopted an attitude like the

others and aimed to one day reach varsity, a lofty goal for me.

And now? I actually like running. Sure, it's still painful, but there is something alluring about the way the steady beat of footsteps on concrete feels. And running in a pack of equally enthusiastic girls trumps any other addictive activity.

However, I could never have come so far without the upperclassmen, who motivated me to run, smile and never give up the fight. ♦

There is a comfort to running, a steady rhythm that transports my mind elsewhere.



KELLY XIAO
Kelly Bean



LEFT: Chemistry teacher Kathy Nakamatsu during her sophomore year Homecoming in 1984. RIGHT: Kathryn Hardy, Nakamatsu's old teacher.



COURTESY OF KATHY NAKAMATSU

Nakamatsu inspired by former chemistry teacher

BY Sweeya Raj & Tiffany Zheng

Kathy Nakamatsu was inspired early on to be a chemistry teacher by her own high school chemistry teacher Kathryn Hardy at Willow Glen High. Although Nakamatsu admitted she did not initially succeed in the class, she nonetheless developed a love for the subject and set her mind to follow her former teacher's footsteps.

"I was inspired by my high school teacher, and by my sophomore year in high school, I knew what I wanted to be," Nakamatsu said.

After getting her undergraduate degree in chemistry from UC Davis and her teaching credential and masters degree from Stanford, Nakamatsu has been teaching AP Chemistry and Chemistry Honors for 21 years, the last seven at Saratoga High.

Nakamatsu said Hardy helped her understand the material in an exciting and fun fashion.

"[Hardy] made chemistry fun and it made sense to me, so I got it," she said. "She told a lot

of stupid jokes, and she made me laugh."

She said Hardy put in extra time and effort outside the classroom by organizing memorable and educational experiences for her students.

"She did what she called a Chem-a-Thon, where we sat in the cafeteria and worked chemistry problems for eight hours and raised money, and I had a lot of fun doing that," she said.

Approximately five years ago, Nakamatsu wrote Hardy a letter to thank her for being an inspiring and great teacher. Hardy replied with an email thanking Nakamatsu for the note.

It turns out that Hardy lived in Oregon, where Nakamatsu's husband, the well known pianist Jon Nakamatsu, was performing, so Nakamatsu and Hardy arranged a meeting.

The two still keep in touch today and exchange Christmas cards. The lessons that Hardy taught Nakamatsu are pleasant memories.

"It was great to see her and she was very touched that I was teaching chemistry because of her," Nakamatsu said. ♦

Profiles of Strength

STUDENTS COPE WITH DISEASES AND DISORDERS



FALCON // SHAZIA GUPTA

Living as a student with Type 1 diabetes

By Becky Hoag

Walking to her next class after lunch, junior Hana Michael rushes to update her pump, stabbing her finger with a needle for a sample of blood and inserting the sample into her glucose monitor to calculate the amount of sugar she ingested during lunch. The routine, called testing, is practically automatic now. She's been drawing blood from herself after every meal since she was about five years old, when she was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes.

[Type 1] is a burden I have to carry, but at the same time I've learned so much and developed so much self-discipline from having it.

>> junior Hana Michael

Luckily for her, she was diagnosed before the symptoms got too serious. "I was going to the bathroom a lot, and I was drinking a ton of sugary fluids, while refusing solids. My mom began to realize something was wrong," Michael said. "She took me to my pediatrician who told us that I had Type 1 and needed to go to the hospital immediately."

According to Michael, Type 1 diabetes is caused by the human immune system going into overdrive and mistaking beta cells in the pancreas for viruses that need to be destroyed. The antibodies attack the beta cells, eventually destroying the pancreas.

Whenever someone with this type of diabetes, like Michael, ingests sugar, the sugar simply builds up in the bloodstream until the body finds some way to get rid of it, such as going to the bathroom or throwing up.

After her doctor diagnosed her, Michael was rushed to Stanford Hospital, where she spent three days learning how to inject insulin as well as how to test her blood sugar. A year later, she received her first pump.

"[A pump is] kind of like a replacement pancreas for your body, except it's outside of your body," Michael said. "It gives you a continuous flow of insulin throughout the day."

Everyday, before and after each meal, Michael tests to judge whether or not she's "high" or "low" on sugars and adjusts her diet accordingly. This way she doesn't have to wait to feel the physical indications such as getting woozy, thirsty and irritable from being too high or getting shaky, sweaty, quiet and irritable from being too low.

This process might sound difficult, but it only takes Michael about a minute or two to do.

"It used to be that I could just run around without worrying, and I'm still able to do that, I just have to keep a closer eye on what I eat and when I eat," Michael said.

Diabetes doesn't affect Michael's education, physical activities or diet very much because she's extremely careful. For example, if she's low on blood sugar after a P.E. class, she has some candy to increase her sugar level.

A cure for diabetes is still in the research process, but supporting the people who have it is a huge help.

Michael goes to a summer camp for children with diabetes, called Camp Bearskin, every summer. She has been attending since elementary school and considers it her second family.

"It's funded by [the] Diabetic Youth Foundation, and it's a camp for kids growing up with Type 1," Michael said. "It's a traditional summer camp except there's a lot more emphasis on diabetes

education." Michael explained that it's like a support group and it's helpful because the other campers can relate to what she's going through.

"There's groups where you can talk about negative experiences you may have had with diabetes," Michael said.

By doing this, Michael and her camp friends can learn from each other's experiences or offer advice.

"I've had friends who've had people who have come up to them after they found out that they had Type 1 and said 'You shouldn't be [at this school].'" Michael said.

Just as summer camp has helped teach her more about how to take care of herself, Michael helped teach another student in middle school after that student found out that she had Type 1 diabetes.

"Her second year in middle school she was diagnosed with Type 1, so I was put in charge [by the school] of explaining to her exactly how everything worked, like testing before every meal," Michael said.

Michael wants to continue to promote education and research for diabetes. She wants to be an advocate for it. "There are lots of myths about Type



Courtesy of HANA MICHAEL

Junior Hana Michael uses her glucose monitor to test her sugar level after a midnight snack. She does this every time she eats.

1 that I've encountered that I'd like to put an end to once and for all," Michael said.

Michael thinks that there can be a potential cure for Type 1, but she's not sure whether it will be in her lifetime.

"[Type 1] a burden I have to carry, but at the same time I've learned so much and developed so much self-discipline from having it. I'm proud of that," Michael said. "I've had it for so long that it's become pretty much one of my characteristics." ♦

A first-grade encounter with cancer

By GraceMa

Then a first-grader, current junior Calvin Shih thought the lump on the right side of his neck was a candy he had accidentally swallowed whole.

But one day during dinner, his parents noticed, and they feared it was something else.

A biopsy at the doctor's confirmed that the lump was actually a swollen lymph node, and Shih was diagnosed with B-cell lymphoma, a type of cancer that affects B lymphocytes in the lymph glands located around the neck. B lymphocytes produce antibodies that protect the body against bacteria and viruses.

"I didn't really understand what was going on at the time because I was young," Shih said. "I knew something was wrong maybe but nothing super serious."

Six-year-old Shih was suddenly thrown into the world of Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), Computed Tomography (CT) Scans and chemotherapy. He started treatment right away, in the middle of the school year.

Knowing that Shih wouldn't be able to fully grasp what was going on, Shih's parents sheltered him from the technical details. Despite this, he still remembers the painful experiences during treatment.

"The first month of chemo, I couldn't keep my back straight because [chemo was through injection] into my bone marrow," he said. "I had to sit up when

I slept."

Shih didn't show up to school for the rest of the month, and even after returning to school, Shih went through chemotherapy once a month.

The treatment lasted until the summer of second grade, when doctors pronounced him a cancer survivor. By this point, Shih had understood that he had some "serious illness" — he just didn't know that the illness happened to be cancer.

The scars on Shih's body are the only wounds left from his battle with B-cell lymphoma.

Years later, students at Saratoga High view Shih as a lighthearted, cheerful swimmer; his past ordeal with cancer seems to have never even happened.

"He lives every day as carefree as ever and is always spreading smiles and laughs wherever he walks," junior Randy Tsai, Shih's friend, said. "I feel as if his past battle with cancer may have an impact on his life when he has to make certain decisions, but he definitely does not show it."

After stopping treatment after second grade, Shih didn't even realize the seriousness of the disease until others started asking him about it.

"After first grade, as I got older, people were wondering if I actually had cancer," he said. "As I kept answering these [questions], I started to get more of a sense of how serious it was."

He still returns to the Lucille Packard Children's Hospital in Stanford for an-



junior Calvin Shih



Courtesy of CALVIN SHIH

Junior Calvin Shih and his family pose for a picture after snorkeling in Honolulu, Hawaii.

nual checkups. Shih said he was lucky to survive cancer.

He said his doctors "every now and then would tell [him] that they were surprised at how healthy [he] was."

However, these comments from doctors and friends never touched Shih the same way his relationship with late art teacher Stephen McCue did.

"This was the first time that someone that I knew personally was affected [by cancer]," he said. "I would think about how much we had in common, because we both also had appendicitis."

Shih said that he and McCue understood each other since "it makes a bigger impact when you actually experience [cancer] rather than just being told [about it]."

But for some, cancer is such a for-

eign concept that they refused to believe Shih's story.

"One time at a swim meet this person was looking at me because I had a scar on my chest from surgery, and they were wondering why I had the scar," Shih said. "I told him that I had had cancer and he looked at me like I was weird, and said 'Really? you have to be lying.'"

Unfazed, Shih laughed and responded with, "I'm telling the truth. You can believe whatever you want."

But now, his life doesn't revolve around the hospital room, chemotherapy or that one evening when B-cell lymphoma entered his life.

"[The fact that I had cancer] doesn't really touch my mind too often," Shih said. "I just think that [cancer] is in my past and that I shouldn't let it change what I do." ♦

Sophomore overcomes disorder that taught her never to take her breathing for granted

By Ariel Liu

In first grade, current sophomore Gabby Fontanilla had her first asthma attack during recess at Argonaut Elementary School. She had been running around with her friends playing a game of wall-ball.

According to Gabby, the first time she felt that pain in her chest and struggled to breathe normally, she started to cry. The more she cried, sobbed and panicked, the harder it became to breathe.

When her friends noticed, they immediately dragged her to the office. Her mom, an employee at Argonaut, was called into the office. Hurriedly, she handed Gabby her Albuterol inhaler.

After a few puffs, Gabby

calmed down. "It was easily one of the scariest things I've ever experienced," Gabby said. "The combination of crying and not being able to breathe was just horrible."

Gabby was diagnosed with asthma in kindergarten after a case of pneumonia had severely weakened her lungs and resulted in her missing a month of school.

Since she was only a first grader, she knew that she had asthma but had no idea what it was.

"I thought having asthma was cool because it made me special," Gabby said. "I didn't think it was that big of a deal, just a name."

Gabby is one of many who suffer from asthma. According to the American Academy of Allergy Asthma and Immunology (abbreviated AAAAI), around 255,000 people worldwide die of asthma each year.

In case of an asthma attack, Gabby carries her inhaler with her every day at school.

"It's really come in handy, especially in PE class in middle school," she said.

Fontanilla is naturally athletic. She does martial arts, plays

volleyball and badminton, and can run a 7:10 mile. Nevertheless, her asthma has always gotten in the way when she does sports.

"I used to run a super cardio day, about 1.5 miles, in middle school PE and then have to slow down or stop halfway through," she said.

The Fontanilla family — composed of four sisters — has learned to deal with the second eldest sister Gabby's predicament.

"We always have to watch out for what she does during sports," her older sister junior Vicky Fontanilla said. "When she ran miles in PE class, she would often be wheeled to the office where my mom would pick her up and take her home because she had an asthma attack."

According to Vicky, Gabby's asthma attacks usually do not only happen during school hours.

"Three years ago, we were at a festival when Gabby had an asthma attack. It was really scary because she almost passed out," Vicky said.

Because of her asthma, Gab-

by has learned to back away from over-exerting herself.

As a result, she has lessened the overall number of asthma attacks she suffers from every month and every year.

At the peak of her asthma, sixth grade, Gabby said she got asthma attacks a few times a month.

"Now, I only get asthma attacks when I push myself too hard or I stress out about something," Gabby said.

Before middle school, Gabby only had asthma attacks when she worked herself too hard physically. However, when school got harder, her asthma worsened because of the stress level. She had an asthma attack the night before her first major social studies test in sixth grade, when she worried and did not know what to expect the day of the test.

"I was really overwhelmed so I started to panic," she said. "It became really hard to breathe, so I had to use my inhaler and I eventually calmed down."

It took a lot of practice and persistence to decrease the severity of her asthma.

"Slowly, I would run a little further or practice a little longer to get my body used to that length of time," she said. "Each time I got more used to it, I decreased the amount of asthma attacks because it helped my lungs adjust faster."

With years of practice, she



Courtesy of GABBY FONTANILLA

Sophomore Gabby Fontanilla practices martial arts. She has learned to listen to her body when exercising.

has become used to living with the condition.

"People really need to know that asthma isn't some stupid wheeze-disease, but it's really a disease that causes a lot of people to die every year," she said. "It has taught me not to take life for granted because one of those people easily could have been me." ♦

falconfigures

25.8M

Number of people in the U.S. who have diabetes

231,404

Number of reported deaths caused by diabetes

\$176B

Direct medical costs of diagnosed diabetes in 2012

WWW.DIABETES.ORG

LIVING WITH NUT ALLERGIES

BY ASHLEY CHEN

I DON'T WANT TO DIE LIKE THIS.

I rocked back and forth on the white hospital sheets with eyes closed. I had just thrown up, but the pain wouldn't leave me. Saliva climbed the walls of my throat and strangled me in ebbs and flows, as if its hands were clenching and relaxing. Within me, my stomach fought to purge my body of what it perceived to be an invader with throbbing knifelike jabs.



FALCON // SAMUEL LIU

I dug my nails into my skin, tracing white lines on a red canvas, hoping in a demented way the damage that I inflicted on myself would lessen my agony; I wanted what little control I could have over my misery.

It was the day before I turned 13, and all I could remember thinking was that I wanted to become a teenager.

Of course, as with all first-person narratives, you know I survived. What might surprise you is that that was just one of the many times I've been to the emergency room for the same reason.

My fight against allergies

I have a life-threatening anaphylactic nut allergy. That means my reaction to nuts involves wheezing, abdominal pain and nausea. I have had it since I was born (even though I didn't find out until I was 6 years old with an IV jammed in the back of my hand in a Shanghai hospital), and I will have it for the rest of my life.

When I was 4, I went to preschool with a little girl who also had severe nut allergies, but unlike me, she knew it, and her mother had taught all the other parents about recognizing the signs for an allergic reaction.

About a year later, in September 2004, I ate a Chinese moon cake that I later learned contained peanut oil. When I started having trouble breathing, my mom knew what to do and sent my dad to drive me to the nearest emergency room.

I honestly can't remember anything about that night except that my face burned and was "red as a lobster," according to my dad, but what it did begin was a long series of visits to the allergist's office. I remember that part. Allergy

shots for each arm every two months and blood tests every six months, which meant a total of 14 shots per year. Let's just keep in mind I was around 7 at this point. It was not fun.

In addition, I found myself banned from a whole host of foods, not just peanuts. My doctor discovered I was also allergic to wheat and dairy; I had to say farewell to pizza, cookies, cakes, ice cream ...

A few years later, my parents took me to Asia again and decided I needed to see a zhong yi, which means "Chinese doctor." After hours of having my hand massaged and being asked increasingly personal questions in Chinese, my parents and I left with shriveled dead plants.

Afterwards, my parents heard about my first-grade teacher's daughter, who had had her non-life threatening allergy cured by a special diet that excluded everything that tastes good but is bad for your body. Not only was my attempt at a diet a failure, but combined with the disgusting Chinese medicine, that was probably the worst year of eating in my entire life.

Years later, I am still undergoing this cycle of hope for a cure followed by disappointment. Last spring, my allergist told me about an opportunity to participate in a clinical trial of a new treatment for peanut

allergies called desensitization therapy. Although I did go in for screening to see if I qualified, I rejected the offer because even if the process worked, which it did for less than half of patients with life-threatening allergies, it would require me to eat one peanut every day for the rest of my life.

The time I accidentally tried a nut cookie in the Beijing Airport blends with the day I went to a restaurant and didn't clarify with the chef what my allergy was, until I don't remember anything but the raw emotions: fear, regret and hatred toward myself for not knowing better.

The "Nut Free Zone"

I'm not alone. More than 2 percent of American children now suffer from peanut or tree nut allergies, and it's important to recognize the implications of this figure.

Although plastering hot pink "Nut Free Zone" signs throughout the school is a good start, it isn't enough. Many students still don't understand how severe allergies can be, and I've seen countless people eating nuts in supposedly nut-free classrooms.

The problem is that unless you, someone in your family or one of your friends has an allergy, chances are you don't think about allergies. You're the person who eats a peanut butter sandwich and proceeds to touch all the doorknobs of

your classrooms without washing your hands. I know you don't mean to hurt anyone, but in this situation, ignorance could kill.

Another consideration is the number of kids with allergies, which has more than tripled in the last decade. People with allergies can be careful, but it's crucial that the rest of the population does their part as well.

One example is California teen Natalie Giorgi, who went to a summer camp and died there the night before she was supposed to return home.

Even though her parents had always watched what she ate and she knew what to do in case of an accident, it wasn't enough. After giving her a dose of Benadryl, an antihistamine that counters the effects of allergic reaction, and three epinephrine injections, doctors pronounced Natalie dead.

When I read stories like this, it scares me almost more than anything else. I can't be any more careful than she was.

Anaphylaxis is an axe (in my defense, that pun was an accident), over my head held by a single skein of thread. Every time I eat, it's a leap of faith. I wonder if I will regret putting that chocolate chip cookie in my mouth, because maybe somewhere, a bit of peanut butter scraped the side of the machine the cookie was processed in. I wonder if the waiter really understands the severity of my allergy, and if I should trust him or her to tell the chef about it.

Don't get me wrong; I'm not asking for pity. This is the hand dealt to me, and I've learned to live.

But do me a favor — please put away that bag of Corn Nuts. They make me nervous. ♦

>> foodallergies

15 MILLION

Americans that have food allergies.

1 IN 13

Children are affected by this disease in the U.S. That's roughly two in every classroom.

50% INCREASE

In the number of people with food allergies between 1997 and 2011.

EVERY 3 MINUTES

A food allergy reaction sends someone to the emergency room.

2% OF POPULATION

Of the U.S. has a severe peanut allergy.

100 DEATHS

Are a result of life-threatening peanut allergies in the U.S. every year.

NATALIE GIORGI

Was a 13-year-old girl in California who passed away after eating a bite of a dessert with peanut butter. She had received three epinephrine injections.

WWW.FOODALLERGY.ORG

FOOTBALL

Team loses to rival Wildcats

By Nikil Ramanathan

After losing to powerhouse Palo Alto 55-21 on Oct. 18, the Falcons went into the game against Los Gatos on Oct. 25 needing a win to turn their season around. Although the team fought hard and was able to move the ball well at times, its effort was not enough to stop the Wildcats, who prevailed 42-14 on their home field.

On their first offensive series, Los Gatos put a touchdown on the board through the air to make it 7-0 Los Gatos. Even as the Falcons were able to contain the run, they struggled on third downs against the Wildcat passing attack.

The Falcons had momentum on offense as they drove the ball down the field, but an interception by the Wildcats shifted the momentum, and gave Los Gatos the ball back.

Even though the Falcons were able to stop Los Gatos on defense after a QB sack on third down by senior nose guard Mike Fitzimmons, they were unable to keep the momentum with inconsistency on offense and ended up punting the ball back to the Wildcats, who scored through the air again to make the score 14-0 Wildcats. This type of exchange proved to be troublesome all night for the Falcons.

The Falcons were finally able to put a drive together as they

moved the ball well through the use of short passes and wide receiver screens. They drove the ball to the 2-yard line and ended the drive with a 2-yard touchdown pass from senior quarterback Jonathan Walters to senior wide receiver Tony Capek, making the score 14-7 after the extra point.

"The whole team really come together [on the drive]," said Capek. "Everyone was playing for the person next to them rather than themselves."

Again the Falcons gained momentum by forcing the Wildcats to punt, but they were unable to keep it again as they gave the ball right back to Los Gatos who scored another touchdown to make the score 21-7 going into halftime.

Going into the second half, the Falcon offense was slowed down as they were unable to move the ball on their first series, while Los Gatos used their power running game to increase their lead to 28-7.

The Falcons managed to get some offense going when they moved the ball into Los Gatos territory, but their momentum was again stopped when a questionable call by the referee gave Los Gatos the ball back. The Wildcats were called for a late hit penalty after hitting senior wide receiver Grant Faylor after he was out of bounds on 4th down and 10, a penalty that should have given the Falcons



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

Senior Ian Strawn prepares to break through the Wildcats' offensive line in the away game on Oct. 25, which resulted in 42-14 loss.

a first down.

"It was a bad call, like many others during the game," said Fitzimmons. "It was part of bad officiating all night long."

The Falcon defense was unable to bring down Wildcat running back Joey Wood in the latter part of the second half, which led to Los Gatos scoring back to back rushing touchdowns to increase their lead to 42-7.

Keeping up the fight, the Falcon offense showed a glimpse of last year's success when they cut the lead to 42-14 after a long touchdown pass from Walters to junior wide receiver Joey Medeiros.

Although the score didn't look like a close game, se-

nior center Clark Rothenberg thought that the Falcons were competitive for most of the game.

"We were in it, and the game was closer than the scoreboard showed coming out for the second half," said Rothenberg. "However, a few things didn't go our way, the referees made some bad calls, and we were unable to keep our momentum."

Going into the final three game stretch, Rothenberg said he thinks the Falcons can end the season strong and get at least two if not three more wins. The team will play its last home game on senior night against the Santa Clara Bruins tonight. ♦

GIRLS' TENNIS

Team ties for first

By Simi Srivastava

Heads turned back and forth as the girls' tennis team intently watched the deciding match of their game against rival Monta Vista on Oct. 17.

On match point, No. 1 doubles sophomores Ai Marie and Yu Karen Asai stood in ready position as their opponent served. The team burst into loud applause as the Asai's won the point, securing an extremely crucial victory over the team's long-time rival.

The 9-1 girls' tennis team's 4-3 win against Monta Vista has put them in first place in the upper league, tied with the Matadors. The team prevailed with freshman Caitlin Ju winning her match at No. 3 singles, and strong doubles pairs consisting of sophomores Ai Marie and Yu Karen Asai, Shireen Haghsheenas and Meera Rachamalla, and Allison Lin and freshman Kelly Hsu.

"The game went well because we were all really pumped up because Monta Vista is our biggest rival," sophomore Shaya Nikfar said. "We even put on red face paint to scare the other team."

Assistant coach Jonathan Chui said the team's strengths and weaknesses largely depend on players' mind-set.

"One of the strengths the team is the desire to win

matches. They know they have to earn each win so they go in with the right mindset," Chui said. "The big weakness is themselves. If they get too scared to lose, it shows greatly in their play. They just need to overcome that by believing they can win their matches."

Prior to the game against Monta Vista, the Falcons won 6-1 against Lynbrook on Oct. 15. All three of the team's doubles teams were successful, and three out of the four singles won their matches, the exception being No. 1 singles with a narrow loss.

The team's lineup was almost identical to the one against Monta Vista, the only differences were in the singles lineup, which consisted of No. 1 senior Usha Raman, No. 2 Shaya Nikfar, No. 3. Caitlin Ju, and No. 4 freshman Neeka Nikfar.

The team hopes to go into CCS as the No. 1 seed. If the team continues to be tied with Monta Vista's team for first place when the season ends, they will play a tiebreaker match at a neutral site, Lynbrook High School.

"I think we have a good chance [at CCS], especially after winning against Monta Vista, so we are a lot more confident and we're bound to do better than last season," Ju said.

The team will play in SCVAL League Finals starting Nov. 5. ♦

GIRLS' GOLF

Falcons end season with strong victories

By Michelle Leung & Kelly Xiao

The girls' golf team ended its 2013 season with wins against both Monta Vista and Wilcox on Oct. 14. The girls' triumph concluded a 7-7 season.

The Falcons were led by junior No. 1 player Vivian Roan with a 40 and supported with 42s from senior No. 2 player Sachi Verma and sophomore No. 5 player Carrie Chen.

"Because it was our last match of the entire season, the whole team tried hard, and there was a lot of positive energy and everyone was happy. I am satisfied with [our] last game," Verma said.

Previously in the season, the golfers lost two close matches before winning their final one against Monta Vista and Wilcox.

They lost a match against Los Gatos on Oct. 9 by eight strokes and also lost the match on Oct. 6 against Homestead by three strokes.

Last year, the team had a record of 13-1. After 2013 graduates Samika Kumar and Sara Petterson moved on, the team struggled to score low.

Verma is concerned that next year will be even more difficult because top players like her and Zabrina Chang are graduating this year.

"I think it'll take a while for us to get back to where we

were [last year]," Verma said.

However, Chen hopes that they can improve scores next year and has set her own goals to contribute to that effort.

"I think the team will get better next year," Chen said. "This year was kind of tough. My goals for next year are to improve my putting skills. And hopefully I will improve my overall playing by next year."

Although the golfers' record has declined, their teamwork has improved. Verma is a veteran on the team, and she has noticed a new unity among its members.

"I think this year our team was a lot closer," Verma said. According to Chen, who joined the team this season as a sophomore, the girls' golf team is different from other sports teams because of their unity.

"I feel the like golf team is together," Chen said. "I've been on other teams that feel not as together, [and] the golf team is closer."

According to Verma, the golf team enjoys its lasting friendships through shared jokes.

"Whenever Carrie's ball goes under [a] tree, we all yell 'Carrie, under wood,'" Verma said.

The Falcons played in League Finals on Oct. 22, but did not play well enough to move on. ♦

'Too small,' and steroids in school

BY Devin Zhao

They told him that he was too small. In 2003, Taylor Hooton was guaranteed to be in the starting rotation for Texas's Plano West Senior High School's baseball team. Yet, when his coaches started pressuring him to gain weight, Hooton made a decision that ultimately changed his life.

To gain weight, Hooton, at age 16, started injecting Deca 300 and orally taking Anadrol in the spring of 2003 to bulk up for next season. Within a few months, Hooton had grown about 30 pounds of muscle.

However, he also experienced the negative effects of steroids, including violent mood swings called "roid rages." He stole money from his parents, hurled a phone through a wall and sent his girlfriend's ex-boyfriend to the hospital.

On July 15, 2003, after several months of experiencing the physical and psychological effects of steroids, Hooton hanged himself in his room.

The stories of Hooton and other victims of steroid abuse raise the question: Why aren't we steroid testing in all high schools?

It's common practice to test for drugs in Major League baseball, so why aren't we doing the same thing to teens, who are far more vulnerable to the enticing drug?

According to a study by the University of Minnesota, 5 percent of middle schoolers and high schoolers admitted that they used steroids to improve their ability. That's about 900,000 students who knowingly use steroids.

Steroid side effects include an increase in cholesterol and blood levels, the appearance of severe acne in unusual parts of the body, premature balding and accelerated puberty. Hooton was shown to have developed massive amounts of acne on his back.

Prolongated use of steroids, costing about a few hundred dollars per month,

will increase the chances of being afflicted with cancer and joint injuries.

Fatal effects can include the shut-down of the heart, leading to death caused by cardiac effect. There is also the possibility of contracting HIV by sharing needles used to inject steroids.

Steroids can also cause the brain to decrease the output of chemicals that determine the sense of well-being, leading to permanent increase in depression and aggression.

"He went from a calm person ... to these rages, ... totally un-Taylor like," his mom said during an interview. "And then ... he'd come in and sit down. 'Oh, I'm sorry I acted like that. I promise I won't do that again.'"

In order to secure the best chances of preventing the symptoms mentioned

Perhaps just by announcing that there will be random tests, schools can prevent many from trying steroids.

above and further teenage deaths, steroid testing should be implemented to teach and prevent students from inflicting further

harm on themselves.

Anti-testing critics might ask: Is steroid testing really worth the money spent? Would having 1 percent of high schoolers tested positive and informing thousands of others actually be worth the loss of money that could be used for funding perhaps a new football field or modernizing a library? Perhaps just by announcing that there will be random tests, schools can prevent many from trying steroids, they might say.

However, steroid testing has effectively deterred many students from trying steroids. A 2007 Monitoring the Future study confirmed that with steroid testing, drug use had declined in high schools by 24 percent since 2001.

Dionne Roberts, who used Winstrol at age 17 in 2004, to try to get a six-pack, says that if she had been informed by adults about how harmful steroids were, then she might have chosen a different path.

"I was the last person in the world you'd think would use anabolic steroids," Roberts said during an inter-



The trend of illegal steroid use is harming athletes and school athletic programs alike.

view. "It's not uncommon to strive for that four-pack or six-pack, even in girls."

However, after five weeks of injecting Winstrol, Roberts found out that the results were not what she wanted.

"I never had a breakdown or used anti-depressants before starting steroids," Roberts said. "I was so upset the smallest thing would set me off ... That was not what I wanted."

One day, Roberts had a sudden moment of clarity about the effects steroids had on her, and after a week of rehabilitation, started living a normal life again.

Roberts, now 24, says that she is still haunted by her brief period as a steroid user.

"I didn't realize how dangerous [anabolic steroids] were or any of the side effects," Roberts said. "It's horrible, the physical and psychological side effects, for guys and girls. I just pray that it won't affect me in the future."

Taylor Hooton died of steroid abuse because no one, including his coaches and parents, knew that he was taking steroids. If there had been steroid testing at his school, perhaps he might still be alive today, playing baseball to his heart's content. ♦

>> thebigidea

Steroid Use Policy

School policy

Before participating in interscholastic athletics, a student athlete and his/her parent/guardian must sign a statement where the student athlete pledges not to use androgenic/anabolic steroids and dietary supplements banned by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency and the substance synephrine, unless the student has a written prescription from a health care practitioner to treat a medical condition.

Consequences

A student who is found to have violated the agreement or this policy will be restricted from participating in athletics and will be subject to disciplinary procedures including, but not limited to, suspension or expulsion in accordance with law, Board policy and administrative regulation.

The Athletic Director's Response

"The athletic department can't really enforce the policy unless we become aware of a positive test from a doctor," said athletics director Tim Lugo. "We do require student-athletes to sign a pledge not to take steroids but that is all."

GIRLS' VOLLEYBALL

Falcons lose match to Lynbrook, ending streak

BY Catherine Tang

Whizzing by the first half of the season, the girls' volleyball team remained undefeated until it faced Lynbrook High School on Oct. 15 and lost 0-3.

This was a huge upset for the team because it had managed to beat every other team in its league 3-0 except Cupertino, its other big rival, which it defeated 3-1.

Because each team in the league plays each other twice, the team will face Lynbrook again on Nov. 7.

"I feel like as a team, we definitely didn't play the best we can, but we could have beat Lynbrook and we will win next time we play them," junior co-captain and outside hitter Sara Parden said.

The team immediately bounced back

from this loss and continued to win its next few games. The team beat Fremont 3-0 on Oct. 17, Milpitas 3-0 on Oct. 22 and Santa Clara 3-0 on Oct. 24. They played Cupertino on Oct. 29.

>> scoreboard

Oct. 17
Saratoga 3, Fremont 0
The team has beat all but two teams 3-0, and Fremont was no exception.

Oct. 5
Saratoga 3, Cupertino 1
Cupertino, one of Saratoga's main rivals, was defeated soundly 3-1.

Oct. 15
Saratoga 0, Lynbrook 3
Since the Falcons have won all their other games, this was a huge upset.

chance of winning the league and moving further than it did last year at CCS, where it was defeated by Sacred Heart Cathedral 3-0 in the second round. ♦

GIRLS' WATER POLO

Pool issues hurt practices

BY Amy Lin

After a problematic season, the 6-4 girls' water polo team is regaining lost ground with a 8-2 win against Los Altos on Oct. 24, a 10-6 win against Palo Alto on Oct. 22 and two out of three wins on Oct. 18-19 in a two-day tournament at Los Gatos.

Despite the recent wins, junior co-captain Madison Gress thinks the Falcons still have a long way to go.

"We started off [the season] doing a lot better and we were winning a lot of games," Gress said. "We're all pretty disappointed with how we're doing right now."

Many of the problems stem from the pool breaking down in September. Because the pool was unavailable, practices were inconsistent and less productive.

With the exception of one practice in the pool at West Valley, the team depended on dryland practices and coaching by ear.

"We've been doing really well for moving up a league, but I think we need to work on our communication when we're in the water a little more," sophomore driver Jace Welton said. "It's been difficult because we haven't been able to be in our best shape, swimming every day and practicing our plays."

The pool was fixed as on Oct. 14, and the girls have been quickly regaining lost ground.

"We're just getting back into shape right now," junior driver Amanda Moriarty said. "But it's been going really well, and we're getting back to the standard we were at [at the beginning of the season]."

Even with the recent drawbacks, most members of the team feel that their team chemistry has drastically improved from last year.

"Last year, we had a new coach, so it was just getting used to him and transitioning," Moriarty said. "This year we've been able to focus on technique and getting into shape, and working together because we all know each other for a year."

Senior co-captain and driver Nikki de Roos said the team will not know if they will be advancing to CCS until after SCVAL Leagues.

"I believe we will place somewhere around fourth [place]," de Roos said, "but I don't know if that will be good enough." ♦

The Falcon is unable to provide for scores on games against Gunn and Homestead on Oct. 29 and 31, or SCVAL Leagues.

BOYS' WATER POLO

Falcons add to wins



Junior utility Kia Hosseinian passes the ball during the Oct. 24 game against Santa Clara.

BY Andrew Jiang

The boys' water polo team continues to win. And win. And win. After starting off the season red hot, the Falcons are still playing strong and had record of 19-0 as of Oct. 25. Led by star senior Stephen Cho, the team seems to have no match in its league.

The team recently won 12-3 against Fremont on Oct. 22. The team is first in the league.

"Even with this high-scoring win, we still have areas we need to improve," sophomore utility Mason Lee said. "These games will help us become better and achieve our bigger goals."

According to Lee, the team played strong defense and did not give the opponent many opportunities to score. However, Lee feels they could improve

on communication and being more patient on offense.

Earlier in the month, the Falcons won 18-6 against Harker on Oct. 15. The team took an early lead and kept it throughout the match.

"I'm really impressed with the work of the boys to come together as a team and win every game," Cho said. "If we keep this up, I don't see why we can't go undefeated for the rest of the season."

With the undefeated start, the boys see winning the league and advancing in CCS as realistic goals.

"[The team] has been working extremely hard at each and every practice. We strive to be the best we can and try to fix all our mistakes," sophomore water polo player Alex Whitman said. "I think we have an excellent shot at achieving our goals." ♦

FIELD HOCKEY

Frustrating record of losses drives team's determination

BY Sweeya Raj

The field hockey team lost 3-1 to Cupertino on Oct. 22, making its overall record 1-7-2.

Freshman forward Tina Miller scored in the second half, but the lone goal was not enough for a win.

"We put in a lot of effort, but were unable to get [the ball] in the goal," co-captain and defensive player Werner said.

The Falcons experienced a tough setback early in the game, when senior midfielder Ingrid Hong was injured and was unable to play for the rest of the game.

Her injury occurred when a player on the opposing team lifted the ball into the air, and it hit her middle finger, causing it to be fractured in two places.

Before the Cupertino game, the team lost 2-1 to Homestead on Oct. 17.

"We went in to the game thinking that we could easily defeat [Homestead] and that they wouldn't be a hard team to play," sophomore and midfielder Erin Norris said. "We were not trying as hard and did not want the ball, until the second half."

The team's efforts in the second half were helped when senior Jennie Werner scored a goal during a short corner. Still, Saratoga was not able to catch up.

Werner said that given more time during the second half of the game,

the team may have been able to pull through.

Even though the team would have liked to have won more games, players said they have been playing better in recent games and feeling better about each other.

"For a long time our main goal was just to bond as a team and learn how to work with each other because our dynamic was really off," junior defensive player Natalie Lemire said. "At this point I think we are finally at a good place with all of that so I guess we just need to keep the positive energy going."

According to Norris, the team started the season struggling with only 14 players, so varsity coach Lifon Hyunh moved two freshmen up to varsity to solve this problem.

The newest members on the team are Tina Miller, forward, and Hannah Leonard, midfielder.

The team hopes that these new members will help improve their record. With the season coming to the end, the team's chances of making CCS are remote.

"It is unlikely, but I think if we keep playing hard and win more games, then we can make [CCS]," Norris said.

The team played Monta Vista on Oct. 29 and Los Gatos on Oct. 31, but could not be covered by the Falcon due to print deadlines.

The team will play a home game against Los Altos on Nov. 5. ♦



junior Natalie Lemire

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LILLIAN CHU, JUNIOR

Sport: Fencing
Years playing: 4 years
Hours of Training Each Week: 10-15 hours



Inspiration: "When I was young, I really liked to play sports, but could never choose one to follow through. My dad suggested fencing because he was a fencer at Stanford University. He thought I'd like the intensity and pace of the game so I tried it and now I want to follow in his footsteps."

Goal: "I really want to be able to continue fencing in college and be able to compete in college tournaments."

Most Notable Experience: "The most memorable experience I've had as a fencer is earning a gold medal at the Junior Olympics tournament in Baltimore, Maryland. I was great to see all of my hard work pay off."

Funny Story: "There was one time during the tournament, my saber got bent the wrong way, and when I was trying to bend my blade back, I accidentally snapped it right in my hands." ♦

—Anant Rajeev

ALEXA FRIEBERG, SOPHOMORE

Sport: Water Polo
Years Playing: 5 years
Hours of Training Each week: 10 hours



Inspiration: "I really enjoy water polo, and it makes me extremely happy to accomplish something I wasn't able to do before — whether it's new moves or a different type of shot. Many people probably don't know her, but Maggie Steffens [inspires me]."

Goal: "My short-term goal is I want to be able to beat Los Gatos. My long-term goal is to be able to play for my college team."

Most Notable Experience: "My most notable experience is winning leagues last year. Also, looking back, going to Hawaii for a tournament [with the West Valley Water Polo Club] was extremely fun and a experience."

Funny Story: "One that I cannot forget is in Hawaii. Rafael Alapont (the coach) was screaming at the refs because they were doing a terrible job and making wrong calls; one of the refs red carded him and Mr. Alapont yells, 'Thank you the first right call you have made today!' and he storms off the pool deck." ♦

—Shazia Gupta

SPENCER YEN, SOPHOMORE

Sport: Volleyball
Years Playing: 4 years
Hours of Training Each Week: 5 hours



Inspiration: "I play volleyball because I think it is a really fun sport. Volleyball is also a sport of skill and mental focus, whereas many other sports just require you to be stronger and faster."

Goal: "Right now, I'm focusing on developing team skills, adapting to certain situations, and communication. Communication is extremely important in volleyball because we have a small court and little room for error."

Most Notable Experience: "There's this one team, Pacific Rim, that we always lose to, and it has sort of become like a rivalry; however, this year we beat them twice at Junior Olympics. The first time we thought it was just luck, but the second time we realized that we are actually a really great team and that gave us a boost of confidence. We realized that we can go on and beat other great teams. After we beat them twice at Junior Olympics, a lot of these players tried out for Bay to Bay Volleyball Club, the club I play at, this year and half their team now play for Bay to Bay." ♦

—Catherine Tang

CHESTER LEUNG, SOPHOMORE

Sport: Volleyball
Years Playing: 4 years
Hours of Training Each Week: 5 hours

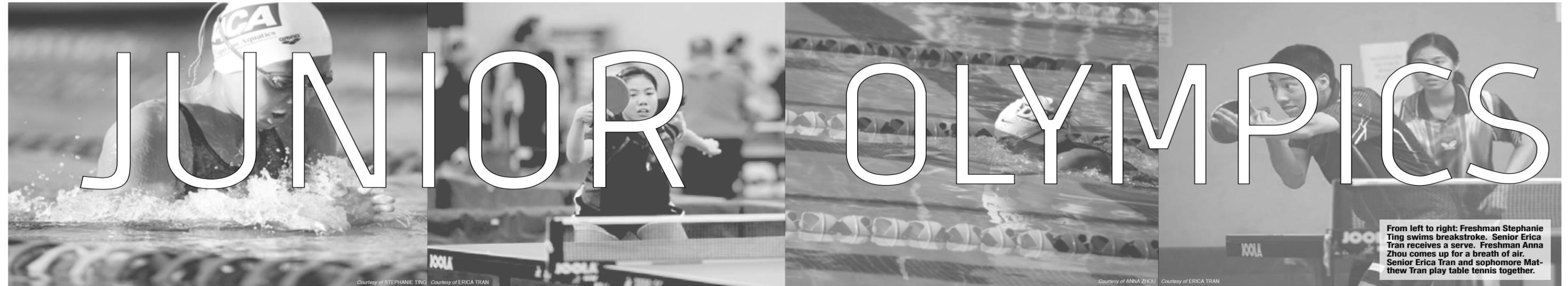


Inspiration: "When I go to LA for tournaments, there are always teams that completely crush other teams, and it's inspirational to see how kids the same age as me can play at such an elite level. It's really inspiring to see how far hard work will go. It makes me want to work harder because I see and know that it is achievable."

Goal: "Last year we finished ninth at Junior Olympics, but this year we are working really hard to finish higher overall. Also, I hope that our school team will win league this year because we have new additions and everyone has improved a lot."

Funny Story: "Last year we went to Sacramento for a tournament, and it was all flooded, so we had to drive through 2-3 feet of water. There were even cars driving on sidewalks. Then when we finally got there, the gym and parking lot was all flooded so we had to take off our shoes and walk through all the water." ♦

—Catherine Tang



From left to right: Freshman Stephanie Ting swims breaststroke. Senior Erica Tran receives a serve. Freshman Anna Zhou comes up for a breath of air. Senior Erica Tran and sophomore Matthew Tran play table tennis together.

STEFANIE TING, FRESHMAN

Sport: Swimming (100 m and 200 breast stroke)
Years Playing: 11 years
Hours of Training Each Week: 17.5 hours



Inspiration: "I'm inspired to swim since it's the only sport that comes really easy to me. My friends inspire me too just because they're great people to race, and they're really supportive. I think about how much time I spend in the pool, and it'll be a complete waste of my life if I didn't make the most out of it. Also, I really want to achieve my goals so I can be proud of what I accomplished."

Goal: "My goals are to make a U.S. Open/National time standard, to make 2016 Olympic trials and to swim in college."

Most Notable Experience: "My most notable experience in swimming was probably traveling with my teammates to compete in Junior Nationals this past summer. It was my first Junior Nationals, so it was really overwhelming with all these cameras, fancy pool deck and big swimmers. It was really nerve wracking with all the pressure to do well at a big meet. Plus, they record every heat of the race, so it streams online. If you win your heat then they stick a camera in your face and get a close up video of you, which was a pretty cool experience for me since I won my heat and saw my face projected on this huge board. At the end of each event they would show the top 32 finishers on the scoreboard, and I was really proud how I saw my name projected in front of everyone, even though I wanted a better time. I got to meet Rebecca Soni, [a two-time Olympic breastroker] there too."

Funny Story: "I got to shave my coach's head after making a bet with him that I could make my Junior Nationals cut. I made it, so he let me shave his head in front of my group during the following practice. It was super funny since I'm not exactly exceptionally gifted in cutting hair, so the outcome was really bizarre. Not to mention that the guard of the shaver came off so one side of his head was basically bald." ♦

—Shazia Gupta

HARRISON YANG, SOPHOMORE

Sport: Swimming (100-yard breaststroke, 200-yard individual medley, 200-yard freestyle)
Years Playing: 5 years
Hours of Training Each Week: 15 hours



Goal: "My goal this year is to make top 16 in the 100-yard Breaststroke this year, which will require me to drop at least four seconds from my best time from last year."

Most Notable Experience: "Making CCS was memorable, because I was only a freshman."

Funny Story: "My coach Christian Bonner told Stefanie Ting, a freshman, that if she swam under a certain time, she could shave his head." ♦

—Shazia Gupta

ANNA ZHOU, FRESHMAN

Sport: swimming, 100-yard and 200-yard backstroke, 200-yard individual medley
Years Playing: 6 years
Hours of Training Each Week: 15 hours



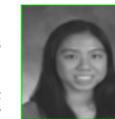
Inspiration: "[My inspiration is] my friends that I compete with. I want to be able to swim well with them and go to all the meets."

Most Notable Experience: "A really fond memory I have is getting my first Junior Olympic cut; it was when I first moved to California and started swimming here." ♦

—Shazia Gupta

ERICA TRAN, SENIOR

Sport: Table Tennis
Years Playing: 8.5 years
Hours of Training Each Week: 12 hours in the summer, 6 to 8 hours in the school year



Inspiration: "For everything I do, I always want to be the best I can be. Whether it be school, music, table tennis or any other activity, I want to bring out my full potential. Especially for table tennis, my passion for it drives me to do my best."

Goal: "My biggest goal is to make the 2016 or 2020 Olympic Team. This is extremely hard because only one to three female athletes from the U.S. make the team. I also really want to make the Women's National Team so that I can represent the U.S. in international competitions, especially the World Singles and Teams Championships."

Funny Story: "One time during an important match in one of the team trials [for a tournament], there was a referee for my match. My opponent hit the ball to the far corner, and when I rushed to try to get it back on the table, I instead hit it at the referee in the face." ♦

—Miles Albert

KATELYN MOLLAHAN, SENIOR

Sport: Volleyball
Years Playing: 9 years
Hours of Training Each Week: 9.5 hours



Inspiration: "Kerri Walsh is my inspiration because she started playing when she was in grade school and then in high school and then went on to play at Stanford and then she won the Olympics three times in a row."

Most Notable Experience: "The Reno qualifier was amazing because my team won the whole tournament, and we were the first Mountain View Volleyball Club team to qualify for nationals (Junior Olympics) that season."

Funny Story: "During a school tournament years ago, one of the outsiders set the ball over the net during her serve. She tossed the ball, but she thought the referee didn't blow the whistle so she was about to catch it. Our whole team was like 'What are you doing Janelle?' so then she panicked and tried setting the ball over the net. It was really funny but embarrassing at the same time because there were a lot of really good teams there." ♦

—Catherine Tang

APRIL SCHINDLER, FRESHMAN

Sport: track
Years Playing: 4 years
Hours of Training Each Week: 13 hours



Inspiration: "I want to be able to represent my new school as a good runner and use that motivation to strive for college athletics."

Goal: "I want to get a college scholarship to UCSB for girls' 800 meter."

Most notable experience: "My most notable experience during track is placing fifth in the nation in the USATF Junior Olympics for Girls 800m."

Funny story: "I tripped and face-planted on the track in front of a guy that I had a crush on at school." ♦

—Anant Rajeev

>> snapshots



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA



FALCON // GRACE MA



Courtesy of ROBERT ENG



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

RALLYING BACK: Caitlin Ju (9) plays against Mountain View at a home game on Oct. 24.

SHIRTS FOR SALE: Madison Gress (11) and Dani Bruno sell shirts to fundraise for the Athletics on Oct. 24.

THE LATEST SCOOP: Sarah Finley (12) and Melissa Szenda (12) distribute root beer floats to freshmen during the Link Crew Social at lunch on Oct. 24.

BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS: National Merit Semifinalists attended a celebratory breakfast on Oct. 23.

A twist on typical Tiger Mother story

JUNIOR NAGGED BY HER OLDER SISTER

“Get off Facebook! If you’re done with homework, you should be practicing SAT! You’re not allowed to leave the house until you bring your grades up!”

Sound familiar? Seems like the average Asian parents. But my case is unusual; these are things I hear on a daily basis from my 20-year-old sister.

Her name is Synthia Ling, a 2011 graduate from SHS and current student at UCLA. When she was moving out the summer before my freshman year, I remember thinking, “WOOOH she’s finally leaving, she can’t bother me now!” Boy, was I wrong.

Freshman year was when the “tiger sistering” first became frequent. My parents, being the chill people they are, never checked my grades so I could pretty much just sit back and relax for the first 12 weeks of first semester.

Then, Synthia asked for my Aeries password and everything changed. Suddenly I was getting calls, emails and texts a bajillion times a day from her asking me for a list of all my assignments due each week and giving me extremely specific lists of tasks to do before bed.

“Come home from cross-country, shower, finish your math problems FIRST and THEN you can start your English readings. Do not sit on the couch or you will fall asleep.”

Every time I do the tiniest amount of work on the couch, I feel as though she is watching me. I am haunted by someone 350 miles away.

Anytime Synthia sees me active on Spotify, I immediately get a call from her ordering me to stop because she is strongly against listening to any kind of music while doing homework. She once sent me an email titled “NO MUSIC WHILE STUDYING...PERIOD” containing a statistic about how students who listen to music while doing school work have lower average test scores.

I thought Synthia’s nagging during my freshman year was bad, but the short 10 weeks of junior year have already been dramatically worse than my entire freshman and sophomore years combined. If I’m being totally honest, tears



Courtesy of SHERRILYN LING

Junior Sherrilyn Ling and her older sister Synthia Ling pose together at Yellowstone.

have been shed and harsh words have been shouted over the phone.

A significant catalyst to the increase in fussing from my sister this year is, you guessed it, the SAT. My sister doesn’t trust my mom to keep me practicing for the exam regularly, so she requires that I take a practice exam twice a week and send a photo of my results as proof.

If I skip a practice test, then I lose my privileges. The usual punishment is having my mom confiscate my iPhone and my sister change my Facebook password so I can’t log on for at least a day. The worst part is, I can’t change it back because my account is under her email (She put it under her email after I first gave her my password. She’s extreme, I know.)

On the days after skipping a practice test, people at school often ask, “Where were you at lunch? I called and texted you like 10 times!” I am then forced to explain the complicated relationship that my sister and I share, and how I won’t be reachable through my iPhone or Facebook for X amount of days. Typically, the person stares blankly at me until they finally find the words to say something like, “...Your sister?”

But all in all, I know that my sister’s terrors come from love. Although my close friends jokingly nicknamed her the evil villain (don’t worry, Synthia has accepted this label), I know that she has a streak of goodness in her heart. The effort she puts into making sure that I succeed reveal her good intentions, which is what I struggle to remind myself of when I’m walking around with my pockets feeling empty without a cellphone. ♦



SHERRILYN LING
Sher Money

buzzworthy >> Chat stickers

by Sherrilyn Ling & Minu Palaniappan

With more than a billion users, Facebook is seeking to expand its offerings.

One of their latest features is sticker-messaging. In every chatbox is a selection tool in the lower-right hand corner that houses emoticons, animations and stickers of well-known characters.

For example, Facebook provides stickers of the “Despicable Me” characters and the notable minions that appear frequently in the movies.

In addition, the site adds animations to the stickers; minions will bobble their head or characters will wag their fingers in disappointment.

Students have mixed opinions about these new stickers. While some find them as a charming and convenient addition to instant messaging, others see them as annoying and unnecessary.

Junior Samuel Breck likes them because they convey messages quickly and in an amusing manner.

“They give me a sense of joy know-

ing that I can express myself through visual representations,” Breck said.

Senior Jessica Pham agrees that the stickers are a pleasant way to make chatting with friends more exciting.

“It’s really cute, and makes the conversation more interesting in a way,” Pham said.

Junior Nadia Younes disagrees, calling them rip-off versions of emojis, which are popular emoticons and icons used in text messaging.

“I think Facebook is running out of things to update and making these ugly stickers,” Younes said.

For other students, such as junior Catherine Cheng, the stickers have become aggravating with overuse.

“They are rather bothersome when people spam you,” Cheng said.

“It was fun at first but now I can’t stand them.” ♦

They are rather bothersome when people spam you. It was fun at first, but now I can’t stand them.

>> junior Catherine Cheng



>> topten

OBSCURE BUT REAL HOLIDAYS IN NOVEMBER

- 10 Saxophone Day — Nov. 6:** Band geeks rejoice. AKA 50% of our school.
- 9 False Confession Day — Nov. 21:** Confess your love to a girl. If she rejects, say “JK, it’s False Confession Day.” Just hope you don’t break her heart.
- 8 Have a Bad Day Day — Nov. 19:** Every day of junior year.
- 7 Name your PC Day — Nov. 20:** Mac
- 6 Start your Own Country day — Nov. 22:** Guaranteed it won’t have as much debt as the United States.

- 5 Operating Nurse Day — Nov. 14:** More experience needed than the Operation Board Game.
- 4 National Men Make Dinner Day — Nov. 7:** Here’s a gourmet microwaved easy mac.
- 3 National Housewife Day — Nov. 3:** Be thankful for your tigress family members.
- 2 National Sandwich Day — Nov. 3:** It’s a step up from the mac and cheese.
- 1 Thanksgiving — Nov. 28:** AKA UC Applications.

>> Rohan Hardikar and Jay Mulye