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With 7 Oscars, "Gravity" puts the sci-fi genre back on its feet.



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The truth about drugs.



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As spring sports begin, winter athletes compete in the CCS playoffs.

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Saratoga swordsman

For sophomore U.S. World Championship Team fencer Jarred Gou, fencing is more than just a sport. **pg. 2**

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Proposed state Senate bill 838 looks to deter cyberbullying and try juveniles involved in sexual assault as adults. **pg. 7**

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SCHOOL SCOPE

Student stereotypes

From the genius to the class clown to the teacher's pet, the Falcon staff looks at typical student molds. **pg. 18-19**

CCS BASKETBALL

Record season ends

The varsity girls finally lost in the semifinals, the furthest the team has ever gone. **pg. 22**

M-SET reaches regional semifinals



>> **ROBOTICS** on pg. 6

From left to right: Freshman Kyle France and seniors Mihir Iyer and Ivan France take the M-SET team's robot, Gus, off the field following a quarterfinal victory at the Central Valley Regionals in Madera on March 7-9.

FALCON // DAVID SPARKMAN

DISTRICT

Bond to upgrade LG, SHS included on ballot

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

During its meeting on Feb. 25, the district board decided to include the \$99 million General Obligation bond on the

June 3 ballot. Los Gatos-Saratoga Union High School District residents will be able to vote on the bond, which aims to renovate both Saratoga and Los Gatos High. It is estimated that \$55

million would be allocated for Los Gatos and \$44 million for Saratoga. If the bond is approved by 55 percent of registered voters in the district, then the board will issue bonds in two-year

intervals over the next 20 years. These bonds will fund projects at both schools. Superintendent Bob Mistele is "very excited about the

>> **BOND** on pg. 6

TEEN ENTREPRENEUR

Into the 'Shark Tank'

SENIOR PITCHES HIS COMPANY ON ABC'S HIT TV SHOW TONIGHT

BY Atirath **Kosireddy** & Vibha **Seshadri**

Senior Jason Li stood on stage in front of a small group of investors. With bright lights shining and cameras running, Li looked at the four "sharks" in front of him and delivered a confident, 2-minute pitch to potential investors.



Li

Tonight at 6 p.m., millions of Americans will see Li's pitch on an episode of "Shark Tank," a show on ABC in which investors

listen to entrepreneurs who give short pitches about their company.

Last fall, Li traveled to Los Angeles to be filmed for an episode of "Shark Tank," which features venture capitalists such as Daymond John, Mark Cuban and Lori Greiner. Li's company, iReTron, founded in November 2011, buys old electronics, refurbishes them and donates or

>> **PITCH** on pg. 6

ACADEMIC HONORS

Madhani, Renda named 2014 valedictorian and salutatorian

BY Aditya **Chaudhry** & Nupur **Maheshwari**

When seniors Akshay Madhani and Alex Renda walked into the guidance office in early February, they had a suspicion of what was going to happen. Yet that didn't stop the two from being "in a state of disbelief" when they left. Madhani and Renda had just received the school's highest academic honors: valedictorian and salutatorian, respectively.

"I felt pretty happy, because I didn't think that I would get either of the honors," Renda said. "Even though I don't think that

GPA means a whole lot, it's nice to get recognized."

Madhani has a GPA of 4.65, taking 13 AP and Honors while in high school, while Renda had



Madhani



Renda

a GPA of 4.63 after taking 10 AP and Honors courses.

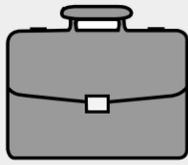
Although both put in a tre-

mendous amount of work to receive these grades, Madhani said the award itself is far less gratifying than his experience at the school.

"This school had engaging classes, the friendliest students and the most passionate teachers," Madhani said. "For me, interacting with such a great group of people in this amazing environment, and the effect this has had on me as a person, has a greater impact than any distinction or award."

Both boys said they faced stressful weeks and intense

>> **HONORS** on pg. 6



news >> briefs

ASB constitution corrects past problems

A new, clearer ASB constitution took effect last month after the ASB agreed earlier this year that the old version was incomplete and ambiguous. ASB officers hope the revised document will prevent misunderstandings about elections procedures.

Senior ASB vice president Anup Kar said the ratification of the constitution allows all students to be able to read and understand the document.

"Anyone who is interested in reading our constitution or knowing our rules will be able to clearly understand what goes on now by reading the constitution," Kar said.

Senior ASB treasurer Robert Eng believes the revised constitution will give students a voice in student affairs.

"This is a nice, formal way for students to tell the administration what we believe in pertaining to certain schoolwide issues," Eng said. "Previously students had no collective forum for which to communicate with the administration."

— Nupur Maheshwari and Megana Iyer

Science Bowl teams scores second place

Even though the school's Science Bowl team walked out of the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center without getting first place in the Science Bowl on Feb. 8, they still had smiles on their faces.

The team scored second place in the DOE (Department of Energy) Regional High School Science Bowl, losing to Homestead 118-32. This was a largely unexpected success because the team has usually placed third in the past few years, according to sophomore Alex Li.

Science Bowl co-captain and senior Robert Eng felt triumphant after the tournament.

"We were ecstatic. It was an epic experience of extreme emotion and dopamine-filled joy," Eng said. "We've never gotten this far before, and I had such low expectations for this year, but the planets aligned on our bracket placement and we triumphed."

— Atirath Kosireddy

Parking lot entrances leveled out

Drivers who had previously had the bottom of their cars scraped when exiting the front parking lot got good news following February break: The problem has been fixed.

During break, construction workers flattened out these entrances to make them closer to the Herriman Avenue level, which prevents much of this scraping and results in happier students, parents and teachers.

Principal Paul Robinson said that "the construction crew detected the problem and dug out the asphalt, leveling it over to match the incline of Herriman."

"We know that having construction fences up and fewer parking spaces is an inconvenience for our students, parents and staff," Robinson said. "Doing something to make it safer when you enter and exit the remaining spots was something we felt that we should do."

— Jonathan Young and Arjun Ramanathan

>> picturethis



SOUPER BOWL >> Senior Mike Fitzsimmons waits in line on March 5, as a volunteer fills his bowl with soup homemade by ceramics teacher Leah Aguayo. All of the 450 handmade ceramic bowls were sold.

SCHOOL SPIRIT

Themed Spring Fling week aims to involve more students

BY Jonathan Young & Ingrid Hong

Spring Fling Week, from March 24-28, is an annual celebration of school spirit normally bookended by Powder Puff football and the Sadie's dance.

This year, however, Sadie's will be held on March 21, the Friday before Spring Fling Week starts. Instead, the Benefit Fashion show will be using the gym during the second weekend of Spring Fling.

This scheduling change has spurred the commission into incorporating a new theme into Spring Fling Week that has not been done in the past: "Around the World"

"This is new for Spring Fling [because] we usually just have arbitrary dress up days," senior Spring Fling commissioner Lauren M. Lin said.

"We also hope that having a theme that encompasses the whole week will encourage

This scheduling change has spurred the commission into incorporating a new theme.

more people to participate in activities."

Despite this change, the week will feature all the components of a traditional Spring Fling Week, such as Powder-

puff football games.

The Spring Fling rally will take place on Friday, March 28.

The commission has been busy as of late to decide how the week will play out.

"We are in the process of possibly getting a group together to film a Spring Fling promo to announce the themes for each day," junior Spring Fling commissioner Amanda Le said.

The individual themes for the weekdays are 'Merica Monday, Tropical Tuesday, Worldly Wednesday, Throwback Thursday and Falcon Friday. The commission hopes these eccentric themes will maximize school spirit and participation. ♦

STUDENT HEALTH

Question, Persuade and Refer helps with suicide prevention

BY Aditya Chaudhry

On the evening of March 4, six parents filed into the library. This was not a parent-teacher meeting or a talk about next year courses. This was a workshop about suicide prevention. The entire teaching faculty also met during collaboration the next day and underwent the same training as the parents did the previous night.

With student suicides on the rise nationwide and more students resorting to self-harm, suicide prevention has gained tremendous attention in schools and in other institutions. Saratoga High is one of the many schools that are beginning to provide these services.

The workshop advocates a procedure known as Question, Persuade and Refer (QPR). It is led by trained therapists from Project Safety Net (specialists

affiliated with the city of Palo Alto) and KARA (grief counseling specialists).

"This is our second year with QPR, and it's a great training," principal Paul Robinson said.

Assistant principal Brian Safine described the workshop as being "like CPR, but for student suicide prevention."

"The workshops feature information about signs of suicide and role-play activities where adults practice having conversations with potentially suicidal students," Safine said.

With three workshops last year and two this year, the school hopes to have parents and teachers recognize the signs of students who are suicidal.

"We want to raise awareness about the warning signs of suicide and self-harm and educate our staff so that we can have many sets of eyes and ears looking and listening

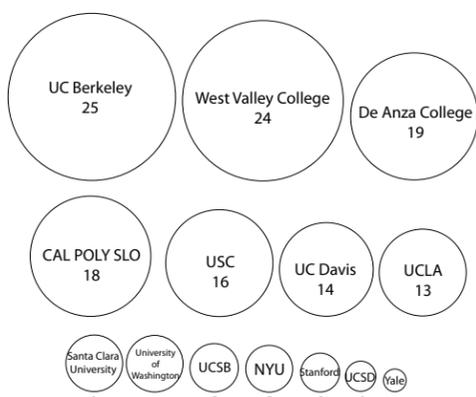
to our students," Safine said.

The goal of the school staff is to help support the students, and they believe that organizing workshops such as this one is one way they can make a difference.

"If we can learn how to better support students and prevent a potential suicide, we will be in better shape for having completed the training," Safine said. ♦

>> falconfigures

Where Class of 2013 ended up going



Source: School Profile — Rotem Shaked

>> thebigidea

Suicide Workshop

How it works
Parents participate in role play activities to learn how to deal with suicidal students.

Why it was held
Student suicides are on the rise throughout the country.

The goal:
Help prevent student suicides

FALCON FOCUS: JARRED GOU

Sophomore travels world for fencing

BY Mellisa **Magner**
& Nupur **Maheshawari**

At every fencing tournament, blood pounds through sophomore Jarred Gou's ears as he uses his headphones to tune out the noise of the thousands of chattering people, clanking foils and beeping scoreboards around him. Music thunders through his mind, erasing all thoughts. He notices nothing. Then the headphones come off.

Game time has arrived.

For Gou, who has been fencing competitively since age 6, each tournament is a test of the mind. Not only must he study and analyze his opponent, but he also must balance himself between an appropriate level of intensity and relaxation.

Gou "walks on a tiny mental tight rope between being too amped up and not intense enough." He knows that even the smallest of mental lapses can lead to defeat.

It is because of this discipline and knowledge that Gou has ranked third in the nation for Cadet fencing, a type of fencing for athletes 16 years old and younger.

Gou began fencing as a way of spending time with his dad. After watching "Star Wars" with his father, Gou said that he wanted a lightsaber of his own.

"My mother said that that spring I had nearly decapitated 500 tulips with a stick," Gou said. "That's when I put two and two together after seeing an older friend of mine fence."

Near the end of kindergarten, Gou started local lessons with Ani and Dan Tibbits at the California Fencing Academy. Within a couple of years, however, Gou realized that this was more than just a sport — it was something he was truly passionate about and wanted to



Gou

take even further.

Gou wanted to train with the top foil clubs in the Bay Area. After hearing a lot of pleading from him, Gou's parents agreed to let him move to the Massialas Foundation to train with Olympian Greg Massialas and coaches Den Hinton and Cole Harkness in San Francisco.

Gou said that despite the fact he had to learn to do most of his schoolwork on the road, it was one of the best decisions of his life.

"I was on the road to San Francisco about five to six days a week in those early years," Gou said.

Later on, the sport became even more serious for him.

Gou began competing for awards and moving up in ranks when he was around 8 years old. Today, his competitions range from once a month to every other week, and he practices fencing around two hours every other day.

Gou recalls his most exhausting fencing competition, Youth 12 U.S. National Championships, when he finished the competition around 1 a.m..

The demanding schedule, although hard to manage, has helped Gou grow up faster.

Because of the amount of time and effort he puts into fencing, managing school work can often be difficult.

"Because so much of my time revolves around fencing, I'm forced to push myself harder with school, which I think has really benefited me," Gou said. "It can get difficult dealing with time, but in the end I'm glad because it has allowed me to gain great management skills."

Gou has competed in countries as far away as Germany, France and Italy.

Recently, Gou made the U.S. World Championship Team that will represent the country in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, on April 4-5. Three U.S. athletes on the Cadet Men's Foil Team will compete, and whoever does best at Worlds will qualify to represent the U.S. at the 2014 Junior World Olympics in Nankin, China, from



Courtesy of FenceOgraphy.com

Sophomore Jarred Gou is ranked third in the nation in cadet fencing. Gou recently made the World Championship Team and will represent the U.S. in Bulgaria on April 4-5.

August 17-19.

Fencing has shaped Gou's personality and work ethic.

"I've learned through fencing that I am completely in charge of my success and failure," Gou said. "Because there are so many competitors in fencing, an athlete is doing good if they can consistently finish in the top eight. However, if I don't like my score, I simply do some self-analysis to improve for next time and then shake it off and train hard to be better."

Because of his love for fencing and the benefits he has gotten out of it, Gou hopes to take his career beyond high school and continue on with the sport in the future.

"I definitely want to fence in Division 1 in college," Gou said. "Because I am a sophomore, colleges are not allowed to talk me in any type of recruiting manner. However, right now I do know that making a World Championship Team helps put me in a good position when I do need to start applying to colleges."

Regardless of what the future holds, today Gou's passion and talent is fencing, and it is something he holds dearly.

"I love everything about fencing — competing, the intensity, the focus and all the friends I have made from all over the world who have a similar passion," Gou said.

"As of right now, there isn't anything I'd rather be doing." ♦

FUNDRAISING

Annual Jazz Cabaret enjoyed by all ages

BY Allison **Lin**

Students, their families and alumni laced up their dance shoes and headed to the annual Jazz Cabaret and Swing Dance on the evening of March 1.

Hosted by the music department and Saratoga Music Boosters, the event showcased the Jazz Bands I and II, the Men and Women's Choir, Concert Choir, the Redwood Middle School Jazz Band and Footnotes Jazz, a professional jazz group.

Volunteers decorated the Small Gym with lights and made room to create a spacious dance floor. The night also featured an all-you-can-eat refreshment bar with hors d'oeuvres and sweets.

Sophomore saxophone player Uday Singh said "the never-ending dessert bar could not be resisted." Many students praised the delicious goods and said it was one of the reasons they attended.

The various music groups performed jazz tunes the en-

tire night, including popular tunes like "Birdland" and "A Riff in Time."

This year, Jazz Cab also featured the Footnotes Jazz Band. Recommended by history teacher Kirk Abe, the band performed while student musicians took a break. Singh was glad he and the other student musicians "got a glimpse of a professional jazz band."

Attendees spun, kicked and swung with friends to upbeat jazz tunes, as if time had travelled back to the 1920s. Unlike other school dances, the Jazz Cabaret encourages students to try a new style of dance. The Cabaret is known for being a casual and care-free gathering, and it attracts many students who do not enjoy regular school dances.

Freshman Megana Saripella enjoyed the music and food but especially "dressing up for the event with her friends."

The event turned out to be a huge success and enjoyable to all ages. The Jazz Cabaret will continue to be one of the highlights of the year. ♦

PERFORMANCE

Music prepares for CMEA

WEEK PRIOR FILLED WITH CONCERTS, PREPARATION

BY Jade **Bisht**

This past week has been dedicated to preparing for the California Music Education Association's (CMEA) Festival hosted in the McAfee Center today and tomorrow. The music department will be performing along with Homestead, Lynbrook, Redwood and Monta Vista. With concerts on March 8 and 9 and a guest performance from San Diego State University Wind Ensemble on Tuesday, individual and combined performances have been practicing to give their best at the festival.

March 7

Last Friday, the combined Symphonic and Freshmen band performed at the McAfee. SWE's performance featured a solo from senior Leo Kim of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto.

"It felt as if Leo and Mozart had analyzed his music together beforehand," junior clarinetist Joowon Lee said. "His expressions and connection to the music were unbelievable."

March 8

The following day, the Symphonic Wind Ensemble (SWE) came together with the Redwood Vivace Orchestra to perform "What's up," a piece based on the Looney Tune's theme song.

Junior Shreyes Balebail said having a combined performance with Redwood helped both groups.

"I've actually been able to work with a lot of the students before for MESH, so being able to play together in a concert setting was fun for all of us," Balebail said.

Saturday's performance featured a solo from junior violist Linus Lu.

Though he found it stressful having the SAT on the same day, he believed his performance went well.

"Solo opportunities are hard to come by," Lu said. "Even though it was far from perfect, it was nice having the experience and honor of featuring."

With CMEA coming up, the groups did not have enough time to focus and perfect one particular piece.

"We had to 'wing it' on Saturday," senior violinist Gloria Liou said. "It was challenging because we had only rehearsed once with Redwood for the combined piece. Overall it was exciting, though, and I think everyone had a great time."

CMEA, March 11 and 12

On March 11, the San Diego State University Wind Ensemble Concert performed as guest artists at the McAfee.

Today's performances will feature the Freshman Orchestra, Philharmonic Strings, String Orchestra, Symphony Orchestra and Saratoga Strings. Tomorrow the Philharmonic Orchestra, SWE and Symphonic Bands will perform.

Balebail anticipates the adrenaline rush of so many performances in such little time.

"It's exciting to hear all the other schools and see all their achievements as of this year," Balebail said. "I love trying my best and feeling the satisfaction of knowing we did a good job afterwards." ♦

CONSTRUCTION

New Sports Plaza set to finish by graduation

BY Helen Chen

The idea of building a plaza to furnish the entrance of the football field has long been a dream and one that is now being fulfilled.

After two years of completing architectural drawings and finalizing planning for the project, construction for the school's new Sports Plaza officially began on Feb. 10. A large donation helped to move the plan forward as the SHS Foundation hopes to improve the facilities at the school.

After installing lights a decade years ago on Benny Pierce Field so that night sports games could be played on campus rather than at Los Gatos's Helm Field, talk of remodeling the area around the turf started. Now, the SHS Foundation's fundraising is turning this into a reality.

As a part of the Red Pride Campaign, the Sports Plaza is the most expensive of several projects in renovating the school's sports facilities, carrying an estimated \$1.325 million price tag, though principal Paul Robinson believes it will be around \$1.5 million when the project is finished. As of early March, the fundraising necessary for the plaza was just shy of \$650,000.

The completed plaza will include new bathrooms to replace the ones that have been found

to be inadequate, a more attractive building and a snack bar, which would facilitate selling food at events.

According to assistant principal Kevin Mount, it will also make preparations for football games and other events easier.

Robinson hopes that the new Sports Plaza will not only enhance the appearance of the current entrance but also become a source of pride in that "our community built it for us."

Because the entirety of the project has been funded by private donations rather than from district funds, the new Sports Plaza will also thank donors who donate over \$500 by engraving their names in the bricks of the walkway.

"We'll be able to recognize a number of people that have been very generous to our school over the years," Robinson said. "[It will] honor the hard work of our community."

According to Robinson, the ongoing fundraising has been mostly successful. Yet, this ambitious plan does not come without problems, some beyond the school's control.

"Recently we've run into an issue with a large pledge that hasn't been realized yet," Robinson said.

Mount said that the district has given the OK to start building, and organizers say fundraising will help pay for the final construction cost. Fund-



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

The new Sports Plaza, being built at the front of the Benny Pierce field, is currently under construction.

raising is not only going to the Sports Plaza but also to the second phase of the Red Pride Campaign.

The construction has created an inconvenience in the parking lot because of the one closed exit and fewer parking spaces. While this initially caused traffic and parking issues, the school quickly cleared up the worst issues within a few days.

Other issues such as rain may be more problematic, since

they could affect how long the construction process takes. As of late February, the rain has not affected the construction much, but Robinson said it could become a bigger factor as the project continues.

Robinson hopes that construction will be finished by graduation this year so that the current seniors can use it. The current timeline expects the plaza to be finished around June with graduation set to oc-

cur on June 5.

According to Mount, it's a "pretty tight timeline."

Mount said that even if the inside of the new building isn't completely finished, the outside of the building should be ready for use, so it would not affect graduation.

Regardless of when the project does finish, Robinson said the new Sports Plaza will "enhance the entrance to our stadium and the events we host." ♦

ENVIRONMENT

School water fountains have high level of copper

BY Rotem Shaked

Several water fountains near the tennis courts, pool and track contain higher than recommended levels of copper, according to AP Environmental Science students, and confirmed by tests run by The Falcon.

Based on results found by several AP Environmental Science students during a lab, the water fountains most commonly used by athletes, including the track and pool-deck water fountains, may have an increased level of copper.

While the water fountains closer to the classrooms of the school are newer and have onboard filters, the water fountains on the outskirts of the school were not upgraded in the installations a few years ago. The old water fountains are recognizable from their copper piping. Most of them are outdoors and that their housing is a barrel instead of a metal casing.

When Falcon staff repeated the APES students' tests with the help of APES teacher Kristen Thompson, they found that the amount of copper in the various fountains varied, but almost all of the old fountains had a higher concentration than the EPA's recommended 1.3 parts per million (ppm).

The copper testing kits, while not as accurate as professional tests, gave results of 4 ppm for the water fountain on the far side of the track, about 3 ppm for the pool-front fountain and marked the filtered fountains as totally clean. On its website, the EPA says that people who drink the contaminated water may,

"with short-term exposure, experience gastrointestinal distress, and with long-term exposure, may experience liver or kidney damage."

Assistant principal Kevin Mount said the water at the school is, to his knowledge, not tested regularly except by municipal water treatment. If the contamination occurs between the main water line and the end of the fountain, he said the school wouldn't know about it.

When asked about the problem, San Jose Water Company suggested testing a faucet as well, to determine if

the culprits were the water fountains themselves or the pipes underneath. When tested, the boys' bathroom faucet closest to the English wing tested negative for copper.

These results suggest that the fountains themselves, which are old and rusty, are to blame for the concentrations of water in the copper.

While copper pipes have been the industry standard for a while, newer fountains and fixtures typically use PVC or CPVC for piping, especially in outdoor systems. The EPA suggests checking outdoor fixtures if they have copper in them at least every five years, especially if they give off a coppery taste or color, which the outdoor fountains do.

Since the issue lies only in the individual water fountains, and not the entire system, a possible solution is to replace the existing water fountains with filtered ones. The cost to replace each fountain would be about \$500, according to the manufacturer of the fountains currently in use near the classrooms. ♦

Almost all of the old fountains had a higher concentration than the EPA's recommended 1.3 parts per million.

MILITARY SERVICE

Senior plans to enlist following high school

BY Megana Iyer & Trung Vandin

Senior Rio Harada has sat through hundreds of hours of lectures, jotted down notes in English and history, taken the SAT and passed countless tests. But in June, after the years that he spent struggling through school with his classmates, he plans to take a very different path: Harada will be enlisting in the military.

"I have a lot of family who have served before," Harada said. "My cousin did it when he was in the Marine Corps."

For as long as he can remember, the military has been something that Harada was interested in.

"I [always] thought it was really cool, but I never imagined myself in that situation at the time," he said. "I thought I wouldn't be able to do it."

The decision has given Harada a different perspective on his life from that shared by many Saratoga students, and he is eager to learn responsibility and strength from his time in the military.

"I'm kind of a slacker," Harada said. "I don't really do much, and if I went to college right now, I probably wouldn't be disciplined at all. [I hope to learn about] self-discipline. [Joining the military] is an investment towards my future."

There are several benefits that come along with enlisting, Harada explained, including the fact that his schooling will be paid for after. He plans to attend a four-year college following his time in the military.

Because his future involves so much

discipline, Harada feels as if he has to take responsibility for his actions now more than ever, and behave differently.

"I feel like I shouldn't be messing around [in school] now. I should take things more seriously," Harada said.

Harada also said he is feeling apprehensive, since the experience will be completely new to him.

"It's a brand new experience. With that, there are going to be some struggles," he said. "I know military life is a lot harder than civilian life, since there's a lot more responsibility."

Harada has to prepare for the military by taking an aptitude test called the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (AS-VAB), as well as talking to his recruiters and going through an

evaluation called the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS).

"[In the MEPS], I take the test, and am checked to see whether I am healthy and mentally stable to join."

In order to take the MEPS, Harada said that he needs to get his weight down and graduate.

"I need to have a high school diploma," he said. "Based on the ASVAB score, I can pick a job [in the military], and according to my practice score, I can do most of the jobs."

After telling his classmates and friends about his decision to join, he has gained a lot of respect.

"I guess at SHS it's a rare thing," Harada said. "It's a unique thing to do since everyone's so academically centered and people are really surprised. I get respect for it; it seems like a meaningful experience." ♦



Harada

BOMBAY IN THE BAY

Performers pull off record-breaking shows

BY Jade Bisht

More than 150 students rocked the dance floor on Feb. 14 and 15 at the annual Indian Cultural Awareness Club show Bombay in the Bay (BNB). The performance kicked off February break with two evening shows integrating Indian dancing, singing and acting.

The show featured four class dances; a traditional Punjabi dance called Bhangra; a classical dance; a teacher dance; and an All Girl's Dance (AGD) and All Male's Dance (AMD), which are a select group of seniors who have been involved in the show for two or more years. This year's skit, written by the senior BNB of-

icers, centered around one boy's quest for forgiveness after hurting four girls with very contrasting personalities by simultaneously flirting with all of them.

Junior choreographer Varna Jammula thought the show turned out a lot better than everyone had expected.

"The junior class presumed we wouldn't do very well because our practices weren't as organized as they have been in past years," Jammula said. "But our performance ended up being amazing, and everyone had a great time."

Scheduling conflicts with the McAfee forced the show to be in February rather than in April. Moving the date two months earlier brought unforeseen dif-

ficulties to choreographers.

"It was inconvenient because we had to choreograph our dances around the time of finals and start practices during winter break," Jammula said.

Despite this earlier date, performers felt more than satisfied with the result of the two shows. The club raised a record breaking amount, around \$10,000, for the two fundraisers that club members collectively chose this year: the Maitri Foundation, which supports abused women, and an orphanage in India.

Although their last show has come to an end, the officers are not ready to give up completely on the Bollywood spirit.

This year, the officers are starting a

year-round, competitive team called Toga Tamasha — "tamasha" means entertainment in Hindi. Toga Tamasha's first workshop was on March 9, and try-outs will be held this weekend. Students from all grades are invited to come.

After months of planning, numerous rehearsals, stress-filled decisions and dealing with the growing number of participants, the seniors are feeling bit-tersweet about their final performance.

"It's hard to believe that four years of BNB have passed by this quickly," senior Priyanka Krishnamurthi said. "Looking back in the future, the shows are definitely going to be a highlight of my high school memories." ♦

CERAMICS

Super turnout at 12th annual Souper Bowl

BY Atirath Kosireddy

Hungry from a long day of school and sports, hundreds of students flooded the cafeteria on March 5 to attend the annual Souper Bowl, which raises money for the art program.

For a donation of \$10, attendees received unlimited soup and a bowl handmade by advanced ceramics students. The event, organized by ceramics teacher Leah Aguayo ended up selling all of its 450 bowls.

The ceramics class dedicated about three weeks at the beginning of the school year and three weeks at the beginning of the second semester to craft

the bowls, sophomore Brandon Hulme said.

He took pride in being able to contribute.

"It's fun being able to be a part of a tradition," he said.

Sophomore Irene Chen said that it took two to three weeks to create each bowl with its own original design. To make the manufacturing process more efficient, certain students were assigned tasks for each bowl rather than having each person build a bowl completely from scratch.

Chen added that the cafeteria was so packed that the line for soup trailed out

of the building.

"I gave some to my coach and he sent someone else on the swim team to come back and get more," Chen said.

"You could see everybody smiling and having a fun time... they had the hardest time choosing [their bowl]."

Aguayo felt the Souper Bowl could not have had such a successful turnout this year without the help of numerous volunteers, such as long-time volunteer parent Sarah Rothenberg, as well as science teacher Kellyann Nicholson, math teacher Rafael Alapont and Special Education teacher Cabot Weaver.



Chen

"With everyone's help, Souper Bowl 12 was a big success," Aguayo said.

Sophomore Michael Guo found his money to be well spent.

"I thought [the \$10] was worth it because not only do you get a unique handmade bowl, you also get as many refills of soup as you want, and you get to spend time with friends," Guo said.

Guo, who consumed three bowls of soup to satisfy his hunger from swim practice, found the evening to be "a fun and delicious experience."

"They did a really great job. The bowls looked great and hopefully next year they will be as high class as they were this year," Guo said. ♦

WASC

Association to certify accreditation with visit

BY Mellisa Magner & Nupur Maheshwari

From April 27-30, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) will visit Saratoga High in order to assess and certify the school's accreditation.

As a third-party organization that works with the California Department of Education, WASC mirrors that of a licensing agency, confirming that the school is putting its claims into action.

"There are always multiple groups working to enact changes at Saratoga, but WASC is a time where they all come together to share ideas," senior Jennie Werner, chair of the WASC student home group, said.

After intensive brainstorming sessions, the WASC leaders, comprised of teachers, administration, parents and students, compile a list of the areas where Saratoga could improve.

According to Werner, "we attempt to ensure that students have a balance between sleep, school and free time."

Assistant principal Kevin Mount said that part of the accreditation is a cyclical review, which means that the review repeats itself anywhere from every two to every six years. In fact, after the last WASC accreditation cycle six years ago, the current partial block schedule was created.

"For SHS, the longest review period is six years," Mount said. "We are also

required to do a mid-cycle report. It's like a self-evaluation we complete."

A large part of this accreditation process is the visitation, where members of the WASC committee check in on classrooms, speak with students and teachers and meet with parents.

WASC also provides the school with tools to generate generic questions about how the school can be improved, which the staff can use for their self-study.

According to Mount, the staff has been working on self-study since March 2013. They have begun looking into what they can do to make Saratoga a better place. Afterward, they build an action plan around those areas to focus on for the next six years.

Mount said that the staff also wants to try and find other methods of assessing students' knowledge.

"We want to support high academic achievement through a variety of best instructional assessment strategies," Mount said. "We are attempting to focus our curriculum more on depth than breadth."

Beyond the academic changes that the staff hopes to make, student health also remains a top priority.

"Sometimes students are so driven here that they don't maintain a healthy balance," Mount said. "We want to encourage them to make good choices and balance their lives." ♦

We are attempting to focus our curriculum more on depth than breadth.

>> assistant principal Kevin Mount

ACADEMIC CHANGES

MAP juniors will have 3 electives combined in 1

BY Vibha Seshadri

In previous years, students in their junior year of the Media Arts Program (MAP) took the obligatory classes, English and History, as well as an elective of their choice: either Animation, Multi-Media Journalism or Film Making.

Starting next year, however, juniors will no longer have the option of choosing one of the three possible electives. The incoming MAP juniors will take a new elective that combines all three of the previous elective choices into one class. If any students wish to take SHSTV, it will be an extra elective.

MAP coordinator Tony Palma said this change was made in an effort to better reflect real-world media. Who will teach this class has not been determined yet.

Palma is not concerned as he believes "it's the content that matters" most.

"We felt that having three [electives] as separate classes didn't emulate how the real world works, so we wanted students to have an advanced experience in all three classes," Palma said.

The MAP department found that many students were not interested in specializing in their junior year, but rather in learning the different artistic skills each of the three electives had to offer.

To create this advanced experience, the MAP team has been planning the new elective for about a year and a half.

According to Palma, having an elective combined with students' English and history classes "fits the whole MAP experience."

"[The new change] will make us learn a little more of everything just like this year and will build up more on every-

thing next year," sophomore MAP student Shreya Sheel said.

Along with media-related projects, this year's sophomores had a career unit in which community professionals are invited to talk about job markets, current trends and applying for jobs.

Next year, a college unit will be added to the new elective. It will give juniors the chance to listen to college speakers, tour colleges as part of the MAP program's Los Angeles trip and understand college application requirements.

"This [unit] gives students the opportunity to get a portfolio together, learn how to apply to college and better to position themselves," Palma said.

These changes will only affect current sophomores in MAP. There will be no change to the senior level of MAP since an elective is optional.

Palma and the rest of the MAP department is confident that the change will benefit students.

"I think students are going to be happy with the change," Palma said. ♦

>> **bigidea**

The new MAP curriculum

Elective changes

Instead of choosing one of three possible electives, incoming juniors will take one combined elective.

Why?

To better reflect real-world media

College preparation

The new elective will include a college unit to prepare juniors for college applications.

M-SET ROBOTICS

Team comes in sixth at regional competition

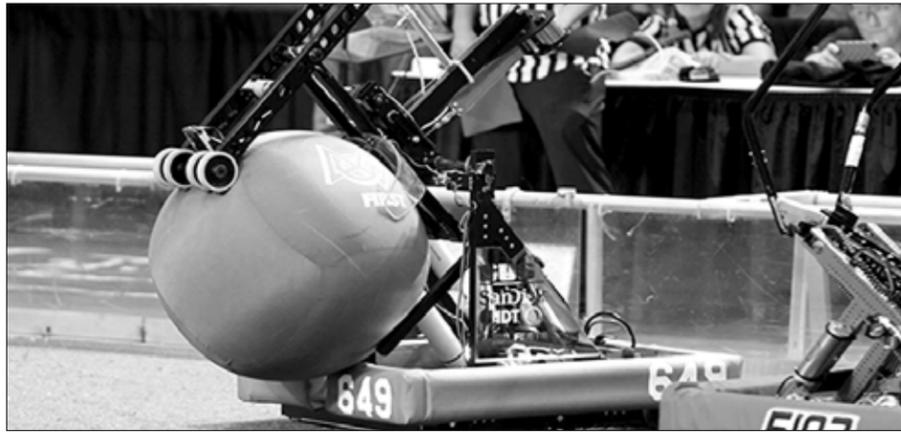
BY David Sparkman
& Aditya Chaudhry

This past weekend the school's M-SET robotics team travelled to Madera for the Central Valley Regional tournament to fight for the championship against 45 competitors. The team advanced to the semifinals — finishing in sixth place.

This year's challenge was to make a robot that can both control a 2 foot in diameter medicine ball and score the ball in either an elevated goal for 10 points or a low goal for one point. The robot earned extra points by passing the ball to teammates, shooting over a truss in the middle of the field and successfully catching a ball that is thrown over the truss. All the challenges are completed in alliances with other teams.

The M-SET team created its robot, Gus, in the past six weeks. Gus has a base of six wheels. It uses its claw to control to control the 2 foot medicine ball. In the center of the claw is a large plastic circle which connects to a linear bar that is powered by two 40-pound springs.

This year, sophomore Naveed Riazat and freshman Kyle France drive the



Gus, M-SET's robot, which took six weeks to build, picks up a ball and moves to score.

122-pound robot during the matches.

The M-SET team, nicknamed the Fish, were off to a good start at the beginning of the tournament, winning three of their first four qualification matches. Trying to show off their robot's qualities and win matches, members faced stressful days.

"The last six weeks of your life cumulate to these few matches and its all up to you to make it work," Riazat said.

The team was able to choose which teams they would compete with during eliminations. The M-SET Fish chose team 3501, the Firebirds, from Fremont High School, and team 2073, Eagle Force, from Pleasant Grove High School, as their alliance partners.

"The fifth alliance is not the best position, but we were able to upset the fourth-seeded alliance and advance to the semi-

finals," senior president Mihir Iyer said.

Although the M-SET Fish were able to upset the higher fourth alliance in the quarterfinals, they were unable to defeat the first-place alliance composed of team 254, The Cheesy Poofs, from Bellarmine College Preparatory, team 973, The Greybots, from Atascadero High School and team 2135, Presentation Invasion, from Presentation High School in the semifinal match.

Though the team did not win the tournament, they believe it was a success and are looking forward to improving Gus.

"Being an alliance captain is a great accomplishment for the team and it shows how far we have come," Iyer said.

But this competition was just the start of the team's competition season. The team is travelling to Denver from April 4-7 to partake in the Colorado Regional. If they excel there, they will win a bid to go to the World Championship in St. Louis on April 24-26.

"We expect to perform at the highest possible standard using the knowledge we gained here and hopefully win the tournament," vice president sophomore Kabir Manghnani said. ♦

HONORS >> Madhani and Renda claim top academic GPAs

continued from pg. 1

pressure at times, but they still enjoyed their overall experience.

"I actually didn't take as many advanced classes; I know a lot of friends who've taken many more advanced classes," said Madhani. "Honestly, if I had taken any more AP's or Honor's, I wouldn't have been able to put the time and effort into each class to really understand the subject matter and do justice to the work put in by the teachers. The more I put into each class, in fact, the more I enjoyed it."

Renda said his drive to do well led him to dedicate a lot of time to his academics.

"I was always motivated to do the best that I could do, which often just took an immense amount of work," Renda said.

Math teacher Audrey Warmuth, who taught Renda in both Algebra 2 Honors and AP Calculus BC, admires his unique personality and concentration in class.

"Alex has a fantastic sense of humor," Warmuth said. "I don't think that his personality is always apparent in the classroom, where he is quiet and focused—but there is a lot behind his reserved demeanor."

Safine complimented Madhani on having a well-rounded personality.

"[Madhani] has a duality that I'll remember," said Safine. "The kid that will goof off and dress up and entertain his classroom while still being serious. I think that it great for us at graduation to recognize students who are full participants in the school community rather than strictly just being all about academics."

Although academics were clearly a huge focus of the seniors, outside the classroom, both are involved in other activities.

For Madhani, one of the most rewarding extracurriculars he joined was speech and debate. To him, the club was an accepting family that taught him how to communicate effectively and speak up for himself, skills that have aided him throughout high school.

"I think I've dealt with a lot of disappointment in speech and debate," Madhani said. "However, I've learned to accept that and fight back."

Renda, on the other hand, likes to spend his time pursuing a variety of activities. From marching in band competitions to writing code or just hanging out with friends, Renda enjoys being in high school and tries to have fun.

Both share a common interest: computer science. With Madhani being president of the the Application Developers' Club and Renda being a chief coder of the Mechanical-Science Engineering Team (Robotics Team), both have had a strong base with which they can launch themselves into this field.

"Because I'm planning to major in computer science, App Dev gave me a place to explore the field and make useful things before I went into college," Madhani said.

In the end, both Madhani and Renda are happy with their accomplishments over the past four years; neither specifically intended on getting this honor.

"Nobody sets a goal to become a salutatorian," Renda said. "People just have to try their best, but it is an honor to be given this award." ♦

PITCH >> Li on 'Shark Tank'

continued from pg. 1

resells the products to schools, hospitals or the general public. Li's business has been featured often in media reports, and Li himself was named the 25th smartest teenager in the world by an organization called The Best Schools.

Two years ago, Li was offered the opportunity to appear on the show as a contestant; however, Li declined because iReTron was not yet generating enough revenue.

Disheartened by having to decline this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, Li moved on and worked toward improving and expanding iReTron. A year after the first offer, Li was asked again by the same producer to appear on the show.

This time, Li said yes.

"Going to Hollywood, getting my makeup done, staying in the Westin and being paid to travel was a really cool experience," Li said.

After arriving in Los Angeles, he realized he would have to improve his usual pitch. For the next two days, Li stayed in his hotel room drafting different angles and approaches to his pitch, hoping to eventually come across the perfect one.

After finally perfecting his pitch, Li practiced until it was showtime. When the time came for him to film, Li was nervous.

"The producers and my parents told me to smile, so I just smiled really awkwardly," Li said. "One of the people even said, 'Why does he look so happy,' so

that made me laugh a little and I calmed down."

After filming, Li was ushered into another room to complete a debrief interview and then was taken to his trailer to meet his father.

Li isn't free to say what happened, yet all will be revealed on tonight's show.

The exposure Li will receive from "Shark Tank" is like nothing he has ever experienced before.

"The amount of viewers on this show is absolutely incredible, and the most publicity I have ever gotten was being on newspapers like the Huffington Post and the San Francisco Chronicle," Li said. "It's a hefty amount of people, but definitely nothing of this caliber."

Li said he felt a large sense of achievement.

"I've watched ['Shark Tank'] for many years, and it's really exciting to know that you get to live something that you idolize," Li said.

Li left Los Angeles with more business wisdom than ever.

He learned that as a businessman, he cannot back down regardless of the risks he is taking or what he wins or loses as a young entrepreneur. Li's drive and determination to make his business successful has paid off well.

"No one expects to succeed, but life is all about surprising yourself," Li said. "You can't succeed if you view everything with a cost-benefit analysis. Instead, take risks and pursue genuine passion! It's always worth a shot." ♦

BOND >> G.O. on June ballot

continued from pg. 1

opportunity this provides for [the] district to improve the teaching and learning environment for everyone involved — teachers, staff and students."

Principal Paul Robinson said that because \$99 million "does not cover all the projects both schools could do," the school needs to use the bond money strategically.

"We could do so much more on our campus," Robinson said. "[Now], we have to prioritize."

At the moment, the school's priorities include: renovations that will improve student safety; upgrades to heating, air conditioning and ventilation; a new multi-purpose facility; athletic facility improvements; additions to theater and music facilities; modernization of the cafeteria; energy management and conservation, including solar use; creating classroom space for expanding programs, including the robotics program and the Media Arts Program, and relocating the music department to a more convenient location near the McAfee Center.

Students must carry heavy and expensive instruments back and forth all the way across campus between the music department and the McAfee, before and after performances.

"It doesn't make a whole lot of sense to have the [music department] way over there," Robinson said. "Building something that is as close to the theater

as possible would be ideal."

Robinson said that one idea calls for the leveling of the office building.

"We would then build a new music building structure on that piece of land," Robinson said.

Robinson believes that the new building would not only be more spacious, but would also save students an unnecessarily long and grueling trek to the theater.

These projects are being examined by a team of teachers, administrators, parents and the school's Green Team. The projects were outlined in the Facility Master Plan, Executive Summary — presented to the district board on Feb. 4 and available on the district website.

Robinson believes that anything "that makes the classroom more comfortable for students" is a priority. Although the school renovated many classrooms with the 1998 bond, it could not renovate all of its classrooms. In fact, several classrooms are still using a system that was built in the 1950s.

"[This system] is neither efficient nor adequate for what we are trying to do," Robinson said.

The school aims to bring these classrooms "up to code."

Robinson notes that the administration has "many different priorities that need to be addressed." In order to do so, the administrators will receive assistance from a design team that will "help them do things in a good [and] logical order." ♦

FALCON FOCUS: DANIEL MARTIN

Senior pursues passion for working on cars

BY Aditya Chaudhry & Arjun Ramanathan

Some seniors have time for senioritis. Daniel Martin doesn't. That's because he's working part time at auto repair shop, pursuing one of his main passions.

"I work at an autobody shop called Concours Autobody in Campbell," Martin said. "Most people who come in are either there because they got into an accident and their car is damaged or someone who wants their dream car to be restored."

Martin, who owns a 1996 Ford Mustang SVT Cobra, has been in love with cars ever since he was a child.

"I got into cars when I was very little because all I played with was hot wheels," Martin said.

For Martin, working at the auto shop has many benefits.

"I started working because I wanted to add things to my car like modifications or eventually have enough money to buy a new car," Martin said. "Anyone that knows me knows that I'm addicted to cars and that is the main reason why I

choose to work at the autobody shop."

Putting in 17 to 20 hours a week, Martin spends his time scuffing cars, preparing them for paint and removing car parts so his boss can repair the car.

"Once my boss fixes the problem, which could be a dent, rust, or new paint job, he gives my back the car then I put every piece I took off back on," Martin said. "Then I wash and wax the car and move onto the next one."

His parents have been supportive of him in his hobby.

"My family is happy because they know I like cars so much and because I have my own money now so I don't keep asking them," Martin said.

For Martin working with cars is not a passing fad. For him, working with cars is a passion which he wants to pursue.

"I would like to work with cars in the future... in terms of design them," Martin said. "However, the job I have now is a fun job for high school."

Martin enjoys working at the shop remarking that it has taught him new things he would otherwise would have not found out and has some advice for those thinking about getting a job.



Courtesy of MICHAEL ESCHEN

Senior Daniel Martin, a car aficionado, poses in front of his 1996 Ford Mustang STV Cobra.

"Just go after something you really enjoy. Even if you have no experience working, it's worth giving it a shot," Martin said. "Also, don't get discouraged if it takes a while to find a job. Patience is a virtue."

Martin said his job has been more of

an opportunity than a burden.

"Working as a second semester senior is not that difficult for me personally because I am able to manage both school and work well," Martin said. "If you give all your effort to something it will work out." ♦

AUDRIE'S LAW



FALCON // AMY LIN

State senator Jim Beall speaks at the press conference at the Saratoga library on March 7.

Proponents of 'Audrie's Law' bring it to public, Legislature

BY Sabrina Chen & Deepti Kannan

As expected, a bill inspired by the incident that led to the suicide of Audrie Pott in 2012 will be heading to the state Legislature soon.

During a press conference held at the Saratoga Public Library on March 7, state Sen. Jim Beall, district attorney Jeffrey Rosen and Audrie's mother, Sheila Pott, spelled out details of the bill, titled SB 838.

SB 838 would charge juveniles who sexually assault defenseless victims in adult court. Charging juveniles as adults would remove the concealment of the offenders' identities and lead to them being registered as sex offenders.

"Under current law, if a group of young men hold down a young woman and rape her, they can be charged in adult court, with adult charges," Rosen said. "But if those same young men instead ply the young woman with alcohol and then rape her, they must be tried in juvenile court."

Although the current law addresses sharing photos of child pornography, Audrie's Law would emphasize the crime of using social media (words, pictures, video) to "humiliate or bully" victims of sexual assault.

For example, under current law, if photos of sexual assault are disseminated, the matter is seen as less serious and treated in juvenile court. Rosen explained that "these things must change."

Rosen added that an amendment to the current law is needed because underage perpetrators are being protected by the juvenile court's "secrecy and anonymity."

"The time has come to pull these predatory perpetrators out of the shadows and make the juvenile justice system live up to its promise to protect their victims," Rosen said.

Rosen, Beall and the Pott family hope that this bill will prevent cases like what happened to Audrie from happening again.

"Audrie's gone," Rosen said. "We are here today to see if we can make some sense out of her senseless death."

Beall said the bill is modest in proposal and has a very good chance of passing. If it receives a two-thirds majority vote in the state Legislature, and the governor signs it, the bill will go into effect on Jan. 1, 2015.

"I believe Audrie's bill is well crafted and will deter future cyberbullying, while providing justice for victims and their families," Beall said. ♦

ACADEMICS

Math prerequisites revised

BY Aditya Chaudhry & Arjun Ramanathan

Course requests for the upcoming 2014-2015 year are here, and the prerequisite rules have seen a change.

Previously, students in a regular level math course were not permitted to jump straight into the AP track. For instance, a student in Algebra 2 regular could not go into Trigonometry Pre Calculus honors. Starting next year, the math department is simply making recommendations for students but not requirements.

Minimum grade requirements in honors and AP math classes to go to the next level have also been eliminated. This allows students to think about what they want, not what they are restricted to.

"Opening up access to our great math classes is a goal our math department has been working on," principal Paul Robinson said.

According to Robinson, good assessments and communication of students' skills contribute to helping counselors advise students on what classes they should take.

Math teacher Debra Troxell said the rule was implemented more as a technicality.

"We made hard and fast pre-requisites so that students wouldn't take on classes that they weren't fit for," Troxell said. "We still feel really strongly that students should follow our guidelines, but legally, we can't stop them from taking the classes they want to take."

Robinson also thinks that choice, which the revised policy allows, will be a benefit for students.

"We never want a student to over-reach and cause problems for themselves, so we hope that they enroll themselves with a challenging but healthy schedule based on their interests and capabilities," Robinson said.

Students like sophomore Naved Krishnamurthy expressed concern that the rule change might hurt students' grades.

"If the students take the harder classes when they didn't do well in the previous level it's more likely that they won't do well," Krishnamurthy said.

Others like sophomore Josh Dey said the new rule benefits students. Dey said the new policy allows students to transfer from regular classes to tougher classes that they feel ready to take.

"This flexibility allows students to enjoy their schedule and take the classes they really want to take, which is important in high school," Dey said. ♦



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SPRING MUSICAL

'Les Mis' cast prepares for performances

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

Senior Zofia Trujillo goes through the lyrics of "I Dreamed a Dream," marking off her staging to refresh her mind of the last rehearsal. Trujillo and around 60 castmates are investing numerous hours to this year's spring musical, "Les Misérables."

Among the challenges of "Les Mis" is that it is narrated with only music and no dialogue. "Les Mis" showcases a serious plot, which presents challenges and learning opportunities for the actors and director and drama teacher Sarah Thermond.

"Les Mis" is a very beloved show for many members of the cast, and I am guessing, will also be for many members of our audience," Thermond said. "We have been putting in a lot of effort into the show — we practice every day after school, except Tuesday, for three hours. Because of this effort, I think that the [musical] will be very exciting for first time 'Les Misérables' viewers."

"Les Mis," an already plot heavy show, requires a lot of work from the cast members for a number of reasons. Although many challenges come with this show, Thermond said there are two that stand out to her.

One is the amount of effort it takes to work on a show with a large cast and crew that participate in a variety of scenes. The second, and perhaps most apparent challenge, is that the entire show is sung. As an operetta, "Les Mis" consists only of singing and no talking. Because of this, the cast often runs whole songs instead of just working on pieces of it each rehearsal.

"We need to do this because finding where the actors and actresses are in their music can be tricky, and because it is usually easier to run the entire musical number and then give feedback, it takes a lot more time," Thermond said.

Even with these obstacles, the cast said they are adapting well to this new type of musical.

"It's been a really amazing experience so far," said Trujillo, who plays the lead

of Fantine. "This is my first lead in such a big production, and working with an ensemble of really awesome people is incredible."

Newcomers to the drama department, such as freshman Kavya Sadras, are also enjoying being a part of the musical.

"The whole process is super fun," Sadras said. "I love working with the older cast members, and the newer ones like myself. The hardest part is definitely memorizing all of the music, because there is so much."

Despite the challenges of the music, however, Sadras said that the result can be spectacular.

"Learning the music is complicated, but once you've polished it, the songs turn out amazing," she said. "Working with the cast also helps a lot, because they are so hardworking and crazy — they make the environment a great place to be."

Junior Sydney Torrens, who plays two smaller roles, is also new to drama this year and is enjoying the challenges and fun that the musical brings.

"As a newcomer to the drama department, I was surprised with how talented the cast is," Torrens said. "I think that the audience is going to be blown away."

As the performance date approaches, the cast and Thermond are filled with confidence.

"I am really starting to see things come to life," Thermond said. "The cast has so much passion for the show and the music, and they understand how meticulous and hardworking we have to be in order to pull it off."

Within the next couple of months, Thermond believes the musical will become even better.

"It is early, and we are still producing on remnants of a set from the last show, as well as working on polishing some aspects of the show," Thermond said. "However, I am confident that once we dive in fully, we're going to have something great."

"Les Mis" premieres on Friday, April 25, at 7:30 p.m. in the McAfee Center, and performances will continue until May 3. ♦

>> togatalks

What are your hopes for the spring musical, 'Les Mis'?

"I started crying during the movie, so my hopes are high for the play."



sophomore Zhan Ng

"I hope that they don't copy the movie and try to add their own style and ideas."



freshman Shreya Ingle

"The story was a childhood favorite, so I can't wait to see the musical."



sophomore Gwyneth Hunger

HISTORY DAY

Participants reflect on performances

BY Megana **Iyer**

After looking through hundreds of documents, researching archives, contacting experts and compiling their findings into one concise project, History Day participants came together at the Santa Clara County Office of Education on March 1 to present their exhibits, performances, websites and to display their hard work.

Due to the low number of entries this year, the school did not hold the school-wide contest conducted in previous years. Instead, participants went directly to the county competition.

History teachers from all over the Santa Clara County met to judge projects and exhibits submitted by students within the county.

Although the number of entries decreased significantly — from 20 projects last year to only 14 this year — the topics that students chose were extremely diverse.

According to junior Riddhi Sangam, who researched and created a project about the rights and responsibilities of the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution diving into her research allowed her to gain a newfound appreciation for history.

"Before I researched my project, I really did not know a lot about the Second Amendment," Sangam said. "But after, I found the topic really interesting. I expected that I would be interested in my topic, but not to this degree."

While Sangam was proud of

her work, she did not advance to the state competition, which will take place in April in Riverside and will contain eight projects from SHS students.

However, she found the experience to be a positive one, and she is excited to be a part of the day next year.

"I enjoyed participating this year and would love another opportunity to do History Day again," she said.

Sophomore Jennifer Chen, who will be advancing to states in April, created a performance about the importance of the film "Snow White" as a turning point in history last year, a project closer her ancestral roots.

Chen chose to do her project on the Chinese workers of the Central Pacific Railroad because they are her "ancestors who came to America first." However, she also added that she has found an abundance of new information while researching.

"It's interesting to learn about and compare the treatments towards Chinese in the past and the present," Chen said. "Also, information on the railroad workers is actually very limited and rare even today, so I wanted to try something relatively difficult and new."

On the other hand, junior Anshul Aggarwal chose to explore a topic that was foreign to him, and with his partner junior Nishant Agrawal, he researched and created an exhibit about the 1979 Iranian Revolution.

Aggarwal and Agrawal will

be advancing to states, along with juniors Mahir Jethanandani, Neel Kattumadam, Vivek Murthy, Alex Kim, Jasmine Deng, Vivian Roan, Nathan Fotedar, Steven Fan, Minda Lee, Stephen Peng, Michelle Leung, Boyu Pang, Max Chang and Ethan Ngai.

"I felt that we put a really good presentation together," Aggarwal said. "We researched about how it [affected events] in the Middle East, and how it affects us."

While Aggarwal originally thought he knew a lot about Middle Eastern conflicts and history, he was surprised to find that there were many aspects of Iranian culture and history that he had never been exposed to.

"I thought I knew some things about the conflicts, but researching more showed me that there was so much more to it," Aggarwal said. "There were so many articles and new events that I had never even seen before." ♦

>> THE bigidea

History Day participants

Students going to States

Sophomore Jennifer Chen and juniors Nishant Agrawal, Anshul Aggarwal, Neel Kattumadam, Vivek Murthy, Mahir Jethanandani, Alex Kim, Jasmine Deng, Vivian Roan, Nathan Fotedar, Steven Fan, Minda Lee, Stephen Peng, Michelle Leung, Boyu Pang, Max Chang and Ethan Ngai

DANCE TEAM

Falcons place fourth at NorCal competition

BY Allison **Lin**
& Megan **MacInnes**

As the music came to an end, freshman Caroline Li smiled proudly and held her head high.

Her nerves settled as she and the other six members of the dance team finished their performance at the NorCal State Dance Championships on Feb. 8.

The team finished in fourth place out of 10 teams.

Taking place at Monta Vista High School, this dance competition was only the team's second competitive performance this semester.

The girls performed a routine to a hip-hop mash up featuring music by Nicki Minaj and Lana Del Rey.

Junior co-captain Joy Tang described the routine as going from "hard hitting hip hop to sassy hip hop to somewhat smoother hip hop."

The team had been working on this dance since the end of football season to prepare for the competition season.

With all of the girls putting in the time to attend extra practices, head coach Brittany Sua was able to make sure each move was precise.

In its first competition of

the year at Bella Vista High on Feb. 1, the team's performance was not what it expected due to a technical difficulty with its soundtrack.

This increased the nerves for the girls because they all wanted to redeem themselves at the NorCal State Dance Championships.

"We were pretty nervous before we performed, but I think we did pretty well [at the NorCal Championships]," Tang said. "Since our team is new, we

didn't have a specific rival team but there were a lot of really strong teams at Monta Vista."

The team was judged based on their execution, synchronicity, technique, style and finesse.

Both the judges and the team were extremely pleased with the performance.

"The performance went well," Tang said. "As a team, I feel like we perform better when there is a crowd, compared to when we are in the dance studio."

While the cheer team has wrapped up its competition season and won't rehearse or compete until the fall, the dance team will continue to prepare a routine for the Spring Fling rally on March 27. ♦

"I feel like we perform better when there is a crowd, compared to when we are in the dance studio."

>> junior Joy Tang

SPEECH AND DEBATE

Members prepare for upcoming qualifiers

BY Sudeep Raj & Oksana Trifonova

Recent success at the UC Berkeley and Sequoia High tournaments has fired up members of the speech and debate team for state qualifiers and national qualifiers this month.

According to junior and captain Supriya Khandekar, the team will send many contestants because some people, such as the Public Forum senior captain Justin Liu, have wildcards that guarantee them an automatic spot at state quals.

"We hope that success will be consistent at state and national qualifiers," Khandekar said.

At Berkeley, sophomores Ashvita Ramesh and Shrey Desai, junior Anjali Manghnani and seniors Jason Li and Mohith Subbarao all advanced to elimination rounds in their respective events. Manghnani placed fifth in Original Oratory speaking.

At Sequoia, freshman Nidhi Jain, sophomores Jui Malwankar and Vibha Seshadri, juniors Agastya Gupta and Supriya Khandekar and senior Mohith Subbarao cleared preliminary rounds.

Khandekar placed sixth in Original Oratory speaking and Gupta placed fifth in Domestic Extemporaneous speaking.

For her part, Khandekar believes that success at state and national qualifiers will ultimately come down to the team's "focus on the day of."

"We just have to put our best efforts forward on those days," Khandekar said.

Because the team lost several key competitors to graduation last spring, younger debaters were forced to step up.

Due to significant debaters graduating last year, younger debaters were forced to step up.

"Sophomores and juniors like Shrey Desai have really gotten better since last year," junior captain Rohith Krishna said.

This year, the team has operated as a unit, rather than a collection of individual debaters.

"In the past, we would all be doing our own thing, but this year we decided to change that," Krishna said.

The changes were small but significant.

According to Desai, last year "[they] didn't trust each other and thought that novice members of the team would leech off the prep," but this year "[they] share more prep, collaborate and work together."

The new team unity and younger debaters bode well for the future.

"It is really hard to say how our team will do since results can be a bit unpredictable," Khandekar said. "Results can definitely be surprising, but we are hoping for the best." ♦

SPANISH

Trip to Mexico creates countless memories

BY Oksana Trifonova

After packing two bags, boarding the plane and arriving at 5 a.m., all a person wants to do is dive into a nice soft bed and sleep the day away. But students put on a brave face and headed straight to the pyramids from the airport. This was no ordinary vacation; these students were on the annual Spanish trip to Cuernavaca, Mexico.

19 students from every level of Spanish joined together to spend their February break learning about the Mexican culture and improving their Spanish language skills. Students woke up at around 6:30 a.m. everyday, arriving at the local high school by 8 a.m.

"Their school is pretty small, one third of the student population compared to ours, and everything just seemed a lot more laid back than here," junior Shaya Pourani said.

The lessons started with an hour and a half of conversation with the professors; the more advanced students even got to attend classes alongside their Cuernavacan hosts. School ended at around 2 p.m., and the students would return to their houses to eat a delicious lunch.

"I loved the food. It's really spicy, but really good," Rosenthal said.

Afterward came the more relaxing part of the day, where the students were given leisure time.

However, for some roommates this leisure time, or "siesta," was filled with creepy, crawly surprises.

"There was a giant cockroach in our bathroom, and junior Randy Tsai was screaming, and I had to trap it under a Pringles can," junior Hans Sun said.



Courtesy of ARIEL LIU

Sophomore Michelle Wang, junior Mackenzie Rosenthal, sophomore Ariel Liu and junior Nastasya Kutuyev pose together in Cuernavaca, Mexico.

After the "siesta" came the activities that varied from day to day, such as salsa dance classes, pyramid visits and trips to the black market.

"I think the best part for me was getting to see all the different areas of Cuernavaca, since it's such a diverse and fun place, with a lot of culture," junior Nastasya Kutuyev said.

The last day of the trip, group members had to create projects that showed their knowledge of the Spanish language. Projects ranged from news reports and essays to dancing to salsa music.

For the Spanish department students, the trip was both a learning experience and a break filled with many memories.

"If I can, I'm definitely going again next year," Kutuyev added. ♦

MOCK TRIAL

Big team takes small steps

BY Megana Iyer

Senior Charles Li holds a script in his hand as he nods his head along to the lines. Names such as "Officer Robert Dougherty" and "Dr. Ricki Sanchez" float around the room as mock trial participants throw themselves into their characters.

This was a typical scene rehearsed by the mock trial team throughout the season. After the team received the details of the trial early in the year, they have been working toward the county competition, which took place in mid-February.

Throughout the season, the mock trial team, consisting of 36 members, spent meetings practicing for the county competition and the competition season. The team faced several setbacks as they went through their trials without a real attorney coach.

According to junior Michelle Luo, this year the team lost key seniors Casey Takahashi and Jennie Werner, who were committed to other activities, and the new attorney coach, Ed Quevedo, was unable to attend meetings for the majority of the year.

"Our attorney coach has been missing," Luo said. "We've basically just been working by ourselves."

Additionally, the team had less time to prepare for the case because of its late start to the season.

Li also said that a team member playing the part of a trial character named Ricky Sanchez dropped out just before

the competition, so freshman Jessy Liu had to step in as a replacement.

There have been bright spots in the season such as the influx of members last fall and the addition of a JV team. Teachers Jim Chin and Michael Kim were also crucial to the team's participation.

The team competed against Gundersen High on Feb. 10 and Los Altos on Feb. 11, losing the competitions by seven and three points, respectively, although the team won the third competition against Leland on Feb. 12.

"I'm pretty sure a lot of our other attorneys and coaches agree that [even though] we lost by three points, the other team was a lot weaker," Luo said. "They were [using] notes, they were stuttering and they barely made any objections."

Li attributes the success during the third competition to the team's diligence as the competition neared.

"We really kicked it up [in past] weeks," Li said. "I'm a firm believer in getting them to drill, getting them to do their lines over and over, and getting them to object to each other and think on their feet."

The team closed the season, however, with a loss to Monta Vista by one point on Feb. 13.

"We did the best with what we had. [Next year], we hope to find a reliable attorney coach and prepare the underclassmen for upcoming years, since a lot of them are really strong," Luo said. "Because of all the mishaps, they weren't able to show their true potential." ♦

Our attorney coach has been missing. We've basically just been working by ourselves.

>> junior Michelle Luo

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Subjectivity in class participation unfair

BY Gitika Nalwa

>> candid caricatures

Raise your hand, raise your grade. Incredible, but true — at least in some classes.

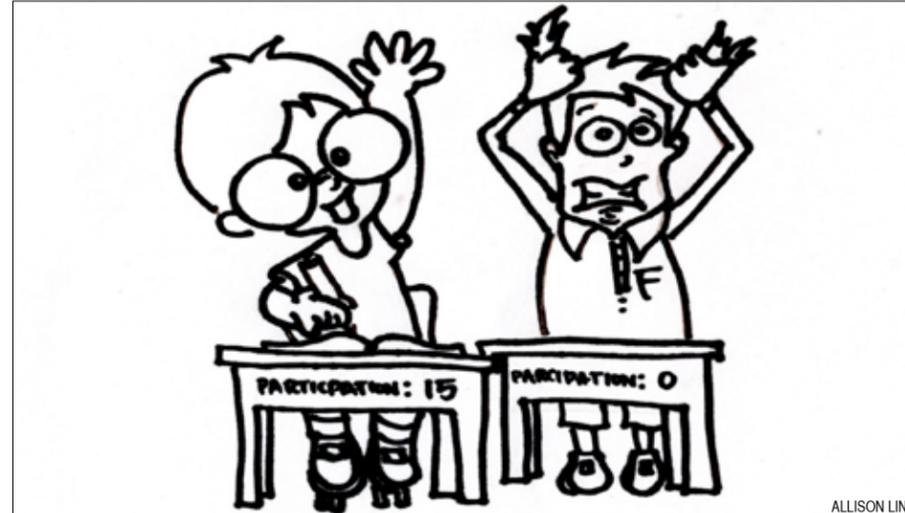
I am, of course, talking about “participation points.” Through my year and a half at the school, it is becoming increasingly and annoyingly evident that those who make the most noise in class are rewarded, and those who remain quieter see their “participation points” plummet on Aeries.

So much for “Empty vessels make the most noise.”

At the school, at least as far as participation goes, quantity is often valued over quality. With just a pen and clipboard in hand, many teachers make tallies of how often a student participates in a day. As a result, in a discussion, students often fight to be called upon, even when their ideas are illogical, irrelevant and quite frankly, nonsensical.

Participation for participation’s sake is a weak and shallow way to measure true engagement. It should more aptly be called disruption. “Participation” should perhaps be replaced by “contribution,” with penalties for repeated and meaningless “disruptions.” It is an idea worth considering.

The beast of participation grades preys on the more introverted among us who demonstrate their understanding of the material primarily through tests, as-



ALLISON LIN

signments and small group discussions. We all know those students — the few that there are — who keep their mouths shut for the better part of the semester. Then, one fine day, such a student shares an idea so extraordinarily profound that it leaves the class dumbfounded.

We mark these students as “the smart ones” and value their few but insightful contributions over all else.

At the same time, we are aware that it is unlikely that these select students will score even an average participation score at the end of the semester. It is un-

likely, and unjust.

I realize that quality is harder to judge than quantity, but that is the nature of humanities.

I have often wondered why there are no participation points in math or science. Could it be that math and science subject matter is so objective that there is no room for “opinions”?

What is it about something as fact-based as history or geography that our collective knowledge and understanding will somehow benefit from individual participation? I can better understand

the value of participation when discussing a classic novel or learning a new language, but less so otherwise.

I admit I am still disgruntled about my participation grade last semester in an unnamed subject, in which I fell short of the next grade by less than a 20th of a percent — all because of a category that is subjective — “discretionary” as I ever so politely put it to the teacher. I won’t deny that upon seeing my grade, I was, in the words of Erich Maria Remarque in “All Quiet on the Western Front,” “at first astonished, then embittered, and finally indifferent.”

Participation is one of those well-intentioned ideas that is overvalued: How likely is it that someone who is relatively clueless, but manages to get a boost off of their participation grades, actually has something consistently valuable to add in class discussions? Could participation be subject to abuse, not only by students ensuring that they make a racket, but also by teachers rewarding their pets?

Perhaps participation grades are meant to simply keep students attentive and engaged. But why should a teacher care about this if students can demonstrate their understanding through tests, essays and projects?

Think about it. In the meantime, keep your hand high, even if you have only blather to contribute. Your grade depends on it. ♦

Forget about memorizing; spend more time learning

BY Nick Chow & Jonathan Young

Enter many high school classes, and you’ll likely see a teacher pacing in the front of the class, lecturing while students frantically try and scribble down notes. This lecture-driven style drives many school systems around the world (most notably China), and these schools are lauded for producing “smart” students en masse.

Through this style of education, the vast majority of the students do indeed remember the material, but for how long? And does this teaching method truly foster understanding?

The two answers — “not long” and a resounding “no” — illustrate the flaws of memorization-based learning, and why it should be banished from classroom teaching.

There are two basic types of learning: holistic and memorization-based. Holistic learning involves creating webs of information and connecting these ideas with other ideas that you have learned. By utilizing holistic learning, you not only gain an enhanced understanding of the topics, but the information is also retained longer.

The trade-off is that holistic learning takes more effort due to its information synthesis period, which is why many students opt for memorization-based learning.

Memorization-based learning is every bit of what it sounds like: memorizing formulas and snippets of information. It’s what most students use to cram for their exams, as it is extremely efficient for short-term memory and consequently for test-taking. However, it does not foster true understanding and long-term memory of the topic.

It’s no wonder why so many students avoid history and biology, because to them, it’s a convoluted conglomeration of various dates, people, places and political ideas, scattered through the dark

and infinite depths of time. That’s because many students approach learning these subjects as if they’re memory competitions, feverishly memorizing a plethora of information but failing to create connections and not attaining true understanding.

Of course, memorization based learning is not a plague that we should avoid at all costs; in fact, it’s necessary for certain subjects like biology and chemistry, but it should be used much more sparingly than it is today.

With our smartphones and instant access to the internet, we have access to a wealth of information at our fingertips. Why memorize the chronology of the World War I, when you can have Siri tell you?

But what your iPhone can’t do, is make the connections between the July Crisis and the escalation of the war, and summarily craft a coherent thesis paper. That unique ability to make connections is central to holistic learning.

In order to facilitate the holistic learning process, students must decide to commit extra time in their studying to information synthesis and filling in the gaps of their knowledge through tutorials and outside sources, such as textbooks. Teachers also can help encourage this process by scheduling a lighter homework load to give more time for students to digest information.

Holistic learning requires an initial time investment, but the massive return is an enhanced understanding and mastery of topics studied.

It’s idealistic and impractical to suggest that all memorization-based learning must be eradicated from society, but we should take appropriate efforts to limit it in the classroom, and students will make the connection between understanding and true learning. ♦

Asian American ‘Jeopardy’ genius defies racial biases

BY Helen Wong

Recently, the popular trivia game show “Jeopardy” has frothed itself into a state of conflicted frenzy over Arthur Chu, an Asian American insurance compliance worker from Ohio. Chu has won the last five games in a row with total winnings clocking in at \$238,200 as of Feb. 24. The backlash against him, though, has been surprisingly immense and completely unjustified.

Chu’s playing tactics are aggressive and random; he sometimes interrupts host Alex Trebek before the question is finished, and he does not make any effort to be genteel.

This, in addition to how he fits the American Asian stereotype of an unattractive, overachieving nerd, has led to a strongly polarized response from those hardcore “Jeopardy” fans out there, who

have hailed him as either a villain or a hero, depending on which side of the island they’re on.

Undoubtedly, Chu’s racial profile is a major factor in the backlash against him. Chu clearly diverges from the demeanor expected of him as an Asian. He isn’t demure, quiet, and studious, and this appears to unsettle a whole lot of people.

What does this say about the role of Asians in American society today? Someone like Chu, can’t even go on a game show and win by virtue of strategies other non-Asian contestants have used before without racist comments being thrown at him from every quarter.

The hard truth is that Chu is too different from the conventional Asian American that Americans have come to expect. Most Asians stay on the fringes of politics and pop culture, and so have nurtured the conception of American Asians as a “model minority,” a title intended to praise a minority who doesn’t

meddle in the home nation’s affairs. The stereotypical American Asian is quiet, nerdy and essentially relegated to background noise.

It doesn’t help Chu’s case that he’s chubby and not exactly a looker. We all know how superficially biased America can be. But it’s extremely disappointing that so many Americans refuse to see past his appearance and race, unable to acknowledge that this man has used his own smarts to win more than \$200,000.

For many young people who are Asian by descent and American by birth, it gets frustrating that Asians simply don’t get much representation in either politics or pop culture.

However, the fault for that does lie partly in that many Asian American families want their children to settle in “safe” job areas like medicine and law rather than media or politics. The result

is that America has gotten to used to seeing Asians as a “model minority.”

Chu represents something bigger than himself; he has forcefully broken the

stereotype wall. In doing so, he has exposed an America that still finds it difficult to accept people doing activities outside their stereotypically designated roles. It was OK for Chu to be a quietly prosperous insurance agent. It was not OK for him to go on a popular game show and win.

America needs more people like Chu. It doesn’t have to just be Asian Americans. It can be Hispanics, African-Americans, Native Americans, anyone. There just have to be enough people who are willing to step outside their stereotypes, who are brave enough to face down the opposition a still racially biased America will undoubtedly give. Only then can our country see people like Chu as an unique individual rather than an offensive stereotype. ♦

America has gotten too used to seeing Asians as a model minority alone.

THIRDPERIOD

STAFFPOLICY

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

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Time to eliminate top honors?

VALEDICTORIAN, SALUTATORIAN HONORS UNNECESSARY

>> candidcaricatures

Saratoga High is known for its high-aiming students and equally high levels of stress. To add to the competitive atmosphere, a select group of high-scoring seniors with soaring GPAs each year become contestants in one last competition: the race for valedictorian and salutatorian.

Though these titles are certainly well-earned and admirable honors for two students each year, the practice of naming a valedictorian and salutatorian runs counter to the competitiveness the school has tried to reduce.

Throughout the year, guidance counselors, teachers and outside speakers continuously tell us to take classes that we enjoy — to focus on the learning experience, not just the grades and numbers. These messages appear to be hypocritical hogwash when the school awards its top academic honors based only on GPA.

By having the valedictorian honor, the school endorses the message that students should load their schedules with as many Honors and AP classes as possible. The only way to win the title is to have a GPA over 4.5. The only way to have a GPA that high is to ace a dozen or so Honors or AP classes

during high school.

In addition, the race for top academic honors sometimes leads students to drop regular, sequential classes such as orchestra and journalism as these classes drag down GPAs.

Rather than completely eradicating the tradition of valedictorian and salutatorian, perhaps the school could adopt a more well-rounded set of requirements such as extracurriculars, leadership and service. The school could also consider adding to the number of recognized students, may-

be as many as five to seven.

Still, even with these possible alternatives, there remains the obvious question: What's the point? Is there any real purpose in singling out two or even a handful of top students at the end of their high school careers?

Students have plenty of opportunities for accolades in their final year. After all, the school dedicates an entire "Senior Awards Night" to honor students.

Why include the additional accolade? Surely parents can survive without another bragging point.

It's time to push aside ingrained traditions that go against the school's mission. The valedictorian and salutatorian honors, entirely unnecessary as they are, only add to the rat race that encourages our student body's seemingly unquenchable AP and Honors thirst. ♦



>> Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

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Cristina Curcelli
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The *Saratoga Falcon* staff voted 21-11 in support of the editorial.

>> togatalks

Should the school continue to have valedictorians and salutatorians?

“You have your MVP for sports, you pick drum majors for band, and I think it's good to recognize people.”



senior Jennie Werner

“Yes, I think it gives credit to those two students who really stood out in the academics.”



senior Mohith Subbarao

Body language: Fake it until you become it

BY Allison Lin

Imagine a student walking down the hallway, arms swinging at his side, shoulders back and openly giving high-fives to other students passing by. Everybody looks at this student and thinks he is someone who was born confident. His emotions and confidence did not come first. His posture, gestures and body language have helped him become the person he is.

Students who are ambivalent or timid can change just by opening up. In a way, they need to fake these “power poses” to boost their confidence and courage.

Simply put, your body language shapes who you are.

Many students think to themselves: “I don't belong at this academically challenging school,” “I don't belong on this stage,” “I don't belong in this crowd” or “I don't qualify to go to this college.”

If you pretend that you belong wherever it is that you want to be, and your nonverbal behavior reflects this, you will gradually feel like you belong.

In every classroom, there is always a student who regularly sits near the back

of the classroom, with her head bent low and never raises her hand. Her participation grade in the class continues to slide, and she wants to change this. To begin, she can voluntarily sit up straight and uncross her arms and legs. She can raise her hand higher in the air, as well as subtly nod her head to acknowledge other students' comments.

According to social psychologist Amy Cuddy, body language, or nonverbal behavior, is a form of communication and interaction. We focus on how our body language affects others and how their body language affects us, only to forget that we, ourselves, are also influenced by our body

language.

The popular belief is that a person's emotions and feelings affect his body language at that moment in time, and that a person in high spirits opens up his body, while someone who is in a sad mood physically closes up and avoids getting in other people's space.

Cuddy's studies proves the opposite: Body language affects your emotions.

A student who fully extends his arm when raising his hand, walks with his

shoulders back and gives others in the hallway a high-five might be someone who is used to being the alpha-figure. But again, his confidence did not come first. His bold body language and choice to take up more space boosted his testosterone, giving him poise and tenacity.

The more space you take up, the more confident you become. Whereas if you are timid and close up your body, you automatically become less certain.

We are all under an inordinate amount of pressure as teens, and any improvement in our confidence would help immensely, in both our social and academic lives. We shouldn't take this as a sort of gimmicky, cliché advice, but instead put this into practice.

Take a moment, and do a quick self-assessment of your body gestures. Are you crossing your legs and wrapping your ankles, or are you spread out and sitting up straight? Look at the other people around you and notice their body language. Are they smiling, waving, giving a handshake or nodding their head? If you lack the confidence that you want to have, use this opportunity to gain that confidence through body language.

Just like Cuddy encouraged adults in the workplace, student should also “fake it until you make it,” or more importantly, “fake it until you become it.” ♦

Body language, or nonverbal behavior, is a form of communication and interaction.

Cameras maintain peace in classrooms

BY Oksana Trifonova

A teacher quickly steps out of the class to make extra copies of a hand-out, but the second the door closes, the class erupts into a cacophony of laughter and talking. When no one is watching them, many students do not feel obligated to behave, and the classroom soon disintegrates into a scene reminiscent of the uncontrolled chaos in "Lord of the Flies."

But what if someone or something were watching students every second of class time?

A camera is just what every classroom needs to make it a place of exemplary conduct with the students discussing and learning ideas relevant to the course. Several schools nationwide have installed cameras, and all report a decrease in petty theft, vandalism, and most importantly, bullying.

For instance, the Connetquot Central School District of Islip, N.Y., deployed a district-wide surveillance system in 2010 to centrally monitor all 11 schools, offering Suffolk County Police Department the ability to temporarily access the cameras.

Connetquot reported a 60 percent reduction in vandalism after installing its new system.

The Utica Community Schools, the second largest district in Michigan, took a slightly different approach: They are putting footage in real time on screens in the hallway so that students can see they are being filmed — a deterrent to bad behavior.

Obviously, not every infraction recorded can be punished.

But the cameras add a deterrent that wouldn't exist without them: In the back of every student's mind, there remains the lingering question of what if they get caught?

The chance that they might face consequences as a result of their actions lends the cameras a fear factor — it acts as an incentive not to act out and instead focus on productive behavior. For instance, a student is working on a group project and the teacher's back is turned: a perfect time to text a friend. The student reaches for his iPhone but

then the metallic gleam of a camera in the corner catches his eye.

A million thoughts race through his head. Will the camera catch me? What will the consequences be? Will my grade in the class go down?

Cameras can also be used to combat cheating incidences, several of which arose this year in SHS, making it easier for the staff to monitor the students and helping avoid any complications as a result of copied testing material.

Of course, there is always the question of privacy. Several people claim that cameras in schools is a violation to the basic right of privacy that every student is entitled to. However, students must understand that a class is not their house or their bedroom.

The school is a public institution that is primarily concerned with the goal of providing a secure environment for education.

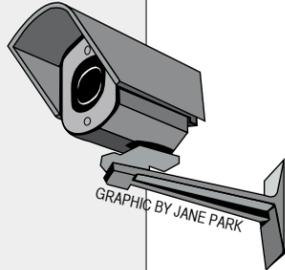
The right to privacy is secondary if the students' actions interfere with the school's purpose.

In addition, many argue that cameras build a barrier of mistrust between the teacher and the students.

Yet it's merely a camera placed in a school; it's not like schools are putting tracking devices and monitoring students 24/7: it's merely an apparatus to maintain the safety of the school and the students, similar to cameras in a store or a bank.

Finally there is the issue of cost. The benefits, however, greatly outweigh any charges for the cameras: any parent would donate however much is needed to ensure that their children are being led on the path of enlightenment and not astray.

Next time the teacher leaves the room, the students will be diligently working under the watchful lens of the camera. ♦



<< PRO CON >>

Security systems in classrooms pointless

BY Vibha Seshadri

On the campus of Central Michigan University in the town of Mt. Pleasant, administrators have installed security cameras in hopes of catching thieves. Sadly, as recounted by senior Meghan Rhoa in the publication CM Life, the cameras failed to capture any images showing who stole her friend's bike.

This is just one example of the downsides of cameras on campuses.

Despite the fact the cameras often fail to catch thieves, administrators continue to put them up on

campuses all over the country — a threat to the learning environment of students and teachers alike.

Many schools around the country have installed security camera systems inside schools with the hopes of reducing vandalism, thefts, drug use and fighting. Twenty-eight out of 30 schools in Oakland County, Mich., have followed this course of action, installing cameras in schools, except inside locker rooms and bathrooms.

Students may now feel the need to be extra careful with everything they say or do because they are always conscious of someone watching them.

In response, students at Seaholm High School and Groves High School in Oakland County have started the group "Students against Security Cameras" (SASC), which has been actively protesting the installment of cameras stating it creates an "atmosphere of distrust in schools."

Distrust is not the only concern with cameras in a school environment.

According to Scholastic, a company dedicated to literature and education, the installation of a camera security system costs about \$500,000, not including regular maintenance fees. Although schools will most likely not

withdraw money from accounts used for educational purposes, the money used for installing these cameras could be put to much better use.

Furthermore, many schools installing these systems are already safe.

One example of this is Ann Arbor Pioneer School, a school with "low crime rates" according to legislative director of American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan (ACLU) Shelli Weisberg. When asked, students at Ann Arbor say the system has increased a level of discomfort in the school environment.

The purpose of installing these cameras is to reduce crime on campus, not to make anyone uncomfortable. However, a loss of privacy and comfort for the students is the result.

Even if a crime were to occur at a high school with the camera systems, there is no guarantee it will help administrators solve it efficiently. For starters, most crimes occur in locker rooms; however it is illegal to place security cameras in locker rooms and bathrooms. Installing cameras in open areas will barely reduce crime since they do not occur in there.

When a Michigan principal was asked by Weisberg how he would determine the right criminal among 50 other students for a theft caught by the security system, he replied, "We know who the bad kids are."

This only made Weisberg wonder "why do [they] need the camera?"

Since schools are able to operate normally without added monitoring cameras, security systems should not be established in any school setting. Schools do not need to place multiple security cameras in hallways, classrooms and useless settings where crimes are not usually committed.

If a school feels that security cameras are a necessity to keep their campus safe, they should place them near entrances or exits of the school or focus on areas where most crimes occur. This way students can come with an open mind to school, ready to learn, without having their academic environment compromised. ♦

Sochi: good effort, but poor precedent for future Games

BY Megan MacInnes & Helen Wong

The buzz from the Winter Olympics is winding down. The Games had a good showing, everyone was safe and there were no major international incidents. On the whole it was deemed successful, but seeing as the country had four years to prepare could it have been better? Was Russia ready?

If the president of Russia, Vladimir Putin, were writing this article, he would undoubtedly spout something about how glorious Russia is, and how Russia was an exemplary host of the most important international sports event in the world.

And the Games were enjoyable and fun to watch. The world got to appreciate Russia's culture through the beautiful opening and closing ceremonies, but that doesn't negate the host of issues that plagued the Olympics. Including but not limited to: barebone Olympic

Village accommodations, unusable running water, half-built motels, uncovered manholes on the sidewalks and stray animals inside said motels.

And then, of course, the threat of a possible terrorist attack on the Olympic site itself loomed large over the Games. Russian officials feared action from Islamic extremists in the North Caucasus region, which is very close to Sochi itself. Fears which were fueled by the two suicide bombings earlier this year in nearby cities Volgograd and Dagestan.

Putin's assurances didn't do much to mitigate the situation. Although the government spent a good \$50 billion on the Games compared to London's \$14.8 billion for the summer Games, mostly in keeping it safe.

Couple that fear with the Russian government's recent questionably ethical decisions restricting the LGBTQ rights and citizen protest, and the resulting political kerfluffle presented a pretty problem for the

rest of the world.

Many officials allegedly did not attend the games in protest of the anti-gay laws, though only the Lithuanian president explicitly provided this as the reason for her absence.

Many tried to rally support to actively protest the anti-gay laws in Russia during the Olympics. Known LGBTQ activists were barred from simply attending Olympic events; their tickets did not guarantee them a spot because an additional Olympic Passport (for security measures) was needed.

Unfortunately, American athletes did not make any collective gesture of solidarity for Russia's gay community, nor for their own back home. There were, however, a number of Americans on the Olympic delegation who were openly gay, including former figure skater Brian Boitano and ice hockey player Caitlin Cahow.

Then, in regard to protest rights, some questioned the legitimacy of Putin's supposed

>> candid caricatures



concession. An area was penned off for protesting, but it was located in a hard-to-reach village a full 7 miles from the site of the Olympic Park. But a clause in the Olympic Charter actually prohibits protests directly at Olympic venues, so Russia actually had the right to do this, in spite of the criticism.

It must be acknowledged that

Russia gave its all to make Sochi 2014 a good Winter Olympics, but it just wasn't enough. There are too many infrastructural and socio-political issues plaguing Russia's government and international relations for a \$50 billion face lift to fix everything. We hope the 2018 Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea, will be judged more positively. ♦

Thai eatery creates culinary delights

BY Gitika Nalwa

As I stepped across the threshold of Siam Thai Cuisine, an exquisite aroma enveloped me. I smelled sweet, sour and everything in between. So, this was Thai food.

Unsurprisingly, the quaint restaurant near the DACA Swim School was packed, with a waiting time of around 30 minutes. Couples sat beneath apple-red Mylar balloons, celebrating Valentine's Day with the legendary zest of Thai food.

The dimly lit establishment was cozy and charming, with magnificent maroon curtains, a golden statue of Laughing Buddha by the door and Christmas lights strung about the windows.

I had high hopes, and fortunately, I was not disappointed.

At the recommendation of the waiter, I ordered the BBQ chicken, the kee mao seafood and the prawn garlic pepper, all of which turned out to be delightful. I complemented these dishes with a can of Coca-Cola.

The chicken, served with a sweet chili sauce, was mild but delicious. It was tender yet crispy at the edges. The ingredients seemed fresh and of high quality. I felt that I was getting my money's worth, or, I suppose, my parents' money's worth. The three dishes added up to a total of \$34.

Surprisingly, the sweet chili sauce did not add much to the dish — I found it quite bland — which is a compliment to the chicken. When all was said and eaten, however, the BBQ chicken was a dish well-

chosen.

The prawn garlic pepper was, in contrast, exciting. Infused with pepper, garlic and cilantro, the jumbo-sized shrimp burst with flavor. The dish was spicy without being overwhelming. The shrimp were juxtaposed with several cucumber slices.

Normally, I would not have thought much of this garnishing trick. However, the combination of the cool cucum-



FALCON // GITIKA NALWA

Siam Thai cuisine, located on De Anza Boulevard, serves delicious and authentic food.

ber slices and the peppery shrimp was unexpectedly pleasing to the tongue and provided a nice touch to the dish that I didn't expect. The fusion of the two offered a good balance in taste. All in all, I found this dish to have a certain je ne sais quoi often lacking in other cuisines.

My last dish was kee mao seafood, a dish accompanied by rice noodles and broccoli. At first glance, I was utterly unimpressed. It looked to me like a glob of noodles with a few scallops tossed in. But looks can be deceptive.

Kee mao seafood turned out to be a

delectable dish that enticed me to seek second and third helpings of it. There was nothing extraordinary about this dish; its presentation was humdrum, and it did not have the punch of the prawns. But it was simply tasty, and that was enough.

A restaurant should have an inviting environment, reasonable prices and, most importantly, good food. Siam Thai Cuisine excelled in each of those categories.

In short, Siam Thai Cuisine was a delightful culinary adventure to which I'll definitely be back for seconds. ♦

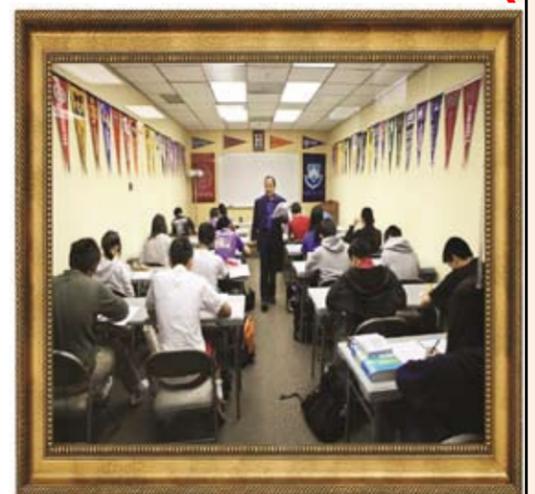


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GRAPHICS BY JAMIE PARK AND ROTEM SHAKED
 Photos courtesy of YELP



In the springtime When the weather is warm

REPORTERS FIND OUTDOOR EXCURSIONS



Carmel-by-the-Sea

Like any other city close to the coast, the salty air that lingers and the sunsets over the ocean make the town of Carmel-by-the-Sea most well-known for its white sand beaches. Many people, however, often think only of the bonfires on the beaches, overlooking the city itself.

Located a little more than an hour away near Monterey, Carmel, though far, greets visitors with its charm.

From quaint restaurants to galleries that display art in many mediums, a stroll in downtown Carmel provides a glimpse into many of the city's unique shops.

One such shop is Cottage of Sweets. Located on Ocean Avenue, the shop has been open since 1959. In addition to its great assortment of fudges, it also boasts more than 50 types of licorice from multiple countries and remains a place worth visiting in Carmel.

Even if you're not up to having a busy day, the atmosphere of the city provides a nice place to take a stroll; after all, any city by the sea is always relaxing. ♦

-Helen Chen



Lake Elizabeth

With Spring coming into full swing, people look for new places to visit. Lake Elizabeth Park in Fremont is one such place.

One of the main amenities of the park is its open nature. With more than 45 picnic areas and large amounts of open green grass, the park offers great space to relax.

For those who want to be more active, Lake Elizabeth offers a great amount of activities free for the public including volleyball, softball, and soccer.

However, the best amenity the park offers is a water park that opened five years ago. With water slides, a pool and a lazy river, the aqua park is a great attraction.

Lake Elizabeth is an open park with many great features. Although the drive is a little long, it is worth it. ♦

-Aditya Chaudhry



Mission Peak

Its 4 a.m., and you wonder why you're up so early. For a Saratogan, the drive up to Mission Peak Regional Park can be a pain, but the experience is well worth it.

Mission Peak Regional Park is located in Fremont and is about a 30-minute drive from the high school.

The hike is about 6 miles in total, but it's more tiring than it seems. The last stretch is a struggle — the rocks along the steep trail take a toll on the knees, but the rush to reach the top keeps one motivated. The hike along the mountain gives a great view of the San Jose area. The view at the top is breathtaking. The sun rises beyond the mountains to the east and creates a golden sea in the sky. While the hike was somewhat difficult, the serene view is well worth it.

"The views are beautiful and it's a great way to bond with friends," senior Rachel Perera said. "And after, you can eat as much food as you want because you just hiked 6 miles of mountain!" ♦

-Jonathan Young



Stevens Creek Archery Range

Though California is desperately in need of some rain, the dry weather does afford some time for outdoor activities, like archery.

The Stevens Creek Archery range, off of Mt. Eden road in the Stevens Creek County Park, is a nearby place to try.

The range is open to the public and has 28 archery stations with hay bale targets. Free archery lessons are available on the first Sunday of every month between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. for groups of five or fewer.

Lessons are also available on other days for a fee and with a reservation. The range is open to the public from 8 a.m. to sunset.

Equipment is provided, and lesson instructors teach the basics of archery: equipment, operating procedures and proper shooting technique.

Archery is a fun and doable activity for everyone, even those typically disinclined to sports. So if you want to try out some archery, head up into the hills for some exercise, while trying something new with friends. ♦

-Megan MacInnes



Capitola

Grab your sandals and head to the boardwalk to spend an entire day gorging funnel cake, screaming on roller coasters and taking silly photo booth pictures with your friends. With spring right around the corner, what's better than spending an entire day on the beach? Surfing, building sandcastles and collecting seashells is the epitome of sunny, carefree days of spring break. ♦

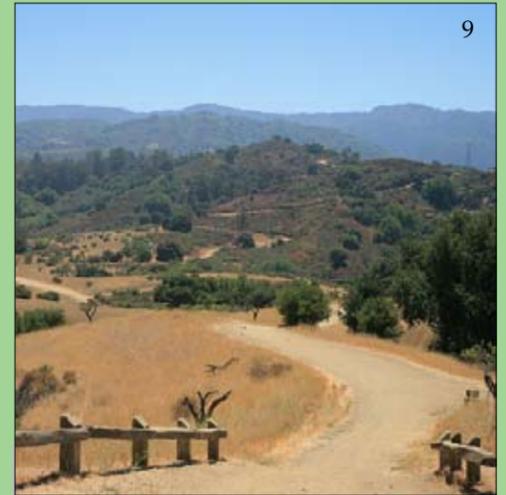
-Oksana Trifonova

San Francisco

What: St. Patrick's Day Parade
Where: Market Street to the Civic Center
When: March 17

If you are feeling the luck of the Irish, then join Saint Patrick's Day celebrations on March 17. The day will be filled with activities varying from Irish dancing to corned beef to trying on a tweed jacket, this celebration will enrich your day like a pot of gold! ♦

-Oksana Trifonova



Fremont Older

Spring has come earlier than usual to California this year. One of the great things to do in this Spring weather is go hiking.

Fremont Older Open Space Preserve, is one of the great hiking places in Saratoga.

The park offers 14.7 miles of trails and over 700 acres of wildlife for the public. With trail loops ranging from 2 miles to 8 miles, it offers a wide variety of trails.

One of the great trails that anyone can try is the two mile hike to Hunter's point.

At the top of Hunter's Point, visitors will see a sweeping view of the Santa Clara Valley and the nearby trails and natural life.

With over 14 miles of trails and wide variety of views, Fremont Older is a local nature spot which everyone will enjoy. ♦

-Aditya Chaudhry



Great America

Come March 29, the air will be filled with gleeful screaming and the whirring of mechanical tracks. Why? Because that's when California's Great America reopens for the spring and summer crowd.

The park will open at 10 a.m. and close at 6 or 8 p.m. — the schedule varies throughout the spring, so be sure to check the website before you plan your trip. Day tickets for adults are \$47.99 per person and \$42.99 for children and seniors (tickets don't include food and snacks, so bring enough money for food). It's about a 20-to-30 minute drive from Saratoga, depending on traffic.

Great America is best known for Flight Deck, previously named Top Gun after the blockbuster movie. But when Cedar Fair bought the park from Paramount in 2006, the name was changed.

Other popular attractions include Delirium, Tiki Twirl, Vortex, Drop Tower and its newest addition, Gold Striker. Gold Striker is the tallest and the fastest wooden roller coaster in Northern California. The ride opened last June and is known for its 54 mph speeds.

The ride measures up better than the other wooden roller coaster at the park, the Grizzly, which is infamous for violently jerking its passengers. Some other less heart-pounding rides are the Rip Roaring Rapids and the 200 foot Star Observation tower.

So lace up your sneakers and head over to Great America for a place to let loose and forget about all the homework you have to do. ♦

-Megan MacInnes

Skyline

When students find nothing better to do at the end of a stress-filled school week, they visit the Skyline trail. The place has become a favorite spot for students to just relax and enjoy the view.

One draw to Skyline is its close vicinity. Skyline is just a quick drive away. Right off of Highway 9 on Big Basin Way, the Skyline view point is as spectacular as it is convenient.

"I like how natural everything is even though it's only a few minutes away," senior Andrew Firth said. "It's definitely worth visiting."

The location is perfect for viewing the majestic scenery of Saratoga and its surrounding cities. As the night descends, lights from buildings across the Bay Area flick on, and as each light is switched on, the panoramic view from Skyline is illuminated. ♦

-Jonathan Young



G(ame)O(f)T(hrones) to watch Season 4

BY Nikhil Goel

April 6 is less than a month away, but for "Game of Thrones" viewers, the wait is torturous. The show of epic proportions is widely known for its grand sets and momentous cliffhangers; however, according to Executive Producer/Writer/Director D.B. Weiss, "[Season 4] is not building toward one specific, climactic event. There are more climactic events in season 4 than there have ever been before."

For those unfortunate souls who are not familiar with the series, "Game of Thrones" follows the lives of the royal families of Westeros and Pentos, two massive islands separated by the Narrow Sea. Like a Dan Brown novel, the show shifts the protagonist perspective every 5-10 minutes, illustrating how intertwined each character's conflict is with the next. The fantasy series revolves around the civil war over the Iron Throne and involves themes of death,

corruption, hope, resilience, sexuality, avarice, family and much, much more.

Season 3 ended with Daenerys Targaryen's moving liberation of the Yunkish as they chanted "Mhysa," or mother, with outstretched arms. One does not need to be a genius to understand that Season 4 will revolve around Danny's return to Westeros with full-grown dragons, the Unsullied army, the Dothraki and loyal bodyguards at her back. And who doesn't want to see an underdog queen rise to power on the backs of dragons?

Much of the anticipation surrounding Season 4 comes from three simultaneous, major dilemmas. On one side of the conflict is the political drama that affects every man, woman and child in Westeros. On the brink of full-scale war, the major families are vying for power and forming alliances: the Lannisters and the Tyrells against the remaining Baratheons, Starks and newcomers, the Martells.

In Season 4, we will see the introduction of Oberyn Martell, a snake-like, dangerous prince who comes slithering for revenge against the Lannisters. As seen in the Season 4 trailer, Oberyn uses the Lannister motto when he states to Tyrion Lannister, "The Lannisters aren't the only ones who pay their debts."

On another side of the conflict is the incoming invasion of both the human Wildlings and the zombie White Walkers from beyond The Wall. Currently in the show, all the warring and plotting families do not fully compre-

hend the threat of this onslaught from the North.

And so a huge burden lies upon the shoulders of Jon Snow, the now tacit leader of the Night's Watch whose sole mission is to protect Westeros from the dangers from beyond The Wall. Jon is recovering from three arrow wounds delivered by his Wildling lover

Ygritte, and it will be interesting to see how that relationship develops in the upcoming season after Jon betrayed her trust and that of the Wildlings. But, as we saw in Season 4 during Jon's time with Ygritte, the so-called Wildlings are ordinary humans and are simply unfortunate to have been born on the wrong side of a gargantuan ice wall.

There are good people within each



BnB choreographer looks back on dance experience

BY Oksana Trifanova

The lights dimmed, and a bright circle of light spotlighted the colorful silhouettes of the dancers. As they took their positions during Bombay in the Bay held on Feb. 14 and 15, two figures in the middle donning shimmering blue tops and sequined purple skirts stood out from the rest. Their moves were flawless, agile and precise.

These two dancers also held an even more important role in the event. They were the choreographers, the people showing all the other seniors what to do.

Considering Shetty's high position now, one would assume that she was always passionate about Bollywood dance and eager to get involved in BNB. However, this was not the case at the beginning.

"Actually, [my mom] really wanted me to join BNB. I was new my freshman year and never joined, and my mom literally forced me to join sophomore year to meet more people in the Indian community," Shetty said.

Luckily, joining ended up being one of the best decisions of her life. Year by year, she worked her way up the ranks, first learning the dances, then creating them.

She draws inspiration from Bollywood movies, other Indian dances and "literally anything I can think of in my head." Yet, this leadership position came with a price.

Since it takes approximately an hour to choreograph around 30-40 seconds of a dance and the senior coed program consisted of eight songs, the time amounted up to 8-10 hours of hard work to create the choreography.

And that's not to mention the hours spent after school practicing. They started dance practice the first week of winter break, practicing twice a week, two hours for each dance, all the way until the show. The closer they got to the show, the longer they practiced.

While Jain worked with girls, Shetty practiced with boys, which had both pros and cons.

"The boys are distracted all the time, so it was a struggle," Shetty said. "But when they do pay attention it's the cutest thing because they all get super excited."

Fortunately, all their hard work was rewarded in the end.

"The most rewarding part is actually just dancing on stage. It only takes like seven minutes, but it's so relieving to perform well for those moments," Shetty said. ♦



Shetty



Courtesy of soundstyle.com

Artwork for Bank's 2013 hit single, "Warm Water," which brought her into the spotlight.

Music recommendations: singer-songwriter Banks

BY Ingrid Hong

Los Angeles-based vocalist Jillian Banks, known as BANKS, has grown quite the reputation in a short time. It all started with her sultry single "Warm Water," a somber, loungey, beat-driven single that captivated many ears. Her soothing vocals along with the song's hook really set a wave through the blogosphere.

"London," her debut EP, has with melancholic tracks about disarrayed love, doled out over sparse R&B beats and soft, ambient melodies. With a voice that floats effortlessly between sultry, strong and wispy, Banks knows what she wants but also understands the pitfalls of the realities.

Certain lines are repeated over and over again, but instead of sounding repetitive, Banks' reiterations come off as necessary echoes. She has mentioned in interviews that song writing and producing are a must when she is overwhelmed with emotion or when she

cannot formulate words accurate of her feelings. Writing makes her feel strong, and it shows in London EP.

The opener "Waiting Game" is Banks' best moment yet: sampled breathy choir and subtle piano let her husky vocals take over. Banks sings of detachment and loneliness in the most alluring way, yet again showing her fragile nature. The sparking-with-electricity "This Is What It Feels Like" is a more intense song with mixed beats and proves the vague "It" in the song title does not matter, for listeners feel and embrace the emotional delivery of the track. It's heart-stoppingly good stuff, utterly compelling and beguiling.

Whenever Banks does release a full length project, there is a strong chance that her popularity will sky rocket in the same fashion that Lorde's did in 2013. Why? Because her style is accessible to a large demographic and has the vocals to back it. Her raw and timeless voice will captivate listeners for years to come. ♦

'Gravity' able to redeem the slipping sci-fi movie genre

BY Helen Wong

Alfonso Cuarón's "Gravity" features two astronauts stranded above Earth, isolated and cut off from ground help. They, the valiant heroes, must find their way back home as their oxygen levels deplete, and time starts running out.

The storyline sounds rather typical. Two people are stuck in space, explosions occur, flashy special effects are splattered over the film and maybe some signs of alien life float by, along with a supernova or two. Next, please.

Such stereotypes are just the sort of level that science fiction seems to have fallen to. We've had two decades of movies stuffed with either overdone special effects or not enough of them, tired storylines, and honestly bad movies. The downward trend began with "Star Trek: The Motion Picture" in 1979, and only

became steeper as time marched on.

"Battlefield Earth" in 2000 was possibly when the sci-fi movie industry hit rock bottom, and it didn't seem to get back up. Granted, "Star Trek: Into Darkness (2013)" was a good bit of improvement, but that wasn't enough to resuscitate the sci-fi movie industry. Or the genre itself, actually.

But last year, "Gravity" defied expectations and presented itself as the sci-fi of the new age. It's realistic enough to spook but has just enough drama to keep the movie true to its genre. Its greatest selling point is that it's not hammed up

with excessive explosions and loud music. It's subtle, restrained and tense.

The cinematography itself is a work of art. The astronauts, floating alone against a background of star-studded danger, play on the human fear of being stranded and doomed to die in a beautiful, lifeless vacuum.

The raw emotion of watching someone desperately fighting for life in an alien world brings chills to the audience and permeates the whole film with a wonderful sense of tension. Sandra Bullock, the leading actress, conveys a whole spectrum of emotions perfectly.

Unsurprisingly, by the time awards season rolled around, "Gravity" had pulled a plethora of nominations.

Cuarón, the director and writer, won a Golden Globe and Oscar for Best Director. Critics raved, and for good reason.

"Gravity" represents hope for a genre that's been drowning in its once-loved antics. Gone is the era of tinfoil spaceships, plastic-masked "aliens" and planets populated with people in bad makeup. Modern standards are higher. Scientific ideals have changed. We Americans don't even have rockets anymore; the program was cut a couple of years ago, rendering the theme of great, glorious rockets utterly obsolete.

This is the new age. For us, the sci-fi of the late 1990s is horribly tacky. "Gravity," however, worked with what's left of the genre and satisfied our modern eyes and jaded tastes. With a bit of luck, perhaps there'll be more films like it in the future, and maybe science fiction will make a bold return. ♦



2014 Oscars close on a high note

BY Oksana Trifonova

What is the best way to begin the 86th Academy Awards? Take a selfie of course! This year's Oscars featured Ellen DeGeneres as the host, who made the ceremony fun and unforgettable. "One of the nominees is 'Her.' And by 'Her' I mean Meryl Streep," DeGeneres said while announcing the nominees for best actress in a leading role.

The award went to Cate Blanchett for her role in the movie "Blue Jasmine." While accepting her award, Blanchett made sure that the runner-ups were not left out. "As random and as subjective as this award is, it means a great deal in a year of extraordinary performances by women," Blanchett said.

In the best supporting actress category, Jennifer Lawrence was a nominee for her role in "American Hustle." "This year I actually did a stair test," joked Lawrence referring to her trip-up at last year's Oscars. Ironically, moments after, she tripped over a cone on the red carpet.

The title of best actress in a supporting role ended up going to Lupita Nyong'o, who played a young female slave in the movie "12 Years a Slave," which also won an Oscar for best movie of the year.

"I dedicate this award to all the people who have endured slavery and the 21 million people who still suffer slavery today," director Steve McQueen said upon accepting his Oscar.

Predictably, "Frozen" won the award for best animated movie, followed by Idina Menzel's performance of "Let It Go," which also won an Academy Award for Best Original Song.

In the performers category, Leonardo DiCaprio had the chance to finally win a long-awaited Oscar for Best Actor in a Leading role, which he arguably deserved after starring as a sleazy and selfish stock broker in "The Wolf of Wall Street." Unfortunately, it wasn't meant to be. His heartbroken face revealed it all when Matthew McConaughey's name was announced instead of his own. Putting on a brave face, he hugged his fellow actor congratulating him on the award for the leading role in "Dallas Buyers Club."

The Oscar for Best Supporting Actor went to Jared Leto for portraying a transgender woman in the same film. During his acceptance speech, he dedicated the

Oscar to his mom and victims of AIDS. DeGeneres noticed a bummed-out runner-up Bradley Cooper and gave him the ultimate consolation prize: a couple of scratch-off lottery tickets.

Out of the many tributes to past movies and actors that dotted the show throughout, the most memorable was Pink's performance of the song "Over the Rainbow" in memory of Judy Garland in the movie "Wizard of Oz." Even DeGeneres got in the act when she came out dressed as Glinda the good fairy in a fluffy pink dress and a wand in hand.

After the ceremony, DeGeneres picked up the phone and ordered pizza for the stars. Any delivery guy's dream is to bring pizza to the Oscars — and, in addition, get a \$1,000 tip.

Between Brad Pitt passing out paper plates and DeGeneres giving pizza to Oscar winners, the perfect conclusion of the Academy Awards was a legendary selfie including host Ellen DeGeneres and stars Meryl Streep, Jennifer Lawrence and many more, quickly becoming the most retweeted photo of all time. ♦



Fallon makes solid 'Tonight Show' debut

BY Arjun Ramanathan

Jay Leno's longtime career has had its ups and downs. As his age continues to climb, his retirement as a host on late night television has been pending these last few years. Leno's experience has grown a lot after his 21 years as host of "The Tonight Show." Since he is 63, it was a good time for him to give up his spot.

After his last show on Feb. 6, the general public wondered whether 39-year-old "Late Night" host Jimmy Fallon would be a good fit to take the coveted place as the host of "The Tonight Show." Luckily, his performance on his first Tonight Show proved that he could make it work.

On the premiere of the "Tonight Show" on Feb. 17, Fallon made a happy and cheerful debut, talking about how lucky he was to have the opportunity to host a show with such legacy. He seemed truly happy to hold the job and excited that he was chosen for the position.

He mentioned that it was the first time in 40 years that the show was hosted in New York, and he showcased the set, which has a vintage design. The fact that the show was brought back to New York was an homage to the classic "Tonight Show" and seemed to boost the audience's cheer.

Fallon, throughout his initial monologue, received many cheers and a sufficient amount of laughter, which he deserved for putting on a quality intro. He had already demonstrated his ability to keep his cool and woo the audience into laughter.

A few segments later, a clip was featured in which Fallon and Will Smith collaborated in the Evolution of Hip-Hop dancing, much to the audience's liking.

By this point, Fallon had done a good job introducing his show to the public. He had smoothly displayed that he was a good fit as host and that the decision to choose him was the right one.

Fallon also did a good job transitioning to his interview with Smith, his first guest on the show. He made his banter with Smith pleasant and enjoyable, two traits a host should have with a guest. The crowd seemed to enjoy the interview, and it was fun to hear.

For the remainder of the show, Fallon wrapped up his talk with Smith and had a quick discussion with U2 before they sent the first successful "Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon" off with an acoustic rendition of their song "Ordinary Love."

Jimmy Fallon is a great host for "The Tonight Show." He seemed confident as a host and had no faltering moments. Fallon's version of "The Tonight Show" is essentially the same as his "Late Night" show, and his humor targets a younger audience, a good technique for increasing viewership.

Fallon also very effectively uses social media platforms to further the popularity of his show, often updating his Facebook page and Twitter. Hashtags that are created for the show often become worldwide trending topics. Quickly uploading clips from the show onto Youtube, they often garner millions upon millions of views.

In addition to his style, the classic set and New York atmosphere were a big hit for the long-time fans of the show. With a few more weeks of experience, Fallon is sure to be a host capable of leaving excellent legacy to "The Tonight Show" as a whole. ♦

>> togatalks

What do you think should have been different at the Oscars?



Leo should have won an Oscar."



senior Julianne Wey



Though it was amusing, they went overboard making the actors seem like normal people."



senior Gloria Breck

Season 9 of 'How I Met Your Mother' still harbors potential happy ending

When the show "How I Met Your Mother" announced that this season would be its last, we were a little sad.

Every Monday night for the past nine years, there would always be one more episode about Ted, Barney and the whole gang, and 30 more minutes of laughter.

Yet, we were still excited and anticipated the last hurrah of our favorite show.

The show is about a man named Ted and his quest to find "The One," or "his soulmate" as well as the lives of his four best friends and how they played a role in him finally meeting "The One."

Season 9, the last season, includes glimpses of Ted's future wife, known only as "The Mother." The entire season only shows a 72-hour period of Ted's life, up to the moment where he, as well as we, finally meet the long-awaited Mother.

The season has had many flaws so far, and it has not lived up to our admittedly high expectations. Instead of the 30 minutes of laughter we were used to, the show takes on some more serious themes such as letting go of people and the hardships between a married couple, resulting in less humor and more emotional scenes. So far many of the jokes are corny and contain less substance, but nevertheless gain a small laugh out of us.

Although these moments are not necessarily bad, we enjoy the show primarily for its hilarious theories, recur-

rent inside jokes and all-around light atmosphere. Needless to say, this season is mostly "fluff" with no progressive plot line.

When The Mother first appeared in the Season 8 finale, we were excited to finally see her in a context outside of Ted's descriptions.

However, the final season has not shown any interactions of Ted with The Mother, which makes us frustrated. She has somehow met every other main character in the show but Ted.

The entire show is about Ted meeting his wife (hence the name of the show), but we never see them talk. It would be a real letdown to see them meeting in the last episode.

We have seen little snippets of Ted and The Mother being happily married. We even saw how Ted proposed (not going to lie, Ted's sappiness paid off)! But so far, the ever constant struggle of Ted's undying love for his ex-girlfriend Robin has been the main theme in most of this season's episodes. Right when we think the show is switching gears, it goes in reverse.

We've revisited the locket story at least two times, seen Ted sinfully flirt with Robin more than three times and have witnessed people feeling bad for him because he hasn't been able to let her go for eight years. (Dude, she's getting married in 13 hours to one of your best friends.)

Ted finally watched Robin metaphorically "float away" in the last episode,

so hopefully we will get to venture into Ted's and The Mother's story, the one we have been waiting to watch for nine years. (Tell us her name already!)

We hope to see Ted and The Mother meeting in the next episode or two so that the last five episodes will explain their life and the gang's life after this momentous event.

In the 16th episode, we already learned what led up to The Mother meeting Ted. And honestly speaking, it was a relief to finally watch an episode with substance to it. The Mother has lived up to our expectations every time she's appeared in an episode, and the episode devoted to her made us like her even more.

Ted's nine long years of overanalyzing every date and moment of his life really paid off because The Mother is a keeper. Her humor and insightful advice has definitely added extra layers to the show, and we expect to see some more of it.

With only three episodes left in the season, hopefully Ted will utter the words "that's how I met your mother" and maybe let his kids take a bathroom break. ♦



MAYA RAVICHANDRAN
Maya Papaya



VIBHA SHESHADRI
Good Vibhes



Behind the Label

STUDENTS EXPLAIN THEIR STEREOTYPICAL REPUTATIONS

GRAPHIC BY RACHEL HULL

Class Clown Jokester brightens peers' days

BY NUPUR MAHESHWARI

"Wanna hear a joke? It's clean, I promise. All right, what do you call a twitchy cow?" junior Anshul Aggarwal readies himself for the punchline and exclaims, "Beef jerky!"

Aggarwal is the kid who walks into a room with a smile plastered on his face at all times; he is the guy who works to make everyone around him laugh as hard as possible. In short, Aggarwal is a class clown.

"I tell jokes because it's a way to brighten people's days," he said. "It's the best feeling in the world when you make that one person's day just a little bit better."

But making one person smile is easy compared to cracking up a bigger group, he said.

"There's always a chance a joke will fall flat on its face while you're running it, or that what you may find funny, no one else does," Aggarwal said.

Aggarwal remembers the time when one of his jokes, which required knowledge of photons to understand, failed miserably among some friends.

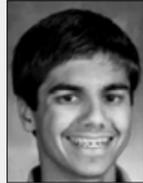
"The joke was two photons walk into a hotel and the bellboy says, 'Are you coming or going?' The photons reply 'Well, isn't it obvious?' And the bartender says 'Nah, I'm color blind,'" said Aggarwal. "The point of the joke is that photons traveling in different directions emit different light waves depending on if they are traveling away

from you or towards you."

The minute the joke had come out of his mouth "nobody said anything for a solid minute" until one girl piped up and said, "I don't get it."

"Those are probably some of the worst words to hear after a joke," said Aggarwal. "It's universally known that

once the joke is explained, it stops being funny. I was able to salvage the situation in the end, but it was a scary 60 seconds."



Aggarwal

Yet, Aggarwal admits that for him, telling jokes during class can be very rewarding.

"It's extremely gratifying to be able to de-stress the classroom and learning environment," he said. "As [students], we all face a lot of stress in our classes and extra-curriculars. Telling a joke and getting people to relax a little bit in the class is always a nice, funny and engaging way to let the class continue to learn and be exciting at the same time."

Junior Robin Osekowsky finds Aggarwal's jokes to be exasperating yet clever.

"There are definitely times when I can't help rolling my eyes," said Osekowsky. "Every once in a while,

though, he makes a really fantastic joke, though, and you just have to give him credit."

Aggarwal started telling jokes more and more in the beginning of sophomore year.

"Once, I heard a pretty hilarious joke, and I just started telling it to my friends the next day," Aggarwal said. "All of them laughed, and it felt good [for] me to be a part of brightening their day."

Eventually, Aggarwal came across another joke he loved and told it the next day as well. And the next. And the next. It soon became a daily routine.

Osekowsky hasn't gone a day without hearing a joke since.

"I hear one at least once per conversation I have with [Aggarwal]," Osekowsky said. "I think his record was

around 20 in one sitting. The amount of jokes he has off the top of his head is extremely impressive."

Aggarwal said that he tells jokes not only to entertain others. He also hopes to learn about the true meaning of humor through trial and error.

"I wanted to understand exactly what makes a joke or a situation or a comment 'funny,' and so I started to tell different types of jokes on different

days," he said. "I judged the reaction of my friends to see how [the jokes] came across, and it became a really fun exercise, so I kept doing it."

When it comes to teachers, Aggarwal believes that "teachers are people as well," and that more often than not, they enjoy his jokes just as much as his classmates do.

"Plenty of teachers have gotten mad at me before," Aggarwal said. "However, I try to remain respectful when I tell a joke — and not interrupt the teacher or the flow of conversation randomly or out of context — to make sure that the classroom environment isn't disrupted too much."

Kathy Nakamatsu, Aggarwal's chemistry teacher last year and this year, recalls his personality with fond memories.

"It all started with [Aggarwal] asking, 'Can I tell you a joke?' and from there it's become a tradition," Nakamatsu said. "I almost come to expect a joke out of him every time we meet. In the end, he makes class a fun place to be, and I think that's a huge factor of his charm."

Aggarwal said he does not plan on stopping the jokes anytime soon.

Though he loves making people laugh, he said his reputation can sometimes pose problems.

"It's tough knowing so many jokes," Aggarwal said. "I have a ton of 'clean' jokes stored up, but now that I've told so many dirty ones, people kind of expect really scandalous [humor] when I don't have any. Expectations, man." ♦

>> THE COWJOKES

By Anshul Aggarwal

What do you call a cow with three legs?

Tri-tip

What do you call a cow with two legs?

Lean beef

What do you call a cow with one leg?

Steak

What do you call a cow with no legs?

Ground beef

>> togatalks

What kind of student do you consider yourself to be?

"I am perpetually curious, and I find pleasure in learning new things."



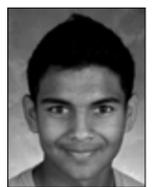
junior Max Chang

"I would say I'm a pretty good student, because I have a good work ethic."



junior Marian Chu

"I put effort into what I do, [but] I don't let my grades define me."



junior Shivaram Yellamilli

Whiz Kid Sophomore breezes through classes

BY HELEN CHEN

As the school year drags on, courses only get harder as more tests approach and more prior knowledge is drawn upon. Many students become flustered or stressed out over grades in difficult classes. They often turn to inefficient ways of studying that take time but are not necessarily effective, such as reading the textbook multiple times or staring mindlessly at notes.

Sophomore Quan Vandinh, however, has been able to deal with this problem. While many other students spend hours studying and struggling to keep up with all their classes, he gets through more efficiently. On the surface, it would seem to be inborn ability.

Vandinh could be considered a whiz;

however, he acknowledges that "natural smartness" does not necessarily mean that he automatically knows all the answers to what is being taught. Instead, his talent lies in the way he perceives presented concepts.

"I see patterns in information," Vandinh said. "I use [this] to better understand and remember what I learn."

Vandinh uses his natural ability to his advantage, and he feels that it has saved him a lot of time. He believes that by learning to apply himself on his own, his pacing for learning the curriculum becomes faster. With

such a method, he is able to grasp lessons taught with more ease, especially in classes that are based on concepts.

While Vandinh excels in all of his classes, he said it is for this reason that he especially likes math and chemistry.



sophomore Quan Vandinh

"I see patterns in information. I use [this] to better understand and remember what I learn."

"Application work is just easy for me," Vandinh said.

Despite his intelligence, Vandinh is very modest, according to fellow sophomore Michael Ren.

"He never flaunts his academic performance," Ren said.

Vandinh also said that his abilities

enable him to understand concepts in a short amount of time.

Sophomore Saro Acharya said Vandinh's perceived smartness belies a strong work ethic.

"He is willing to go above and beyond and not just do the minimum amount of work," Acharya said.

As he moves forward in selecting courses for his upcoming junior year, Vandinh believes he can get through a hard workload without having to sacrifice too much time.

"[My ability to understand more] gives me the chance to load up on challenging courses," Vandinh said. "Although I may not have the same relaxed pace, I [should] be able to take [them] without injuring my sleep schedule too harshly." ♦

Overachiever Busy, busy all of the time

BY Gitika Nalwa

In Saratoga, where many consider the children to be above average, students can find it difficult to stand out. Whatever you can do, someone else can probably do better. Sleepless nights are commonplace; sky-high grades and SAT scores are the norm, and most students seem to play a musical instrument.

At a school where overachievement is the norm, what constitutes overachievement? One example would be sophomore Meera Rachamalla, who excels in sports, music, academics and more.

Rachamalla has been on the school's varsity tennis team for two years.

"My parents signed me up for it, but I really enjoyed it, and I wanted to stick with it," said Rachamalla, who has been playing the sport since second grade.

Rachamalla also plays the cello and the piano, reaching Level 10 in the Certificate of Merit program.

Rachamalla spends a few hours every week playing the piano for patients at Kaiser Permanente, where she also assists nurses and interacts with patients.

"It's a good experience," Rachamalla said. "Helping the sick patients gives me a chance to realize that there are bigger problems in life than failing a math test. We take so much for granted."

In addition, Rachamalla is the co-president and co-founder of the school's Environmental Club.

Her interest in environmental science blossomed while she was at Redwood Middle School. While there, she designed several environmental science-based projects for the Redwood science fairs.

"I truly was passionate about the environment, and I was looking forward to

joining the high school's environmental club," Rachamalla said.

Upon arriving at SHS, Rachamalla was disappointed to find that the school did not have an Environmental Club.

Sophomore Michelle Shen, who is co-founder and co-president of the Environmental Club, and Rachamalla decided to start this club upon finding none when they arrived to high school.

This initiative also pushed Rachamalla to join the school's Science Club, Girl Effect Club and the Baby Advocacy Club, of which she is a co-secretary.

Surprisingly, Rachamalla's extracurricular activities have so far had little impact on her sleeping schedule. She reflects that time management is key.

On an average weekday, Rachamalla comes home between 1:35 and 3 p.m., spends two hours on homework, plays the piano for around an hour and then practices tennis for 1-2 hours. She is usually in bed by 9 p.m.

"I come home and go to sleep as soon as possible," Rachamalla said. "I don't really like spending time on Facebook or YouTube, so I guess that is why I go to sleep early."

Weekends, however, are her "busy time."

"I'm pretty packed on the weekend," Rachamalla said. "I don't have time to go to a lot of the parties that my family gets invited to."

Rachamalla challenges herself academically. This year, she is taking three AP and honors courses. Despite her rigorous course load, Rachamalla is a straight-A student. Next year, as a junior, Rachamalla will take a total of six honors and AP courses.

"I think the difference between me and most students is that my parents



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

Sophomore Meera Rachamalla plays tennis, one of her many extracurricular activities.

are not telling me what to take. In general, my parents don't interfere with my course schedule and my extracurricular activities," Rachamalla said. "They want me to choose courses I will truly enjoy."

Sophomore Ankitha Sarvesh, who has been friends with Rachamalla for over eight years, believes that "[Rachamalla's] drive for excellence is something that inspires many."

"Being able to juggle so many different activities makes her a well-rounded and unique student," Sarvesh said.

Despite such comments, Rachamalla doesn't see herself as an "overachiever."

"A lot of people call me that, but I think about the outstanding people at this school, and I just feel like that is not me," Rachamalla said.

Like many students at the school, Rachamalla often doubts the scale of her accomplishments.

"Sometimes, I feel like it's never

enough," Rachamalla said. "I have to do more and more, and then I just have to stop myself and say, 'No, you are doing enough. Even if you don't get into an Ivy League, you are still self-motivated, and that will take you far.'"

Rachamalla realizes that her perception of her accomplishments may be skewed.

"I've learned that we don't realize how much we do until someone points it out," Rachamalla said. "I just feel like I'm just doing all my regular activities. I'm just used to it."

Yet, Rachamalla is not just a "regular" student. She is an athlete, a musician, a humanitarian and a scholar.

"I do all these activities and study hard because I only have one chance at high school and, as much as I want to just hang out with my friends every day, I also want to invest my time for the future," Rachamalla said. ♦

Procrastinators Students delay schoolwork

BY Vibha Seshadri

Junior Anish Ramanadham blinked his eyes and yawned as he neared the end of the short horror story he has promised to write for a friend's birthday. He had spent the majority of the week writing it for her and couldn't help but smile as he finished his masterpiece.

After finally finishing it, he looked at a clock, which read well past midnight. Unfortunately, Ramanadham still had to start a history project that was due the next day.

At 3 a.m., Ramanadham mustered the energy he had left and pushed past the fatigue to finish his history project. He even received an A on it.

Ramanadham is not a typical teen procrastinator. He does not waste precious hours every day scrolling

through Facebook or watching clips on YouTube or beating his high score on Candy Crush, only to finally realize that he has been neglecting his homework this whole time. Ramanadham procrastinates by using his time to do the activities he enjoys, waiting to the last minute to begin schoolwork.

"I definitely am a procrastinator," Ramanadham said. "I guess what sets me apart is that I procrastinate all the time."

Like many students, Ramanadham loves music and the arts and finds they often distract him.

"I don't mind procrastinating on schoolwork because I have other things that I do prioritize over school, such as playing the guitar or designing artistic things like album covers or tattoos," he said.

However, Ramanadham still be-

lieves procrastinating can be detrimental since it adds unnecessary stress and can confuse his sleep schedule.

In order to relieve his stress, he enjoys writing songs because it lets him express his emotions in a positive way.

He finds that songwriting acts as an outlet for him to remove any frustrations that build up in him due to school or life in general.

"I found [songwriting to be] a good way to vent my thoughts and feelings," Ramanadham said. "I kind of just picked up a pen one day and started writing. I try to procrastinate less, but I also don't mind because I'm doing something that makes me happy."

Like Ramanadham, senior Edward Lin also procrastinates to focus on activities that he enjoys.

"I almost always wait until the last minute to start homework," Lin said. "I

don't remember the last time I started a project or assignment two days before it was due."

In fact, Lin once started a statistics project on car prices at 2 a.m. the day it was due.

Lin said he procrastinates to avoid long and tedious homework assignments. He instead uses his free time to play online poker or solve Rubik's cubes, pastimes that he finds both mentally challenging and gratifying.

Ramanadham believes that students should pursue their interests rather than spend too much time on homework.

"I think making yourself happy is more important than focusing mainly on schoolwork," Ramanadham said. "If you're passionate about something, then a lot of the time you have should be spent on that passion." ♦

Teacher's Favorite Junior bonds with mentor

BY Sudeep Raj

Junior Kevin Chiang doesn't mind saying he is a teacher's pet. He said that for him, maintaining good relationships with teachers is not a difficult task.

"Just stay respectful, say 'hi' every once in a while, and don't take anything for granted," Chiang said.

History teacher Jim Chin, Chiang's world history teacher last year, said that he first liked Chiang because of academics.

"He was a good student, and he al-

ways worked really hard," Chin said.

Chin said that he and Chiang were able to bond over a shared sense of humor, something that goes beyond pure academics.

"Sometimes he would say snarky things and extremely funny but historically accurate comments in class," Chin said. "I am a big fan of those jokes."

Chiang's relationship with Chin developed throughout Chiang's sophomore year, so when Chiang requested to be Chin's teacher's assistant this year, Chin immediately agreed.

"I liked [Chiang] as a student, so I let him be my teacher's assistant," he said.

Chiang said that his role as a teacher's assistant for Chin has further allowed him to develop bonds with him.

According to Chiang, the rapport he has with his teachers has proved useful over the years.

"I felt that I was able to get a lot more out of world history by maintaining a good relationship with [Chin]," Chiang said.

Chiang added that in his world history class last year, he felt less intimidated reaching out to Chin whenever he found the material difficult to understand.

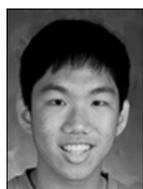
"I was more comfortable asking him questions and asking for help whenever I needed to," Chiang said.

However, contrary to popular belief, Chiang said he finds no academic benefits to being the teacher's favorite.

"[Academics are] more about how hard you work in the class," Chiang said.

Additionally, Chiang said it requires no academic skill to become the teacher's favorite.

"[Grades] don't really matter in my opinion, as long as you don't do anything that offends the teacher," Chiang said. ♦



Chiang

THE TRUTH ABOUT DRUGS



RECENT BUSTS ON CAMPUS
HIGHLIGHT SUBSTANCE ABUSE

ALL GRAPHICS BY HELEN CHEN

Exploring the science behind substances

BY Allison Lin
& Melissa Magner

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry conducted a national study in 2011 and found that a shocking one in three 12th graders have used marijuana in the previous year.

For teenagers, experimenting with alcohol and drugs is common; in fact, many teenagers have a tendency to feel immune to the problems of drugs and do not contemplate about the consequences.

While it is illegal for anyone in the U.S. who is under the age of 21 to buy or use illegal substances or alcohol, the Office of Adolescent Health reported 40 percent of teens drank alcohol and 15 percent abused marijuana in this past month.

Experts fear that teens using these substances can develop an unhealthy dependency on drugs. The less harmful gateway drugs like marijuana sometimes lead to teens relying on more powerful substances that cause greater health problems.

The use of drugs among teens affects every school, and

assistant principal Kevin Mount said that it is a concern for SHS.

Though the recent busts do not indicate a sudden increase in students using drugs and drinking, it does show an increase in carelessness and change in social culture.

"Anytime we find that there is drug use going on in our school and community there is a concern," Mount said.

"The concern for us, as administration, is when we find that some students have been under the influence during the school day, which is not conducive to a safe and productive learning environment."

Even though some students have been caught using drugs during school hours and on campus, the number of students experimenting with drugs at SHS, both on campus and generally, according to Mount, is much lower than other schools in the county.

"We haven't noticed a significant spike in the amount of kids using drugs, so we aren't necessarily concerned that drug use is going up," Mount explained.

"However, we are concerned with the social changes around drug use — in particular marijuana, and the effects it has on students."

Still, when Saratoga students

took the Cornerstone Developmental Assets Survey in 2013, 11 percent admitted to marijuana use once or more in the past 30 days. This is only 4 percent less than the national statistic for teen marijuana abuse.

Often, the effects that drugs have on people, especially teens, are damaging, both in a mental capacity and physically.

According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, students who begin using marijuana and other drugs will soon show physical, emotional, social and temperamental issues.

They begin to feel fatigue, have mood swings, poor judgment and feel depressed or irritable. These teenagers also withdraw themselves from family lives, begin breaking more rules and change the style of how they dress and the music they listen to.

At school, these students often express negative attitudes, their grades start to drop below normal, they have discipline problems, truancy and they are generally less interested in any academic subject.

But it isn't only the symptoms of drug and alcohol abuse that are so apparent in teens. According to Dr. Timmen Cermak, 9 percent of marijuana users become addicted; however, the numbers are higher for teens.

Cermak said that young people who use drugs like marijuana between the ages of 12-18 fall into addiction faster than older users.

One of the most dangerous factors

with marijuana is its ability to stunt brain growth, especially in the brains of teenagers.

Because the brains of teenagers are still developing, the use of drugs like marijuana not only limits the speed at which the brain develops, but also kills brain cells and decreases students' learning capacity.

When teenagers use marijuana, the effects cause the brain, which is in the process of developing, to slow down significantly. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), "marijuana impairs a person's ability to form new memories and shift focus." Coordination, reaction time and ability to process new information are also disrupted.

Heavy drinking has also been shown to impair the growth and integrity of certain brain structures. The NIDA states that alcohol consumption during adolescence can alter measures of brain functioning, including blood flow in certain brain regions and electrical brain activities.

Experts say that many students who use substances and alcohol are numb to the consequences that it can have on their physical and mental health.

Many teenagers believe that trying drugs and alcohol once does no harm, and that they have enough to handle them. For a number of teens, however, addiction follows quickly after initial usage or consumption.

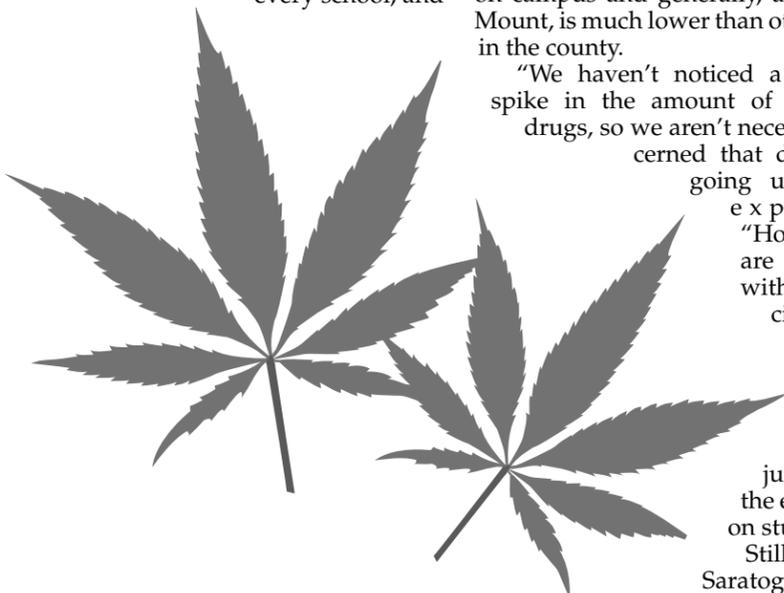
"Even though our percentages of drug and alcohol use are low in comparison with others in Santa Clara County, it's still an issue for us

to work on," principal Paul Robinson said. "We have a responsibility to give our students every tool possible to be healthy and safe, and helping someone make good decisions when it's truly important is the best legacy you can hope for." ♦

1 in 3
12TH GRADERS USED
MARIJUANA IN 2011

SOURCE: AMERICAN ACADEMY OF CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRY

Experts say that many students who use substances and alcohol are numb to the consequences.



'It just happened, it was spontaneous'

'I didn't talk the whole day. I felt ashamed.'
'They're just having fun, not planning on doing it forever.'
'Peer pressure, not wanting to be left out of the culture.'

THE STORIES OF HOW SEVERAL STUDENTS FIT INTO THE DRUG AND ALCOHOL CULTURE

BY Rachel Hull, Meganalyer & David Sparkman

Editor's note: All names are pseudonyms to protect the subjects' privacy.

Pressured to conform

Carter is 15, maybe 16. His teammates crowd around him, chuckling and nodding, shoving each other around. They are at a friend's house, and it seems like any other day.

And then, the scene shifts. Somehow marijuana has suddenly made an appearance at what started off as an innocuous hangout. Carter is doing them; everyone is. It would turn him into an outsider if he said no. Now a senior, Carter acts as if his first moment with drugs from just one or two years ago is a remote memory. The event has become a blur, a distant time he can hardly hold onto at this point in his life.

"Pressured?" he asks, seemingly struggling to come up with an answer. "Yeah, probably. Peer pressure, not wanting to be left out, like you've got to fit in."

He can't say exactly how old he was when it happened, or who might have been there. The details seem to escape him. But that day unintentionally propelled him into a different world from the one he had been accustomed to his entire life.

"I don't know," he said. "It just happened, it was spontaneous, and we never really planned it."

But the use of drugs has had consequences.

"A lot of people's grades have dropped," he said. "I know a few kids who have misused [drugs]."

But because Carter's life revolves around his sport and his education, he claims he uses drugs in moderation.

"I'm a pretty devoted athlete," he said. "I tend to stay away from that because I have to stay in shape."

He added he is cautious to limit his use to avoid problems with his parents or school authorities.

I'm cautious about it because I don't want to risk not going to school and getting kicked out.

>> Carter

"You definitely have to be smart about it if you do it, definitely have to be responsible. Doing drugs, I

guess, is really stupid," Carter said. "I'm cautious about it because I don't want to risk not going to school and getting kicked out; that would be really bad, so you have to stay away from that."

Nonetheless, Carter continues to use illegal substances. Although he said he is responsible about the amount he consumes, he has become part of the drug culture. Because of this, Carter feels as if many people are quick to judge him and his friends because of their drug usage and involvement.

"I think when you talk to strangers or people you don't know very well, they have first judgments on you," he said. "I guess there's kind of a taboo, like people are like, 'Oh, [they use] drugs, they're automatically bad.'"

Rising up from mistakes

Lucy knows firsthand how a mistake can change a person's life. When she was exposed to the world of drugs in eighth grade, her own life spiraled out of control.

Things turned from bad to worse when her parents found out she was using marijuana.

"I didn't talk the whole day," she said. "I didn't want to; I felt ashamed."

Though she was initially downcast and downtrodden about the situation, Lucy soon realized that her experience could turn into something positive.

Her parents were not overly upset. They

acknowledged that Lucy had made an error in judgment but hoped she could gain valuable insight from this experience.

"My dad was pretty easy about it," Lucy said. "He kind of just took it like, 'You need to learn from this, and it will help you in the future.' My mom was not too OK with it, but she didn't find it that bad. They didn't freak out."

Part of her parents' easygoing reaction, Lucy said, was because they made similar mistakes to her early on in their lives.

"My family has never told me no; they have always told me, 'You make the mistakes and you learn from [them].'" Lucy said. "My mom and dad have made the same mistakes I have."

Despite these mistakes, Lucy finds that her parents are successful adults, who can be proud of their accomplishments. Lucy herself feels that now is the time in her life to experiment.

"High school is definitely about falling and picking yourself up and learning from your mistakes," she said. "I don't think [drug use] will demolish your future, but it does have an impact on what you do and how you go about new things."

Ultimately, Lucy feels that her decision to use drugs and her experience getting caught have helped her to grow and develop as a person. Now she feels that using drugs is no longer necessary in her life.

"I would not make the mistake again; I definitely [learned] from it," Lucy said. "But I am glad I made the mistake, because it's made me look at things a lot differently, and it's made me look at things in perspective."

The bystander

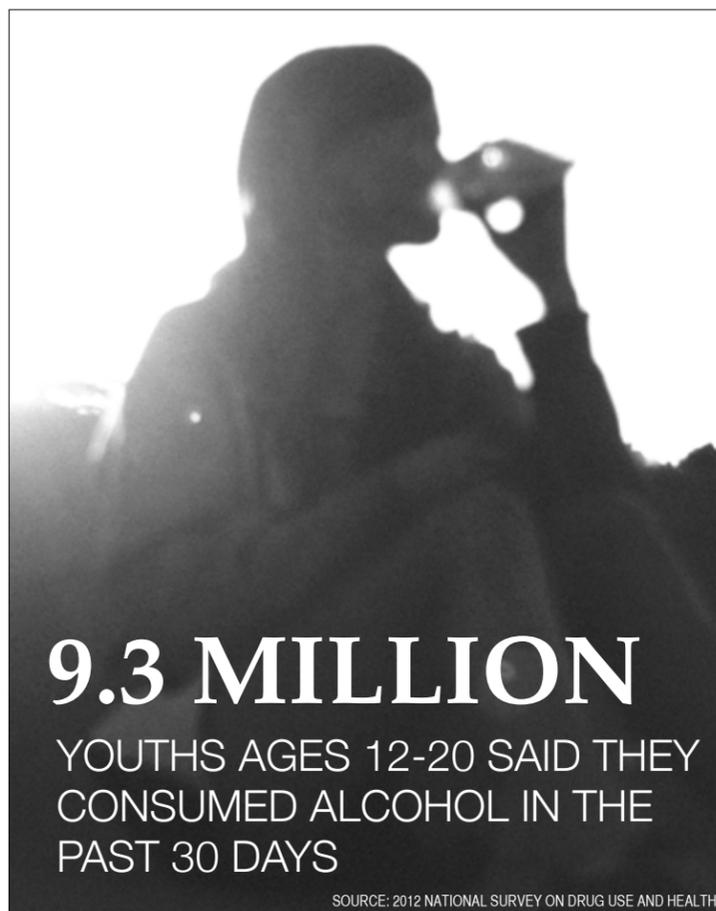
Donna is no stranger to the world of drugs and alcohol. Although she says she herself is not a substance abuser, she cannot say the same for her friends.

"I do have friends who do it, some more than others," Donna said, "but I myself have not tried it. But I've definitely been around people who've done it."

Donna was first exposed to this sort of lifestyle in high school. She speaks about drug and alcohol culture flippantly, not overly concerned. She acts as if it is none of her business.

"I don't personally find [using drugs] appealing, but if other people do it, that's not really my problem," she said. "I don't really have a say in what people do. If they want to, that's fine with me."

She feels, however, that students who indulge in



SOURCE: 2012 NATIONAL SURVEY ON DRUG USE AND HEALTH

drug and alcohol usage should refrain from doing so on school grounds.

"I think it's a little silly to be doing it on campus," Donna said. "You can do it somewhere else, just keep it out of school. You can do it anywhere else, just not here."

Donna said that most high school students are, at some point, thrown into an environment with marijuana or other gateway drugs.

"It's pretty inevitable, depending on who you're with," she said. "You can't really avoid seeing it, knowing about it or being around it."

Donna says students have the power to stay away from taking drugs or drinking alcohol.

"You can definitely choose not to, and people still respect you if you don't want to," she said.

She also said most students who have tried gateway drugs throughout their high school years do not face the risk of becoming addicted or abusing these substances.

"It's not really a super pressing issue;

no one has really overdosed at our age," Donna said. "They're just kind of having fun, not planning on doing it forever."

Donna has had her share of incidents with police due to her friends' drug usage. Even when describing these "scary moments," she adopts a casual tone. Nothing really happened; it was all no big deal.

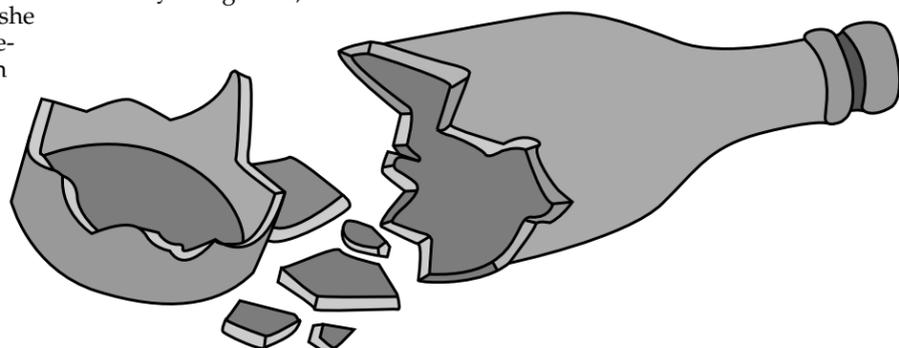
"I've had some encounters with police," she said. "But everything's been fine because everyone was pretty responsible — as responsible as it

You can't really avoid seeing it, knowing about it or being around it.

>> Donna

can get." Regardless of her non-judgmental attitude toward substance abuse, Donna does feel that students should think about their futures before deciding to become a part of the drug and alcohol culture.

"I think if you're going to experiment, you have to do it responsibly. You can't just go crazy," she said. "I think it is OK as a high schooler to just try it out, because you never know what will happen in the future. [But] you have to know your limits." ♦



>> quickfacts

■ SURVEY RESULTS

In the fall, the Project Cornerstone survey that all students took showed a 17 percent decrease in the number of students who used alcohol in the past 30 days. There was also a 12 percent decrease in the number of students who said they came to school drunk in the last two weeks.

Nationally in 2013

■ 15 PERCENT

Of high school seniors used a prescription drug non-medically.

■ 22.1 PERCENT

Of high school seniors reported binge drinking (defined as 5 or more drinks in a row) in the past two weeks.

■ 15.6 PERCENT

Of high school seniors were current marijuana smokers.

■ GETTING HIGH

Some ways students ingest marijuana: smoking, vaporization or oral ingestion through food or drink.

CCS PLAYOFFS

Falcons end run in semifinals

BY Arjun Ramanathan

After a very successful season for the girls' basketball team, the team found itself with the No. 2 seed in the Division III CCS playoffs. They were able to easily handle Gunderson in the quarterfinals, winning with a score of 50-27 on March 1 but were unable to make it past the Soquel Knights in the CCS semifinals, losing 56-44 on March 5.

The Falcons were able to play well defensively against the length and best post player of the Knights, but according to senior forward Dharini Ramaswami, the girls were unable to get back on defense and stop Soquel from scoring points in transition. Ramaswami also said that the Falcons committed too many turnovers, problems that didn't help them considering that their shooting wasn't very good.

According to coach Mike Davey, Soquel had plays that were unexpected and quick. Saratoga had one of its worst shooting performances and they missed shots they would usually have been able to put away.

"Senior Dharini Ramaswami and junior Mikayla Davis did a great job in our last game with 19 and 11 points respectively," Davey said. "We ended up losing because Soquel is a great shooting team and they were good at sinking free throws late in game to win it all."

The team ended the season with a 45 point per game average, and Ramaswami ended with a 19.4 points per game average, the highest of the team. Second to best was Davis with an eight point av-



Courtesy of GREG SPIRAKIS

Senior point guard Trishika Shetty handles the ball on March 1 in the CCS game vs. Gunderson.

erage and the highest rebound average with 7.5 per game.

Davey said that next year will be more difficult as the team is transitioning into an upper league.

"Next year is going to be tough because of the A league, the strongest public school league in CCS, but the way the teamwork is right now, I'm hoping we will manage," Davey said.

Overall, even though the girls weren't able to make it past the semi-finals, Ramaswami thought the team gave a good effort this season and played hard.

"One thing I can take away from this season is that every game is a new game, and you should treat it like you're the underdog," Ramaswami said. "We took every game one at a time and played hard." ♦

>> TheStats

46

Points Scored

In the two CCS games for the Falcon girls' basketball team, senior forward Dharini Ramaswami scored a grand total of 46 points. Ramaswami had 27 points in the win against Gunderson on March 1 and 19 in the team's loss against Soquel on March 5. "Dharini is for sure our leading scorer," said senior point guard Trishika Shetty. "She's great at getting open and driving to the basket."

37

Runs scored so far

In their first five games so far, the Falcon baseball team has not only gone undefeated, but they have had great offensive production. They have scored 39 runs totally so far and were able to score a staggering 15 runs in just one game. The team is looking to repeat as league champions.

WHO'S HOT

Girls start out strong

After two games were cancelled due to field problems, the girls' lacrosse team started out their season with three wins. They won against Notre Dame, Santa Catalina and Sacred Heart Cathedral. "We have a few girls who played basketball and are good at picks, so our new offense allows us to use that strength," senior Jennie Werner said.

Balls of fire

On the weekend of March 7-9, the boys' tennis team competed and won the California Tennis Classic tournament in Fresno. Despite not having their No. 3 doubles and No. 2 singles players, the team was able to dominate. "It's pretty amazing we were able to win because we were so short-handed on players," said senior Sanjay Kaliyur.

Kaiser's on a roll

After being a top tennis prospect since his freshman year, senior Kial Kaiser received an offer to play tennis next season at Princeton University. Kaiser is not sure whether he wants to take the offer and play at Princeton or not, but he said that he might wait until he finds out whether he gets an offer from Stanford before he makes his final decision on where he will play.

>> TheRANKINGS

- 1 ^ Baseball (5-0)
- 2 ^ Girls' Lacrosse (3-0)
- 3 ^ Boys' Tennis (3-0)
- 4 ^ Softball (1-0)
- 5 v Boys' Volleyball (1-1)

TRACK

Team hopes to make big comeback

BY Gwynnever Hunger & Nupur Maheshwari

"Optimistic." It's the first word that comes to coach Archie Ljepava's mind when thinking toward the upcoming season of track.

After a disappointing 0-6 record last season, the track team faces significant changes this year, moving down from the De Anza League to the El Camino League.

In previous years, the school's track team competed against some schools with close to 300 students on their team, making winning a huge challenge.

After last year's record, moving leagues has completely changed the team's outlook.

"I think changing leagues is going to be good for the team in terms of uplifting the team," said Ljepava. "We're going against schools more our size, so the depth of the team sizes up well."

Adding to the positive outlook are the many returning and new athletes on the team. One such athlete is senior high jumper Mady Fagan, who transferred to the school from Los Gatos for her senior year.

Fagan transferred to Saratoga for her senior year from Los Gatos High School, and seems to be an extremely promising asset to the track team.

"Track has been my passion since

middle school and high jump became my main event sophomore year," Fagan said. High jump, especially, is my release. I need it to function normally."

Last year Fagan was ranked top five in the country for high jump and top three in California.

Needless to say, Fagan did extremely well in her time on the Los Gatos track team, receiving MVP in sophomore year and winning the Stanford invitational junior year. She hopes to continue doing

her best this year as well.

"I definitely have high hopes for this season," Fagan said. "My goal is currently 6'1" and I know I have a lot of work to do but I'm excited to do it with the team. I can't wait to start competing

wearing red."

Fagan is among the over 60 newcomers to track this year, many of whom are freshmen, making the overall age group very young. The coaches are therefore working on teaching the new athletes all the techniques in order to prepare them for their first meet coming up in three weeks.

Some freshmen who have stood out and caught the coaches' eyes during tryouts include freshman distance runner Alice Bian, freshman thrower Tristan Bush and freshman distance runner Nick Sum.

Returning stand out athletes include junior sprinter Laura Cummins, senior sprinter Travis Stokes, junior runner Ste-

ven Sum, junior jumper Puck De Roos and senior runners Ben Glasstone and Eric Ringsrud.

Track Coaches Ljepava, Michael Xialtry, Dan Ambrinco, Dan Casas, Peter Jordan, Kerri Slover are also changing up the way practices run this year this year to allow students to have more time to study and participate in other activities.

To ensure that no practice time gets lost, the coaches are making sure that the track practices run faster by eliminating down time. The practices, which ran for three hours last year, now last less than two.

"Practices have been more efficient this year; either that or we're running shorter workouts," senior sprinter and jumper Clark Wang said.

In regards to his goals, Ljepava added, "We want to grow this season, have fun, and make sure kids enjoy their season and come back to support the team and school. We want to make this team a family, and I am very confident that we can." ♦

>> THE bigidea

Track and Field

Who lifts the weights

Everyone lifts. However, the lifting matters more to the discus and shotput throwers.

Newcomer

Senior Mady Fagan came to SHS from Los Gatos this year and is looking to bring SHS track success.

Junior legend

Junior long distance runner Steven Sum has established himself as one of the best runners in all of California in his past two years at Saratoga.

BOYS' TENNIS

Team takes Division I title at Fresno

BY Nick Chow

With an imperious swing of his racket, sophomore Karthik Padmanabhan crushed one last groundstroke to clinch the match against Jesuit High School 5-2, securing the Falcons' first California Tennis Classic title since 2007.

"We were the only public school in the semifinals, and we still won [the tournament]," senior captain Sanjay Kaliyur said.

The tournament, held on March 7-8 in Fresno, featured 128 teams competing from all over California. During the Friday matches, the team handled Tamalpais with a 6-1 beating, and also crushed Menlo-Ather-

ton, 6-1.

Saturday proved to be a tougher test, with the Falcons matched up against Brophy, a team from Arizona. However, the Falcons prevailed 5-2, despite contentious moments between the two teams.

"Brophy was pretty mad that we were beating them," Kaliyur said, "and when [singles No. 1] Neel [Bedekar] finally won his match, he just stared at the Brophy kids in the stands."

Immediately after defeating Brophy, the Falcons were matched up in the final against Jesuit, which had knocked off defending champion Menlo School in the semifinals. The Falcons defeated Jesuit, winning the tournament. Brophy

proceeded to defeat Menlo, placing third overall in the tournament.

Bedekar attributes the relatively easy victory to a bit of luck in the tournament date.

"We were lucky enough that Menlo's top few singles were taking the SAT so they missed [the tournament]. Menlo's full lineup would have still been very hard to beat, but it would have been close," Bedekar said. "But we beat Jesuit, and they're still a really good team."

What makes the team's win even more impressive is like Menlo, their roster wasn't at full strength. Freshman No. 2 singles Andre Xiao and senior alternates Jeffrey Chen and Henry Ling were unavailable

for the entire tournament, and junior No. 3 doubles player Narain Mandyam had to leave after playing Friday.

"It's pretty amazing we were able to win," Kaliyur said. "We had [no] alternates and had to take two JV kids ... so everyone else had to step up."

The tournament victory leaves the team brimming with confidence and primed for a strong regular season followed by CCS.

"There is no team in our league as tough as the schools we played in the semis and finals [at Fresno], so we can easily go undefeated in our league," Kaliyur said. "Most likely we will be seeded first in CCS over Menlo." ♦

>> **thebigidea**

California Tennis Classic

Back at the top

The Falcons took the top spot at the California Tennis Classic for the first time since 2007.

Stepping up

The team pulled up two JV players due to the unavailability of freshman Andre Xiao and junior Narain Mandyam.

Unstoppable

Seven players went undefeated through all five matches.

The last match

Sophomore Karthik Padmanabhan clinched the title in the finals against Jesuit High School.

GIRLS' SOCCER

History made: Falcons advance to CCS quarterfinals

BY Helen Chen

After beating Leigh High 2-0 in the first round on Feb. 26, the girls' soccer team advanced to quarterfinals of CCS for the first time in Saratoga history. The girls lost a close game to Woodside 2-1 during the quarterfinal round on March 1 and ended their season with a 9-9-2 record.

The Falcons had a strong preseason, but a tough league season, ultimately placing fifth.

Co-captain senior Stephanie Ho said they just weren't able to get the results they were hoping for.

"We had a lot of close games, but we

just didn't get very lucky," Ho said.

Ho, however, believes that they did end up having a successful season after making it past the first round of the playoffs.

"We've really improved upon since last year," Ho said. "Everyone was really determined so we really pulled through in the end."

Even with multiple injuries and losing key seniors from last year, the team had a strong performance in the Division II tournament for CCS. They beat

Leigh with goals from sophomore Lauren Plesse as well as senior co-captain Lindsay Webster. Webster's goal was

a header that took place during the first five minutes of the play.

Webster attributes what success the team did have to its coach Ben Maxwell, who helped push them, but Webster

believes the team could have advanced to semi-finals under different circumstances.

"[The Woodside game] was really

close, and we should have won," Webster said. "It was just that a lot of us were sick."

Ho shares a similar view in how the girls did and acknowledges that there were understandable discrepancies in their defense.

"Everyone [had] been playing the whole game, so we were all a little tired," Ho said. "We did have a lot of close chances, some off the posts, but we were just that little bit off."

Even so, the girls are happy with their final results.

"We've gone further that we ever have before, so our success shows," Webster said. ♦

We've gone further than we ever have before, so our success shows.

>> senior Lindsay Webster

BOYS' LACROSSE

Team projects strong season with multiple rookie seniors

BY Ingrid Hong

With seven seniors added to the roster this year who have never played before, the boys' lacrosse team is building anew.

The new players are Jacob Marr, Jonathan Walters, Bobby Vithanage, John Moyles, Grant Faylor, Jacob Camp and Mitch Miller.

The Falcons had a great weekend in their first tournament in Watsonville on March 1, winning two out of the four games they played.

Senior attack co-captain Clark Rothenberg thinks the influx of seniors playing this year will be a strong asset to the team.

"They all were impressively good for the time they've had to learn," said Rothenberg. "Not only were they extremely physical and ground ball machines, but they also made a lot of really nice lacrosse plays and I have no doubt they will be stars by the end of the season."

According to Rothenberg, though the new seniors won't know the sport of lacrosse well, their athleticism and general knowledge of sports will help make their transition smooth.

Walters, like many of the other new senior players, decided to try lacrosse as a chance to experience a new sport.

"It just looked like a fun sport and it's something new to try, and it might

be one of the last few times I'll get to try a new sport," said Walters, who was the quarterback for the football team in the fall. "So me and my buddies thought it'd be a cool experience."

While there are a few similarities to football and lacrosse, many of the new senior players were surprised by unfamiliar aspects of the game the past weekend.

"Every game was just 25 minutes straight so the game was moving pretty fast," Vithanage said.

Others were surprised the physical nature of the sport.

"I was surprised with how physical I was allowed to be and how many opportunities I had to blindside the opposing

players," Camp said. Senior co-captains Tony Capek and Clark Rothenberg thought the tournament exposed the team's strengths and weaknesses.

Both Capek and Rothenberg said the Falcons' main weakness is the lack of knowledge of the game. But it won't take long for the newcomers to learn.

At the tournament, Rothenberg thought the team had the most clean hits, which led to success on ground balls and shots from around the crease. Capek also saw a clear strength for the Falcons.

"Our athleticism was unmatched by other teams, and that was amazing," Capek said. ♦



Rothenberg

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BADMINTON

Senior reigns among nation's elite

BY Lauren Louie
& Candice Zheng

From the moment senior Bryan Chow was introduced to the sport of badminton, a seed was planted that would take him to unbelievable heights. With blood, sweat and tears invested in what started as a fun pastime, Chow's hard work gave rise to an impressive career.

As of today, Chow has qualified for the U.S. national team to play in the Pan American Games, is sponsored by Yonex and achieved the coveted title of No. 1 junior boys singles player in the nation in 2012 after winning the Northwest Super Regional Junior Badminton Tournament as a sophomore.

In addition, he placed third at the 2010 USA Badminton Junior International Trials; second in boys' doubles and first in boys' singles at the 2010 and 2011 USBDF Winter Junior International Championships; second in boys' doubles and third in boys' singles in the 2011 International Junior Badminton Championships; and first in boys' singles in the 2012 Northern California Super Regional Badminton Tournament.

Before he started to play competitively at age 14, Chow played recreationally at the local community center with his childhood best friend, Syllas Sun. As Chow's interest in the sport grew, so did his resolve to get better.

"I started taking lessons at badminton clubs like Smash City, Bay Badminton Club, and Bintang — I really developed a passion for the sport," Chow said.

Chow entered in his first open tournament at the age of 12 with Sun having little experience in the sport. Playing doubles against two college students, Chow did everything he could to be taken seriously.

"Our opponents were very physically intimidating, and needless to say, we lost

the first round," Chow said. "However, after that loss, we vowed to never play another tournament until we were ready to win."

Chow then fully invested himself into his training and conditioning his body. As of now, Chow is taking a break from training, but at the peak of competition season, he trains every day for three hours with his coach Holvy De Pauw at the Bintang Badminton Academy.

"Our training regiment was extremely physical with cardio and explosive drills," Chow said. "My favorite part were the rare game days where we could play against the coach and other players on the team."

The hard training certainly paid off, as Chow accomplished a career high when he won boys' singles in the 2012 Northwest Super Regional Junior Badminton Tournament. After standing on the top tier of the podium, he was officially the best boys singles player in the nation under 17.

"It was certainly an amazing feeling," Chow said. "To know that I was the best player in my sport throughout the nation was a great honor."

Although Chow's badminton career has been full of triumphs and well-earned accomplishments, it hasn't been without its share of lows. At the 2011 junior nationals, Chow ended up being knocked out in the second round by a lesser player.

"It was really an eye opener," Chow said. "I knew I needed to train harder for next year and to stop slacking off."

Chow has been playing on the school's varsity badminton team since freshman year. Since his first year, Chow has played every position, holding spots in boys' doubles, singles and mixed doubles in consecutive seasons. This year, Chow is planning on playing either singles or mixed doubles.



FALCON // DAVID SPARKMAN

Senior No. 1 boys' singles player Bryan Chow competes against Leland High on March 6.

"I like playing for the school team since it's such a contrast to training; it's much more relaxed, and there is more time for games and socializing with friends," Chow said.

Last year, Chow placed third in CCS for mixed doubles with his partner, 2013 alumna Lauren Chu. He points to winning a hard-earned CCS title for boys' singles during Chow's sophomore year as his favorite moment playing for Saratoga.

"I could remember many of my team members watching me play and cheering me on during the finals match," Chow said. "[The match] was extremely close and very thrilling."

Now, as a senior captain and trainer, Chow continues to hone his skills and inspire incoming players with his passion for the sport and incredible technique.

"What sets [Chow] apart is his versatility since he can play anything," senior varsity player Alvin Huang said. "Also

his smash is strong, but he compounds that with how quick he hits the bird. He has good footwork and a bunch of tricks up his sleeve; he is a very well-rounded player."

Chow encourages new players to step out of their comfort zone and challenge better players to "learn constantly from their court presence."

With so much experience under his belt, Chow continues to be a valuable asset to the school team and a star player whenever and wherever he picks up a racket.

"Every time I lose a match, it becomes fuel for future wins," Chow said. "Success is sweetest when so hard won."

Badminton practices began in late February, and the first pre-season game was a home game against Leland on March 6.

League games start on March 25, with the team playing a home game against the Cupertino Pioneers. ♦

SWIMMING

Swimmer balances academics and sport

BY Meganalyer
& Maya Ravichandran

The ice cold concrete bites at sophomore Bradley Newton's toes as he runs onto the dark, empty pool deck. Rubbing the drowsiness from his eyes, he and his teammates listen to the warm-up set and get ready to take the first plunge. It is 5:30 a.m.

Newton attends morning swim practices with his club team before school three times a week for an hour and a half, as he and his teammates train for upcoming meets and improve their strokes and their speed.

He swims about 16 hours a week, including mornings and Saturdays.

Newton has been swimming since the time he started walking, at around age one and a half. According to Newton, his mom pushed him toward the sport.

"[My mom] started me in swimming when I was little and I liked it, so I just stayed with it," Newton said. "I enjoyed doing it."

At age 5, Newton started swimming competitively, and he has since become a considerable force. At his club, De Anza Cupertino Aquatics (DACA), Newton swims with the National group, the most elite swimmers at the club.

Newton specializes in long distance freestyle events, particularly the mile,

which is about 66 laps total. However, since the mile is not an event in the high school league, Newton said he swims the 200-yard freestyle and the 500-yard freestyle events.

Last year at CCS, Newton placed 14th out of 52 swimmers in the 500-yard freestyle and was the fastest 500-freestyler on the school's team.

Because swimming takes up so much of his time, Newton has to manage his time well. He has to balance his time for both studying and practicing, and hopes to continue on to college as both an athlete and a strong student.

"I definitely care about academics as well as swimming," he said. "Swimming will definitely help with getting into college, but [I] definitely [want] a balance of both."

For the school team, Newton hopes that more swimmers will qualify for CCS this spring. Though several swimmers attended the CCS meet last year, Newton hopes that number will increase by the end of the season.

With many strong swimmers alongside Newton this season, such as seniors Cameron Borch and Sasha Samoilov as well as senior Janey Heyman, junior Yayla Sezginer and freshman Stefanie Ting, the team hopes to improve in ranking.

The team swam their first meet on March 13. ♦



Newton



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WRESTLING

Grant wins CCS and finishes 4th in state

BY SudeepRaj

A wrestling duo did themselves and the school proud last weekend when they made it to the state meet and walked away with a historic finish.

Graham Grant, a senior who wrestles at 220 pounds, finished fourth in the state and first in CCS in his weight class, the most success any SHS wrestler has had for years. Junior Christian Murabito did not place at state, but took second at CCS a week earlier in the 170-pound class.

The state tournament was held in Bakersfield on March 8, and CCS was held on Feb. 28.

At the double-elimination state tournament, Grant won his first match, lost the second,

and then proceeded to win five rounds in a row to get fourth place. His only losses were to wrestlers from Orland and Birmingham High. These two took the third and eighth places respectively. Murabito won his first round, but then lost his next two, finishing 1-2.

"It's good for the team that Grant got fourth, especially since it was above his projected ranking," junior Christian Murabito said. "It really shows how far our team has gotten."

With both Grant's and Murabito's contributions, Saratoga placed 53 among all California schools in wrestling.

At CCS, Grant went undefeated and ultimately pulled off a close 3-2 championship win against Leland's Jack Loumena.

Murabito was undefeated in his class, until he lost in the finals to Gilroy's Matt Penyascek.

This year's success is similar to last year, when Grant also took first place in CCS and Murabito took fourth in the 160-pound class. Grant attended states last year, along with 2013 alumnus Henry Wei, but didn't have nearly the same success this year as he did last year. Grant had a record of 1-2 while Wei had a record of 2-2.

Grant said this year's success was maybe even greater than last year's because they not only sent two wrestlers to states again, but they had more wrestlers qualify for CCS. Along with Grant and Murabito, the team sent senior Isaac Tung and juniors Alex Hansen and Vince



TALISMAN // NAVEED RIAZIAT

Junior Christian Murabito dominates an opponent at Christopher High in Gilroy on Jan. 18. Murabito qualified for the states tournament.

Rositano to CCS.

"We had more wrestlers in CCS this year, and two wrestlers in the finals," Grant said.

Many factors contributed to the team's success, including

coaching and wrestlers' efforts.

"We did so well this year mostly because of our coaching staff," Murabito said. "They pushed us much more than last year." ♦

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Seniors struggle to finish last-minute P.E. credits

BY HelenChen & NupurMaheshwari

Senior Akshay Madhani recently learned he was the valedictorian for the Class of 2014.

Like several other seniors, though, he also had a slight problem: He needs to take P.E. this semester to fulfill graduation requirements.

As second semester started, he walked into his first day of P.E. class and sat alone on the bleachers amidst a crowd of underclassmen. When assistant principal Brian Safine spotted Madhani, Safine "literally bent over laughing," even pointing him out to teacher Richard Ellis and counselor Eileen Allen to laugh along.

While Madhani has had to endure teasing as one of the few seniors in the

school's P.E. classes, he is not the only one in need of last-minute credits.

Seniors who have waited to complete credits are often seen as last-minute scramblers, but some students, including Madhani, do so in order to prioritize coursework or other activities in their earlier years.

Senior Katherine Sun, another senior in need of a last few P.E. credits before graduation, is now on the swim team having previously swum freshman year. Sun said that while she did try to do swimming junior year, she quit two weeks in because she knew it would be a lose-lose situation for both her performance in school and in the sport.

"I couldn't really handle it," Sun said. "I didn't want to only put half my heart into the things I was doing, so I knew I had to choose."

As a senior, Sun said that even though her workload hasn't decreased, it's been easier to swim because she has gotten better at balancing her schedule. Even so, Sun said that swimming as a senior has been fun and is "pretty much stress free."

Madhani also said he waited to fulfill his P.E. credits because "second semester [senior year] is generally a bit more relaxed for [these] activities."

Madhani found it to be a fairly simple transition moving into a class with so many underclassmen. If anything, they were better prepared than he was.

"Many of the underclassmen in P.E. have done it for multiple semesters, so they've become strong," Madhani said. "I sometimes find it hard to keep up with them."

Senior Lauren M. Lin opted to play a

sport instead of take P.E. to finish up her credits. While Sun returned to swimming, a sport she did as an underclassman, Lin has decided to pursue track, despite having previously played tennis.

With her heavy course load junior year and college applications senior year, Lin too thought it would be more beneficial to focus on academics.

While Lin has never run track before, it is something she meant to try in high school as she considers herself a "casual neighborhood runner."

Despite only doing track as a senior, Lin has no regrets with how it turned out as it hasn't been much of an impediment in her life.

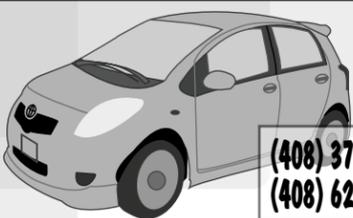
"Frankly my legs and butt are really sore, but at least I'll look good in my prom dress," Lin said. ♦

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GIRLS' LACROSSE

Building Falcons implement new defensive strategies

BY JadeBisht & JanePark

After losing nearly half the team to graduation, the Falcons are implementing new offensive and defensive strategies for the new season. Rather than a more traditional or conservative defense, this year's defense is more high-pressure and high-risk.

The team first tried these new game tactics against Menlo-Atherton at a jamboree in San Francisco on Feb. 22.

"Playing against Menlo was a great opportunity to realize our major weakness," senior team co-captain Jennie Werner said. "We hadn't had the chance to practice our new defense against a full set of attack until the jamboree."

The scores from these games were not kept on record as these games took place before the official season started.

"The jamboree is our first opportunity to play both league and non-league opponents every year, and it gives us a good sense of where we stand as a team," senior team co-captain Lena Jewler said.

After two rained out pre-season games, the team won with the scores of 17-5 and 22-3 against Notre Dame and Santa Catalina on Feb. 24 and Feb. 26, respectively.

"Our league is unquestionably one of the toughest sports leagues we're involved in at this school," coach Eric Wong said.

"Pretty much every school in it is an athletic powerhouse from all over the Bay Area, so if at any point we stop being

proactive about our own self-improvement and improvement as a team, we'll be left behind."

Junior attack Christina Crolla is looking to improve her shooting technique throughout the season.

"I want to ensure that I'll be able to shoot from any angle with no misses by the time we get to CCS," Crolla said. "It's a

lot more reassuring when you know you have mastered shot techniques that will surprise the other team."

Along with new game tactics, longer practices and team film discussions have been added to achieve the team's goals of winning CCS championships, continue last year's trend of making it to semifinals and repeat last year's victory against Los Gatos.

"It feels like all the work we've put in the past few years is culminating this year, which is a lot of pressure, but at all the same times make us super determined to succeed," Werner said. ♦



Crolla

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BOYS' GOLF

Falcons' season off to strong 4-0 start

BY Melissa **Magner**
& Oksana **Trifonova**

The boys' golf team is off to a good start this year after beating Lynbrook on Feb. 27, Monta Vista on March 3, and Los Gatos and Milpitas on March 10, leading to a 4-0 record for the Falcons as of March 10.

Junior Robby Gragnola and senior Christian Galvin shared medalist honors in the first two matches for having the best results for either school and led the SHS team in the last two matches.

On Feb. 24, the Falcons received seventh place out of the 16 teams competing in a tournament at Salinas.

"When we got there, the weather was really nice, but after a few holes, it got really windy," freshman Nathan Shang said. "From what I heard, nobody was playing too well either. I shot 90, and we finished with seventh place."

Even though the first tournament did not go as well as the Falcons hoped, Shang thinks that they will improve.

"We will do better as the season goes by and end up where we should be," Shang said.

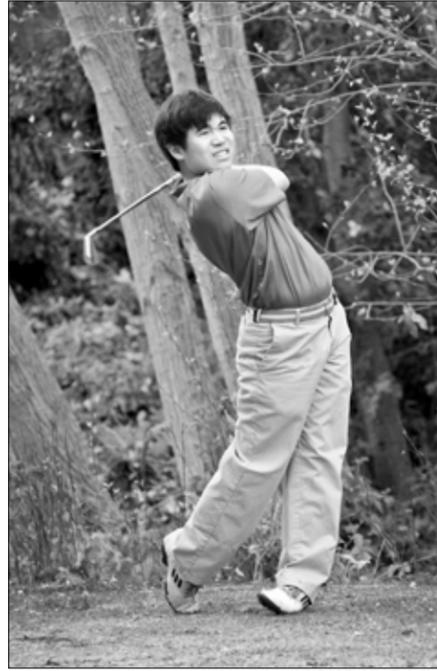
Before these tournaments, the Falcons faced a challenge that put more pressure on them—tryouts.

"Our tryouts didn't go as well as we planned, mainly because of the rainy weather," Galvin said. "But besides that, everyone came back from last year doing pretty well."

One big loss from last year's team was No. 1 player Robbie Parden, a 2013 graduate. Because of this, many underclassmen are stepping up to fill key spots on the team. Shang is one of them.

"Shang definitely stands out amongst the underclassmen," Galvin said. "I think he has a good amount of talent, but as of now, the team is mainly relying on the upperclassmen because they've been at it for so long."

Other newcomers, however, are not on the traveling team, including freshmen William Chen, Won Hee-Lee, Trevor Leung, and Wyatt Schulman. ♦



Courtesy of NOW AND FOREVER STUDIOS



Courtesy of NOW AND FOREVER STUDIOS

Junior Noah Jung, left, and sophomore Lucas Peng, above, played against Lynbrook on Feb. 27. The team won went on to win against Monta Vista on March 3 as well.

BASEBALL

Senior leadership leads team in strong start

BY Allison **Lin**
& Nikil **Ramanathan**

After a successful 2013 season for the baseball team ending in a tough loss to Saint Ignatius in the first round of the CCS playoffs, the Falcons are looking to try and get back this season.

While they have strong senior players and a lot of potential from the junior players, the Falcons will have to overcome the loss of several key players from last year.

The team lost Stevie Berman, Trevor Hanks, Kyle Dozier and Stephen Ruff to graduation and will look to try and fill their strong production on the team.

Even though replacing four starting players who excelled on both the offensive and defensive sides of the

game seems like an insurmountable task, senior infielder Drew Kriens believes that their closeness as a team will help them succeed.

"Losing Stevie and Kyle is tough," said Kriens. "But we have a lot of team chemistry and experience, which helps a lot."

While the team may not have the individual star power, they are hungrier after having their last season end on a bittersweet note.

"The team is definitely different than last year," said Kriens. "We are a scrappier and grittier team. We hope that we make CCS and we definitely have a team that can defend our league

title."

To have a good chance in defending that coveted league title, they are going to have to get all the help they can get on defense, especially with their pitching.

Senior pitcher Thomas Alexander has been a solid player for the varsity team since his freshman year.

But after tearing the ulnar collateral ligament in his throwing elbow, Alexander had to undergo Tommy John surgery during the offseason.

Even though he had the surgery eight months ago, he is not 100 percent and won't be until at least a year after.

We have a lot of team chemistry and experience, which helps a lot.

>> senior Drew Kriens

While Alexander's hitting has not been affected much by the surgery, his arm strength is down, but he's thrilled to be back.

"The hardest part of the recovery process was having to watch from the bench while the team is still playing," Alexander said. "But the physical therapy and long hours of soreness are worth it once you can get back on the field."

The Falcons won their first game on Feb. 28 against The King's Academy, 9-1. They continued on to defeat Prospect High School 7-1 on March 1 and Piedmont Hills 3-2 on March 5.

The team is preparing to play in their tough league where there no game is an easy victory against traditional powerhouses like Palo Alto, Wilcox and Los Gatos. ♦

SOFTBALL

Girls look to carry winning ways to upper league

BY Gitika **Nalwa**
& Vibha **Seshadri**

After last year's record of 24-5, the school's close-knit softball team, led by coach Joe Medeiros and assistant coach Fred Santos, is looking forward to build on last year's success. This year, the team has moved up from the El Camino league to the De Anza league.

Although the softball team lost two of last year's key seniors, 2013 grads Briana Bowker and Alyson Nilan-Axline, the losses did not break the bonds that the team had formed the previous year.

Senior Hera Tang, last year's El Camino division pitcher of the year, who also plays third base, said that the team's chemistry was one of the keys to last year's league championship win.

"When one person made a mistake, we never let her get down on herself and made sure to pick her up when we had the opportunity to," Tang said. "We were very familiar with each other's strengths and weaknesses on and off the field. This season, we are only going to

grow tighter."

Tang believes that being so close with one another gave their team an advantage.

"We're close and very familiar with what each of us is capable of contributing," Tang said. "We always persevered no matter how rough our games turned out."

Sophomore Ellie Lee, who splits time between catcher, third base and outfield, also believes that being close off the field helped them during games.

"I think that we had an edge because we were underdogs and we meshed really well, executed plays and got hits," Lee said. "This year, it is really going to count because now we are moving up to a new league. The teams are going to be much harder."

The team finds that bonding is a crucial part of the season. Senior left fielder Tivoli Sisco, who has been on the varsity team since her freshman year, believes that bonding "is the best part." During the spring, the team has many team bonding activities, including team dinners, lunches and sleepovers.

"We just have a lot of fun," Sisco said. "[Bonding with the team] is even better than winning because everybody loves

each other."

The girls hope that team bonding activities will help out on the field. Sophomore Eleni Spirakis thinks that the team "has a chance of making CCS this year."

To replace last year's seniors, the team will be adding several players to the roster, including seniors Nicole Grabar and Lois Om and juniors Maddie Sloan and transfer student Colleen Fleming.

"The players coming up to varsity can hit [well]," Spirakis said. "Last season, we were a really strong hitting team. Hopefully, we'll keep that going."

Last year senior Amanda Lee was voted the league's MVP offensive player after hitting an astounding .618 average last season.

Besides Lee, other hitters the team is counting on are Sisco, Spirakis, Stephanie Hayes, Dani Bruno, Savannah Green and Analisa Ruff.

On Feb. 25, the team scrimmaged and lost to Pioneer High School, which Tang describes as a "really tough team." As many key players of the school's team are still finishing basketball, the team's scrimmage was played mainly by JV players.

With key members returning after the basketball CCS tournament, the team

should be back to full strength and ready to play. Tang looks forward to a fun season filled with competitive games once the season begins.

"It can only get better," Tang said. "It's just the beginning and the varsity players on basketball will rejoin our team soon ... It will be a good season."

These sentiments are echoed by Coach Medeiros.

"Our goal is to stay above .500 and to hopefully make it to CCS again," Medeiros said. ♦



Tang

>> **thebigidea****Girls' Softball****Key player losses**

2013 alumnae Briana Bowker and Alyson Nilan-Axline.

Key returning players

Mandy Lee, who hit a .618 average last season, along with Hera Tang, Tivoli Sisco, Eleni Spirakis, Stephanie Hayes, Dani Bruno, Savannah Green, and Analisa Ruff.

New additions

Seniors Nicole Grabar Lois Om and juniors Maddie Sloan and Colleen Fleming.

COLLEGE SPORTS

Athletes to take talents to collegiate level

BY Jonathan Young

At least a dozen seniors will be playing sports at the college level in the next few years.

Among others, Stephen Cho is heading to Harvard to play water polo; Grant Faylor will play football at Menlo College; Mady Fagan will compete as a high jumper on the track team at the University of Georgia; Zach Hewlin will play tennis at Whitman College; Nadia Roohparvar will participate in crew at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; Jason Tatman will play football at the University of Puget Sound; Kial Kaiser will play tennis; and Mandy Lee will play softball. (Both Kaiser and Lee have yet to decide where they're going.)

Roohparvar, a coxswain for the Los Gatos Rowing Club, is one of a few students participating in crew who received offers from various schools. (Other crew participants who plan to continue rowing in college are Isabella Zuccarino, Nicole Bowman and Colin Albert.)

Roohparvar has had teammates and friends who have been recruited in the past that served as her introduction to the recruitment process.

"I heard from my friends in the grades above me, who were also coxswains, that high school really prepares you for collegiate rowing and that it isn't all that different," Roohparvar said.

Roohparvar is ready to take on the challenge of college sports.

Time commitment and the rigorous practices are oftentimes aspects high school athletes struggle with when they enter campus, but Roohparvar is not too concerned.

"I understand that it's a major time commitment but we already spend [at least] 20 hours a week at practice and I have become good at managing my time," Roohparvar said. "I'm expecting the intensity to increase, but I don't think it'll be that different."

Roohparvar is excited for the opportunity to play the sport she loves in a college environment.

"It'll be cool to be somewhere where everyone is super into it and everyone wants to win," Roohparvar said. "Even though I'll be going there with no one I know, it'll be cool to meet a ton of new people."

Roohparvar is not the only athlete traveling north for college athletics. Tatman, a safety and cornerback, has committed to play football at the University of Puget Sound.

Like others, Tatman's journey to playing collegiate sports was filled with the desire and drive to get to the next level.

"Entering my junior year, I realized how much I loved the game of football and how hard I wanted to work to reach the next level," Tatman said. "My [safety and cornerback] coach, Coach [Eric] Wong, told me that he thought that I had the potential to play football at the next level so I began to work towards that goal."

Football has opened doors for Tatman and he can now go to the school of his choice. Despite this, Tatman does not feel he is already prepared for collegiate football and knows he must work even harder.

"As of now, I think that more work in the weight room and on the field are needed," Tatman said. "I am super excit-



TALISMAN // JASON LI



FALCON // JADE BISHT

ABOVE: Senior Stephen Cho prepares to take a shot at a water polo match. Cho will be attending Harvard University next year for water polo.
LEFT: Senior Mandy Lee plays shortstop in a softball match. She will play softball next year at a college that she has yet to decide.

ed for the opportunity and want to excel [at Puget Sound]. I have already set my goals for next year and look forward to joining a program that wants to grow."

While Roohparvar and Tatman already know where they will be taking their talents, shortstop Lee still does not know where she will be playing softball next year.

Lee has received an offer to play at M.I.T. However, she has not committed yet because she is still waiting to hear from Stanford.

Lee said she felt she was skilled enough to pursue college athletics after seeing coaches express interest.

"I saw some coaches come out to my tournaments and watch me play," Lee said. "The fact that they took the time to come watch my game made me feel like

I was good enough for [the coaches] to take interest."

The recruiting experience helped Lee look into the future and has given her a variety of school choices she may not have had.

"[Softball] has definitely helped me get into schools that I might not have without it," Lee said. "It also forced me to start looking into colleges early so when senior year came around I already had a pretty good idea of what schools I was going to apply to."

Lee recognizes that there will be a "learning curve" once she gets to college, but she is still excited to take on the challenge.

"It makes it feel like all that practice, traveling, and hard-work has paid off," Lee said. ♦

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Winter vs. Summer Olympics

SUMMER WINS GOLD; WINTER FAILS TO MEDAL

As the Winter Olympics came around this season, I found it hard to be too excited. While the Summer Olympics are one of the best events of the year, the Winter Olympics are like the attention-seeking little brother.

I can't be the only one who feels this way, as there are quite a few major problems with the Winter Olympics.

It is hard to relate to the different competitions because the sports only appeal to people in a narrow range of geographic locations. In addition, sports in the Winter Olympics are also less suspenseful because the athletes in these sports sometimes don't compete directly against each other; they compete for times.

According to Nielsen ratings, the 2012 London Summer Olympics were watched by 219.4 million American viewers, which made it the most watched event in American television history. Yet the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics were only watched by 190 million American viewers, piling in comparison to Summer Olympic viewership.

There are many reasons for the difference in interest. For one thing, Winter Olympic sports are far more obscure. Fewer people take part in sports such as skiing, ice skating and curling, which is why viewers of the Winter Olympics don't feel the same attachment to these sports.

The reason the Summer Olympics are more popular is that many more people play (or have played) sports like soccer, which is the most viewed sport worldwide, compared to more obscure sports like curling.

Similarly, for those who live in locations like Saratoga, where it never snows, winter sports cannot be practiced close to home and involve long journeys to snowy places like Tahoe or Colorado. As a result, less hype tends to surround the Winter Olympics in a majority of events.

The viewers are also more inclined to watch the Summer Olympics because in these sports, athletes often directly compete against each other, whereas, most of the time, winter athletes compete for times

and points that are compared to each of the competitors. The latter, of course, is less intense than watching the athletes compete head-to-head, as they do in the Summer Olympics.

For example, skiers complete the runs individually for a time that is later compared to other skiers' times.

By contrast, track and field runners race against each other at the same time to the finish line, creating an atmosphere filled with much more suspense.

Some people may like watching snowboarding, but as for me, I'll take soccer or swimming every time because of the head-to-head action and because I am more used to summer sports than winter sports. ♦



ARMAN VAZIRI
He's Our-man

Some people may like watching snowboarding, but as for me, I'll take soccer or swimming every time.

>> snapshots



FALCON // DAVID SPARKMAN



Courtesy of GREG SPIRAKIS



FALCON // DAVID SPARKMAN



FALCON // DAVID SPARKMAN

DNA DETECTIVES: Emily Nguyen (12) uses a micro-pipette in the AP Biology gel electrophoresis lab.

THE LOGO: Dharini Ramaswamy (12) drives to the basket during the girls' basketball CCS semi-finals game on March 5 against Soquel High School.

FLOAT LIKE A BUTTERFLY: April Khong (11) practices her butterfly stroke during swim practice on March 6.

MODERN CLASSIC: Priyanka Krishnamurthy (12) and Sweeya Raj (10) perform a classical dance at the annual Bombay in the Bay on Feb. 15.

Senior finds peace in daily napping routine

Honestly, I really don't know what I was doing with my life before this current semester.

It all happened the week after winter break. I was sluggish and irritated at school from not getting my standard 12 hours of sleep while operating on break schedule. Clearly taking those two blissful weeks for granted, I stumbled back home red-eyed and full of unpleasant thoughts.

Dumping my backpack roughly on the ground, I made motions to waste time on the Internet on my bed, my usual routine when I come home from school. This time, though, something inside me changed. After struggling to keep my eyes focused on the dancing cat gif in front of me, I closed my laptop and proceeded to take a shut-eye.

You might be thinking: Why in the

world is taking a nap such a big deal? One thing you don't know about me is that before this fateful moment, I had never taken a nap if I could avoid one. The only times I had succumbed to my bed is when I was sick.



CANDICE ZHENG
Zhengsta

There was always more "Sherlock" episodes to watch, more time to waste on BuzzFeed and more "Late Night With Jimmy Fallon" clips to binge watch on YouTube. To the old me, taking a nap was like losing a battle. And I do not like to lose.

Anyway, continuing with my story, I awoke from my nap 2.5 hours later at 5:30 p.m., disoriented and confused. At first I was in a panic, as the sky was dim, and I thought I had slumbered on over to the next day.

However, after checking the time, the panic subsided, and I thought to myself,

"Wow. This feels nice. The bed is soft and warm. I'm comfy. Let's go back to sleep." I proceeded to fall back asleep and was knocked out until 7 p.m., when my mom's voice beckoned me to the kitchen for dinner.

Feeling both full and well-rested, I realized that I could get used to this napping thing. Since that day, I've dived into bed and taken a nap until dinner every day after coming from school.

It's come to a point where I find myself thinking about climbing into the covers multiple times during the school day. In fact, I'm beginning to question if the only reason I go to school anymore is so I can come back from school to take my daily nap.

Who needs a social life (or anything

else, for that matter) when you can just nap your life away? Certainly not me, that's for sure.

Why on earth would you ever choose having to put in the effort to interact with people or strain your eyes on a book or a computer screen when all your problems could be solved by the pure bliss of a nap? Just think about it.

I vouch for napping as a recreational hobby and highly recommend

it to anyone.

Of course, if you are not a second semester senior and don't have gaping holes in your schedule full of, oh, I don't know, nothing, you might have a small issue. But to everyone else out there who is willing to take on the challenge, nap on, my friends. ♦

Who needs a social life (or anything else, for that matter) when you can just nap your life away? Certainly not me.

buzzworthy >> Cupcake month

BY SudeepRaj

For many students, March can be the worst month of the school year. There are no breaks from school, with AP tests looming in early May.

To keep students alert and active, English teacher Suzanne Herzman has instituted "cupcake month" in her class every March.

"In previous years, she saw that certain students became less involved in class, so she tried to find a way to keep everyone interested," junior Vivek Murthy said.

Students volunteer to bring in snacks each day of class. Traditionally, most student bring cupcakes; however, students are now opting to serve other sweet snacks, such as brownies or cookies.

"At first I didn't think it would work, because Ms. Herzman wasn't making it mandatory for students to bring in snacks," Murthy said. "However, many students volunteered, and we have a volunteer for almost every day of class."

Herzman carefully chooses the time to distribute the snacks to the class.



"If we have a test or a quiz, she gives us the snacks during the quiz," junior Narain Mandyam said. "That's when I need sugar the most."

The timing of the month itself is also not an accident. Students ascertain that March is one of the busiest months in English class.

"In the past few weeks, we had a poetry project, a practice write, a vocab and grammar quiz, and we were reading 'The Grapes of Wrath,'" Mandyam said. "Right now is the best time for cupcake month."

The month is in its beginning stages, so some students are still trying to work out the details.

"On the day when it was my turn to bring food, I forgot, so I sent one of my friends who had a free second period to get cookies," Murthy said.

However, most students believe that so far, the month has been a large success.

"I can see that more people are alert and don't fall asleep in class, so I would definitely say that cupcake month is working," Murthy said.

The month also offers benefits outside of class.

"Every morning, I now look forward to English more than usual," Mandyam said. ♦

>> topten

MATH PUNS

- 10 Gratitude:** Tan(x) man!
- 9 Food for thought:** A math teacher's favorite dessert? Apple pi.
- 8 Pick-up lines:** I'm not a mathematician, but I'd sure love to count on you.
- 7 Junior year:** Don't go insin.
- 6 Blood Drive:** Math saavy will be donating A+.
- 5 What is sleep:** Math students dream of imaginary numbers.
- 4 Cringeful:** sWhy divide tan by sin? Just cos.
- 3 Lean on me:** I hung out with my algebras earlier.
- 2 Vacation:** Make sure to hit up Times Square next time you're in New York.
- 1 Sorrynotsorry::** What do you call a number that can't stay still? A roamin' numeral.

>> Jade Bisht