



School welcomes new staff members.



Junior sings at Carnegie Hall.



Fall sports prepare for new season.



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PLAZA PALOOZA

REVAMPED STADIUM ENTRANCE BRINGS COMMUNITY TOGETHER



BY CaitlinJu & EllenWu

As students entered the football stadium last Friday, they met a massive, fire engine red "Home of the Falcons" sign and a large gold-stained falcon on the ground. Cobalt "Falcons Forever" lettering on a concrete planter bed greeted the crowd streaming into the field, hands full of

snacks from vendors in the two new buildings nearby.

The Falcon football team responded to their improved facilities with a 28-27 win over Hillsdale.

Completed just before graduation last year, the Sports Plaza is now the main entrance of countless sporting events. The Plaza was the culmination of more than two years of extensive planning and fundraising that

started when the SHS Foundation and alumni got together and decided the old ticket booth was something the school needed to fix.

Construction officially began in February, and what had been a mere idea became reality in June. The attainment of funding for the \$1.325 million project came entirely from

>> PLAZA on pg. 3

FALCON // ELLEN WU

PROJECTS

Measure E bond OK'd; work starts

BY NupurMaheshwari & GitikaNalwa

Measure E, a bond measure that will provide the school district with \$99 million to re-modernize classrooms and upgrade the school's plumbing, electrical, sewer, heating and air conditioning, passed on June 3. Renovations began this summer and are expected to take five years.

Taxpayers will pay \$18 per \$100,000 of assessed property value annually for around 20 years to fund the bond, which allots \$44 million to Saratoga High School and \$55 million to Los Gatos High School.

The last district bond, Measure B (1998), enabled seismic upgrades to the school in addition to the "basic repairs" for classrooms. Many upgrades were not possible in the 1990s because of comparatively low funds amounting to \$79 million. With the more costly \$99 million Measure E Bond, the school hopes to fix problems they could not address before, such as classrooms.

"[In 1998], they did everything that they could possibly do," said principal Paul Robinson. "Now, almost 20 years later, there are some things that we want to do over again to make sure that they are done really well, up to standards today."

>> PROJECTS on pg. 5

CANVAS

School adopts new educational website

BY ArjunRamanathan & RotemShaked

With the start of the new school year, teachers are making the transition to a new learning management system called Canvas.

With Canvas, teachers can easily update and post assignments as well as moderate discussions among students. The school is currently going through a three-year transition period where teachers are learning about Canvas and its capabilities.

According to English teacher Ken Nguyen, Canvas allows teachers to know quieter students better through online discussions.

"What the online discussion forum allows these students is an avenue to participate in a way that they don't feel like they're being watched by 28 of their classmates," Nguyen said.

Principal Paul Robinson thinks Canvas can be revolutionary.

"Communication is always the key element of learning new material," Robinson said. "Canvas helps with the communication of ideas from teacher to student, student to teacher and student to student."

Canvas differs from Aeries since it offers seamlessly intertwined calendars, discussion forums, a gradebook and many other features while Aeries traditionally records only grades and each student's information.

Robinson said Canvas is a step forward in blending online tools into the classroom.

"By 2016, if all has gone well, we hope that everyone will be very comfortable with Canvas and it will be a strong tool for learning for many years to come," Robinson said. ♦

COURSES

College Board approves yearlong AP Physics class

BY SummerSmith

After much deliberation about the advanced placement physics course at the school last year, the school appealed to the College Board and was approved to teach a two-year AP Physics course in one year.

"We weren't certain the College Board would approve us teaching [AP Physics] in one year because they made it a two-year class," said AP Physics teacher Kirk Davis. "Plus, the previous plan to open a two-year course would have deterred students mainly interested in taking the class for some exposure to physics."

The class syllabus was submitted to the College Board in March, and while waiting for approval, the school submitted Physics

Honors in case the preferred plan didn't work out.

The next step was discussing with the University of California to see how it, and other colleges, would view the class, said Davis.

In order to clarify to colleges that students have taken both AP Physics 1 and AP Physics 2 in one year, each semester of the class will show up separately on students' transcripts.

Davis said the UCs and other colleges will give the student only one year of physics credit, but a student's transcript will show that he or she has taken two full years of content.

Also, according to Davis, the curriculum of the course has not gone through much change from previous years.

>> PHYSICS on pg. 5



Davis

>> what'sinside

RECREATION

After school hangouts

Reporters review places students visit in their free time. **pg. 10-11**

ADMISSIONS

Common problems with the Common App

Essay prompts limit creativity of applicants by being too broad and unoriginal. **pg. 8**

CELEBRITIES

Death of a childhood hero

Reporter reminisces about the tragic suicide of beloved actor Robin Williams. **pg. 13**

NEW STUDENTS

Out-of-district students

Two freshmen from out of town compare their old schools to Saratoga. **pg. 14**



Cheer team loses fifth coach in a row

Coming off a rough year, the 23 members of the cheer team have encountered yet another difficulty: Coach Briana Terry, who began coaching the team at the end of last year, recently resigned due to health concerns.

Last year, the team was unable to attend Nationals in Anaheim, largely because of the absence of a permanent coach. Terry's arrival was too late, but showed promise for this coming year. Unfortunately, it has been a rocky start.

After going through four different coaches last year, the team is disappointed to see another coach go. However, according to cheer adviser Julia Peck, there has already been some interest in the position.

In the meantime, practices are being held after school with Peck present as a supervisor. The competition team will still proceed as planned. ♦

— Deepthi Sampathkumar and Summer Smith

Math Team ties for first in CAML contest

Last year, the Saratoga Math Team, led by adviser P.J. Yim, finished off its successful season with a tie for first place in the California Math League (CAML).

CAML is a series of six tests, each 25 questions long. The top six students' scores on each individual test represent the school for that test, and were ultimately combined into a cumulative score for the school.

Math Club core members included sophomore Keshav Narayan; juniors Alex Li, Celine Liang, Brendan Ney, Nathan Ney, Sean Shi, Dorrie Tang and Kristine Zhang; seniors Kevin Chiang and Landon Chow; and 2014 alumni Edgar Chen, Priyanka Krishnamurthi and Matthew Lee.

Current Math Club team captain senior Kevin Chiang said that the perfect cumulative score of the Math Club was an unexpected feat.

"It's definitely a huge accomplishment," Chiang said. "A lot of the members are super strong, and it's super impressive that they would have such consistency and be on top of their game every time." ♦

— Michelle Leung and Trevor Leung

School upgrades weight room equipment

After getting a new paint job and new equipment over the summer, the \$60,000 weight room reopened on Sept. 8.

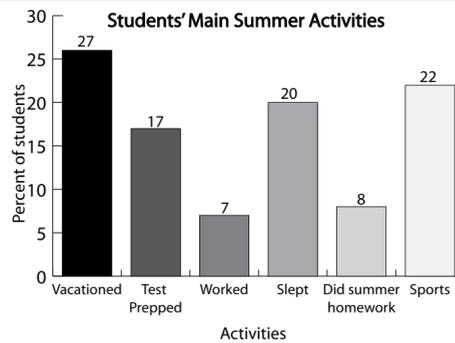
Along with a bright red paint job, the weight room was decked-out with better mats and lighting in order to give it a cleaner and more purposeful feeling. The weight room's equipment now includes more functional pieces that allow more students to use the facilities at once.

Richard Ellis, the physical education department chair, is excited about the upgraded equipment, which includes 10 power platforms, each with a bench, squat rack, pull-up station and Olympic living station.

"It allows for more kids to do squats, more kids to do bench, more kids doing pull-ups," Ellis said. ♦

— Becky Hoag

>> falconfigures



Source: Survey of 100 students
— Trevor Leung and Nechar Thumathy

>> picturethis



Courtesy of LUKE SALIN

BACK TO SCHOOL RALLY >> Sophomore Daviana Berkowitz-Sklar scoots across the gym with a dodgeball in the scooter-dodgeball contest during the first rally of the school year last Friday.

CLASSES

Computer Science employs new blended online format

by Dorrie Tang

For the first time in the history of the course, AP Computer Science (APCS) teacher Debra Troxell is trying out a blended version of the class for the 2014-15 school year. The course now only requires students to attend class on Mondays and exam dates, with the rest of the lectures available online.

Troxell intended for this blended mode to allow students a more flexible schedule, especially for those with previous experience with programming or other class conflicts.

So far, the new format has mostly resulted in a large number of student schedule swapping — Troxell allows "visitors" in classes, or students who sit in on different periods if they are unable to go to their usual class due to various conflicts. She even allows students to come to her class

in two different periods if they need to hear a lecture multiple times in order to understand.

"For example, if you are officially in period seven but have a cross country meet [that conflicts with class], [you can come as] a visitor in first period," Troxell said. "You would take part in [first period's] class the same as anybody else and do the same thing as you would if you [came during] seventh period."

Due to missing or "visiting" students, Troxell has had as few as 24 or 25 students in her classes and as many as the high 30s. Nonetheless, Troxell said most of her students have opted to stay in their assigned class periods.

Previously, the APCS class followed a flipped classroom style where students watched Troxell's online instructional videos for homework and completed assignments about the lessons in class.

Additionally, programming assignments are now submitted completely electronically. Troxell said this has worked well because most of her classroom materials had already been online and only needed to be transferred to Canvas, the school's new online management system, this year.

Besides the scheduling inconveniences due to the new format, Troxell said the blended version of the class has so far fulfilled her goal — to provide flexibility for students.

"At first, I was a little nervous [about changing the style of the class], but I think it is working very well," Troxell said. "Students can get the information in the way that best suits them. They can sit in my class twice, they can never sit in it at all [or] they can get [the materials] online and double check to make sure they [understand] all the ideas [by doing] the worksheets." ♦

DRAMA

'The Matchmaker' promises to be hilarious and unique show

by Melissa Magner & Saya Sivaram

It's been shown at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane. It's been performed on Broadway. And now, "The Matchmaker" is appearing at Saratoga High.

Opening on Oct. 10, this year's production of "The Matchmaker" promises an entertaining comedy with eclectic characters and cast.

Set in 1890s New York, the play tells the story of Horace Vandergelder, a merchant looking to get married after having been a widow for several years. He asks his friend Dolly Levi to find a match, but Dolly is more interested in marrying him herself.

As she tries to get him to no-

tice her, she also helps his niece elope with a penniless artist and two of Horace's assistants take a day off work without running into their boss. When everyone finds each other in one of the classiest restaurants in the city, games of hide and seek, food fights and mistaken identities ensue.

Because of the unconventional tone of the show, Theron said she is most excited to watch the various roles come to life.

"Normally, over-the-top farcical comedies have very flat characters, but the characters in 'The Matchmaker' are not only hilarious, but also have a lot of depth and insight that they bring to the story," Theron said.

The audition, held on Aug. 27, proved a successful and low-stress event for those participating.

"It was made to be a 'one-size-fits-all' kind of audition, so anyone can participate regardless of their acting abilities," sophomore Sarah Traina, who plays a singer in the musical quartet said.

Even with the excitement of a new play for the new school year, the show also offers challenges to actors and actresses because of the shorter preparation time, with performances a week earlier than usual.

The show will perform Oct. 10 and Oct. 11 at 7 p.m., Oct. 12 at 2 p.m. and Oct. 17 and Oct. 18 at 7 p.m. in the McAfee Center. ♦

PLAZA >>

continued from pg. 1

donations. "The foundation was to build something nice for everyone involved in the school," principal Paul Robinson said.

The Plaza offers an improved experience for spectators. Previously, stadium visitors could only use a small bathroom, and snacks were sold at pop-up tents that needed bulky, intense lighting. Visitors can now use updated bathrooms and a snack bar with refrigerators. During football games, an area for Sports Boosters will sell Falcon merchandise.

Athletic director Tim Lugo believes the Sports Plaza is a necessity.

"The Sports Plaza is a much needed finish to our stadium."

athletic director Tim Lugo

"The Sports Plaza is a much needed finish to our stadium," Lugo said "We were in violation of OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Standards] code by not having enough restrooms for the number of people attending sporting events."

Robinson said the architects who designed the plaza aimed to find a balance with the similarly modern McAfee Center and the traditional school buildings within the school itself.

Following the designers' vision for a state-of-the-art plaza, LED lights were installed on the "Home of the Falcons" sign stretching across the plaza. The LED lights enable better energy efficiency.

Although the 4-month construction of the Sports Plaza may have seemed

straightforward, unforeseen complications occurred during the process. Construction workers juggled delays caused by un dependable weather and looming deadlines. They also discovered that the water pipes underneath the plaza had multiple cracks and leaks. This required repair on the part of the school.

For their part, most students seem to have received the Sports Plaza warmly. "Since our turf and track area are fairly new, it really makes the area look even better," sophomore Kirthana Ramesh said. "Also, I think it is very convenient [that] a water refill station and water fountain is set up there."

According to Robinson, the Sports Plaza has also become a symbol of the community togetherness.

"I remember one time I saw the entire football team sitting and gathering in the Plaza while waiting to go to a game," he said. "That to me identified what [the Plaza] was for, a place for people to come together and meet." ♦

>> togatalks

Does the Sports Plaza benefit the school?

"I think it benefits our school, but it isn't worth the money they put into it."



sophomore Shreya Ingle

"It comes in handy because now there is a built-in snack shack."



junior Malia Oreglia

SPEECH AND DEBATE

Off-campus coach hired as Rector steps down

by Maya Prasad & Amulya Vadlakonda

After eight years of coaching speech and debate, English teacher Erick Rector has stepped down. Chris Harris, an off-campus coach who previously worked as an assistant coach, now leads the program.

"I think the changes in speech and debate are going to be a little difficult at first," said Rector. "But I think at the same time, the coaches that Harris picks up will be talented coaches that will lead the program in a positive direction."

Rector cited fatigue and burnout as the main reasons for stepping down.

"I think that when I had more energy and more free time on my hands, it was a little easier to balance out my life with speech and debate," Rector said. "But in the past couple

years, I've seen that long weekend tournaments, practices throughout the week and especially traveling with the team that I've gotten into [were] taking a toll on me in the classroom and personally."

He leaves the program in good condition, after building it up for eight years. When he came to the school, the program was going to get kicked out of the Coast Forensic League. Rector reestablished it in the League.

Harris has extensive experience, having coached at Santa Clara University for two years and Fresno State for six years. He is also a seasoned partici-

pant of speech and debate himself, having competed in the LD, policy, extemporaneous, impromptu and oratory events in high school and college.

Over the summer, Harris organized an event at Santa Clara

"Harris has been a great guide for the team this past year."

senior Agastya Gupta

University for SHS public forum and parliamentary students in order to prepare the camp, Harris is making more changes, which are expected to have positive effects, according to senior Rohith Krishna.

One change is that the number of tournaments entered by a student will be dependant on the amount of practices attended. This "creates a better atmosphere for learning" and enforces attendance, fixing a major problem from last year.

"Last year, attendance was sporadic, leading to a lack of preparedness and polish on tournament day," Gupta said. "I want to focus on building team unity and motivation to foster a better work ethic and

lead Saratoga to victory." The team plans to incorporate more league and out-of-state tournaments, such as the St. Marks Invitational in Texas and the Glenbrook Invitational in Illinois. Despite these positive changes, some remain skeptical about the team's future.

"I'm sure [Harris] will do a good job being our coach, but I'm worried that it'll be a little hard since he is not a part of the Saratoga High staff," said sophomore Raina Kolluri.

Harris's addition as head coach has been taken well by the team. Senior Anjali Manghnani said she "still [sees] the program being successful as we have always been."

"There will be some changes, but [Harris] has some great ideas for the program and I'm just excited for this season to begin," Manghnani said. ♦

ACADEMIC COMPETITIONS

Lou restarts Quiz Bowl

by Kevin Chow & Oksana Trifonova

The Quiz Bowl club has had a complicated history, one that senior Bruce Lou wants to change.

Lou brings an impressive skill set to the team. As the reigning national U.S. History Bee champion, Lou was a crucial part of the Saratoga A-team that claimed second place in the 2014 National History Bowl competition last spring.

He was also the leading scorer of Team California at the National All-Star Academic Tournament (NASAT), a competition featuring the best Quiz Bowl players in the nation.

Quiz Bowl is a team trivia game comprised of a variety of categories, including history, literature, science, math, art and pop culture. Players "buzz in" when they have the answer.

The school's Quiz Bowl club was originally founded in 2009 by 2011 alumnus Vijay Menon. Under his leadership, the club reached its peak but began to fade once Menon graduated.

Since Menon's graduation, there have been two attempts to revive the club. 2013 alumna Maggy Liu restarted Quiz Bowl as an unofficial club during the 2012-2013 school year, but the team again grew inactive once all of its mem-

bers graduated.

However, last year, 2014 graduate Nicholas Chow stepped up and led the team to one competition, in which they managed to qualify for the National Scholastic Championship (NSC), which was held in Virginia.

"Even though our Quiz Bowl team qualified for the national tournament, it was comprised of our History Bowl A-team. So realistically, we didn't have a real Quiz Bowl team; just a History Bowl team masquerading as a Quiz Bowl team," Chow said.

With Chow's graduation, Lou has stepped up to the challenge of improving the Quiz Bowl club.

Like Liu three years ago, Lou plans to make Quiz Bowl an unofficial club in order to allow the club to have more flexibility with practice times and locations.

Lou has decided that there will not be tryouts for Quiz Bowl.

"The idea of Quiz Bowl was to be a little more open-access to all people, because it covers a greater breadth of material," Chow said.

The first club meeting was on Aug. 27. Future meetings will be on Wednesdays during lunch in Room 506, and the meetings will be open to anyone interested.

"Whoever wants to come can just sit down and play," Lou said. ♦

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

'Don't mock the trial'

TEAM MEMBERS FORESEE BRIGHT FUTURE

by Cassandra King

After a season filled with miscommunications and uphill battles last year, the Mock Trial team is ready for a fresh start and looking for a new teacher-coach and a new attorney-coach who will lead the way.

After the attorney-coach repeatedly failed to show up to practice and contact the team last year, team members found themselves without a coach halfway through the season.

Even so, they persevered through the season with teacher-coaches Jim Chin and Michael Kim and did reasonably well at the county competition last year.

Last spring, the team lost three trials out of four, but their scores were better than expected. The team finished strong, participating against teams who had been training with practiced attorneys.

This year, the path to success will not be easy. If the team does not find an attorney-coach in time for the season, it will be difficult to keep up with other schools. Senior Max Chang still sees reasons to be hopeful.

"If our team possesses the intellectual thirst it had last year, I believe that this team has the potential," said Chang.

Chang added that during practices last year, "the engagement of the team was almost tangible, with every member actively contributing to discussions." He hopes this year will be no different.

Last year's difficulties inspired a sense of closeness among members and created a sense of community.

Practicing at night and traveling to different schools, the county competition also gave members time to bond and create lasting friendships.

Although Mock Trial has lost valuable members such as 2014 alumni Charles Li and Julianne Wey, there are underclassmen ready to take their places, such as sophomores Jessy Liu and Jacqueline Han.

Last year, there were many new participants, many of them freshmen. This allowed the club to create a JV team.

Although it was difficult helping the new members adjust at first, they grew more confident, and will be crucial to leading this year's team to success. ♦



Chang

Music program adds teachers to its faculty

BY Devin Zhao

Music students were pleasantly surprised on the first day of school with the addition of two new faces to the teaching staff: teacher Anthony Lanzino and student teacher Jonathan Hsu.

Having taught previously at James Logan High School for seven years, Lanzino brings impressive experience to Saratoga. Before his present job, he also taught at Whitney M. Young Magnet High School in Chicago.

Under Lanzino's tutelage, the band program in Chicago quadrupled. He also led groups to national festivals at both the Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall.

Through one of his friends, percussion teacher Vince Oliver, Lanzino secured an opportunity teaching the jazz program at Saratoga. After reaching out to music teachers Michael Boitz and Jonathan Pwu last year, he was chosen to teach the AP Music Theory class as well as co-teacher orchestra with Boitz.

Lanzino said that he knew SHS was a great school with a strong performing arts department, but he was surprised at how close students are to the school and community.

"[Students'] bonds with the community are something that is way above any other school I have worked at," Lanzino said.

"I also cannot believe how many

people that work here went to school here; it is a real testament to the community."

Hsu, on the other hand, got his opportunity as a student teacher by chance in the lobby of a concert hall.

"I was watching an open rehearsal when I ran into [Boitz]," Hsu said. "I knew him from county honor band back in high school. He asked me what I was doing with my life. I said I was getting my teaching credential and he said,

"You should come [to Saratoga]."

Hsu realized at a young age that he enjoyed teaching and pursued his undergraduate degree at San Jose State University,

where he played tuba and was drum major for the marching band.

"Helping people brought a lot of joy to me," Hsu said. "I was lucky; a lot of people don't know what they want to do in college, which means I got very lucky that I knew."

Hsu was originally brought in in the spring to help low brass members improve their playing, but he was impressed with what he saw and decided to stay.

Hsu would like to officially join the staff when he gets his teaching credentials.

[The music department] seemed like a well-organized, well-oiled machine, so I thought that was very impressive," Hsu said. ♦

Hsu got his opportunity as a student teacher by chance in the lobby of a concert hall.

Seasoned historian joins department

BY Dorrie Tang

New history teacher Faith Stackhouse Daly is a key addition to the school's faculty for the 2014-15 school year and comes with a wealth of experience: She has been the Santa Clara County coordinator and a member of the state board for History Day for the past few years, a lead trainer for social studies teachers in Santa Clara County on the implementation of Common Core and a National Board Certified Teacher in the Social Sciences.

Daly came to SHS after 10 years of teaching at Gunn High School in Palo Alto, where she had experience teaching World History, U.S. History, AP U.S. History, Contemporary World History, U.S. Government, Psychology, Economics and Living Skills. She is teaching two sections of ninth-grade World Geography and three sections of 10th-grade World History.

She said she applied for the teaching position at here because she had grown tired of the commute from her home in Los Gatos to Palo Alto and also because she knew some members of the Saratoga Social Studies department.

Daly earned two Bachelor of Arts from UC Davis in Political Science and History, and a Master of Arts from the Monterey Institute of International Studies in International Policy Studies, where she focused on development and nonproliferation. While there, she worked on research regarding the use

of chemical and biological weapons in terrorist attacks and was hired as a Treaty Analyst for the Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) on a contract with the U.S. Army verifying chemical weapons destruction.

In fact, Daly was selected to represent the U.S. Army in presentations on the status of disarmament at The Hague in the Netherlands while she was working at SAIC.

"It was pretty amazing to be representing our government at the age of 24," Daly said.

Daly said her decision to leave government work and enter teaching was largely inspired by the inequalities in education privilege she had seen.

"I believe that service to our youth is more valuable than any personal accolades I could have received by staying in government work," Daly said. "Despite the lack of public applause, public service roles are among the most important career choices one can make."

Daly first taught English as well as some First Grade and International Baccalaureate (IB) Chemistry for a year and a half in Rabat, Morocco, then eventually moved to teaching at Gunn and now Saratoga.

So far, Daly said her experience at the school has been enjoyable.

"I love Saratoga and am happy to be a Falcon," Daly said. "The staff and students have been warm and welcoming. Right now, there is nowhere else I'd rather be." ♦

English teacher contributes wealth of experience

BY Rachel Hull

It would not be wise to ask new English 9 teacher Susanna Ryan what she did before coming to Saratoga High. Rather, it might save one time to ask what she didn't do.

At her old job at Falls Church High School in Virginia, Ryan taught AP English Literature, Creative Writing, English 10 Honors and English 11 for 10 years; she also taught a composition course at Northern Virginia Community College for one year. Not to mention that she served as a private tutor outside of school as well as a varsity cheerleading coach, Lead Mentor and chair of the Honor Council at Falls Church.

Now Ryan has moved on to the next step in her life: teaching at Saratoga. A woman with dark brown hair and square-shaped glasses, she seems unassuming at first, but her energy and enthusiasm shine through. She describes herself as someone who embraces her "inner nerd."

She hails from a world far outside the Saratoga bubble, living in Latin America and later in Virginia and Maryland.

"I am really grateful for my time overseas because I was inspired to embrace different cultures and people,"

Ryan said. "I love to travel to parts of the world I have never seen before and to immerse myself in the everyday life of the local people."

Her family relocated to San Jose because of her husband's work. She said that Falls Church is similar to Saratoga in its size and diversity.

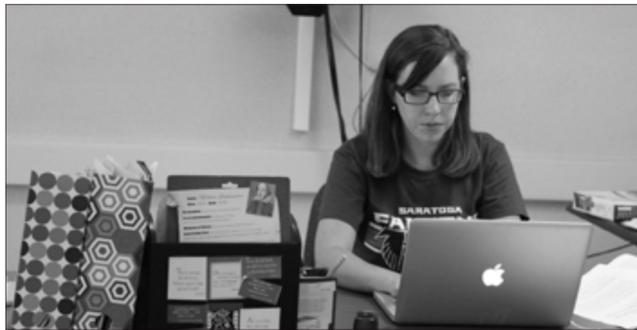
"After my first visit to Saratoga, I knew I wanted to be here," she said. "The student body, the administration and the teachers really impressed me, and I wanted to be part of this community."

Ryan earned her Bachelor of Arts in English and her teaching credential at The College of William and Mary in Virginia and her Master of Arts in Literature at George Mason University in Virginia.

"In college, I kept finding myself choosing English classes as electives, so my mom suggested I work toward getting my English teaching credential," Ryan said. "Once I started my internship at a high school my junior year of college, I never turned back."

Ryan said she became a teacher because of her love of literature and teenagers, as well as the positive impact that her own teachers had on her life.

"I think it is an honor to be in the



New English 9 teacher Susanna Ryan works in her classroom on the afternoon of Sept. 5.

classroom with young people and to study my favorite subject — books! — all the time," Ryan said.

Ryan sees her strengths as her "genuine interest" in her students' lives.

"I really enjoy being around adolescents because I think they are just starting to figure themselves out and the world around them," she said. "I think that's such a cool time to enter a young person's life and to be with them as they

light bulbs go off and his [or] her world starts to really open up."

This year, Ryan looks forward to helping her students not only learn about literature, but also themselves.

"I hope that they feel cared about in my classroom and safe to be themselves," Ryan said. "I hope that they feel that I challenge them to stretch themselves, but that I support them as they do so." ♦

New staff members give students academic support

BY Trevor Leung & Neehar Thumaty

For new teacher Megan Hunt, lead teacher of the ASSIST (Accommodating Saratoga Students with Intervention, Support and Therapy) program, and supervisor Jennifer Blomquist, the supervisor of The Learning Center (TLC), being a new staff member is a lot like being a new student.

"You're trying to figure out how ev-

erything works, and where the nearest bathroom is," Hunt said.

Both the ASSIST program and the TLC are now located in the H building, which used to house the preschool. The newly created ASSIST program is designed to provide academic support for students based on their individual needs, while The Learning Center gives students with special needs a quiet and comfortable environment to take tests.

Hunt started out as a substitute teach-

er and "unexpectedly really enjoyed it" before deciding to pursue teaching. She had previously worked at Gilroy High School and most recently Lynbrook High School for seven years.

In contrast, this year will be Blomquist's first year on a high school campus.

Before Saratoga High, Blomquist had volunteered at schools in Los Gatos, and this year, she looks forward to making a difference in students' lives and par-

ticipating in future school spirit events at Saratoga.

"I think it's very exciting; I really love Saratoga High," Blomquist said. "The teachers and the students have all been very welcoming, and I can see that the school is run really well."

Hunt said she "hopes to create a safe accessible place on campus for students to go, whether it's for health issues, academic support, or just needing a quiet space." ♦

PROJECTS >>

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The administration is now looking to improve some of those same classrooms and accommodate many of the growing programs on campus, including MAP, and the music and engineering programs. One of the larger projects will be the creation of a new music facility, which is expected to cost \$10 to \$12 million.

"It is going to take time to get that started, and then it will take probably another two years to build that building," Robinson said. "We don't just want to throw a whole bunch of stuff together and hope it stands up."

Robinson hopes the upgrades will relieve a heavy burden that currently rests on the shoulders of the school's maintenance crew.

"[They] keep this 1959 Chevy running as best as it can," Robinson said. "[They do] some really incredible things."

Upgrades to the school's infrastructure have already begun, although Robinson notes that these upgrades have most likely escaped most students' notice. The school has improved its heating and air conditioning systems, as well as its sewer system.

"[The latter is] not necessarily one of those really sexy items that sells out there," Robinson said, "but it's one of those things that, in the bond measure, we knew we would have to do."

These upgrades cost less than anticipated. "[Now], we will have even more money going into some other programs where we can say, 'Wow, we built this or we modernized this,'" Robinson said. Robinson foresees a lengthy process for larger renovations. It will take the district six to eight months to design and

approve architectural plans before it can proceed with construction.

"I wish I could say we could start [building] tomorrow," Robinson said. "But there has to be a lot of planning that goes into it first before we can actually start turning over some dirt."

Robinson finds that a common reaction to Measure E is confusion. Many wonder why a "beautiful school" like Saratoga High would need renovations.

"[People think], 'Why do they need to fix something that isn't broken?'" Robinson said. "But what people don't see is some of the infrastructure. Some of the water pipes around here are busting, and we are just putting them together with tape and gum to fix them."

Junior Meera Rachamalla, co-president of the Environmental Club, believes that the school should also focus on "making its campus more environmentally friendly." She suggests adding solar panels to the school parking lot.

The school has considered adding solar panels to its campus, although Robinson does not see this happening in the near future. The administration wants to first focus on upgrading facilities that have not been upgraded since 1959, when the school was built.

"We want to fix the leak first, and then we will bring in a new water source," Robinson said.

The \$44 and \$55 million split in the allocation of the bond funds is based upon both need and population, said Robinson. Within the district, 55 percent of the student population reside in Los Gatos, whereas 44 to 45 percent reside in Saratoga.

"Both schools are going to be able to do a lot with that kind of money," Robinson said. "[Most importantly, the bond] enables us to apply for some matching grants of money from the state, another reason why the timing of this [bond] was so important." ♦

SUMMER COMPETITIONS

National History Day members tour capital

BY Michelle Leung & Kelly Xiao

Zooming around Washington, D.C., on Segways with four classmates and history teacher Kim Anzalone, senior Jasmine Deng paused to take pictures of landmarks including the White House, the Lincoln Monument and the Capitol.

She yelled "Go Falcons!" into the echoing Canadian embassy, took pictures of an East Coast specialty — fireflies — and even posed for tourists intrigued to find five kids and their teacher riding around the capital of the United States on Segways.

Deng traveled to D.C. with four other students to represent the school in the National History Day competition from June 15-19. Although the participants had a busy schedule, they set aside time for sightseeing as well.

In the past two years, the school sent six students to the national competition, compared to five students sent this summer alone.

Senior Max Chang received the History in the Federal Government Award

at the competition for his website "Miranda v. Arizona: Rebalancing Rights and Responsibilities," as well as \$200, which he admits to have not spent yet.

Chang found History Day to be a valuable learning experience because of the connections between current events and history.

"When I started my project, I had no clue about civil rights," said Chang. "After you really think deeply, you learn all these things. I mean even [the] Boston [Marathon] bombers connected to Miranda [Rights]; you get to see how everything is part of this larger web."

Deng was also able to explore new topics through the creation of a website entitled "Exodus for the Boat People: Rights of Refugees. Responsibilities of America" with seniors Minda Lee, Michelle Leung and Vivian Roan.

"What I had learned in AP U.S. History from a textbook was enriched with [seeing] artifacts from history and literally standing on history," Deng said.

Anzalone and her husband chaperoned the trip. According to the students, Anzalone made the trip incredible with



Courtesy of JASMINE DENG

History teacher Kim Anzalone and seniors Max Chang, Minda Lee, Michelle Leung and Vivian Roan enter the University of Maryland in Washington, D.C., during the competition.

her sociable interactions with everyone, from a soldier who fought in Afghanistan to a child visiting grandparents.

Anzalone said the entire trip was "fabulous," partly because the small group size allowed better interaction.

"The Segway [tour] was the best," Anzalone said. "And we cracked each other up and we got to see all the great stuff in D.C."

While the last History Day proved successful for participants, students are already preparing for the next competition. The prompt for the 2014-15 school year is Leaders and Legacies.

"I'm looking forward to touring the archives, sifting through the material," senior Ethan Ngai said. "There are a lot of different sources, and a lot of them will give you a new perspective." ♦

COURSES

Engineering class paves way for 4-year program

BY Becky Hoag

The first assignment of the year: build the tallest structure possible that can support a marshmallow with 25 uncooked spaghetti strands, tape and string. Students in Principles of Engineering, the new elective taught first period by teacher Audrey Warmuth and sixth period by teacher Matt Welander, both in the old woodshop room, were drawn into the course with this first exercise.

Introduced by Project Lead the Way (PLTW) last year, Principles of Engineering is an extension of the freshman and sophomore elective Introduction to Engineering Design. Junior Eoghan Walsh, who wanted to try something new, feels that it is a well-paced, hands-on class.

"I like how we've gotten to building objects and it's only the second week," Walsh said.

Students can take Principles of Engineering without having taken Introduction to Engineering Design. The two classes are similar, but differ in the type of engineering that students do.

"The course work in [Principles of Engineering] is [more] advanced, but it's very different from the first-year class," Welander said. "The first class [teaches]

designing using computer software and the second year class is more hands-on building."

The engineering electives have been so popular that they necessitated a waitlist. PLTW's plan is to create a four-elective program by adding one class in 2015 and another in 2016, depending on teacher availability and student interest.

"We're thinking of maybe [adding] aeronautical engineering, biomedical engineering or digital electronics," Warmuth said.

Even though it is only the beginning of the year, senior Andre Baluni already knows this is one of his favorite classes.

"I really like working with all the tools we use in class. Right now, we're building slopes and pulleys," Baluni said.

Students in the Principles of Engineering class will be provided with their own VEX robotics kit, in-class laptops and scientific notebooks.

Unlike most classes, these engineering courses do not follow state standards, so they can take any pace that benefits the students the most.

"The course is really interesting," Walsh said. "It's a new experience that I can learn a lot from." ♦

PHYSICS >>

continued from pg. 1

The only change is that an additional chapter about rotational dynamics will be taught and tested this year.

Not only did the College Board separate the AP Physics B course into a two-year class last year, but the board also split the AP Physics test into two separate tests.

Other than the addition of rotational dynamics to the curriculum, the only other change is the structure of the AP test itself.

Now, students will no longer have to memorize 40 formulas; rather, they will be given the formulas on the test, and will have to apply them to more advanced, two-step problems. And a calculator may be required, as opposed to previous years.

The number of problems on the AP test has also been cut from 70 questions to 50.

"There was real time pressure [on the old AP test], and you had to recall all the formulas," Davis said. "It was an exercise not in pure physics in many ways. They are trying to make it much more physics based."

The goals of the class have also

changed; now, students start with big ideas and concepts, and will have to learn to apply them in different ways, Davis said. But he said they are not as technical as they used to be.

In the free response portion, for example, there will be more questions in which students have to justify answers in a paragraph.

AP Physics students feel most strongly about the split of the AP test.

Many people agree with the decision to split the test in two and believe it will be extremely beneficial for everyone.

"I think the two tests make it better because then each test will concentrate on sections of physics that are closely related to another. This would help me do better on the test," junior Josh Dey said.

Junior Maya Sripadam thinks the changes to the testing are unfair.

"I'm not a fan of the situation because as far as I know we are still getting the same amount of credits as any other AP level science—and they are only taking one test," Sripadam said.

How does Davis feel about the testing changes?

"Instead of three hours of fun, they get six hours of fun now at the end of the year," Davis said. ♦

Not only did the College Board separate the AP Physics B course, but they also split the AP Physics test into two separate tests.

Sports Plaza unites students and faculty

BY Cassandra King

“Home of the Falcons” in foot-high shiny letters is a spectacular sight to see driving past Saratoga High School on Herriman Avenue. Students, staff and the entire community can all take pride in the world-class facelift that the sports program has received.

Now stands a sports facility that is of the quality that our school deserves, boasting pride and confidence in the sports program.

With a cost of \$1.35 million and over two years of planning, the Sports Plaza finished construction in June in time for the class of 2014’s graduation. Granted, we may have spent a lot of money and time to make this seemingly simple entrance, but it has more benefits than downsides.

We now have new bathrooms, a concession stand, a shiny metal structure proudly announcing Saratoga High School and donor plates across the front walls.

In addition to the modern look, the structures in the field area are stronger and the water running through the water fountain pipes in the field area is cleaner as well. Indeed, this new facility provides a safer and better environment for athletes and everyone who uses it.

Previously, there was just the football field, some run-down bathrooms and makeshift stands during games with no real entrance. Compared to other schools, the sports facility was, substandard. That is no longer the case.

When the McAfee Center was completed a dozen years ago, the school gained a one-of-a-kind facility, which has been used by the drama and music departments extensively, not to mention

community members for events such as the Steinway Society and San Jose Wind Symphony. Likewise, the Sports Plaza, along with the Benny Pierce field, will be just as beneficial for the athletic department.

The field, which was resurfaced last fall, is less hot in the sun than it was previously, benefitting the marching band, football team, field hockey team and other sports.

The Plaza’s new concession stand will also make it easier for people to have cold drinks and food.

Ultimately, the Sports Plaza has helped enhance the school. Both athletes and non-athletes can gaze at our new Sports Plaza and feel proud to be a Falcon.

As principal Robinson always says, “It’s GREAT to be a FALCON!”

Yes — it has always been great to be a Falcon — and now, even more so. ♦

>> falconfigures

- 7 Small lights under the metal structure lighting up the floor
- 5 Large concession windows
- 2 Trees surrounding the donor walls
- 1 Firetruck-red water fountain

What to do about ISIS?

BY Arman Vaziri

There has been news of fighting in the Middle East for as long as any of us can remember, but now the threat to democracy and America has become much more real.

The Islamic State of Syria and Iraq (ISIS), now called the Islamic State, is a declared terrorist group by most major countries in the world. They are a Sunni jihadist group and call themselves a caliphate, proclaiming that they have religious authority over all Muslims in the world. ISIS threatens the stability of the region, destroys cultural and religious sites and slaughters innocent civilians.

Recently, the group received attention for the videotaped beheading of American journalist James Foley, which elevated the threat of ISIS in the eyes of the American public. The ugly display of Foley’s beheading proves that ISIS wants to take the war directly to America.

Although most people want to avoid another war in the Middle East, the U.S. needs to continue at least its airstrikes in order to prevent the brutal murder of thousands more citizens and the destruction of cities and important sites in the Middle East.

Foley’s murder makes it easier for Obama to justify escalating the U.S.’s presence in Syria, but America needs to tread cautiously. For now, the U.S. should simply continue its aid to the Iraqi and Kurdish forces and slightly increase the frequency of airstrikes on ISIS-controlled zones, which would eventually wear out the comparatively small ISIS army.

At this point, to stop ISIS completely, sending American troops back to the Middle East may be the only option in the near future. The best plan to continue fighting ISIS and staying out of Syria is to continue preventing ISIS from taking over more territory and to

help Middle Eastern forces stop them; however, boots on the ground may be necessary to stop ISIS’s bloody tyranny, even if it means losing more American soldiers to stop terrorism in the Middle East.

Not many Americans want to send our soldiers back to the Middle East. If we decide to do so, it would be extremely controversial.

Perhaps the Iraqi War in response to 9/11 was unjustified, but this time, we have a just cause. We should learn from the mistakes we made last time and fight smarter in the Middle East. ♦

>> togatalks

What do you think the U.S. should do about ISIS?

“I definitely think the U.S. should act against this unjust action.”
sophomore Kushagro Bhattacharjee



“I don’t think we should do anything. Violence is not the answer.”
sophomore Andrea Hwang



“Forces need to be sent to the source of ISIS, and it needs to be eradicated.”
junior Karthik Padmanabhan



THE saratogafalcon <<

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The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 30-5 in support of the editorial.



Online-based education has potential but also poses risks

Monday morning. After a relaxing and fun-filled weekend, students are forced to wake up at 6:30 on a chilly morning and sit in unbearably slow classes for the next six hours.

Most students would rather be at home than at school every day for nine months.

However, getting an education at home is no longer just a dream. Now it’s actually possible.

As school-based technology is becoming more advanced and tests are being changed from Scantron and pencil to clicking buttons on a computer, some believe that there is no longer a need for students to show up to certain classes at school.

As of now, computer-based classes like computer science now have an online option that allows students to learn the same material that they would learn in school, except at home on their own computer.

Instead of attending classes like this at school, some people believe that life would be easier for teachers and students if the class was taught online, thus removing the need to show up at school.

Theoretically this form of teaching does make sense.

Students can learn the material at their own pace, have fewer classes to show up to at school and online learning allows for more flexibility in students’ schedules.

This all sounds great, but in real life, it’s not quite the same.



KEVIN CHOW

First of all, when in class, students dedicate most of their focus on taking notes and learning the material. If a student is confused, a living, breathing human is there to provide immediate feedback.

In contrast with the learning environment school provides, when at home, here are sometimes too many distractions to focus on learning.

What originally was meant to be an hour-long lesson can sometimes take triple that time when students are faced with distractions such as siblings, phones and, most of all, the Internet.

What started as learning the origins of Latin can turn into watching an hour of cat videos on YouTube.

Also, more importantly, being at school provides more than just basic education. Learning to engage with other people both inside and outside the classroom is a crucial skill that students can learn only in an environment in which they are interacting with their

peers. Interacting well with other people is as important as any math problem, vocabulary word or formula you learn in class (you should still pay attention in class, though).

One of the main reasons that adults in the U.S. lose their jobs is due to the inability to work well with others — for this reason it is important that students develop the social skills necessary to work well with others and school is the ideal place for students to hone these skills.

Although schools are becoming more technologically advanced and shifting to online education, it is important that students recognize the need for having in-person classes and limit the online classes they take to only those that aren’t offered at their school.

Also, another word of advice for you online class takers: Don’t open YouTube. ♦

Get over the gross factor: The search for new water sources takes us to our toilets

BY Becky Hoag

As California plummets deeper and deeper into drought, scientists are starting to look for alternatives to the standard water-collecting process to satisfy the state’s growing thirst.

Currently, 55 percent of our water is imported, 30 percent is collected from local freshwater bodies, underground wells and runoff from mountain snow melt, 10 percent is conservationally saved water and the remaining 5 percent is recycled water. But due to global warming and the increase in demand, we are running out of local water and imported water is becoming more expensive.

Little do most people know that the best alternative is right underneath us: the sewage drain. That 5 percent of recycled water could account for more of our water, if only we’d let it.

But if you think that’s gross, you’re not alone. There is even a group, started in Australia, called “Citizens Against Drinking Sewage.” Honestly, though, the people opposed to this idea need to get over their squeamish selves. In fact, water is much more sanitary when it goes through the extensive filtration process than our current tap water is. California needs more water, and this is

the answer.

Sewage water purification facilities make sure that the water is as clean as possible. The water goes through four main processes: membrane filtration, reverse osmosis, ultraviolet oxidation and sometimes ozone disinfection, though San Diego is the only location that currently does this step.

Membrane filtration filters out any particles and microorganisms, and then reverse osmosis removes salts, bacteria and viruses. The water is then exposed to ultraviolet light, creating a chemical reaction that destroys any remaining chemical contaminants. Finally, the ozone disinfection step rids the water of any remaining tiny organic or inorganic organisms by mixing ozone into the water.

This makes the final product 99.9999 percent clean and crystal clear, while bottled water is still somewhat foggy in comparison.

Tap water’s process, in contrast, mainly just removes larger particles, but doesn’t get down to the molecular level the way sewage water purification facilities do. For example, purified sewage water only has 20 parts per million (ppm) of salt remaining after its process, whereas the average imported water has

600 ppm.

Surprisingly, despite the extensive process, sewage water purification is actually less expensive than desalination, another possible water source that is being looked into by some coastal communities.

Apparently more people would be OK with drinking water that was once fish urine than water that was once sewage. It is also 30 percent less expensive than imported water. It’s natural to fear water that comes from sewage, but superior water.

Another aspect that treated sewage water has an edge on is the recycling of natural resources. No more worries about using up all the freshwater on Earth, especially with our continuously growing population. Easy, smart and efficient.

Sadly, even after the water goes through the extensive cleaning process, it is currently only used for local industries and watering lawns. Some people have even suggested directing the water back into the local reservoirs and streams to make the purified water seem more palatable.

This view is ironic, though, because that method would take perfectly clean water and contaminate it again. Two steps forward, and one step back.

Soon a water purification facility is scheduled to open right here in San Jose

>> candid caricatures



KEVIN CHOW

and plan on pumping out 8 million gallons a day.

But the drinking-worthy water will only be used for industrial and landscaping purposes.

If we were to use this water for drinking, we would increase the average cleanliness and health of our community.

Let’s put our water to better use no matter where it came from because, frankly, we can’t afford not to. ♦

You done texting yet?

BY Kelly Xiao

At a recent get-together dinner, a 12-year-old boy, the son of one of my mother’s friends, sat with his eyes locked on his iPhone, his thumbs racing across the keypad.

Despite my father’s attempts to make conversation, all he could muster were half-hearted grunts of acknowledgement and the occasional popping of rice into his mouth with chopsticks. Then he goes back to beep-blo-beeping and pressing buttons. How appalling.

This use of phones during social interactions is one of the worst social problems today. Not only does it demonstrate disrespect to other people, but it also prevents phone-users from making the most out of day-to-day interactions. How can one expect to have productive and meaningful discussions while distracted by Facebook notifications, texts and iPhone games?

Then consider the impressions made on others when using the iPhone. Focusing on a screen rather than the conversation sends the message that the phone’s contents are far more important than the living, breathing person present.

Picture this: Someone confronts a friend with a problem, only to find that that friend is too occupied with what is essentially a plastic and glass box around wires.

This hapless friend can only guess what her conversant is doing. Texting? Browsing? Or, heaven forbid, downloading yet another game app?

Humans like to see that other people are listening; it irks us when another’s behavior suggests that our words are worthless.

Nothing is more disrespectful than impertinent people who cannot be bothered to pretend they are listening (what happened to eye contact?).

While for some, this may seem to be a big fuss over a small matter, it is ultimately better to turn off phones while talking to others. There is no need to be interrupted by a meaningless text while immersed in a conversation.

Besides, no matter how tempting it is to reach for the phone upon each buzz, surely the text can wait. The phone will not explode and shower molten metal onto bystanders simply because a text message isn’t answered immediately.

The whole point of a conversation is to actually interact with the other person. When electronics come into the picture, the conversation dwindles into a mess of repeated “Sorry, what did you say?” and a lack of understanding. The conversation might as well not have taken place.

All it takes is a simple “Bye, I have to go now” message to appease impatient texters and feel free to engage in a face-to-face, meaningful conversation.

Until then, I will find someone else to converse with instead of talking to someone only half-present, even if he’s the son of my mother’s friend; I do not want to wait for someone to finish his mental trip through texts, apps and emails, before looking up and giving a non-committal reply.

I prefer to talk to those who actually listen to what I am saying instead of those who have their faces buried in a smartphone.

So please, do turn those phones off, unless you want me to turn around and walk away. ♦

Would decreasing the drinking age be helpful?

BY Apoorv Kwatra & Neehar Thumaty

At age 18, Americans legally become adults and are granted every privilege of adulthood. Except one.

Eighteen-year-olds can vote, join the military and even buy guns. But they cannot enjoy a glass of wine at family dinners until they’re 21, a relic of outdated ‘80s legislation that should not exist today.

A lower drinking age has been proven to be successful in a majority of developed countries. Countries such as the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia have set the legal age to drink at 18 and are considered both economically and socially advanced.

Not only are these countries doing well overall, but they have less drinking-related issues such as DUIs, than the U.S., despite the fact that the U.S. consumes less alcohol per person than those countries. This is because U.S. citizens often abuse alcohol when given the freedom to drink.

In 1982, President Reagan established the Presidential Commission Against Drunk Driving (PCDD), to control what was then considered a drunk driving epidemic.

Many critics argued that Reagan’s increased drinking age of 21 infringed on citizens’ rights. He in turn said that it was a small price to pay because how the law would lower drinking related deaths. Nonetheless, these days people receive more education on the

negative effects of abusive drinking than during Reagan’s time.

Young people in the U.S. tend to not drink as responsibly as individuals in countries with lower drinking ages. This is a result of people who actually obey the law being thrown into a heavy drinking environment at 21 without any guidance and often without any previous experience on drinking responsibly.

Some might argue that people might abuse drinking even if the legal age was 18. At 18, many teenagers are still home, or preparing to go to college. By 21, however, most are on their own and do not have parental restrictions preventing them from drinking.

While drinking can be dangerous, smoking and joining the military, which are risky, are rights that 18-year-olds receive.

Voting is something that requires knowledge about politics, a complicated subject. If the government is trusting 18-year-olds to cast informed and accurate votes that decide the future of the country, then they should also acknowledge that they are mature enough to drink responsibly.

There are very few benefits in keeping the legal drinking age at 21. This simply increases the chance of people abusing alcohol, leading to people becoming alcoholics and binge drinking.

Eighteen-year-olds are adults. They are tried as adults and receive adult rights, such as voting, smoking, and living on their own. Drinking should be one too. ♦

Originality lost with Common App prompts

BY Jade Bisht & Arman Vaziri

After years of writing analysis-heavy essays in their English classes that allow little room for personal expression, many seniors hope to write an essay that lets them show off their creative side. Finally, they can write an essay that isn't about analyzing a character's struggle against all odds and the morals gleaned from it.

Or not. With college apps, students are suddenly the protagonists of their own stories.

But Common App essay prompts are far from perfect. Prompts such as "Reflect on a time when you challenged a belief or idea" and "Recount an incident when you experienced failure" are too broad.

Instead of allowing students to be creative, the Common App essays end up being stories of students finding a moral at the end of overcoming difficult life situations.

Seniors struggle more with finding a topic because the Common App doesn't challenge applicants or provide specific requirements within the prompts. In fact, the five prompts are so broad that students can essentially take any event from their life, write a story about it and draw it back to a some sort life-changing lesson learned at the end.

Without specificity in the prompt, anyone can whip up some "life meaning" from a participation award received as an 8-year-old or the devastating death of the family hamster.

This is not to say that personal anecdotes are worthless; some of the best essays originate from stories of personal growth. But essay writing proves more enjoyable when the prompt is challenging. Simple, broad prompts offer no creativity and too much generalization. Topic originality is what the Common App lacks.

Individual school prompts are miles ahead when it comes to originality. For instance, the University of Chicago acknowledges the importance of giving students prompts that they will enjoy and be creative with.

Moreover, Chicago's prompts were made by students for students — Chicago students are given the chance to come up with prompts for future applicants and a few solid ones are then posted for the final cut.

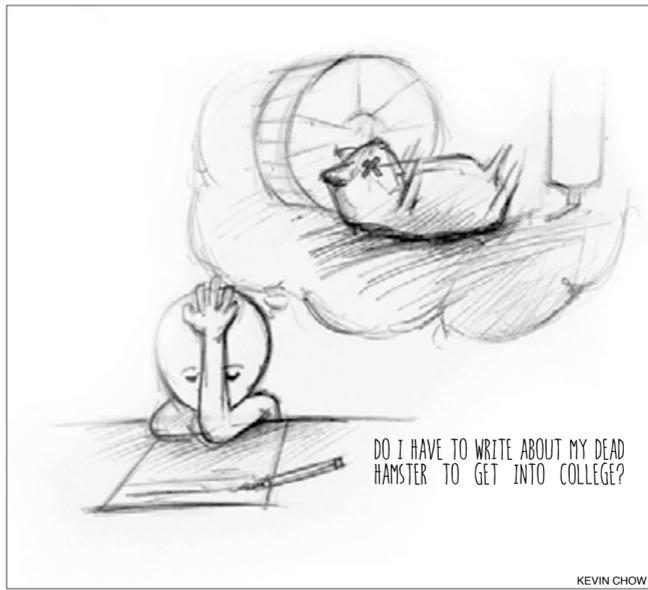
Questions range from "Why are we here, and what is here?" to "Create a group of three and describe how they correlate." Saratoga alumnus and Chicago class of 2016 student Joshua Harris inspired one of the five prompts for this year's applicants, posing the question: "Were pH an expression of personality, what would be your pH and why?"

These options offer a lot more room for personal interpretation and provide more insight into each individual.

With more specific prompts for applicants, admissions officers can learn better about a student's perception of the world than they can with a generic essay response about a generic life-changing experience.

The essay prompts given by individual universities are like a breath of fresh

>> candidcaricatures



KEVIN CHOW

air (or desk air, because who has enough time in senior year to smell the roses?) compared to the cliched and vague Common App prompts. A prompt that asks for a specific answer, rather than a prompt that asks for students' life stories, can seem refreshing — or even fun

— to write. The Common App should learn from the essay prompts from individual colleges in order to allow students to be creative and actually write about a meaningful experience in their lives, not just about the family hamster's demise. ♦

Current events in class make education relevant

BY Atirath Kosireddy

It is often said that children are the future of our country.

But when it comes to politics and keeping an eye on our government, many teens could not care less.

Most concern themselves with how their favorite sports teams are doing or whether their favorite celebrity was caught with drugs.

Many simply have no incentive or time to input their voice in political matters that could directly affect them in the present and future.

Even dedicating minimal time to politics could spur some interest in them.

Opponents of linking current events to high school students' education may argue that there is little time for it during the school day.

Currently, teens are expected to spend hours learning algebraic equations and other difficult material, and they have little time to learn about current events.

However, making time to stay informed is essential, because what students gain from learning about the world can be applied to their daily lives, regardless of what job or college degree they get.

Of course, high school students are sometimes exposed to current events and the structure of our government in classes such as Gov/Econ, World History and World Geography, but the approach is inconsistent and often unplanned.

Now more than ever, awareness of our current events is crucial, especially as tensions rise among major world powers.

Teaching students at school about current events could be done by linking past events, that they do learn in school, to current events.

One such example would be to link the anti-Japanese sentiment during World War II to the anti-Muslim sentiment today. Thus, we can avoid a repeat of the mistakes of the past as well as see historical prejudices in a modern perspective.

Teens are entering a stage of life when they need to become independent and make more choices.

If the young people never see the importance of current events and are unaware of what our government does, they will wake up one day and scratch their heads, not knowing what their vote means.

Let us have an informed future — and let it start with a more consistent discussion of current events in the classroom. ♦

>> bigidea

How well do you know your current events?

Questions

1. What is IS? Who is its leader?
2. What region is Ebola affecting?
3. Who is Michael Brown?
4. Who recently signed a cease fire with Ukraine?

- Answers
1. IS stands for Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. It is a Sunni jihadist group. The leader of the group is Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.
 2. Ebola is currently affecting West Africa.
 3. Brown was an 18-year-old African American teenager who was shot to death by a police officer in Ferguson, Mo.
 4. Ukraine agreed to a cease fire with pro-Russian rebels. However, fighting continues to threaten the state of the cease fire.

Bucket half full or half empty?

ALS ICE BUCKET CHALLENGE WASTES WATER BUT ALSO RAISES VITAL FUNDS

BY Anant Rajeev & Lauren Louie

Do you know what Lou Gehrig's disease is? Neither did most people until recently, but the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge has been changing that.

ALS stands for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. It targets nerve cells within the brain and spinal cord, eventually causing muscle control and movement.

In the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge, those who accept gallantly dump a bucket full of ice and water on their heads within 24 hours of being challenged; however, all are encouraged to donate to the ALS Foundation. The drenched participant then nominates others, keeping the movement alive.

Due to California's intense drought, there has been a backlash in response to the Ice Bucket Challenge. It takes about a gallon of water for each challenge. Now, picture the millions of challenges uploaded so far. Now, picture how much water California is losing day by day.

It seems the residents of the Golden State have banded together to waste California's scarcest resource: water. California, currently in the midst of its worst drought in generations, is now victim to gallons and gallons of water dumped on the daily due to the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge.

Despite our dire need for water, though, there's a much more hopeful side to the Ice Bucket Challenge. As of Aug. 26, the ALS Foundation has raised \$88.5 million. With each passing week, donations are rising by the millions.

And here's why this is so important: Funding for ALS is scarce.

More than 5,600 people are diagnosed per year, and an average of 15 people per day. Currently, there are 30,000 Americans who struggle with ALS.

In other words, ALS is responsible

for two deaths per 100,000 annually. And within two to five years of being diagnosed, the average ALS victim will die. Half will live at least three more years, about 20 percent live five years or more and up to 10 percent will survive for more than 10 years.

Although ALS is deadly, the billions it would take to find a cure is a considerably bad investment for pharmaceutical companies. Those companies don't take into account human life; they take into account how much money they can make.

The Ice Bucket Challenge is not so much of a waste of water, but rather a misuse.

The solution? A compromise. Don't waste the water. Reuse bath water or do the challenge on the grass. And whether you choose to dump ice water on your head or not, donate to the ALS Foundation.

The trend is really just an awareness campaign. When it comes down to it, it's all about the money that is being donated to an important cause. So why don't we all join hands and choose to advocate through either awareness or donations? Either way, we're all working toward a cure for ALS victims. ♦

>> falconfigures

89 million dollars have been raised for ALS since as of Aug. 26

15 people are diagnosed with ALS every day

56 hundred people are diagnosed with ALS per year.

Can you go one full week without television?

BY Deepthi Sampathkumar

I wouldn't call myself an avid television watcher. On average, I'd say I watch about three hours worth of TV each week. Not bad, right?

So, when I was asked to take on the challenge of no television or any form of video for a week, I signed up without hesitation, fairly confident in my abilities. But I couldn't be more wrong.

On the first day of my challenge, after returning from a tiring day of school, I grabbed a quick bite to eat and settled down on the couch with the comfort of my laptop. The clock read 3:45, and I figured that I could probably sneak in an episode of "New Girl." Not until my browser lead-ed to the Netflix homepage did I realize that I still had to complete the challenge.

After barely preventing myself from failing on my first day, I proceeded to begin my homework and finished rather early that day.

With the hour of so of free time I had, I had the choice to either catch up on the APUSH homework that would be due next week or break the challenge and watch TV.

As a junior, catching up with homework with that one golden hour of free time was a fabulous idea, but I was not in the mood to do APUSH (a rather bad

decision on my part).

I decided to not follow any of those options and went to bed, with wasted an hour on my phone and finally fell asleep.

Throughout the rest of the week, I was unaware of the challenge. The homework load I had received in school combined with my dance practices kept me busy and I was unable to think about my lack of "New Girl" episodes. It wasn't until Friday that I faced my biggest challenge.

As I came home exhausted from school, my craving for television was higher than it had been all week.

Surprisingly, though, I was able to spend the hours before my dance class texting my friends and practicing for class, which kept

my mind off the TV I yearned for. After class, I walked into the kitchen looking for something to eat, and was met with the roar of the television. I could hear the television booming downstairs and the beginning credits of a movie start.

Unable to watch, but still curious, I asked which movie my family had started. Either enthralled by the movie or deafened by the high decibel music that reverberated through our house, my parents did not respond to me.

Quite possibly using the lamest method I could to gain information, I



FALCON // JADE BISHT

Junior Deepthi Sampathkumar watches a video and struggles to continue the challenge of going one week without television. After five days, Sampathkumar gave in and failed.

proceeded to sit down near the bottom of the stairs to hear the dialogue and figure out which movie my parents were watching. Let's just say patience is not my best attribute, nor is dialogue guessing. Before I knew it, I was sitting downstairs watching "Spider-Man."

You could say that I tasted victory right before it slipped away from me. I endured the challenge for most of the week, but at the last moment, failed.

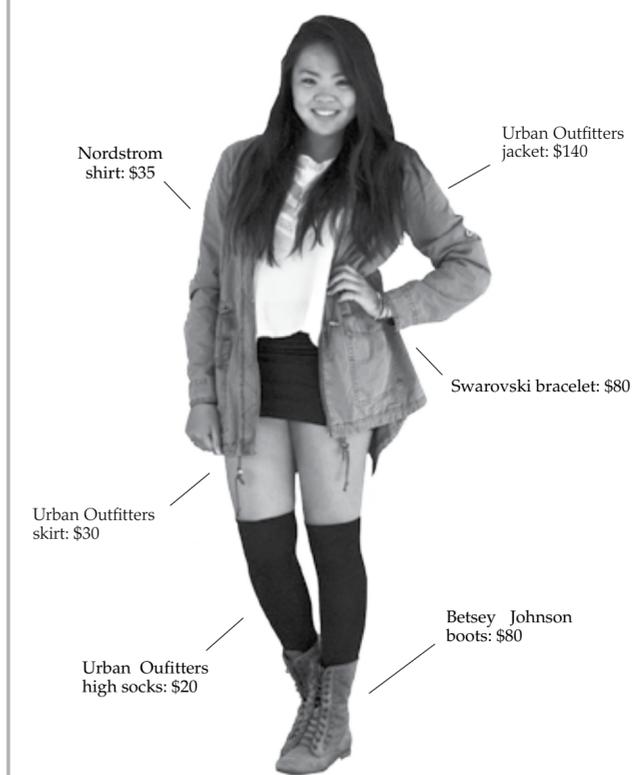
Although this challenge did not make me realize that I was in fact addicted to television, I did realize that I was able to finish my work at a faster rate and more

efficiently. The time I saved, however, did not push me to work ahead on assignments; rather, it instigated me to engage in various other distractions such as my phone and binging on junk food (I went through a whole bag of Chex Mix in one week).

So would I recommend this challenge to fellow juniors and seniors who need to get work done? Yes, but make sure you keep your phone and all sorts of food away, or else you'll be stuck engaging in six different texting conversations at a time with a mouthful of Chex Mix, like I did. ♦



STYLE FILES



Julianne Lau, 12

September 12, 2014

Eat. Snow. Crave. Repeat.

Icebox: the coolest place to be

BY DorrieTang

With the hype for Tpumps just about over, dozens of teenagers are now heading to the new shop Icebox in the same Cupertino plaza for some Instagram-worthy dessert.

Icebox offers a variety of ice cream, cookies, macarons, snow ice and drinks, though it is best known for its macaron and cookie ice cream sandwiches.

For around \$5 (though slightly expensive because of the relatively small size) you can get a scoop of delicious ice cream sandwiched between two soft and chewy, freshly-made macarons. Cookie ice cream sand-

wiches are also sold at Icebox for \$4 — just one dollar less.

The 16-or-so different types of ice cream offered are displayed on one side of the cashier for customer viewing, and samples are offered if a decision between all the good flavor choices is hard to make. Behind the counter also sit arrangements of various macarons and cookies as well as an array of additional toppings.

Outside the ordering area, the shop offers a pleasant and spacious place for sitting. Service is satisfactory, and customers can enjoy background music while waiting for their order, which takes about 10 minutes.



FALCON // DORRIE TANG

One of Icebox's more famous treats is their yummy ice cream sandwich at \$5.

Icebox

(OUT OF FIVE)

Where: 19929 Stevens Creek Blvd
 Type of food: Dessert
 Price range: under \$10
 Reporter's favorite: Marble ice cream

With its delicious treats, relatively reasonable prices and cordial environment, Icebox is a worthy stop for dessert-lovers. So if you ever have extra money and are craving some ice cream, or just want to make your friends jealous, head over to Icebox and enjoy some sweets. ♦

BY CaitlinJu

With school already kicking into high gear, students are looking for places to relax and grab a small bite to eat after school.

SnoCrave Tea House and Hot Pot, located next to 85°C Bakery Café on De Anza Boulevard, is the perfect place to do so. Although SnoCrave offers hot pots and hot soups with custom ingredients, the most popular items are its beautiful drinks and desserts.

Of these items, one of the best known is the shaved ice, also called "snow." With a \$7 price tag, SnoCrave's green tea snow with red bean may seem costly at first, but is well worth it. The portions are large,

SnoCrave Tea House

(OUT OF FIVE)

Where: 1183 S De Anza Blvd
 Type of food: Drinks and desserts
 Price range: under \$10
 Reporter's favorite: Shaved ice "snow"

more than sufficient for two people, and are easy to share.

Whether the flavor be taro, mango or honeydew, all of the snows are richly flavored and perfect accompaniments to a meetup with a friend or an intense study session.

Vibrant Verde: Quick and simple snacks

BY CassandraKing

With a new school year comes work and fatigue. After school, tired and hungry students are seeking places of respite to eat and relax. What better way is there to de-stress than to gorge themselves and hang out?

Verde Tea Cafe

(OUT OF FIVE)

Where: 19620 Stevens Creek Blvd
 Type of food: Taiwanese
 Price range: under \$10
 Reporter's favorite: Pork cutlet rice plate

Creek Boulevard in the Merlion Plaza is perfect for relaxing and forgetting the day's issues. With their well-known milk tea and other various drinks and food items, Verde successfully caters to almost all teenagers.

It has Taiwanese snacks such as crispy chicken cutlets, fried squid, fried yam and sweet potatoes. The cafe also sells full meal entrees, such as fish with black bean sauce and the popular pork cutlet rice plate.



FALCON // CASSANDRA KING

Verde is great for students with a little time. The only downside to this quick, easy and comfortable restaurant is that it has crowds. Because Verde is situated in a small plaza, the parking lot can get packed, and only one bathroom is available.

WITH THE BEGINNING OF THE SCHOOL YEAR, FALCON REPORTERS EMBARKED ON A QUEST TO FIND POPULAR, LOCAL PLACES TO HANG OUT.

Pinning the Hotspots

Blue Rock Shoot: the perfect place to rock

BY SummerSmith

Downtown Saratoga does not often attract many high school students, but there is one local cafe that has been a hot spot for Saratoga residents in recent years. Blue Rock Shoot is well-known for its friendly employees, great food and cabin-like atmosphere.

Walking into the cafe, customers are immediately greeted by employees and

an all-around welcoming environment. The two-story building has several rooms on the top floor as well as a balcony perfect for hanging out, doing homework or looking at the beautiful view of Wildwood Park.

The owner of Blue Rock Shoot, Guillermo Alvarez, is a native Mexican who moved to the United States at age 18. Alvarez bought the cafe in 2004 after it went out of business due to financial issues. Since acquiring Blue Rock Shoot, Alvarez has worked hard to transform the small coffee shop into a community friendly location. Alvarez has gotten to know his customers on a personal level as well, not only creating regulars, but good friends.

The cafe is perfect for all sorts of social activities. There is an open mic night once a week that is open to anyone in the community who would like to play music in front of an audience.

Blue Rock Shoot has a variety of choices for lunch, dinner or an afternoon snack,



FALCON // SUMMER SMITH

Blue Rock Shoot is the perfect place to relax after a long day and eat something delicious.

such as a sandwich or salad for under \$8. The cafe also sells homemade bagels and smoothies in several flavors.

If you're looking not only to have a great meal, but also a good time, stop by Blue Rock Shoot for the opportunity to make a new friend in the community. ♦

Blue Rock Shoot

(OUT OF FIVE)

Where: 14523 Big Basin Way
 Type of food: Coffee shop and deli
 Price range: \$2-\$17
 Reporter's favorite: Strawberry smoothie

Wildwood Park: Saratoga's own oasis

BY SummerSmith

Although there are few options for students who enjoy doing homework or hanging out with friends in the outdoors, Wildwood Park in downtown Saratoga is a perfect place to enjoy nature.

Wildwood Park is a mere 1.1 miles from school and is located on 4th Street off of Saratoga Avenue. The location makes the park an easy afternoon destination for both students who can and cannot drive. It serves as an ideal location to unwind with a picnic, as it is close to downtown restaurants and shops.

In 1910, Wildwood was opened as a privately owned camp that offered dancing,

croquet and tennis. Campers slept in tents, furnished or unfurnished, or outside.

The park remained a private campground until the 1960s, when it was shut down due to factors such as noise and traffic congestion.

In 1963, the city of Saratoga purchased the land and decided to convert the campground into a public park.

The entrance to the Wildwood Park is a bridge over Saratoga Creek surrounded by lush green trees, and opens up to a beautiful 4-acre park with picnic tables, horseshoe pits, a playground, a beach volleyball court and a grassy field. The park also has its own bathrooms, making it suitable for an extended trip.

Wildwood Park

(OUT OF FIVE)

Where: 20764 4th St
 Open from: All times
 Price range: Free



FALCON // SUMMER SMITH

Wildwood has a beautiful view and is a great place to get outside and unwind in fresh air.

The picnic tables are great for homework or studying, and during a study break, the grass provides a place to play frisbee, have a picnic or just relax in the sun.

Wildwood Park is an ideal location for hanging out or working in the afternoons or on weekends. Its convenience, rustic beauty and tranquil settings allow for productivity and relaxation. ♦

Students' summer concert experience

Jay-Z and Beyoncé



All photos courtesy of Musictimes.com

BY Fiona Sequeira

The joint Beyoncé and Jay-Z "On the Run" summer tour left its unforgettable mark on AT&T Park in San Francisco on Aug. 5 for the close of its North American leg, amazing fans with an epic two and half hour performance.

Junior Neeki Tahmassebi witnessed the electrifying concert live, along with junior Nina Harris.

"I have always loved Beyoncé, and seeing her in concert was a childhood dream of mine. I used to sing and dance to her songs when I was about 7 or 8 years-old," Tahmassebi said.

The power couple performed music of a wide range in their respective careers: music that Queen B had produced when Tahmassebi was a child, to songs and rap that they had put out recently or just this year, including selections from Jay-Z's latest "Magna Carta Holy Grail" album as well as Beyoncé's famously "Single Ladies."

Fortunately for dedicated fans, everything they performed can be found on their "On the Run tour" album.

Although Tahmassebi admired the way Beyoncé carried herself as an artist, exuding great confidence and class as well as stunning outfits, one part of the night resonated most profoundly with her.

"The most memorable part of the night was when Beyoncé sang "Love on Top." Her vocals were amazing, and I couldn't believe what I had just heard live!" Tahmassebi said.

Junior Sabrina Clark also attended the concert with her mom and fellow junior Iva Glumac.

"Although Jay-Z definitely got the crowd going in the beginning, Beyoncé was the memorable part of the night," Clark said. "She's a great role model,

She's a great role model, as she can sing, dance, rap and inspire women to be strong



junior Sabrina Clark

as she can sing, dance, rap and inspire women to be strong all while looking like a model and simply being amazing."

Because the theme was "On the Run," the stage effects created an atmosphere of vagabonds escaping from the events of their pasts.

"The videos, lights and sound effects were all perfectly coordinated, and they meshed together many songs and overall created a story with movie clips and words and great music and effects," Clark said.

The wild crowd of over 41,000 ranged from teenagers to middle-aged people filling up the entire stadium. Everybody was extremely energized, hyped up, and dancing crazily. Clark was on the baseball field, where she was up and dancing and singing along for the whole night.

Although rumors circulated during the couple's tour of Beyoncé and Jay-Z's divorce, Clark said the rumors seemed unlikely afterwards because they were so cute together, and Tahmassebi agreed.

"It was precious when they showed Blue Ivy on the big screen, and it was a slide show of her pictures. It was a cute and loving moment when the couple embraced each other and smiled at their baby daughter," Tahmassebi said.

When the night ended around 11, the girls left with an experience to remember.

"I thought the concert was really worth it because seeing Beyoncé live is a very rare thing to come by. It was definitely something I will remember for the rest of my life. She is an icon," Tahmassebi said. ♦

Bruno Mars



BY Saya Sivaram

I have to admit, I love a good chick flick or romance novel. I've watched everything from "27 Dresses" to "Pretty in Pink," and read cringe worthy books like "Twilight" and "A Walk to Remember."

I never thought that I would add Bruno Mars' "Moonshine Jungle Tour" to the list of female-oriented productions, but the two-and-a-half hour show was almost reminiscent of a Nicholas Sparks novel.

The SAP Center was at its full capacity on Aug. 15, packed with women of various ages, and the occasional man, brandishing posters and signs in varying levels of impropriety. I was exactly like them, minus the revealing clothing and the fact that I was with my dad who covered my eyes every time he saw something even vaguely inappropriate.

Inside, girls were screaming and wailing, lamenting the fact that Bruno would never be theirs. The tour directors seemed to have predicted this, as Mars spent the entire set winking, smirking and making every woman in the building swoon, me included.

I found my seat and settled myself in between two women decked out in Bruno Mars gear, waving foam fingers and snapchatting everything, but when the singer appeared on the stage, they were quickly forgotten.

Every song boosted my self-confidence and spoke to the feminist part of my soul. Mars hit every note to perfection, all the while showcasing his considerable charisma and stamina, moving around the stage almost constantly.

Light effects, pyrotechnics, and a glittering, neon palm trees added to the energetic ambience. Nico and Vinz, who opened the concert, could not compare at all to the showmanship that was displayed by Mars.

He was a force of nature, giving girls heart palpitations just by looking at them. I was out of breath just watching him.

The singer and his band of backup singers seemed to serenade every girl in the place, assuring them that "You're amazing, just the way you are." Needless to say, by the time the song ended, I was feeling rather warm and fuzzy about the entire situation.

The rest of the concert was much the same, with Mars's prowess carrying each song and spontaneous dance sequence to new heights. Some of Mars' most popular songs, "Grenade," "Locked Out of Heaven" and "Treasure," elicited cheers from the audience.

The concert was, all in all, captivating and memorable and I'm looking forward to future concerts from the singer. Not to mention, I have a newly founded crush on Bruno Mars. ♦

>> falconfigures

17,496 fans who attended "Moonshine Jungle Tour."

350 dollars for box seating in the SAP Center.

3.5 hours for the entire show.

21 songs performed by Bruno Mars during the concert.

Ed Sheeran



BY Larissa Chiu

In the distance, a stout red-headed man wearing humble flannel and khaki jeans with an acoustic guitar entered the stage, into a single spotlight. Thousands of teenagers screamed as Ed Sheeran, British sensation, began to strum two simple notes to the song "I'm a Mess."

One of the thousands of teenagers included me, possibly one of Ed Sheeran's biggest fans.

I began listening to Ed Sheeran during my middle school years, prior to his rise to popularity. So naturally, I knew all the lyrics to every single song.

His concert was held at the SAP Center in San Jose on Aug. 26. Additionally, this was the first concert that I had attended without my parents, so I had the freedom to scream liberally.

Entering the concert, I knew Sheeran's "X" tour would be spectacular, like his music. Truthfully, though, the concert turned out even better than I expected. It was pretty much perfect.

It consisted a combination of upbeat songs along with his smooth serenades — Ed Sheeran classics — such as "Lego House" along with his newest tracks.

His entire concert consisted of just him and an acoustic guitar, without a huge production behind him. With only two essential elements, he really took the time to open up to his fans. In one performance, "Afire Love," he explained to the audience that this particular song was close to him, and he hoped that his audience would be quiet just for a moment to appreciate the beauty of the lyrics and melody.

Sheeran proved to be genuine and witty with his frequent stories and bad jokes, showing that it isn't always about the aesthetics or the ferocity of the performance. His music can frequently be found on the Billboard's top 40 charts, but he is much more than the typical self-obsessed pop artist.

My favorite performance of the evening was his calming serenade of "One." He used the simplicity and beauty of the song to surround his entire performance. He embraced the lyrics and used simple watercolor graphics in the background to embody the song's meaning. In the end, he asked for the audience to turn on the flashlights on their phones, making the stadium twinkle with lights.

In his final performance of his popular song "Sing," he told his fans to "never stop singing."

My first unchaperoned concert experience was one of the best in my entire life. Not only did I get to see my favorite artist live, but I learned to love him even more, if that was even possible. ♦

>> togatalks

What was your favorite part of the show?

"I loved how he could entertain the entire SAP center without any backup singers/dancers."



junior Sanam Mohan

"I was so happy to hear him play my favorite song of his, 'Give Me Love' live."



senior Sarah Liddie

Robin Williams: forever an icon to this world

Ja Feel

Jade Bisht

I miss my childhood.

Every day after kindergarten, my older brother and I would belly flop onto the couch where my mom would deliver us peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and flip through TV channels until we'd agree on something suitable. Sometimes "Spongebob Squarepants." But most of the time, "Flubber" or "Mrs. Doubtfire." Hours would pass, and it was meaningless back then, when we had nothing to do and relaxing wasn't a waste of time.

But now, instead of vegetating in front of my old boxy TV, I spend hours sleeping on pillows made of textbooks and mountains of homework. I value my past for reasons other than envy of

6-year-old Jade's free time and laziness.

I don't come home just to belly flop into boredom anymore. Instead, I have to come home to the news that my childhood hero has passed away, and suddenly those hours of watching Robin Williams aren't so meaningless anymore.

My mom informed me just an hour after it happened. Before any news articles surfaced, before local news was reciting the information for hours on end. She had no sources — just a bewildered text from her coworker; I didn't believe it and I brushed it off.

Then, as most news spreads these days, the Facebook posts started to flood in even faster than my CNN app could inform me: Robin Williams, dead, at age 64 in his home in Tiburon. Just like that. My childhood idol hanged himself due to unknown reasons.

It's implausible, and nothing more. Robin Williams, of all people, is dead. Teddy Roosevelt, the perfect image of the president; Alan Parrish, a flam-

boyantly charismatic club owner; Sean Maguire, an inspiring psychologist; a brilliant English teacher in "Dead Poet's Society," and Robin Williams, the mastermind behind them all, was dead.

It's uncanny that such a clever and talented man could have been so unhappy with his life. There is something so unmatchably raw about his performances, from his speed walking entrance to the way he couldn't contain his excitement until his first joke tripped over his introduction. Then some self-deprecating sidenote, and then another joke accompanied with four different accents. He was unstoppably brilliant, an icon who revolutionized standup comedy.

The basis of my sadness over his death is that I miss the simplicity of my youth. Robin Williams was a goofy, hilarious soul who energized me after an exhausting day at elementary school, and middle school, and even some days throughout high school.

I was 5 when he brought light into

my life. Now I'm 16, and I have to accept that loved ones die and suicide happens. I don't want him to be gone, but I have to grow up and accept this absence. Robin Williams was undeniably the best of the best actors to exist because no one expected him to be depressed.

Robin Williams took away America's breath with his comedy, and completely suffocated America with his suicide. As his nanny pseudonym, Mrs. Doubtfire, once asked, "Ever wish you could freeze frame a moment in your day, and look at it and say, 'This is not my life?'"

How many times had he thought something along these lines before he committed suicide? Is he actually dead? Is the world's funniest man really gone?

Maybe I'll watch "Mrs. Doubtfire" or "Aladdin" as I used to. Back then, it was to avoid boredom. Twelve years later, three feet taller, and T-minus 13 months to becoming an adult, it's to avoid acceptance. He may be gone, but his spirit and humor will forever live on. ♦

Kardashian APP brings glory addiction, shame

BY Sherrilyn Long

The sound of my screaming fans sends a rush of adrenaline through my body, and I flash a smile to the crowd as blinding lights of paparazzi cameras go off one after the other. Wads of cash are thrown at me by the hundreds, and I hastily pick it all up as my rank number slowly rises.

Now, let's pause and picture me in public, clutching my phone and frantically pressing buttons here and there as my friends watch with a mixture of embarrassment and concern. But I must conceal my shame; this is just the price that comes with being an A-list celebrity on the frighteningly addicting app, "Kim Kardashian: Hollywood."

In case you haven't heard of this app, here's a little background. You start the game as a nobody working at a clothing store, until none other than Kim Kardashian just happens to venture in. You befriend her by saving her from a fashion emergency, thus beginning your quest to rise in status from the dreaded E-list to the coveted A-list.

When I first downloaded the app, I had heard so much about how impos-

sible it is to reach the A-list, so I really didn't expect to get anywhere.

For five days I played the game non-stop, striving to reach my goal. I attended gig after gig, which helps build up my fanbase, until I almost felt like giving up. Plus, I was forced to go on "dates" for publicity with guys who never failed to hurl insults about my outfits. "I could write a poem about how lacking your outfit is. Want to hear it?" is just one example of the many hurtful comments I have received.

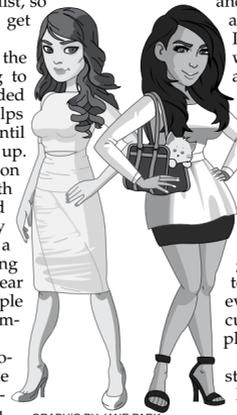
Attending gigs and going on dates in this game involves clicking buttons repeatedly until you reach five stars. If you fail to reach at least four stars, your fanbase may drop exponentially.

The frustration of climbing the ranks got overwhelming and I contemplated deleting the app several times, but after about a week and a half of dedication

and determination, my character was finally an A-lister. It's sad to admit, but this was probably my proudest accomplishment all summer.

When most people reach the A-list, they get bored and delete the app — cough cough Jade Bisht — feeling as though there is nothing left to work toward. But not me. No, I worked too hard to get here, and I am going to get myself to rank No.1 even if it takes months (I'm currently at rank No. 113; please send moral support).

Recently, I've hit a few obstacles during my quest to be No.1. When school started, my workload piled up so I neglected my celebrity double life for just one day. The next morning, I opened the app to discover that I had lost a million fans, and read a "tweet" that said something along the lines of, "Has anyone heard of Sherrilyn lately, or did she disappear off the face of the Earth?" My



GRAPHIC BY JANE PARK

ranking went down by five and I nearly threw my phone in frustration. About three days worth of playing evaporated, just like that.

I know what you're thinking. "Wow, Sherrilyn needs friends" or "this is too stupid of a game for someone to spend that much time on." Both of these statements are true.

I would just like to clarify that I am fully aware of how insanely pathetic I am for playing this game, and my friends never cease to remind me of this whenever I try to sneak in a few taps on my screen.

And to make matters worse, they always call me out in public. Name any location, and chances are I have openly played "Kim Kardashian: Hollywood" there. The list includes, but is not restricted to, a sushi restaurant, in line at Safeway, an orchestra concert; the list goes on. I am not proud of this.

Humiliating as my addiction is, I cannot deny it. I've become a sad victim of this app and the only way I can escape is by beating the game. As much as I'd like to keep talking about this game, I need to catch a flight to Soho, New York. Kim's calling me. ♦

Juniors take the messaging app 'Yo' to the next level

BY Miles Albert

Senior Anshika Maheshwari reaches for her constantly buzzing phone in class. She receives a message: "YoFrom from Vivek Murthy at the Stairway to the Roof." A few seconds later, she replies by sending back her location.

This is the scenario juniors Aakash Thumaty and Spencer Yen envisioned over the summer when they created "YoFrom," a simple messaging app that allows people to send their locations to their friends.

Yo is a simple, yet powerful greeting — a slightly more exciting alternative to the usual "Hey" or "Hi." In fact, a few developers created an app that initially had no other purpose but to send other users a notification with the message: "Yo."

However, Yo isn't all about messaging; it's about notifications. Yo has the potential to be an entirely new platform, and it is headed in that direction.

Recently, Yo released an update to its app that now allows users to send more than just a Yo. The once incredibly simple app is now losing its simplicity, but gaining relevancy. Users can now attach links and hashtags, and add new services to receive Yos from. Imagine

receiving Yo's from your favorite store when it's having a huge sale, your favorite TV show when its season finale is on or your favorite artists when they release a new song.

Since its surge in popularity, other developers have riffed on the Yo concept, making it even more useful.

Yen and Thumaty, while interning at Everalbum, a company that organizes photographs on all devices, decided to have a "mini-hackathon and code all night alone in the office." Yen said they originally intended on working on the company's app, but one of the employees decided he wanted to join Yen and Thumaty in coding just for fun. According to Yen, he brainstormed "random cool ideas," YoFrom being one of them.

Intrigued by the idea, Yen and Thumaty decided to put their other work aside and build it overnight.

"[Thumaty] and I [built the app for] iOS," Yen said. "The other guy did Android. About five hours later, we were 'YoFrom-ing' each other from the office."

"Basically there were a

bunch of 'Yo clones' and we thought [YoFrom] would be a useful variation," Yen said. "We made it just for fun."

To date, the app has a few hundred downloads and roughly 100 YoFroms are being sent daily.

YoFrom's publicity spiked when it was featured on the popular technology blog, "TechCrunch."

"We emailed probably 70 reporters from about 15 publications with our main pitch being that we were high school interns," Yen said.

Yen said nobody responded after 24 hours.

"[Thumaty] even snuck into the TechCrunch offices to try to get them to write about us, but was turned back," Yen said. "At this point, we had pretty much given up."

Around four days later, TechCrunch published an article showcasing a collection of Yo clones. YoFrom was first on the list.

"It didn't get us as many users as we expected," Yen said. "But it still gave us a decent amount."

Despite the feature on TechCrunch not becoming as big of

a success as Yen had hoped, students at SHS continue to use the app frequently.

"It's fun to send random locations to my friends, especially when they aren't totally accurate," senior Anshika Maheshwari said.

Maheshwari believes that the locations, which are linked to Foursquare, are amusing because they are often incorrect and include places she's never heard of before.

"I use it because it's entertaining to see all the random places, most of which I haven't even heard of, show up on the app, and send it to my friends," Maheshwari said.

Maheshwari said she does not use the app only because of its inaccurate and funny locations, but because three of her closest friends use it as well.

Although Maheshwari said she is obsessed with sending the default locations to her friends, she said that "[YoFrom] could be improved by letting users type in their own locations to send."

In regard to YoFrom's future plans, Thumaty said he wants to get as many people to use the app as possible.

"We think it's a fun and cool idea, an easy way to share your location, and we just want other people to think that too," Thumaty said. "Download YoFrom." ♦



GRAPHIC BY ROTEM SHAIKH

Junior recounts musical journey to Carnegie Hall

BY Nupur Maheshwari

Junior Ankitha Sarvesh stood in the wings, trying to concentrate on taking deep breaths of air and quelling the fire in her gut. Every sound around her was amplified. Every murmur resonated through her hazy mind, highlighting irrational thoughts: Do I have lipstick on my teeth? What if I can't open this door to get on stage? What if I trip and fall?

Forcing her numb legs forward, Sarvesh moved onto center stage in Carnegie Hall, where she had been selected to sing by the American Fine Arts Festival (AFAF) last June.

Of course, the road to singing at the famed venue began years earlier. At age 11, Sarvesh first began taking singing lessons.

"I remember when my parents first realized I could sing," Sarvesh recalled. "As a young kid, I would sing songs in the car, and a favorite was 'Part of Your World' from 'The Little Mermaid.' I think my parents just really listened one day and found that I had some kind of spark in me."

Since then, Sarvesh has participated in elementary and middle school musicals and has been a part of the school choir every year.

In eighth grade, she took part in Honor Choir, a choir that comprises select students from different parts of the country. She has been to States and Nationals in the last three years.

Sarvesh said that although she shares common fears such as stage fright and anxiety, she continues to sing because it allows her to be someone else, even if only for a few moments.

"Even though you're singing a song, even though it is Ankitha singing a song, you're not," Sarvesh said. "You don't have to be you up there; you can be anyone. In fact, this is an art where it is better to go all out and it is applauded to go all out."

Her biggest accomplishment thus far

is singing at Carnegie Hall last summer. She received word of the opportunity in March.

"This is kind of a funny story because my mom actually sent in a recording of my singing to AFAF without telling me, because she knew that I would put too much pressure on myself if I did," Sarvesh said.

Sarvesh first learned that she had been accepted at lunch during school, while scrolling through her e-mails. At first, Sarvesh thought the e-mail from AFAF was just spam, so she texted her mom to check its legitimacy.

"After she told me [what the e-mail was about], I could barely concentrate the rest of the day," Sarvesh said.

From then until early June, Sarvesh

"You go on, you want it to be over, but then, after the end, you would do anything to go back on."
junior Ankitha Sarvesh

prepared for her performance, practicing the two songs she was to perform around four to five times a week.

Finally, the week of her performance, the last week of school, arrived.

"That was a hard week for me because the performance was on Sunday the 8th," Sarvesh said. "That Wednesday, school ended. Then on Saturday, I was up at 7 [a.m.] taking the Chemistry SAT and that night my family and I took a red-eye to be in New York by 6 a.m."

Upon arriving, Sarvesh and her family spent the day with relatives. Around 3 p.m., disaster struck. Sarvesh realized she had brought twice the number of contacts for her left eye and none for her



Junior Ankitha Sarvesh sings "Spring Sorrow" and "Se tu m'ami" at Carnegie Hall on June 8.

right eye.

"I had this extreme power that I had to put in my right eye and I didn't want to put it on because it hurt," Sarvesh said. "Still, I didn't want to go onstage with glasses. My dad had to go to the local pharmacy and get samples of Acuvue Daily Contacts. It sounds silly now, but it was so stressful to have to deal with that hours before the performance."

With the crisis averted, Sarvesh proceeded with her customary routine before big events: coffee, a shower, cough drops and vocal exercises.

Hair and makeup took up the majority of the following two hours, and then it was time to drive to the venue.

Once at the Hall, Sarvesh went backstage to meet her accompanist to specify tempos and dynamics. Sarvesh recalls how she felt she had "known the accompanist for years, not just 20 minutes."

Out of a group of 30 performers that night, Sarvesh was the only singer. She performed two songs: the contemporary poem put to music, "Spring Sorrow," and an Italian song, "Se tu m'ami."

Thirty seconds before her performance, Sarvesh found herself backstage in the Hall, rubbing at the goosebumps rising on her arms, trying desperately not to throw up. She then took two steps out onto the 10-foot stage ahead of her.

Sarvesh compares the process to a roller coaster.

"You go on, you want it to be over, but then, after the end, you would do anything to go back on," Sarvesh said.

The pressure she was under was based solely on the venue, Sarvesh said. Once she got onstage, she glanced down

at some kids who had already seen their siblings perform. They were falling asleep in the front row.

"That definitely relaxed me a bit, and when the very first note left my mouth, I was sailing," Sarvesh said. "I thought, 'I just know that I can do this. Why am I worried?'"

Now, looking back on the experience, Sarvesh believes singing in Carnegie Hall changed her life from an internal standpoint.

"I am pretty self-conscious about a lot of things, especially with singing, where you're literally placing yourself onto a stage where people are staring and judging you," she said. "Yet, the entire seven minutes I was up there I thought, 'So many amazing performers and musicians have been up here, get to [be] up here, so what does that make me? I must have been something to get here. I deserve this.'"

In the years ahead, Sarvesh looks forward to pursuing singing through the rest of high school and possibly choosing a musical minor in college.

"Singing will always be a huge part of me," Sarvesh said. "Putting yourself out there is nerve-racking. Yet, it's the best feeling after you come off. Because [even] if someone doesn't appreciate [your art], at least you're sharing." ♦

Are elite summer programs worth the price?

BY Dorrie Tang & Ellen Wu

Four weeks at the COSMOS summer program at UC San Diego came down to the success of one meticulously designed machine for junior Suneel Belkhale. He had spent the dozens of hours prototyping it, designing it and piecing it together with sensors and actuators that guided two differently colored marbles through their respective tracks.

As he watched, each marble bounced between plinkos and around spirals and embarked on a final double loopy-loop before reaching spinning disks and the chain that brought it back to the top. Success. His design worked.

COSMOS

This Rube-Goldberg machine was part of Belkhale's final project at COSMOS (California State Summer School for Mathematics and Science), a summer program centered on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). The project applied physics and practical calculus concepts that Belkhale had learned in his intensive Kinetic Sculptures class there.

With more and more students interested in STEM fields, COSMOS has become a popular summer program option. It boasts a relatively reasonable

tuition fee of \$3,100, including room and board and spans four-weeks. The residential camp is hosted at one of four UC campuses (Santa Cruz, San Diego, Davis or Irvine).

The camp is notorious for its selective application process, which includes submitting official transcripts, teacher recommendations and answering short-answer questions. For instance, UC Davis receives almost 1,200 applications but has only enough space for 200 students. But are these expensive programs worth the cost? Some camps such as the University of Pennsylvania's Summer Academy in Applied Science & Technology (SAAST) can cost up to \$8,000. For Belkhale, COSMOS was a rewarding experience and worth the cost because of the unique activities, facilities and people he was exposed to.

"The camp is all about STEM and giving students a glimpse into what specializing in a particular field would be like," Belkhale said. "I learned some essential math, engineering and teamwork skills in an environment that made it fun and constantly engaging."

Yale Global Scholars

Senior Carolyn Sun attended Yale University's Young Global Scholars (YGS), a two-week summer program that cost \$5,000. Sun attended the pro-

gram's new session, Science, Policy and Innovation (SPI). She explored environmental science and policy through lectures and seminars.

The program's aim is to expose students to different topics through 14 lectures and seven seminars and help them decide what they are interested in. For Sun, the program failed to live up to its prestigious name and excellent reputation.

"I expected the seminars to be led by professors," Sun said. "Instead, [they was mostly led by] Yale students and alumni. The professors lectured, but didn't lead the seminars."

Sun said the most enjoyable part of the program for her was its social aspect. "I learned the most from the group projects that we worked on at night, after [all the] seminars and lectures, since we had to do lots of research," Sun said.

Sun said the program taught mostly about policy rather than "hardcore, hands-on science and math." The seminars focused primarily on the global food crisis, fracking and nuclear energy.

"I learned a lot, but I wish there was less policy and more hands-on science, like labs," Sun said. "A lot of material was crammed into two weeks, [and] I think it should have been better spread out [so] that we could let the information soak in [more]."

Duke TIP

Senior Michelle Luo participated in the Human Rights and Advocacy field studies course at Duke University's two-week Talent Identification Program (Duke TIP).

The program's tuition was \$3,650, and the course there explored human rights as well as advocacy and support for the public.

Luo said that the course entailed learning about the United Nations and declarations it has drafted, such as the Convention to Eliminate all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as well as learning how to advocate for strong beliefs.

She collaborated with fellow students on a campaign promoting awareness of the overlooked genocide happening in Darfur, a region in western Sudan. She and her classmates created Facebook, Tumblr and Twitter pages to share important information and articles about the topic.

Luo enjoyed the chance to create memorable friendships.

"[Participating in Duke TIP] ended up being one of the best choices of my life," Luo said. "The cost [did] not really matter [when one considers] the unforgettable memories [I made] with so many wonderful people who share the same passions as [me]." ♦

Freshmen relay first impressions of school

BY Fiona Sequeira

The first day of high school is almost always a daunting experience, yet for freshman Sarah Deng, the nerve-racking experience was compounded by the fact that she did not attend middle school with many of her peers. Lacking the common Redwood Middle School past that so many of her classmates share, Deng has faced additional difficulties in a new environment.

Deng, who attended Lawson Middle School in Cupertino, was originally supposed to attend Monta Vista High School, located near her father's house. However, because Deng started to spend the majority of her time living with her mother in Saratoga, attending high school here became the most practical option.

Although Deng has faced challenges in meeting new people with compatible interests to her own in the first couple weeks of school, she hopes to find her niche socially by getting involved early on.

"I don't think I've actually made any new friends so far, since I kind of just hang out and talk to people I already know or have mutual friends with," Deng said. "Outside of school, I still only hang out with my old friends whenever

I have time. I feel pretty excited for Club Day, though, as I'm definitely looking forward to making friends through joining clubs."

In addition to the social aspect of high school, Deng occupies herself with a stringent dance schedule, often dancing for over 10 hours per week. Her favorite style of dance is a combination of modern and contemporary, yet she spends the majority of her time perfecting the jazz style.

"Basically all I do outside of school is dance. It's my passion," Deng said.

In fact, her love for dance has contributed to her favorite part of Saratoga High so far: the Independent Study Physical Education (ISPE) program. Deng's rigorous dance schedule allows her to do ISPE rather than typical P.E. classes, an alluring choice for Deng because she is released from school earlier.

Academically, Deng fits into the

school seamlessly, balancing normal freshman courses with Chinese 4 Honors and Algebra 2 Honors. Her favorite class so far is Biology, and she loves science teacher Lisa Cochrum's teaching style.

"In terms of classes, high school so far is pretty easy. Sometimes, however, I feel like the homework we do is just a waste of time," Deng said. "Plus, the food here is really expensive!"

Deng also plays bass for the school orchestra, an instrument she played for three years while at Lawson. In the time she is not studying, dancing or practicing bass, Deng enjoys listening to pop or acoustic music.

"I really like bands like Boyce Avenue that cover songs acoustically. I'm also really into soul music. One of my solos for dance this year is a soul song by Joss Stone, and I love her," Deng said.

Another freshman who attended a

different middle school is Elora Pradhan, who attended Challenger, a private school in Sunnyvale, until now but has lived in Saratoga for almost five years.

Pradhan is excited to connect with new people at Saratoga, but knows she must venture out of her comfort zone.

"It's only been two weeks, but I guess the biggest challenge I've faced so far is making new friends," Pradhan said. "Most of the kids here are very accepting, but coming from a school where there were only 50 people in each grade, being the new kid is very intimidating, especially for me. I'm a naturally shy person and most of the time I'm afraid to introduce myself because I'm worried that people won't want to talk to me."

Pradhan is also unaccustomed to the wide array of activities the school offers. "At Challenger, everything was focused on academics, and it was way less relaxed. There were no clubs or sports teams or anything like that," Pradhan said.

In hopes of getting involved, Pradhan is eager to join speech and debate, robotics, DECA, Indian Cultural Awareness-Club and Key Club.

"Several people have told me to join Indian Club, so I'm interested in seeing what it's all about. I'm willing to try out almost anything!" Pradhan said. ♦

"...Coming from a school where there were only 50 people in each grade, being new kid is intimidating, especially for me."
freshman Elora Pradhan



Music and language department students explore Spain during summer vacation

BY Jenny Qian

This summer break, while many students were busy attending summer camps and SAT prep classes, another group of students traveled to the opposite side of the globe — Spain. On June 21, 220 students and five teachers from the music and language departments traveled there to perform and learn about Spanish culture.

The band and orchestra go on an international tour every three years, but this was the first time the band and orchestra have gone with students taking Spanish 2 and above. The trip lasted 14 days, and the group traveled to numerous cities, including Madrid, Valencia, Peniscola, Barcelona and San Sebastian.

"Performing in Spain was an entirely different experience," said junior Shiva Djabbari, who plays the tuba. "You never knew how the audience would react. Many of the crowds were really energetic and you could feel their smiles when they clapped after every piece we played."

Being able to perform in concert halls with such old and majestic architecture was truly a reward for the music students.

"There were ornate statues and [stained] glass that you usually don't see

in a concert hall," said junior Michelle Handoko, who plays the flute. "It's the kind of historical architecture that you don't see, especially in the U.S."

As the students traveled from city to city, they found that even the hotels had a touch of old-fashioned charm in them. Instead of having card keys, the hotels in Spain had actual keys, according to junior Alice He, who plays the clarinet.

Performances were often in the evenings, so students had the mornings to spend time exploring. For some, this time provided an opportunity to interact with the locals and practice Spanish.

"We had a free day where we all just played frisbee on the sand and splashed in the ocean," said senior Josh Pi, who is one of the four drum majors. "It was just altogether a really great day spent with a bunch of really great people."

In one memorable instance, senior Anshul Aggrawal, who plays the tuba, took a taxi with his friends, intending to visit a former bullring area.

"The taxi driver seemed kind of disgruntled to be carrying tourists, so I tried to ease the situation by talking to the guy, [but] somewhere along the way the dude blew up on me!" Aggrawal said. "He started yelling at me in rapid-fire Spanish which I could barely understand. I then talked about why we were

here and how great the city was, and he slowly opened up. By the end of the ride he was giving us tips on where to go on a budget."

Many students noticed how different the Spanish lifestyle was compared to America. For instance, in Spain, dinner is usually eaten at around 8 or 9 p.m., so it was hard for the students to find places to eat.

"It was really stressful when we had limited time to eat, and although I missed Asian food during the trip, being able to have such great Spanish food was worth it," said junior Felicia Hung, who plays violin. "I really suggest trying every single tapas dish on the menu."

The trip to Spain was one of the longer tours the music and language department have gone on, but the increased timespan allowed students to interact with locals and immerse themselves more fully into Spanish culture.

"All the Spaniards there ... were so welcoming and patient with the people that were struggling to communicate in Spanish," Hung said. "Occasionally, some kids would even say hi to us by screaming 'Konichiwa.'"

Traveling around an unfamiliar country was hard for many of the non-Spanish speakers and even for the students

from the Spanish classes, but students nevertheless found the experience enjoyable.

"[Spain] is such a beautiful country and just a fun place to be," Pi said. "[It was] definitely an unforgettable trip. I'm still having withdrawals from the late night ice cream runs in Peniscola and Barcelona." ♦

28 points scored

The football team prevented a last-second conversion to beat Hillsdale 28-27 during the home opener last Friday. After Hillsdale's failed 2-point conversion attempt, the team stormed the field. Both teams made multiple turnovers, but the Falcons managed to escape with the win with no time left.

Matchups

- Football
Tonight vs. Willow Glen
- Girls' Golf
9/15 vs. Homestead
Monta Vista
- Girls' Tennis
9/16 vs. Los Altos
- Girls' Volleyball
9/16 vs. Branham
- Field Hockey
9/17 vs. Westmont
- Boys' Water Polo
9/18 vs. Mountain View
- Girls' Water Polo
9/18 vs. Mountain View
- Cross Country
9/23 @ Central Park

World Cup became my life

JUNIOR DISCUSSES HIGHLIGHTS OF SPECTATING 2014 WORLD CUP

money maker

Anant Rajeev

"Jermaine Jones ...OHHHH!" yelled ESPN commentator Ian Darke as United States men's national team midfielder Jermaine Jones fired a 25-yard shot into the back of the Portugal net. I sprang off my couch and screamed in excitement. It was the first time in my life I saw the United States match up amazingly well against one of the best teams in the world.

This was just one of the hundreds of exciting moments from the 2014 FIFA World Cup, which was hosted in Brazil this summer.

Appropriately nicknamed "the month-long festival of football," the World Cup not only brought the whole nation together but united the entire world.

Watching the World Cup this past summer was undeniably one of the best experiences of my life, not because the United States or the Netherlands, whom I support because of their vibrant and attacking playstyles, won, but because it brought such extreme teeth-clenching and nail-biting excitement to soccer fans all over the world.

One exhilarating moment was the United States' conquest of the so-called "Group of Death," a group that contained some fearsome players such as world-renowned Portuguese winger Cristiano Ronaldo, respected German captain Philipp Lahm and lethal Ghanaian forward Asamoah Gyan.

Along the way, soccer fans all over the world also discovered young talent such as 23-year-old Colombian midfielder James Rodriguez, famous for his quick technical skills and 19-year-old United States striker Julian Green, known for his finishing ability.

As a final point, this World Cup tied the highest goal-scoring tally in this tournament's history (171) with the 1998 World Cup hosted in France.

Amidst all the magical moments that the World Cup gave us, there was one in particular that, although not positive, was definitely one of the biggest talking points: Uruguayan striker Luis Suarez's bite, for the third time in his career, this time on Italian defender Giorgio Chiellini in the dying minutes of Uruguay's playoff-clinching 1-0 victory over Italy on June 26.

A day after this incident, FIFA decided to suspend from Luis Suarez from all football-related activity for four months which included even entering a stadium, therefore ending his World Cup. This was one moment I cherished because I absolutely despise Luis Suarez as a hu-

man being because of his despicable actions and the disgraceful personality he imposes on the face of football.

And as if that incident didn't add enough drama to the cup, just under a week later, the United States was knocked out by Belgium, leaving me and thousands of soccer fans around the country heartbroken. Despite the loss, however, the United States goalkeeper, Tim Howard, did America proud as he set the record for most saves by a goalkeeper in a World Cup match.

Because the grit the American team showed throughout its World Cup campaign, I was proud to be American and I have decided that rather than dwell upon the Americans' unfortunate exit, I will cherish their surprising, exciting performance.

My favorite moment of the whole tournament, which brought a smile from ear-to-ear, was the host country's crushing 7-1 semifinal defeat at the hands of the eventual World Cup champions, Germany.

I am strongly against Brasil because of its strong reliance on its forward Neymar Da Silva and center defender Thiago Silva, so seeing Germany completely crush Brazil was special.

The World Cup has been and always will be the greatest sporting event, and the next World Cup in Russia, although four years away, already has me on the edge of my seat. ♦

Niners' stadium an improvement

NEW LEVI'S STADIUM ALLOWS FOR INCREASED SEATING AND UPGRADED FACILITIES

BY Lauren Louie & Arman Vaziri

After negotiations with the city of San Francisco about building a new stadium at Candlestick Point failed in 2006, the San Francisco 49ers decided to move locations from their old iconic stadium, Candlestick Park, to Santa Clara.

After two years of construction and a cost of \$1.3 billion, Levi's Stadium finally opened to the public on July 17.

The team moved because of Candlestick Park's outdated facilities and poor location.

They decided to leave their home stadium after rejecting San Francisco mayor Gavin Newsom's proposal, who suggested to build a new stadium at the problematic Hunters Point Naval Shipyard.

On Aug. 2, freshman Vikram Iyer attended the stadium's inaugural event, a Major League Soccer (MLS) game between the San Jose Earthquakes and the Seattle Sounders that the home team won 1-0.

In contrast to the Earthquakes' success, the 49ers' first home preseason game on Aug. 17 ended in a defeat against the Denver Broncos, who won

34-0.

"The game was really anticlimactic, considering the fact that the 49ers didn't score one time," said senior Sherrilyn Ling. "But it was such a great experience because I get to look back and say that I was at the very first [football] event that ever took place at the Levi Stadium."

Despite not even having been open for two months, the stadium is already experiencing difficulties.

The day after the first preseason game, grounds crews ripped up all of the Bermuda grass, which had started to tear out of the ground in big chunks after the

first couple of games had been played on it.

With time running against them, the crew has barely had enough time to slightly alter the base of the grass and is hoping that the

newly planted grass will both look and function well before the 49ers play their season opening game against the Chicago Bears on Sept. 14.

Officials urge fans to use public trans-

“There were more people, the bathrooms were nicer and the food was better [at Levi's Stadium]. The atmosphere was much better.”

freshman Vikram Iyer



Courtesy of Hawkinson Media Company

The state-of-the-art Levi's Stadium is the new home of the renowned San Francisco 49ers. Students are excited about the 49ers' fresh start at the stadium in Santa Clara.

portation if at all possible.

"My mom had to drop me, my dad and my half-brother off about half a mile away from the stadium because the traffic was so bad," Ling said.

Despite these early setbacks, the stadium is set to make history by hosting the Super Bowl 50 in February 2016. The last Super Bowl held in the Bay Area was Super Bowl XIX in 1985. The stadium will provide more seating for the fans.

"I was shocked at how many people the stadium could seat," Ling said.

The 49ers' old home, Candlestick Park is now set to be demolished in the near future as it is no longer the home of any team or other organization. However, despite early flaws, Levi's Stadium is undeniably an upgrade on Candlestick Park due to having better seating arrangements and the ability to host different events.

"There were more people, the bathrooms were nicer and the food was better [at Levi's Stadium]" Iyer said. "The atmosphere was much better." ♦

Summer camp teaches winning hoops strategy

BY Apoorv Kwatra & Trevor Leung

Sophomore Joshua Deng placed his backpack on the floor, took out his notebook and pen and sat down at a desk in his summer camp's classroom.

Like many students who attended summer classes, Deng spent his mornings diligently jotting down detailed notes and listening to his teacher's lectures.

But these lectures were about pick and roll plays, zone defense and man-to-man defense.

This summer, Deng, along with sophomore Jonathan Cai, junior Noah Quanrud and other students, attended the Point Guard College (PGC), a five-day basketball camp at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

PGC aims to use the classroom and the basketball court to teach players about the mentality that great high-level basketball players have. Students focus on mental aspects like maturity, patience and strategy.

"I learned a lot about being a leader and the certain qualities I should exemplify on and off the court," Deng said.

PGC has increased in popularity since its owner, Dick DeVenzio, released the book "Stuff Good Basketball Players Should Know." It is now one of the most popular basketball camps in the entire world.

The camp is essentially an in-depth version of everything the book teaches, with on-court demonstrations.

There are three two-hour classroom sessions in the five-day-long camp during which athletes learn techniques in a classroom.

These techniques are then applied during three two-hour court sessions.

Many coaches have begun telling their players about the camp.

"I heard about it from an email sent by a parent of a varsity basketball player," Deng said. "It sounded exciting, so I decided to try it out."

Students leave PGC with a completely different perspective on basketball, Deng said.

"It's not like the typical amateur basketball camp," Cai said. "It goes further and more in depth by teaching techniques that a few basketball players know."

Quanrud thinks that PGC increased his basketball IQ and made him a better contributor to the varsity team.

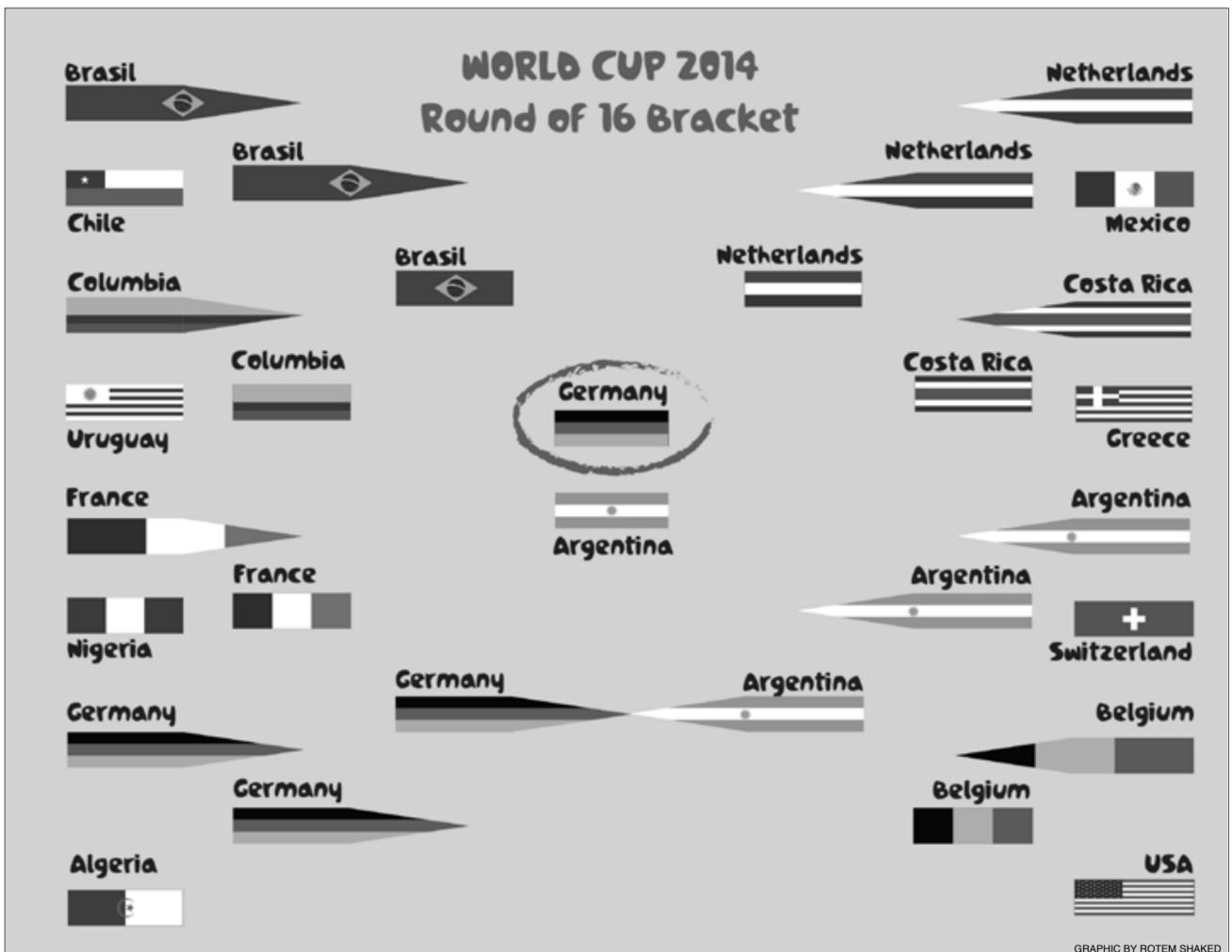
"They taught me to understand basketball in even more detail," Quanrud said. "I learned how to stay aggressive and focused on just doing my job on the court."

Not only does PGC teach athletes about basketball, but it also teaches them about persevering through life's challenges.

By teaching its participants to not only accept but to seek out challenges, the camp transforms participants into mature workers who cannot wait to overcome their next obstacle, Quanrud said.

PGC left a lasting impression on a great number of its campers. Many athletes who went to PGC said they would want to go again.

"PGC gave me plenty of valuable knowledge and tools that help me not only as a basketball player, but also as a person," Deng said. "I would definitely do it again." ♦



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FALL SPORTS PREVIEWES 2014

GRAPHIC BY HELEN CHEN

FOOTBALL

Coach: Tim Lugo
Last season's record: 3-7 overall, 2-5 league
Last season's recap: The Falcons had strong talent in many key positions, but many injuries and their inability to play together to secure wins hindered them.
Star players: senior receiver Joey Meeiros, junior offensive lineman Adam Camp and junior receiver Vincent Kung
Key additions: sophomores quarterback Will Liddle, receivers Kian Ghelikhani and Brian Tatman and offensive lineman Aaron Vogel
Key matchups: Los Gatos and Milpitas

The football team last season had lots of talent in many key positions, but multiple injuries and their inability to work together to secure key wins hindered them from performing decently in their league.
 This year, the team will be affected

by the losses of key quarterback alumni Jonathan Walters, nose tackle Mike Fitzsimmons and running back Davis Berryhill. Also, because of a smaller senior class, seven sophomores have been drafted into the varsity team, resulting in a younger team.
 Yet, according to head coach Tim Lugo, the sophomores have greatly exceeded his expectations and are of great help to the team. One to watch out for is starting quarterback sophomore Will Liddle, who is expected to fill the shoes of Walters.
 "[Liddle] has done everything a quarterback should do," Lugo said. "he is looking like he will be at [Walters's] level by the time he's a senior. As of now he's at a higher level than [Walters] was at his age in his time. We ask a lot of him and he's responded really well."
 Key matchups for the team include Los Gatos, Milpitas and Wilcox, but Lugo believes that the football team



Sophomore Jesse Chung prepares for the start of a football game in the fall of 2013.

has the potential to do well at all three games.
 "All of our opponents are key," Lugo said. "If we can go into league with a 2-1 record, I think we're gonna

do well. I gotta say this: this team is good enough to go to the playoffs even as young as we are." ♦
 —Arjun Ramanathan & Devin Zhao

CROSS COUNTRY

Coach: Danny Moon & Peter Jordan
Last season's record: N/A for cross country
Last season's recap: The top runners ended the season earning fourth place at CCS, but an unexpected turn of events, which included several runners getting sick that day, hindered the team from qualifying for states.
Star athletes: seniors Andrew Harter, Valerie Lensch, Carolyn Qi, Christine Schlossareck and Steven Sum, juniors

Kimberly Chen, Ashley Chen, Kevin Duong-le, Stephen Law and Matthew Peterson, sophomores Alice Bian and Nicholas Sum
Key additions: freshmen Allison Borch, Amit Nag and Lillian Zeng
Key matchups: CCS @ Crystal Springs, Belmont (Nov. 15), CIF State Meet @ Fresno (Nov. 29)

With multiple runners finishing fourth place last year at CCS, the boys' and girls'

cross country team look to build on their success from last year.
 "Our main goal [for the girls] is to make sure nobody gets injured, which is really hard to do, improve every single meet and improve our skills [over the course of the season]," Moon said. "[We look] for people to strive and excel so that they work their very best and to the very end, [our ultimate goal] is to do very well on the last two meets."
 To prepare for the upcoming season,

runners trained intensely by going on long runs everyday throughout the summer.
 "[This summer, we ran] around nine miles [a day] with one 10-mile day on Saturday," Harter said. "Our average run mile pace went from around 7:45 [from] last year to [around] 7:15 this year. This year we will work hard try our best to beat our previous records." ♦
 —Cassandra King & Dorrie Tang

BOYS' WATER POLO

Coach: Courtney Crase
Last season's record: 25-3
Star Athletes: juniors Mason Lee and Graham Schmelzer
Key additions: junior Davis Robertson, Noah Quanrud, and sophomore Christopher Metz
Key matchups: Los Altos, Gunn, Mountain View, and Palo Alto



Lee

After a victory against Homestead High School last year, the boys' water polo team finished as champions of the El Camino league.
 The Falcons went on to CCS for the first time in five years, but lost against

Menlo in the quarterfinals.
 This year, the team is depending on returning key players such as juniors Mason Lee and Graham Schmelzer.
 "[Lee and Schmelzer] are two of many key players on the team, who play year-round water polo and bring a wealth of knowledge," said Coach Courtney Crase. "They are dedicated to leading the team in and out of the water and work incredibly hard."
 The team's performance will be extremely affected by the absence of all-star player Stephen Cho, who graduated last year and is now attending Harvard

University. Crase hopes that Lee and Schmelzer will step up.
 "They have big shoes to fill, but I know they are up for the challenge," Crase said.
 To be successful in these games, Crase believes the team will have to focus on "quick transitions" from offense to defense and vice versa. "[We must also improve our] driving, holding position and strength," Crase said. "If we are able to get our heads in the game, focus on the fundamentals, speed, defense and quick transitions, we will be in good shape to match up against these teams." ♦
 —Nupur Maheshwari & Gitika Nalwa

>> falconfigures

- 15 People on the boys' varsity water polo team.
- 25 Games won last season.
- 12 League games this season.

GIRLS' WATER POLO

Coach: Nick Berg
Last season's record: 7-5
Star Athletes: seniors Mackenzie Rosenthal, Puck de Roos, Amanda Moriarty, and junior Alexa Frieburg
Key additions: sophomores Jessy Liu and Kanika Vora

Last season, the girls' water polo team finished third in the De Anza League, despite season-long pool problems. The Falcons ended their season with a loss to Los Gatos in overtime. "[We] performed much better than expected," said senior Madison Gress.
 Even though they moved up a league,

the team advanced to CCS for the first time since 2006, and made it to the quarter-finals, where they lost to Soquel 6-2.
 "We had a really good season with strong team orientation and a focus on team plays and skills," said senior Amanda Moriarty. "Our practiced paid off [when] we made it to CCS."
 In addition to solid skills and good team members, the team also makes sure to bond and connect.
 "[We want] strong team relationships," said senior Amanda Moriarty.
 The team is looking forward to facing Los Gatos, Palo Alto and Monta Vista. The team hopes to win against Los Ga-

tos, and qualify for CCS once again.
 "[We hope] to advance further than last year," Gress said. ♦
 —Nupur Maheshwari & Gitika Nalwa

Junior Jace Welton gets looks to pass the ball to a teammate last season.



Courtesy of NOW&FOREVER STUDIOS

GIRLS' VOLLEYBALL

Coach: Brad Fredrickson
Last season's record: 9-3 in the El Camino League
Last season's recap: The team had a number of sophomores and juniors who helped lead them to a strong season and the first round of CCS.
Star athletes: junior setter Nicole Chiou and senior outside hitter Sara Parden
Key additions: Libero Caitlin Cooper, Outside hitter Jennifer Chen

Having lost only a few key players to graduation, the team should be stronger this year, with the addition of four new players to the team.
 According to junior Chiou, the last

year's team was already cohesive and a few strong players have been trained to replace the players that left the team last year.
 The team advanced to CCS last season, but ended their season with a loss in the first round of CCS against Burlingame.
 The girls hope to perform better than they did last season by beating Lynbrook in league play and advancing further in CCS. "We lost both matches against Lynbrook last year, so beating them will be definite proof of our growth as a team," sophomore opposite Julia Vita said. ♦
 —Trung Vandinh



Junior Eleni Spirakis spikes the ball in a tough match against Prospect High School.

FALCON // LAUREN LOUIE

FIELD HOCKEY

Coach: Lifon Huynh
Last season's record: 2-8
Star athletes: Seniors Christina Crolla, Natalie Lemire and Bianca Oliveri and junior Erin Norris.
Key additions: Juniors Corrine Bryan and Sarah Price and sophomores Emily Chen, Rachel Davey and Maxine Parr.
Key matchups: Monta Vista, Los Gatos and Willow Glen

Field hockey players are seeking

to redeem themselves after a difficult season last fall. Contributing to the losing season were injuries to several key players including alumni Ingrid Hong and Risha Shah.
 "Our main goal is to beat our record last year, since we did not do too well,"

Players have grown stronger and are ready to face the upcoming season.

win as a team," Norris said. "This season, we look a lot better in terms of our skill level, and this should hopefully

help us in getting far." The team is comprised of mainly juniors and seniors, and a few sophomores. Norris believes that the difference in ages only benefit the team.
 "I think the diversity of the grade groups should help us on the field, since each person has different strengths," she said.
 The team's first game is on Sept. 17 against Westmont High School. ♦
 —Deepthi Sampathkumar

GIRLS' TENNIS

Coach: Florin Marica
Last season's record: 16-6
Star athletes: junior Shaya Nikfar and senior Smita Sabada
Key additions: freshmen Dasee Carter and Stephanie Ren
Key matchups: Los Altos and Monta Vista

Last season even with nine out of 14 players new to varsity, the Falcons placed first in the De Anza League. However, the team failed to reach semifinals at the Fresno NorCal tournament and did not move past the second round of CCS.
 The team hopes to use last year's experience and start this season strong with four new players.
 "Last year most of us were new to the team, but this year using our experience we definitely hope to improve on last season's results and possibly win CCS," junior Yu Karen Asai said.

Seniors Smita and Arathi Sabada, who are co-captains, returned from a break last year and are two strong additions to the team.
 The goals and expectations have certainly in turn become higher. "We want to match the 2010 reign as Norcal and CCS champions. I think we have the best chance this year to do so," sophomore Neeka Nikfar said. Smita agrees that with a better balance of old and new players this season, the team's chances look better.
 In addition, the close-knit bond between the team's players has proved to be an important factor.
 "Even though tennis is a very individual sport, it pays off that on the court we have been working very well together. This will definitely translate during future matches and lead to success this season," Arathi said. ♦
 —Caitlin Ju



Junior Shaya Nikfar hits the tennis ball at high speeds during a tennis match last year.

Courtesy of NOW&FOREVER STUDIOS

GIRLS' GOLF

Coach: Dave Gragnola
Last year's record: 7-7
Star players: senior Vivian Roan and junior Carrie Chen
Key additions: freshmen Sarah Lo and Raina Kolluri
Key matchups: Los Gatos and Hillsdale

September is on the calendar as the Falcons hit the golf course. This year, the girls' golf team has had many valuable, freshmen additions. During tryouts freshman Sarah Lo made the top

six of the players, comprising the traveling team.
 "I'm excited and nervous and I think it's going to be a good experience," Lo said.
 Many of the previous players have also improved. After practicing very often during her entire freshman year, sophomore Raina Kolluri is now the sixth player on the traveling team.
 "I managed to play well for at least two of the tryout days, and I knew my



Roan

hard work during the off season and summer definitely paid off when I landed a spot on the travel team," Kolluri said. "I aim to improve even more by playing in matches this year."
 For some other players, however, tryouts did not go as well as they hoped, nor did they reflect the players' true capability and position on the

team.
 "The first day of tryouts was terrible, second day was like watching a horror movie and the third was disastrous," said junior Carrie Chen.
 Despite these inconveniences, Chen is still ranked as the best player on the team.
 Overall, the team's goals as always are to make it to CCS, be in the top tiers of the league, and beat Los Gatos.
 "This year I think we'll be just as competitive if not better than last year," said coach Dave Gragnola. ♦
 —Oksana Trifanova

>> snapshots



FALCON // ELLEN WU



FALCON // JADE BISHT



FALCON // JADE BISHT



FALCON // ELLEN WU

Three students relax on a blanket on Aug. 22, enjoying "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" at the Back to School Movie Night.

The Sports Plaza's new facilities have gotten a lot of positive feedback since its opening last June.

Analisa Ruff (12) paints red stripes on Michael Cole (12) at the Tailgate before the rally last Friday.

The dance team takes the field during halftime at the football game against Hillsdale last Friday.

buzzworthy >> New year, new computers

By Jane Park & Anant Rajeev

Gone this year are the journalism room's now ancient 2007 model iMacs. In their place are sleek, new 2014 iMacs available for all students to use.

Jennie Werner, who graduated last year after being a yearbook editor, and newspaper editors-in-chief Sabrina Chen, Megana Iyer, Deepti Kannan and Amy Lin pitched their urgent need for updated computers, laptops and new software during a meeting with the SHS Foundation last spring.

With a generous donation of \$20,000 from the Foundation, the journalism room is now equipped with a new set

of 33 iMacs and 10 Macbook Pro laptops. The 2007 iMacs are being re-programmed with a Linux operating system and will be used by different teachers as well as by the Learning Center.

The journalism program has also spent the last four years saving money for new equipment. Combined with the money from the Foundation and \$15,000 from private donors, adviser Mike Tyler

was able to place an order for the computers last spring. The total cost for the new computers and software was roughly \$60,000.

By providing students with the most updated versions of technology, the journalism program is giving students the tools they will be using in future prospects. The new iMacs come with CS6, a faster, more modern program. Kannan also believes that the new

computers are a great addition to the room.

"I'm excited to see that the new lab has brought our publications up to date in the digital era and is competitive with the resources other journalism programs have access to," Kannan said.

Iyer added that the new computers benefit all students and not just the journalism students.

"The new computers help the entire school because there are so many people that use the journalism room as a resource," she said. "It will help increase efficiency throughout newspaper and yearbook tremendously for years to come." ♦



"The new lab has brought our publications up to date in the digital era."

senior Deepti Kannan

More than just stuck in the middle

SOPHOMORE REFLECTS ON DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GRADES

amulyan bucks



Amulya Vadlakonda

Freshman year was a breeze for me. Oh sure, I had to get used to a new school and find out where the bathrooms were. I had to make sure that P.E. didn't kill me. My classes were relatively tougher than middle school classes, so I had to make sure I was always on top of things. But I had Freshmen Focus, Link crew and Ms. Satake constantly checking up on me.

Sophomore year, nothing. No Link Crew helping me get settled into my new classes. No more late credit on homework. No more written procedures in my science labs. Nothing except for two hours of excruciating Trig/Pre-calc Honors homework every night.

I had completely anticipated that sophomore year would just be a glorified version of freshman year.

I scoffed when my counselor told me that honors courses would have double the homework of their college prep equivalents. I just blatantly refused to believe that I would actually have to spend that much time on homework. It just didn't seem possible.

Yet somehow this year, 15 times three equals 40 due to weird significant fig-

ures rounding, and dimensional analysis was 10 times more difficult than I remembered. I have one week to write multiple stories for the Falcon, instead of one month to do one Journalism One assignment.

And as for my math class, well ... It's all Greek to me. Quite literally.

And yes, I know, as a sophomore, I really shouldn't be complaining. Juniors are worrying about their SATs and seniors have college applications, and even freshmen have their struggles of adjusting to the brand new world of high school. To everyone else, sophomores are just stuck in the middle.

But this is the first year where no one is there to hold our hands. It's like that One Republic song — "Old, but I'm not that old; young, but I'm not that bold."

But even though I'm "not that bold," I think I'm prepared to undertake the challenge.

When I actually understand that $\cos(a+b) = \cos(a)\cos(b) - \sin(a)\sin(b)$, or that the product of two numbers in Chemistry has the least number of significant figures, I feel my confidence building, knowing that the concepts that once seemed so daunting are really extremely doable. It's actually an incredibly satisfying feeling.

It also doesn't hurt that my teachers are trying to keep the mood light, so that I don't get entirely sucked into the black hole.

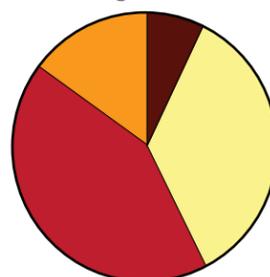
With Ms. Cahatol's enthusiastic lectures ("MY WAY! MY WAY! MY WAY!

MY WAY! MY WAY!), Mr. Sheehy's entertaining simulations and Ms. Wissolik's "politically correct" fractured fairytales, I stay smiling even as I get through my seemingly endless pile of homework and studying.

It's clear to see that I was a little naïve to think that my sophomore year was going to be similar to my freshman year. But I think I'm ready to take it. Bring it on, Chem Honors. ♦

>> falconpoll

How much support do you feel you have in high school?



- 7% Constant support
- 36% Occasional support
- 42% Some support, but not much
- 15% No support at all

The Falcon polled 100 students from all grades.

>> topten

WAYS TO START THE SCHOOL YEAR RIGHT

- 10 Join rally commision. One more Oompa Loompa can't hurt.
- 9 Complain about the movie night. Never mind, Rally took care of that.
- 8 Push APUSH homework until Monday morning. What is sleep?
- 7 Party with the band kids. Thankfully Snocrave is open late.
- 6 Hang out in the parking lot until midnight on Friday. 'cuz apparently that's what the cool kids do.
- 5 Spend all free time in the journalism room. Especially if you're not in journalism.
- 4 Learn how to count. 5...4...
- 2 Drop AP Physics. BEFORE the first test.
- 1 Get HOSH'd. Whaddup.

>> Arjun Ramanathan

First Semester Release Dates '14

- September 12
- September 26
- October 17
- November 7
- November 21
- December 12