

# THE saratoga falcon

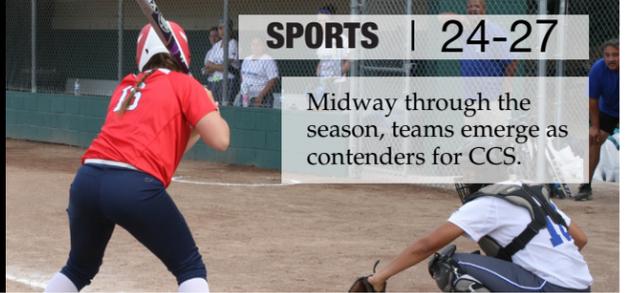


Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage PAID  
Saratoga, CA  
Permit No. 41




**ENTERTAINMENT**  
| 16-17  
The rise of the anti-hero.

**SPECIALTY** | 18-20  
**IS SCHOOL SPIRIT DEAD?**  
DOES IT EVEN MATTER?



**SPORTS** | 24-27  
Midway through the season, teams emerge as contenders for CCS.

Saratoga High School >> Saratoga, CA  
An Independent School Publication

[saratogafalcon.org](http://saratogafalcon.org)

Friday >> April 4, 2014  
Vol. 53, No. 10

>> what'sinside

■ ONE MONTH MORE

**'Les Miserables'**  
The musical debuts soon. It's huge, from set to cast. **pg. 2**

■ OPINION

**Changes to the SAT**

Are College Board's revisions to the infamous college entrance exam a good idea? **pg. 11**

■ FOOD REVIEW

**Trumpets: All hype, but little punch**

According to our reporter, the latest craze disappoints, from taste to environment. **pg. 13**

■ /R/SARATOGA

**Saratoga tells all**

What is your worst fear? The story of your first crush? Questions, answers and more from our student body. **pg. 14-15**

■ SPORTS

**The Exodus**

Why some top athletes are not choosing Saratoga programs. **pg. 24**

>> springfling



TOP LEFT: Ellie Koenig (12) rips the flag from Sara Parden (11) during Powderpuff championship match on March 27, which ended 6-0 in favor of the juniors.  
TOP RIGHT: Michael Cole (11) defends history teacher Jerry Sheehy, who looks to pass during the Staff vs. Students basketball game, which students won 36-34 in overtime.  
BOTTOM RIGHT: Senior boys perform their cheer routine during the rally on March 28.



ALL PHOTOS BY SIMI SRIVASTAVA

**THE VILLAGE**

*After less than a year, Market closes*

BY Ashley Chen

One or two people linger in the store, halfheartedly browsing the shelves for something to buy. Outside, the tables sit empty; no one stays long enough to sit down and enjoy the mosaic pattern that adorns the deck. The same sign — big, careful letters — smothers each side of the wall: Sale. Everything 40 percent off.

These were the last days of a dying business: Wildwood Market, Saratoga's home-grown grocery store that started last July with one man's dream and shut its doors for the last time on March 15.

"It's just simple math," said owner and Saratoga High parent Frank Dutro. "I'm losing thousands of dollars every month."

It would be easy to say Dutro is bitter, but the stronger undertone is exhaustion, disappointment. Contrast this with the Dutro of July 2013, who told the Saratoga Patch, a community paper, that "On a scale from one to 10, the reception I'm getting is about a 20." Now it's a different message.

"It's pretty hard," he said. "There is no real support for small businesses here."

Dutro initially thought oth-

*"There is no real support for small businesses here ... If I had to do it again, I probably wouldn't do it."*

>> owner Frank Dutro



FALCON // SHAZIA GUPTA

er Saratoga small businesses made a profit, but after talking to them, he realized "they don't make money."

A business can succeed downtown "if it is the right business," Dutro said, but he no longer believes Wildwood Market fits the description.

When asked whether he would change anything if he went back in time, he says he would "probably build a hole." Then he changes his

mind. "You know what? If I had to do it again, I probably wouldn't do it."

The market was scheduled to auction off its equipment on March 15. He closed the store "right afterwards." He does not plan on opening Wildwood anywhere else, he said, or trying again in Saratoga anytime in the future.

While acknowledging

>> **MARKET** on pg. 5

**DANCES**

**Why was Sadies canceled?**

BY Tiffany Zheng

On Friday, March 21 — the day Sadies was supposed to occur — the Small Gym sat empty but for a few students taking photos of the empty room. Facebook caption: "Sadies!"

The cause for the cancellation was a lack of interest. While Sadies is generally the least attended dance, this year numbers sharply declined. On the afternoon of the dance, only 40 tickets had been sold, according to principal Paul Robinson's email, which meant the dance wasn't worth having.

On campus, students have started wondering why interest in dances has fallen.

Senior Lauren Lin, a head commissioner of Spring Fling, attributed Sadies' failure to timing.

"Sadies is historically the least attended dance of the year because of its awkward position in the middle of March," Lin said. "[This year] we had to move it to the Fri-

>> **SADIES** on pg. 3

**FALCON FOCUS: ABBY FOSS**

**Family beyond blood**

**ONE-CHILD POLICY BRINGS JUNIOR FROM CHINA TO SARATOGA AS INFANT**

BY Michelle Leung

She was found on the steps of a factory in China one morning almost 17 years ago, one of 23 million abandoned or killed baby girl victims of China's one-child policy.

Her name became Abby when the Foss family adopted her and brought her to America. The girl who was found on the steps is now a vibrant junior at Saratoga High School.

Here, among the children of immigrants, she is a living reminder of one of China's most notorious policies. Meant to slow population growth, the

one-child policy also resulted in forced abortions, hefty fines and abandoned baby girls — Nicholas Kristof of the New York Times even called it "gendercide."



Foss

Abby was one of the more fortunate victims; the unfortunate ones were killed by their own parents or aborted as fetuses.

"I understand the need to try and control the population," said Cathy Foss, Abby's adopted mom. "The issue at hand is that China's culture puts a great emphasis on having a son."

Mrs. Foss is English, French and German, with brown hair

>> **FOSS** on pg. 5

news >> briefs

AP Physics C considered for 2015-2016

Over the next few years, students will see many changes in the format of the physics curriculum on campus. Not only will the AP Physics B class be replaced with a rigorous Physics Honors course for the 2014-2015 year, but there is also a potential plan for the addition of an AP Physics C class for the 2015-2016 year.

Whether the Physics C class will be added will be based on the reception of the Physics Honors class.

One major concern with adding the Physics AP C class would be that students would need to take a year of physics before the AP Physics C class.

"We don't know how many students will take Physics a second year," said physics teacher Kirk Davis.

Assistant principal Brian Safine said the course could be a beneficial addition for those interested in physics.

"The Physics C would be teaching different topics so that would be of appeal to some people," said Safine.

— Deepthi Sampathkumar

New murals give more school identity

The school finished painting two Falcon murals in front of the school and by the boys' locker room on March 10 at a cost of around \$8,000.

Principal Paul Robinson said that the purpose of the murals is to identify Saratoga as a school.

"Our school is a really nice school, but when you drive up from the outside, it's hard to tell whether it is a school or just a bunch of buildings out front," Robinson said.

If voters in the district pass a general obligation bond on the June ballot, Robinson expects the school to add many renovations in the near future.

"Over the next 10-15 years, there'll be a lot of renovations to the school to bring it up to the technological standards that need to be met or exceeded," Robinson said.

— Andrew Jiang and Jihau Yu

Highway expansion meets opposition

Mayor Emily Lo and the Saratoga City Council sent a letter on Feb. 25 to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) expressing concerns and asking for further studies on possible negative impacts expanding Highway 85 could have on residents.

The Highway 85 project is overseen by the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) and Caltrans. It would convert carpool lanes to toll lanes and add a lane.

Residents want a light rail for mass transportation; however, the new project does not include a light rail.

VTA spokesperson Brandi Childress said that the VTA is still studying other solutions to traffic problems in places such as the congested lanes at Highway 85 and Interstate 280, which will not be fixed through the current expansion plan. There is no set date for the project, although VTA estimates that it would start between 2016 and 2017.

— Michelle Leung

>> picturethis



DRAMA >> Junior Chris Nasser and senior Charles Li stage a scene from the musical "Les Miserables" at a rehearsal. The musical premieres on April 25, and continues on April 26 and 27 and May 2 and 3.

"LES MISERABLES"

Large cast creates challenges

By Simi Srivastava

The melodious sounds of close to 60 SHS drama students singing ricochets off of the walls of the McAfee Center as the cast of this year's spring musical, "Les Miserables," lends its voice to sing "Do You Hear the People Sing."

"Les Miserables," which will debut in the McAfee Center on April 25 at 7:30 p.m. and will run through May 3, is a musical on a scale like other. Plainly put, it's huge, from set to cast.

"One thing about this set is that it has different levels, which is something we haven't done since 'Jekyll and Hyde,' which was three years ago," stage manager senior Wren Sutterfield said. "We're using scaffolding so that certain people can be on a higher level than others."

Sutterfield also said that though the set will not be as detailed as past years, it will still capture the essence of different scenic locations.

"This set is one large stable

set for the whole show which is more like we have generally done for fall plays," Sutterfield said. "It's a lot more minimalist in the sense that we are using the same street for everything and adding in little bits and pieces to make it seem like the specific locations."

This year's cast of "Les Miserables" contains a record number of participants with over 60 actors and actresses, creating some difficulties.

Drama teacher and director Sarah Thermond said that she has been having trouble blocking scenes that involve the whole cast due to lack of rehearsal space.

She plans to solve the spacing issue by having the actors learn all of their vocals first, so that when they move into the McAfee Center with the finalized set, she can focus on the actual formations.

The number of people in the cast has also created some challenges with costuming.

"We have approximately 60 people that we have to put into costumes that relate to their

characters, that make sense to the show... the sheer bulk of it and the hectic nature of it is insane," said costume designer senior Annalise Nussbacher. "We have had to rent from three different organizations."

Both Thermond and Nussbacher also have had to work around the fact that the large cast will not fit in the dressing rooms backstage.

"We're thinking of putting [a tent] somewhere alongside the stage door of the McAfee and designate [some actors] to have that as a changing space. The green room is probably going to be used as a dressing room," Thermond said. "It's going to be a little chaotic, but the nice thing is that compared to last year, each actor has on average fewer costumes."

Despite these difficulties, the cast and crew are anticipating a successful final product.

"This is one of my favorite musicals, so I'm really enjoying hearing everyone sing and everyone sounds lovely," Sutterfield said. "It's a really exciting experience for me." ♦

APP DEV

New hackathon draws 800 teen coders

By Andrew Jiang & Anant Rajeev

More than 800 high school students, most of them from the Bay Area, went to the campus of PayPal's San Jose Headquarters with one goal in mind on March 7-8: win one of the handful of prizes in the High School Hacks Hackathon.

Representing the school at the event were sophomores Spencer Yen, Aakash Thumaty and Ethan Chen, who combined to try to write an app that pairs a user and a random Facebook friend to chat anonymously.

They had two days to write the code for the app. With a mere 24 seconds left, they submitted their app. Later that day, they found out that they had won first place in the Fa-

ebook API award and an iPad Mini.

Although the majority people who went to High School Hacks knew how to code, roughly 300 people without prior programming experience also came.

"People who didn't know how to code came [to the event] and learned how," Yen said. "There were workshops with professionals centered around helping beginners create simple applications [such as] games like 'Flappy Bird' and various other Android applications."

Yen and Thumaty, co-organizers of High School Hacks as well as participants, spent much of their time supervising the event.

They organized workshops that taught code to any stu-

dents, led workshops and helped to make sure the event ran smoothly.

Around 30 companies such as Google and Facebook sponsored the event and helped pay for all of the costs.

Furthermore, companies gave out awards to students who created apps using one of their APIs (Application Programming Interface) and advertised jobs and internships.

Overall, Yen and Thumaty believe that the experience at a Hackathon was nothing short of exciting.

"The environment at the Hackathon was the best because it kept people extremely content and motivated," Thumaty said. "It's everyone coming together whether they were a coding veteran or a rookie." ♦

SADIES >> Dance canceled due to lack of student interest

continued from pg. 1

-day before Spring Fling week, so not enough interest was generated during the week."

According to Lin, the lack of school-wide publicity could also have contributed to the low attendance. Lin noticed that many of her peers were not aware that Sadies was coming around.

Senior Vivian Wang, a member of the spirit publicity commission, said that students have lost the incentive to go to the school dances.

"What's happening this year is that girls who still want to ask go ahead and ask, but they won't go to dance," Wang said. "Instead, they'll go do something else with their date."

But according to ASB vice president Anup Kar, the problem goes beyond Sadies. Students don't know what to do at dances anymore, he said.

"In middle school, that was jumping up and down. In high school, we transformed that into 'side to side' with other people," Kar said. "But when that's taken away from you, it's hard to figure out what to

do." In a poll The Falcon conducted earlier this year, 37 percent of responders said that they stopped attending dances because of the ban on freaking—a style of dancing the administration has tried to stamp out with a face-to-face dancing requirement.

Sophomore Arnav Pawar went so far as to say that the student body was trying to prove a point by not attending Sadies. "I think Sadies was canceled because of the anti-freaking policies," Pawar said. "The students wanted to show that the policy was bad and didn't show up to

dances this year because of it." Robinson disagrees that the policy has affected the attendance.

"I don't think the anti-freaking policy was the reason for the cancellation because the other schools that don't have the anti-freaking policy, their attendance has also dropped as well," Robinson said.

Kar said that eventually the low numbers might result in the end of Sadies. Next year, the dance commission might show a movie projected onto the football field.

"That would bring in a lot more people than Sadies could have," he said. ♦

CONNECTIONS

Middle school teacher remains friends with former students

By Sabrina Chen & Ariel Liu

After a long day of listening to 13-year-olds recite the order of the US presidents, Redwood Middle School 8th grade core teacher Alexis Nesper can't wait to return home and relax with her husband and 2-year-old son Landon. But sometimes Nesper is delayed a little longer than expected, and she doesn't mind one bit.

Three to four times per semester, some of Nesper's old students come to visit, inquiring about her life. Nesper too enjoys catching up with these previous students.

"I like to find out how they've changed [and] what's new in their lives," she said. "I always ask them for the gossip so that I can find out about how some of my other old students are doing now that they've graduated."

Nesper said her former students often completely change after graduating

from middle school.

"You don't always remember your eighth-grade teacher, but I like to know how people are because your eighth-grade self is not who you are," she said. "[Eighth grade is] just a blip on the way of becoming who you truly are."

Her closest former student is 2011 alumna Nina Mohanty, who started visiting Nesper quite frequently soon after graduating from middle school.

"We always had so much to talk about, whether it be schoolwork, my future, [Nesper and fellow core teacher Shannon Avina's] futures, how stupid boys are, what they cooked for dinner the previous night, new books that we liked, SNL sketches that we all found so hilarious," Mohanty said.

Nesper added that even when Mohanty was a student in her class, she knew they got along well. Their personalities meshed well and they enjoyed each other's sense of humor. In fact, right after Mohanty graduated eighth

grade, she began to come back to visit regularly.

"Alexis was a really great anchor for me in high school. She was always there, always in the same room. In high school, [there are] a lot of changes. It was nice to have a constant support system from a person like [Nesper]," Mohanty said. "I know a lot of people found it weird and probably still do today. But I definitely consider Alexis to be [one of] my best friends."

Mohanty said that over the years their relationship as student to teacher has become more of a true friendship. The two of them enjoy going to movies, getting pedicures and going shopping together. When Nesper was pregnant, Mohanty attended her baby shower, and she now babysits for Nesper.

Mohanty added that although she doesn't know what the future holds for her, she is confident that Nesper will be in her life in no matter what circumstance. ♦



Redwood Middle School teachers Shannon Avina and Alexis Nesper pose with former student Nina Mohanty at a party.

**What is your COLLEGE dream? Whatever it is, FLEX can help!**

**Senior Packages Class of 2015**

- College list research
- Full review of application and essays
- Interview workshop
- "Majors" research
- And many more!

**College Counseling**

Expertise is drawn from former college admission officers including Stanford, Yale, U Chicago, Berkeley and more!

**Sign up for a FREE 1-on-1 Academic Counseling Session**

**SAT I / ACT Intensive SAT I Program**

Prepare for the SAT and ACT test with:

- Strategies and techniques
- Homework, diagnostic tests
- Progress report and feedback

**SIGN-UP FOR A FREE DIAGNOSTIC TEST!**

**Summer Preview Program**

Get a head start by previewing upcoming school year courses at an accelerated pace!

**Instructors from:**  
Local high schools, Harvard, Stanford, Berkeley, Princeton, Johns Hopkins, and many more!

An overview of a particular Honors and AP subject in the coming year.

**Free College Admission Seminars for All grades**

Attend our free informational seminars every month. Wide range of topics covered on college admissions such as SAT vs ACT, College admission trends, how to plan extracurricular activities etc.

**SAT Verbal Junior Program 9th-10th graders**

Get a head start on SAT prep while developing general reading skills.

**Middle School 6th-8th graders**

Book Club, Grammar Classes, Essay Writing classes: Curriculum developed by former instructors of Writing at Johns Hopkins CTY and Stanford EPGY.

**Palladian Counseling 8th-11th graders**

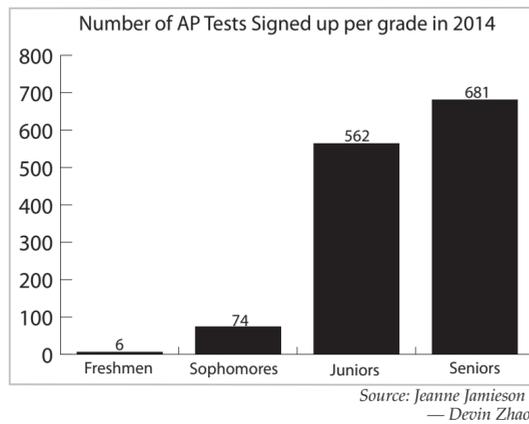
Start your college dream by planning ahead and building a solid foundation! Register today for as low as \$1,195

Almaden 408.997.1632      Cupertino 408.252.7742

Fremont 510.668.0880      Los Altos 650.947.7742

[www.flexcollegeprep.com](http://www.flexcollegeprep.com)

>> falconfigures



EVENTS

# SHS defeats Redwood in staff charity game

BY Shazia Gupta

Members of the Saratoga High staff and Redwood Middle School faculty participated in the second annual charity basketball game on March 19 at 7 p.m. The final score was 52-32, with the Saratoga High staff winning for the second time in a row.

Between 300 to 400 people attended the event.

Last year, the proceeds of the charity event went to the Saratoga Sub-Acute Hospital. This year, the proceeds, which were close to \$3,000, will benefit Redwood media arts teacher Manny Steffen's hometown of Washington, Ill., a city that was hit by a tornado and devastated last November.

The overall sportsmanship between the two teams was friendly, but "there

were a couple instances where teachers were upset about being fouled," assistant principal Brian Safine said. However, by the end of the game, "there were no ill feelings between teachers."

"It was fun watching the teachers get competitive with each other," sophomore basketball player Erin Norris said. "There was time after the game to visit with your teachers, and it was a fun time to hang out with friends."

Students enjoyed seeing some of their favorite teachers from both schools play against each other, Norris said.

"There's a pretty intense rivalry between some of the Redwood and Saratoga teachers," senior Dharini Ramaswamy said. "Every time Mr. Sheehy hit a three [point basket], we would all go crazy."

Teachers enjoyed playing against



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

Teacher Mike Davey looks to pass during the staff game against Redwood on March 19.

each other and raising money for a good cause at the same time, Sheehy said.

"It was great that so many people came to watch a bunch of 'old guys' run up and down the court," Sheehy said.

Although the game was supposed to be for fun, there were some minor dis-

agreements.

"We're all competitors and once the game gets going some of us have a tendency to get wrapped up in it," Steffen said. "When it's over, we all shake hands and have nothing but respect and appreciation for each other." ♦

ORGANIZATIONS

# Math Club prospers in recent competitions

BY Dorrie Tang

After months of hard preparation, members of the math club participated in their most important series of math competitions of the year: the American Mathematics Competitions (AMC) 10 and 12 held on Feb. 4 and 19, and the American Invitational Mathematics Examination (AIME) held on March 13 and 26. This year, 28 students from the school as well as 13 from Redwood Middle School qualified for the AIME, an invitational test given to the top few percent of scorers on the AMC 10 and 12.

"I'm quite excited about how well the students are doing," math club adviser and math teacher PJ Yim said. "I believe 28 AIME qualifiers is the largest number of qualifiers since 2008-09 and 2009-10 when we had 21 AIME qualifiers."

Based on their AMC and AIME cumulative scores, top scorers will qualify for the USAJMO or USAMO, proof-based tests given to only around 500 top math contestants in the nation. The results for qualifiers are expected to come out around next week. Apart

from the AMC contest series, math club members also participated in the annual Berkeley Math Tournament (BMT) and Santa Clara Valley Math Association (SCVMA) Field Day on March 22. Saratoga placed fifth in BMT as a team. Sophomore Sean Shi also placed first in the Individual Round, and senior Edgar Chen placed fourth in the Discrete Focus Round.

At SCVMA, sophomore Alexander Li placed fourth in the Open Precalculus contest, sophomore Celine Liang placed fourth in the Discovery Quest contest, while senior Priyanka Krishnamurthi and junior Kevin Chiang placed fourth together in the High School Leap Frog Contest.

"I think [what helped us succeed was that] everyone was really motivated to put their best foot forward and try the hardest they could," Krishnamurthi said.

Despite their past successes, math club members plan to continue honing their skills and preparing for the upcoming USAJMO and USAMO.

"I am proud of the way officers and other main [members] have stepped up and ran the math club," Yim said. ♦

HISTORY BOWL

# Heading for Nationals

## SARATOGA RALLIES TO WIN TOURNAMENT

BY Bruce Lou

The History Bowl team, confident and heavily favored to win the March 22 Northern History Bowl Championships, once again proved its status as a powerhouse team by winning the tournament and becoming the first varsity triple crown winner — the winner of all three regional tournaments — in the history of the competitions.

This victory was a marked contrast with just two years ago, when the team was just getting started and barely made it into the top half of the field.

"I think last year was the year in which we really started making huge gains," junior Ethan Ngai said. "Since then we've built our way up to a fear-some reputation."

The varsity A team, consisting of Ngai, juniors Bruce Lou and Nitya Sampath and senior captain Nick Chow, managed to win seven rounds in a row, and each single round by a margin of 100 points or more.

"I thought we would do pretty well, but I didn't expect the final rounds to be so easy," Sampath said.

Sampath, who is a self-described Anglophile and the team's expert on all things Britain, said that the close-knit team dynamic helped greatly in propelling the Falcons to victory.

"We've spent all of last year together and all of this year together," Sampath said. "We trust each other to answer questions."

Chow stressed the importance of the closeness of the team.

"I've seen people open up in practice in ways they've never opened up outside," Chow said. "We tell terrible jokes, and so much more. I couldn't have survived junior year without History Bowl to give me sanctuary."

One of the "jokes" that Chow mentioned was Ethan Ngai's hatred of Greeks that has become a running gag within the team.

"[Ethan] believes that he is an ancient Persian, and as such, he hates anything having to do with Greece," Chow explained. "For those non-history buffs, that's because the Greeks managed to defeat the Persians in the Persian Wars. Ethan hates them to such an extent that he refers to Greece as 'the G-word.'"

Chow also wants to dispel the myth that History Bowl is merely memorization of facts, dates and people.

"Many players do memorize trigger words — 'stock clues' in History Bowl lingo — but that only gets you to a certain level of proficiency," Chow said. "It's cliché, but history really is a puzzle, and if you memorize facts, you'll never be able to see the entire puzzle. Context is important in History Bowl."

Ngai believes that the source of the team's victories comes from the devotion of its members.

"Though we have fun during practices, we all are pretty serious about [competing]," Ngai said.

Although all members of the team are serious about their game, Chow noted the lack of internal competition.

"There's no jockeying for History Bowl positions," Chow said. "Unlike in a lot of other teams, the interests of the team are the interests of the members."

The team looks to have a promising Nationals run, which will be on April 26 and 27 in Washington, D.C.

The team has attended two times in the past, with a quarterfinal finish last year.

"Though we did very well last tournament, I think we can up our game quite a bit," Ngai said. "I hope we can continue being a powerhouse team." ♦

# FOSS >> 1-child policy brings junior to Saratoga as an infant

continued from pg. 1

and green eyes. She's confident and cheerful and likes to socialize. She said Abby is one of the best things to ever happen to the Foss family.

"[Abby is] awesome, strong, resilient, beautiful, loving, happy, the best daughter I could ever ask for," Mrs. Foss said.

Mrs. Foss decided to adopt one evening, flipping through a magazine. It wasn't a simple decision. She had been going through "intrusive, exhausting and mentally taxing" infertility treatments. After hours of research and counsel with adoption agencies, she and her husband dropped out of infertility treatments and decided to adopt a girl from China.

"Infertility treatments were time consuming, physically painful, stressful and, of course, not guaranteed," Mrs. Foss said. "When the option of adopting a daughter from China became a very real possibility, it was a relief to change focus [onto] something more concrete and positive."

In adopting Abby, the Foss family went through a strenuous 9-month process. They had to submit references, write essays and fill out paperwork. They also had to check carefully for corruption in the agencies they used to make sure that they were going to get Foss.

The Fosses, along with 14 other couples, travelled to China with gifts for officials in order to work out the adoption.

"Abby was left at the steps of a factory in town in the wee hours one morning at the age of about nine days old," Mrs. Foss said. "This tells us that it was a very difficult decision for her biological parents. I can't imagine making that decision, but they did what they thought was best for them."

Mrs. Foss concluded that Abby's biological parents had been reluctant to give her up because they took so long to give her up — most girls are found at one or two days old — and because they left her in a public spot, knowing that she would be in safe hands soon.

Abby, of course, has memories of only



Courtesy of ABBY FOSS

Junior Abby Foss poses with her family. Foss was adopted and moved from China to America when she was less than a year old.

the Foss family, which consists of her adopted mom, dad and older brother. And although she has always known she was adopted, she feels complete in her family.

"My parents are just that — my parents, Mom and Dad," Abby said. "They've been my parents since I was one, so there really isn't any difference between my relationship with my own parents and 'regular families.' We only look different and don't share the same genetics."

Abby doesn't care much for her origins and feels no obligation to learn more about either her biological parents or her ethnicity. Finding a person in China is like "finding a needle in a haystack," she said.

And, she said, she fears consequences to her biological parents because it's illegal to abandon a child.

Abby also does not identify herself as Asian. Although her parents offered her

the chance to immerse herself into her ethnicity, Abby chose neither to learn the language nor to go the weekend Chinese schools.

"I really can't consider myself Asian," Abby said. "I'm not having an identity crisis in believing I'm white. I know what I look like, but my whole family is white and I was brought up [in white culture]."

The contrast between Abby's appearance and her family's appearance has caused no end of confusion among her friends.

According to Abby, reactions generally follow the same pattern.

"The usual response is something along the lines of 'Really? What's [being adopted] like?'" Abby said. "Most think it's interesting or something like that, but I've definitely been called a liar before. Not just a 'You're serious?' type of reaction, but flat out 'Stop lying, what's the truth?'"

Abby likes to have fun with reactions to her adoption. She occasionally throws out vague information such as "My parents are white," while simultaneously combing through her black hair.

"I mean just saying 'I'm adopted' all the time gets old fast; [it's] really boring," Abby said.

It wasn't until 2013 that the Chinese government finally changed policies so that couples in which one parent had no siblings could have a second child of their own. Abby believes that this policy may help prevent many cases of abandonment and infanticides. But at the same time, she is satisfied with where her life has brought her.

"When I was younger, I didn't know all the facts, so there was a lot more open room for stuff to dream about," Abby said. "I don't really care anymore. I just want to go on with my life. I don't remember a thing about China, and living in Saratoga is pretty dang fortunate." ♦

# MARKET >> Wildwood in downtown closes due to high costs

continued from pg. 1

Dutro's valiant efforts, some of Wildwood Market's neighbors mentioned other reasons for the business's struggle.

According to the owner of Fat Robin, an antique shop located just down Big Basin Way, Wildwood Market needed to stay open longer to build its customer base.

"You never start a business unless you plan to stay in it for at least five years," she said. "Of course [Saratoga needs] a market, but you have to stay in there and merchandise it properly."

She added, "I think [Dutro] would be the first to tell you he expected [customers] to come immediately."

In contrast, she has operated the Fat Robin for 41 years. The business has been alive for even longer; her family was the original owner.

She also cited the lack of foot traffic in Saratoga as a major issue, saying the downtown doesn't have "the right kind of stores."

Another local merchant, Adam Clark, owner of Everything But the Wedding Dress, denounced Saratoga's "old school philosophy" of prioritizing tradition over growth. For instance, he said the permit system is outdated

and inefficient. Clark said it takes "three months and two thousand dollars" to put up a sign because it needs to go through so many commissions for approval.

"In that time, your sign isn't there," Clark said. "You aren't getting your business out there."

Still, Clark believes there is hope if Saratoga could emulate the resurrection of Campbell's downtown. It used to be a "ghost town," Clark said, but by bringing in popular business like Aquí's, a restaurant chain,

civic leaders have attracted more people from all over the Bay Area.

As a result, more store owners moved to Campbell's downtown, he said, because they knew they would have foot traffic to back up their businesses.

Whatever the causes, Wildwood Market is gone for good. Historically, the space has been host to a series of businesses that "came and went," according to the Saratoga Patch.

As a child, Dutro often went to the Saratoga Drug Store, and it served as an inspiration when he opened up his shop.

The Saratoga Drug Store was in operation from 1910 to 1999. In a sign of the times, Wildwood Market lasted less than a year. ♦

**The Saratoga Drug Store was in operation from 1910 to 1999. In a sign of the times, Wildwood Market lasted less than a year.**

ACADEMICS

# 12 Saratoga students take part in the Synopsis Science Fair

BY Ariel Liu

For many students, going to bed at 3 a.m. is no big deal. For sophomore Meera Rachamalla, who makes it her mission to go to sleep every night at 8 p.m., nothing — not death nor life, not even a strong cup of coffee — warrants staying up this late. Except, that is, Synopsis.

The Synopsis Science Fair took place at the San Jose Convention South Hall on March 13.

About 1,100 students participated

and about 40 percent of them will receive cash prizes and awards at the ceremony April 6 at Great America.

The weekend before Synopsis took place, Rachamalla stayed up putting her board together: printing graphs, cropping pictures, typing the conclusion and more. In total, her project took 35 hours.

"It was strange because for the first time I was actually limited to the number of hours left before I had to turn it in, so it felt like a countdown to the end of my life," she said.

Rachamalla did her project on the topic of riboflavin. She got her idea from the Center for Disease Control announcement that humans may be entering a post antibiotic era.

When cleaning the surface of tables, the bacteria, not the DNA, dies. As a result, this DNA can still be transformed into new bacteria.

For Rachamalla's project, she tried to find a way to prevent transformation in bacteria using riboflavin, a mineral that breaks DNA into useless fragments.

Though her project was inconclusive, she still learned from the background research about antibiotics.

A total of 12 students from Saratoga High participated in the event.

"For being such a good school, we don't even have a science fair program," Rachamalla said.

This was Rachamalla's fourth time doing the science fair, and she plans on continuing throughout high school.

"At the end, it's worth it to present my achievements to the judges" she said. ♦

**Cornerstone Christian Academy**  
cornerstonedream@gmail.com

## Math & Chemistry Tutor

**Math Courses**  
Pre-Algebra, Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2, Trigonometry, Pre-Calculus, AP Calculus AB/BC

**Chemistry Courses**  
Regular / Honors / AP / Chemistry Olympiad

**SAT Courses**  
SAT I: Critical Reading / Writing / Math  
SAT II (Subject Test): Math, Chemistry

**Private & Small Group**  
Dr. Sang Park, (408) 996-0354

All Driving School  
456 South 2nd St #7  
San Jose, CA 95124

## All DRIVING SCHOOL

\*10 off with this ad!

- Free pick up and drop offs
- Private training
- Well trained instructors

(408) 370-9696  
(408) 626-7684

## EVENTS

## 'Girls with Courage' has great second year

BY Ashley Chen  
& Tiffany Zheng

"Girls for Courage," an event aiming to empower female students, happened on March 25. Planned by ceramics teacher Leah Aguayo and attendance secretary Mandy Armes, an informal club of female students and Saratoga High parents, "Girls for Courage" had around 20 to 25 participants in its second year.

The event taught the girls to respect their mind, body, and others.

The roots for "Girls for Courage" were planted at the beginning of the year, according to event planner sophomore Darby Williams.

In time, Williams and other girls formed a casual group that has met every Monday to plan "Girls for Courage."

"[We] started talking about certain is-

suues on campus," Williams said. "We all agreed that there was a lot we wanted to talk about, like the pressure of self-image."

According to Aguayo, she brought the group together after a 25-year hiatus of the "Women's Awareness" club to plan "Girls for Courage." "Women's Awareness," she said, was created because female students often came to her for advice on topics such as self-confidence or bullying, and she wanted to address those issues in a workshop.

Grieving the death of Audrie Pott, Aguayo felt that the time was right to start up the group again.

Sophomore Ursula Bravo, who attended the event for the second time, said that she really enjoyed the event.

"The workshop really made my day by opening my eyes and giving me a different perspective on myself," Bravo said. ♦

## CLUBS

## Students excel in FBLA conference

BY Jihau Yu  
& Tiffany Zheng

Students from Saratoga High competed in a Future Business Leaders of America Club (FBLA) Conference on March 1 at Homestead High after months of studying. The club competed against 27 high schools and over 900 students while placing top 10 in nine different competition subjects about real-world business practices. Members competed individually, but represented the school as a team.

The entire competition is a variety of tests in different subjects, yet students enjoy the challenging prospects that it offers.

"It was really nice to know that after all that work we were able to pull in fourth place," Wang said.

Senior Nikki Thareja, president of

FBLA, said that the awards ceremony was exciting and nerve wracking at the same time.

"Every time a Saratoga kid won we would all scream and cheer like there was no tomorrow," said Thareja.

Thareja believes that the team did extremely well in comparison to last year. For the first time ever, 17 members qualified for states. This is larger than the 11 members who qualified last year and the seven members from the year before.

Right now, seniors Thareja, Jonathan Yang, Nelson Wang, Kevin Jiang, junior Alex Kim, and freshmen Leslie Huang and Michelle Xu have been preparing for the California Future Business Leaders of America State Conference in April. Thareja hopes that the team will eventually make it to the nationals in Nashville. ♦

## FIELD TRIPS

## MAP goes behind the scenes in L.A. trip

BY Becky Hoag

Teens around the world have watched captivated as Ted narrates one crazy week after another with his best friends Robin, Lily, Marshall and Barney in the hit show "How I Met Your Mother."

But while many have seen the show, few talked to the cast and seen the sets.

Fifty juniors in the Media Arts Program (MAP) experienced just that on the annual Los Angeles and Hollywood trip from March 12-16 where they explored the exciting world behind the scenes of many popular TV shows.

The MAP students got to visit sets of "How I Met Your Mother," "Friends" and "The Mentalist," as well as view props from "Harry Potter," "Batman"

and other popular movies.

"It was an amazing experience and we got to learn a lot about the film industry by visiting the various studios," Madison Gress said.

The students tried on the famous sorting hat from "Harry Potter," sat on the couch of "Friends" and witnessed the exact location where Red John was killed in "The Mentalist."

"The weird thing is that you look like you're in a living, breathing town from the outside, but if you look inside the doorway you see unpainted walls and little pieces of timber falling down because they're built for only what the camera can see," Andrew York said.

They also went to locations such as Warner Brothers Studio, Sony Pictures Studio, the Grammy Museum and the

Griffith Observatory.

Margo Pevar especially enjoyed the Griffith Observatory.

"We could see the Hollywood sign from there; it was a very beautiful area," Pevar said. "And the place was just amazing. It was filled with all of those cool facts about stars and galaxies."

On the third day, the group got to cruise down the Hollywood Walk of Fame and attend a PaleyFest Show — a show that provides the latest information on popular TV shows and movies — for "How I Met Your Mother." There, some of the students were able to chat with the cast over video chat.

Not only was this trip fun for the students, but it was also a chance to visit many colleges in the area. Tony Holt's favorite part of the trip was visiting Chapman University.

"Dodge School, the film school [at

Chapman], was really cool," Holt said. "They have these private editing suites so you can be alone when you're editing, which is great."

The juniors also enjoyed the team-bonding aspect of the trip.

"It was a great experience that brought the entire group together," Jennifer McAfee said. "We got closer with people we never would have thought we would have."

MAP English teacher Suzanne Herzman, who went on the trip, said that everything went very smoothly this year. "There was this nice feeling getting off the bus at the end," Herzman said. "People seemed tired but in a thoughtfully, relaxed sort of way."

Pevar recommended the trip for MAP students in the future.

"It's just a really cool experience," Pevar said. ♦

## STANDARDIZED TESTING

## SAT changes will affect current freshmen class

BY Deepti Kannan  
& Michelle Leung

A revised version of the SAT will be implemented in spring of 2016. The new test is intended to fix problems with the current version of the test and to keep pace with the ACT, which has been outstripping the SAT in recent years in popularity.

The new 3-hour SAT will go back to the old 1,600-point system and include an optional essay.

There will be no penalty for wrong answers.

The reading and writing sections will be based on more relevant articles, from traditional literature to science articles.

For example, the new SAT will include analysis of excerpts from historical documents such

as the Constitution.

"Whenever a question really matters in college or career, it is not enough just to give an answer," College Board president David Coleman told the New York Times. "No longer will it be good enough to focus on tricks and trying to eliminate answer choices. We are not interested in students just picking an answer, but justifying their answers."

The optional essay question will ask students to analyze a passage instead of writing a response to an arbitrary question, as in the previous SAT.

The math section will focus on three areas — problem solving and data analysis, algebra and the application of complex equations in science and social science.

"The changes in the SAT should eventually be good overall, if done as stated," said Rakhi Israni, president of a local test preparation service called Excel Test Prep. "The skills that the SAT proposes to test should be much more in line with the skills necessary to actually succeed in college."

SAT prep classes and books have been a reliable way to get adequate scores in the past. Standardized test prep companies will be adapting to these changes and making new strategies.

"Starting Summer 2015, [Excel Test Prep] will offer prep for both the current and the new formats," Israni said. "The new format prep will cater to students taking the new format PSAT in October 2015."

According to Israni, the new SAT will be more difficult initially, but should be easier than the current SAT in the long term.

"Initially, the new SAT will be harder than the current version," Israni said. "It should eventually be a better assessment."

Junior Jackie An believes that the test will be a more accurate measure of intelligence and effort in school.

"In that sense the changes are founded, but it also seems like it'll be harder to get good scores, so that may be a negative for students," An said. "The old one definitely sounds like a more guaranteed good score if you studied hard, whereas the new one you could go either way depending on how you

did on the test."

An feels that making the essay optional was a mistake on the part of CollegeBoard.

"I think it would kind of be hard to judge the scores if some people wrote an essay and some people didn't," An said. "I don't see how that would be helpful, so I think they should have kept the essay."

Freshmen are optimistic that the new test will not require the extensive test preparation previous students have had to take.

"I like the revised version of the writing section of the SAT because it will test us on what we learn in school," freshman Trevor Leung said. "Hopefully we won't have to do additional test prep. This will revolutionize standardized testing." ♦

## ELECTIVES

## Music department has busy concert month in March

BY Devin Zhao

"I will bet anybody five dollars that at the end of the first movement [of Maslanka's 'Give Us This Day' Symphony], somebody is going to clap," musical director Michael Boitz declared to the Symphonic Wind Ensemble the period before the March 7 performance.

At that time, junior clarinetist Joowon Lee rose up and took the bet.

"I thought that it was a good opportunity to jip my teacher of five dollars," Lee said later. "I knew that the audience would be silent if we played really well, so I was more concerned about the quality of the music rather than the five dollars [I won]."

The bet between Lee and Boitz is only one example of the many experiences created during the start of the music department's concert season.

While basketball fans energetically watch "March Madness" NCAA basketball on TV, Boitz and other music teachers prepare for the concert season, a large portion of which is focused in March.

Boitz said that most of the music

events, which last until June, are centered around March because the music department needs to work with other programs, such as the spring musical, for space in the McAfee Theater.

On March 1, March 8 and March 15, several solo and ensemble groups from Saratoga performed at the annual CMEA Solo and Ensemble Festival at San Jose State University.

Five soloists, sophomores Michael Okuno, Suneel Balkhale, Uday Singh and Katie McLaughlin and freshman Theo Luan, won superior command performances, the highest awards given at the festival.

On March 14 and 15, Saratoga featured six orchestras and two bands in the CMEA Band and Orchestra Rated Festival, held at Saratoga High, along with the bands and orchestras of Homestead, Monta Vista and Lynbrook High Schools and Redwood Middle School.

Two of the March concerts, which happened on March 7-8, featured two winners of the school-wide concerto competition held last December, junior violist Linus Lu and senior clarinetist

Leo Kim. Both concerts were met with McAfee-filling crowds and positive reception for the soloists.

The other two winners, senior euphonium player Lauren Casey-Clyde and junior cellist Kevin Lee, will be featured in concerts in May.

"I feel a bunch of excitement [about soloing with the band]," Casey-Clyde said. "I've never soloed with an ensemble before so it's going to be a new experience. Nonetheless, I'm looking forward to sharing my music with a big audience and sharing the gorgeous sound of euphonium."

In addition, tryouts for the the school's top band, Symphonic Wind Ensemble (SWE), were held from the last week of March to the end of the first week of April. Tryouts for the top orchestras, String Orchestra and Saratoga Strings, were held in the middle of March.

Sophomore euphonium player Ellie Lee, who is trying out for SWE, hopes that her painstaking efforts for the audition will come to fruit and help her into SWE.

"[My private lesson teacher] says the best way to cure nerves is through preparation," Ellie said. "I have been working

really hard this year to improve, so I'm going to do my best and what happens [next will be all right]."

The California All-State choirs performed on March 22, featuring six students from Saratoga. Seniors My-Lan Le and Christine Zhang made the Mixed Honor Choir, while seniors Emily Chiang and Nina Jayshankar and sophomores Isha Mangal and Ankhitha Sarvesh were in the Women's Honor Choir.

Boitz, even after managing the music department past the month of March, said that he isn't worn down because the work required for the future of the department really never ends.

"Right now, I feel that I am never finishing one project without starting or working on others," Boitz said.

Yet, according to Boitz, being busy has its perks for teachers.

"Even as we are finishing this month, my mind is thinking about [the events in May and June]," Boitz said. "I'm [always] thinking about what's next. As students come into [the class to work on the next event], we, as teachers and directors, have to prepare to make it work."

And the bet? "It was so set up," said a smirking Boitz. ♦

## SPEECH AND DEBATE



Nationals qualifiers juniors Deepti Kannan and Jimmy Xiao pose with coaches Allison Bronlow, Chris Harris and Erick Rector.

## Students qualify for national tournament

BY Devin Zhao

During the awards ceremony of the national qualifying tournament, junior Deepti Kannan and three other competitors from Bellarmine were called as finalists in Lincoln-Douglas debate.

A crowd of speech and debaters, parents and coaches from all over the Bay Area grew silent as the Bellarmine coach prepared to announce the qualifiers to the national championships. The tournament began with the top 36 debaters in the Coast Forensics League (CFL) and only four were left.

Three of them were going to qualify for nationals in Lincoln-Douglas debate while the other was going to be an alternate.

"I was trembling when the four of us were up there," Kannan said. "The announcer said, 'The alternate to the national champions is from Bellarmine...' and that's when I knew I had qualified. The rest of her sentence was drowned out in my surprise and happiness. I just couldn't believe it."

The speech and debate team had much success at the national qualifying tournament, which ran from March 22-24 at Bellarmine College Prepara-



Gress

tor, with Kannan and junior Jimmy Xiao qualifying for nationals in Lincoln-Douglas debate and domestic extemporaneous speech respectively.

## SPEECH AND DEBATE

## FALCON FOCUS: DEBATER SHREY DESAI

## Sophomore's road to states

BY Deepti Kannan

Dressed in a long sleeve aqua blue shirt, black zipper tie and black running shoes that tell you he's no normal suit-jacket, dress shoe-wearing debater, sophomore Shrey Desai finds a seat on an old wooden bench in an empty aisle of Westmont High School and takes a bite from his bagel. He's just debated five preliminary rounds and is waiting in anticipation for the ever-feared Posting.

A throng of well-dressed teenagers in business attire begin to crowd around the glass windows. An adult shoves his way through the crowd and posts a single white sheet of paper — The Posting. Sixteen make it to the "Go round," which determines who qualify to states, and the rest go home.

Dejected students begin to stray away, while others hug friends with glee. Waiting patiently for the crowd to thin, Desai marches calmly towards the posting and smiles. "Saratoga SD" is third on the list.

"I was really happy," Desai said. "I knew that I was up there with the top competitors in the pool and that my hard work and focus had paid off."

Desai was one of three Saratoga students who attended the Lincoln-Douglas debate state qualifying tournament on March 14-15 at Westmont.

Competition was brutal: Out of 106 pooled from the best of the Bay Area, only eight made it to the state tournament. Desai became the first Lincoln Douglas Debater from Saratoga to make it to the state tournament since the LD team's conception three years ago.

The "Go" Round

When it was time for the round to begin, Desai gathered his things — laptop, accordion folders, pens — and walked into an ordinary Spanish classroom that had been transformed into a stage. Twenty spectators, including debaters

eliminated from the tournament, parents and five judges, filled the room.

After losing a coin flip to determine which side of the topic he would argue, Desai took his seat on the left, where the affirmative sits. Taking a sip from his water bottle, Desai wiped sweat off his forehead.

His hands shook as he set his timer to six minutes, the length of his first affirmative speech.

"I affirm. Placing political conditions on humanitarian aid to foreign countries is unjust," he began.

Lincoln-Douglas debate is a one-on-one event in which the competitors argue a topic tied to values and morals for 40 minutes. As the affirmative, Desai had three short speeches to give as opposed to the negative's two long speeches.

"Usually it's easier if you negate because you get more time to explain your arguments," Desai said. "I was quite scared because affirming is difficult. And I was pretty nervous."

Desai is the art of persuasion. Simply delivering arguments and responding to one's opponent is not enough to sway five judges. Desai's style is that he relies on his charm and tends to be aggressive in cross examination.

"I usually press my opponents for different concessions about their arguments or some flaws in their case," Desai said. But speaking and delivery are important as well.

"Many judges have pointed out that I have a very loud voice and that I should tone it down," Desai said.

During the go round, Desai started quickly, a bit too loud but caught himself. He tried to stay calm, despite exploding with nervousness, as he read his case with his somewhat high-pitched voice.

His opponent, a diminutive Asian girl from Palo Alto High, scribbled furiously on her paper, hanging on to his every word. The nerves continued to strangle Desai during cross ex-

amination, but once he began his rebuttal, he knew he was set.

When it came time for the last speech, he looked the judges in the eyes, knowing that his last words would have the strongest influence on their ballots.

"Many people watching the round commented [that] my last speech was deep, inspirational [and] fluent and it was really nice," Desai said.

By the end of the round, Desai felt good, but could not be certain he secured the win; he judged it to be "dead even."

Awards

Desai could only await the verdict of the judges, to be announced at the awards ceremony held in the auditorium. A long table of trophies gleamed temptingly under the fluorescent lights.

"I sat all the way in the back because I wanted to be away from the crowd and in my own secluded space," Desai said. (He also conceded that he enjoys the long walk to receive awards so that he can bask in the attention.)

After patient anticipation, the Presentation High School coach called the 16 debaters down to the center and announced the eight state qualifiers.

"He finally called my name," Desai said. "My heart was pumping."

Desai was not the only speech and debater to succeed at the state qualifiers. Members of the Individual Events or speech team, including senior Mohith Subbarao and junior Anjali Manghanni in Original Oratory and junior Supriya Khandekar in Oratorical Interpretation will also be attending states.

Desai has every intention of doing his best at the state tournament on April 25-27 at James C. Enochs High School in Modesto.

"I am going to prepare pretty hard [for states]," Desai said. "Now that I have this opportunity, I don't want to blow it up." ♦

# WHAT WE TAKE FOR GRANTED

## WITH HELP, SENIOR COPE WITH MOTHER'S DEATH

BY SAMUEL LIU

"The hardest part is pretending that everything is OK when it's not," senior Melissa Szenda wrote in a Facebook post on Nov. 13, 2013.

Earlier that morning, a cold one in the middle of college app season, she found out her mother had died.

For a long time, as her mother Lisa Marie Edelman suffered through illnesses, Melissa had kept quiet. She felt that she would be foisting her problems on others, because in Saratoga "everyone seems perfect."



FALCON // SHAZIA GUPTA

That day, it was sheer emotion that made her decide to tell the world.

"Growing up in a community like Saratoga, I have always felt like the outcast with my constant family issues," she wrote. "So I kept them quiet. To anyone, even my closest friends, my life was perfect. But it's been far from perfect."

In the next few weeks, Melissa learned that the students around her are far from uncaring or perfect. But she didn't know this, then. After posting, she deleted her Facebook app and wondered if anyone would care.

### Simpler times

When she was 9, Melissa and her mother lived in a condo in Mountain View. This was before the illness, before her mother was left in a non-functioning state. Sometimes Melissa likes to recall those simpler times, especially when she misses her mom too much.

They lived within walking distance of a 7-11, which was "the coolest thing ever" because it meant Slurpees in summer.

"So we began walking and I got my Slurpie and my mom got her Diet Coke," Melissa said. "As we walked back, I held her hand the whole time, never letting go. Then randomly I started squeezing her hand, and then she would squeeze back. It became a game, but what we both noted is that it felt like a heart beat. Squeeze after squeeze, I giggled, and she laughed. To me, each 'heart beat' was like a silent 'I love you.' There was something really special about those moments."

"It was an inseparable mother-daughter bond that could never be broken," she said. "I guess there's a sad part of this memory, and that is that when my mom suffered her stroke, she no longer squeezed back."

Melissa grew up in two households, since her parents divorced early on, with her father, the custodial parent, living in Saratoga. She only has "blurps" of memory of that period, but her childhood was a happy one.

Her mother was always the life of the party — energetic, strong-willed and independent. She worked in marketing and tended to change the color of her hair because she was spontaneous. One day it was brunette, the other day it was blonde.

Of all their fond memories, Melissa misses most the sound of her mother's voice on the countless phone calls they have shared.

"I used to take [the phone calls] for granted," Melissa said. "She would call maybe because she was lonely or maybe just to check in, and sometimes I zoned

out and tried to get off the phone with my mom as quick as possible ... but you have no idea how much I regret that, not listening to her."

It's different now. She has a great relationship with her stepmom and her father, but now she's lost the one person she was "100 percent open" with.

### Thanksgiving in the hospital

It was nearing Thanksgiving and Melissa, an eighth grader at the time, was "9 p.m." tired and ready to change into her pajamas.

Suddenly, her dad said they had to go to the hospital.

"It felt super weird," she said. "I'd known that Mom was in the hospital, but I thought it wasn't a very big deal, like, OK she's in the hospital again."

For a while, Edelman had been in and out of hospitals, as she dealt with various medical issues. But this wasn't just another hospitalization. Edelman had a stroke and was in the intensive care unit; the doctors wanted Melissa and her father to say goodbye before they operated.

"I remember me feeling 'What's going on,'" she said, staring at the table. "I rubbed my eyes. It was surreal. I just remember the Christmas music, this happy Christmas music on the car as we got there. I remember walking through the halls, it was darkish, it just felt sad."

"We go in and I see my mom unconscious. I'm just holding her hand, just silent. My dad is expecting me to say something but ... I was speechless, didn't know what to say."

"The only thing I could say was 'I love you Mommy I love you Mommy,'" Melissa said. "And then we went home."

At Redwood Middle School the next morning, she kept silent about her troubles.

It was a common pattern for Melissa. When her mother was at her house recovering and Melissa had to care for her, she didn't say a thing to her friends. When she saw her mother have a seizure — she kept calling her name, her mother wouldn't respond — Melissa went to school and didn't tell a soul.

"I always tried to put this front on," she said. "I really liked school because I liked the escape where everyone is OK in school, it was almost like a pretend world."

### There, but not 'there'

A year after the Thanksgiving surgery, her mother was housed in a rehabilitation center, after a series of medical problems that Melissa had to witness first hand.

Melissa recalled her first impression of the rehab center.

"The first time I walked into there it felt like death," Melissa said.

When she asked her father if there was a better place for her mom, he shook his head. It was the best place in the entire South Bay.

Her mother had grown extremely thin, and visibly unwell. Upon seeing her, Melissa's hopefulness shattered.

"That's when I realized, OK, this might not go back to how it used to be," she said.

She tried to visit every weekend, but sometimes she said she just couldn't bring herself to do so.

"I didn't see her as often as I should have," she said.

Every time I would go there it ruined my entire day, my entire week."

Melissa shakes her head. It hurts, especially when she wonders if she could have done more.

"The only thing I could do was hold her hand, tell her 'I love you,'" Melissa said. "Words couldn't really come to my mind, I told her what's going on, 'Oh there was prom and stuff,' but there was a big chunk of me that knew she couldn't hear me anyway."

"It was hard, that's the only word I can use, insanely difficult, to see this person I had always looked up to completely shut down."

### Death in the family

October was prime college application season, and Melissa had finalized her list of schools, "stressing about stupid things." The next day, though, the last thing she could think about was college applications.

Tears filled her eyes, and her father's voice cracked as he said, "Melissa, we need to talk to you."

"I didn't need to hear his words to know what had happened," she said. "It had been coming for so long, but somehow as the words drifted off his lips, it all became real. 'Your mom passed away.'"

It was painless, she heard her father and stepmom say, as they too started crying. She just fell asleep. She's free

now. No longer trapped inside a motionless body.

"I had lost the person that brought me into this world and it was devastating," she said. "And I had never felt so alone."

### Onwards

For a while, after losing her mom, Melissa had wanted to become a therapist or social worker. But she's been drawn to journalism. The executive producer of SHSTV, Melissa recently was admitted to the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communications at Arizona State and is "obsessed with it."

These days, Melissa has plenty to occupy herself with. But while she has lots of support around her, that doesn't mean the pain has gone away.

More than anything, she misses the phone calls with her mother.

"The day my mom stopped calling was a terrible and painful day," she said. "I actually saved all of her voicemails on my old phone and I prayed they would still be there, so I could still have that part of her and hear her voice once more."

She checked last month, and the voicemails are gone.

### Opening up

On that day last November, Melissa wrote the Facebook status, posted it, logged off, deleted her Facebook app, turned off her phone and took a long shower. She had broken her silence and wanted to forget it.

"I'm sure I will regret this Facebook post the second I post it, however I know it's what my mom would have wanted," she wrote. "I think she knows I have been holding it in for too long, and it's time to just be free from it all."

Then she came back online, one shower later. There was "just a little heart, or people who said 'Hey I'm here for you.'" She started crying.

"It was like this huge weight had been lifted," she said. "OK, it's out there now. I don't have anything else to hide. This is my life and people know."

The support offered by her friends, even people she didn't know, changed the way she remembered that day.

"It was weird, I was almost happy on such a sad day," she said. "The whole time I thought [people] would push me away like 'Wow you're an outsider' but they did the opposite."

Melissa said she is no longer afraid of telling the truth — even if it breaks with the "perfect" image others might aspire to have.

"Honestly," she said, "being strong all the time isn't healthy. It's OK to be weak." ♦

### FALCON FOCUS: ALANA HESS

## Junior is a part-time 'mother' to six younger siblings

BY Deepthi Kannan & Shreya Tumu

The door slams shut. Junior Alana Hess's parents have just left the house to go out for dinner. Many teenagers would seize this opportunity to do whatever they like. But Alana cannot.

As soon as those doors close, Alana (16) is transported into a world of whiny complaints and squeaky toys. An undoubtedly daunting task looms over her: babysitting her six younger siblings: sophomore Jonathan (15), Sarah (11), Ryan (9), Jennifer (7), Robert (5) and Samantha (3).

First on the agenda: Clean the messy house, starting with her room. Toys, books and games lay scattered on the floor.

By delegating tasks to her siblings, she makes sure the job gets done.

Next thing to worry about: dinner. She stuffs the chicken nuggets in the oven and cooks the macaroni and cheese on the kitchen stove.

After attending to her siblings' needs, she returns to her room that she shares with her sister, Sarah, and eventually starts her homework.

These are only a few of her responsibilities as half eldest sibling, half babysitter.

She follows this routine around three times a week when her parents are not at home.

Having six younger siblings has greatly influenced Alana.

"I sort of feel as if I'm living two lives: the carefree happy teenager, and the part-time mom," said Alana. "I know when it's appropriate to act like each one and I'm honestly really used to it."

Alana feels that although being the

oldest sibling can mean a lot of work, it can also be a blessing.

"I feel like God put me in this position to be the oldest because I can handle all these kids," Alana said.

Alana has been taking care of her siblings since she was in first grade. She learned how to change diapers when she was only 7.

"I know that I'm essential to keep my family going so I do it," Alana said.

Due to familial obligations, Alana does not have as much time as she would like to do her homework or have a social life.

"I might want to go out with friends, but I can't because I have to babysit," Alana said. "I don't always like all the time I have to spend babysitting when I'd rather be doing other things but I've made my peace with it and just keep pushing on."

For example, Alana said she enjoys their lively family gatherings, especially when they go out to eat in a restaurant. It is not every day that someone sees a family of nine enter McDonald's.

Alana said many people in restaurants are surprised at how respectful the Hess family is.

"Many times there are people [who] compliment us saying, 'Wow your kids are so well behaved,' and I take pride in that because that means I'm doing my job," Alana said.

Alana said she does not feel as though her family is viewed much differently.

"Sometimes people will ask us why we have so many kids and if we were Mormon, but that's about it," said Alana, whose family is not Mormon.

Alana also receives admiration and trust from her friends and family.

"When Mr. Hess and I go out, I have



Courtesy of ALANA HESS

Junior Alana Hess second from right poses with her six younger siblings and parents.

no worries," said Laurel Hess, Alana's mom. "I know that everything is fine because I know that ultimately [Alana] is going to do the right thing. I feel very safe."

Laurel also said that Alana has been responsible and independent since an early age. Her siblings agree and love their oldest sister.

"I like that Alana sings us to sleep and I like when she make us yummy food," Jennifer said.

Her dad's strong belief of "family first" deeply resonates with Alana, and she always makes time for family bonding. She tries her best to maintain a close, tight-knit relationship with every member of her family.

"I really like being the one in charge and the one they look up to in being able to help them with anything they need," Alana said. "We are all really close and I love that about us and I hope we stay that way." ♦



#tspasanjose  
f t

Westgate Mall  
1600 Saratoga Ave, Ste 103, San Jose, CA 95129  
www.tspaSanJose.com



REDKEN  
17th Avenue NYC

## PROM SPECIAL: \$79 Prom Package

Special Occasion Hair, Makeup Application, FREE Redken Hairspray  
All services performed by supervised students

For upcoming schedule of classes, visit: [tspaSanJose.com](http://tspaSanJose.com) | Call 408.579.9111



Great Services, Amazing Prices  
Appointments 408.579.9111

Part of a network of 25 franchise nationwide schools. First and only campus in California offering courses in Cosmetology and Esthetics.

# ACADEMY

for Salon Professionals



## NOT YESTERDAY'S BEAUTY SCHOOL

Admissions | 408 564 1767  
Appointments | 408 261 9201

Show your student card  
and get \$3 OFF any service



Splitting CA into six states a terrible idea

BY Andrew Jiang & Anant Rajeev

Recently, Tim Draper, a well-known venture capitalist who helped fund Tesla and Yahoo, proposed a plan to split California into six states.

The six new states would be called Jefferson, North California, Central California, Silicon Valley, West California and South California.

According to Draper, this division would be more beneficial to the government because it would be dealing with smaller states.

The plan is full of holes ranging from issues of water distribution to the enormous gain in California senators that would occur.

First off, there is the issue of how this plan would affect the water distribution in California.

Currently, Los Angeles gets the majority of its water from an aqueduct that contains water from rivers in Northern California.

If this plan went through, nothing would stop, let's say, the governors of North California or Central California from diverting water from this aqueduct to local farmers in their own state rather than people in South California.

Likewise, San Francisco gets the ma-

majority of its water from the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir in Yosemite.

Again, the governor of Central California could easily divert this water to local agriculture, depriving San Francisco of its water.

Tensions over water — a resource that is certainly strained these days — would likely arise.

Another problem with this proposal is that it would essentially give what used to be one state, 12 seats in the Senate instead of its current two.

This new plan would cause a conflict in Congress as it would throw off the balance of votes from an even number to an odd number.

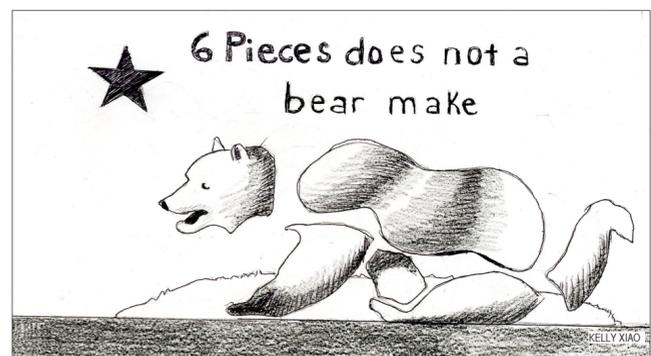
Also, adding 10 presumably Democratic senators to the Senate would basically ensure that the Democrats have their way in every issue in the Senate, making the government one-sided and unbalanced.

With the breakup of California, the northernmost state, Jefferson, would not have a single university in the University of California (UC) system.

This, in turn, would force residents of Jefferson to pay the costly \$36,000 out-of-state tuition, which is over \$20,000 more than the in-state tuition, to go to UC schools.

Lastly, citizens would see an increase

>> candid caricatures



in taxes. The newly created states would have to create their own state systems, like prison and police systems.

This will all cost money, and lead to an unnecessary raise in the already absurdly high taxes residents in California already pay.

Draper claims that California is currently "ungovernable" and that his plan would allow the state governments to be more focused.

But, having a slightly more efficient government at the cost of less water for some areas, increased taxes, and higher UC tuition for many is not worth it.

Clearly, the costs of this proposal seriously outweigh the limited benefits.

There is just too much risk and change in this proposal of this division to even take it into consideration and for it to even be a possibility.

Perhaps Draper should just stick to venture capitalism. ♦

Creativity deserves our respect, not our hatred

BY Ashley Chen

"I'll find you and kill you ... You're a clown. Kill yourself ... Dude I'll kill you." All tagged with @dongatory, Flappy Bird creator Dong Ha Nguyen's Twitter username, these death threats popped up around the Internet like weeds.

What was the offense? Nguyen decided to take down Flappy Bird after he thought the product was too "addictive," according to Boy Genius Report. The threats seem even more ludicrous upon closer inspection.

Anyone can continue to play the game; the only change was that no one could download it for the first time.

These personal attacks on Nguyen are just another entry in a long list of game creators, artists, writers — creative people in general — who have received vitriolic anger in response to their product, or their decisions regarding it.

What everyone needs to realize, though, is that these people do not owe the consumers of their work anything, and need to be treated with respect.

This isn't the only example of unjustified hatred. Think back a few years to 13-year-old Rebecca Black and her song "Friday."

While some people argue that the song itself was poorly written, the personal attacks on her were unwarranted and unnecessary.

Imagine yourself at 13. Could you have handled people calling your song "the worst song EVER," as one YouTube comment read?

What about insulting your appearance, making memes with your face where the caption was "I don't want to live on this planet anymore?" or being bullied at school to the point that your parents pulled you out?

Today, Black is a vlogger and singer

on YouTube.

Last year, she created a "Draw My Life" video, an autobiography of her life so far. In describing the "Friday" phase of her life, she talked about how she felt that she had "no friends" and recalled thinking things like "At least my computer loves me."

She even took down "Friday" for a short period because she couldn't handle the overwhelming flood of negative comments.

It's clear that the backlash she was forced to deal with after uploading "Friday" catalyzed a period of depression in her life, which could have had life-threatening consequences.

Cases like Black's are what people need to consider before verbally abusing their least favorite artists.

Some people might argue that since artists decide to publicize their work, they need to be prepared for criticism. After all, they rationalize, creators put themselves out there and they often earn a lot of money.

But this logic is faulty. Publishing a song, game or piece of writing deserves constructive criticism, not unrelated assaults on a person's body or personality.

A comment like "I thought the lyrics were redundant" would be much more appropriate than one like "I hate this song...one million people [the number of dislikes currently on 'Friday'] hate you."

The jump from disliking a product to disliking the person involved is the issue.

In short, modern society needs an update on its attitudes towards creative minds.

They deserve respect and constructive criticism, not attack. Hateful thoughts should stay just that: unsaid words. ♦

Warning labels on soda positive change for CA

BY Arman Vaziri & Nelson Wang

In February, lawmakers in California proposed a bill to put warning labels on sugary drinks in an attempt to combat obesity, a strategy reminiscent of Michael Bloomberg's ban on large soft drinks containers in New York.

This bill is not a miracle cure for obesity, but is a step in the right direction.

If the bill becomes law, it would be known as the Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Safety Warning Act.

It would force all businesses or individuals selling beverages with 75 calories per 12 fluid ounces or more to show a warning label to customers that would read "STATE OF CALIFORNIA SAFETY WARNING: Drinking beverages with added sugar(s) contributes to obesity, diabetes and tooth decay," similar to labels on cigarettes.

Restaurant menus, bottles and even vending machines would all have to display a warning.

Similarly to the criticism Bloomberg faced, organizations in California have argued that soda is not the root cause of obesity.

They say obesity is a complex problem with many contributing factors, and thus the bill doesn't target the right ones.

CalBev, an arm of the American Beverage Association, told the LA Times, "We agree that obesity is a serious and complex issue.

However, it is misleading to suggest that soft drink consumption is uniquely responsible for weight gain. In fact, only 4 percent of calories in the average American diet are derived directly from soda."

While it is true that soda is not the only problem, it is impossible to boil

down obesity to just one main cause.

As a result, it is necessary to begin to combat all the different contributing factors, starting with soda.

It's illogical to argue that we don't have to address one factor that is detrimental to people's health just because it isn't the worst factor.

Furthermore, critics of the bill downplay the harms of soda by saying they only constitute a small percentage of calories; they neglect to mention that liquid sugar has more detrimental effects, including blocking the immune system from functioning properly.

Critics also rarely mention links between sodas and the rising rates of obesity, diabetes and tooth decay.

Others feel that a label, rather than a ban, won't do anything to prevent people from consuming soda; however, informing the public of the dangers is important in dissuading them from continuing an unhealthy lifestyle.

The anti-soda bill may not be perfect, but it's better to start taking action than do nothing at all. ♦

>> the big idea

CA Soda Warnings

The basics

The bill was proposed by State Senator Bill Monning on February 13, 2014. Businesses would be required to warn consumers about beverages with more than 75 calories per 12 fluid ounces.

Benefits

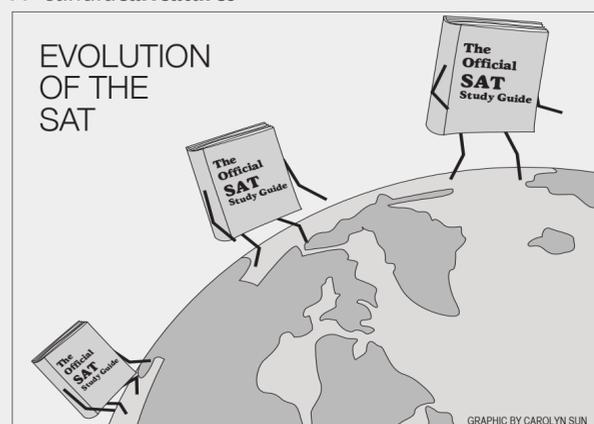
Californians can be better informed about the consequences of their drink choices.

Cons

The bill may not deter the drinking of sugary drinks.

Time for a change: Modified SAT eases the painful rite of passage

>> candid caricatures



The current SAT is execrable. No idea what "execrable" means? You're not alone because a vast majority of the population is similarly clueless. You might never see the word again unless you teach English at Harvard.

That's why College Board's decision to revise the SAT for 2016 is a positive one. Among other changes, the new SAT will test more common vocabulary, make the writing section optional and be more accessible for low-income students. They hope to increase the popularity of the SAT compared to the ACT.

For starters, reducing the number of archaic vocabulary makes the SAT more practical. Few of us use words like "quixotic" in everyday life, and most jobs will not require such knowledge.

In fact, the current incarnation of the "critical reading" section only tests students' ability to regurgitate random words they've memorized. To make it worse, the questions are designed to test a student's knowledge of a word's definition, not his or her ability to actually use it.

"The SAT's rarified vocabulary changes will be replaced by words more common in college courses," College Board president David Coleman said in a New York Times article. "No longer will students use flashcards to memorize obscure words, only to forget them the minute they put their pencil down."

In contrast, the new SAT will focus on words such as "empirical" and "synthesis" that are commonly used in college courses. This way, the test is no longer just used for admissions; it actually helps prepare students for a college education.

Some might argue that complex vocabulary is a marker of how well read one is. But there's a difference between complicated and useless vocabulary.

The fact is, it doesn't make one's writing any stronger to use words one's audience doesn't know. Some of the most well known articles or speeches, like Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address," use straightforward words so that all audience members can understand the message. True writing skill involves effective and eloquent use of simple words, not the overuse of complicated, awkward words.

In addition, the writing section, including the grammar, is now optional, so the timed essay will no longer be mandatory.

In fact, some colleges, such as Washington University in St. Louis, already do not count the writing section of the SAT, instead simply scoring the test out of 1600. Why? Because college essays are a much better way of evaluating an applicant's writing abilities than the SAT essay.

Think about it. When writing a college essay, students have more time to

prepare and can choose a topic they are truly passionate about, allowing them to display their unique personality and creativity. In comparison, the SAT essay involves writing an essay as quickly as possible, and the scoring favors quantity over quality.

The new SAT essay, however, will have a time limit of 50 minutes, which is twice as long as it used to be. Additionally, the prompt will be published ahead of time and remain consistent; only the source material students are expected to base their essay upon will change.

In addition, the new SAT seeks to level the playing field for students across the country by partnering with Khan Academy to provide free SAT practice for everyone.

For instance, here in the Silicon Valley, you can drive around a town and find multiple SAT practice centers, but in many places, such centers are hard to find and often expensive. College Board and Khan Academy's work will help reduce the disparity between poorer and wealthier students, and allow standardized tests to reflect a student's intelligence, rather than his or her ability to pay for hours of SAT camp.

With a retooled SAT, a new generation of students will no longer dread this execrable test. ♦

Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

Editors-in-chief Sarah Finley Samuel Liu

Opinion Editor Sanjit Nalwa

Reporters Ashley Chen Anant Rajeev Nelson Wang

The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 22-5 in support of the editorial.



Social media results in duller minds

BY Michelle Leung

When was the last time you checked your phone? Was it two minutes ago? Or five? Or maybe even an hour?

Most students would agree that social media is addictively distracting. Procrastination has never thrived more than in the current modern age.

Former New York Times reporter Bill Keller claims that social media isn't just a distraction; people are selling their souls to the Internet.

In restaurants, people play Candy Crush while waiting for food. In a lunch line off campus, students use their phones instead of talking.

In extreme cases, there have even been incidents of people taking pictures of an accident to post online instead of helping the injured. For example, the National Post reported that in 2012, bystanders at a car accident in Ontario took pictures instead of calling for help.

Posting and tweeting on social media has become a competition over who has done the most interesting things, said the most clever statements and tak-

en the best photographs. But technology has also dulled human innovation in terms of problem solving, decision making and interacting with others.

Just as GPS's have lessened our sense of direction, pocket calculators have rendered us less capable of basic math and typing has hurt our handwriting, social media has killed our ability to communicate genuinely with friends or even to express real emotions.

Students today feel their duty as a friend is fulfilled when they type a couple "LOLs" or chat a few words. Although communicating online might be faster, it also adds an extra filter to friendships. Messaging doesn't convey a real personality; a typed word cannot carry the emotions or nuances that words can in person.

Yet, there may be some benefits of using social media: Keller wrote, "Basically, we are outsourcing our brains to the cloud. The upside is that this frees a lot of gray matter for important pursuits like FarmVille and 'Real Housewives.'"

According to New York Times reporter Nick Bilton, the web has actually

made users dumber. While in the past, monks could recite entire books, Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the printed page meant memorizing was unnecessary.

And now, the Internet has made even reading and analyzing information unnecessary. Why think if the Internet is just a click away, ready to tell you what to think?

"I spent a lot of time trying to make sure people could put anything on the web, that it was universal," World Wide Web creator Tim Berners-Lee said in an interview with the New York Times. "Obviously, I had no idea that people would put literally everything on it."

So while it's true that technology has improved information flow, it has also created many problems.

I couldn't live without social media — I seriously doubt you could either.

But how hard can it be to put down the iPad and talk during dinner? It's about the small steps: If everyone tried to spend half their time just talking the old fashioned way to others, the human race would at least save some of its social skills. ♦

FOURTH PERIOD STAFF POLICY MISSION STATEMENT LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

- Editors-in-Chief Sarah Finley Samuel Liu News/Associate Editor Grace Ma Opinion Editor Sanjit Nalwa Sports Editor Jay Mulye Lifestyles Editors Rohan Hardikar Amy Lin Entertainment Editor Sherrilyn Ling Specialty Editors Sabrina Chen Deepti Kannan Backpage Editor Nelson Wang Head Web Editor Catherine Tang Assistant Web Editor Arman Vaziri Head Art Editor Helen Wong Head Graphics Editor Carolyn Sun Assistant Graphic Editor Kelly Xiao Business Manager Devin Zhao Head Columnist Bruce Lou Assistant News Editor Robert Eng Head Copy Editor Michelle Leung Head Photographer Simi Srivastava Photographers Shazia Gupta Minu Palaniappan Reporters Miles Albert Ashley Chen Becky Hoag Andrew Jiang Ariel Liu Sweeya Raj Anant Rajeev Deepthi Sampathkumar Dorrie Tang Shreya Tumu Jihau Yu Tiffany Zheng Adviser Mike Tyler

Printed by Folger Graphics in Hayward, Calif. \*Various contributions were also made by the third-period newspaper staff

# Private counseling closes the cultural gap

HOW PRIVATE COLLEGE COUNSELING CAN HELP CHILDREN OF IMMIGRANTS

BY Samuel Liu

When my parents immigrated from China in the 1992, they came here with little to no knowledge of English or connections with the “more sophisticated” world. They wanted me to go to a good college, in which they saw the stability they didn’t have growing up, but the American system was far more complex. In China, it was pure merit — take your tests, suffer and struggle — but here there were things like college essays and extracurriculars, tasks completely foreign to them.

I’m the eldest sibling, so my parents relied on the extremely unreliable: parents who told them “If you get a 2400 on the SAT, you can go anywhere” or “If you’re Asian, you have no chance because of affirmative action.” Like so many immigrants, they simply didn’t understand the system, and weren’t connected to people who could educate them.

I signed up for private college counseling my sophomore year, and I credit the program — certainly an expensive one — with opening up opportunities and interests I had no idea were offered to me. All of a sudden, I knew which camps were worthwhile, which camps simply wanted your money. I got book recommendations and, during college app season, an editor for essays. If anything, I was being guided along a path

toward my interests, whereas before I was stumbling in the dark.

The critics of college counseling often argue along two lines: (1) The school offers counseling and essay help and (2) college counseling perpetuates the income gap — poorer students aren’t likely to pay for expensive counseling.

While the school’s counselors were certainly helpful (and I made sure to use those resources, as well), private counseling was quite simply able to provide more. School resources are often spread thin. For example, I realized a week before a deadline that I had forgotten to write one of my college essays. I also had no parent or sibling who wrote English well enough to trust with a college essay. It would have been unreasonable to expect a school counselor to edit the essay on such short notice, especially when the counselor has a huge number of students to worry about.

The second argument comes with its fair share of contempt. “Oh, he used counseling, so he got in,” they say. I don’t deny that counseling can provide an edge (though the allegation that counselors “write your essays” is not particularly valid. My counselor told me that, when he was an admissions officer, he always knew when parents or teachers wrote a student’s essay. It’s hard to write a personal essay if you’re

not that person).

Yet to these critics I pose the question: Aren’t connections to knowledgeable people their own sort of counseling? Doesn’t having a parent who’s an English major or an older sibling who’s gone through the process give an advantage as well?

My parents, for whom English is a second language, don’t read American newspapers or follow SAT changes. If anything, counseling helps to diminish the inherent disadvantages of the children of immigrants like myself. It certainly helped with calming my parents’ SAT obsession and their strict following of Aeries — they learned that what really mattered in getting into college (and life) was finding a passion and sticking to it.

Do I still have an advantage over underprivileged students who have neither connections to “people who know” nor the resources for college counseling? Absolutely. Just as I do by attending a school like Saratoga, and being able to take AP classes.

This is part of why affirmative action for minorities and low-income students is necessary; however, first-generation Asian immigrants receive neither the benefits of affirmative action nor parental connections. It’s a gap, disconnect of culture, and for many of us private counseling is simply the best way to bridge this gulf. ♦

## >> togatalks

### How helpful is private college counseling?

“Private college counselors are especially helpful for the older sibling.”



junior Anisha Nagarajan

“Since my parents can’t help me through the process, counseling is super helpful.”



junior Varna Jammula

“If you find the right place to go for help, it will work like magic.”



senior Jason Li

# ‘Health freak’ barely survives fast food

BY Catherine Tang

Ever since I can remember, my family has always been health conscious, to say the least.



CATHERINE TANG  
I Tango

I didn’t realize my family’s extremely health conscious ways were weird until I began having play dates with my friends in elementary school. They would come over and the only snacks I would have at my house were fruit and other healthy foods. Apples. Yogurt. Granola bars.

No one wanted them but me.

As a result, I began keeping a snack drawer full of unhealthy, “yummy” snacks, such as chocolate and chips, for my friends when they came over. I didn’t understand my mom’s obsession with organic foods or why she would not let me eat McDonald’s Happy Meals like the other kids.

Age, as usual, has changed my perception.

Fast food, such as McDonald’s and Taco Bell, is ridiculously unhealthy for a number of reasons.

First off, the meat used in fast-food meals is not organic, so it is full of growth hormones, antibiotics and terrible feed.

The feed used in these so-called animal “farms” includes drugs and chemicals, animal waste products, unhealthy amount of grains and even plastic fillers.

Secondly, that meat is not 100 percent meat. It is combined with synthetic ingredients, corn and other products that will go unnamed. And, I will just leave it at that.

While many agree that fast food is unhealthy, it is sometimes hard to act on those beliefs in real life. For exam-

ple, since I do not pack lunch, fast food sometimes seems like the only option for a 40 minute lunch.

But I’m saved by my health freak friends. My two health conscious friends

and I only hit four, occasionally five, places for lunch that I would recommend to anybody looking for a healthy lunch close to campus.

Our top pick is Rio Adobe, where we love to order the Taos Taos house salad with chicken. Safe-way is a distant No. 2, but none the less it has fresh boxed salads and our friends have unhealthy options also. No. 3 is Saratoga Bagels, which has spinach, egg and cheese omelettes. Finally, Togo’s has half salad and half sandwich combos.

Our healthy ways of lunch repulse

our other friends who are always looking for cheap fast-food options. The “normals” think we are freaks, that all we eat is grass. On the other hand, we think they eat trash.

But there is room for compromise between the two bitter rivals.

One day at lunch, my “normal” friends wanted to go to McDonald’s for lunch. Because we were in separate cars, we were literally on the phone screaming at each other. In the end, we compromised for Chipotle, which is undeniably unhealthy but is better than some fast-food places.

Sometimes, all a person needs is a full stomach, and both normal people and health freaks can agree on that. ♦

While many agree that fast food is unhealthy, it is sometimes hard to act on those beliefs in real life.

# Going Pro: The need for professional classes

BY Rohan Hardikar

Now that I am a second-semester senior, I spend my time doing, well, nothing except for what is required to maintain decent grades in school. During junior year, when my mom saw this behavior, she would threaten to take away my laptop so that I would study. It’s different this year now that this free time is more plentiful: She tells me that I should be taking online classes in Micro or Macroeconomics or Excel.

I want to pursue a career in finance, but it is hard for students already bogged down with hours and hours of work every single day to take extra online classes purely out of interest. Call it laziness or lack of time, but I can’t focus on an online class, and, certainly, even busier students don’t possess the resources to

add another class either.

So, why not incorporate more of these pre-professional classes into the regular school curriculum?

Giving students the option to take focused classes that correlate with their interests or career goals will surely be beneficial on a variety of different levels.

First, many students do not have any idea whatsoever about what they would like to pursue in the future, so having the ability to learn in-depth about computer science, mechanical engineering and finance would give the needed exposure to accurately define their interests.

Additionally, when students apply to college, their career paths aren’t necessarily defined by their first choice major, and in fact, many pick a certain major because they have only a slight interest in a particular subject. It is relatively

common for college students to do a full 180 twist, switching from a computer science major to an English major because they realized they aren’t a good fit for the math and science based professions.

Having pre-professional classes would help students avoid these predicaments by helping them to see if they truly have an interest in a certain subject. If they do, then taking specialized classes would enhance their understanding of something they are passionate about.

In addition to being a measurement for the future, taking pre-professional classes can be a valuable asset for “resume boosting.”

Now, when people hear that phrase, they scoff in disgust at the misappropriation of intellectual curiosity, but in the case of these specialized classes, enrolling can kill two birds with one stone.

When applying to colleges, summer programs or internships, many times they ask if you have any experience in a particular field you want to study.

For most high school students, that isn’t the case. But if schools offered these specialized classes, students could pursue their intellectual interests in the classroom as well as develop certain skills and qualities coveted in the professional world.

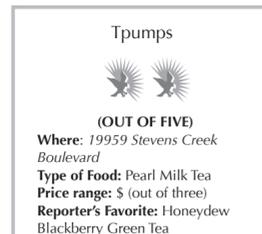
With less than six months left before I head off to college, I should probably take my mom’s advice and learn Excel because for all I know, there could be a job offer down the line that requires me to be proficient in Excel.

But senioritis demands that I focus my attentions on greater things, like playing video games for four hours straight. I think I’ll do that instead. ♦

# All hype, no punch: latest craze a disappointment

BY Catherine Tang

My mouth waters as I look at picture after picture. Pink and green and purple with tapioca at the bottom, each of the colorful drinks looks so good. After



days of scrolling through these pictures on Facebook, I just knew I had to try out Tpumps, the new pearl milk tea shop in Cupertino. Little did I know that my expectations would be crushed.

On a Tuesday evening, my friend junior Allison Chan, who had already been to Tpumps several times, and I arrived at the store and met the line that was 15 feet out the door. I figured this place must be either super cheap, super tasty or have super modern decorations on the inside.

To pass the time in line while we waited, my friend gave me some background on the restaur-

ant. I learned that Tpumps has many different flavors of fruit that customers can combine together into a drink. Such drinks usually cost between \$2.95 and \$4.95.

After waiting about 20 minutes, we finally stepped inside the store. I was shocked, and not in a good way.

The store was literally a partially brown closet. I say “partially” because only half the store was painted brown, while the other half had white primer or paint — I couldn’t tell. There was no flooring, only cement with scratch marks from tiles that had been previously removed. There was also little furniture, only a single black table with no chairs.

My friend and I had to wait another 10 to 15 minutes inside the store before finally arriving at the register. Because it

was my first time and I didn’t know what to order, the lady at the counter suggested I try the peach mango strawberry tea. I ordered a peach mango strawberry green tea without milk, while my friend ordered honeydew blackberry green tea with milk.

She charged me \$2.95, which at first glance seems cheap for a drink. However, this is only \$.50 cheaper than Verde, another very similar pearl milk tea shop that also sells assorted fruit flavored milk teas and even freezes. As a result, the ridiculously long line and unusual interior of Tpumps made the cheaper price not worth it.

After ordering, I crammed into a corner with all the other people waiting for their drinks. It was a mess. People could not get in or out, and my friend and I ended up squished against the wall.

About 15 minutes later our drinks were finally ready, but we had to wiggle our way out of the corner to get to the counter to pick them up. Then, because they did not give us straws, we had to squeeze over to the corner with straws and move



FALCON // CATHERINE TANG

Typical drinks include: a honeydew blackberry green tea with milk (left) and a peach mango strawberry green tea without milk (right).

slowly out the door to enjoy our drinks.

My drink was only OK. It really was not much different from any of the other fruity drinks at other pearl milk tea places. The boba, or the tapioca on the bottom, tasted the same

as any other boba.

I would not recommend going to Tpumps unless you truly have a full hour you want to waste. The taste and price are only average, and the decorations and seating are way below average. ♦

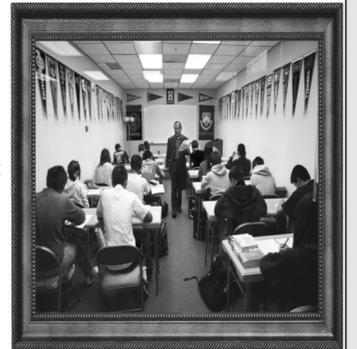


## The Ivy Advisor Dr. Jiang

Expert in English, SAT and College Application Prep

### WHY CHOOSE THE IVY ADVISOR?

- ◆ Dr. William Jiang has four Master’s Degrees, and a Ph.D. of Columbia University
- ◆ SJSU Professor with 30 years of experience in US universities
- ◆ Senior Member of the National Association for College Admission Counseling
- ◆ Has a MAGIC way of improving students’ SAT score by 300 points in Critical Reading & Writing
- ◆ Has SMART approach: Strategy, Methods, Acumen, Research, and Teamwork
- ◆ Deep knowledge of Ivy Leagues’ and other top schools’ application and admission processes
- ◆ Dr. William Jiang has successfully guided many students into their dream colleges.
- ◆ His son went to Harvard and his daughter to Cornell University



### 2014 Summer Classes Are Available For Enrollment

For early bird discounts and class registration, please reach us by

- ⇒ Website: [www.theivyadvisors.com](http://www.theivyadvisors.com)
- ⇒ Email: [Dr.ivyadvisor@gmail.com](mailto:Dr.ivyadvisor@gmail.com) or
- ⇒ Phone: 408-982-3425
- ⇒ Address: 4675 Stevens Creek Blvd., Suite 120, Santa Clara, CA 95051
- ⇒ Address: 3765 Washington Blvd., Fremont, CA 94538

\$80 Gift Voucher per class



April 4, 2014



# /R/ASK SARATOGA

## SARATOGA TELLS ALL: QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND MORE FROM THE STUDENT BODY

### What was the story of your first crush?

(self.AskSaratoga)

submitted 10 hours ago by [FalconStaff](#)[-] [Julianne Wey \(12\)](#) 832 points 6 hours ago

In elementary school I had a crush on [senior] Nikhil Goel — my best friend had the same crush and hid it for a while. I tried to set them up, I left him a note and he thought I was talking about myself. I tried to explain to him 'Oh Nikhil it wasn't for me.' Someone likes you. I thought it was pretty obvious. (Nikhil thought it was a death threat). I thought he was a drama king. Don't flatter yourself.

[permalink](#)[-] [Vivian Wang \(12\)](#) 157 points 5 hours ago

I had a crush on [senior] Brian Lyu in sixth grade because of Walker Creek. We were in the same group for farm animals. There was the boogie dance. I tried, I was hoping I would get to dance with him, but the dance ended two people before him. So close but so far. In 6th grade when I liked him I hid it and tried to set him up with [senior] Stephanie Chu. Such heartbreak.

[permalink](#)[-] [Iris Xu \(11\)](#) 326 points 2 hours ago

When I lived in China, there was this boy in my class, and he was basically the popular guy. If second graders could be popular, that is. He was cute and extremely smart. I'm pretty sure all the girls liked him. Anyways, after a while I found out he definitely didn't like me back. I'm pretty sure he did not like me at all.

[permalink](#)

### What is your worst fear?

(self.AskSaratoga)

submitted 6 hours ago by [FalconStaff](#)[-] [Zhan Ng \(10\)](#) 52 points 4 hours ago

My greatest fear is not being the best that I can be before I die. Not crossing everything off of my bucket list before my time is up is also one of my biggest fears.

[permalink](#)[-] [Patrick Wang \(12\)](#) 888 points 3 hours ago

My worst fear is blood. I hate it.

[permalink](#)[-] [Vincent Huang \(11\)](#) 590 points 2 hours ago

My worst fear is rats. Ever since I was young, I was deathly afraid. I remember back in fourth grade I was sitting in class kind of zoning out and suddenly out of the corner of my eye I saw a tiny mouse slip its way out of the doorway. Well, I screamed, jumped on my desk and everyone started staring at me. I was visibly shaken and occasionally people still remind me of that day.

[permalink](#)

### Who would you switch bodies with if you could?

(self.AskSaratoga)

submitted 1 hour ago by [FalconStaff](#)[-] [Carmine Drohan \(11\)](#) 153 points 1 hour ago

I would switch bodies with Shakira because I wish my hips don't lie.

[permalink](#)[-] [Iris Xu \(11\)](#) 326 points 1 hours ago

Beyoncé. I've always been jealous of people with curves.

[permalink](#)

### What is the weirdest thing you've said in class?

(self.AskSaratoga)

submitted 12 hours ago by [FalconStaff](#)[-] [Kristie Lin \(12\)](#) 1,023 points 10 hours ago

Can we get dinner?

[permalink](#)[-] [Samuel Liu \(12\)](#) 6 points 8 hours ago

I was trying to make a 'Game of Thrones' reference. The teacher asked 'What are you doing for Valentine's Day?' and I said, 'I'm going to eat the heart of a horse.' Everyone just stared blankly at me.

[permalink](#)[-] [Josh Dey \(10\)](#) 246 points 3 hours ago

What's gucci homie [to a teacher]?

[permalink](#)

### What was your weirdest dream?

(self.AskSaratoga)

submitted 13 hours ago by [FalconStaff](#)[-] [Michelle Wang \(10\)](#) 298 points 13 hours ago

Once when I was 7, I had a dream that I was kidnapped by an Egyptian Hitler and he took me to the bottom of the pyramids and fed me milk. After he fed me milk, I turned into a baby and we spent the rest of our lives stealing babies. Then one day Egyptian Hitler ripped away his entire body and revealed that he was actually my brother, [senior] Patrick Wang. I woke up in shock.

[permalink](#)[-] [Caitlin Lo \(9\)](#) 176 points 7 hours ago

My weirdest dream would definitely be when I was 7. I had a dream where it was Memorial Day, and my mom was at work. My dad took me and my sister to the park, and suddenly some big monster came out of the tanbark. It chased me everywhere, but no one else seemed to notice. When we got home, our house was burned down and my dad got a call saying my mom died in a car accident.

[permalink](#)

### What was your most adventurous off-campus lunch?

(self.AskSaratoga)

submitted 20 hours ago by [FalconStaff](#)[-] [Jason Li \(12\)](#) 433 points 17 hours ago

During junior year, some friends and I pre-ordered at BJ's [Restaurant and Brewhouse] and got ourselves pizookies to eat in class, solely to make others jealous.

[permalink](#)[-] [Sachin Bettadapur \(11\)](#) 81 points 10 hours ago

My friends and I wanted to go to In-N-Out at lunch, but we were talking while on the freeway and took the wrong exit. We were in Oakland. It was weird. We were by the Air Force or something.

[permalink](#)[-] [Jonathan Tran \(11\)](#) 392 points 6 hours ago

So I was coming back from Chipotle and my friend was driving. Coming back, he decided it would be a good idea to accelerate through a yellow light. It was not a good idea. He rammed a Prius in front of us, giving the Indian lady "whiplash" and ended up getting sued. But it was okay because the lawyers resolved it by giving the lady \$200.

[permalink](#)

### What is the most embarrassing thing you've done?

(self.AskSaratoga)

submitted 10 hours ago by [FalconStaff](#)[-] [Alex Ferrari \(11\)](#) 765 points 9 hours ago

I was super fat and unathletic in fifth grade and I was on this basketball team. The first time I got playing time I was so happy and I made a basket. I was so excited and threw my hands up in the air, but I found out it was for the wrong team. It was so embarrassing I quit after that.

[permalink](#)[-] [Anisha Nagarajan \(11\)](#) 365 points 7 hours ago

I was playing soccer two or three years ago. The goalie took a punt from the goal line and it was coming towards me so I got ready to trap it. I have absolutely no idea what I was thinking, but for some reason, right when it came to me, I caught it. I was shocked, like I had no idea what made me do that so I freaked out and dropped the ball. My coach gave me a "I don't even know..." kind of look and the referee was so confused that it took him a second to blow the whistle and call a hand ball.

[permalink](#)[-] [Michelle Wang \(10\)](#) 298 points 6 hours ago

So in freshman year, I was walking to school with [sophomore] Gwynevere Hunger and a stranger asked if we needed a ride and I got scared so I dropped to the ground and pretended to have a seizure. There are pictures of me lying on the middle of the road on Herriman Avenue and bystanders were skeptical.

[permalink](#)[-] [Patrick Wang \(12\)](#) 888 points 2 hours ago

Running into the girls' bathroom on accident.

[permalink](#)

### How can I become ripped?

(self.AskSaratoga)

submitted 6 hours ago by [SHSstudentadvice](#)[-] [Jay Mulye \(12\)](#) 287 points 5 hours ago

I am no where near being close to ripped but I have gained around 35 pounds of muscle since the beginning of the school year, so I feel qualified to answer this question. Before senior year, I was a scrawny Indian boy, weighing a mere 115 pounds. Junior year was a stressful year and when stressed, I lose weight. Even though I had a six pack (only because I had no body fat), I did not feel strong at all.

At the start of senior year, I made a commitment to work out for four days a week. This is a step that you should also take. Allocate time slots into your schedule to work out and stick with them. Sooner or later, going to the gym will be very routine like eating dinner. I don't care if there is a test tomorrow, no excuses for missing the gym!

The next step is to create a weight training schedule. There are so many weight training programs that you can follow. The most common schedule that I have seen is bicep and back day, chest and tricep day and shoulder and leg day. Even though you are only working two muscle groups, it is important to do different exercises on each of the two muscle groups each workout day. I know that leg day sounds appalling, trust me it is, but it is necessary to strengthen the thighs and hamstrings, and it also helps burn fat.

Some of you may suffer from small calves syndrome (me included) — they are something we are born with. No matter how hard you work your calves, no matter how much burn you feel in your calves, they won't grow. Don't let this deter you from leg day. Man up and own those puny calves of yours.

If you have any questions regarding specific exercises and form, I would strongly suggest watching the Strength Camp Youtube Channel.

[permalink](#)

### How can I attract the ladies?

(self.AskSaratoga)

submitted 12 hours ago by [SHSstudentadvice](#)[-] [Andrew Jiang \(10\)](#) [Miles Albert \(10\)](#) 298 points 10 hours ago

Girls are complex mysterious creatures that are almost impossible to decipher. Therefore, it is incredibly hard to attract one, but I have put together a step-by-step process that is (kinda) guaranteed to work.

1. Be smooth with everything you do. For example, if you trip and fall, pretend it was on purpose and then start break dancing.
2. Have good hygiene. No one likes a scrub. Take a shower everyday, use deodorant and follow the other rules of cleanliness.
3. Be confident, but not to the point where you come off as rude or inconsiderate to others.
4. Start working out and get jacked (see Jay's response on how to get ripped). Girls like muscular men.
5. Work at Starbucks and give girls free drinks. Chicks dig Starbucks.
6. ...Or, be yourself and hope she likes you for who you are. ... Nah, who are we kidding.

[permalink](#)

### How to get an A in Mr. Yim's Class?

(self.AskSaratoga)

submitted 7 hours ago by [SHSstudentadvice](#)[-] [Bruce Lou \(11\)](#) 298 points 6 hours ago

First thing to know is that IT IS POSSIBLE to get an A in his class. Request to be moved to the front row so that you won't fall asleep as much. That way, even if you do, he'll yell at you and you'll snap back awake. Staying awake in his class is imperative. Ultimately, it's not the book, nor the lecture notes that will help you ace that test — it's Mr. Yim's lectures themselves that will push you through.

Do the homework because when Mr. Yim calls you up to the board, you have to be ready, or else you won't get the extra-credit points that are so crucial to the end-of-year grade. Speaking of extra-credit, don't pass up an opportunity to get any. That means tissue boxes, AMC (American Math Competition) 10/12 and any other opportunities that may present themselves.

Finally, there's the old method: study tirelessly. There's no one trick to getting an A in any class, and this class is no exception.



FALCON // MINU PALANIAPPAN



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

Top: Senior Jay Mulye lifts weights during his usual workout routine at the weight room after school. Bottom: Sophomores Andrew Jiang and Miles Albert test out their own 6-step relationship advice to win the hearts of junior Anisha Nagarajan and sophomore Ariel Liu.

Study like your life depends on it, especially in Trigonometry/Pre-calculus second semester and AP Calculus BC. Spend your weekends and breaks on it if you have to. And finally, just relax! Mr. Yim is tough, and yes, he does have his quirks, but really, he's just a normal human being with a passion for mountain biking and telling stories. An A isn't guaranteed in any of his classes no matter what, but following these steps will definitely give you an edge.

[permalink](#)

### How to get to In-N-Out and back on time during a regular lunch?

(self.AskSaratoga)

submitted 3 hours ago by [SHSstudentadvice](#)[-] [Jay Mulye \(12\)](#) 298 points 2 hours ago

Many of my friends have pulled this off though personally, I'm not comfortable doing this, but I do know it is possible to do in a 40-minute lunch period.

First off, you want to run to the car, right when the lunch bell rings. You can't afford to lose precious time strolling. Once all your friends reach the car, take off onto the streets while everyone else waits in horrid jams in the parking lot. Never wait for the straggling friend. Maybe you can give him some of your fries once you come back to school ON TIME.

You want to go to the Mountain View location, not the Sunnyvale one. Even though the Sunnyvale one is only 8.4 miles away as opposed to the Mountain View one, which is 9.2 miles away, you will be impeded by several consecutive traffic signals down De Anza Boulevard if you go to Sunnyvale. The great thing about the Mountain View route is that you are on a practically clear freeway for a little less than 7 miles and the restaurant is a about half a mile from the exit. But here comes the dangerous part of the trip that you shouldn't do: for that 7 miles you are on the freeway, you need to exceed 100 mph and you need to hit the same speed on the way back.

[permalink](#)

# Anti-Heroes: Why are we drawn to them?

BY DeepthiSampathkumar & CarolynSun

Life is unpredictable. Sometimes almost nothing goes as planned, which can be frustrating. We experience stress and crises on a daily basis, so when we decide to watch TV or read a book, it can be quite depressing and make us even more likely to “indulge” in the perfect lives of fictional characters.

But instead of agonizing over these unrealistically flawless characters, we can focus on their opposites — anti-heroes, or central characters who lack conventional heroic attributes. Figures such as Sherlock Holmes with his sociopathic tendencies, Jay Gatsby with his materialism and Frodo Baggins with his passivity captivate us, but why?

Anti-heroes are the protagonists that are innately good but display qualities that may seem otherwise. Heroes against the normal guidelines of a hero, they do “good” in a different way.

Perhaps we like anti-heroes because we can easily empathize with them. What kind of person can claim that they are unfailingly honorable, truthful, cou-

rageous and altruistic? Nobody. We are flawed humans, and anti-heroes embody our imperfections.

We choose to watch or read about anti-heroes to comfort ourselves. Learning about characters who make mistakes but still succeed in having decent lives reassures us; they are proof that our errors aren't necessarily the end of the world.

As flawed humans, we don't want to see the hard-working and virtuous always get rewarded. Perhaps a dark side of us wants to recognize the fact that making mistakes is acceptable.

An example is Dr. Gregory House, a respected specialist in diagnostic medicine from the TV show “House M.D.” Although skilled and extremely intelligent, Dr. House invites criticism thanks to his rash and unconventional decisions.

When his questionable ethics and addiction to the pain-killer Vicodin eventually lead to his firing, Dr. House's life seems to be done, for he has no career, no friends and an addiction to drugs. House is able to get past these roadblocks in his life, however, and move on. He demonstrates that even when life seems hopeless, we can still pick ourselves up and keep moving on.

In addition, anti-heroes usually have good intentions. Although their methods

are questionable, their causes inspire acceptance and perhaps even admiration and respect. After all, the ends justify the means, right?

helpless teenage boy, but he also plays a crucial role in the moral side's victory.

Even the serial killer Dexter Morgan from “Dexter” targets only other murderers who have escaped the justice system.

As episodes unfurl, he progressively becomes more human: in the series premiere, he introduces himself as a psychopath, one incapable of empathy, but by the series finale, he has developed into a loving father, brother and boyfriend.

Dexter's transformation gives us hope that we can conquer our own darkness; he proves that every person has good in him or her. In fact, audiences in their own struggles find themselves actually empathizing with Dexter, which is rather ironic since his entire character is based on the inability to feel empathy.

Anti-heroes seem to emulate the small evil, imperfect characteristics we all possess.



## RISE OF THE ANTIHERO

GRAPHIC BY CAROLYN SUN

For instance, Walter White from “Breaking Bad” begins making crystal meth to financially provide for his family. And, sure, Severus Snape from “Harry Potter” constantly hurls verbal abuse at a

Watching them on television or reading about them in books makes us feel better that, even when life doesn't go our way, there's a chance for us, even if we're far from perfect. ♦

### >> thebigidea

#### The Anti-Hero

##### Walter White

A chemistry teacher diagnosed with lung cancer who cooks and sells meth to ensure financial support for his family.

##### Dexter Morgan

A serial killer who only targets murderers after finding evidence that they are guilty.

##### Sherlock Holmes

A “high-functioning sociopath” who takes on the role of the world's only consulting detective.

# Sophomores battle it out over ‘Divergent’

## ADAPTATION FILLED WITH SURPRISES

BY ShreyaTumu

Dozens of dystopian novels and movies follow a formulaic plotline where the protagonist stands out in society by doing something that forever changes the dysfunctional system.

Although “Divergent,” the movie, which came out on March 21 and is based on Veronica Roth's nationwide bestseller (2011), follows the same plotline, its twists and turns make it very unpredictable — and well worth watching.

The movie is set in dystopian Chicago, the only known remaining place on post-apocalyptic Earth. The city is divided into five factions — the selfless government Abnegation, the honest judges Candor, the courageous police Dauntless, the kind farmers Amity and Erudite, the faction dedicated to knowledge.

In this city, every teenager take an aptitude test at 16 which determines which faction they will be placed into. Tris Prior (Shailene Woodley) tests as divergent, meaning she places in multiple factions.

She ends up choosing Dauntless, where she learns of a shocking conspiracy led by Erudite leader, Jeanine Matthews (Kate Winslet), to eliminate all Divergents.

In my case, I read the novel so long ago that I didn't remember many of the details from the book or even the ending, so the movie held a ton of surprises.

“Divergent” does a wonderful job playing with the audience's emotions. Embarrassingly enough, I cried three times during the film. As the beloved

characters are constantly put at risk of death, the movie pulls on the viewers' heartstrings.

Additionally, each characters' relationship in this film is developed and genuine. For example, when Tris gets beaten up by Peter, her enemy (Miles Teller), her love interest Four (Theo James) can't stand to watch her get hurt.

This scene alone develops the plot in three ways. For one, Peter's evil personality exemplifies his strong hatred. Additionally, the scene exploits Tris's weaknesses while also giving the audience a hint that Four may have feelings for Tris.

And just as a bonus, the movie's soundtrack is brilliant, consisting of popular artists such as Ellie Goulding, Skrillex, Zedd and Snow Patrol. “Divergent” does a wonderful job of mixing unique and creative relationships with a beautiful blend of music that enriches the scenes. It's a definite must-watch movie that will leave audiences captivated. ♦

## MOVIE FAILS WITH CLICHÉ PLOT LINE

BY AshleyChen

A strong, independent girl lives in a dystopian post-war America where the population is divided into separate communities. Following a standard but strange ritual all teenagers are required to undergo, she fights to save the lives of those she loves from an oppressive ruling body.

Sound like “The Hunger Games?” Sorry, no. This is “Divergent,” the latest of many failed attempts to transform a popular young adult novel into a successful film.

The best that can be said about this movie is that it's better than the book it's based on, a popular but shallow novel of the same name by author Veronica Roth.

“Divergent” shadows teenage Tris Prior (Shailene Woodley), who lives in a futuristic Chicago where the population is broken up into five factions.

She has a secret to hide, though: she doesn't fit in. She's Divergent. With the help of her half-boyfriend, half-instructor, Four (Theo James), she fights a sin-

ister plot to manipulate the Dauntless to destroy the Abnegation and Divergent. (See how long that took to explain? That's how you know a premise is too complicated.)

Instead of making the intelligent choice and simplifying the plot, director Neil Burger chose to lengthen the movie to a completely unnecessary 2 hours and 20 minutes.

The most disturbing part of the movie is Tris and Four's relationship. “Divergent” essentially legitimized romantic exchanges with unequal power dynamics, whereas in reality these kinds of relationships are often abusive. No product aimed at teenage girls should even remotely hint that a boss-employee or teacher-student relationship is acceptable.

Not only that, the film is marred with plot holes and consistency errors from the start. When you consider that the Abnegation consider looking in mirrors vanity and the Dauntless prize physical and mental strength over anything else, it doesn't make any sense that Tris even has access to mascara.

In fact, most of the movie doesn't make sense. The five factions in this unnamed society are said to cover the farmers, government, justice system, military and intellectuals of a civilization. Somehow, though, the main characters always have access to new clothes, computers and guns, which begs the question: Who works in the factories?

In short, if you're looking for something superficial to take your mind off school, look no further than “Divergent.” If not, skip this vapid, underwhelming film. ♦



GRAPHIC BY JANE PARK  
FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

the same name by author Veronica Roth. “Divergent” shadows teenage Tris Prior (Shailene Woodley), who lives in a futuristic Chicago where the population is broken up into five factions. She has a secret to hide, though: she doesn't fit in. She's Divergent. With the help of her half-boyfriend, half-instructor, Four (Theo James), she fights a sin-

# Wrongly rated TV shows broadcast too much gore

BY CarolynSun

Making this spate of violent shows worse is that the TV Parental Guideline system is ineffective and often inaccurate.

For instance, NBC's “Hannibal,” which centers around a cannibalistic serial killer and a FBI criminal profiler, is rated TV-14, indicating that the program contains some material that many parents would find unsuitable for children under 14.

In reality, the barbaric content in “Hannibal” could horrify even mature adults. The show includes scenes displaying corpses in multiple states of mutilation and decay and a half-decapitated man's intestines being pulled out to make into cello strings. Perhaps one of the most graphic scenes occurs when a murderer dissects a man, pulling his organs out, while the victim is still alive and awake.

Hannibal is a cannibalistic serial killer who murders people for his own twisted pleasure. The show even details his cooking process, provoking an immeasurable amount of horror and disgust. Even worse, the cannibal feeds his “gourmet” dishes to his ignorant “friends,” showing no remorse over his actions.

Although “Hannibal” has received critical acclaim, its misleading TV-14 rating can deceive unsuspecting parents and teenagers.

Many other well-received shows, such as “Breaking Bad,” “The Walking Dead” and “Bones,” which contain extensive gore and violence, are also rated TV-14, making one wonder just what matter would be considered inappropriate for teens.

These programs should change their rating to TV-MA, which indicates that the TV content may be unsuitable for those under 17. They could also, as “Dexter” did for its first season, originally broadcast as TV-MA but rerun episodes edited down to TV-14.

Even if shows are unwilling to tone down the amount and degree of violent content, a TV-MA rating would properly warn parents and teenagers of their truly horrific content. ♦



Courtesy of NADIA YOUNES

Junior Nadia Younes practices the ballet pose “arabesque” at Jollyman Park, preparing for her next performance “Die Fledermaus” with the Opera San Jose.

# Junior pursues the arts: singing and dancing

BY BeckyHoag & ShreyaTumu

In addition to live performances, Younes posts covers on her father's YouTube account using a recording studio built in her garage. She has recorded covers of songs such as “Too Close” by Alex Care and “Stay” by Rihanna, each receiving around 200 views.

Her family is especially supportive of her interests; Younes' father is a singer who learned to play the piano and guitar from ear, and her mother is a dancer. Under their guidance, Younes began dancing when she was just 3 and began singing at age 4.

“My dad always encourages me to go down and record with him and work on my voice and play guitar and piano,” Younes said. Younes is planning on majoring in voice and minoring in dance in college. She's currently looking at Chapman University or University of Southern California.

“Performing is something that I love more than anything in this world.” “Being on stage and having that rush of adrenaline, I live off of it and I love it. Performing is my life.” ♦

Performing is something that I long for; I love it more than anything in this world.

>> junior Nadia Younes

# The obsession with likes on Facebook profile pictures

## STUDENTS FALL INTO AN ONLINE EPIDEMIC: PROFILE PICTURES UNREASONABLY GLORIFIED

I'm kind of notorious for being “#thirsty” for likes on my profile pictures, the image representing my online profile. There are even screenshots posted on Facebook of me messaging my friends “Nobody is liking my photo [sad face emoji].” I know, it's a problem. I'm working on it.

But compared to people who like their own photos to bring them back on the newsfeed in hopes of getting more likes, I'm not THAT bad. I've also seen people repeatedly change their profile pictures to the same photo. I, thankfully, have yet to sink that low.

My friends have even conducted research and found that between 8 and 10 at night is the “prime time” to change your profile picture for the maximum number of likes. And yes, that is generally when I change my profile picture. And yes, I have dispensed that useful information to you, dear like-thirsty reader (you're welcome).

Let me describe the typical girl's (and

sometimes guy's) profile picture to you. Changed about once every three months, this photo is likely to be taken with an expensive camera and shows the subject posing casually in front of a brick wall or some other “hipster” background. The caption consists of an overused quote or song lyric with photo credits to whoever took the picture below, as well as other credits such as “caption creds,” “everything creds” and more.

There are hundreds of likes from people she barely talks to. Underneath that, there are around 20 comments exclaiming “OMG share your beauty please [heart emoji]” or “Can we switch faces?”

Truth be told, behind the carefully created profile pictures is a desire to be liked. That is what nearly every girl wants from her profile picture.

We want likes, we want to be wanted. It's extremely pathetic and extremely

true. Profile pictures represent the best part of ourselves, the part that we want everyone to see. It only adds to the old truth: You see in everyone their best, what they want you to see. You don't see their struggle, their self-doubt and as a result everyone seems better, more perfect than you.



ARIEL LIU  
The Little Mermaid

You don't see how they're probably failing math just like you, or how they spent yesterday crying over an episode of “Pretty Little Liars,” screaming at the TV. You don't see all of that because they hide it behind their seemingly perfect profile picture.

In my profile picture, I am lying on a picturesque pile of bright yellow leaves, hair perfectly straight, outfit casually chic. But contrary to popular belief, I do not lie on leaves in cute clothing in my spare time.

Most days you will find me looking



GRAPHIC BY CAROLYN SUN



FALCON // DAVID SPARKMAN

# Leaders fight for SPIRIT

## STUDENT LEADERS COMBAT APATHY AND LOOK FOR WAYS TO REVIVE RED PRIDE

BY AmyLin & SherrilynLing

One boy dressed from head to toe in red — shoes, shirt, car key lanyard — licks peanut butter off of a plastic plate. Another wearing all blue attempts eagerly to outdo him. From the four corners of the Large Gym come shouts and high-pitched cheers, each class attempting to outdo the others.

This is a common scene at rallies. But while hundreds of students still attend the now twice-a-semester events, the clear trend has been toward more and more empty bleachers.

In the meantime, student leaders are looking for answers. Junior rally commissioner Natalie Miller said restrictions on rallies are part of the problem.

"It has been harder to please the administration while making a funny rally for all the students," Miller said. "I think sometimes they forget we're high school students who are immature and just want to make a few stupid harmless jokes."

In addition to fewer students attending rallies, other spirit-related activities like spirit days and Powderpuff football are also having trouble generating participation.

"People at our school believe they have better things to do and think, 'Oh, I have to use those extra three minutes necessary to choose a spirit day outfit instead of studying for a Chemistry test,'" junior class president and spirit commissioner Adrienne Kim said. "It takes like five minutes. It's easy. Do you go to SHS? Why wouldn't you want to represent your school?"

### Lack of spirit

According to several class officers, juniors have an especial-

ly hard time allocating time for rallies and spirit activities.

"I think we could do a better job motivating the junior class," junior class treasurer Josh Pi said. "Even though junior year is a tough year, I think the officers, including myself,

should try harder to encourage people to participate instead of just focusing on school work."

junior Christina Chin

Kim said that the junior class officers have been working harder on participating in school events like Powderpuff, Homecoming and spirit days. "It's really important for the officers to take part in these activities because if other students see us [participating,] they'll want to do it too," Kim said.

### Promoting spirit

To combat the issue of low student attendance, the rally commission wants to have mandatory rallies that will require all students to attend by closing down all classrooms during tutorials.

These could encourage students who didn't go to rallies in former years to attend, Miller said. "We were hoping that having tutorials closed down would make people have nothing better to do so that they can come and see how fun rallies actually are," Miller said. "People are so stressed out and worried about their grades that they go to every tutorial but we want more people to come."

This idea is currently being debated. Because the addition of mandatory rallies would require changing the schedule of the rally day, the rally commission is working with the administration, teachers and the office to make them a reality.

Miller hopes to see mandatory rallies instituted by the next school year, but said, "It's not looking good."

Junior Uma Kumar added that another way to increase spirit could be promoting spirit days more.

She said that before spirit days, she goes shopping with all her friends to pick out matching outfits.

"It takes forever but I'm glad that I do make time for it because it makes high school so much more memorable," Kumar said. "I would hate just studying all the time. It's nice to have other things to do."

The spirit commission is also looking at new tactics to increase student participation in spirit-related activities, like spirit days and dances, and is looking to expand its social media presence.

For Spring Fling, the spirit commission used Instagram and Facebook to tally the number of people who dressed up. They had previously marked

down those who visited their table at the top of the quad steps, but many weren't aware of this method, said junior spirit commissioner Christina Chin.

The spirit commission created hashtags for every class, and encouraged students who dressed up each day of the week to post pictures and use the hashtag. Although this new method didn't have much support from underclassmen, many upperclassmen, in particular the junior class, got really involved.

The spirit commission's ultimate goal is to bring students more together and increase school pride — an objective that has not been fulfilled to their standards yet.

"Spirit is really important and helps to get students pumped up about events on campus," Chin said. "It's important for the school to bond." ♦

## What is school spirit?



FALCON // SHAZIA GUPTA

Q: What do you define as school spirit?

A: It's all part of being connected to something bigger than yourself. There are always going to be students who would rather not be connected, and that's OK; that's a choice that they make. But we have so many students on our campus who find a way to be connected, you know almost 65 percent of students compete in athletics. I think they feel pretty good when they're wearing a uniform or an outfit that has an "S" or says Falcons. That kind of makes them feel good and they take pride in that. So you talk to our group for robotics or our speech and debate team or for other groups that our doing things, representing the school, it feels pretty cool.

Q: What do you say to people who say SHS has no spirit?

A: Whenever someone mentions to me that school spirit is dying, I guess I'm kind of a glass half full guy. I think back to all the times when we've got a gym packed of students during our Speak Up for Change Week and everybody was talking about some really great things that were happening or I think back to our spirit week for Homecoming or I'm looking forward to Spring Fling. Maintaining that level of excitement sometimes is difficult so it's just my hope that we continue to work on it if we feel like, "OK, wow, today's a really low day," then what are we going to do tomorrow to make it better?

Q: How do you think SHS spirit compares to spirit at other schools?

A: Having been at different high schools, the level of involvement on some of those days is higher here than what you see at other schools. Now there might be other schools that are even higher than us and that's a given, but I think our level is pretty high and we just keep chipping away and going and going and going at it even more.

Q: What is your ultimate hope for spirit at SHS?

A: So my hope is that anybody that leaves here when they graduate or if they have to leave because of moving or anything like that, they can look back on their experience here and say, 'You know what, I really felt like I was connected to the school and I felt like I was supported by my classmates, by my teachers, by everybody there on campus.' And that's the kind of spirit that's really important to the school. ♦

# Compared to nearby schools, even 'nerdy' ones, Saratoga a land of APATHY

BY AndrewJiang & ArielLiu

"And the second place winner of Homecoming decorations is..." the announcer at the Homecoming football game began.

The sea of sophomores clasped each other's hands in anticipation of the announcement. They had been working on their decorations since summer, and this was the moment they had all been waiting for.

"The class of 2015!" the announcer finished.

The juniors jumped up with a deafening roar, while the crestfallen sophomores, who lost by one point, started booing.

"We should've won that!" one yelled with tears in his eyes. "They definitely rigged it," another echoed. "That was so unfair."

Thought this was Saratoga? Wishful thinking — school spirit here is often seen as a lukewarm soup of apathy, disconnected enthusiasm and tutorials used for "real things" like homework.

Nope, this is Monta Vista.

"It was really sad that we lost, but I think our sadness united us as a class and inspired us to do even better next year," Monta Vista High School sophomore Heidi Wang said.

To many Monta Vista students, losing the Homecoming decorations competition was something worth shedding tears over.

On the contrary, when Homecoming decoration winners are announced at Saratoga, students barely look up from their work to pay attention to the intercom.

Compared to nearby schools, Saratoga seems to be lacking in school spirit.



Courtesy of TATIANA WRIGHT



Courtesy of ROGER CHEN



Courtesy of DILLAN PATEL

Few people dress up for spirit days and many students would rather spend tutorials doing homework or studying than attending rallies.

"We have a lot of kids who are academically focused and see school more as a place for learning, and only that," said Saratoga sophomore Ellie Kriens, who transferred from Mitty at the beginning of the year. "Although Mitty also has academic priorities, I think they also focus a lot on school spirit because it brings the school closer together."

### Spirit Competitions

At Mitty, in-school rallies are mandatory for all students. According to Kriens, Mitty holds a huge rally each year called Monarch Madness at the San Jose Civic Center.

Students apply to join a team of representatives and about 50 are randomly chosen to represent their class. Each team creates a dance routine and competes in relays and games. The rest of the class dresses up in their class colors and cheers on their representatives.

"It's deafening for the entire three hours," Kriens said. "It's optional to go to Monarch Madness, but almost the entire school shows up each year; it's a huge deal there."

Supposedly, academics and spirit are opposed; Saratoga is too academic, so no one goes to rallies during tutorial. However, schools like Lynbrook High School tend to debunk this theory.

For example, the academic atmosphere at Lynbrook High School mirrors that of Monta Vista and Saratoga. Despite this, Lynbrook still manages to rake in high participation at rallies.

"The stress here is huge so little things like rallies really help especially for the mental health of the students," Lynbrook sophomore Alvin Fan said.

According to Wang, the seniors at Monta Vista are the ones who inspire the rest of the school to be spirited.

"They are the oldest in the school, so they don't want to feel like the younger students can beat them," she said. "They have this sense of pride where they have to win and other classes follow their ex-

ample."

Monta Vista students use Facebook as a way to encourage class pride. They often have "spams" on Facebook, in which many students change their profile pictures to the same photo. Their class officers use Facebook class groups to post cheers for rallies and to inform the class about upcoming events.

"The officers are really motivational and pumped and there's reminders everywhere around school [for school spirit events]," Wang said.

Monta Vista also emphasizes the importance of dressing up for spirit days in order to win class points and unite the school.

"People really like dress up days; it's a change in environment so people can get their minds off grades," Wang said. "If they see their friends doing it, they want to do it too. People at Monta Vista are crazy and bold."

### District-Wide Events

Unlike Saratoga, other schools also emphasize intradistrict spirit and unity. In the Fremont Union High School District, students from high schools such as Lynbrook and Monta Vista participate in events such as IntraDistrict Council (IDC) Fantastics, a district wide rally. When football teams in the district square off each fall, the winner walks away with a special helmet prized by all the schools.

### Spirit at private schools

At Presentation High School, teachers are competitive with each other, incentivizing students to attend rallies, which occur about six times a semester.

"Everyone is always really excited about [rallies], even the staff," Presentation freshman Ivana Su said. "It's funny watching the teachers be competitive with each other."

Su's homeroom teacher, the facilitator for the freshman class, motivates her students to participate with her hilariously competitive spirit.

One time near the beginning of the year, her class was brainstorming for ideas for their class mascot and some-

one suggested Ash Ketchum from Pokémon. When the class scoffed at the idea, her teacher retorted, "I kind of like that though, it's like we're telling the seniors 'we gon catch yo ass.'"

In addition, Presentation competes with other schools in the nation in an annual magazine fundraiser. They were No. 1 in the country this year, raising the most money through a competition between grades to see who could sell the most.

### Too much spirit?

Even with all of their benefits, spirit events have the potential to go much too far. According to Wang, a couple years ago at Monta Vista, a group of seniors keyed the cars of various juniors after the junior class beat the senior class in a rally.

A similar incident occurred at Lynbrook when, two or three years ago, a few seniors, angered by their loss in the Homecoming competition, slashed the tires of cars that weren't parked in the senior parking spaces.

According to Wang and Fan, the Lynbrook and Monta Vista administrations are fearful of overly competitive rivalries.

"[The seniors slashing the tires] was pretty bad so the administration pretty much rigged Homecoming so that the seniors always get first no matter what," Fan said.

Nevertheless, because of their class pride, people still attend these events.

"We just wanna be the best we can especially for an event as big as Homecoming," Fan said.

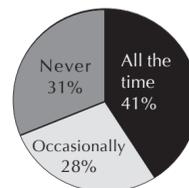
"We totally got robbed, but it's OK since we love our class enough to still show up."

For his part, Fan wants to spend as much time as he can with his peers before he graduates.

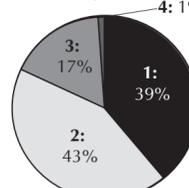
"You're only with [your classmates] for two more years, for us at least, and you've grown up with most of these kids," Fan said. "Chances are you may never see them again in your life, so appreciate them and appreciate the time you have with them now." ♦

## >> falconpoll

Do you go to rallies?



How would you rate Saratoga's spirit? (1- worst, 4-best)



The Falcon polled 112 students.

## >> togotalks

### How can we improve spirit at Saratoga?

"I think when there is a rally there should be a closed tutorial, thus boosting the attendance at rallies."



junior Jordan Vogel

"If there was a grade called 'School Spirit Participation,' then everyone would participate."



junior Randy Tsai

"Friends should encourage each other to participate. People will be more comfortable if they know they won't be alone."



senior Vanessa Wang

# I've never been to a rally, and I am not evil

I'm a senior and I've never been to a rally, nor will I ever go to one. Many would call me un-spirited, apathetic. To the outsider, this might seem true. I spend my tutorials working in the Journalism Room rather than shouting at rallies. I'd rather spend free time with my friends than sit in the crowd and watch my classmates perform silly (albeit entertaining) tasks.



SAMUEL LIU  
Chairman Smao

My louder peers would tell me that this is wrong. They would criticize those who don't show up to rallies or don't dress up for spirit days for not "showing school spirit." How can you express Red Pride if you don't shout and cavort with the rest of us?

This culture of quietude is supposedly so problematic that the Rally Commission is looking to make rallies mandatory for all students. If they had their way, all teachers would lock their doors and students would march to the gym and cheer their hearts out.

Allow me to phrase it simply: This is

a terrible idea.

Call me close-minded, sure, for never attending a rally. Maybe I'm not qualified to critique something I've never tried. But I'd say that the truly close-minded are those who believe that "school spirit" exists only in these extrovert-dominated tasks, that to be introverted is to be anti-Saratoga.

Truly, there's a better way to include introverts than to say "Oh, just go join a crowd full of people you don't know," "Just have spirit and be loud!" To some of us the idea of dressing up in odd clothes and attracting attention is terrifying — just like, to some, sitting down for 10

hours with a book sounds like torture.

Indeed, the rhetoric of rallies often subtly condemns academics. A common reason given for the unpopularity of rallies is this: Students are too academic minded and can't be expected to give up even one tutorial to attend a rally. It's the "overly-academic" students — in other words, the nerds — who are making

Saratoga so "spiritless."

This is an extraordinarily uninformed opinion based not in reality but in "Saratoga is too academic which is causing all our problems" ideology.

If this were true, then why are schools like Lynbrook and Monta Vista — surely, they aren't any less nerdy — so spirited, while our bleachers have so many empty seats on rally days?

Besides, tutorials were created for learning, so why are we condemning students for using this precious time to do just that?

Contrary to stereotype, I, like many other rally-evaders, don't "study too much." By and large, we're not close-minded to new experiences or socially impaired (at least I would hope not). Nor do we all hate high school and view it as just another stepping stone.

The truth is that school spirit is not limited (not remotely, not in the slight-

est) to extroverted activities like Homecoming, rallies or football games. From the quiet freshmen who run book clubs to the athletes who represent Saratoga in competition, school spirit is vast and diverse.

To say that not attending rallies is inherently "bad" is to imply that there are "better" kinds of students — namely, those who have the panache and self-confidence to exude spirit so openly. If rallies are about unity, then why do their supporters consistently put

down one type of student? So the point is this: There's no need to keep shoving rallies down our throats, and the death of school spirit. Yes, it's often easier to say that a school is spirited based on its decibel values, but the reality is that spirit need not always be so loud or voluble.

Sometimes, spirit can be silent. ♦

**The truth is that school spirit is not limited — not remotely — to extroverted activities like Homecoming, rallies or football games.**



Soprano boys show off their dance moves in their quad day during arguably one of the biggest displays of school spirit: Homecoming.

## Homecoming: a must or bust?

BY Miles Albert

Homecoming, on the outside merely a celebration, presents a great battle between two opposing forces: apathy and school spirit.

Opinions on Homecoming vary. Some may think Homecoming brings classes together, providing a memorable bonding experience, while others believe it is a complete waste of time.

Sophomore Luke Salin counts himself among those who love Homecoming.

"Along with big sports games, I think that Homecoming is one of the times our school is the most pumped," said Salin. "But Homecoming would be so much better with more people."

According to Salin, people don't participate in Homecoming because of their jam-packed schedules or because they don't like decorating and performing in front of others.

Every year, though, some students who have never participated before dive into the experience. This year, junior Jackie An did just that.

"Since I'm an upperclassman now, I was less nervous about dancing in front of the entire school," An said. "Also, a lot

of my friends wanted to do it, so it was something we all did together."

On the other hand, students like junior Samuel Junqua have a slightly different outlook on Homecoming, saying that it is a memorable experience but that students with busy schedules should not feel pressured to participate.

"I don't think it's for everybody, but I think it can be a good chance to build and express school spirit," Junqua said. "It can sometimes bring people together."

Salin, however, believes the school should continue to make efforts to increase its school spirit and participation in Homecoming and as well in sports games.

Salin said that compared to many other local schools, such as Monta Vista and Lynbrook, SHS is less spirited. However, it should be driven to become one of the most spirited schools around — or at least more spirited than rival Los Gatos.

"It's fun, since you get to hang out with your friends. It's also stressful, but the good kind of stress that bonds classmates with each other," Salin said. "And there's nothing better than the feeling after it's all over." ♦



Salin

## Breaking racial boundaries

BOMBAY IN THE BAY UNIFIES ITS PARTICIPANTS

After Bombay in the Bay (BnB) my freshman year, I vividly remember all of my friends, Indian, Asian, Caucasian, Latino, running over to me saying how awesome the show was and asking me to teach them about Indian dancing. My friends wanted to learn Bollywood dance moves other than the stereotypical "twist the light bulb." Too lazy to teach them, I told them to do BnB next year.

The next year, our sophomore dances were jam-packed with enthusiastic participants of all different ethnic backgrounds.

When Bombay in the Bay was started 12 years ago, all of their participants were of Indian origin, but over the last few years, I've begun to see a rise in non-Indians Bollywood dancing alongside their Indian counterparts.

Some might wonder how non-Indians fit into this Bollywood song and dance culture when most have never even heard Bollywood songs before. But from what I've seen, the non-Indians who participate in the show are just as, if not more, enthusiastic about BnB.

Every year BnB gives my non-Indian friends a chance to don saris, kurtas and dupattas, and shamelessly take selfies with the caption "Honorary Indians!!!" In a sense, it makes me proud to be Indian watching all of these people from other cultures thoroughly enjoying being part of something intrinsic to my identity.

This year the seniors had almost an entire section of their dance consist of non-Indian performers, and the juniors, whose dance was already large, benefitted from additional non-Indian dancers who made up around one-fourth of their dance.



Seniors Willie van de Hoek and Katie Truong were two of the many non-Indian participants of this year's Bombay in the Bay in February.

For us seniors, the last two weeks before the show were memorable. Having practiced almost every day for two hours or more, a distinctly Indian vibe rattled around campus. I saw my non-Indian friends humming along in the hallways to famous "Chingam Chabake," one of our numbers; talking about what color sari they wanted to wear on the day of the show; and for those especially dedicated, casually practicing the dances hoping

that people wouldn't see.

The non-Indian performers in BnB have become an integral part of the spectacle, creating diversity, community and newfound friendships.

Senior Katherine Sun, who joined her sophomore year, embodies what it means to be a non-Indian performer.

"I expected it to be super awkward at first because I was the only non-Indian, but honestly it wasn't awkward at all," Sun said. "Everyone was super friendly and accepting and we treat each other like family."

BnB, over the course of the last few years, has transformed itself from a strictly Indian show to a multicultural event with performers moonlighting as Bollywood dancers for the night. As the number of both

Indian and non-Indian participants increases each year, I truly believe BnB has secured its place at Saratoga as a spirit hub.

Sun also feels the same way.

"I feel like BnB has always been a source of school spirit," Sun said. "The friendly competition between grades, AMD, AGD and all the hours spent hard at work became quality bonding time and we all grew to become a family."

In addition, when advertising for the show, participants show their true school spirit, posting a million statuses on Facebook about the show, messaging friends from other schools to attend the event, making promo videos, whispering through the grapevine that the senior dance was going to be amazing because of one guy's crazy body rolls and showing ultimate Red Pride for a major Saratoga event.

I think it is safe to say that Bombay in the Bay has grown to become comparable to Homecoming and Powderpuff and has redefined what spirit means around here due to the huge number of participants of all backgrounds and the closely knit community it creates. As I leave high school, it's encouraging to think that I've been part of something that will make people proud to be Saratogans. ♦



ROHAN HARDIKAR  
Rohizzle

# On the other side of the runway

SENIOR EXPLAINS THE IMPOSSIBLE PURSUIT OF PERFECTION

BY Sweeya Raj & Tiffany Zheng

Last year, senior Daniella Henao took a deep breath and prepared to step out onto the runway in San Francisco. She could see the blinding camera lights from photographers flashing incessantly even from behind the curtains as she checked one last time in the mirror to make sure her professional makeup, curled blonde hair and short, tight dress looked perfect. She was the last model to walk the runway at Bay Area fashion week, an annual event that stretches from October to November, and a huge honor. It had to be perfect.

While modeling may seem like a magical and glorious profession, Henao said that it can also be an extremely demanding job.

"There were a lot of people crying [at fashion week] because modeling will break you if you're not strong enough," Henao said.

Henao has been modeling since age six, when she began her modeling career in her home country of Columbia. When she moved to the United States at the beginning of her sophomore year, she joined the Barbizon school of modeling in San Francisco, where she got the contacts of photographers and fashion designers.

"The modeling community in the Bay Area is really small, so everyone knows each other and everyone knows who you are," Henao said. "I was the shortest and the fattest one at the castings, but they liked me because I was foreign and brought something new and different."

Henao said that models of-



Senior Daniella Henao walks the runway at Bay Area Fashion Week in San Francisco, an annual event that runs from late October to November.

ten face harsh stereotypes. "People don't think that I'm smart or that I can get good grades. They just think that I care about how I look," Henao said. "And that's really hard sometimes."

Another downside is the competition among models. According to Henao, some of the girls who model with her can be spiteful or unpleasant.

"There's a lot of pressure to be perfect because you're competing against so many girls who want to be in your place," Henao said. "There is a lot of pressure to have perfect skin

and a perfect body when you are in this kind of industry."

The fashion industry has created a cookie-cutter vision of the perfect look, causing models to have to go to extreme measures to fit the mold. Despite feelings of inadequacy at times, Henao believes that it is worth it.

"Even though I am a size 2, I'm still considered fat. I'm 5'7," and I'm short," Henao said. "So it's true that you have a lot of pressure at times, but if you enjoy it, it's worth it."

Henao added that while fashion designers in the industry can corrupt a model's mind-

ing, models should try to remain true to themselves.

"I get that the industry wants us to see beauty a different way, but I believe that we should see beauty as it is," Henao said. "We shouldn't have to change the way we look and who we are."

She remembers the time a few years ago when she missed a month of school because she was modeling in a photoshoot and struggled to catch up.

Henao said that it was hard to raise her grades and make up the work she missed. In regards to her future in

modeling, she said, "It's something I don't want to do for the rest of my life, but it is really fun."

Although Henao said that she is not planning a career in modeling, she said that for the time being, modeling remains exciting.

"Being on the runway is an amazing feeling, like being on top of the world, and it's the reason I model," Henao said. "I get nervous when I am the first model to get on the runway because everyone is watching you, but once you start walking, you're no longer nervous." ♦

## Senior shows eccentric personality through creations

BY Nelson Wang

A communal locker, various chemistry bombs, a life-size party cannon, a wrist-mounted flare gun, a flamethrower that sort of works, simple air cannons and a briefcase that allows me to control detonation — such a list sounds like a crazy dream, right?

But it's not. It's simply a list of things senior Charles Li has created over the years.

From starting a communist locker this year (a story covered in the Nov. 1 issue of the Falcon) to creating miniature explosives to planning a Humans vs. Zombies game, Li has had a multitude of provocative projects.

Li's list of eccentric experiments began in middle school with making simple explosives.

Because he is careful and his intent is based on curiosity alone, those explosives never hurt anyone.

"I started burning stuff in middle school. [It was] mainly just homemade napalm [and] propane, simple stuff," said Li.

He also assembled a briefcase to help

detonate the various explosives he had made. He used buttons and wire connectors along with LEDs to create a detonation button.

Currently, Li is working on a grenade delivery system that would deliver flashbangs, non-lethal explosives that are meant to disorient people by blinding and deafening them through a bright light and loud sound. Li simply does these projects for fun and curiosity, and flashbangs are among his favorite projects.

Li's interests aren't limited to explosives. He is currently working on a "functional broadcasting setup." In addition, as a freshman, he thought about starting a Humans vs. Zombies game at Saratoga High, a spinoff of a tag game played on college campuses. The idea didn't launch until this year.

"I basically threw some people in an area for four hours with Nerf guns and [had them] try to fight the 'zombies.' It had a positive result, so I'll probably do it again," said Li.

What's the common ground in interests between tinkering with explosives and a Humans vs. Zombies game? Nothing really. Anything that captures Li's interest is a potential target.



Senior Charles Li "plays" with a circuit board and a soldering iron on his work table.

"I just make stuff because I want to. My projects are just based on whatever interests me that day," said Li.

Li credits the knowledge needed to pursue the interests to his own outside research.

"A lot of my friends think I'm some kind of a genius. It's really just the Internet," said Li of his various projects. "There's this great thing called Google

that you have access to as well." Despite what seems like many successes, Li has had many failures as well, but has learned from them all.

"My projects have probably a less than 50 percent success rate. Like in freshman year, when I tried to make a lawnmower tank. God knows what I was thinking at the time," said Li. "It's gotten better over the years." ♦

## YMCA swim coach

BY Amy Lin

Senior Emily Nguyen stands in the middle of pool and gestures to Erin, a nervous 5-year-old girl holding onto the wall, to swim toward her. Slowly letting go, Erin swims shakily and ungracefully, but eventually makes it to Nguyen, grabbing her arms and smiling triumphantly.

This is a typical day on the job for Nguyen, a swim instructor who teaches young children the basics of swimming at the Southwest YMCA on Quito Road. Because Nguyen had a YMCA membership, she swam at the gym regularly and a lifeguard there suggested she apply to be a swim coach.

Although she started working just to stay busy during the summer between junior and senior year, Nguyen found it extremely fulfilling and stuck with it throughout the school year.

"I really enjoy interacting with kids and I've been swimming my entire life, so I thought I could share all of my tips and tricks that I have learned over the years to help my students succeed," Nguyen said.

While she was dealing with a difficult course load and a number of college ap-

plications during her first semester of senior year, Nguyen still found time to work for six hours a week.

"I would work right after school, and since I didn't have a seventh period at the time, it was not stressful at all," Nguyen said.

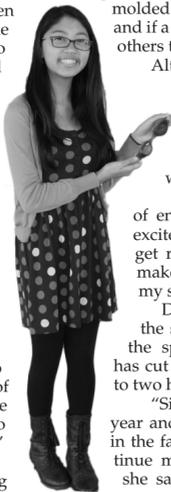
The flexibility of the job also helped to avoid scheduling problems and gave her a certain amount of leeway, while teaching her how to manage time. Her coaching schedule is molded to fit her extracurriculars, and if a conflict arises, she can ask others to sub for her.

Although she was able to manage her busy schedule during first semester, Nguyen found herself exhausted at night when faced with homework and studying.

"It requires a lot of energy to stay upbeat and excited while teaching, and I get really tired," she said. "It makes it harder for me to finish my school work efficiently."

Due to her commitment to the school swim team during the spring sports season, she has cut down her working hours to two hours a week.

"Since I'm graduating this year and will be going to college in the fall, I won't be able to continue my job for much longer," she said. "But I will definitely try to continue working for as long as I can." ♦



Emily Nguyen

## Kumon Center tutor

BY Dorrie Tang

It's 9 a.m. on a typical Saturday morning when senior Henry Ling wakes up, sometimes wishing he could stay in bed longer. But he can't — he has to drive himself and his 5-year-old little brother to Kumon, a learning center located near the entrance to downtown Saratoga, where he has a part-time job.

Students at Kumon come to the center at least once a week to complete appropriately-leveled reading or math packets and then get assigned additional packets to finish at home. The program's packets teach students various math skills or reading strategies and include many problems and other materials for the students to practice.

Unlike in a typical tutoring center, however, students do not work side-by-side with other students or teachers; they work independently and consult teachers only when they need help on work.

Ling's job is to grade the packets of homework and classwork that students bring to the center.

"This job isn't exactly the most exciting because [I] just sit there grading papers and recording scores

and occasionally help some students with questions," Ling said. "It can get pretty repetitive, but it teaches me to stick with things that aren't fun, even if I don't like [them] that much."

In fact, Ling, who earns \$10 an hour at Kumon, believes the demand from his work is beneficial in the long term.

"I like how it develops my work ethic," Ling said. "I have to grade a huge stack of papers and so I've learned how to be efficient with my time."

Ling said he found out about the job opening while sending his brother to Kumon one day.

Though he had not been explicitly looking for jobs, he decided to go for the opportunity in order "to get some [work] experience and earn some money to save up" before the end of his high school career.

"[During] second semester, I [have] a bit more time now that college [applications] and the marching band season is over," Ling said.

Ling said the job is a good experience to have before he goes off to college.

"I would advise people to get a similar job just to gain some [exposure to] work," Ling said. ♦



Henry Ling

# PART-TIME JOBS

GRAPHIC BY MICHELLE LEUNG  
ALL PHOTOS BY SHAZIA GUPTA

## Good Sam volunteers

BY Shreya Tumu

Every Sunday morning from 9-12 junior Shivaram Yellamilli makes a small effort into bettering the lives of others. Like many other students, he volunteers at the Good Samaritan Hospital in San Jose, a hotspot for teens looking to make a difference and for volunteer work.

Finding a volunteer job at a hospital is harder than one may expect.

Because of the large number of students interested in going into the medical field, volunteer opportunities are very limited and competition is high.

Yellamilli had to be fill out a lengthy application form as well as complete an interview in order to obtain his position.

After gaining experience, Yellamilli was promoted to the team captain of his specific shift.

Yellamilli has been the team captain of his shift of eight other volunteers for over a year. He spends three and a half hours volunteering every week.

"Originally I was interested in the medical field but over time that's kind of changed, though I still stick with the job," Yellamilli

said. "It's an interesting experience and you can meet a lot of interesting people while you're there."

As a group leader, he usually spends half an hour delegating tasks such as delivering labs to others and around two hours carrying out some of the tasks himself.

He and the other volunteers deliver flowers, medicine and miscellaneous items.

"[The tasks] can be either fun or boring; it all depends on who you get," said Yellamilli. "You can get a spontaneous and bubbly person and sometimes you have to discharge someone who just sits in their chair."

Junior Lipika Sadaram also volunteers at Good Samaritan Hospital.

"I'm really grateful for this opportunity," said Sadaram.

She said that while the application process was difficult, volunteering is a great experience because she has the opportunity to help others.

"It makes me feel special to know that I have the power to make a difference in my community and in individuals' lives," Sadaram said. ♦



Shivaram Yellamilli

## Animal hospital aide

BY Shreya Tumu

Last April on College and Career Day, junior Celia Kohler walked into her next career informational session, excited for what might be in store for her. Indeed, she was fascinated by the presentation given by Dr. David Reed, who discussed his rewarding experience working at Reed Animal Hospital in Campbell.

He offered students the opportunity to volunteer there if they were interested. After his presentation, Kohler talked to Reed and now, almost a year later, Kohler still loves her job, working every Sunday for four hours and sometimes on Saturdays when needed.

Though it is voluntary, difficult and sometimes messy, Kohler says her job is "a good experience and really fun." She cleans cages and rooms, walks and bathes dogs, holds the animals when they get shots or nails clipped and files paperwork.

Her favorite thing to do is take care of the newborn puppies and their mothers in isolated rooms. Since they're young, they still haven't gotten all of the required vaccines to be around any other dogs.

Kohler gets to play with them and feed them.

"Sometimes the mom is very aggressive, but other times she's a sweetheart," Kohler said. "So it just depends, but it's really nice to get to work with them on that level. You go in with the owners and you're just like, 'Hey, yeah your puppies are doing just fine.'"

Though Kohler likes working with animals, she's not sure if she wants to be a veterinarian because, from what she's seen, it doesn't involve as much human interaction as she might like in a career.

In order to further explore opportunities, she has also started to volunteer at Good Samaritan Hospital.

This adds three and a half hours of volunteering to her Sundays. Besides the homework and studying all students must do, Kohler is also committed to her work for the National Charity League and playing tennis in the fall.

"It's tough, you don't get much sleep, but it's worth it. I don't mind volunteering in the morning because it's something I look forward to doing," Kohler said. "It's not work; it's something I want to go do." ♦



Celia Kohler

# 'That rich school'

SOMETIMES MIDDLE-CLASS STUDENTS LIKE GABBY FONTANILLA FEEL COMPARATIVELY POOR

BY Michelle Leung & Carolyn Sun

To many, the first words that come to mind when asked to describe Saratoga are "rich," or "affluent." Maybe "SAT obsessed" if it's a good day.

The stereotype of Saratoga as a rich school is certainly not without its basis in reality; according to census data the average household income in Saratoga was \$147,918 in 2011, while the average household income in California was \$57,287. Houses in the city often sell for \$1.5 million or more — far beyond the means of all but the wealthiest Americans.

Going to school among the very wealthy at Saratoga are students whose families are solidly middle class, yet feel poorer compared to their wealthier peers. While they're not truly "poor" as the state would define the term, these students nevertheless grow up among peers for whom money is never an issue.

One such student is junior Gabby Fontanilla. For Fontanilla, shopping is a privilege, not a careless past time.

At school, dozens of students wear brand-name jeans, drive new BMWs and travel to exotic places on their vacations. Fontanilla sees her friends throw away perfectly good food, while she only gets \$5 for every lunch.

### Background

Fontanilla's family lives in a pueblo-like house owned by her grandparents on Saratoga-Sunnyvale Road by the edge of the Golden Triangle.

Her mom works at Argonaut Elementary School as a cashier, yard duty and teacher's assistant. Her dad works as an executive protector.

For a little extra money, her family rents out the guesthouse in front. She and her three sisters share one bathroom. She also shares a bedroom with her older sister.

When Fontanilla was a child, she never really asked for much. In fact, she only realized that her family was not as wealthy as most other Saratogans when she was in seventh grade, a time when peer pressure dictated the necessity of expensive, brand name clothing.

"That's when I started wanting more stuff because I've seen everybody else [with] all this stuff and I wanted it too," Fontanilla said. "After a while, my parents were like 'Oh you can't and they put restrictions [on me].'"

Fontanilla and her sisters learned to save money at an early age.



The Fontanilla family poses in front of the Golden Gate Bridge. Gabby is third from left.

"It wasn't really explained, it was kind of implied," Fontanilla said. "After a while when you keep asking, [then] you start realizing that you can't keep asking for all this stuff because you need to save money."

### Frugal spending

Fontanilla watches as her friend throws away a large Peach Perfection Jamba Juice. It cost only \$4.99, but Fontanilla cringes as the almost-full drink hits the bottom of the trash can with a substantial thunk. She couldn't help but feel that it was a waste of money.

When Fontanilla goes shopping with her more privileged friends, she notices that some of them spend money in ways that would be unthinkable for her.

"I feel like they waste money," Fontanilla said. "Like they don't [really] want [it] or just buy things for the heck of it, and I feel like it's kind of stupid."

Because of her financial restrictions, Fontanilla is sometimes left out of expensive social activities.

"When my friends plan places to go, if it's far or requires money, I sometimes can't go," Fontanilla said.

"And I feel bad since I really wanted to go, but I really can't. And they're just like 'Oh, OK' and they go instead."

Fontanilla does not usually share in-depth details about her family's situation; in fact, only a few close friends are aware of the particulars — that she and her family are average rather than wealthy.

Although Fontanilla tells her story, some of her friends still do not truly understand her financial situation. "There was this one time when I told somebody about it and they were like 'Oh well, okay,' but they were still inviting me to places that I'd have to pay a lot for," Fontanilla said. "They still think I have money to go to these places and guilt-trip me into going."

For Fontanilla, shopping with friends is one of the most difficult parts of life in Saratoga.

To her, shopping involves emphasis on the price tag rather than the style. If the item is particularly expensive, Fontanilla might also put it on layaway, where she pays the price in installments.

"Sometimes when we go shopping, [my friends] have a lot of money," Fontanilla said. "They have over \$100 in their wallet. And then there's me and I have \$20."

Fontanilla knows firsthand that labeling Saratoga as a completely wealthy community is inaccurate. Although she admits that Saratoga is incredibly wealthy compared to many other cities, she also knows that not everyone lives an easy, privileged life.

"There are many people who are pretty wealthy, but there's also many people who are average, like me," Fontanilla said. "I don't ever feel like I don't fit in. Everybody who does know of my financial stuff accepts it and it's not a big deal to anybody." ♦

Because of where I'm at I've learned to be more grateful for things."



sophomore Gabby Fontanilla

Although they may not be able to afford all extracurricular expenses, education has a higher priority in the Fontanilla family. They have not needed financial aid for standardized testing.

In addition to saving portions of any money that she gets from her relatives, Fontanilla also plans to get a summer job at the AMC 14, Target or T.J. Maxx, like her older sister.

Even though she must work harder than her wealthier peers, Fontanilla still makes sure to find the money for certain luxuries like new clothes.

She makes the best of what she does have and balances her efforts among extracurriculars, academics and fun activities like shopping. Sometimes she has to sacrifice one activity for another she really wants to do, because of financial restrictions, but Fontanilla looks at her financial situation optimistically as a new opportunity.

"Because of where I'm at I've learned to be more grateful for things but it's also motivated me to work harder for the things I want," Fontanilla said.

Fontanilla knows firsthand that labeling Saratoga as a completely wealthy community is inaccurate. Although she admits that Saratoga is incredibly wealthy compared to many other cities, she also knows that not everyone lives an easy, privileged life.

"There are many people who are pretty wealthy, but there's also many people who are average, like me," Fontanilla said. "I don't ever feel like I don't fit in. Everybody who does know of my financial stuff accepts it and it's not a big deal to anybody." ♦

## >> saratogafinances

■ \$157,000

Median household income in Saratoga according to data through 2012.

■ \$57,287

Median household income in California according to data taken in 2011.

■ \$1.89 MILLION

Median house sale price in data from past 90 days.

■ 100

Cost of living index (cost of maintaining a certain level of living) in California in March 2012.

■ 151.6

Cost of living index in Saratoga in March 2012 (51.6% higher than national average).

■ 75.9%

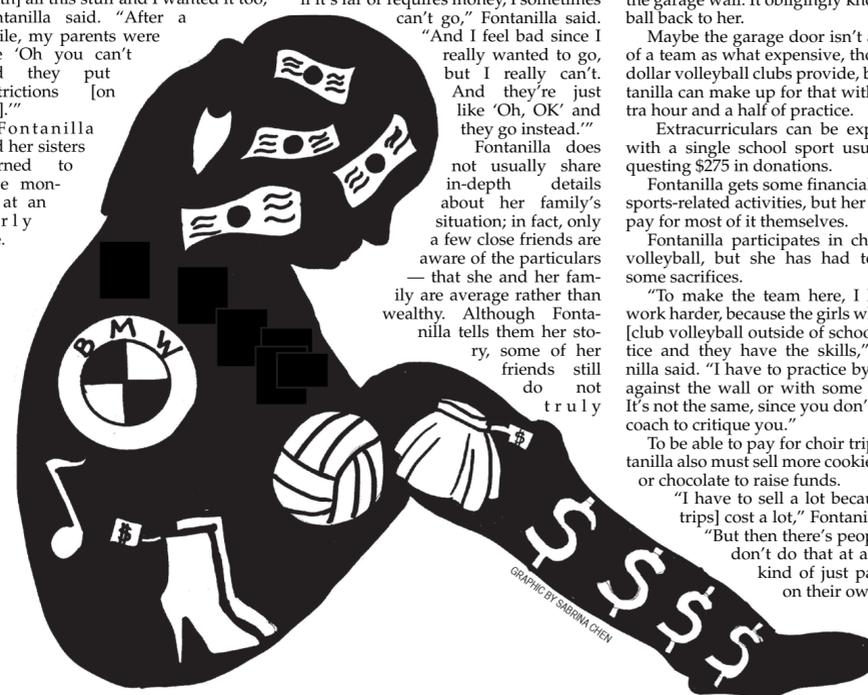
Of residents in Saratoga have a bachelor's degree or higher, according to data taken in 2011.

■ 10.8%

Of residents in Saratoga have top executive positions according to data gathered in 2007-2011.

■ 2.5%

Of residents in California had top executive positions in 2007-2011.



>> TheStats  
12 wins in a row

The boys' tennis team has shown no sign of losing. The team defeated Monta Vista, last year's league champions, 6-1 on March 27. "We have a ton of really good players," junior Narain Mandyam said. "We are inspired to give a hundred and ten percent effort in every practice to reach our goal of getting to the finals of CCS and going on to nationals."

5 Goals scored

Senior Ingrid Hong contributed five goals in the girls' lacrosse 18-13 loss to Palo Alto on March 27. "I could have scored more goals, but I was dealing with sickness," Hong said. "Towards the end of the game we were ahead, but lost the lead due to the deterioration of our stick skills."

WHO'S HOT

Hole in one

The boys' golf team has a record of 8-0 and is on its way to winning the league for the second consecutive year. "We have four more matches against the bottom teams so we should go undefeated for the second year in a row," junior Robby Gragnola said.

WHO'S NOT Injured, but hoping for better

The boys' volleyball team has been dealing with injuries, resulting in a mediocre record of 4-7. The team is making adjustments to improve their record. "Improving our passing will make everything run smoother because it's easier for the setter, which will then make it easier for the hitters," sophomore Chester Leung said.

>> TheRANKINGS

- 1 ^ Boys' Tennis (12-0)
- 2 ^ Boys' Golf (8-0)
- 3 ^ Baseball (9-3)
- 4 ^ Boys' Track (3-0)
- 5 = Girls' Lacrosse (6-2-1)
- 6 = Boys' Lacrosse (5-3)
- 7 = Softball (5-4)
- 8 = Badminton (1-1)
- 9 v Boys' Volleyball (4-7)
- 10 v Girls' Track (1-2)
- 11 v Boys' Swimming (0-2)
- 12 v Girls' Swimming (0-2)

# The Exodus: Why athletes pick private schools over Saratoga

by Ashley Chen & Minu Palaniappan

Eighth grader Roshan Bal, a 6'2" forward, was the best basketball player at Redwood Middle School in eighth grade. Everyone thought that Bal would be the one to bring his 3-pointers and slam dunks to the SHS gym in a few short months.

Following eighth grade, however, Bal transferred to Pinewood High School, a private school in Fremont after completing eighth grade. He felt Pinewood gave him the best combination of athletics and academics.

At Pinewood, Bal has achieved no small measure of success. As a sophomore, he is among the youngest members of Pinewood's boys' varsity basketball team — a team that, as of March 15, has won 24 of 29 games and is deep into CIF state playoffs.

Senior K.J. Carta-Samuels, a Bellarmine quarterback, is another prominent example of a Saratoga resident who pursued athletics at another school. Others include junior Sean Welch, a St. Francis water polo player, and junior Joe Rodriguez, a Bellarmine lacrosse player. Additionally, junior Araad Sarrami, who spent two and a half years at Saratoga and was ranked fourth in CCS wrestling in his weight class as a sophomore, transferred to Bellarmine near the start of the wrestling season.

Such a trend in recent years could be causing Saratoga prowess in "major" sports like basketball and football to decline. For instance, in this past season the boys' varsity basketball team went 6-17, and the football team had a disappointing 3-7 season. As a result, some fans have taken to wondering: How can Saratoga athletics improve?

The stereotypical answer might be that students are too focused on their grades, and need to branch out. Or that the kids that live here aren't as interested in sports as students at other schools. The real issue, though, might be that the area does



Pinewood sophomore Roshan Bal puts up a 3-pointer against King's Academy on Jan. 31.

have talent — but it can't keep it.

Athletics director Tim Lugo is well aware of this phenomenon.

"It impacts us quite a bit," he said. "If every team had an extra [two to three] standout players on the roster, that [would make] huge difference for a school like us."

Rather than official recruitment processes, Lugo said, private schools benefit from parents and boosters who advertise their school to neighbors.

"Private school coaches [don't] go out to recruit," Lugo said. "It's illegal as far as CCS goes and sports can be sanctioned by it."

Some student athletes choose private schools because they often boast a more experienced coaching staff.

One reason Bal chose Pinewood was its coach, Mani Messy, who played three years of professional basketball in Europe. Messy scored an average of 20 points per game, and when he retired in 2009, he founded an elite basketball academy in Los Altos.

Messy is an example of the kinds of coaching talent private schools can attract.

"If a [private school] wants somebody, they can offer a teaching job that the public school can't always offer," he said.

Lugo added that in local private schools like St. Francis, Mitty and Bellarmine, many coaches are also on-campus teachers.

Despite these challenges, Lugo said, coaches work hard with their athletes.

"No one will come out and say [they're leaving] strictly because of athletics," Lugo said. "But we know [they are]."

Of course, many top athletes choose to stay at the school, despite the benefits many believe private schools offer. One such athlete is tennis player and junior Neel Bedekar, who is currently ranked 25th in California.

"To attend Saratoga High is free," Bedekar said. "None of the competitive schools, public or private, have an academic program [that can rival Saratoga's] so for me, choosing [Saratoga] was a no-brainer."

Bedekar added that even though Saratoga might have access to fewer athletic resources, it just as competitive as any other school, considering it won the Fresno tournament earlier this year. ♦

BOYS' VOLLEYBALL

# As injuries mount, players fill different roles

by Catherine Tang

During the first set of the first game of the season against Eastside College Prep on March 5, sophomore star setter Chester Leung landed on opponent's foot and broke both his ankle and his foot. Since then, Leung has been out, but plans to play again in three weeks, or about a few weeks into league.

"I'm really excited to play again," Leung said. "It sucks to have to watch from the sideline, but the team is adjusting well."

But Leung is not the only player injured. Less than a week later, senior middle blocker Sam Kobara landed on an opponent's foot while blocking and sprained his ankle on March 10 in a match against Los Gatos.

Only two days later, junior libero Trung Vandinh suffered a concussion on

March 12 while playing basketball with some friends.

Despite the multiple injuries the team suffered, it still managed to keep a record of 4-7, as of March 24, when they won against Oak Grove. The team beat Oak Grove 3-0 — first set 25-16, second set 25-22 and third set 25-20.

The team is adjusting as players are stepping up to fill in the sports of the injured players. Sophomore libero Spencer

Yen is now setting instead of Leung, so the team now lost one of its best defensive players in the back row.

"[Setting] came as a huge surprise," Yen said. "There's a lot of pressure on the setter because of Leung's injury. The team is really strong, but we can only perform if the set is out there. Overall it's been a learning experience."

While adjusting to new positions

**Injuries may physically weaken the team, but it strengthens them mentally because it teaches them how to fight during tough times.**

>> sophomore Chester Leung



Senior opposite hitter Hareet Jhutty serves at a match against Lynbrook on March 24.

and new rotations, the defense is not as strong as it could be. As a result, this influences the other positions.

"It's a lot of pressure because we outsiders are constantly up hitting," senior outside hitter Kevin Tran said.

Despite the setbacks the team suf-

fered early on in the season, it still plans to work hard and win league, which started on March 26.

"Injuries may physically weaken the team, but it strengthens them mentally because it teaches them how to fight during tough times," Leung said. ♦

GIRLS' TRACK

# Falcons finally win, look to finish the season strong

by Ashley Chen & Dorrie Tang

The girls' track team began the season with two consecutive losses in dual meets against Homestead and Santa Clara on March 13 and March 20. However, the team improved and won a narrow victory in their third meet against Fremont on March 25.

While standout athletes, in general, did well at the first two meets — 100m sprinter and junior Laura Cummins placed first and second, and 800m distance runner and se-

nior Lauren Casey-Clyde placed second twice — a lack of athletes in events hurt the team.

"Because we don't have a lot of girls, it's hard for us to get points where we need them," short distance and hurdles runner senior Katie Davenport said.

At the same time, Davenport said the team has gotten stronger since the previous season, where it had a 0-6 record.

"Last year we had to deal with a really young team, mainly [with] incoming freshmen [and] new sophomores," Davenport said. "This year we're [be-

coming] a more developed team."

Not all new athletes are novices, though. Freshman Celine Bellegarda, who has three years of experience because she participated in middle school track, now competes in the 100m and 200m sprints.

"We've already had a lot of progress from the first meet," Bellegarda said. "[At the Santa Clara meet] that really showed."

Unfortunately, Bellegarda said, as a result of the more intense nature of high school track, she is suffering from shin splints in her right leg.

"I'm trying to get back, but [with] shin splints the more you wait the better [it heals]," she said.

The team will compete next on April 24 at a home meet against Wilcox. ♦



Junior Allison Chan sprints the first leg of the 400m relay at Fremont on March 25.

# New NFL restrictions ridiculous

WHY THE LEAGUE SHOULD EASE GRIP ON SAFETY REGULATIONS

When 49er linebacker Ahmad Brooks sacked opposing quarterback Drew Brees in a game between the 49ers and Saints last season and forced a fumble, the 49ers thought that they had secured a win after recovering the ball. Joy soon turned to anger after Brooks was penalized for "unnecessary roughness" because he made forcible contact to Brees' neck. This penalty changed the course of the game and essentially gave the Saints the win.

When I watched this play live, I was infuriated when the referee threw the yellow flag up because, in my opinion, that was a clean hit and it basically guaranteed a 49er loss.

Brooks made an incredibly athletic play by twisting his body and wrapping his arms around any part of Brees he could find in order to tackle Brees. Unfortunately, Brooks hit Brees' neck and therefore broke a NFL rule.

In the past few years, the NFL has introduced several rules to improve player safety. Many of these rules have banned

defensive players from tackling offensive players in the head and neck.

Although these rules have undoubtedly increased the safety of the game, they have also made the game less fun to watch. Much of the excitement in football comes from stadium silencing big hits, but now anything that looks "bad" is almost certain to be penalized and cost teams a whole 15 yards out of the 100-yard field.

For example, even if a defensive player's initial trajectory when tackling is toward the chest, if the offensive player changes his position and the defensive player hits the offensive player's head or neck area, the defensive player will get penalized. What's a defensive player supposed to do? Freeze in mid-air to avoid getting a penalty?

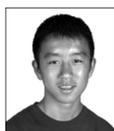
Instead, last season, defensive players aimed for the legs to avoid the head or neck penalty. The result: Several star players received lower-body injuries — Green Bay Packers wide receiver Randall Cobb broke his leg and New England Patriots tight end Rob Gronkowski tore his ACL

and MCL (key ligaments in the knee).

Additionally, all of these rules have made offenses nearly unstoppable. Broncos quarterback Peyton Manning recently broke several significant passing records last season, and, in general, offenses seem to be breaking records every year. Ferocious and offense-shutting defenses like the 1985 Bears or the 2000 Ravens are a rare sight now because of all the restrictions placed on defensive players.

Although numerous studies have shown that football, especially tackling, causes both short-term and long-term injuries, football players should be aware of the risks before they sign an NFL contract. If an athlete wants to play a risk-free sport, then he should not play football. Football isn't a pretty sport — it's a sport for only tough men willing to get physical and endure pain, and that's why the best professional football players get paid millions of dollars.

Despite all of this, the NFL will most likely continue to restrict defensive players to further increase safety, which really just marks the demise of great defense — and players like Brooks will be goats rather than heroes. ♦



ANDREW JIANG  
JIANGGo unchained

GIRLS' SWIMMING

# A disappointing start

TEAM LOOKS TO IMPROVE AFTER FIRST MEET

by Deepthi Sampathkumar

The whistle sounds. Junior April Khowong steps up to the white diving block along, her heart pounding. The cheers sounding on the other side of the pool sound hollow and tinny, and she stands above the still water, waiting.

Khowong and the rest of the girls' swim team competed in their first meet of the season on March 13 at Monta Vista, but ultimately lost 126-56 to Monta Vista. Although the girls were not expecting to win, they looked forward to making a splash into the season.

"We are not the best [in our league] so we weren't really surprised [by our performance]," Khowong said. "But [the first meet] was actually really fun ... as the Monta Vista pool is very nice."

In order to prepare for the first meet, the girls practiced drills and worked on speed during practice. They also ran through the events in the meet the evening before to simu-

late the meet.

However, the girls were missing many of their key swimmers, including junior Yayla Sezginer, who was out with a concussion, and normally swims the 100 backstroke and the 500 freestyle. With so many girls missing because of injuries and the MAP field trip to Los Angeles, the team was at a disadvantage.

Still, regardless of their slow start, the team has hopes for personal improvement over the course of the season.

The girls' nest meet took place March 28 at home against Palo Alto. Paly won 105-81.

Overall the girls did better than their last meet as they were able to learn from their mistakes from the first meet.

"[Although] at Monta Vista, some of us freshmen were confused on how high school meets worked, I think we improved as a whole," freshman Stefanie Ting said. "We also cut time on our events, so we're off to a good start." ♦

BASEBALL

# 13 innings and a sweet win

by Miles Albert

Baseball has no time clock. Theoretically, a game could go on forever.

In a March 19 game, the Falcons may have wondered how long the game could go on as they battled Homestead 3-3 in the 12th inning when the game was suspended because of darkness.

The game continued at home on March 21, but the outcome was shortly decided when senior outfielder Davis Berryhill hit the game-winning home run.

The team's defense, led by senior Tyler Plesse starting pitching, was strong.

"Plesse was huge for us shutting them down in the extra innings," senior pitcher Adrian Fong said.

After a 15-minute break, their next game against Homestead began and the Falcons won 5-0.

"We carried the momentum right into our second game where we won behind [Plesse's] pitching again," Fong said.

Homestead's starting pitcher was a sophomore with a lot of talent according

to Fong, but was "rattled" easily. "He started walking guys and threw the ball into center field when he picked off," Fong said.

After the two successful games against Homestead, the Falcons are 2-2 in league. They lost their first two games against Palo Alto on March 12 and 14 after being 5-0 in the pre-season.

With the loss of key players such as class of 2013 alumni Stevie Berman and Kyle Dozier, who helped carry the team into a De Anza League championship last year, the Falcons are trying to adapt to these losses.

"We all know we each need to step it up for us shutting them down in the extra innings," senior pitcher Adrian Fong said. "We don't have any one person to take their place, but we all try to help out in our own ways."

The team faced off against Wilcox on March 26, where they lost 12-2.

The team, with a 2-3 record as of March 28, is doing worse than last season when they began 4-0, but are still aiming to compete for the league championship. ♦

**[Senior Tyler] Plesse was huge for us shutting [Homestead] down in the extra innings.**

>> senior Adrian Fong

## BOYS' LACROSSE

## New players help lead to victories

BY MinuPalaniappan  
& DevinZhao

With a 18-15 loss against Woodside, a 15-12 loss against Los Altos and a 11-9 win against Carlmont, the Falcons are going strong with a 5-3 overall record and a 1-2 league record, earning them fifth place in the El Camino League.

Lead scorers include senior Tony Capek and Clark Rothenburg. Seniors Billy Hanford and Tim Fisher and junior Gino Caloiaro are leading the defensive side of the field.

Even though most of the team's players are relatively new to the sport, their athleticism and willingness to learn the basic skills compensates for their inexperience, said senior goalie Holden Peake.

"As a new team with [many] football players, it's hard to get them to assimilate into a new sport," said Peake. "We're a little shaky now, but we'll progressively get better [as the season progresses]."

Sophomore attack Quincy Owyang said the new players' experience in other sports could provide an advantage to the team, since they are athletic and pick up stick skills really quickly.

Bill Kurz became the team's new coach this year, replacing previous coach Larry Bohem.

"[Kurz] is focusing more on stick skills rather than running like last year," Peake said. "He's better at realizing that the team has lot of beginners. He [scheduled] different games with a lot of teams we've never played before. They were pretty easy, so we could get that motivation we probably need for new players to not let them get discouraged."

While the last coach had them perform drills that would benefit a more advanced group, Kurz is focusing on basic skills that would help the new players get better.

According to Capek, the coaches, Kurz along with assistant coaches Gino Castillo and Santos Olmos, care about the players enjoying the sport rather than them winning every game.

Owyang predicts the team will have a stronger finish than last year, when they placed 29th in the Central Coast Section league.

"We're going really strong this year and the players are really strong," Owyang said. ♦



The boys' lacrosse team plays against Scotts Valley High School at home on March 25.

## BOYS' TENNIS

## Team continues with undefeated season

BY JihauYu

The boys' tennis team has had amazing season so far, remaining undefeated as of March 20 with a record of 11-0 overall and 6-0 in the De Anza league.

Since emerging as champions of the Fresno Tennis High School Classic in early March, the team has faced little opposition, winning every match 7-0 or 6-1. On March 20, the team remained undefeated with a 6-1 beating of Los Altos. Previously, they'd scored victories over Palo Alto 6-1 on March 18 and Lynbrook 7-0 on March 13.

The reason for the recent success has been the overall depth and talent on

the team, said sophomore Karthik Padmanabhan, who plays No. 2 singles.

"The key success to our team has to do with strength and flexibility," said Padmanabhan. "We have so many strong players that also play doubles that are ranked nationally."

The team's No. 1 singles player, junior Neel Bedekar thinks the biggest challenge will be dealing with injuries as the team has had to deal with them. However, with a full lineup the team should be very hard to defeat.

"Our biggest challenge will most likely be to keep all of our players healthy, as we've had numerous injuries in the

past, but with a full lineup, we would be a very tough team to beat," Bedekar said.

Junior co-captain Vikram Ramesh, who plays No. 2 doubles, said that the only school that will give the team some trouble is Menlo High School.

"Menlo High School is one of the top teams in the nation and we will most

likely face them if we get deep in CCS," Ramesh said.

Bedekar said that the team wants to continue to remain undefeated in order to attain the No. 1 seed for CCS. With half the season over, Ramesh has high expectations for the rest of it.

"The team is performing its best this year compared to my previous two years on varsity and I feel like we can go far in CCS and hopefully go to NorCals," Ramesh said.

Saratoga played at Lynbrook and Los Altos on April 1 and 3 respectively, but due to printing deadlines, these games could not be in the print edition of the Falcon. ♦

**The key success for our team has to do with strength and flexibility.**

>> sophomore Karthik Padmanabhan

## BADMINTON

## Freshman players support team's game performance

BY ArielLiu

Thanks to the No. 2 varsity girls' doubles team, the Falcons edged 16-14 in its first league matchup on March 25.

Last year, Saratoga lost to Cupertino 14-16 because the girls' varsity doubles No. 2 spot lost.

This year, however, freshmen Spring Ma and Megan Fung were able to pull out a 2-0 win over Cupertino.

In the past, the girls have generally been a weakness for Saratoga. However, this year that has changed.

According to assistant coach Chris Do, the girls have improved a lot and have made the team solid. Key additions for the team this year include Ma, Fung and freshman Josh Li and Jason Zhao.

According to senior captain Matthew Lee, the new freshmen have also positively impacted the team this year.

"The freshmen are doing well at the spots they're playing," Lee said. "It's good that we have them because they'll be the ones leading the team in future years."

Still, the team continues to relies heavily on veteran players to pull out wins for the team.

In the game against Cupertino, juniors Max Chang and Kevin Lian managed to come out victorious against a strong pair from Cupertino in the varsity boys' doubles two spot, greatly aiding the team.

"Kevin and Max are one of a kind of a pair," Do said. "Out of everyone on the team, they have the best chemistry and mental game."

According to Do, the team has a great chance of placing first this season.

"I'm very confident in my team," Do said. "All of them practice very hard and have improved a lot since last season, with all of my players placed in current positions, we're bound to do well." ♦



senior Matthew Lee

## BOYS' SWIMMING

## Boys hang on tight despite rocky start to their season

BY AndrewJiang

Stroke after stroke. Breath after flip turn. Flip turn after flip turn. Sophomore Bradley Newton's legs were burning on his second to last lap of the 500-yard freestyle race at the March 13 swimming meet between Saratoga and Monta Vista.

Seeing another swimmer in front of him, Newton used all of his remaining energy to sprint to the finish. Newton finished third in the event, just over one second behind second place.

"Although I didn't go a best time or beat [the second-place swimmer], it was still a good way to start off the season," Newton said.

The boys' varsity swimming team lost 116-60 to the Matadors.

"It was a little crazy because it was our first meet, but overall, the team swam well," junior Brian Lew said. "Even though we lost, we flashed our

potential as a team."

Lew believes the team could have trained harder to prepare for the meet and given each other more support at the meet. He also said cheering for teammates helps them swim faster.

It's always tough to replace swimmers who graduate on varsity, and this year several underclassmen have emerged, including sophomore breaststroker Harrison Yang.

"[Breastroker] Michael [Lee] who graduated last year was one of our fastest swimmers last year," Yang said. "I definitely feel a lot of pressure trying to fill such a big hole."

For now, the team plans on training hard every day and hopes to improve at their next meet on April 17 at Gunn High School.

"As long as we continue to work our butts off in practice, we will definitely have a shot at winning our next meet," Newton said. ♦

**As long as we continue to work off our butts in practice, we will definitely have a shot at winning our next meet.**

>> sophomore Bradley Newton

## BOYS' GOLF

## Golfers continue with undefeated streak

BY ArmanVaziri

The boys' golf team, who is 8-0 as of March 25, continued its hot streak, beating Los Gatos 197-209 at La Rinconada Country Club on March 17. The team was led by junior Robby Gragnola and senior Christian Galvin, who shot 38 and 36 respectively.

Another key victory was against Monta Vista 155-188 at Deep Cliff Golf Club on March 25, which was led by senior Christian Galvin and junior Arman Vaziri, who both shot 29.

With the victories against challengers Los Gatos and Monta Vista, the Falcons have almost surely secured first place in their league in the El Camino Division.

"It is such an amazing feeling, beating Los Gatos since they are our biggest rivals," Gragnola said. "We don't

beat them very often in the sports at our school, so beating them twice in the sport that I play feels great."

As the likely league champions, the team is thinking ahead.

"Since we are pretty likely to win league, we are looking ahead to trying to make CCS and everybody is just trying to get through these last few matches so we can focus on the more important events," sophomore Lucas Peng said.

The team's strength comes mostly from the upperclassmen who mentor the improving underclassmen when they are not playing in matches.

"As a freshman, or at least me, our goal is to get on the traveling team," freshman Wyatt Schulman said, referring to the six players of the 12-person team who play in matches.

Since the season is halfway over,

**The Falcons have almost surely secured first place in their league in the El Camino Division.**



Senior Christian Galvin putts the ball in a match against Monta Vista on March 25.

the boys' golf team is getting ready for the Santa Clara Valley Athletic League (SCVAL) finals and CCS in May. The team placed second in SCVAL finals last year and made it to the first round of CCS last year.

"I think that the team is getting close to putting it all together for league finals," coach David Gragnola said. "We need to continue to stay sharp and my hope is that all players will have it together by the end of April." ♦

## BOYS' TRACK

## Wang sets mark in hurdles; runners set pace

BY ShaziaGupta  
& DorrieTang

The boys' varsity track team has experienced a wealth of success, starting the season undefeated with wins in all three of their past dual meets against Homestead on March 14, Santa Clara on March 20 and Fremont on March 25. All of these victories have come in the lower El Camino League after the team struggled in the upper De Anza League last year.

"The training regiment that the coaches have put together has been effective," said junior Rohith Krishna, who runs the 800m, 1600m, and 3200m distance

events. "The first few meets were great for seeing where we were at and what specific skills we need to work on for the rest of the season."

This year, the team is strong in both short- and long-distance events.

Star sprinter senior Travis Stokes placed first in the 200m and 400m, while Eric Ringsrud placed first in the 100m, both consistently contributing to the team.

Ringsrud also placed first in the high jump and long jump events.

"The varsity boys' team is really good this year," Ringsrud said. "I have been able to undefeated in all the events I've ran so far."

Senior Clark Wang shined in the hurdles events, placing first in both the 110m and 300m hurdles events against Homestead and in the 300m against Santa Clara.

According to head coach Archie Ljepava, Wang even broke a school record in the 400m hurdles, running the race in 61.68 seconds during the Cupertino/De Anza

Invitational on March 22. Additionally, both the 4x100m and 4x400m relay teams, consisting of Ringsrud, Stokes, Wang, and senior Benjamin Glasstone in the 4x100m relay and Ringsrud, Stokes, Glasstone, and star distance runner junior Steven Sum in the 4x400 relay, respectively, placed first.

In distance events, senior Drew Bryan, juniors Andrew Harter and Sum and sophomores Kevin Duong-Le and Stephen Law excelled in their races, consistently scoring points for the team.

"You can honestly see people improving and our practices are paying off," sophomore distance runner Stephen Law said. ♦

**You can honestly see people improving and our practices are paying off.**

>> sophomore Stephen Law

## SOFTBALL

## Falcons steady in De Anza



Junior Analisa Ruff prepares to bat during a game against Los Altos on March 19.

BY BeckyHoag

The varsity softball team hit the ground running this season with a 2-0 record so far in the competitive DeAnza league and an overall record of 5-3.

The Falcons competed in two games in the Charlie Miguel tournament on March 22. They lost to Leland 7-1 and Evergreen Valley 5-4.

Prior to the tournament games, the team won against rival Los Gatos 5-2 on March 21.

"The games have gone really well, [but are] definitely a challenge compared to last year," junior Analisa Ruff said.

Sophomore Eleni Spirakis, junior Analisa Ruff and seniors Tivoli Sisco and Hera Tang have been key players for the

team, but senior Amanda Lee says that everyone has been playing well.

"We've been pretty solid all around," Lee said.

Being in a higher league than last year, this season has been more of a challenge for the girls. They hope to make CCS again and advance farther than last year.

"So far it looks like we're going to have a good season if we just keep playing the way we do," Lee said. "We generally try to focus on basics and just make sure that we don't make unnecessary errors in games."

The team also played games against Homestead on April 2 and against Monta Vista on April 3, but these could not be covered due to printing deadlines. ♦

## GIRLS' LACROSSE

## Close loss to Saint Francis ends Falcons' win streak

BY ShreyaTumu

For the first five games of the season, the girls' varsity lacrosse team was undefeated, but an unfortunate loss against Saint Francis 12-11 at home on March 21 ended their undefeated record.

Seniors Risha Shah and Ingrid Hong were star attackers for the

team, scoring the most goals for the team. Goalie senior Casey Williams was a crucial part of the defense, and senior Jennie Werner dominated in midfield.

"Even though it was disappointing to lose to [Saint Francis], I'm proud of the way we played," Werner said. "We fought hard the entire game and played our hearts out."

The girls were originally ahead of Saint Francis, but they fell behind in the last 20 seconds. The team was missing multiple starting attack players like sophomore Talia Clement.

"It was good for us to play a challenging team early in the season to really test our defense," Werner said.

As of March 28, the team's overall record is 6-2, as the girls also lost to Palo Alto on March 26. Most of the

Falcon's offense has been generated by Shah, Wong, and Werner.

Sophomore Erin Norris believes the conditioning and training before the games and during practices have been very helpful. The team has worked to better themselves on the field this season, which benefited them on the March 19 game against Pioneer High School. The game ended with a score of 19-4.

"We changed our defense and that helped us a lot to give ... Pioneer only [four] goals," said Norris.

Werner is looking forward to spending her last season with her team.

"Every year I get to know people I wasn't that close too in the previous years," Werner said.

The team is traveling to LA during spring break, a trip that Norris is looking forward to.

"We are going to [go to] Disneyland and stay in a beach house," Norris said. "That will be really fun."

The team hopes to make it to league playoffs.

"We joke around and have fun, but work hard when it's time to practice or compete." Werner said. ♦

**It was good for us to play a challenging team early in the season to test our defense.**

>> senior Jennie Werner

>> snapshots



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA



Courtesy of JESSICA UONG



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

**POWDERPUFF:** Dharini Ramaswamy (12) plays in the seniors versus juniors Powderpuff game on March 27, won by the juniors 6-0.

**MAP TRIP:** Junior class MAP students in front of the Columbia Pictures building in LA on the weekend of March 15-16.

**BOYS' TENNIS:** Sanjay Kaliyur (12) makes an overhead shot at the non-league match against Sacred Heart on March 12.

**BENEFIT FASHION:** Usha Raman (12) and Yasmin Kakkar (12) both participate in the Benefit Fashion Show on March 29.

# Boys, please get away from my younger sister!

"She's hot, hot, hot!" My eyes bulged out as I stared blankly at the Facebook comment. Each additional word cut like a sharp knife into my growing anger. I've let it slide when I heard guys call my sister tall, pretty, even cute — but hot? Hot is one step away from the word that starts with an "s" and ends with -exy.

My fingers furiously flew across the keyboard, "I really hope you're not referring to my little sister." Without thinking, I posted the response.

See, my 13-year-old sister Caitlyn is lucky to have me around. Good-sister-wise, I'm the total package. Not only do I give her valuable fashion advice and edit her incomprehensible history essays, but I also (most importantly) act as her personal "boy-repellent."

Ever since she's entered the awkward, hormonal stage of middle school, I've been extraordinarily attentive with her relationship status. It is my solemn duty to see that she remains lonely and single. Like me.

In January, Caitlyn played the role of

Gabriella in the middle school production of "High School Musical." She and the boy who played her boyfriend Troy in the musical put on a very adorable act. I, along with the rest of the audience, sighed when they looked lovingly into one another's eyes and cheered when they held hands.

But a couple days later, when I walked past her room, I noticed her phone light up with an Instagram notification. Being the curious (not nosy) big sister I always am, I peered down to read the comment "cutest couple ever."

I nearly dropped her phone as I scrambled to open the photo. There it was, the same picture I had helped her pick out to post, complete with 63 likes and just as many suggestive comments. Wrinkling my nose in disgust, I scrolled through ship names, hearts and "awwwwwwww's."

Blehghghh. I shuddered. This was real-life romance, and I was not a fan. My gasps of surprise must have

caught Caitlyn's attention, because when I looked up she was staring at me. I casually put down her phone, smiled and asked, "Sooooo.... What's going with that boy?"

She looked at me with a puzzled expression and said, "Nothing? Why?"

I was somewhat relieved. Nevertheless, it didn't stop me from asking anonymous questions about their relationship on Caitlyn's friends' ask.fms.

"So... What's going on between Caitlyn and [boy.] PS this isn't Caitlyn's sister."

I tried to be secretive. Key word: Tried.

Although I was later assured by her friends' answers that it was a false alarm, I realized Caitlyn was catching on to my snooping.

Deciding it wouldn't be safe to look through her phone so frequently, I made my own Instagram to check up on her. It's not ideal for stalking — since Caitlyn isn't one of those people who posts

about her relationships. But it'll have to do until August, when, for the first time in six years, I will be able to track her every move at school.

Sure, say that I'm nosy, paranoid, that I'm crazy for "holding her back from young romance," but the truth is, I don't want to share her with any smelly, rude middle school boy. In a year and a half, we'll be in different schools again, maybe even different states. The time we have together should be spent crying over "Dance Moms," learning piano duets and gossiping about other people's love lives.

We're like Elsa and Anna in "Frozen." Anna doesn't always know what's best, and Elsa needs to watch out for her.

So to all you upperclassmen guys who are just waiting to pounce on the next round of unsuspecting freshmen, know that I'll be watching your every move.

I may be only an inch over 5 feet, but I can yell a storm.

"NO, CAITLYN WON'T BUILD A SNOWMAN WITH YOU." ♦



SABRINA CHEN  
Brina it on

## buzzworthy >> We Day event

BY TiffanyZheng

Sixteen thousand hands clapped for J. Cole's live performance of "Crooked Smile," the pressure-sensitive bracelets lit up with the motion. One moment, the crowd was immersed in darkness, and the next, thousands of little white and blue lights filled the Oracle Arena. Sophomore Gitika Nalwa cheered with the crowd.

Nalwa was at We Day on March 26, an initiative of Free the Children that describes itself as "the movement of our time, empowering a generation of young global citizens through an inspirational event."

About eight members of the Saratoga's Baby Advocacy club and 10 members from the Free the Children club went to the We Day event.

Assistant principal Kerry Mohnik, one of the advisers of the trip, said the purpose of the event was to encourage youth to get involved in any global service.

Being sur-

rounded by inspirational people who had worked their way there was a memorable experience for members like Nalwa. Clubs or organizations for good causes are invited to attend the event.

"It's breathtaking," Nalwa said. "You look around and you are surrounded by these incredible kids who are doing these incredible things."

There were also quite a few celebrities at the We Day event including Hannah Simone, Magic Johnson, Selena Gomez, Seth Rogan and Orlando Bloom. There were performances from artists such as J. Cole and Big Sean.

Sophomore Meera Rachamalla, a member of the Baby Advocacy club, especially liked seeing well-known people.

"A lot of celebrities gave motivational speeches and shared stories of how they had to overcome obstacles," Rachamalla said. "They taught us all how we can make a difference for the good."

Nalwa said that the energy in the arena was undeniably powerful and inspiring.

"There are very few things that really and truly change your outlook on things, but, without a doubt, this is one of those things," Nalwa said. ♦



## >> topten

### WAYS TO DEAL WITH COLLEGE REJECTION

- 10 **Eat loads of ice cream.** You've had a falling out with an Ivy League school. So what? From now on, food is your best friend.
- 9 **Daydream and ignore reality.** If I don't finish college like Steve Jobs and Bill Gates, I'll become rich right? Righttttt?
- 8 **Start asking your parents to give absurd amounts of money to colleges.** They'll soon realize there was an accident and they had meant to accept you.
- 7 **Comfort yourself with the fact you have fewer college rejections than rejections for prom dates.** Actually, I don't know which is worse.
- 6 **"LET IT GO. LET IT GO."** Just forget about college. And sing. Disney makes everything better. Too bad in Disney it ends happily ever after. Unlike your college apps.
- 5 **Take the sour grapes approach.** You were overqualified. The admissions officers clearly can't recognize TRUE talent.
- 4 **Delude yourself into thinking you don't need an education.** Would you like fries with that?
- 3 **Cry in a corner.** The rejection didn't make you cry. The papercut you got from opening the envelope did the trick.
- 2 **Repeating high school wouldn't be so bad.** You can be a second semester senior twice.
- 1 **Use the rejection letter for something useful.** Like firestarter. Or toilet paper.

>> Nelson Wang and Kelly Xiao