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SCHOOL SCOPE | 16-17

Reporters analyze the many different classroom vibes on campus.

IN-DEPTH | 18-19

Students' lives are forever changed by unique experiences.

SPORTS | 20

The time and effort required to be a crew coxswain.

Saratoga High School >> Saratoga, CA
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>> what'sinside

■ HISTORY BOWL

New champions

Toga defeats reigning national champion from Bellarmine, one-man team Sameer Rai. **pg. 3**

■ ADMISSIONS

College interviews

Do alumni interviews really matter in the entire college application process? **pg. 7**

■ LIFESTYLES

Hit or miss gifts

Students recount tales of best and worst Christmas presents. **pg. 12-13**

■ ENTERTAINMENT

Jimmy vs. Jimmy

Kimmel and Fallon, the two late-night stars, duke it out for the top spot. **pg. 15**

>> staffeditorial

WHY A proposed Physics Honors course would be a beneficial change to curriculum.

JBK

LEADERSHIP PRESENTS
SECOND "SPEAK UP FOR
CHANGE" WEEK JAN. 21-24

by Megan **tyer**
& Nupur **Maheshwari**

As the lights in the Large Gym went out last Friday, colors flew around the packed room. Thrown from all sides of the room, the glow sticks that had been handed out at the beginning of the assembly painted the air as students' screams echoed off the walls.

The assembly marked the end of the second annual "Speak Up for Change" week, led by seniors Sarah Finley, Jennie Werner and Manini Desai. The Leadership class-sponsored event took place during the week of Jan. 21-24.

Friday's assembly began with students and teachers speaking live or via video to discuss their growth as individuals throughout high school. Students such as seniors Sam Guy, Jason Tatman and junior Melissa Rogan talked about learning to succeed despite the stresses and struggles of high school.

Assistant principal Brian Safine said he was impressed with the speakers'

>> **SPEAK UP** on pg. 5



Junior Melissa Rogan speaks at the assembly on Friday, Jan. 24, discussing how she tries to "Just Be Kind" every day through her actions and words.

FALCON // JADE BISHT

RENOVATIONS

District eyes bond to improve schools

BY Gitika **Nalwa**
& Helen **Wong**

This June, district residents are likely to vote on a \$99 million bond to upgrade and maintain facilities at both Los Gatos and Saratoga High Schools.

The bond, an additional tax paid annually by property holders, has yet to be approved by the school board, but principal Paul Robinson believes it will receive the board's approval within the next two school board meetings, which are scheduled to take place on Feb. 4 and Feb. 25.

The school's administration is proceeding to make plans for potential projects to be funded by this bond.

Robinson said 55 percent of registered voters in the district will "have to agree that it would be a good thing to pay some additional taxes for the school to be refinished, refurbished and modernized."

The additional tax would be from \$18 per \$100,000 of the value of a resident's property. It is estimated the tax would be retired after 20 years.

The use of the money would be monitored by an oversight committee of community members, parents and school employees.

Robinson estimates that \$55 million of the \$99 million would be used to renovate Los Gatos

>> **BOND** on pg. 5

CHOIR

Yowell bids adieu to singers, SHS

BY Gwynevere **Hunger**
& Allison **Lin**

As the second semester began, students and staff members were missing the smile of a prominent teacher on campus: Jim Yowell. After 10 years as a choir, orchestra and AP Music Theory instructor, Yowell said his final farewells to his students and their families at the choir's holiday concert on Dec. 10.

His retirement, coming at midyear, surprised students, staff and parents.

In the meantime, the school has hired a replacement choir teacher: Andrew Ford. On Jan. 1, choir students discovered that Ford will be replacing Yowell in his teaching position.

Several senior choir students described Ford's enthusiasm and terrific personality



Courtesy of JANEY HEYMAN

Music teacher Jim Yowell poses with the Chamber Choir at the Saratoga Retirement Community on Dec. 10 after their penultimate performance.

and are glad that an talented director will be taking over for the remainder of the year.

Ford has been a conducting student of Dr. Jeffrey Benson of San Jose State University. Benson is one of the top cho-

ral conductors in the western United States, and leads one of the best choir programs. When the music program learned of Yowell's departure,

>> **YOWELL** on pg. 6

news >> briefs

Ceramics to host annual Souper Bowl

There won't be any touchdowns or interceptions, but the 12th annual Souper Bowl to raise money for ceramics will have plenty of soup to dish out on March 5.

The Souper Bowl is a fundraiser hosted by the ceramics program, in which advanced ceramics students make hundreds of pottery bowls to sell in an all-you-can-eat soup buffet, cooked by parent volunteers.

From 5 to 7 p.m. in the cafeteria, the event will serve a variety of soups, such as chicken noodle, black bean, and potato corn chowder, for an optional donation of \$10.

After last year's unprecedented demand, changes have been made to better accommodate this year's event; it was rescheduled to a later date to give the students enough time to be able to finish all of their bowls. In order to accommodate more people, teacher Leah Aguayo said that customers will go to the faculty lunch room to purchase their bowls, then go into the cafeteria to get soup. This system will allow for more room for seating.

Aguayo hopes that these changes will allow the ceramics program to serve more people more efficiently.

"It's an exhausting event," Aguayo said. "But for me, seeing the students, the teachers, the administrators, the board members and the community coming together for a soup supper is just magical to me."

—Simi Srivastava

Bombay in the Bay adjusts to earlier date

For the past few months, the members of the Indian Cultural Awareness Club have been preparing for their biggest event of the year, Bombay in the Bay. This annual showcase, held this year on Feb. 14 and 15, features SHS students performing several Indian dance numbers.

Due to the earlier show date this year, each grade began choreographing and practicing before Christmas break. Along with giving the students less time to prepare, the earlier show date is also on the same day as Bollywood Berkeley and a major speech and debate event.

Despite these difficulties, the officers still predict an entertaining show similar to ones in past years.

"I really want people to have fun and give people a chance to learn about Indian culture," senior president Sachi Verma said. "I want the audience to enjoy it and the performers to enjoy it so they'll do it next year."

—Rohan Hardikar and Simi Srivastava

Falcon newspaper to claim Crown Award

The Falcon staff recently learned that last year's paper will be the recipient of a national award for excellence, one of 30 high school newspapers to be honored with a either a Gold or Silver Crown award from the Columbia Scholastic Press Association in March.

The Falcon has received eight Crowns since 2003. One Crown is gold, the highest award, and the rest are silver.

Current editor-in-chief Karen Sung said this award reflected well on the dedication of The Falcon staff.

"Our editors last year [2013 alumnae Jackie Gu and Debbie Soung] did a great job producing quality publications, so I'm glad the staff was recognized for our hard work," Sung said.

—Oksana Trifonova

>> picturethis



Seniors Peter Karren and Jacob Camp and junior Saia Ghelichkhani glaze bowls during class on Jan. 27. They plan to sell them during the 12th annual 'Souper Bowl' fundraiser on March 5.

MAKE A WISH

School helps parents learn English

By Oksana Trifonova & Devin Zhao

Assistant principal Kerry Mohnike pointed to a sentence projected onto a board. "She went to the doctor," said Mohnike, slowly and carefully articulating each word.

Thirty-one students stared at the board, carefully listening to Mohnike's pronunciation of the sentence. "She went to the doctor," a medley of assorted accents chanted back.

After a student made a wish that his parent could learn English in order to feel more comfortable coming to school events, the administration and Leadership class students reviewed and granted that wish and started sponsoring free English classes.

The classes are part of a larger campaign put on by the school to help make student wishes come true as a result of Speak up for Change week. The 10-week course is taught by Mohnike and is held on Monday evenings in room 201.

"[It] seemed like a great opportunity to offer something to families that would also help to bring the community together in a productive way," Mohnike said.

The classes generally consist of several reading, writing and speaking exercises on a subject the students are interested in, and ends with homework based on English language application. Mohnike said that there are vast differences in teaching adults to speak a different language as opposed to teaching high-school students.

"Many of the adult students are highly educated in their native languages, so they understand what it takes to learn," Mohnike said. "Language, however, is often difficult for adults to learn because it requires making associations that have already been formed. Adults are more patient in many ways, yet they have the liberty to not attend if the class is not fitting their needs."

Mohnike hopes that the class will be another outreach



SHS teachers assist parents and grandparents as they complete worksheets during the first English class on Jan. 13.

to the community that shows the hospitality of Saratoga High.

"We care about our community. We want people to feel like they can come to the school as a resource, and we want to support students and [help] their families find happiness and success," Mohnike said. "I hope the students gain confidence in their English

thought that the class would be a good opportunity for him to learn more English.

"When I work [in the United States], I can read and write, but I cannot listen or talk well," He said. "English is really essential to living life in the United States. No English, no anything."

Jiuzhen Lu and Guilin Lu hope to learn more English to become more independent and limit their dependence on their daughter.

"When we came to the United States, we decided to stay at our daughter's house," Jiuzhen said. "[My daughter] has to accompany me for average tasks, such as shopping and getting around, and I don't want to take as much of her time. [Guilin] wants to understand more of American society, and he wants to learn enough English to make more friends and read American newspapers."

Mohnike believes that the class will have long-term benefits for the students, expanding their vocabulary and generally improving their English skills.

"One can only imagine if one has never experienced the frustration of being an intelligent person who struggles to communicate in a new language," Mohnike said. "There is much patience and encouragement needed, but the rewards are endless. I have always enjoyed the eagerness and applauded the courage of adults learning a new language."

We want people to feel like they can come to the school as a resource.

>> assistant principal Kerry Mohnike

communication skills. I also want them to develop their own support system within the class."

SHS parent Jennifer Chang started attending the class because she wanted to improve her writing and grammar skills.

"I'm okay at talking, listening and watching television, but I've always had trouble with writing in English," Chang said. "Whenever I write emails, I always ask my daughter to proofread, and she always finds something grammatically wrong."

Student Baoxin He, however, feels that he needs to improve his English communication skills. His brother's son attended Saratoga High, so he

ROBOTICS

Members prep for challenge

By Aditya Chaudhry & David Sparkman

Robotics continues to become more challenging every year. Last year the robot was asked to shoot frisbees into high goals and climb a metal structure.

This year's challenge, called aerial assist, is a combination of volleyball, football and soccer.

The game is played on a 25x54-foot field with 2-foot diameter exercise balls with the goals located on either end of the field with two on the ground, worth one point, and two more seven feet high, worth 10 points.

There is also a truss that spans the center of the field and by throwing over it, teams gain 10 points. If a team member can catch the thrown ball, the team earns an additional 10 points.

"This year's challenge is much more intense than previous years," M-SET vice president Kabir Manghnani said. "The game requires teams to be able to do multiple things instead of being excellent in one aspect of their robot."

The game is played with two alliances composed of three teams each. Throughout the game, passing to teammates adds a bonus, making cooperation between teams and their robots crucial to the game.

"This year's challenge makes it harder for one team to win just from skill," senior club president Mihir Iyer said. "In order



Senior Ivan France and sophomore Kyle France work on their creation.

to win, even the best teams will have to rely on their alliance partners to score a good chunk of the points."

M-SET's members have six weeks to design, build and test a robot that they feel will most effectively accomplish the task. After those six weeks, there is another six weeks of competition.

The team is planning on competing in two events this season. The first competition they will be attending the central valley regional in Madera and it will be held on the second week of competition, March 7-9.

Although the team usually competes at the Silicon valley regional, this year they will compete at the Colorado Regional

in Denver on the sixth week of competition, April 3-5.

In the past few weeks the team has prototyped and nailed down a rough idea of their robot as they proceed to design it.

Iyer said that the team is in the process of transitioning away from prototyping and has started constructing their robot in a 3D computer aided design software called Solidworks.

Members' goal is to finish early in their six-week build schedule to allow for drivers' practice and fine tuning.

"We hope our schedule will help maximize our effectiveness during this season," Manghnani said. "This year we hope to do better than ever before."

COMMON CORE

Scantrons replaced by computerized testing

By Michelle Leung & Carolyn Sun

The years of pencil-and-paper Scantron STAR tests are gone forever. Starting this year, schools all over California will be making the transition to computerized testing systems. During this transition year, freshmen are exempt from all standardized tests.

Juniors will take the new optional Early Assessment Program (EAP) computerized test, unlike previous years.

The state will continue testing special education students. Assistant principal Brian Safine said juniors will still take the EAP portion of the former STAR tests during the week of April 21 in order to help the school try the computerized tests.

Although there none of the specifics about dates and times have been determined, the juniors will take the tests in the library and research center where they can utilize the computers. Safine said that the school is equipped to handle close to 100 students at a time.

"There are some logistics to work out in terms of scheduling," but we feel good about the school's preparation," he said.

With the new changes, Saratoga effectively gains two

more school days, which forces seniors to attend two additional days of school.

"I like the fact that we will have two more days of classroom time for teachers to focus on their curriculum rather than spending the entirety of the two days doing something that the state tells us to do," Safine said. "I'm intrigued by the notion of computerized testing based on Common Core standards."

The tests are being implemented as part of the new curriculum.

"We recognize that this year is just a pilot, which means that none of the scores will be overly criticized or scrutinized," Safine said. "[The state] just wants to see any technical challenges with these interfaces."

>> bigidea

EAP computerized testing

What it is? Testing based on the Common Core curriculum standards

How it will work: Juniors will take it on April 21 in the computer labs.

What this means for others: Freshmen are exempt from STAR while special education students are not.

HISTORY BOWL

Lou leads Toga to topple Bellarmine legend Rai

By Nick Chow & Jonathan Young

Everything came down to the last question of the final round of the History Bowl tournament on Jan. 26. The moderator started reading the question: "A retiarus is..."

Junior Bruce Lou knew the answer right away. He paused for just a moment, though, seized with fear. Then he buzzed in with the correct answer: a gladiator.

"I hesitated," Lou said. "I knew it, but I was so scared. I hesitated for half a second before finally buzzing in, and I got it right."

With that answer, the varsity History Bowl team triumphed over the national champion team, Bellarmine A, at a home tournament—a major achievement. The Bellarmine team is comprised solely of senior Sameer Rai, who went undefeated at the National History Bowl tournament last year in Washington, D.C.

A total of 17 varsity teams and nine JV teams participated in this year's tournament. Saratoga won first in the Varsity Bowl, which is a team competition, JV Bowl and JV Bee, which is the individual competition.

The Varsity A team is comprised of senior captain Nick Chow and juniors Bruce Lou, Ethan Ngai and Nitya Sampath.

According to Lou, the team members were somewhat intimidated this year by the prospect of facing Rai, since he beat Saratoga's Varsity A team last year by a large margin.

"It was not pretty, the way he beat [the A team]," Lou said. "But this year,

we actually beat him."

Though Rai took an early lead, Saratoga gained momentum during the fourth quarter and won the tournament against Rai, 320 to 280.

According to Chow, Lou's knack for historical facts and "ridiculous buzz" at the end were what ultimately led to the team's success.

"This year we did the unthinkable and actually beat [Rai]," Chow said. "Really, our team was carried through the match by the genius of Bruce."

Lou said the victory depended upon more than simply having a strong knowledge of history; speed and confidence were also key factors during the tournament.

"Half the questions were determined by buzzing speed," Lou said. "Another good skill is knowing whether you are sure in your answer. If you get it wrong, not only are you screwing yourself over, but you're also screwing your entire team over."

Although the History Bowl team won at the Northern California Fall Regional Tournament and individual competition on Dec. 7, the team nervously anticipated facing Rai in this year's home tournament.

Chow said that the "legends" surrounding Rai's previous domination against Saratoga last year made the victory against him even sweeter.

"Last year, we watched him singlehandedly destroy the second best team in the nation by himself at nationals," Chow said. "There is a certain aura of legend around [Rai], so when we finally beat him, it was indescribable ... I started tearing up."

There is a certain aura of legend around [Rai], so when we finally beat him, it was indescribable ... I started tearing up."

>> senior Nick Chow

CHEER

Continuity returns with addition of permanent coach

By Allison Lin & Megan MacInnes

The cheer team is leaping back into routine after a rough beginning of the season due to no coach. However, it seems head cheer coach Brianna Shearer is here to stay.

Shearer previously coached in Pop Warner, the nation's largest youth football and cheerleading organization, before coming to the school at the

end of November to take over as head coach. Though Shearer is new to Saratoga, she is no stranger to the Bay Area. She graduated from San Jose High School, where she was also a cheerleader.

Sophomore Summer Smith said the team and Shearer are getting along well.

"We have not had her as a coach for very long, but so far she seems great," Smith said. "She's different from other

coaches because she actually does the conditioning she asks us to do, whereas most of our coaches but stopped after a couple days. [Shearer] has stuck with it and we all love her for it. She is quickly winning over our hearts (which is not a piece of cake to do)."

Shearer and the girls worked quickly to prepare a routine that they performed at the rally on Dec. 6.

"She is nice and is doing

great with what she has been given," sophomore Cayla Zelanis said. "She was able to help us form a routine for the rally in a week and a half."

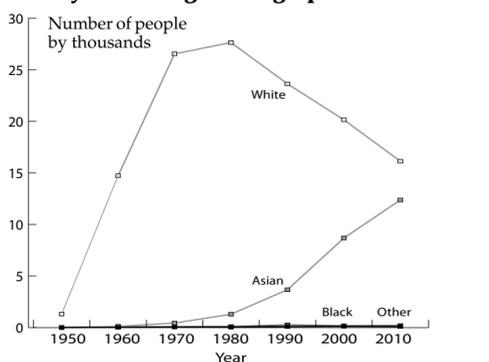
The team started having regular weekly practices as of Jan. 6, in hopes of getting their season back on track. They are currently performing cheers at the boys' and girls' basketball games. Smith said the girls are hopeful for a competition team, but are unsure when it will be-

gin, since the season has always started in December. They are unsure whether they will compete in Anaheim for the Spirit Championships this May.

"The team is getting back into routine, but after being out of it for so long, it's a little difficult," Zelanis said. "[Shearer] knows that some of the seniors were really looking forward to competing during their last year, and she wants to give them that chance."

>> falconfigures

City of Saratoga demographics over time



Source: US Census Figures 1950-2010 — Rotem Shaked

DRAMA

Student production, musical bring challenges

BY Melissa Magnier & Vibha Seshadri

“God of Carnage” written by Yasmina Reza will open tonight as a student production directed by senior Annelise Nussbacher. The story revolves around two couples whose sons got into a fight earlier that day. They meet to discuss the situation, and throughout the meeting, the parents start to act like children themselves as they re-evaluate life and marriage.

“It’s actually a really funny show,” Nussbacher said. “It’s very relatable — it’s like watching people that you know have it out on stage.”

The show takes place in real time and consists of four characters, including senior Charles Li, who plays Alain Reille, junior Nastasia Kutuyev, who plays Annette Reille, senior Ehrland Hollingsworth, who plays Michel Houllie and senior Zofia Trujillo, who plays Veronique Houllie.

The show runs tonight and tomorrow at 7 p.m. and Feb. 2 at 2 p.m.

Just completed: “Up”

Recently, Hollingsworth directed a student production of his own.

On the week of Dec. 1, the Thermond Drama Center was filled with eager audience members, waiting to watch “Up.”

Written by Bridget Carpenter, “Up” tells the story of a family man in the 70s, who dreams of becoming a successful inventor. The man has a teenage son who realizes that his father is not the father he wants, and ends up befriending a pregnant teenager, thus finding himself taking on the role of a father.

Hollingsworth said he enjoyed leading the collaboration required for a production including directing junior Andrew York, freshman Raymond McCarthy, and freshman Sarah Traina in the roles of Walter Griffin, Mikey Griffin and Maria.

Drama teacher Sarah Thermond found “Up” to be a complex production.

“It’s a very interesting show because it has interesting elements like dream sequences and dialogue taking place simultaneously, but it is also in many ways a very realistic portrait of a modern family and their struggles,” Thermond said.

Thermond was impressed not only with the technical aspect of the show, but also by the work of the cast, a group that included a wide spectrum of experienced and completely inexperienced actors.

The cast members felt that they had gained a worthwhile experience through participating.

“I think the show went really well,” said sophomore Emily Ludwig, who played Helen Griffin. “All of the actors got along and we had a lot of fun putting the show together.”

On deck: “Les Miserables”

The drama department’s next endeavor will be a production of the renowned operetta ‘Les Miserables’ for the spring musical.

Drama students look forward to putting on such a well-known and beloved production.

“This is my first musical with a main part,” said senior Zofia Trujillo, who plays the role of Fontine. “Being able to explore Fontine’s character and journey



Junior Blake Propach reviews music for “Les Miserables,” the spring musical, on Jan. 24.

will be tough, but I’m really excited to do so.”

Other lead cast members include juniors Natalie Miller and Siobhan McMillan, who play Eponine and Cosette, respectively.

Senior Manini Desai, who will take on the role of Madame Thenadier, is looking forward to the challenge of such a difficult show.

“I’m so excited to play [Madame Thenadier] because she’s deliciously wild and out there, and I’ve never had the opportunity to play such a crazy character,” Desai said. “It’s also exciting to play in such a well-known show, because this is an incredibly tough show to put on, and everyone knows it, so we really have to

perform at a high, professional level, but I know we can do it.”

Like past spring musicals, “Les Miserables” has both dialogue and music; however, the dialogue will be “spoken-sung.”

Because of this new challenge, Thermond hopes that students do not exhaust their voices.

Rehearsals for “Les Miserables” started early this month and will continue throughout the semester until the premiere of the show.

Despite these challenges, Thermond thinks the show will run smoothly if students take care of themselves.

The show runs April 25-27 and May 2-3. ♦

MATH CLUB

Team preps for AMC

BY Rachel Hull & Maya Ravichandran

With the American Math Competition (AMC) coming up in February, the Math Club has begun preparing for the contest. By attending club meetings every Friday, members are able to get into the appropriate mind set for the competition.

Last year, the top scorers for the AMC 10 were sophomores Celine Liang, Nathan Ney and Sean Shi.

On the AMC 12, seniors Edgar Chen, Jeffrey Chen and Matthew Lee received high scores. A total of 22 students qualified for the 2013 American Invitational Mathematics Exam (AIME), a test given to students who ranked high enough on the AMC.

With the AMC in mind, club members have been taking practice tests every Friday.

According to sophomore Kristine Zhang, members usually take “a few” tests per week to exercise their skills.

Lee said that when taking these practice tests, teamwork within the club is key.

“We have people who are good at the test help the other people do problems,” Lee said, “and explain how to do things or different topics.”

Some dedicated club members spend up to 10 hours per week preparing for the competition. Lee emphasized the motivation students need to succeed.

According to math teacher and club adviser P.J. Yim, somewhere around 85 students from Saratoga High will participate in the AMC this year.

The questions on the test draw from a variety of topics, including algebra, geometry, number theory, probability and

counting. “It’s hard stuff; it’s beyond what you do in the curriculum,” Yim said. “We have students who take Geometry and Algebra 2 far exceed students who take Calculus. You wouldn’t expect that.”

Yim said that the skills students need to take the AMC are “half problem solving, half experience.”

“Like anything else, if it’s familiar to them, it’s easier,” Yim said. “Having that exposure, it’s kind of like playing chess. Chess is problem solving; at the same time, they did a study where the bigger library of the possible moves you have, the better you do.”

Yim added that the AMC is often unpredictable because it encompasses a broad range of topics.

“The difficult questions are the ones you probably haven’t seen before,” Yim said. “You just can’t prepare for everything. The permutation of the number [of topics] you have is just astronomical.”

Although Math Club’s structure has not changed significantly from previous years, Lee said the club’s adaptability and skills have increased.

“I think we are more efficient and productive this year,” Lee said.

According to Zhang, the number of schools participating in the AMC increases each year, making it more difficult for Saratoga to secure a top spot.

“It gets harder every year; there is more competition,” Zhang said.

Zhang said that the AMC is always surrounded with an air of uncertainty, since she and other students are not always confident in their performances. Ultimately, there is only one thing they can do after taking the test.

“Hope for the best,” Zhang said. ♦

SPEAK UP FOR CHANGE >> Speakers stress being kind



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: speaker Jason Hewlett, SHS alumna and attendance secretary Mandy Armes, vice principal Kerry Mohnik and junior Alana Hess, winner of 2013’s Saratoga Idol.

ALL PHOTOS BY JADE BISH AND DAVID SPARKMAN

continued from pg. 1

courage.

“It’s very challenging for a young person to share something really personal, so anytime someone is willing to do that, I reflect on my own experiences as a teenager and think, ‘There’s not a chance in the world I would have been able to do that,’” Safine said. “I am really appreciative of people willing to take that risk.”

Music teachers Jonathan Pwu and Jon Jow, along with attendance secretary Mandy Armes, also discussed their experiences at the school and their reasons in returning to Saratoga for a career in education. These speakers viewed their stories as positive experiences, which contributed to the leadership class’s efforts to change the week’s overall tone.

“It was really interesting to hear different people’s stories depending on their backgrounds or what they were interested in,” sophomore Nicole Chiou said.

However, junior Michelle Luo felt that making the assembly positive and lighthearted was not as effective as the darker, more serious assembly last year.

“It was not as heart-felt,” Luo said. “It would have been more effective, but the speakers did not seem as genuine, and I was expecting to cry and be really touched.”

But it was the glow-stick activity that drew the most criticism from students.

Junior Nidhi Vellanki said that although the majority of the students were respectful, a certain few lost focus of the message of the activity.

“A few of the kids were immature, so they ruined the whole point of ‘just be kind,’” Vellanki said.

The activity was intended to be one

that brought the student body together with questions related to changing school culture. Instead, some students decided to overlook the message of the activity and threw their glowsticks across the room.

“We have a wonderful student body,” assistant principal Brian Safine said. “The only time things got a little out of hand during the assembly was when the lights went out, so lesson learned.”

Additionally, the leadership class granted several wishes at the assembly, including dedicating a page in the yearbook to senior Andy Chen and playing a video from sophomore Amanda Meserve’s father, who is stationed in Afghanistan. Even better, students enjoyed a rare weekend without any homework, a gift granted from teachers.

“I thought that the [wish granting] was great,” junior Irene Chen said. “I thought it was really funny and thoughtful. It was really well thought out.”

Classroom activities

To spread the message of community throughout the week, the leadership class organized several classroom activities for each school subject, with topics such as sleep, AP courses and peer pressure.

Finley said the leadership class split into groups and came up with topics for each class.

“We got a leader for each subject area, and then they got volunteers from the class to help them,” Finley said. “Each of the groups came up with lessons [for the subjects].”

Vellanki thought the mini-lessons were not very helpful because many teachers half-heartedly presented the slideshows and videos, while some did not work on the activities at all.

“A lot of my classes didn’t really do the activities,” she said. “[We did not do them in] math or history, only English, orchestra and science.”

However, sophomore Ankhitha Sarvesh thought the activities were effective and were an improvement from the previous year.

“This year was a lot more interactive with the teachers, and I thought that was really cool since I had something to look forward to in every class,” Sarvesh said.

An eccentric speaker

Similar to last year, the week began with a keynote speaker, this year an entertainer named Jason Hewlett. He spoke about listening to “your heart instead of your head” and learning to embrace uniqueness.

Junior Anish Srinivasan said that he enjoyed the assembly because of Hewlett’s unique style.

“He seemed really comfortable in his shoes, which I thought was really special about him,” Srinivasan said. “Overall, he was being as weird as he possibly could, and he didn’t care about what other people thought, so his main message was that you shouldn’t give into peer pressure.”

Keeping students going

Although there is debate whether the week was actually effective, the week-long event tried to remind students to be kind, considerate and compassionate towards their classmates.

“We mainly [tried to] provide students with a way to become inspired to create change on campus and a motivation and a means for promoting positive change,” Finley said.

One of the major changes that leadership hoped to make this year was to promote the idea that the school is a community, as well as to focus on Saratoga pride, as opposed to last year’s more serious theme of universal acceptance and

understanding.

Werner said that this message “parallels with Mr. Robinson’s efforts to build school pride for all aspects of Saratoga, not just our academics.”

Desai also added that the week was intended to let students know that they have a strong support system.

“We want the message to be that we’re all here for each other,” Desai said. “We are not trying to bring each other down, even though [school is] stressful.”

Added Desai: “We are trying to find ways to continuously let the school know that we are there for them. [This way], people will see little acts of kindness at school, and hopefully, it will keep motivating them.”

Creating a permanent change

The main goal for the Speak Up for Change Week, according to Werner, is to gradually make a difference within the school.

“We know one week won’t change school culture, but I believe small acts over time will,” she said. “As new freshman classes come to [school], hopefully they will pick up on this message until eventually, the school culture does change.”

Safine hopes that the week reminded students that they have support within the community.

“I always want students to think they’re not alone with whatever challenge is going on in their life,” he said. “I want students to think that there is no expectation for perfection.”

Overall, leadership hopes that the week will continue to encourage students to take the time to be kind to one another and to really celebrate the time spent at school.

“Yes, we want to get good grades in class, but it’s not a fight to be at school,” Desai said. “It should be a place where you want to be, where you feel comfortable being.” ♦

FACILITIES BOND >> Schools hope to improve technology

continued from pg. 1

High, which has more students than SHS and a greater need for new classrooms because of growing enrollment.

Even so, Robinson said, “I think with [the remaining] \$44 million, we could do a lot of great things.”

Some of the school’s facilities have not been updated since Saratoga High opened in 1959, Robinson said. Some of the possible renovations include: upgrades to heating and air conditioning, technology and lighting upgrades, additional classroom space for science and engineering, the relocation of the music department and the relocation of P.E. and gym facilities.

According to Robinson, the upgrades to the lighting, heating and air conditioning would make “the school’s electricity bill drop like a rock.”

To lower electricity expenses, the school is also looking at the installation of solar panels. Although Robinson said the installation of solar panels will be costly, he believes the solar panels would benefit the school “in the long run.” However, the trade-off between up-front installation costs and long-term savings is being explored further by district leaders.

If the bond passes, some buildings could be replaced, and could be others expanded.

“I’d say that one project that is right there at the top is building a space large enough for our music program to really be comfortable,” Robinson said. “Right now, our music program is kind of bursting at the seams.”

One plan being discussed calls for shifting the music department to a newly constructed building, where the admin-

istration and drama buildings currently are. This would be done to increase its proximity to the McAfee Center. The administration building, cafeteria and Thermond Drama Center would be relocated to a completely new building, or given a different place on campus.

In addition, Robinson believes that “a key component to [the plan] is the ongoing support for technology,” for which school officials have decided to set aside \$2 million a year.

The last bond the district passed was in the late 1990s. The money collected from this bond went to fund most of the modernization of the campus, including the building of the science wing, a new library, and part of the McAfee Center.

The prospect of campus improvement, along with the possibility of up-graded technology, has been met with enthusiastic approval from students.

“New computers and keyboards in the journalism room would be great,” junior Tesia Sun said. “If they do some renovations, then I hope they’ll do it soon.”

Senior Eric Taw also approved of possible school improvements, advocating the installation of solar panels.

“The amount of money we would save [with solar panels] could pave the way for future investments and bragging rights,” Taw said.

Although the school is in need of these renovations, the school board has yet to approve the school’s plans to put the bond before voters.

If it does go before voters and is approved, implementation would begin next school year. However, it would be years before major projects such as the relocation of the music department are completed. ♦



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HISTORY

Students place last touches on History Day projects

BY Meganalyer

Junior Linus Lu has loved history for as long as he can remember, from learning about significant figures in the past to taking notes on important events.

To him, it has always been a real story, filled with complex details and real events.

"It's a lot of fun, looking at the past," Lu said. "You can find a lot of humor and irony in the history, the characters are interesting, sometimes the stories that history tells are more provocative than simple stories in books."

A student participating in History Day this year, Lu is ex-

cited to incorporate two of his favorite subjects into his project — history and music.

As this year's theme is about rights and responsibilities, Lu decided to do a project on the Russian music composer Dmitri Shostakovich and his artistic rights in the former Soviet Union.

According to Lu, an enormous amount of work has had to be put into his project, from delving into his research of the composer to studying about the atmosphere in the Soviet Union.

"I [looked] through scores, recordings, different interviews," he said. "It does take some time."

Similarly, junior Jasmine Deng, who researched the Vietnamese boat people after the Vietnam War and the fall of Saigon, said researching for her topic takes a lot of work, as well as allowing for a deeper understanding of the topic.

Deng has participated in History Day since freshman year, and to relate her topic to the theme, she is exploring the responsibility of the U.S. government to help Vietnamese refugees, as well as the rights of those refugees.

She also said that only after students write a long annotated bibliography with several different sources can they begin working on their project

Projects require around 30 hours of work and must be approved by history teacher, said Matt Torrens, the social studies teacher who coordinates the school's History Day efforts annually with librarian Kevin Heyman.

Through History Day, Torrens said, students are able to "sharpen research skills they are already learning, develop analytical skills, gain passion for a topic and defend their projects against critical analysis."

Deng pointed out the benefit of the hours that go into it.

"It's not a school project," she said. "It's separate so it's set apart from school, a fun project you do with friends." ♦

>> bigidea

History Day

Theme
Rights and Responsibilities

Benefits of History Day
According to Mr. Torrens, History Day helps students to sharpen their research skills, to develop analytical skills and to gain a passion for a topic. They also learn to defend their topic and argument from critical analysis.

Hours required for History Day project
Around 30 hours are required.

CHOIR >> Yowell retires after 10 years with music program

continued from pg. 1

music department head Michael Boitz quickly went calling around to local choir directors.

"I made a call to Dr. Benson and Mr. Ford was the first name that he [suggested]," said Boitz. "He said, 'Andrew Ford, you need to get this guy.'"

Ford is thankful for the opportunity his new job presents.

"I really and truly feel very honored and grateful for this opportunity to be teaching at Saratoga," Ford said. "It could have been any other person here, and I got picked; it's kind of like winning the lottery."

Ford will remain the choir director for the remainder of the year, but arrangements for next year and the years following are still being planned, and a decision has not yet been made.

"I would love to make a home here as a Falcon, but what we are looking at here right now is finishing off the semester," Ford said.

He said that for the few months he has with the choir, he wants to make sure that they are prepared for their evaluations in the spring.

"I know it might sound weird that I'm focusing on the short term, but my focus is on the end of this year, and making sure it doesn't feel like, 'Oh, there's a replacement here and he did an awful job,'" Ford said. "My goal is to give [the choir] a spectacular end of the year."

Along with teaching the Saratoga choirs part time, Ford also directs the Calvary Church Choir in Los Gatos. This will be his first school teaching job.

Yowell's first-period philharmonic orchestra, composed of sophomores, juniors and seniors, has now been grouped together along with the first-period freshman orchestra. Both the philharmonic orchestra and the freshman orchestra are under the direction of Jonathan Pwu.

Naoki Taniguchi has also taken over Yowell's teaching role for AP music theory during third period. Taniguchi

is now teaching jazz band at Redwood Middle School and Saratoga High. He graduated from UCLA with a bachelor's and master's degrees in music composition and saxophone performance.

Yowell's impact on Saratoga High

After graduating from the University of the Pacific Conservatory of Music and receiving his Bachelors and Masters degree in Music Education, Yowell went on to teach music in the California public school system for more than 30 years. Yowell received the honor of becoming the district's teacher of the year in 2008-2009.

A decade ago, the school successfully recruited Yowell from Fresno, and he instantly turned the choral program around, creating a number of strong choirs at the school.

Before his retirement, Yowell conducted the Women's Ensemble, Cantare Chorale, Chamber Singers, Concert Choir and the Saratoga Men's Choir, which he taught during Wednesday lunches because it didn't have its own class period. He also formed a 4-octave handbell choir called the Saratoga High School Ringers.

Yowell is beloved by hundreds of students and graduates, and many were deeply saddened when he announced his departure on Nov. 18.

Yowell is beloved by hundreds of students and graduates, and many were deeply saddened when he announced his departure on Nov. 18.

According to many students in his classes, Yowell was teary-eyed as he explained the sudden news.

During the summer of 2012, Yowell led the choir group on a music tour of Europe, entertaining families and dignitaries along the way. Each year, he has led the Chamber Singers, Cantare Chorale and Concert Choir to their caroling performance in San Francisco.

Yowell has served as president of the California American Choral Directors Association, the Bay Area and State choral representative to the California Music Education Association board and State of California Honor Choir Chairperson.

In his many years of teaching at Sara-



Yowell's replacement, Andrew Ford, a local choir director teaching for the remainder of the year, works with freshman Sarah Jin and sophomore Mengjiao Li on singing exercises.

toga, Yowell has helped students who love music, as well as students who are foreign to it, become passionate about singing, playing instruments and studying the fundamentals of music. Yowell's main focus was the choirs, and students of different levels have studied with him to improve their vocals and expand their singing skills.

"Mr. Yowell has opened me up to so many opportunities through choir. I've gotten to perform with choir at venues I wouldn't have even dreamed of like in the Vatican," senior Nina Jayashankar said.

"Most importantly, Mr. Yowell helped shape me as a person by opening me up to a group of people who loved to sing."

Many students who have known Yowell for a long time along with those who have only studied with him for a short time, have formed a strong relationship with him through daily choir classes, countless performances and numerous competitions.

Sophomore Ankitha Sarvesh came

under Yowell's vocal teaching during the summer before her freshman year.

"He is a passionate and dedicated person who really kept the choir program alive," Sarvesh said. "The reason we are so good is because of how hard he pushed us."

Many teachers had also created a strong friendship with Yowell over the course of his teaching time.

"I was saddened to hear that Mr. Yowell would be leaving us; he is a fine teacher and a good person," English teacher Cathy Head said. "We will miss him."

The Chamber Choir put its thanks into a couple of songs that they rehearsed on their own for Yowell and performed at the final concert. The tribute song that they sang, "Thank You For the Song," brought a huge smile to Yowell's face.

He also received numerous handwritten cards from students who thanked him for his hard work and personality. "I'll definitely miss him as a teacher, and I'll also miss him a lot as a friend," Jayashankar said. ♦

>> togatalks

What is something you will remember about Mr. Yowell?

He was a really good teacher, and the students knew he cared about them all."



sophomore Bitu Naimi

Everything he did was for the good of his own students."



senior Vivian Wang

I had him for a year and a half, and from what I've seen he's a great teacher."



sophomore Austin Villanueva

SPEECH AND DEBATE

Team showing growth, 8 students break

BY SudeepRaj & OksanaTrifonova

Eighty-eight schools competed in the Martin Luther King speech and debate tournament at James Logan High from Jan. 17-19. Considering the size of the tournament the team's results showed considerable growth among the participants.

In extemporaneous speaking, juniors Michael Ong and Jimmy Xiao advanced to elimination rounds, but both lost in quarterfinals. Ong and junior Sudeep Raj advanced to elimination rounds in Parliamentary debate, but lost in double octafinals.

It was the first time that Ong broke (advanced to elimination rounds) in debate, and the fact that it was a large tournament

added to his excitement.

In Lincoln-Douglas debate, junior Rohith Krishna and sophomore Shrey Desai advanced to elimination rounds.

"I was excited about making it to the elimination rounds, especially after countless hours of research, preparation and dedication," Desai said.

Krishna won double octafinals and quarterfinals but ultimately lost in semifinals.

"I feel like the fact that I wasn't ecstatic or overjoyed ultimately helped me keep my composure when debating the top seed and in the further elimination rounds," Krishna said.

Overall, the tournament had a successful outcome, and members showed a fair amount of growth regarding performance.

"It shows great progress that

our first ever parliamentary debate team cleared [preliminary rounds] and that a sophomore advanced in Lincoln-Douglas," Krishna said. "[Sophomore] Shrey Desai has become one of the best in our league."

Several state and national-level tournaments are coming up, such as the Stanford Invitational on Feb. 7-10.

"The results bode well for the rest of the semester, especially since the January-February Lincoln-Douglas topic is used in States, Nationals and the Tournament of Champions," Krishna said.

In the second Coast Forensic League Speech tournament on Jan. 26, few participants made it past the preliminary rounds. Freshman Mitali Shanbhag and sophomore Ashvita Ramesh ad-

vanced to semifinals in Original Oratory (OO), and senior Mohith Subbarao went on to finals and placed sixth in OO.

Junior Anjali Manghani, captain of OO, feels that the team's performance is overshadowing great success in future tournaments.

"To get three people to break, especially in our league, is a major achievement and we're working our way up through the season," Manghani said. "We've got some really really big tournaments coming up ... and judging by our performance now I think we're going to do really well there."

Manghani said that at this point in the season, all the teams are looking more polished "Now that people have had time to rehearse and edit their

speeches the competition is a lot tougher," Manghani said, "and to see that we had three people break already in such an environment is amazing."

Subbarao, the only finalist from SHS, was ecstatic about breaking. Only one thing could've made it better: "I would've been very happy if more people from SHS broke," said Subbarao. ♦

>> bigidea

Jan. 17 and 26 tournaments

Who broke
Senior Mohith Subbarao; juniors Michael Ong, Jimmy Xiao, Sudeep Raj and Rohith Krishna; sophomores Shrey Desai and Ashvita Ramesh and freshman Mitali Shanbhag.

SCHOOL SPIRIT

Rally commission tries to boost participation

BY MelissaMagner & NupurMaheshwari

If the rally commission has its way, students hoping to enter classrooms on rally Fridays will find doors closed and locked.

The commissioners tried this for the December rally, but had lackluster results.

"It was the first rally where we suggested to the teachers that they close their doors," senior rally commissioner Bronwen Bowen said. "But many teachers were hesitant about this and didn't end up doing so, so the turnout wasn't much bigger than previous rallies."

Rally commissioner Isa Berardo said that it would be ideal

to get closed tutorials for rallies in order to see more participation from the students.

Bowen said that the number of rallies was cut down from eight last year to only a round three or four this year — the motive being to use the fewer number of rallies to make students more excited to attend.

"We also hoped that by having fewer rallies, teachers would be more willing to close

their rooms for tutorials, but unfortunately, that hasn't happened yet," Bowen said.

Junior Natalie Millersaid that the rally commission was also working with the office at the end of last year

to change the school schedule on rally days. This would allow for a designated time rallies had every time they were hosted.

"We were thinking that by

having a different schedule on rally days, more students would come to the rally," Miller said. "Our goal is to fill up the middle bleachers — we want [the gym] to be overflowing."

However, rally commission adviser and guidance counselor Eileen Allen said that selecting a designated time for a rally could pose potential problems.

"Technically there isn't enough room in the gym for everyone to fit, so holding an event where all students are forced to attend would prove problematic," Allen said.

Other students, including sophomore Nihar Agrawal, dislike the idea of forcing more student to attend.

"Although I think rallies are a great way to increase spirit and school participation, I don't think they should be made into a mandatory obligation," Agrawal said. "People should still be given the option to use tutorials."

According to Allen, closed tutorials is the best way to increase student participation at rallies; however, she admits that this idea may not work out.

"It's difficult because a lot of teachers really value the tutorial period, and remain hesitant about closing their doors," Allen said. "Because of this, closed tutorials aren't something we can mandate, but rather encourage." ♦

BOOSTER WEBSITE

Hacker targets music department home page

BY NelsonWang & TiffanyZhang

Visitors to the Saratoga Music website on Dec. 15 were greeted not by the usual music schedules, but instead by a black screen with moving red text saying "Hacked Hank Sandlep" (presumably a pseudonym).

Band member and senior Margaret Maccoun said the website was hacked for a couple of hours and then the site went "Under Construction" for a while.

According to Zone-H.org, a website with a cybercrime archive, Sandlep has so far committed 481 known website defacements, since July 2013. He has hacked everything from lacrosse websites to technology websites. He has even hacked multiple international sites, such as websites from the U.K. and Czech Republic.

Still, his identity remains unknown; no public information on him can be found. His attacks have not been reported in various hacker news websites.

Some students say they were grateful for this interruption to finals week, because the prank relieved some stress.

"Thanks Hank for making me laugh when finals studying took away all my happiness," wrote senior Gabriela Romo on Facebook the day of the hack.

Most students seemed to believe that there was no real motivation behind the hack and that it was just for amusement.

"Sometimes you get bored and do fun things; this was no different," said senior Kevin Jiang. Jiang was surprised Sandlep chose

the Saratoga Music website to hack.

"[He] amazes me — out of all the pages you could hack for email lists and stuff, you attack a website that holds no value. There aren't even emails hosted on the site."

Since the end of December the Saratoga Music website was up and running again. Even so, Sandlep has been known to "redeface" some websites that have been fixed, according to his Zone-h.org record. ♦

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COLLEGE

Legacy: Does it really affect admissions?

BY Melissa **Magner** & Vibha **Seshadri**

Many students here work day and night for stellar grades, outstanding test scores and excellence in extracurriculars, all in the hope that they'll be admitted to Stanford, MIT, Harvard or other private schools.

In the meantime, other students have something else in their corner, legacy.

Legacy refers to the advantage in admissions some students gain when applying to a private college because one of their family members attended.

According to Michael Hurwitz, associate policy research scientist at the College Board's Advocacy and Policy Center, legacy is a reality.

In his Economics of Education Review, Hurwitz states a student with primary legacy has a 45.1 percent more likelihood of being accepted into a university, with secondary legacy a student has a 13.7 percent better chance of getting accepted and with any legacy a student has a 23.3 percent more likelihood of getting accepted.

A study conducted by Thomas Espenshade from Princeton University showed that the legacy advantage was equivalent to a 160-point increase on an SAT score.

Class of 2012 alumnus Shivan Chadha, who now attends University of Pennsylvania, is among those who don't believe having history at a school is helpful.

"My dad did his MBA at Wharton [UPenn's famed business school.]" Chadha said. "It was useful in the sense that I visited once when I was younger and got to know the school at an early age, and I decided it was what I wanted to work towards, but other than just putting the idea in my head I don't think I had an edge when applying just because my dad did his MBA here."

Despite all of the advantages of having legacy, senior Alvin Huang believes that it shouldn't be the main reason students are accepted. "I believe that since the rest of a system is a meritocracy, legacy kids should have to be as accomplished as the other people they are up against," Huang said.

Senior Priyanka Krishnamurthi feels that legacy, is not a bad thing if the candidate is as accomplished as others.

Krishnamurthi said. "I don't think they get accepted only because of [legacy]. If someone is a good candidate for a particular college, having relatives who have gone to the school can help."

Family members who attended the college previously and donate large sums of money, may in turn expect the acceptance of their child.

"It makes sense sometimes," class of 2013 alumnus Bhavana Vadrevu said. "When an alumni gives money that the school needs to keep it at a certain quality, the act should be rewarded."

But Vadrevu doesn't think the idea is fair. "It creates a more uneven playing field for people who are trying to get into colleges, which is already a daunting and difficult process," she said.

According to Business Insider, Harvard's legacy admissions rate stands at 30 percent while only 5.8 percent of all Harvard applicants were admitted in 2013.

For its class of 2015, Princeton had a similar legacy admissions rate to that of Harvard's: Its rate was 33 percent but overall only 8.5 percent of all of Princeton's applicants were accepted.

Some students, such as Vadrevu, believe that although "legacy" kids have a slight advantage over "non-legacy" kids, they shouldn't be considered as someone who was accepted to return a favor.

"Money shouldn't ever dictate education," Vadrevu said. "However, our education system doesn't have enough support to stop being as reliant on donations (especially the larger, more prestigious schools) so currently the practice is a necessary evil."

Guidance counselor Eileen Allen shares a similar opinion. "I don't necessarily think that this [donating money] occurs across the board with admissions, but if a student who comes from a very wealthy family who has donated millions to a school is admitted over another student who is more qualified in every way, then of course I think this is unfair," Allen said.

Because these are private institutions, Allen said that it is their right to make these kinds of decisions.

Others see more positive sides of legacy. "A lot of factors get thrown into the pot as admissions officers try to create balanced classes with students who have particular talents and a variety of backgrounds," Stephen Joel Trachtenberg, the 15th president of George Washington University, stated in a Wall Street Journal article.

"Whether an applicant is a legacy should be one of those factors, because it is so important to sustaining two qualities at the core of the college experience: school spirit and a lasting sense of community."

Trachtenberg believes that these "alumni children" have the academic requirements as well as true passion and love for the school.

Although legacy is a reality, Allen believes it shouldn't deter "non-legacy" students hopes of getting accepted into a college.

"I believe that students should be evaluated in a holistic fashion," Allen said. "Even if legacy status plays a part in admissions, it is likely and necessary for there to be other factors that go into an admission decision." ♦

>> bigidea

The Truth about Legacy

Primary legacy
Students on average have a 45.1% higher chance of acceptance.

Secondary legacy
Students are 13.7% more likely to get accepted.

Any sort of legacy
It still guarantees a higher acceptance rate by 22.3%.

Source: Michael Hurwitz of College Board

FALCON FOCUS: MICHELLE LEUNG

Figure skater perseveres despite heavy workload

BY Helen **Chen** & Maya **Ravichandran**

It's a typical Sunday practice. Junior Michelle Leung shivers slightly as she rubs her hands together in an effort to stay warm.

It's 5 a.m., but the ice rink air is actually colder than the morning air outside. Her sleek, white skates glimmer as the lights reflect off the unmarked surface of the ice rink. She's half-asleep, but she can feel herself waking up with each stroke.

Leung's love of skating began at age 5. She was living in Vancouver, Canada. Leung said that since "everyone skates in Canada," she decided to take up the sport, along with her brother, freshman Trevor Leung, and several other friends.

She started private lessons with her current coach, 1996 U.S. national champion Rudy Galindo, when she was just 11 years old.

"I like the speed and creativity of ice skating, and all the friends I have at the rink," Leung said.

Leung currently skates at Logitech, the Sharks Ice at San Jose almost every day of the week.

Though she has never considered herself a serious competitor, she has still participated in a few competitions for recreational purposes.

"Competitions are exhilarating because everyone in the audience is looking only at you. For three minutes, you have complete center stage," Leung said. "It's helped me a lot with my confidence."

Although she has had to cut down

on practice time because of school work, Leung practices hard for five or six hours a week in the mornings, working to master some of the more complicated spins and jumps as she plans to test into senior level in the United States Figure Skating Association (USFSA) system.

Leung's favorite spin is the Biellmann spin, a move in which the skater extends one foot over the head from behind to form a teardrop.

"It's probably the most cliché spin you can do in figure skating, but I like it because it feels amazing to spin and stretch at once," Leung said. "It was the element I most wanted to do when I was younger."

Leung's proudest moment was when she performed a clean routine at the Crystalline Classic, a competition held in Santa Rosa last year.

Since it was one of her last career competitions, performing a clean program without any slips or mistakes was especially meaningful.

In addition to skating, Leung has also started sharing what she does by teaching a group lesson beginner class twice a week. She finds interacting with the kids incredibly rewarding, if sometimes tiring.

"They are so excited about skating," Leung said.

Leung has enjoyed participating in the sport through the years and thinks it's been worth the effort.

"Skating has been my best friend for eleven years," Leung said. "I don't regret anything I've done; every fall has helped teach me something new about getting up and trying again." ♦



Leung

APPLICATIONS

College interviews not as important as feared

BY Derek **Sun**

Each year, hundreds of thousands of college applicants have a chance to receive the fated college interview. But how important is the actual interview in the admissions process?

There are two types of interviews: the informal interview with a college alumnus and the coveted interview with an admissions officer.

Any interview with any college admissions officer has a direct correlation to college admissions, but the actual importance of alumni interviews is less clear.

For most colleges including all Ivy League schools and many private schools including Duke and University of Southern California, the colleges require alumni interviews. More than 100 SHS seniors go through these interviews each year.

The alumni interview is generally a 30- to 60-minute conversation that gives an alumnus a better understanding of the student, and the student a better understanding of the school.

The alumnus then writes a small report about the student. Usually at the beginning of each interview, the alumnus says the interview has little bearing on the actual admissions process, but students can't help but wonder whether it's true.

Senior Jason Li, for one, initially felt good about his University of Pennsylvania interview, but was disappointed with the outcome.

"My alumnus interview went really well, but in the end, I was still rejected, even though my interviewer was really impressed by my responses," Li said.

For many top-tier schools that interview, such as Georgetown, Dartmouth, Brown and Duke, the interviewer tells the student that in the scope of the admissions process, the interview itself is only a fragment of the whole process.

There's many more things colleges take into account when reviewing applications.

The toughest part about the interview, though, may not actually be the interview itself, but whether the interviewer is genuinely interested or merely putting up a masquerade because it's their job.

According to all Ivy League websites, the alumnus interview is an opportunity for students to get a feel for the college, but the interviews are also evaluative of the student's abilities.

What most students do agree on is that the interview process is a great way for students learn about the college from a student perspective, a sentiment reflected on many college websites.

Although the college interviews often elicit fear and anxiety, almost all seniors recognize that it's a necessary part of the college application. It presents a chance to make an impression.

"Whether or not the interview actually helps the application process, it is a good way to get a feel for the university and to let the university know you," Li said. ♦

The interview itself is only a fragment of the process. There's many more things colleges take into account.

Take heed: APES is not an easy AP course

BY Jade **Bisht** & Derek **Sun**

Looking to take an AP science that isn't as math heavy as AP Physics, concept-based as AP Chemistry or as memorization-based as AP Biology? Considering taking AP Environmental Science (APES) because you've heard that it's an "easy AP"?

Not so. APES is no walk in the park. The class assigns AP U.S. History-style chapter notes daily, with each section ranging from five to 20 pages long. Students then start the next class with a quiz based on these readings. These notes can prove frustrating as well as time-consuming. Coupling these notes with occasional projects in APES leads to hours of weekly homework.

While the class gives rigorous homework, it is much easier than its AP science counterparts in one aspect: the labs. APES labs do not require comprehensive multiple page write-ups and lab reports. Even so, the labs in APES are effective in testing the students' conceptual knowledge of the unit and supplement the textbook readings.

APES requires students to take an interdisciplinary approach to learning, since it combines history, science, and

government policy into one curriculum.

The school's college prep biology and chemistry classes provide students with an insight as to what AP Biology and AP Chemistry will be like, therefore shining a light on what subject they show a greater interest in.

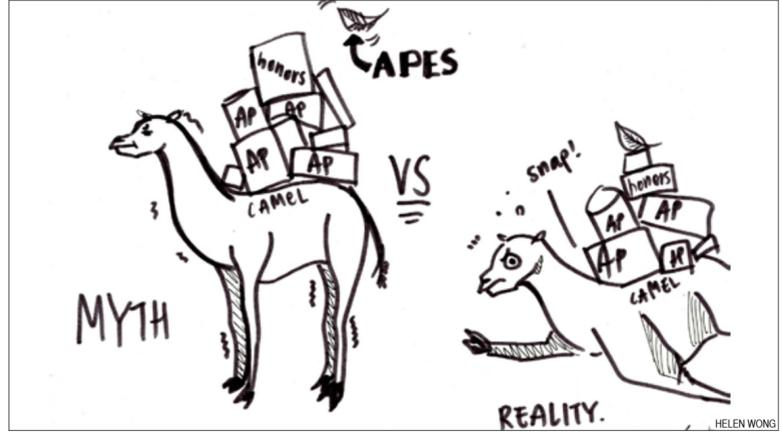
By contrast, there is no prerequisite course to expose students to the topics covered in APES. Students assume the class is easier than others because the concepts seem relatively simple: the Earth needs to be saved, mortality rates and birth rates vary by country and animals live in a dog-eat-dog world.

Now throw all these topics into a test and you'll find yourself deceptively confused. However, APES tests are deceptively difficult.

Granted, the subjects in APES are far more concrete than other AP sciences, but simplicity by no means equates to easiness. APES exams are similar to AP U.S. History tests, forcing students to be able to apply their knowledge about the subjects to hypothetical situations.

The abundance of information covered by APES tests classifies it as one of the toughest AP classes offered at the school.

>> candidcaricatures



Each covers two chapters on average, with high expectations for short response and mind boggling multiple-choice questions.

Going over notes is nowhere near enough studying required for the class; students must go in depth and fully comprehend concepts and real-world examples before feeling adequately prepared for tests.

This is not to say that the class isn't fun. APES offers en-

tertaining movies and creative projects that offer an hands-on approach to comprehending these real-world topics. While providing tips for understanding concepts, APES teacher Kristen Thompson tells of her hilarious adventures in numerous countries, some featuring fellow science teacher Lisa Cochrum. First semester provides numerous engaging art projects, including writing and making a children's storybook about an

endangered species.

It's become a common trend where students take AP courses to obtain the coveted one point GPA boost, only to collapse in a fiery explosion of school-induced stress. If you truly enjoy the idea of integrating environmental studies with history and a variety of other disciplines, APES is your class. If you don't, and just want the AP credit, APES might be more than you bargained for. ♦

New Year's resolutions work when using right approach

BY Nikhil **Goel**

When people flop on the couch during a post-countdown New Year's food coma and create a quixotic list of resolutions for the upcoming year, they look out the nearest window with the prospect of self-improvement and self-fulfillment.

Often, however, the resolutions are abstract, and without a concrete goal, people forget the resolutions they created after a week of introspection. But, if forgetting resolutions is the problem and not the concept itself, then why not just create a surefire way to remember?

The solution is simple: Create a motto. Create an acronym. Create some method to remember. Say, for example, a list of resolutions is mainly personality focused. Reading more books, immersing yourself in the arts, maintaining composure in tough situations and smiling more becomes "Rims." Rims on rims on rims. "Rims" becomes your keyword for the year, one that is straightforward and easy to remember.

The major problem with New Year's resolutions is that they are easily forgotten because of their often abstract nature. Without some way to remember, many maintain the habits of the previous year that they resolve to change. The solution is a catchphrase for the year, and once the obstacle of memory is overcome, the benefits of resolutions are numerous.

Granted, one phrase may not be enough for self-improvement, but it does make one conscious of their goals in the spur of the moment. Just as a religious believer remembers portions of scripture during various situations, a New Year's resolutionist should know his or her keyword by heart. Otherwise, as the resolution doubters correctly proclaim, creating a set of goals at the beginning of every year is useless.

Some argue that resolutions prevent

people from living in the present; however, since the very essence behind a resolution is the desire to change poor habits, then carpe diem would only cement these habits into a person's lifestyle.

Obviously, New Year's resolutions are not for the weak-spirited or the impatient. But, can he who desires a beach body really obtain a six-pack by living in the moment? Can a debater become a state champion by not setting goals for herself to practice? Can a mathlete emerge victorious at the highest competitions without doing the extra problem sets every single day?

The naysayers who proclaim that New Year's resolutions are meaningless do so because so many fail at them. But if a racehorse is not running well, you do not denounce the entire equestrian sport as useless.

While there are over-idealistic aspects of the New Year's resolution tradition, the entire concept cannot be labeled as useless. The impracticalities of New Year's resolutions can be fixed by first setting realistic and concrete goals. Then, if you are one of the many still holding on to those abstract resolutions, create a motto for the year. Just please do not make it YOLO. ♦

>> bigidea

New Year's resolutions

The Problem
New Year's resolutions are often abstract, impractical and easily forgotten.

The Solution
Create concrete goals for the year that are reachable. If the resolutions are still abstract, create a motto or acronym for the year that will help you remember what you have set out to achieve.

Bitcoin: online currency hurting investors bit by bit

BY Matt **Foley**

Gamering massive attention from the media in recent months, the online cryptocurrency Bitcoin saw its unit price skyrocket from \$200 to well over \$1,000 at its peak. The truth is, though, that anyone looking to invest in it should be deterred by the volatility of the currency.

Recently, several crashes in the Bitcoin market illustrated the volatility of the currency, which, in its first major crash, dropped from \$1,000 to \$500 in a matter of hours, and at the time of this writing, has stabilized — or come as close to stabilizing as Bitcoin can — at \$850, according to the Mt. Gox Online Exchange. These drops, brought on by the denunciation of the currency,

one thing remains common between all of them: the use of Bitcoins as the currency of choice. Bitcoin is ideal for this type of transaction due to its untraceable nature and the anonymity inherently provided by the currency.

The price of Bitcoins, and all other cryptocurrencies that have grown in popularity in recent months, is driven by speculation. The hype surrounding this investment is the sole driver for the current spike in price, and it is creating a bubble that will soon pop. The mining process is so resource intensive that Marginal Revolution estimated that Bitcoin mining accounted for \$15 million in power consumption daily in December of 2013.

Nearly all aspects of Bitcoin have been under widespread scrutiny since the currency's boom, and the mining process is no exception. Hackers can infect computers with a virus that will utilize the computer's available resources to mine Bitcoins for the hacker, and only the incredibly

tech-savvy will notice a drop in their computer's performance. However, this only scratches the surface of the currency's shady applications.

Last October, an apartment in San Francisco was raided, and inside, federal agents found the servers running the largest online underground market at that time: the Silk Road. The Silk Road was an online marketplace for illegal goods and services ranging from drugs to professional hitmen. To ensure the privacy and safety of both the buyer and the seller, the Silk Road could only be accessed through a secure browser, and payments were made in Bitcoins.

Since the shutdown, numerous markets have popped up to fill the void that the Silk Road left. However, one thing remains common between all of them: the use of Bitcoins as the currency of choice. Bitcoin is ideal for this type of transaction due to its untraceable nature and the anonymity inherently provided by the currency.

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The hype surrounding [Bitcoin] is creating a bubble that will soon pop.

THIRD PERIOD

STAFF POLICY

The *Saratoga Falcon* is published 12 times per year by the Advanced Journalism classes of Saratoga High School, 20300 Herriman Ave., Saratoga, CA 95070.

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

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

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

Physics changes worth trying

CHANGE TO HONORS COURSE WOULD WORK TO STUDENTS' BENEFIT

The magical two letters: "A" and "P." Mix the two ingredients together, slap 'em in front of a course and you'll create a magical student trap — think flies drawn to an electric fly killer.

With the opposite intention in mind, AP Physics teacher Kirk Davis, in conjunction with the guidance department, is exploring changing AP Physics B to Physics Honors. This proposed change comes in the wake of the recent College Board decision to change AP Physics B and AP Physics C into a two-year course sequence, AP Physics 1 and AP Physics 2. Instead of adopting this plan, the school would eliminate AP Physics from its course offerings and introduce Physics Honors.

In essence, the proposed course would combine topics covered in both AP Physics 1 and 2, such as Newtonian mechanics and electromagnetism, but taught without the strict constraints of the AP curriculum. The push for this class looks to ensure that students can properly master the class concepts, rather than just rush toward preparation for an AP exam in an eight-month period. According to Davis, however, students who take this course next year will still be adequately prepared to take either AP test.

Physics is no simple course. It is a branch of science needed in almost every scientific craft — MIT won't even consider you if you haven't taken physics. With the current AP Physics structure, the course stresses preparation

for the AP test instead of concepts. The proposed course will give Davis freedom to go far more in-depth into the subject rather than simply brush the topics in a test-preparatory manner.

We can hear the cries of the AP-hungry already. With this change, there is no "AP" (though the course would more adequately prepare one for the tests) — how are students going to show their love for the sciences to colleges? It just doesn't flow as well. One can't brag "I took AP Bio, AP Chem and AP Physics" in the same breath, and it's a travesty.

Jokes aside, it's highly unlikely that colleges will punish a student for not taking an AP class that isn't offered. You don't look bad for taking a class that doesn't exist. Instead, it's more likely that this transition would lessen Saratoga's reputation as a test-taking, automatons-student factory.

Those who are interested in the actual subject of physics, though, should be thrilled by the proposed course. The system surely won't be easy (Davis isn't known for fluff classes). Rather, the opportunities for true physics lovers will only increase. First-year Physics students, in motion, will stay in motion, and the resulting momentum will propel physics buffs through college.

Simple Newtonian physics. ♦

Those who are interested in the actual subject of physics, though, should be thrilled by the proposed course.

>> Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

Editors-in-chief

Cristina Curcelli
Karen Sung

Opinion Editor

Nick Chow

Reporter

Samuel Liu

The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 29-2 in favor of the proposed physics honors course.



American education remains mediocre

By Candice Zheng

Twenty-sixth place in mathematics, 17th in reading and 21st place in science. It's no secret that American students are falling behind their international peers.

Although SHS is an exception, it is still disconcerting to see how the U.S.'s foreign counterparts are outpacing us in almost every subject. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests administered last year placed the U.S. in the bottom half out of the 34 countries tested.

According to the PISA website, an average of \$115,000 is spent per American student on their entire educational career. There is apparently no correlation between spending and test results, as Slovakia, which spends merely \$53,000 per student, scored on the same level as the United States. This seemingly paradoxical observation leads to the question: what in the world are we doing wrong?

Many states have taken the mediocre scores to heart and initiated the Common Core State Standards in hope of spurring students' intellectual progress and readiness for higher education and future careers. California accepted the initiative in 2010, and as of now, 45 states have adopted the Common Core standards, gradually fulfilling the goal of consistent and more challenging educational goals throughout the entire country.

Although in the early stages of its initiation, the Common Core has shown gradual, but promising results. Kentucky, the first state to actually implement the curriculum, has seen a notable increase in test scores, high school graduation rates, and college and career readiness since 2010. However, the rate of improvement is not fast at all, and experts have pointed out that the "one size fits all" curriculum ignores learning nuances among students.

The U.S. deserves to be cut some slack, though. The U.S. harbors a huge variety of ethnic and socioeconomic groups that are hard to cater to under one national education system. Most of the high-achieving nations on the PISA

>> candid caricatures



test, including South Korea, Singapore and Finland, are largely ethnically homogeneous and hold the same social values, especially on education.

Thus, it's difficult to say if the U.S.'s educational system is the issue. Compared to the U.S., it is true that the top-scoring countries deploy very different educational methods. Many of the Asian countries that consistently place high on the PISA utilize a system with greater emphasis on testing and academic drilling, while Finland, another top scoring country, has a highly unorthodox school system where exams and homework are minimized. The U.S. seems to be muddled in the middle of these extremes and not succeeding at all.

The problem falls heavily on the shoulders of America's youth culture. Still, to many American youths today, high achievement in academics is looked down upon, and huge emphasis is placed on sports, recreation and "what we are good at." America's educational system can do little to truly motivate students, even with the new Common Core standards. Juxtaposing this mentality with, say, China or South Korea, the student perspective is completely different.

In many of the consistently high-scoring countries, cultural emphasis on the relationship of education and success is

highly stressed. For the many students in South Korea and China, school runs six days a week and most students stay in school or some kind of after school tutoring program to 10 at night. Grades are posted in classrooms for everyone to see, shaming the students with the lowest scores and lauding high performers.

However, for all the praise applauding the ability of these countries to churn out test-taking machines, there is criticism pointing out the lack of emphasis on innovation and creative freedom. America, despite its educational shortcomings, still remains a titan of innovation in the global market.

Yes, the American students are "falling behind." But the United States was never "ahead" to begin with, having never scored above mediocre on any international assessment tests since the late 1900s. There is no best bet for a quick solution to the U.S.'s woeful scores, and a major educational upheaval is not practical nor guaranteed to be effective.

Students need to be motivated to do well in school, and frankly, many are not in an environment where school is placed as first priority. To change this problem, societal issues much more deep-rooted than our nation's education system have to be evaluated and changed — no small feat indeed. ♦

Tandoori Oven

INDIAN RESTAURANT BRINGS AUTHENTIC INDIAN TASTE

By Atirath Kosireddy

My dad and I made a run over to Petco to get my dog dinner for the night, and we had to make it home in about an hour, so we didn't exactly have much time on our hands. As we made the 15-minute trip to Tandoori Oven to eat our own dinner, I wasn't too sure if the restaurant would be able to pull off a good curry in 15 minutes as it takes time to marinate the meat I did see that six of my friends liked this place on Facebook, so I figured it would probably be good.

After pulling over in downtown Los Gatos on Santa Cruz Ave., we entered the restaurant, which was small and casually decorated.

As I walked up to the cashier, I took a look at the menu, which had a variety of items ranging from curries to naan (Indian flatbread) wraps filled with meat or paneer (Indian cheese). There was a good variety of foods on

the menu.

I decided to go with the Sunday special Lamb Dopiaza (pieces of lamb cooked in an onion gravy), while my dad ordered a chicken kabob and chicken wrap.

Now, with my Indian descent, I can say that cooking lamb curry is not a task that can easily be done in a matter of minutes.

It turned out that the cooks were able to pull off a not-so-easy task in a matter of minutes. I was skeptical at the speed at which the chefs were able to cook up the dish. Five minutes later, I received a metal bowl filled with chunks of lamb in a dark sauce, along with rice, naan and cucumber salad on a separate plate.

I speared a piece of savory and spicy lamb with my fork and placed it in my mouth. It was flavorful, but not searingly hot, the way most people imagine Indian food.

The chefs did not just toss some

Tandoori Oven

(OUT OF FIVE)

Where: 137 N Santa Cruz Ave, Los Gatos
Type of Food: Indian
Price range: \$
Reporter's Favorite: Lamb Dopiaza



Tandoori Oven offers delicious Indian food at an affordable price and quick speed.

lamb pieces into chili powder to make the curry — I could tell that they put the time to let various spices soak into the meat.

And surprisingly, the lamb was quite tender. The chef provided me with a decent-sized bed of rice and two halves of a naan to complement the lamb. The naan wasn't exactly bad, but I have eaten better naan with more fluffiness. Essentially, the naan was not necessary.

When my dad and I walked out of the restaurant, we took a look at the time and found that we only took up a half-hour for dinner. Not bad, considering that I ordered lamb curry, which usually takes hours to prepare.

We even made it home in time so we could head to the movie theater to watch a movie. Coincidentally, it was "Krrish 3," a Bollywood movie. However, I was a bit frustrated to find that there was another Tandoori Oven branch in the same complex.

Tandoori Oven's food as a whole was exceptional, even though I've eaten better naan before. The restaurant managed to make me a complete Indian dinner with tender meat and flavorful curry sauce, all in 5 minutes for about \$10. That kind of quality for the speed is a win-win.

I definitely feel confident in saying that Tandoori Oven managed to warm up my night. ♦

STYLE FILES

Brandy Melville \$35
white shirt

Brandy Melville \$30
shirt

Brandy Melville \$45
sweater

Pac Sun \$20
skirt

DeMasque \$40
leather jacket

PacSun \$30
skirt

CVS \$4
tights

CVS \$8
tights

Urban Outfitters \$15
socks

Urban Outfitters \$15
tights

Steve Madden \$100
boots

Steve Madden \$100
boots

Ai Asai, 10 and Yu Asai, 10

STYLE FILES

Polo Ralph Lauren \$3
cotton tee

\$25 AT&T Park
Giants cap

Allison Lin's \$15
cardigan

\$35 Banana Republic
dawn fit chinos

Timberland \$35
boat shoes

Jason Li, 12

January 31, 2014

Journalist find success in shopping for relatives

By Allison Lin

The biggest challenge I face each year is far more daunting than a big dance competition, intimidating than preparing for finals week or exhausting than a tennis tournament.

As the holidays roll around at the end of each year, my hopes for a relaxed break are crushed, as my mom and I prepare ourselves for the tiring task of finding the best fit gift for the personality of each person in our 20-member extended family.

As we entered the maze of shops at the Tanger Outlet nestled in Barstow, Calif., I let out a heavy breath as I braced myself for the annual shopping extravaganza, and the quest to find the gift to match the character of each person in our family began. The outlet's directory attracted a large crowd trying to glance at the endless list of designer stores mapped out in color coded rows, and I politely squeezed myself between strangers until the directory loomed over me.

Everybody in my family is known to have their individual quirks and interests, which makes it very tough to pick out each person's present. At the annual family holiday reunions, my mom and I are known to have the best taste, and we

were determined to live up to the expectations.

My cousins range from 6 to 27 years old, so we decided to start with the basics: clothing. Running from Gymboree to Hollister to Calvin Klein, my mom and I rifled through dresses, sweaters, scarves and ties, mixing and matching an assortment of colors and patterns until we were satisfied. We also found Belle's yellow ball gown, from Disney's "Beauty and the Beast," and Buzz Lightyear's spacesuit, from Pixar's "Toy Story," for my youngest cousins.

After hitting a majority of the clothing stores, we began to look for offbeat items. I was convinced the moment I laid eyes on a gleaming pair of red moon shoes, strap-on shoes that simulate walking in an anti-gravity zone, that it would be treasured by one of my younger male cousins.

We proceeded to discover a tomato launcher, singing toothbrush and gum-ball dispenser from various toy stores.

As we moved on to my cousins who are older and in college or graduated from college, we narrowed it down to things that they could use in their dai-

ly lives. I remembered that they are all athletes of some sort, and probably preferred athletic apparel and equipment. I browsed through the racks of multi-colored pairs of Nike's new line of Flyknit Sneakers, and found a couple of Nike Elite socks to go with the shoes.

I also have a cousin who most likely loves food more than he likes me, so I bought him a donut maker.



ALLISON LIN
Linccredible

My mom and I met back at the Dairy Queen for milkshakes to reward ourselves, and both of us collapsed into the booth. She showed me a robotic vacuum for my aunt, a digital photo album for my

grandaunts and a cookbook for my uncle.

Apparently there was a purse she had in mind for my other aunt, but an aggressive lady in the same store grabbed it from her like a preschooler grabs her classmate's Legos. Shopping at the outlet for presents can feel like a warzone.

The next weekend, the entire family gathered at one of my cousins' homes in Los Angeles. We finished the big family dinner, but my mind was on the many presents under the Christmas tree that

my mom and I spent hours wrapping before driving down to Los Angeles with my dad and sisters. I always get more excited to watch others open their presents from me than open my own.

My dad offered to distribute the presents, and as he called up each person's name. The sound of tearing wrapping paper filled the room as everybody eagerly ripped open the gift wrap covering their Christmas presents.

Bows and ribbons littered the living room floor. Gasps and exclamations filled the room, just as I expected, as everybody marveled at their new gifts.

All of the cousins spent at least another hour trying out the new toys, gadgets and clothes, as the adults retired to the dining room for coffee.

As I sat on the carpet talking to my older cousins, my youngest cousin, who is 6, ran up to me in the midst of all of the commotion and threw his short arms around my neck, whispering in my ear that he "loved his new spacesuit berry much."

I'd say the Lin family did well this holiday season, and our gifts turned out to be unanimous hits! After all, we did go through a battle field and then some to get them. The only thing I dread now: next year's holidays. ♦

Robotics club member presented with dream niche gift: a cat-fighting robot

By Matt Foley

Senior Alex Renda eagerly reached for his Christmas present and tore the wrapping paper from the box. When he looked down, a large, black set of eyes met his gaze. Renda received a Robosapien robot and was thoroughly delighted.

"My uncle who has always given me cool and random gifts gave me the Robosapien because he knew of my interest in robotics," Renda said.

The WowWee Robosapien is a remote-controllable robot that retails for \$80. It was designed by a former NASA engineer, who wanted the Robosapien to be highly customizable and easily modified. It can either be controlled by the remote control that comes with it or by smartphone.

"The controls are actually extremely elaborate, especially for a toy robot, and I'm still trying to become accustomed to all of them," Renda said. "The remote has over 20 buttons and many buttons can be used in conjunction with one another

to execute even more movements."

This button layout allows for high variability in the actions of the robot. Teams of engineers have programmed the Robosapien to perform various tasks from playing soccer to speaking. Renda, however, has found another use for his robot.

"When I first brought the robot out of the packaging, my cat seemed attracted to it and started hitting it, so I decided I would fight back," Renda said. "Commandeering the robot is not an easy task, though, and my cat typically comes out on top."

Renda views these bouts as a harmless way of blowing off steam.

"The Robosapien provides a nice getaway from work," Renda said. "If I'm tired of studying or lying on the couch with nothing to do, I'll power up the Robosapien and just walk it around the house."

According to Renda, part of the allure of the robot is derived from his love of robotics. However, this does cause him to hesitate when deciding if he would



Courtesy of ALEX RENDA

The Robosapien gets ready for a showdown with senior Alex Renda's cat. Renda says that the robot "provides a getaway" from the rigors of senior year and helps him relax.

recommend the Robosapien to a friend. "For someone like me who loves gadgets and is interested in engineering, it's a great gift," Renda said. "But, I could

see how someone could view it as a novelty gift, and \$80 is a hefty price to pay for something that could be viewed in that light." ♦

HOLIDAY GIFTS:

HITS LIST

THOUGH THE HOLIDAYS ARE OVER,
THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT WILL LIVE ON

GRAPHICS BY ROTEM SHAKED

Kit Kittredge doll completes students' dream

By Vibha Seshadri

Erin Norris jumped out of bed and ran down the stairs, her bright blonde hair bobbing up and down behind her. As she rounded the last step, a smile as bright as the sun spread across her face. Under the Christmas tree sat an enormous present with her and her three sister's names.

The Norris sisters ripped open the gift as quick as their hands could carry them, but to their disappointment, they were met with a stack of red bricks with an old glove resting on top.

Their father had played a Christmas prank on them, and Erin, who was only 5 at the time, started sobbing. But, as soon as her parents brought out her real gift, a Barbie scooter, her smile returned, and her tears disappeared.

Three years later, Erin was met with a similar situation but with a better outcome.

Norris, now 8, once again rounded the last step and jumped off in excitement, as she saw a large present with her name on it under the Christmas tree.

When she tore the wrapping paper off, she was face-to-face with the American Girl Doll Kit Kittredge.

An American Girl doll looks like a typical doll, but each comes with a story to her background, making them

more relatable to children. Kit Kittredge is a young girl who helps her family through the Great Depression with her intelligence and thriftiness. Through this journey, she learns that money is not as important as her family and friends.

"I had already seen the movie about Kit, and I really liked her story. I wanted her doll, so I could play with her," Norris, now a sophomore, said. "I was really excited when I got the gift because I originally thought I wouldn't get it since it was pretty expensive."

For the next few years following that successful Christmas, Norris's maternal grandmother, who gave her the doll, would bring Norris extra clothes for the doll on her birthday or on Christmas as a present.

"There was this one set of matching pajamas that [Kit] and I had," Norris said. "We would both wear the pajamas at night."

Although Norris loved all the accessories she was gifted each year for her doll, her favorite one had originally come with the gift itself.

"I was really excited because [Kit] had a typewriter, and I thought it would actually type stuff when I was little," Norris said. "But it turns out it didn't, so I was pretty sad, but I still thought [the typewriter] was really cool."

As Norris grew older, her days of

matching and playing with Kit started to fade away. However, the doll still remains in a corner of her room.

During Christmas, Norris and her sister place their dolls on an American Girl sled next to their Christmas tree.

Although Norris no longer plays with her doll anymore, her 7- and 8-year-old cousins enjoy playing with Kit Kittredge when they visit Norris and her family.

The doll remains her favorite Christmas gift even to this day, not only because she had wanted it for a long time but because it also carries sentimental value.

Norris and her grandmother had always been very close.

Norris family would often drive to Los Angeles to visit her grandmother, who couldn't come to Saratoga due to health problems.



Courtesy of ERIN NORRIS

Sophomore Erin Norris holds the doll she got from her grandma.

According to Norris, her grandmother "spoiled" her because she was the youngest of her siblings, and instead of receiving one doll like her two elder sisters, she received two more dolls in the years following Kit.

"[The doll means a lot to me] because my grandma passed away this year, and so now whenever I see it, it reminds me of her," Norris said. ♦

Reporter gets to pilot a plane for the first time

By David Sparkman

It all started with what looked like a family lunch to me. On my sister's last day before December break, my mom and I went to pick her up to meet with my dad for lunch to celebrate the end of finals. Curious about where we would eat, my mom told us that we would spend the gorgeous day outside and have a picnic.

Crossing Highway 101, we headed toward the wetlands in Palo Alto to a "secret" meeting spot. Sure enough, my dad, holding a bag of sandwiches, was waiting at a picnic table by the duck pond next to the little airport.

We munched away, watching the ducks paddle around and airplanes take off. As we walked back to the car to head home, someone else pulled into the parking lot.

My dad turned to me and said, "Happy 18th Birthday, and Merry Christmas! You get to fly today. Meet Louis, he will be your flight instructor." I was, needless to say, overjoyed.

Flying has always been a

dream of mine. At home on my flight simulator, I've logged over 240 hours, nearly enough to become a commercial airline pilot. But this was so much better than the simulator.

After a short presentation about airplane basics, Louis and I headed to the small Palo Alto Airport. As I drove through the many rows of planes, I couldn't wait to get started. We pulled up next to the plane I was going to be flying: a Cessna 162 Skycatcher.

Louis showed me how to do the walkaround inspection to make sure all of the plane's components were in working order and to make sure nothing had been damaged on the plane's previous flight. After that we put on our headsets, started the engine, taxied to the runway and I took off.

I had the opportunity to do

most of the flying. This really let me get a taste of what being a pilot was like. After completing our climb to 3,500 feet, we flew toward San Francisco Airport for about 10 minutes, watching planes much larger than us take off and land. This was just enough time for me to get the hang of the plane's trim, which ensures level flight.

We then made a left turn and flew over the mountains toward Half Moon Bay to do some sight-seeing. Flying over the cliffs and watching the waves crash was a completely new perspective and showed me another reason people fly.

Over the water, Louis showed me how the plane's various control surfaces affect its course and performance in the air.

Lowering the flaps raised the nose and allowed the plane to fly at a much lower speed. We flew along the cliffs for another few miles before making another left turn back toward the mountains.

This leg of the one-hour flight was a little less smooth than the beginning, giving me a chance to fly in a bit of turbulence.



FALCON // DAVID SPARKMAN

Senior David Sparkman poses in front of the Cessna 162 Skycatcher.

The mountains were also completely different from the air. I was clearly able to see the San Andreas Fault running through them, forming small lakes and valleys in an almost perfectly straight line, another thing I had never seen before.

After crossing the hills, we began our descent back into the airport. This is where Louis took over again, landing the

plane back in Palo Alto. This hour truly was and will probably always be the best and most exciting gift I have ever received.

I had wanted to pilot a plane ever since I was 5 years old. It was a dream come true for me and a surprise I had never expected. This opportunity will definitely help me pursue getting my pilot's license. ♦

The best and worst movies of 2013

THE BEST . . .

1. AMERICAN HUSTLE

The story of a sly con man managed to sneak its way into theaters right before awards season started. "American Hustle," directed by David O' Russell, has already posted garnered 10 Oscar nominations and several wins in the Golden Globes and SAG Awards with categories including Best Supporting Actress, Lead Actress, and Outstanding Performance by a Cast. The actors fully invested in their roles, as was evident with the paunchy Christian Bale. The movie features a fast-paced storyline, a standout cast, revealing outfits, big hair, strong Jersey accents and an elaborate comb-over.



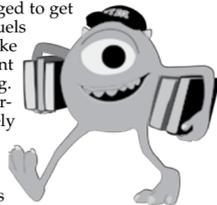
2. FROZEN

Ironic how a movie that revolves around ice and snow (polar vortex?) can warm the coldest of hearts. With a warm-hearted snowman, stone trolls and catchy songs, "Frozen" features gorgeous animation and a heartfelt message. Recently surpassing "The Lion King" as the title the highest grossing Disney animated film, "Frozen's" soundtrack has also hit #1 on the Billboard charts, knocking off Beyonce. It also received a Golden Globe for best animated feature. Inspiring hundreds of Youtube covers, "Frozen" hit all the right notes. Be sure to look for "Arrested Development" references, a cameo from "Tangled" characters and a secret scene after the credits.



3. MONSTER'S UNIVERSITY

In an era of "meh" animation sequels, Pixar managed to get at least one movie series very, very right. Often sequels or prequels take the easy way out and simply remake a successful movie like "Cars" with a slightly different plot, but "Monsters University" does no such thing. With the same entertaining perspective on the average closet-monster's life, the prequel to the immensely popular "Monster's Inc." deviates from the original story just enough to be a funny movie of its own. The movie also focuses on painting a more complete image of Sully and Mike, which, if anything, makes you want to rewatch the first movie.



Freshman practices magic



COURTESY OF HUMANS OF SARATOGA HIGH

Freshman Christopher Metz holds up a deck of cards for Humans of Saratoga High.

BY GwynivereHunger

Standing out from the crowd can be hard, but for freshman Christopher Metz, his magic making skills set him apart from his classmates.

On a daily basis, Metz practices tricks with cards, only sometimes creating tricks with money, coins and pencils.

One of his signature tricks is one where a card is put on someone's knuckles, only to get slapped out in the blink of an eye and replaced with another card.

"His tricks are very cool and interesting. I'm always asking him if he has new [tricks]," freshman Aaron Marshburn said.

Metz became interested in magic at the age of 8. His grandfather showed him his first magic trick, a simple ring trick of separating and pulling apart rings attached to each other.

According to Metz, "magic is [manipulating the expected] in order to create an optimistic feeling to both sides."

Metz first learned magic tricks through YouTube. After learning the basics, he

was able to incorporate the different elements he found online to create his own magic. Because he is busy on weekdays, Metz tries his best to strengthen his skills during the weekend.

"If you [want] to start doing magic tricks, I would take a look at some of the tutorials on YouTube but not directly copy them," Metz said.

Like many students, Metz wishes to continue doing what he loves after high school.

But he knows that the career of a magician is not easy. Even after five years of learning magic, he still hasn't learned the majority of magic tricks. In order to succeed, any magician would need to devote countless hours spent on learning and perfecting magic.

Regardless, his passion has truly changed Metz's life.

"Magic has made things in life more entertaining," Metz said. "I've learned to see a the bigger picture in life because that's what we're always trying to achieve in magic in order to fool our audience." ♦

. . . AND THE WORST

—BY ROTEM SHAKED, TRUNG VANDINH, LAUREN LOUIE, SUDEEP RAJ AND MATT FOLEY

1. FREE BIRDS

The movie "Free Birds" by Reel FX Creative Studios is an animated film about time traveling turkeys. That's all you need to know to label it as one of the worst movies of 2013. Two turkeys, Reggie and Jake, travel back to the first Thanksgiving in order to take themselves off the menu. In addition to the senseless storyline, the film consists of one too many plot twists. Rather than enhance the film, they only make things unnecessarily complicated and prolong the painful experience. So unless you're interested in finding out how Reggie convinces the settlers to opt for pizza instead, I just saved you an hour and five minutes.



2. PERCY JACKSON: SEA OF MONSTERS

The Percy Jackson movie industry didn't deserve a second chance. Yet the "Sea of Monsters" was created, and it failed just as miserably as its prequel. Nearly every detail of the novel was changed, from Percy and Tyson's battle in the gym to Percy knowing the prophecy early. Not only did the film stray from the novel's story, but it also had no real plot of its own. Since so much content was taken out, the extended battle scenes were too much, essentially making the movie a collection of fights with very little character interaction. "The Sea of Monsters" gets my vote for one of the worst movies of the year.



3. THE HANGOVER PART III

As a huge fan of Legendary Picture's "The Hangover", it was disheartening to watch the comedic masterpiece shamed by a poorly written sequel for the second time. Director Todd Phillips tastelessly milked the original movie's success without adding much variation to the plot structure. Fans were disappointed to watch the group face predictable mishaps once again. Phillips had promised to create something completely different for the third movie after the second one failed to satisfy viewers; however, the result was more of a poorly written action movie stuffed with unnecessary dark humor than the light-hearted comedy it should have been.



Long-awaited Sherlock Season 3 launch satisfies

BY HelenWong

For Sherlockians, it's been a long two years. Steven Moffat, the head writer, left us on a horrible, heart-wrenching cliffhanger. Then, the BBC cheerfully pushed back the release date of the new season from September 2013 to the beginning of January 2014, with no sign of regret, just a snide, terse announcement.

So far, "Sherlock" has proved itself as a spectacular show with sky-high ratings and a large, fervently faithful following. In fact, Benedict Cumberbatch, the lead actor, has his own rabid fan cult. Much of the show's success comes from its ability to tweak the original Holmes stories to fit the modern age. BBC's Sherlock Holmes is cold, brilliant genius, tech-savvy and brusque, a perfect modern rendition of Arthur Conan Doyle's Victorian detective. But Holmes is nothing without Dr. John Watson, his faithful partner-in-arms. Watson isn't changed all that much from the original stories, and that's all right. He's steadfast, faithful, moral and a crack shot.

Seasons 1 and 2 of "Sherlock" were well received, but what of season 3? The first episode of the new season, "The Empty Hearse," came out Jan. 1 with a record 9.2 million viewers in the United Kingdom, not counting

the many watching illegally. Now, the million-dollar question: Was it good?

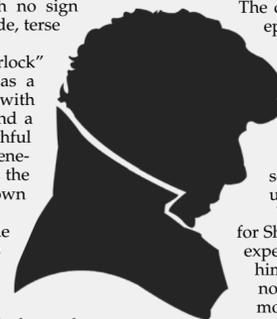
On balance, it was. The episode had action, angst and anger; laughter, light and levity. Most importantly, it answered the burning question: How did Sherlock survive his fall?

The solution presented was sensible, if a bit anti-climatic. The defining aspect of the episode were the joke scenes—the fake solutions that Moffat presented before revealing the real one. These "explanations" for Sherlock's survival all seemed so plausible... until they weren't.

While an explanation for Sherlock's survival was expected, the detective himself changing was not. Sherlock Holmes is most definitely not the same man from before he fell.

I'd envisioned the exact same detective from the first two seasons—someone cold, brilliant and uncaring. I hadn't really considered that Sherlock could change, but he did, and it makes sense. Kudos to the writers for their A+ characterization.

Season 2 left off at Sherlock's faked death. Season 3 picks up two years after the fact. He comes back to London as a man less sure of himself, but the change is perfect. The world's only consulting detective and his blogger roam the streets of London once again. ♦



Pixar's recent films disappoint followers

There are a total of 14 Pixar movies, not including the numerous future productions being planned.

But unlike the four-part "Twilight" saga, this surplus is OK. Pixar movies have been good for years on end, leaving viewers crying with joy or sobbing of a broken heart.

Well, until recent years, that is.

Pixar's most recent creations, "Cars 2" and "Planes," have been rather disappointing. Each lacked the originality and depth that audiences have always expected. As "Toy Story 3" made college students sigh with reminiscence, "Planes" made us facepalm. It was somewhat enjoyable, but was rather messy and lacking. (Heads up, there's a sequel coming in 2014. Hold on to your aviator hats, extreme turbulence ahead.)



JADE BISHT
Ya Bisht



LAUREN LOUIE
Louie-gi

These movies weren't sub-par because they were sequels. No, "Cars 2" and "Planes" lacked substance in the basis of their existence—their plots.

Pixar has proved that they are fully capable of providing original and memorable additions such as the "Toy Story 3" and more recently, "Monsters University." "Monsters University" has reassured us that Pixar wasn't on a downwards spiral, and both complimented their respective series perfectly.

Sadly, "Cars 2" was sudden and unorganized. The movie follows Mater the tow truck, as he is mistaken for a spy and thus adopts new and complicated spy responsibilities. Mater accompanies previous protagonist Lightning McQueen on his World Cup racing competition.

The movie extends to more sentimental waters as the unrefined car is thrown into the high class world of sophisticated cars, embarrassing McQueen, who is labeled as a joke. Tensions rise as McQueen feels humiliated being associated with his best friend.

"Cars 2" managed to cause betrayal and hurt that had never been suspected in the first place. It felt inconsistent given that "Cars" left the two on solid ground, or rather road. It contradicted the previous relationship, leaving us befuddled.

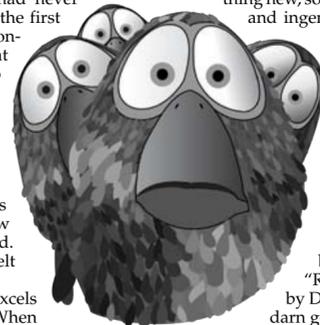
When Planes was announced, few people were excited. However, Planes felt old and repetitive.

What Pixar excels in is creativity. When

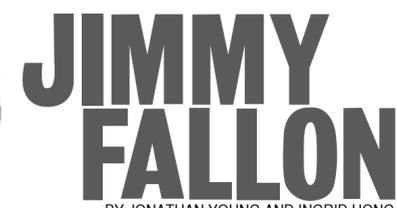
it comes to plot and characters, Pixar is master. How could they have thought of putting together a talking dog with flying house without raising suspicions of insanity? The world may never know.

And while "Cars 2" and "Planes" originated from the same creative concept, the Pixar audiences craved something new, something as outrageous and ingenious as a rat that can cook.

Regardless, Pixar is still the bee's knees in our book. Go more in depth into the making of the "Cars 2" and "Planes," and it'll shine some much needed light on some of their questionable choices. But Pixar better step it up soon. "Rise of the Guardians" by Dreamworks was pretty darn good. ♦



Top late-night show hosts battle for top spot



—BY JONATHAN YOUNG AND INGRID HONG

HUMOR: The late night show host is known for his dry, sarcastic humor. His humor consists of poking fun and basing his jokes on celebrities and current events, in addition to self-deprecating humor.

SKITS: Kimmel's skits consist of his recurring feud with actor Matt Damon, the "Guillermo in Movies" segment, the Lie Detective and the "Nice-off" featuring talk show host Ellen Degeneres. Though frequent, the show's skits always have fresh content.

GUESTS: Kimmel does the generic interview with guests. Kimmel is known for his recurring staged "rivalry" with actor Matt Damon. Recently, he feuded with Kanye West, in which Kimmel made some jokes regarding the rapper's ego, and West demanded an apology.

SIDEKICK: America has fallen in love with Guillermo, the lovable security guard, for his strong accent and love for tequila. His short, chubby stature and sassy persona accompanies Kimmel on his various skits and outings.

BAND: Cleto and the Cletones

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT: Lots. His "Hey Jimmy Kimmel" YouTube challenges, where any viewer can do the challenges, have gone viral and racked up millions of views. The segments "Lie Witness News" and "Confusing Question of the Day" involve walking the streets of Hollywood and asking randomly selected pedestrians about made-up news and questions that do not make sense.

GAMES: No games ♦

HUMOR: Fallon's humor is witty and sarcastic, often poking fun at other high profile celebrities, as well as utilizing slapstick and musical comedy. He is notorious for his inability to keep a straight face, and this quirk adds to his charm.

SKITS: Fallon's skits are always creative and unique. From his History of Rap performances with Justin Timberlake to Joking Bad, Fallon hilariously covers a wide array of topics.

GUESTS: Fallon typically persuades his guests to participate in games, something other hosts such as Kimmel and Conan don't do.

SIDEKICKS: Steve Higgins is Fallon's right hand man and brings a different tone to the show. Higgins is outrageous, animated and unpredictable, while Fallon is more steadied and anchored in his routine.

BAND: The Roots, enough said. The greatest hip-hop band is one clear draw to Fallon's show. Cutting in on perfect moments and delivering perfect song renditions, Fallon has the best show band in late night television.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT: Fallon rarely has the public involved in his show, but sometimes there are studio audience members involved in games. Fallon does connect well with his audience, however, and their reactions add to the show.

GAMES: Fallon has the most diverse set of games on late night. These include: Charades, Pictionary, Catchphrase, Lip-Sync Battle, Box of Lies, Dartboard of Insanity and Egg Russian Roulette. These are a guaranteed riot, as there is nothing funnier than Fallon and his guests making a fool of themselves. ♦

SCORE: KIMMEL 2, FALLON 6. FALLON IS THE BETTER JIMMY

Japanese anime proves popular among students

BY ArjunRamanathan & NikilRamanathan

Animes, the name for Japanese-animated TV shows, have become wildly popular in the U.S.

Most well-known anime series tell of magical worlds detailing humans who possess some sort of superpower, such as ninja skills or super strength. One such example is "Naruto," a show about the world of ninjas and the struggle between good and evil.

The show was originally a manga comic book series but gradually gained popularity and was made into an anime series. The show is considered to be one of the most popular anime shows, and

with its sequel "Naruto Shippuden," there are over 500 episodes and counting.

Some students loosely follow anime. These people read or watch their favorite comics or shows from time to time, only occasionally watching the plot lines. Other students, however, are heavily engrossed in anime, devoting large portions of their time to the addictive action-packed shows and books.

One such student is sophomore Michael Ren, president of the Anime Club.

"Anime is basically storytelling," Ren said. "I really enjoy watching these stories unfold, and there's just a certain feeling you get off of anime that you just can't get from movies."

Ren said in the period of one year, he watched 80 different anime shows, and a website called myanimelist.net calculated that to around 29.5 days worth of TV.

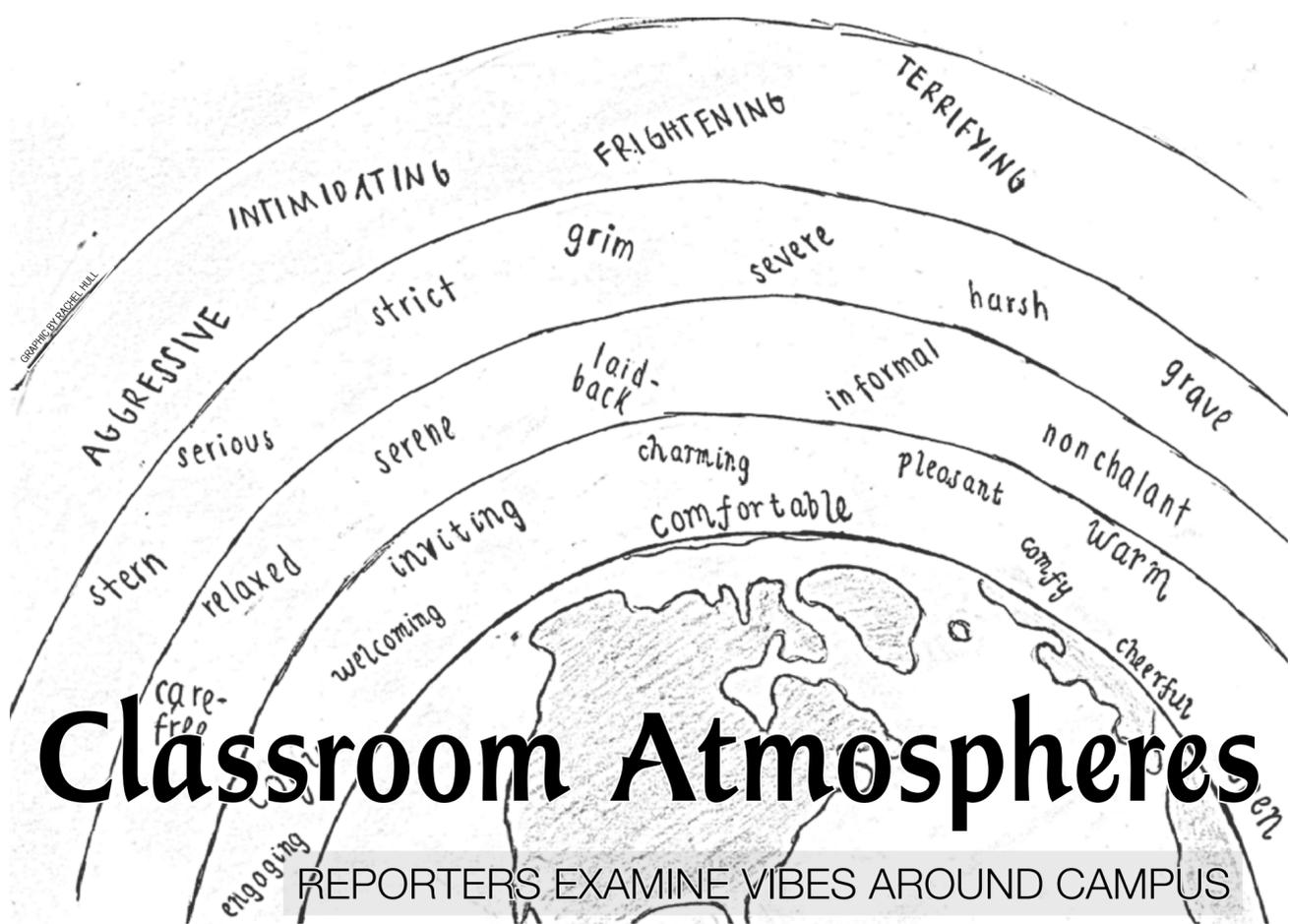
"Anime doesn't get old because every single one provides a different story, and the possibilities are endless," Ren said.

Anime is usually a popular substitute to regular American-made cartoons because of the action and the various dubs from the original Japanese to English, Spanish, German and even French. In addition, the themes are often inappropriate for young kids, usually varying in age ranges and using mature language. This aspect makes animes different from standard American cartoons, which

primarily targets younger audiences of ages 6-12.

In Asian countries, Anime and Manga have long been popular, but a reason for their rise, especially the rise of Anime in the United States is its thrilling action and its intense plotlines which include betrayal, courage, bravery and lots of ambition. Even though nobody can actually relate to the characters' actions within the shows/comics, people can relate to the various problems that each character goes through.

With anime's diverse elements and the action-packed long standing storylines, it's no surprise that it is rising up in the ranks as a popular alternative to cartoons. ♦



Classroom Atmospheres

REPORTERS EXAMINE VIBES AROUND CAMPUS

J-room a cozy, comfortable haven for all

Classrooms can be mundane, cold and hostile at times. Students sit in the same position but in different spots. They stare at the same board but with different strings of some sort of "required" knowledge across the board. They fall asleep in the same position but with different neck cramps and different classmates judging them.

lack of sleep while I battle junior year, they cannot compare to the one thing that makes the J-room as special as the students themselves.

The best part of the J-room is the people who fill it up both during and after the school day, with students sometimes staying until 8:30 at night. They are devoted but quirky, responsible but peculiar and individually dedicated to all the pages this room spews out, whether they are yearbook spreads or copies of newspaper layouts.



JADE BISHT
Ya Bisht

But not in room 303. The Journalism Room, lovingly nicknamed by students as "the J-room," is located toward the back of the school and is my personal on-campus heaven. Home to the Journalism 1 classes, the Talisman yearbook and most importantly, the Falcon newspaper, this room is the epitome of perfection due to its many beautiful qualities.

No other room can find siblings Nikil and Arjun Ramathan shooting each other down in subtly humorous ways in the midst of story discussions. Nor is it possible anywhere else to spot senior Jonathan Young turtling backpacks (thanks a lot, by the way) and scaring chickadees (students in their first year in the newspaper staff), while senior Matt Foley proudly dons senior Cristina Curcelli's beanie.

For starters, no; I am not biased. Being a part of the third-period newspaper staff this year is an honor and a privilege, as it could not be a better family to be a part of. However, whether one is part of any journalism staff does not change the fact that the J-room holds ideal aspects that outweigh those of all other rooms on campus.

This is only a glimpse of all the amazing people on the various staffs in the J-room. But to fully comprehend these peculiar situations is impossible without visiting the J-room at least once. Upon entering, visitors will be able to realize that no other class on campus can compete with the cozy and chilled vibe this classroom gives off.

The room is primarily made up of long desks, seating three at a time. Lining one side of the room are 2007 model iMacs, with more filling the tables in a small cove in the back.

Working at the old-fashioned iMacs has a much more nostalgic and homey feel than working on the industrial-looking computers in the library, if I'm being honest. And anyone can become an honorary member of the J-room's printing club by paying \$5 or \$10 for a semester or a full year of access to the printers, respectively. Completely worth it for the ease of printing.

While these couches are extremely advantageous toward remedying my

Talk has been circulating recently that the out-of-date iMac monitors may



Junior Sherrilyn Ling naps on a J-room couch, while junior Jane Park poses nearby.

be replaced with new iMac screens in the future. Frankly, this could not upset me more. Filling the J-room with fancy-smancy chrome computers will take away from the comfy-cozy feel that our current annoyingly stiff keyboards and small resolution iMacs contribute to.

can always spot something never seen before on the walls. Large posters given to journalism adviser Mike Tyler by alumni from past staffs cover the walls. San Francisco Giants memorabilia is found here and there, and staff mugs are grouped together on the wall. (Take note of the lack of fourth-period's staff mugs, while third period's are proudly posted next to the yearbook staff's.)

OK, rivalries aside, it isn't necessary to be a part of any journalism staff to be able to bask in the comfort that is the J-room. Just another beauty to this room is the comfortable atmosphere that allows anyone and everyone to enter without ever wanting to leave.

The temperature is also always perfect in the J-room. Cooled with a nice AC closer to the summer and perfectly warm and cozy during the winter. Never too warm nor too cold. And come on, how can anyone argue with couches? Isn't extra sleep incentive enough? ♦

The beauty of the J-room is that one

Yim combines uplifting words, strict lessons to inspire students

By Helen Chen

Upon entering the classroom of math teacher P.J. Yim, students see encouraging posters that line the walls, many of which are the words of Yim himself.

"Be like cactus."
"Achieve zero."
"Be mindful."

Below these short yet meaningful phrases, problems are scribbled on any of three whiteboards, as students explain their work to their peers.

Despite the seemingly relaxed atmosphere in his room, Yim is often considered one of the strictest and most difficult teachers on campus. Many people, however, do not see all of what Yim tries to do for his students.

Yim said his first priority is to give his students in Algebra II Honors, Trigonometry and Precalculus Honors, and BC Calculus a "good learning environment," and, in achieving this, he is the first to admit that he is indeed often strict when it comes to student behavior. This outlook spawns from his own middle school experience in Boston.

"I remember having a hard time learning because the classroom was so chaotic that very little [time] was devoted to learning," Yim said. "I realized that even one [distraction] affects everyone."

With this in mind, Yim tries to make himself accessible to his students, as he "prefers the Socratic method" of teaching in which students learn through questioning rather than one-sided lecturing.

He hopes his students know he is "open to approach."

Sophomore Nandita Mohan said Yim's classroom is always available for

students to use, although it can sometimes be crowded.

"Yim's room is always packed with people," Mohan said. "Everyone is working out problems on the whiteboards."

According to sophomore Ashvita Ramesh, Yim always brightens when his students display genuine interest in what he is teaching.

"His teaching style is great in that he encourages learning for the sake of learning," Ramesh said.

Yim said his goal is to transcend the traditional role of a teacher in order to break through to students.

As a teacher, he said he sees himself not so much as "a teacher that drills in the information to the empty bucket that is [a student's] brain, but rather sometimes a cheerleader."

Yim, however, also said this desire to motivate students is often hindered by the students' reluctance to listen to cliché advice such as "never give up."

To counter this reluctance, Yim has come up with his own quirky ways to reach out and click with his students. This was the beginning of how he came to be known for his many sayings, such as "be like cactus."

For this particular saying, Yim has often accounted to his students how he gave his girlfriend at the time a cactus instead of roses to tell her to be strong and keep going when times are tough.

After he told students this anecdote, Yim said he was "caught off guard" when many of them were touched and even made some of the posters that hang in his room.

"Some students even completely turned around after I told them the sto-



Yim displays several motivational posters made by students around his classroom.

ry," Yim said.

Yim also said students often "focus too much on the grades or honors credit."

"[They] memorize and regurgitate rather than respond to the holistic ideas," Yim said.

He believes students sometimes don't actually understand concepts fully. Being in such a class that might not be suitable for them can cause unnecessary stress for some students.

"I noticed some students were depressed seeing other kids do so well," Yim said. "You shouldn't compare yourself to anyone else but rather feel successful if you've done everything you can."

Through anecdotes from his own life, Yim often tries to entertain as well as motivate his students. He said he tells stories not just as amusement, but rather as "planned tangents."

"I never really liked [quirks]," Yim said, "but if it helps the students, I'll do it." ♦

>> ClassroomHotspots

The best classroom to...

■ GET COFFEE FROM

[Obenour's] coffee usually tastes better; it's stronger, and it's not bland. She occasionally runs out of cups, but that's OK."



junior Michelle Luo

■ USE DURING TUTORIAL

I would say my math class, because that's where I need the most help."



junior Allison Chan

■ FALL ASLEEP IN

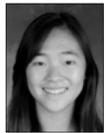
Chinese, because she lets us [fall asleep during class]."



sophomore Justin Lee

■ HANG OUT IN

I would say the Journalism Room. It feels like an open space, plus there are comfy couches and large tables."



junior Jennifer Kim

Students find second home in Thomson's room

By Jane Park

From students' recycled projects from past years to the 11 stuffed monkeys hanging from the ceiling, science teacher Kristen Thomson's classroom is an array of memories. Thomson tries to cover as much empty space as possible with pictures and other miscellaneous objects.

"I think white walls are a little sterile, so I like having pictures up," Thomson said. "I like having those personal touches so that it kind of makes it everybody's classroom."

Many students, like senior Phillip

Young, feel very welcomed when entering Room 1015.

"I enjoy the entirety of her classroom, as it is more friendly and more homey than most rooms," Young said. "In addition, her caring personality creates a friendly atmosphere."

Many students enjoy their time in Thomson's home-like class.

"I think her personality and teaching ability make the class more unique than most, and combined with her stimulating classroom, these create a dynamic that is hard to find in this school," Young said.

Thomson said she views her students as "more than just their letter grade."

"[Thomson] interacts with us in a friendly manner," junior Adrienne Kim said. "Even though we know she's our teacher, she also makes it a point to make herself available to all her students."

According to junior Christina Chin, students find it easier to understand the lessons when they are connected to their everyday lives.

"The way she teaches and runs the class allows students to absorb the material and become interested in the topic, not just the letter grade," Chin said. ♦



Students relax in science teacher Kristen Thomson's classroom during third period.

Coffee, hot chocolate liven up history classroom

By Helen Wong

History teacher Kim Anzalone has a reputation around campus for having one of the best classrooms to just take a break, hang out or study in.

In room 604, coffee and hot chocolate are always available; a well-worn, comfy couch sits right next to the food table and posters of stars ranging from Marilyn Monroe to Matt Damon hang from the walls.

Confederate and Union flags lie comfortably on the ceiling. A brass bookend shaped like the Lincoln Memorial keeps the APUSH textbooks from falling over. Little mementos like these are scattered all over the classroom; a sense of organized chaos is apparent but in a very comfortable way.

"I'm very glad [my students] think my classroom's cozy," Anzalone said. "That is my goal. I want them to have a safe comfortable place."

Each of the objects around the room

has its own story and purpose. The G.I. Joe figurine on the bookshelf, for example, was a gift from a student.

"I collect trinkets from trips, like my small china figures and Alcatraz stuff," said Anzalone. "I try to fill the room with eclectic stuff so that students will want to look around."

Aside from the comfortably cluttered environment, the room is also usually temperature-appropriate, even in winter.

"I love how it's always really warm," junior Cindy Cheung said.

Though Anzalone has a reputation as a tough grader, she hopes that students know they are welcome to come in and get help. Anzalone's energetic personality and enthusiasm for her subject, together with the comfort of her classroom, draw people in.

"The class itself is very energetic," junior Chris Lee said. "Mrs. Anzalone not

only makes her lectures exciting, but she also urges the students to participate."

For students, that participation is made easier by the environment around them.

"It's super cozy," junior Anna Sabel said. "It's warm; there's coffee and a couch and [Anzalone] always says hi when you visit."

A major attraction in room 604 is the coffee table, where Anzalone's students can come in whenever they want to get a hot beverage free of charge, as long as they bring their own cups. It's a system that is founded on cooperation. Students supply the coffee, tea, creamer and the rest of the edibles; Anzalone supplies the coffee machine, the table and the encouragement.

"The coffee station was started because my poor APUSH kids were so stressed out. I felt that providing coffee

for them would not only help but also smell like home," said Anzalone.

Even when class is in session, the coffee station is available for use.

"She lets her students get coffee during class, which is a hug in a mug," Cheung said, "so who wouldn't like that?" In addition to the coffee table, the posters that paper the walls feature prominently throughout the classroom. A picture of a shirtless Harrison Ford sits right below a Spongebob poster. Students like the variety, though.

"I love all the posters on the walls," junior Jared Robinson said. "It's great." Even though movie posters cover the walls and hot beverages are available to its visitors, room 604 is still a history classroom down to its linoleum, and Anzalone is a history teacher with great zeal for her subject.

"The room is spacious and cozy at the same time," Lee said. "The classroom is big, but the work we do makes it seem cozy." ♦



MOMENTS THAT CHANGE LIVES

Senior remembers mom's battle with cancer

By Candice Zheng

Even 11 years later, senior Kristie Lin remembers the confusion she felt from her tutor's words.

"Don't worry, everything will be OK," her tutor said.

Something in her tutor's expression bothered her, and the words she heard made no sense.

"Why was she saying that?" Lin wondered. "I got a good grade on my book report, so why is she saying that everything's going to be OK?"

The words continued to linger in her mind. A few weeks later, her parents sat her down on the couch. The tension was tangible, even to a 6-year-old; she thought she was going to be punished. But looking back, she realizes the words that came next were much worse: Her mom told her that she had breast cancer and was going to the hospital for a few days to get better.

Now, Lin realizes the gravity of that conversation. However, at that moment, her 6-year-old self was unable to discern what her mom was really saying. She didn't understand what cancer was and didn't know that there was a

possibility her mom could pass away during her surgery.

"Honestly, before that, I didn't know what was going on," Lin said. "All I knew was that she went to the hospital a lot. She never told me when she was diagnosed. Even when she was in pain, she made me think and feel that everything was normal and that the cancer wasn't there."

The day Lin's mother, May Lin, went into surgery was "the scariest moment for the entire family." Her brothers, Jeremy Lin, now 27, and Emerson Lin, now 24, did their best to keep their sister occupied by playing games and taking her out.

"I remember that when Dad came back [from the hospital], he had tears in his eyes, which scared all of us because he rarely cried," Lin said. "At night, he tucked me into bed and told me that everything was going to be OK. In a way, my family shielded me from the problem."

The surgery took two days, but the results weren't conclusive until a few weeks after the procedure ended. Lin's family was wound unimaginably tight from fear and worry. By the end of June 2006, around three weeks after Lin's mom entered surgery, the news came back that the procedure was successful and that she was going to be okay.

"It was a huge relief," said Lin. "It was kind of like letting out a big breath after a long, long time. The tension completely diffused."

Looking back, Lin has never sensed even one moment of weakness from her mother.

"Mom is definitely my biggest inspiration and the strongest person I know," Lin said. "During the process of going to hospitals for treatment, she never shed a tear, or, at least, not in front of me. She never pitied herself and went on doing all her housewife duties and took really good care of her children. Even amidst the pain and

struggles, she was the pillar drawing us together as a family."

After fighting long and hard with her illness, Lin's mom was given the all clear during the summer of 2006, although she has scheduled checkups to make sure the cancer hasn't returned.

After coming close to losing her mom, Lin understands not to take anything for granted, as they could just as quickly be taken away.

"As a six year old, I had everything I needed: a nice family, community and education. I took things for granted like I deserved to have certain things," Lin said. "However, I've learned to put aside my spoiled attitude and build my own independence."

Lin has realized that, despite what her family had gone through, a positive that came out of their ordeal was how it brought them closer together.

"We used to not talk to each other a lot, but after this experience, we started hanging out more as a family, calling each other and taking trips as a family," Lin explained. "We cherish each moment we spend together and make sure we're all taken care of, no matter where we are." ♦



senior Kristie Lin

Trip to Kenya teaches positive, appreciative attitude

By Nupur Maheshwari

Sophomore Corinne Bryan pressed her face against the window of the plane, enjoying the cold glass against her cheek while the buildings and streets of San Francisco receded beneath her. As the ground gradually became smaller, revealing an intricate map of lines and lights, Bryan turned to her grandmother, who was sitting beside her, and grinned in excitement.

Little did she know that the next two weeks would result in one of the most rewarding experiences of her life.

In the summer of 2011, Bryan spent two weeks in Kenya through the Kilgoris Project, an organization that works to feed and educate the children of a Maasai village in Kilgoris, Kenya.

The people living in and around Kilgoris are from the Maasai tribe, which makes up about 1.4 percent of Kenya's population. They are not a politically powerful tribe, with poor access to basic services, like sanitation, health care or education.

In this area, Bryan and a few other families had the responsibility of holding a vacation Bible school at different schools every day.

They worked hand-in-hand with local leaders and families to operate schools and provide daily food and clean water.

They put on skits for the children, told them Bible stories, as well as occasionally giving the kids medical checkups.

Bryan first became interested in helping those less fortunate than her when her grandmother found the organization and opportunity through her church, PBC Palo Alto, and invited Bryan along for the trip. After hours of packing, prepping and a 20-hour plane ride, she finally landed in Kenya.

Instantly, Bryan was struck with how different the country was from California, as she drove through the streets. She saw goats and sheep on the road in front of her and little kids running alongside the van, waving to Bryan and her fellow volunteers like they were celebrities.

"It's a completely different feeling being there," Bryan said. "I didn't [want] to keep my eyes in the car because everything was different, and I wanted to see as much of it as I could."

Bryan had to quickly adjust to many new habits and challenges along with the different location. Although some of the challenges were difficult to overcome, and the habits hard to pick up, many opened her eyes to new realities.

"It sounds kind of silly now, but one thing that was tough was learning how to swallow malaria pills," Bryan said.

Bryan learned to interact with new people like "adults, children, teachers,

cooks and sales-people," through daily contact.

Bryan noted that the language difference was a big barrier to overcome.

"The kids did not know English very well, so we had to communicate with them through the teachers and adults, which was a bit difficult," Bryan said. "One thing that I learned is that you really don't need to speak the same language or speak at all to reach out to them, love them and play with them."

During her time abroad, Bryan also learned to be more thankful and appreciative of what she has.

She said her favorite part of the trip was how gracious the people there were, even though they had so little compared to those living in Saratoga.

A typical Maasai school child rises at dawn, often cleaning the house and helping his/her family with their daily work. Only after everyone has eaten can they wash up and begin the long seven kilometer walk to school, along with the other children in the village.

"It made me think more about how fortunate I am to have so many things,



Sophomore Corinne Bryan poses with Kenyan children.

most of which I don't actually need," Bryan said. "That Christmas, I remember not really wanting anything because I felt I had everything I wanted."

Bryan also realized how important it was to smile and be positive every moment she could.

"The smiles on the children's faces really made me think about how they live with so little so happily," Bryan said. "[Now], I always take a moment to try to be happy when I'm down because I have no reason to be sad in comparison to what [the less fortunate] go through day to day. In the end, if they can be happy, I should be happy." ♦

Student experiences Hindu rite of passage

By Melissa Magner

It was June 2009 when senior Kushal Haran, who was 13 at the time, took part in his own Upanayana, or "String Ceremony," a common Hindu tradition for all boys.

Since he was little, Haran knew that the day would come. As he stood on stage with a Vadhyaar, a religious authority figure, and began to recite numerous Hindu prayers, he felt not only accomplished, but also a sense of pride for finally partaking in his very own ceremony.

This day signified his becoming a Brahman — the transition between childhood and one's rite of passage. To Haran, this day was not only important but also extremely exciting.

More commonly known as a String Ceremony, Upanayanas are celebrated when a boy is between ages 7 to 13. But boys can only be of an odd age in order to take part in the ceremony.

Originating in the ancient caste system in India, where Brahmans held the highest status, this ceremony marks an important time in a boy's life. During the ceremony, a string is put around one's body, and the boy wears it for the rest of his life.

The string is divided into three threads, each of which represents a different deity. The first deity is Sara-

swati, the Hindu goddess of knowledge and art. The second is Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity and wealth, and the third is Parvathi, commonly known as the goddess of power.

"Those who celebrate Hinduism continue with the traditions, even though the caste system has been abolished," Haran said. "The traditions are less strict than they were long ago, but they are still important."

After the Upanayana, boys must complete a set of prayers every morning, afternoon and night. They also often add strings to themselves during different and important stages of one's life, like marriage.

Haran admits that even though he doesn't follow all of the requirements of the Upanayana, he occasionally recites prayers, which are called Sandhyavandanams.

"I normally recite my prayers before a test or speech and debate tournament," Haran said. "I feel like it kind of gives me good luck."

Haran says that even though people aren't as serious about Upanayanas nowadays, it's still important.

"I'm happy that I was able to have my own," Haran said. "Even if I don't follow all of the traditions, it still remains a part of my life, and that in itself is an accomplishment that I look back on and am proud of." ♦



senior Kushal Haran

"It remains a part of my life, and that in itself is an accomplishment that I look back on and am proud of."

Grandparents leave large impact before moving away

On the day I was born at El Camino Hospital, my grandparents stood hovering over my clear hospital crib, smiling down at me. I weighed barely 6 pounds and was dressed in a pink cotton cap and a hospital blanket, but my grandma held me in her arms and rocked me while my grandpa looked on proudly. Little did I know

watch the Los Angeles Lakers and Kobe Bryant, my grandpa's favorite player. It was moments like those, moments where I lay on my grandpa's big belly, that made me feel blessed and special.

As I continued to grow and learn new hobbies, they were my biggest fans at my music recitals, Irish dance competitions and tennis matches. My grandpa always helped me calm down, forget everything else, and only focus on whatever I had to do.

My grandparents and I continued to create memories in the years that followed, especially on trips and vacations. In Paris, we tasted 20 flavors of gelato and 30 types of cheese. In Alaska, we drank glacier water and came within several feet of a grizzly bear. In China, we rode camels on the Great Wall and fed bamboo to giant pandas. There was never a dull moment with them.

Finding out about the separation

When I was 10 years old and in the fifth grade, my parents told me one school night that my grandparents had decided to move back to their hometown, Taipei, Taiwan, where everything was more convenient for them. My parents explained that due to their older age and health, they need to be somewhere where everything was easily accessible.

What followed that announcement is a blur to me now, but I remember thinking that everything was crashing down on me, as cliché as it sounds. Though their departure date was set, I continued to pretend that they were not really going to leave and stayed in denial.

After a lot of thinking to myself, I pushed my feelings away and forced myself to believe that there was nothing in my control that I could do to change the situation. I started to look through

Sophomore reflects on life after Bat Mitzvah

By Vibha Seshadri

Breathe in, breathe out. Do it again. Sophomore Talia Clement's morning was a blur of excitement, nervousness and fear. As she took deep breaths, she remembered the countless hours, days and months that were spent to make this day perfect.

Breathe in. Breathe out. Clement completed her Bat Mitzvah on June 25, 2011. A Bat Mitzvah is a Jewish coming-of-age ceremony in which a 13-year-old girl transitions from childhood to adulthood. To complete a Bat Mitzvah, she must read from the Torah, write a speech about her portion, which includes stories from the Torah, and read from the Haftarah, the book of prophets.

Clement's journey began six months before the day of her Bat Mitzvah.

"I was scared [to have a Bat Mitzvah] because there are so many things I have to learn and be able to do, so it was kind of stressful," Clement said. "But once I got into [the process], I realized that if you take it slowly and go piece by piece, it's not that hard."

Clement had been learning Hebrew since kindergarten and had completed the language prerequisite for having a Bat Mitzvah. What remained were preparations for the big day.

First, Clement had to learn sections of the Torah and many different prayers. Her portion was about the Korach, which told the story of a king and his noble personality. Clement had to learn prayers because she helped lead services at her congregation on the day of her Bat Mitzvah. After reading and memorizing

for a total of six months, Clement was ready.

On the morning of her Bat Mitzvah, Clement began her Torah reading and the day started to go by faster than the past six months. The day was nearing the end and her service was over. Clement and her guests left Congregation Beth David and headed to celebrate her achievement with approximately 100 guests at the Los Gatos Jewish Community Center.

"[This journey] really helped me to become a more mature person and realize that to accomplish something, you have to practice and practice to get better at it," Clement said. "Hard tasks [often require] persistence, and you [should not give up.] I think that was a really valuable lesson to learn, so in everything that I do now, I always try 100 percent."

Clement believes that this once-in-a-lifetime event helped her gain a different perspective of herself and of her religion because she had the opportunity to analyze and form her own opinions about the stories of time and creation from the Torah.

"I figured out my identity in both a religious and a general aspect because [my Bat Mitzvah] taught me who I am and the numerous things I can accomplish as a person," Clement said. "It also brought me closer to the Jewish faith."

Clement believes that every day, hour and minute she spent working and memorizing was worth it.

"After all of this build up for the past 13 years of my life, it was great to finally be able to say I successfully had a Bat Mitzvah," Clement said. ♦



Clement



Sophomore Allison Lin, at age 4, sits with her grandparents and younger sister Vivian.

old photo albums and began to put together a scrapbook.

On the morning of their flight, I was quiet and stayed apart from everybody else. After the luggage had been loaded in the car, my grandpa called my name. Gathering every ounce of willpower to hold back tears, I walked over and sank into his outstretched arms. He held me tightly and whispered that no matter where he was, he would always be there for me. My grandma, being the soft and gentle person she is, couldn't bring herself to look at me.

I asked them to wait, and I ran to retrieve the finished scrapbook from my room. Handing it to my grandma, she took it and held me close.

Life apart from grandparents

I spent the immediate hours after their departure to myself, randomly recalling sweet memories and fun times spent with them. As time slowly passed, I began to feel like my usual self again,

smiling and have a good time with family and friends. I thought of them frequently, and I still do, even now. I always look forward to calling them once or twice per week.

Because my grandparents are important figures in my life, it was hard to let them go. At first, it seemed as if I was missing a piece of myself, and I no longer knew how things were going to be. But just like my grandpa helped me get back on my feet when I learned how to walk, he and my grandma will always be my supporters, my listeners and most importantly, my family.

Nowadays, whenever I miss them and wish they were with me, I sit down at the piano and play a piece that my grandpa would enjoy.

Through this experience, I've come to understand that some things are out of our control. We must accept that the people in our lives are meant to come and go, but they will remain close to your heart, always. ♦

ROWING

Brain behind the coxswain

ROWER SHEDS LIGHT ON HER OFTEN MISJUDGED POSITION

By Gwynevere **Hunger** & Nupur **Maheshwari**

Travel to Lexington Reservoir near Los Gatos on a typical afternoon, and you'll see senior Izzy Zuccarino crouched down at the end of the boat, yelling out words of encouragement and directions to the rowers in front of her, as their oars cut through the water in one fluid motion.

As the coxswain of the Los Gatos men's varsity rowing team, Zuccarino carries a huge responsibility (since the women's team did not have enough room for one more, the varsity men's team for Los Gatos was able to accommodate Zuccarino as its coxswain.) Her position, little understood by many people, may seem simple at first, but is essential to the success of her team.

"People usually describe my position as one similar to that of a quarterback," Zuccarino said. "I really come into play during races when I have to motivate and steer correctly."

In rowing, there are usually eight people to a boat, all with different positions and tasks. The team consists of the coxswain, stroke seat, bow seat, stern pair and bow pair. All these seats hold the same power and responsibility toward the team's success.

In particular, a coxswain is in charge of leading practice with drills and technique. Rowers are not supposed to look out on the sides of the boat, so the coxswain, or cox for short, relays the proximity of the other boats in relation to their own.

The coxswain is also in charge of steering the boat, coordinating the power and rhythm of the oars and communicating to the rest of the crew using a device called the "cox box."

Senior Nicole Bowman, who also competes in the sport as a rower, believes that though coxing and rowing are very different, they share the same demands and pressures.

"[The coxswain] puts in the same amount of time as the rowers," Bowman



Senior Izzy Zuccarino, the coxswain, keeps her teammates in cadence during practice.

said. "Other team members are not supposed to look out on the sides of the boat, so the cox has to multitask extremely well to lead the team effectively."

The team generally spends three hours a day, six days a week practicing in many clubs, and can sometimes go up to 30 hours a week during competition season.

"[Practice] was really hard during nationals my sophomore year because I had practice at 5 a.m. before school, two times a week for a month," Zuccarino said. "It's been really hard to balance sport these past four years with the constant pressures of school."

Bowman has experienced her own set of difficulties balancing rowing and academics.

"I have found that the hardest part about managing school and crew is the

constant exhaustion," she said. "After a hard practice, it can be impossible to stay awake late into the night to finish homework. It really makes you value your free time."

Yet, despite the challenges, dedication to the sport has its benefits. Zuccarino has officially committed to the University of California San Diego for rowing, while Bowman has been accepted into the University of Wisconsin-Madison for rowing.

For Zuccarino, the impact of coxing will remain with her no matter where she goes.

"I believe that although what I do may not be physical, it is definitely a huge mental challenge because I have to come to practice every day ready for new motivation for my guys," Zuccarino said. ♦

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Backed by 5-1 record, players feel confident with chances for League

By Arjun **Ramanathan**

The girls' basketball team has started the season with multiple wins, and with a pre-season record of 8-3 and a regular season record of 4-1 so far, the players have high hopes for the rest of the season.

"I expect us to go all the way to league," senior point guard Trishika Shetty said. "I don't think we are going to lose many more games, so I'm hopeful for our chances at CCS."

Shetty, who leads the team in assists, said one factor that has contributed to the team's success is everyone's commitment to the sport.

The team has enough motivation and commitment to practice two hours a day, six days a week, and the players come prepared to try their best.

The team has won all of its league games so far, except for one away game on Jan. 17 against Los Altos High, with a narrow loss by just three points. Coach Mike Davey said the team's best wins were against South San Francisco and

Carlmont High because of those team's good records, and he believes the teamwork and combination of star players and shooters have been essential to the team's victories.

Most of the success comes from pushing the ball up the court to the agile posts and forwards on the team.

Senior veterans Dharini Ramaswamy, the leader in steals and points, and Tivoli Sisco, the leader in 3 pointers, are two star players who consistently do a good job leading the team both on



Shetty

and off the court. "It's easy to dump the ball up the court because [the posts and forwards] do a good job of shooting the ball with control, but at the same time, [Ramaswamy and Sisco] dribble out if they need to," Shetty said.

In addition, players said that Davey is a great contributing factor to the team's growth. Shetty said that Davey constructs practices to help the teammates get better, and he puts them through rigorous drills to improve their technique.

The girls took on a tough Los Gatos team on Jan. 25 at home and won 66-58. The team was able to stop the Wildcat offense with great defensive scouting and preparation.

Despite LG's size, the Falcons were able to get the post players from the Wildcats' into foul trouble. Ramaswamy had 24 points in the win.

The combination of teamwork and efficiency at practice along with close relationships among

players has strengthened the team. The team were scheduled to play Monta Vista at home on Jan. 28, and at Cupertino on Jan. 31. ♦

>> thebigidea

Varsity Basketball

Star players
Dharini Ramaswamy, Tivoli Sisco and Trishika Shetty

Veteran coach
Longtime coach and history teacher Mike Davey

Hopes for the season
To finish up the season with a positive record and hopefully qualify to make it into Leagues

THE QUOTABLE

Just as important

"[The coxswain] puts in the same amount of time as the rowers," senior Nicole Bowman said. "The [coxswain] has to multitask extremely well to lead the team effectively."

WHO'S HOT

Girls' hoops

With key senior players like Dharini Ramaswami and Tivoli Sisco, the senior girls' basketball team has gotten out to a hot start. After a strong pre-season, the team has a 4-1 record in league. "I think we have been having a strong season so far," senior guard Dharini Ramaswamy said. "Our underclassmen have really stepped up."

Wrestling power

Despite losing class of 2013 state qualifier Henry Wei, the wrestlers have started out the season well so far. In their match on Jan. 18, junior Christian Murabito placed first overall, while last year state qualifier senior Graham Grant placed second overall.

WHO'S NOT

Boys' soccer

After making the CCS playoffs for the last three years, the boys have struggled to start the season. With an anemic offense, the team has had to pull up many freshmen, resulting in a lack of size as well as experience.

Boys' basketball

With the loss of key players like class of 2013's Kyle Dozier and Stevie Berman, the Falcons have not been able to find their rhythm this year. The team finds itself with an 0-4 league record.

>> TheStats

24 Points scored

Dharini Ramaswamy scored 24 points in the girls' basketball 66-58 win over Los Gatos on Jan. 25. It was the first win over Los Gatos for all of the senior girls during their time here at Saratoga.

6 Games won overall

The girls' soccer team hasn't experienced the success that they were looking for, but with some great comeback wins like their win against the Monta Vista Matadors, the girls have a 6-3-2 record, including pre-season, and a record of 2-3 in league play.

BOYS' BASKETBALL



Junior Joey Medeiros dribbles past another player at the home game against Los Gatos on Jan. 10. The Falcons lost 66-58 to the Wildcats.

Lapses lead to massive deficits

By Jonathan **Young**

After five league games this season, the Falcons are still without a win and are looking to find footing in league play. But players say they expect to recover from their rocky start and earn wins in their remaining league games.

The team has had its fair share of difficulties early on this season. The height deficiencies were clear in the two losses to Milpitas, 75-53, and Los Altos, 65-54 on Jan. 15 and 17, respectively.

"The biggest struggle this season is our size," senior guard Justin Huang said. "The teams that we play are almost always bigger than us, and we lost a very strong senior class last

year. We also had to make adjustments to our new coach."

New coach Temo Barrera has placed a strong emphasis on conditioning in practices

"Since most teams are bigger than us, we need to utilize our speed by getting up and down the court faster," Huang said. "Every day in practice, we run a lot to improve our stamina and endurance."

The team often faces large point deficits, in which the players fall behind in stretches and struggle to recover against their opponents. This was seen in the Falcons' recent 66-31 loss to Palo Alto on Jan. 22.

"Every game we have this lapse where the other team just goes on a run and we are down by 15 or more," senior center

Kevin Chun said. "Our struggle is to stop those runs and get a win."

The Falcons plan to focus on improving their shot selection and defensive prowess. Another goal is to reduce their opponents' offensive rebounds. The Falcons also want to keep their edge and push each other during practices and games.

"It's always good to see players helping each other during the game and during practice," Chun said. "We want to get better as a team, and we are trying our best to improve each other by being competitive during the practices and going hard during the game. Even though we are down most of the times during the game, people on the bench still cheer for the players

on the floor."

Not only do the bench players cheer, but the fans do as well. The home crowd support has been a big factor in the morale of the team. One such game in which the crowd was a sixth man was against the Los Gatos Wildcats and while the Falcons kept clawing and scratching, they eventually fell, 66-58 in the tough loss.

"The best part about the season are the home games, the energy and excitement that the school brings is awesome," Huang said. "It really gets the players pumped up and excited for every game. Although we may not win every home game, our school is still always cheering us on, which keeps our confidence up." ♦

WRESTLING

Falcons perform well despite loss of players

By Sudeep **Raj**

On Jan. 18, the wrestling team competed in a meet with several schools at Christopher High School in Gilroy. Junior Christian Murabito placed first, senior Graham Grant placed second, senior Mike Fitzsimmons placed fourth and senior Isaac Tung placed seventh in their respective weight classes.

"The meet went really well, with so many people placing," Tung said. "It definitely bodes well."

The team will attend another meet on Feb. 1. and will hope to send some wrestlers to CCS during the February break.

"The wrestlers that placed on the 18th will definitely be going to CCS, along with a couple of others," Tung said.

Although there are more meets before CCS, the last meet usually offers a good indication of the team's potential.

According to Tung, "Those who placed will probably do the same at CCS."

The success of the team also shows its recovery from losing key wrestlers from last year's team.

Three students graduated last year, and four sophomores decided to ultimately quit wrestling.

"The losses made a difference, but we have strong upperclassmen this year," Tung said.

The loss of wrestlers isn't the only change that occurred this year. "The coaches have more of a hands-off approach this year," Tung said.

"We work out more on our own schedule and sometimes one coach won't come to a meet."

This has forced wrestlers to manage their own schedules and improve their own strength.

"Overall, it resulted in a better overall team, even though it made a few people drop [wrestling]," Tung said. ♦

Feeling like gold

THE WARRIORS START WITH A 27-18 RECORD

As the NBA season nears the halfway point, the Golden State Warriors sit nine games above .500, yet they only hold the sixth place in the ultra-competitive Western Conference playoff picture. After a somewhat shaky start to the season that saw the Warriors go 14-13, the Dubs rattled off a 10-game win streak and climbed up the ranks in the Western Conference. At 27-18, the Warriors have not had a bad season, but they have not been as impressive as projected in the preseason.

The Warriors completed a Cinderella playoff run last season and challenged the Spurs in the Western Conference

Semi-Finals, only to lose in six games. This playoff performance spurred the league into predicting them to finish among the top three or four teams in the West.

This, however, has not panned out. The Warriors have had their struggles, especially with turnovers. Star player Stephen Curry has been terrific (more on that later) but he is also averaging 4.2 turnovers a game and power forward David Lee is averaging 2.6. This is not a trend the Warriors want to continue if they hope to solidify themselves as one of the West's elite.

Despite these issues, at one point the Warriors did look like a dominant team in their 10-game win streak. Golden State impressively won games against the Los Angeles Clippers and the Miami Heat during that streak and looked like the team everyone expected to see as the season tipped off.

The Warriors' successes so far can be attributed to the stellar play of point guard Stephen Curry. Curry has been nothing short of an All-Star and potential All-NBA player thus far. He is averaging 23.5 points per game, seventh in the league, and 9.2 assists per game, which is good for second in the NBA.

Other than Curry, center Andrew Bogut and forward Andre Iguodala have also been important cogs in the Warriors' machine. While they don't contribute much as far as scoring, they are both elite defenders and give the Warriors a new dimension they didn't have in the past.

While the Warriors have not been perfect this season, they are a team to watch as the second half of the season progresses. With the Splash Brothers, David Lee, Iggy and Bogut, the Warriors are one of the league's most fun teams to watch and they may be one of the most dangerous come playoff time. ♦



Jonathan Young Flashy Sass

BOYS' SOCCER

Unforseen injuries lead to rough start for players

BY Samuel Liu

When senior centerback and co-captain Nikhil Goel went up for a header on Jan. 7 against Fremont, he didn't realize that his opponent's shoulder was heading for his head. Goel was knocked back furiously, onto the ground.

He landed on the back of his head.

Goel's concussion marked the third of the team's serious injuries. Just the game before, senior center midfielder Matt Foley had also gotten a concussion; not even a week before, sophomore center midfielder Jesus Chiprez Velasquez suffered a knee injury. After Goel, the team lost senior co-captain and centerback Will Guy during a game when Guy twisted his ankle.

"He's a straight beast, he was only out for a game," Goel said of Guy, who is his co-captain. "It's like his body regenerates."

With a litany of injuries, the team struggled through the first half of the season in the De Anza league and ending round 5 with a 0-3-2 record.

"Players had to play in roles they weren't used to," Goel said. "[It was a] higher level of play and tough for them to adjust."

In its most recent game on Jan. 27, the team suffered a loss against Mountain View, one of the top teams in the league. According to Guy, the loss reflected the team's main



FALCON // LAUREN LOUIE

Senior Andrew Firth dribbles up the wing on the game against Santa Clara on Jan. 22. The team suffered its first home loss, 1-0.

weakness: an inability to play offense.

The losses of Goel and Foley had hurt the team's transition game, and the players struggled to move the ball against their opponents.

On Jan. 22, the team suffered its first home loss against Santa Clara, after it was unable to recover from an early goal that it conceded. The game ended 1-0.

The team had just come off of a 2-0 loss to Los Altos, and three games prior, the Falcons lost 3-0 to Los Gatos on Jan. 10.

The Falcons also drew 0-0 against Palo Alto on Jan. 17 and Fremont on Jan. 8.

With Goel playing in the game against Santa Clara on Jan. 22 and Foley working with trainer Liz Alves to recuperate, the team looks to improve its performance for the rest of the season; however, it may be too little too late.

Sitting at second to the bottom of the table with only half the season remaining, the team may have to set its sights on a less lofty goal, and focus on avoiding relegation to a lower league next year. ♦

2014 WINTER OLYMPICS

Let the games begin

2014 WINTER OLYMPICS SET TO BEGIN IN SOCHI NEXT WEEKEND

BY Oksana Trifonova

With the 2014 Winter Olympics scheduled to begin on Feb. 7 in the Russian city of Sochi, Olympic fever is running high.

A number of Bay Area athletes will be competing in Sochi, most notably 15-year-old Polina Edmunds, a sophomore at nearby Archbishop Mitty. Edmunds was named to the U.S. women's figure skating team in mid-January after finishing second at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships in Boston.

Four members of the San Jose Sharks will also be on the ice in Sochi, competing for their home countries. Patrick Marleau and Marc-Edouard Vlasic will play for the Canadian team, and Annti Niemi will play for Finland and Joe Pavelski for the U.S. team.

Unfortunately, much of the excitement has been overshadowed by public protests regarding the location of the games. For the Chechens, it is a grisly reminder of the massacre conducted by the Russian government in 2000.

For the LGBT community, it is a place of mistreatment and

oppression due to Putin's new anti-gay laws.

Despite the \$50 billion cost for the Sochi games, the most expensive Olympics yet, potential security issues for the athletes continue to be a concern. Between suicide bombers who may already be in Sochi and Islamist militant groups located nearby, many countries are concerned about the safety of their athletes.

This year, 87 nations will be participating in the Olympics, an increase of five countries from 2010. Colombia, Ethiopia, Ghana, North Korea, Senegal and South Africa will not compete in 2014, while Malta, Paraguay, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Zimbabwe, and Dominica will be making their Winter Olympic debut this February.

But countries aren't the only ones making a debut: Six new events are being added to the games as well, including the biathlon, figure skating as a team event, the luge team relay, the ski halfpipe and women's ski jumping.

The Games will be played for two weeks, coming to a close on Sunday, Feb. 23. ♦

>> THE bigidea

2014 Olympic Games

Local Connection
Polina Edmunds, a sophomore at Archbishop Mitty, qualified on to the U.S. women's figure skating team.

New events
Biathlon, team figure skating, luge team relay and women's ski jumping.

Safety Concerns
Suicide bombers may be in the area, as well as terrorist organizations stationed nearby.

OPINION: ATHLETICS

College sports recruiting spirals out of control

BY Derek Sun

Ten years ago, 90 percent of prospective college athletes committed during their senior year and signed their National Letter of Intent during the holiday season. Fast forward to the present, and that is no longer true.

College recruiting is spiraling out of control nowadays with top-flight athletes committing to college as early as eighth grade or freshman year. These commitments are absurd, both for the athlete and for the school.

For both parties, the offer is extreme. For the student athlete, they are often overwhelmed with the opportunity to play sports at the collegiate level and foolhardily commit to the school without knowing whether or not the school is a good fit. The most important part of the athletic experience at college is finding the right fit for the player academically, athletically and socially.

St. Francis baseball standout Tim Susnara, now a senior, encountered many of these problems early in his high school career. He was heavily recruited by many schools, some that did not fit his academic, social or athletic profile. Schools started talking to him the summer after his freshman year. Many offered scholarships but he finally chose the University of Oregon early in his junior year, still very early in the recruiting calendar.

Often, the stars in middle school lack the work ethic and dedication that other less physically gifted athletes have. Sometimes the hard work that the coach puts into recruiting a highly touted player falls through because the player does not develop as well as the coach thought the player would. Then what happens? Since verbal commitments are not final and can be taken away, athletes often find themselves receiving a raw deal.

If a coach finds a better player than the one he previously recruited, he is not obligated to uphold his offer of a spot on the team. It isn't until an athlete finally signs his National Letter of Intent that he knows he is going to a certain college.

There are also rare cases in which a prospective athlete loses his scholarship and roster spot because the coaching staff leaves and a new one comes in.

For example, local standout and Team USA second baseman Bryson Brigman committed to Santa Clara University in eighth grade. The coaching staff left two seasons later and with its departure, Brigman lost his commitment. Fortunately, Bryson, now a senior, recently verbally committed to Stanford University.

All the hoopla about early verbal commitments is frivolous because of the assumptions that the coach puts in the player and the player puts in the coach. The coach assumes the player will con-

tinue to develop rapidly and maintain an elite ability. While sometimes highly touted players pan out, more often than not, they do not develop like the coach who recruited him would have hoped.

Even though early verbal commitments and recruiting as early as eighth grade seems ridiculous, colleges continue to do it to remain competitive.

Recently, Susnara took his official to Oregon but was dismayed by the fact that the University could not give him a written agreement stating the amount of money he would get.

For Susnara, the whole experience is frustrating, but that is the world of college recruiting nowadays.

In order to improve both athletes' and colleges' experiences, early recruitment should end. Sadly, though, as long as one college does it, the others will follow suit, leading to a cycle of disappointment for both coaches and players. ♦

>> togatalks

What do you think of early college sports recruitment?

“Good for them!”



senior Jason Li

“It's tough for athletes since they may not know what they're looking for in a college.”



senior Stephanie Chu

“Athletes definitely deserve it, if they're also academic.”



junior Neel Kattumadam

SEAHAWKS VS. BRONCOS

BEST DEFENSE VS. BEST OFFENSE



QUARTERBACK PEYTON MANNING

55 TOUCHDOWNS
5,477 PASSING YARDS
107.0 QB RATING
37 YEARS OLD



CORNERBACK RICHARD SHERMAN

8 INTERCEPTIONS
1 TOUCHDOWN
38 TACKLES
25 YEARS OLD

Super Bowl XLVIII
3:30 PM
Feb. 2 on FOX



Let the fun begin: Broncos and Seahawks clash

After a year in which new stars emerged, records were broken and multiple coaches missed games for health reasons, the two top teams in the NFL remain with a chance to win Super Bowl XLVIII in New York.

This Super Bowl is significant in a variety of ways. It is the first Super Bowl to be played in a cold weather stadium since Super Bowl 10, and it is the sixth time in the Super Bowl era that the best offense in the league, the Broncos, faces the best defense in the league, the Seahawks.

The Broncos and Seahawks are polar opposites from each other. The Broncos have a high flying passing attack while the Seahawks have a strong defense and a power running game.

Broncos' historic season

The Broncos, led by future Hall of Famer and five-time MVP quarterback Peyton Manning, have had one of the best offensive seasons in the history of the NFL, scoring a single season record 606 points and 76 touchdowns. They also broke the single season record for most players with 10 or more touchdowns, most passing first downs and most second half points.

Manning himself had arguably the greatest passing season for a quarterback in league history. He threw for 55 touchdowns in 2013 (a league record) and broke Drew Brees' 2011 record when he passed for 5,477 yards.

The Broncos finished with a 13-3 reg-

ular season record and claimed home field advantage in the AFC.

Denver's playoff run

After a first round playoff bye, the Broncos faced the San Diego Chargers in the AFC Divisional playoff round.

After jumping out to an early 17-0 lead after three quarters, the Broncos withstood an offensive surge by Phillip Rivers and the Chargers, giving the Broncos a 24-17 win, and advancing them to the AFC Championship game where they would play the New England Patriots led by Manning's ultimate rival Tom Brady.

In the past decade the Brady and Manning had played 14 times, three of them in the playoffs, and this AFC Championship was their 15th matchup (fourth in the playoffs). Prior to the game, Brady was 2-1 against Manning, but the two hadn't met in postseason play since Manning was still with Indianapolis.

In the AFC Championship game, the Broncos dominated on both sides of the ball after getting out to a fast start on defense. The Patriots were eventually unable to comeback.

Seahawks' regular season

The Seattle Seahawks had similar success during the regular season, but their success was more defensive than offensive. They also boasted a 13-3 regular season record and clinched home field advantage in the NFC Playoffs, an advantage that would prove extremely

important for the young Seahawks led by Russell Wilson at quarterback.

The Seattle Seahawks are undoubtedly carried and led by their defense, which was statistically the fourth best defense in NFL history this year. The "Legion of Boom" (the nickname for the secondary of the Seahawks), led by San Francisco's new public enemy No. 1 cornerback Richard Sherman, was dominant all year long and was a big factor in the team only losing one home game all year long.

Seattle's playoff run

After a first round bye for the Seahawks, the New Orleans Saints went into Seattle hoping to derail them, but it was to no avail.

Seattle dominated defensively, and extended their season to the NFC Championship a week later against the San Francisco 49ers.

While San Francisco and QB Colin Kaepernick looked strong early, they committed three turnovers in the fourth quarter and were ultimately unable to score on the last drive when Kaepernick threw a pass that was tipped by Sherman into the hands of Seattle linebacker Malcolm Smith to end the game.

After the game, Sherman called out and took personal shots at 49ers wide receiver Michael Crabtree, using phrases like "sorry receiver" and "mediocre" to describe him. This caused an uproar everywhere in America and was the No. 1 discussed topic in sports for the next couple of days.

Either way you look at it, this Super Bowl looks to be everything a fan dreams

of, the two truly best teams duking it out for eternal bragging rights. While "defense wins championships" may sound cliché at this point, it has historically proved to be correct. In the five times the best offense and defense have played in the Super Bowl, the team with the best defense won four out of the five times.

It will be interesting to see how the variety of weapons for the Broncos-offense match up with the stout defense of the Seattle Seahawks. I for one am very interested to see whether Manning decides to try and test Sherman once or twice during the course of the game.

Prediction

However, as this Super Bowl is being played in a neutral field, this venue has highs and lows for both teams.

The Seahawks as a team are built for a cold weather, potentially snowy type of game since they have the best defense in the NFL, and one of the best running games in the league with Marshawn Lynch; however, they are not playing at home, which puts them at a disadvantage.

For the Broncos, they are not playing at Century Link Field which gives them an advantage, but Peyton Manning historically is not at his highest level during cold weather games.

In the end, I believe the Broncos and their potent passing attack will be too much for the Seahawks despite having the best cornerback and overall secondary in the league. It will be close, but I think the Broncos will squeeze out a 20-17 victory, thereby giving Peyton Manning a second Super Bowl ring. ♦

>> snapshots



FALCON // JADE BISHT



FALCON // LAUREN LOUIE



FALCON // DAVID SPARKMAN



FALCON // LAUREN LOUIE

HERE'S THE CATCH: Solon Zhu (12) delivers a speech during the Speak Up for Change assembly on Jan. 24.

DON'T MISS LES MIS: Drama teacher Sarah Thermond reviews sheet music during 'Les Mis' rehearsal with Matt Nobles (11) and Natalie Miller (11).

BEING PEACOCKY: Ehrland Hollingsworth (12), Sasha Samoilov (12) and Nithika Arunkumar (10) imitate a peacock at Comedy Sports on Jan. 17.

DON'T MESS-I: Brennan Wu (9) jukes out a Santa Clara defender during the varsity soccer game on Jan. 22.

Senior fails at college interviewing attempt

While most students in their high school career will hear and lament about the struggles and hardships of junior year, the first semester of senior year is far worse once you factor in the college application process. School and college essays were indeed tough for me, but I placed most of the first semester stress on myself when I made a dreadful mistake on my first college interview.

In terms of college apps, the months of November and December are notorious for early applications, which then lead to the dreaded college interviews.

Soon after finishing my Columbia Early Decision application in early November, I received an email from a Columbia graduate named Youngmie Han asking me if I was interested in an alumni interview. Even though she assured me it wouldn't affect my application process and that it would be very casual, I was still skeptical about whether I wanted this interview.

After consulting with my friends and my parents, I decided that I would do the interview despite my earlier worries of jeopardizing my chances of getting in by sounding dumb. I sent an email back to Ms. Han, telling her that I was indeed interested in the interview, and I listed the times when I was free. Now, my trouble started with our following email exchange.

She sent me an email back asking me if I was free on Monday, Nov. 25, for an interview. I responded that I was free at any time that day and yet again waited for a response. She responded back asking if I would meet her at the Starbucks in downtown Palo Alto at 7 p.m. for our interview.

Now before I am judged for my stupidity, let me preface this next part by saying that this was my first time with the interview process, and I didn't fully understand the concept of a "confirmation email." Even though I had been taught in sixth grade that assuming

makes an ASS out of U and ME, I decided to assume that because I had told her I was free for the entirety of Monday, our interview was going to happen, so I didn't send a confirmation email.

I prepared myself in the next week for the interview, asking my peers about the interviews they had already done for other colleges. As the time passed, the day of Nov. 25 finally came, and I felt prepared for this interview. I dressed up fairly nicely in black slacks and a long sleeved collared shirt. I then hopped in my mom's Nissan Leaf, and we made our way to University Ave. in downtown Palo Alto.

I went to Starbucks early in order to make a good impression and waited for Ms. Han. As the time went by, my curiosity grew, and I wondered why my interviewer hadn't shown up yet. Let me also preface this next part by saying I am not racist, but rather, I was just confused. As I sat there waiting, I proceeded to ask every Asian lady who walked into Starbucks if her name was "Youngmie Han," and I got some very strange looks indeed.

At about 7:30, my mom came and asked me if I had fully confirmed the date with the interviewer. I told her I hadn't sent an extra confirmation email, and let's just say neither of us had very pleasant ride back home. I had wasted 30 minutes in downtown Palo Alto.

I called the interviewer and found out that since I hadn't confirmed fully, she didn't know whether the interview was on. She said that she would be going out of town the next day, and that her deadline for interviews was Dec. 1, meaning I would not be able to get an interview.

While this whole experience was very embarrassing for me, considering that I had told many people I was doing an interview, it did teach me some valuable lessons. I was once again bitten in the rear end by the evils of assuming and learned the valuable lesson that there is no such thing as too many when it comes to confirmation emails. ♦



NIKIL RAMANATHAN
Nikeef

I proceeded to ask every Asian lady who walked into Starbucks if her name was "Youngmie Han," and I got some very strange looks indeed.

buzzworthy >> Year of the Horse

BY Nupur Maheshwari & Gitika Nalwa

Chinese New Year, also known as The Lunar New Year, is a time of both new beginnings and old traditions. This year's holiday, which starts today, Jan. 31, marks the Year of the Horse.

According to Chinese mythology, Chinese New Year falls on a day when an ancient sea monster, the Nian, rises from the sea. In ancient times, Nian would wreak havoc on the villages of China. The villagers soon realized that the monster feared the color red. From then on, the people donned red and lit firecrackers to frighten the monster. This tradition has continued into the present day.

The color red is not only significant in Chinese mythology but is also symbolic in daily life. In Chinese culture, red represents luck, good fortune and joy. For this reason, wearing red at funerals and other somber occasions is considered disrespectful.



Like most holidays, Chinese New Year embraces tradition. People often clean

and decorate their homes, buy gifts for their loved ones, spend time with family and friends and buy new clothes.

New clothing represents the start of a new year. But, according to sophomore Felicia Hung, the significance of new clothes has greatly decreased over the years.

"Now, you get new items more often in the new year," Hung said. "It's not as special or as practical."

Other Chinese New Year traditions include giving red paper envelopes to family members and eating authentic Chinese food.

In China, Chinese New Year is the biggest festival of the year. Elaborate celebrations often last for a span of 15 days. Festivities fill the streets as well as homes with lion dancing, lantern festivals and temple fairs.

This holiday is celebrated around the world. Many Asian countries, such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand, also observe the holiday.

No matter where one celebrates Chinese New Year, the holiday remains an important day to all who celebrate it.

"It's a time when people come together," Hung said. "It's a day to spend with loved ones and look forward to the upcoming moments in life." ♦

>> topten

WAYS TO WATCH THE SUPER BOWL

- 10 Root for the Niners:** Never forget about that home team, man. In our mind, Seattle lost.
- 9 Show up to a Broncos party wearing Seattle colors:** I'm colorblind, can't tell the difference between green and orange.
- 8 Have a study party:** Grades over football any day.
- 7 Sleep:** What's a Super Bowl?
- 6 Try to understand the rules of football during the game:** You know it'll never happen. Stop trying now.
- 5 Forget the game, eat the food:** KFC chicken buckets and bags of chips for the win!
- 4 Only watch for the Bruno Mars halftime show:** I'll catch a football for youuuu.
- 3 Watch soccer:** You mean FOOTball? Why are Americans so weird?
- 2 Ruin the Super Bowl party:** Channel your inner Richard Sherman.
- 1 Make it a SOUPERbowl!** One bowl of clam chowder please! Drown away your sorrows when you realize that the refs suck.

>> Vibha Seshadri and Gwynevere Hunger