



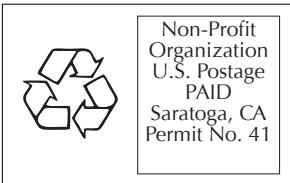
Classes prepare for fantastic Quad Day.



New Doctor wows viewers.



Reporter reflects on trip to Africa.



# THE Saratoga Falcon

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

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## MEDIA ARTS

### Changes hurt MAP electives

BY Michelle Leung  
& Trung Vandinh

The Media Arts Program (MAP) added a Media Arts 2 class for juniors this year, a continuation of the sophomore MAP class Media Arts 1 — and also a major blow to the size of the broadcast journalism program, which has suffered a greater than 50 percent drop in numbers and is down to a staff of 14 students.

The new Media Arts 2 class combines filmmaking, advanced digital animation and multi-media journalism, which were previously offered as electives for juniors. Students also take common English and social studies classes.

To compensate for the new Media Arts 2 class, MAP has made several adjustments to its curriculum. The

>> MAP on pg. 5

### Math Club plans to create Math Quad mural

BY Katherine Sun  
& Eileen Toh

This year, the Math Club is planning to create a mural in the school's Math Quad. The project will be supervised by math teacher PJ Yim and organized by freshman Lillian Zeng, who plans to base it on a mural

she once saw in New York.

After discussing the plans, students and the math department have agreed that the mural will showcase five great mathematicians — Euclid, Euler, Gauss, Leibniz and Mandelbrot. Its bottom left corner depicts the Falcon logo in addition to bleachers surrounding

the Benny Pierce Field, which represent Saratoga High and how math ties in with students' daily lives.

On the right side, there will be drawn houses and satellites that symbolize the Saratoga community and how math ties into society. The remaining two sections illustrate the past and

the future.

Zeng has done a rough sketch of the mural on her Wacom drawing tablet.

"[The section that illustrates the past] is the foundation for what we have now and what we will have in the future, so basically, it's like math builds upon math," Zeng said.

Yim said that throughout the years, he has often seen lone students standing by the tunnel of the hallway in the Math Quad, especially after Math Club practices on Fridays. Yim figured that the walls should appear more uplifting and give

>> MURAL on pg. 5

## PROJECTS

### 'Matchmaker' cast overcomes tight schedule

BY Melissa Magner  
& Saya Sivaram

"You're discharged, and you're discharged and you! You're discharged too!" yells senior Chris Nasser, who plays Horace Vandergelder, as he rehearses his role during an after school practice of "The Matchmaker."

In preparation for the Oct. 10 opening night of the show, Nasser and other students practiced for the past three weeks. Unlike previous fall play rehearsals, the cast of "The Matchmaker" has had only three weeks to prepare, far shorter than the usual six weeks.

The fall play, which consists of four acts and lasts around an hour and a half, completed its first round of performances, and cast members look back proudly on their rehearsals. Because of the shortened time between auditions and shows due to the earlier planned showtime



Thermond

in the school year, practices were longer and busier, lasting two and a half hours instead of the normal one and a half in order for the cast to be ready on time.

"The decreased rehearsal time definitely made the process a lot more frantic, mainly because everyone had less time than they are used to with fall play practices," said junior Emily Ludwig, who plays the character Irene Molloy.

With an intricate set and costume, actors and actresses with over 100 lines, and longer practices, each scene was only rehearsed about three to four times before dress rehearsal.

"Even with the busier rehearsals, the quality of the show has not been impacted," said junior Nina Nelson, who plays a musician. "[Drama teacher Sarah Thermond] found a way to add some music with the show, and have it blend perfectly to the plot. I think that the audience will re-



Senior Chris Nasser dips senior Nastasya Kutuyev during a dress rehearsal on Oct. 9.

ally enjoy the added music."

The show is set in four completely different locations, and the tech crew had to figure out how to create these sets. In the end, it was decided that all of the set pieces would be dual-sided and that doors and

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Massimino inspired students at the research center on Sept. 6. pg. 8

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#### Rookie senior shows skills on field

Senior Alvin Kim excels on varsity team. pg. 25

October 17, 2014

**Liang wins prestigious MIT math competition**

When junior Celine Liang entered the gigantic auditorium at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Sept. 27, she felt shivers of nerves going down her spine.

Liang, along with hundreds of seventh grade to 12th grade girls from over 250 middle schools and high schools around United States and Canada, were all there to compete in the sixth Annual Advantage Testing Foundation Math Prize for Girls.

It turned out that Liang was the best among the girls, answering 17 out of the 20 brutally hard questions correctly in two and a half hours and winning about \$30,000 in scholarship money as a result.

"When they called my name during the awards, I was extremely surprised because there were a lot of very strong competitors," Liang said. "I guess I never expected to win against some of the other girls."

The MIT competition is the largest math contest specifically for girls in the world.

Besides Liang's stunning success, junior Kristine Zhang, who also competed last year, did well, receiving an honorable mention distinction. She felt that this year's problems were more challenging than the ones from the previous year, but she still completed around 12 of them before running out of time.

"I enjoy that you get to travel and be able to do a lot of social events," Zhang said. "There's a social aspect of it, and then you also do the math."

— Becky Hoag

**School honors National Merit semi-finalists**

A celebratory breakfast honoring the record 39 National Merit semi-finalists from the class of 2015 will take place in the cafeteria on Oct. 22.

"I think the school is really good about supporting its students and appreciating their accomplishments," said senior Sonal Pai, one of the semi-finalists. "I'm excited for the breakfast to see the other students being recognized."

The event will begin with muffins, croissants, yogurt, bagels and drinks. Then, everyone will be seated for the formal introduction, during which principal Paul Robinson will congratulate the semi-finalists and ask them to stand and acknowledge their parents and relatives. The ceremony will end with a final round of applause before students are left to mingle.

Around 90 percent of the semi-finalists will gain the title of finalist. The list of finalists will be announced in the spring.

"I think our high performances on the PSAT every year are a testament to the dedication of the teachers and students," assistant principal Brian Safine said.

— Fiona Sequeira

**Blood drive gives SHS students chance to save lives**

Got Blood? This is the motto of the Community and Wellness Commission this year.

The commission hopes eligible donors come to the Nov. 2 Blood Drive held in the Small Gym.

"Blood donation is an easy way to save lives and we really want Saratoga High to support the community in this manner," said senior head commissioner Vivek Murthy.

The commission will start promoting the event and releasing specific details after Homecoming week.

Students must be at least 16 to give blood if they have parental consent or be 17 without parental consent. Other restrictions include not having traveled to a third-world country in the past year and participants not being ill.

According to Murthy, donating blood requires little more than a slight pinch from the needle.

"I was really nervous about donating last year, but it wasn't painful at all. [It felt like] a tiny pinch," said 2014 alumni Akshay Madhani.

As an extra incentive, the commission will give a surprise gift to the donors.

A final benefit, commissioners said, is that studies have shown donating blood is beneficial to the donor as well as the body is given a chance to produce new fresh blood.

— Deepthi Sampathkumar

**>> picturethis**

FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

**MATCHMAKING >>** Senior Andrew York and junior Emily Ludwig act out a scene in the fall play, "The Matchmaker," which opened Oct. 10. There will also be performances on Oct. 17 and 18 at 7:30 p.m.

**MOCK TRIAL****Team welcomes mentors**

BY Cassandra King  
& Isabelle Tseng

After weeks of uncertainty, the mock trial team has found a teacher and a coach.

As a retired attorney, Roberts has expertise and knowledge in law that greatly benefits the team.

Because Torrens also has experience from coaching a form of mock trial at a previous school, mock trial members are expecting a relatively smooth transition.

Torrens said the club is "pretty much self-run" because of strong leaders like seniors Max Chang and Michelle Luo, but agrees that "[the students] will need some mentoring that Dr. Roberts will provide. I'm just going to learn first."

This year, he will be focusing on pretrial — which involves a debate on the nuances of the Fourth Amendment, which protects citizens against unreasonable searches and

seizures, arbitrary arrests and surveillances — and on helping ease the team into the new season.

Chang has been participating in mock trial throughout his four years at the school and has found that the team has been "rich with raw, untapped potential."

"I guess a part of me wants to help develop their talent while sharing my passion and enthusiasm for mock trial," Chang said.

The team held an informational meeting late September. Thirty-five students from all four grades attended, including both veterans of mock trial and new faces to the team.

Chang and Roberts offered an overview of mock trial. Students were then assigned roles for the following week's auditions.

Returning member junior Karthik Padmanabhan sums up the season as: "Different teacher, different room, new captains, new people. It'll be good, it'll be fun." ♦

**DRAMA****Students to watch 'Sweeney Todd'**

BY Melissa Magner  
& Saya Sivaram

Students from the three drama classes are going to Mountain View to see a professional production of the musical "Sweeney Todd" on Oct. 23.

The production will be performed by Theatreworks, a reputable regional company that puts on shows, such as "The Lake Effect."

"Sweeney Todd" is a dark musical that follows barber Benjamin Barker as he seeks revenge on Judge Turpin for wrongfully imprisoning him and taking Barker's wife and daughter. After 10 years in prison, Barker finds his wife gone and his daughter adopted by Judge Turpin. Barker adopts the alias Sweeney Todd and seeks revenge on the Judge and everyone who helped contribute to the injustice against his family.

The field trip will occur during school hours and about half of each of the three drama

classes are attending. "Students learn about theater not just by getting up and performing, but also by watching complete shows and analyzing what they found effective or ineffective about

cause I think it will be interesting to see the characters on stage," Liao said.

Senior Andrew York, who has been on multiple field trips to see productions, believes that seeing professional shows is a great learning experience.

"I saw 'Comedy of Errors' by William Shakespeare at Montalvo my freshman year, and we were able to see a cast of six actors play 14 different parts and leap across a two-story set," York said.

On top of that, York said it is helpful to see shows with classmates because of the common experience from which students can draw parallels.

Senior Jack McCarthy enjoys seeing how the performers use songs to enhance dramatic moments. He is particularly excited to see how they act out violent scenes and make them work safely while still getting the important message across to the audience. ♦

**"S**tudents learn about theater not just by performing, but by watching shows."

teacher Sarah Thermond

performances and design elements," drama teacher Sarah Thermond said. "Last year, we were unable to do this and students missed out on a great opportunity."

Freshman Zona Liao is excited to watch the production. "I'm really looking forward to seeing 'Sweeney Todd' be-

October 17, 2014

**Seniors aim high for their final Quad Day**

BY Anant Rajeev  
& Arjun Ramanathan

With upwards of eight hours of dance practices per week, the senior class has been putting their full efforts behind preparations for their final Quad Day on Oct. 24.

Eight dances accompany their Disney theme: three girls dances, one guys dance, one partner dance, a Bollywood dance, the annual football player dance and the finale. Senior Josh Pi, the 2015 class president, is confident, saying, "Our dances are packed and the rehearsals are coming along smoothly. We're hoping to touch up our dances faster and more efficiently than previously."

"There's a lot more enthusiasm in Homecoming this year and the attendance for practices has gone up a lot in comparison to before," Park said. "This allows us to touch up our dances faster and more efficiently than previously."

According to Pi, the Quad Day is important for its ability to unify students. The atmosphere of community and spirit is almost tangible during practices.

"No matter how Quad Day goes, I hope everyone will be happy with all the effort we put in for coming together as a class to do something great," Pi said.

Co-choreographer Anshika Maheshwari is helping plan the senior class's

first co-ed Indian-themed dance.

"We've been practicing for so many hours and even with 80 people stuffed into the dance, we seem to be pulling this off," Maheshwari said.

Senior class treasurer Jane Park said the skirt and numerous dances rival the quality of previous classes' senior Quad Days. In most of the dance rehearsals, 20 to 30 students have shown up. Park said that this number is impressive.

"There's a lot more enthusiasm in Homecoming this year and the attendance for practices has gone up a lot in comparison to before," Park said. "This allows us to touch up our dances faster and more efficiently than previously."

Pi is impressed with the participation so far and expects it to continue.

Having completed their skirt early, the seniors have had weeks to rehearse all the elements needed to bring their Homecoming and dances together into one big performance.

"No matter how Quad Day goes, I hope everyone will be happy with all the effort we put in for coming together as a class to do something great," Pi said.

Co-choreographer Anshika Maheshwari is helping plan the senior class's



Seniors Puck de Roos and Samir Ramakrishnan paint cardboard decorations on Oct. 11.

>> **#bigidea****Homecoming Week 2014**

Monday 10/20  
Teacher dance @ Lunch in the Quad

Tuesday 10/21  
Freshman Quad Day @ Lunch

Wednesday 10/22  
Sophomore Quad Day @ Lunch

Thursday 10/23  
Junior Quad Day @ Lunch

Friday 10/24  
Senior Quad Day @ Lunch

Saturday 10/25  
Homecoming dance @ 8 p.m. in Large Gym

**Juniors prepare for Nickelodeon performance**

BY Anant Rajeev  
& Arjun Ramanathan

After a successful sophomore Quad Day last fall, the class of 2016 plans to repeat the feat in this year's performance on Oct. 23. Their skirts and dances will all be centered around the theme of Nickelodeon shows this year.

Choreographers such as Sonia Harris are also excited to showcase their own productions.

The juniors are planning six dances: two girls' dances, a boys' dance, a partner dance, an all-boys Bollywood dance and the finale, all woven into the skirt based on the theme given to the grade.

Junior class president Darby Williams is most excited about the positive collaboration.

"The whole point is to just come together as one class to

produce a Quad Day that we can feel very proud of," Williams said. "We have to focus on our task at hand rather than compare with other classes if we want to be successful this year."

Besides the dances, skirts provide an avenue for participation because there are several more parts available than previous years. Junior Savannah Green, who will be playing Sam Puckett from the Nickelodeon TV series "iCarly," is participating in a Homecoming skirt for the first time.

"I love choreographing dances because it gives me an opportunity to get to know the rest of my classmates," Harris said. "Our dances are smaller but more fun and our choreography is harder but more interesting. However, our main goal is still to get as much people as we can involved."

"Working with such a big cast seems hard, but is something that I'm extremely pumped for," Green said. "Skirt-wise I think we can improve this year by memorizing lines and having more practices before the show."

Junior Meghan Shah will play the role of Dora from the popular kids show "Dora the Explorer." She feels lucky that her class got this theme.

"The theme of Nickelodeon has set us up so well because it's such a broad scope and gives us an opportunity to dig deep and find students of such different personalities to play these characters," Shah said. "It's going to be such a pleasure to work with everyone and will be a ton of fun to be in and watch."

The junior class officers and participants have been hard at work for roughly 16 hours a week recently.

"Under promise, over perform," junior class vice president Spencer Yen said. ♦

**Sophomores present organized, united front**

BY Apoorv Kwatra  
& Saya Sivaram

It's a hot afternoon in October, and the Quad is strewn with paper mache celery. Everywhere, students are busy building larger than life cutlery and painting giant pieces of pizza. Determined to impress the rest of the school, the class of 2017 is in frenzy of activity in its preparations for Homecoming.

The announcing of the Homecoming themes in late August of this year generated plenty of buzz among sophomores.

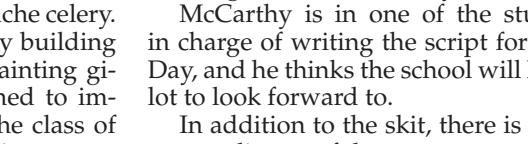
"A lot of my friends watch 'The Food Network,' so I know that they're all really happy with the theme," said sophomore Jacqueline Han. "This theme offers a lot of different options for decorations and dances."

After their debut last year, the sophomores are determined to improve their decorations and their performances for this year's Quad Day.

According to sophomore Raymond McCarthy, last year's efforts to create a "Club Penguin" Homecoming were unorganized and disjointed due to miscommunications. The class also had technical difficulties they want to avoid this year.

"We could be better prepared," Ma said. "Still, we'll definitely be putting an impressive and cohesive Quad Day." ♦

McCarthy



McCarthy

**Freshmen try to overcome obstacles, difficult theme**

BY Apoorv Kwatra  
& Saya Sivaram

Given the Homecoming theme of "Channel 4 News," the freshmen are determined to break the tradition of being the laughingstock of the school and put on a good show.

With their Homecoming Quad Day on Oct. 21, the freshmen are working to put everything together. Dances, scripts, decorations and keeping class spirit high are just a few of their tasks.

"Our decorations are coming along nicely, as are our dances," freshman class president Kyle Wang said. "Some areas need more work, but overall, everything is going as planned."

Attempting to stay on top of the workload, class leaders have avoided procrastination and are even further in their preparations than some other classes.

"Our planning is going pretty well," freshman class vice president Roland Shen said. "Funding is at a nice amount right now, and the skirt and dances are all coming along smoothly."

Even so, Homecoming is tough for

newcomers since it forces the class to come up with three dances, decorations and a script for their Quad Day.

## Saratoga candidates prepare for council elections

BY Miles Albert  
& Neehar Thumathy

The City of Saratoga will be holding elections for three four-year term positions on the Saratoga City Council this November.

The five candidates include former mayor Emily Lo, Saratoga resident John Chen, Saratoga Planning Commission member Mary-Lynne Bernald, community volunteer Rishi Kumar and Saratoga parent Yan Zhao.

These positions entail serving on and reviewing committees and agencies and representing the city, among other responsibilities.

Voting takes place on Nov. 4, and vote-by-mail applications have already been sent out.

Each candidate is running for varying reasons and hopes to implement his or her unique views into the Saratoga way of life.

"There are five of us running in this race, and each of us bring our own merit and the best of intentions to the table," said Kumar.

According to Kumar, his previous involvement volunteering in the community prompted his venture into local politics.

"I had caught the volunteering bug," Kumar joked. "Working with our com-

munity [and] solving its challenges and issues truly energizes me, and I hope to continue doing that as Saratoga's worker bee on the city council."

Kumar said that he wants to use his vision, energy and leadership to benefit the community, but also plans to listen to the ideas of citizens.

"[I hope] I continue making the right choices, and teaming with our citizens, listening to them, bringing our energy, dedication and volunteering passion," Kumar said.

Bernald said that if elected, her "main goal is not to disappoint any of [my sponsors] or the voters of Saratoga."

Bernald said that it is important City Council members have prior experience or involvement in the city.

City Council works most smoothly when the elected officials are knowledgeable about the City, its past and its potential for the future," Bernald said.

Chen, who has not had previous election experience, is hoping to be elected because as an ordinary citizen, his voice was not heard.

"I found that in order to gain more attention for Saratoga from the Board of Directors of the VTA (Valley Transportation Authority), it is easier to have a City Council member contact the board," Chen said.

Zhao, a volunteer on the Saratoga



The city council meets at the City Civic Theater monthly to discuss events and projects.

FALCON // TREVOR LEUNG

Planning Commission and resident for 16 years, said she is running to give back to the community.

"My family and I have enjoyed so much of what Saratoga offers, and as a good citizen of the great community, I want to contribute and help make Saratoga the best place to live not only for my children, but also for generations to come," said Zhao. ♦

Zhao, a volunteer on the Saratoga

## Youth Commission to host 'Pizza and Politics' forum

BY Allison Lin  
& Summer Smith

candidates for local and statewide elections will be very enriching."

The event is sponsored by the Saratoga City Council and Mayor Emily Lo, and will be shown live on KSAR.

Unlike the last event, which focused on the 2012 presidential election, this year's forum will focus on local elections.

The political forum will feature state assembly candidates Republican Chuck Page and Democrat Evan Low, as well

as the candidates for the school board of Saratoga Union School District and the Cupertino School District.

Saratoga City Clerk Crystal Bothelio

will mediate the discussion while candidates debate and answer questions from the audience.

In a format that is similar to the presidential debate, Bothelio will focus on local elections.

Attendees will be served complimentary pizza and other refreshments throughout the night.

Many history and government teachers at Saratoga High School and other local high schools will be offering extra credit to students attending the event.

Wang believes this year's "Pizza and Politics" will be an excellent event.

"If you aren't attending because you're interested in politics, and not coming for extra credit, then at least enjoy some pizza!" Wang said. ♦

**T**he two commissions are excited to put on another political forum for the youth."

Monta Vista senior Jeremy Wang

will have a pre-made document of questions to raise during the debate.

Questions will concern mainly topics that students have heard of, such as

recent propositions and bills concerning teens or public schools.

After a set of questions have been debated, Bothelio will then open the floor for any questions from the audience.

Because of large audience participation last time, the coordinators have increased the amount of time for this.

Attendees will be served complimentary pizza and other refreshments throughout the night.

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## Residents campaign for elementary school board positions

BY Summer Smith

The Los Gatos Saratoga Union High School District did not have a campaign this year. Three spots on the board opened up, and three candidates stepped forward: incumbent Doug Ramezane, newcomer Robin Mano and incumbent Cynthia Chang.

The elementary school district is a different case. Five candidates are running for three positions on the Saratoga Union School District (SUSD) school board. The positions have four-year terms, and the last election race for the SUSD school board was in 2010.

The candidates are current board member Patty Buchanan; retired Redwood Middle School teacher Susan Germeraad; parent and consultant Cynthia Miller; community volunteer Laura Tillett; and software engineer Yongjian Wu. The school district includes Argonaut, Foothill and Saratoga Elementary Schools as well as Redwood Middle School. Germeraad hopes to impact the community and improve education if elected. She said that her motivation to run for the SUSD School Board comes from an interest in keeping public education as strong as possible.

"I benefited greatly from the wonder-

**On voting day, Nov. 4, three of these candidates will be elected to the school board and have the opportunity to contribute their ideas to the community.**

but they also enjoy the campaigning process.

My favorite part of campaigning is having substantive discussions with people. Instead of 'Hi, how are you?' people want to talk about the future direction of the schools," said Germeraad. "It's great to connect with people on an

entirely different level than usual."

Campaigning requires valuable time and dedication, however. Candidates have to take time away from their daily lives.

"The hardest part of campaigning is the time it takes away from my family," said Tillett.

The candidates have also run into some unexpected challenges.

Physically, the hardest part of campaigning is trying to get those lawn signs planted in the rock-solid ground that we have here in Saratoga," said Miller.

On voting day, Nov. 4, three of these candidates will be elected to the school board and have the opportunity to contribute their ideas to the community.

However, over half of the community votes by absentee ballot, a ballot which voters fill in at home and mail in, so the race is expected to be decided in mid-October when ballots are returned. Tillett hopes to take her experience to improve the transparency of district operations and timely communication to the high school and community.

I want to ensure the curriculum meets the needs of our students," Tillett said. "It's about ensuring our students have the opportunity to excel and get a great education." ♦

## Speakers encourage girls to pursue sciences

BY Becky Hoag

panel, junior Anne Zepecki said STEM is an important field for women.

"I know from personal experience that women are underrepresented in technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Los Gatos High School held an hour long presentation called "Empowering Women and Girls in Technology" on Oct. 7. The audience consisted of middle school and high school girls and parents.

Zepecki was one of the five students who presented on behalf of Los Gatos High School's advanced computer science program, Advanced Science Research (ASR), which allows students to have an individualized approach to learning the subject.

Four college students also spoke about their experiences and careers in computer science. April Grow, currently

sions for programming and making their own visions come true," Grow said.

The presentation encouraged girls to pursue math and science while staying well-rounded.

Saratoga freshman Jocelyn Chen said the presentation encouraged her to continue in STEM.

"I think it was pretty interesting to hear the stories that [the panelists] shared and I learned a lot about their experiences," Chen said. ♦

**The presentation encouraged girls to pursue math and science while staying well-rounded.**

"I think it was pretty interesting to hear the stories that [the panelists] shared and I learned a lot about their experiences," Chen said. ♦

## MAP >>

continued from pg. 1

Palma, the seventh-period slot that multi-media journalism has been relegated to makes it difficult for MAP juniors who do not want seven periods to take the class.

He said the remaining students are highly dedicated, and the quality of the broadcasts has remained steady.

Eleven of the 14 remaining students in SHSTV are seniors, with only three possible returning students for the 2015-16 school year, further clouding the future of the broadcast program.

"I don't really like [the change] because I really wanted to do SHS TV and now I have to take Media Arts 2," junior Jennifer Chen said. "I would have to take another [class period] to take SHS TV."

But for other students like junior Alex Guo, who would have taken Media Arts 2 had not been offered, the addition of the class was beneficial.

"[The Media Arts 2 class] is very effective and it combines all these different classes into one curriculum," Guo said.

Current senior Lukas Pettersson sees the addition as a good development, although he had expected the sophomore level and senior level elective classes to be added earlier, in time for the class of 2015.

"A large number of us joined

the program at the promise of its completion by our senior year," Pettersson said. "It would have been a nice addition since I enjoyed Media Arts 1 sophomore year more than I did filmmaking junior year."

In the future, MAP will eventually add an elective class at the senior level, Palma said. The department is surveying students to determine what the elective will look like.

"Students have been interested in a media component at the senior level for a few years," Palma said. "We're exploring options to create a linked elective at the senior level, but no decision have been made, and what it will look like is up in the air." ♦

## PLAY >>

continued from pg. 1

ented actors and actresses pays off, said senior Dan Kawadri, the stage manager for the show.

"The cast takes their job very seriously, and this amazing lineup of people have made the show the success that it is," Kawadri said.

After the first shows on Oct. 10, 11 and 12, the cast was pleased with their results.

"The first couple of shows were great," Kutuyev said. "We had some amazing audiences and we really think that they enjoyed the performances."

The cast had two evening shows and one matinee. Each performance had an excellent audience turnout of students and community members.

"Even though it was a rush to put this production on, the first weekend of shows has really reflected how prepared we are and I'm really proud of how it's been going," Nelson said.

The show will also perform today and Oct. 18 at 7:30 p.m. in the McAfee Center. ♦

## BAND >>

continued from pg. 1

the music is passed back and forth between the soloists and the full ensemble," Moon said. "It's just one of so many new and incredible things being incorporated into this show."

The band will attend the Western Band Association (WBA) Dublin Competition on Nov. 1, Bands of America (BOA) competition in Los Angeles from Nov. 7-9 and the WBA James Logan competition on Nov. 15. Their senior night will be on Oct. 18, where they will do a complete run-through of the performance, and play at all remaining home football games.

With three competitions left, the drum majors expect only to improve. The band is gearing up to finish the show and wow audiences at football games and competitions alike.

"This is a show with the potential to really deliver something unlike anything we've ever performed before," said Iyengar. "If [we] step up to the plate, this year will have a lasting legacy." ♦

## MURAL >>

continued from pg. 1

drafting her vision of the mural. Because she thought it would be fun to convey a message about mathematics using her artistic talent, Zeng ultimately decided to take charge of the project.

"We want to make [students] think about what the mural means," Zeng said. "Thinking is always good, right? We also want to show that Math Club

people do more than [solve math problems] all day long."

Zeng noticed, however, that Zeng was doing too much of the work by herself. Since he wanted the mural process to be more of a collective effort, he suggested to Zeng that she should recruit a group of willing student volunteers.

She then created the "Toga Math Mural" group on Facebook, whose group description welcomes anyone who wants to "keep up with the progress of the mural," provide general feedback, view the timeline of the project, sign up for days to

Courtesy of LILLIAN ZENG

Freshman Lillian Zeng spent a weekend or two sketching her vision of the Math Quad mural, which will be painted by students this year.

help out or just look at the math mural."

The Facebook group has hosted a number of discussions and updates concerning the progress of the mural. Zeng also recently posted a link to the proposal that the students will give to Principal Paul Robinson for full approval.

Once the proposal is approved, volunteers will start working on the project. Zeng hopes the cost of the paints will be around \$500-600, but the real cost will be in labor. He expects student and parent volunteers will try to finish the mural before the start of winter break in December. ♦

October 17, 2014

# Community college offers viable options

BY DevinZhao

When alumnus Ethan Gelfand graduated last spring, he could have taken the route of most of his classmates by attending a four-year college with a huge price tag.

Rather than spending \$50,000 a year to attend a private school on the East Coast or even \$30,000 to attend a UC, he chose to go to West Valley College, where his first two years of college will cost under \$5,000. Despite a lack of dorm and campus life at West Valley, Gelfand said that the benefits of community colleges outweigh any drawbacks because of affordability and flexible schedules.

"There's lots of classes [at West Valley] with only about 8,000 students and I paid \$1,000 and I'm doing 18 units this semester," Gelfand said. "There is also the ability to maintain a part-time job; I could get one since I still have my car while everyone who left doesn't."

Gelfand plans to transfer later to major in business. He recommends community colleges to those who want to have more leisure time while focusing on higher education.

For alumna Daniella Henao, class of 2014, who currently attends Santa Barbara City College, language barriers were the main incentive for her to attend community college.

"When I moved to the United States [from Colombia] my sophomore year, I didn't speak English, so my grades in high school were not good enough for me to get into my dream university," Henao said. "I saw community college as an opportunity to show universities what I am capable of now I am fluent in English."

Although Santa Barbara City College wasn't her first choice, Henao believes she still made the right decision.

"My campus is beautiful [and is] right in front of the beach, and all my teachers have Ph.D.'s so I don't feel like I am learning less than a person that goes to a four-year school."

alumna Daniella Henao

a four-year school," Henao said. "Also, community colleges give you a lot of options and help you get good grades and succeed in whatever you want to do."

Henao is following programs to transfer into University of Southern California or UC San Diego. She recommends anyone potentially taking the community college transfer option to first check transfer agreements, as every community college has different requirements.

"For example, [at the Santa Barbara City College], if

you have more than a 3.4 GPA you have guaranteed admission in almost every UC and four excellent private schools," Henao said.

Henao also recommends checking the transfer rate, reading about the teachers and studying a lot for the placement test.

Not all community college classes are transferable, so transfer applicants

should make sure that they place in classes that are good enough for them to be able to transfer in two years.

Alumnus Pav Dhanota, class of 2011, who currently attends West Valley, took the transfer option to get a better chance of entering better schools.

"After researching admissions between high school and transfer students, I saw transfer students had priority over high school students," Dhanota said.

Dhanota said among other advantages, community college has prepared him well for when he transfers, as it gave him a better impression of a college workload.

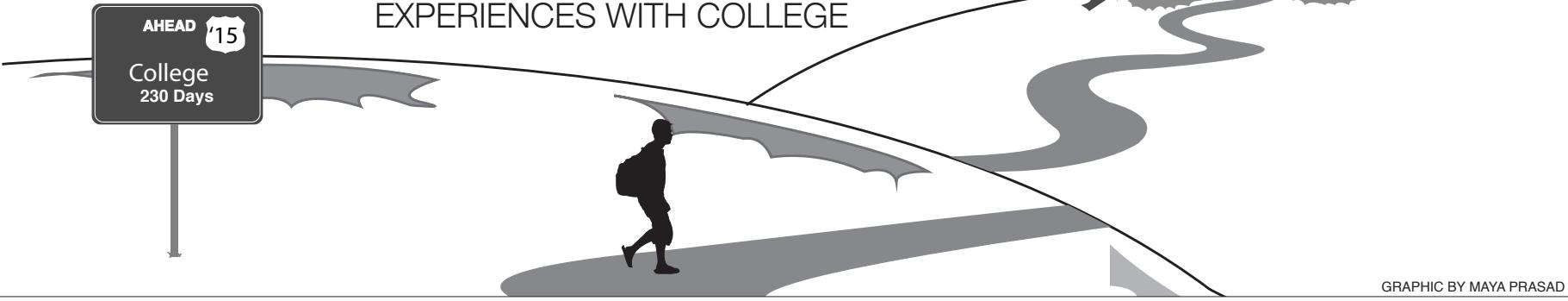
Dhanota was recently admitted into UC Davis and plans to study economics and work in the field before attending graduate school.

He advises those considering community college not to be scared of what others will think.

The truth is, community college is the better decision for most," Dhanota said. "The opportunity to get into a better school, develop better study habits, and mature more mentally and physically is a good recipe for future success." ♦

## ROAD TO COLLEGE

**ALUMNI DISCUSS UNIQUE EXPERIENCES WITH COLLEGE**



GRAPHIC BY MAYA PRASAD

## College rewards honesty

BY RachelHull

*Editor's note: Bob is a pseudonym to protect the subject's privacy.*

English teacher Cathy Head has been helping students with college essays for decades. She now has her fair share of anecdotes: students who apply to a ridiculously high number of colleges, others who rush frantically to finish essays at the last minute. But she remembers one senior's fateful essay in particular.



Head

She shared his story this year with the seniors in her AP Literature classes, with a nostalgic introduction to set the mood: "Long, long ago, before students had PCs and laptops for writing their college essays, in a kingdom right about the same place we are today, a student named Bob faced an ethical conundrum."

Fifteen or 20 years ago — Head can no longer quite remember — Bob had just finished writing his college essay for a prestigious East Coast university. It was handwritten, and Bob gave it to his father's secretary to type before sending it on its way.

Bob did not check the typed version once it was completed, but some time later, he found his handwritten essay among his father's other papers.

"[It had] editing all over it in his dad's penmanship — his father had revised the essay before turning it over to his secretary," Head said.

This discovery left Bob with two choices: He could do nothing, even knowing that the essay was not his own, or he could admit what had happened to the university and risk his chances.

The crux of the matter was that Bob's original essay was by no means perfect.

## Rejected by top choice, Li embraces alternative path

BY LaurenLouie  
& ArmanVaziri

"In the following months, I was quite apathetic towards every rejection or acceptance," said Li.

In the fall of 2013, then-senior Jason Li knew where he wanted to go to college, the University of Pennsylvania.

In particular, the Wharton School of Business had been his holy grail, and he was so convinced that he would get in that he didn't plan to apply anywhere else since he hoped the school would admit him Early Decision.

According to Li, the team owed its success in being invited to the White House purely to its willingness to try.

"When my team first heard about the Faire, we decided we may as well apply, not thinking that we would even have a shot," Tung said. "We applied and continued to work on it until we finally got the acceptance letter as honorary makers. It probably didn't hurt that we had attended a couple of Maker Faires in the past and received awards. [But] I believe the important part is that we tried."

Tung and his team flew out the Tuesday before the White House Makers Faire. That night, they prepared for their presentation, scheduled the following morning.

On the day of the Faire, they arrived

October 17, 2014

### FALCON FOCUS: MATTHEW TUNG

## Student attends White House Faire

BY FionaSequeira



Courtesy of MATTHEW TUNG

Sophomore Matthew Tung (right) and his team pose with science guru Bill Nye at the Maker Faire last summer, where they were honored for their interactive game The Grid.

at the White House at dawn and suffered through a long line to clear security.

The checkpoint was quite impressive, complete with badges for everyone as well as intimidating detection dogs," Tung said.

The Grid is a giant interactive platform that is mainly used to run interactive game modes or to power the mobile game Flow.

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

This little gathering was great in that it showed just how much people cared about the Maker movement," Tung said.

Next came the part that everyone was eagerly anticipating: President Obama's address. Obama told them that he fully supports the Maker movement and

wants to encourage the next generation in its building pursuits.

Following the address, Tung and his team were given an exclusive tour of the White House Maker Faire.

"Being at the White House was awesome," Tung said. "The place is immaculate. It was also fun to see so many maker projects inside the White House. All of them were ingenious and very inspiring."

Unfortunately, Tung did not have the chance to meet President Obama personally, even though he was in the adjacent room. However, he did meet Bill Nye.

"We saw him and awkwardly walked up, introduced ourselves and asked for

a picture," Tung said. "It doesn't sound like much, but it was pretty cool to meet such a central figure in education and the science community."

Near the Faire's end, Tung and his team received a ribbon for being "White House Makers." Combined with ribbons received at other Maker Faires, Tung and his team have been awarded a total of 17 ribbons. In 2013, The Grid won six Editor's Choice Awards and four Educator's Choice Awards at the Maker Faire: Bay Area in May and the World Maker Faire in New York in September.

Tung first thought of the idea for The Grid when he and a teammate wanted to bring a project to a Maker Faire.

"At the time, the game Flow was pretty popular at school, so we decided to make a life-size version of it," said sophomore David Dunaway, Tung's teammate from Harker.

The first step in Tung's two-year long project was to model the idea on a computer software program called SketchUp. Tung and Dunaway decided it would be best if it had a grid-like structure that consisted of tiles that were interchangeable. Next, they started cutting out pieces of the tiles on the Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machine.

At the culmination of the White House Makers Faire, Tung reflected on one of the main lessons that developing The Grid has imparted, the importance of simply trying.

"Even if you think you won't succeed, the chance that you might is still worth the risk and effort," he said. "I've learned that you can make anything you dream of and more. I'm pretty sure that none of us thought that The Grid would be what it is today, but anything is possible as long as you work at it." ♦

CHEER

## Team gears up for first competition

BY SummerSmith

Despite difficulties finding a coach both this season and last season, the cheer team has continued to prepare for competitions and successfully organized the annual Peewee cheer camp.

The cheerleaders started getting ready for the competition season on Sunday, Sept. 28, by spending eight hours learning their competition routine, which was choreographed and taught by the UC Berkeley cheer coach.

"The choreography was really good and different than what we are used to," said senior Jessica Uong. "The best part of the day was the feeling at the end when I realized that we have our routine completed and that all we have to do now is continue to practice it."

After not having a competition team last year, the girls cannot wait to get back into the rhythm of competition.

The team consists of 20 girls who are looking forward to focusing on competitions.

"I love being on stage and working with my team to throw girls in the air," said freshman Camilla Taysi. "I love seeing the final product. Being able to go on stage and perform together is going to be amazing."

In addition to preparing for their competition season, the cheer team also held a successful Peewee cheer camp.

The Peewee cheer camp is a yearly event that the team puts on for children in the community ages 3-11 who are interested in learning how to cheer.

This year, the peewee camp had 20 participants.

The cheer team practiced with the participants three times during the week of Oct. 13 to prepare a performance and cheers for the football game tonight, Oct. 17.

"The kids benefit a lot from Peewee because it introduces them to cheerleading early on so [that] they don't get a stereotypical view about it, and they might even want to do it in high school," said senior Megan Marshall. ♦

### EVENTS

## Class of '84 high school reunion rekindles relationships

BY GitikaNalwa  
& KellyXiao

at the Hotel Valencia in San Jose and lasted for around eight hours.

Some were even able to rekindle former group relations with their classmates from school organizations. For instance,

the reunion organizers arranged for Roberts and his former bandmates to perform once more at the reunion.

"Interestingly, the exact line-up of the band that played at the reunion never played together as a band in high school," Roberts said. "While many of us played in bands, and a few together, we decided to form our own band for the specific school. If you love what you do, colleges will see. Those who appreciate what you do will accept you. And those are the institutions you should attend." ♦

veals yet a set of insider jokes for the class of 1984. John Loken, the former SHS student body president, coined the idea based on two factors:

Back in the '80s, many students had phone numbers that were 867-xxxx. In addition, Tommy Tutone's 1982 song "867-5309/Jenny" was a No. 1 hit, especially for SHS students whose phones started with 867.

"It was interesting [to] bump into people we hadn't seen in decades in some cases," alumnus John Roberts said.

The family that had the number 408-867-5309, dialed 867-5309, had to change their phone number once the song became popular due to all the prank calls, Roberts said. "There was no caller ID back in 1984, so prank phone calls were a common occurrence." ♦

Alumnus Ed Goldfarb, who is now a record producer, organized the band's reunion performance.

Robert found that he and his old classmates were able to reconnect.

"To quote organizer Christy Dwyer Rector," Robert said, "the band took away the anxiety and nerves that many people were feeling and brought an upbeat, joyful mood to the party. As the band played on, people loosened up, and many joined in the dancing."

The novelty of seeing old friends after so long a gap led to a fun night.

"It was interesting on Friday, as many of us were checking in, to bump into people we hadn't seen in decades in some cases," Robert said. "Literally anyone on the elevator could have been an unrecognized classmate."

Indeed, the classmates of 1984 found themselves still socializing at 2 a.m., celebrating in a manner that was not unlike their camaraderie from three decades earlier. ♦

SPEAKER

# Astronaut delivers powerful message

BY Caitlin Ju  
& Bruce Lou

Veteran of two space flights, two-time fixer of the Hubble Space Telescope, the first person to ever tweet from space, a cast member who plays himself on the CBS hit comedy "The Big Bang Theory" — these accomplishments all belong to one man, current Columbia Mechanical Engineering professor Dr. Michael Massimino.

Students were given the opportunity to meet and learn from this Renaissance man on Sept. 26 in the library research center.

Since the McAfee Center was not available at the time, the presentation was initially open to only physics students due to the smaller room space, but later allowed all who were interested to attend in order to encourage attendance.

Consisting of a brief introduction from Columbia Dean of Admissions Jessica Marinaccio, followed by Massimino's personal narrative, the presentation aimed to inspire students to consider the science,

technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects by demonstrating the numerous possibilities of those fields.

The presentation garnered a significant amount of interest — so much so that the entire research center was packed with people, and some people had to stand in the back.

"All you guys are staying after school on a Friday for this?" Massimino joked.

According to Marinaccio, Massimino decided to visit Saratoga in part because of its Principles of Engineering program.

"We were looking for really smart people [to visit]," Marinaccio said. "We've identified a lot of applicants in the Bay Area in Saratoga. We saw some of the design projects in [Principles of Engineering] and saw the creativity that manifests itself in high school and college."

In his presentation, Massimino shared videos of his take off into space and his crew experiencing zero gravity, as well as a slideshow of various photographs from his life both in and out of space.

During the presentation, Massimino told students that perseverance through challenges can lead to great rewards.

He himself had tried four times to get into the NASA space program and succeeded only on the fifth time.

Although the presentation was focused on STEM subjects, Massimino did not restrict his talk to those fields.

He advised students to think about what they like, whether it be math, science, English, music or sports.

"Look at what you're interested in and then those are the things you want to study," Massimino said. "Take it one step at a time, think about what you enjoyed in high school, keep your faith up, keep a positive attitude."

Senior Smita Sabada was surprised by Massimino's personality, which was humorous and intriguing.

"I pictured him to be a stereotypical nerd who would have a boring talk on how smart he is," Sabada said, "but he was really funny and resonated well with the audience."

Reasons for attending the session varied. Sophomore Ruchir Mehta said he attended because he was intrigued by Massimino's background.

"I went because he is an astronaut and he's been in space, which I find very fascinating," Mehta said.

Sophomore Simrun Buttar said Massimino's success



TALISMAN // NAVEED RIAZAT

**Veteran astronaut Michael Massimino speaks to students on Sept. 26.**

sparked her interest in meeting him.

Massimino's presentation was effective in delivering the message across of never giving up on one's dreams, she said.

"It really inspired people because it showed you don't need to know what you want to do right now. And [that] you can find out what you want to do as you go along," Buttar said. ♦

CLUB DAY

## Food gains sign-ups, but will new members stay?

BY Cassandra King, Michelle Leung  
& Amelia Schwabe

Courtesy of EUNJU PAK

Eager students surround the Interact table during Club Day on Sept. 26

"We had jello cups and cupcakes, which definitely captured people's eye," said Foster. Freshman Ian Kim went to Club Day "half for the food."

"Only the people who truly

have passion for those clubs will attend their meetings," Stratakos said.

Using food as an incentive provides incorrect information about the popularity of a club, freshman Ayush Aggarwal said.

"A lot of the time, food at the booths are the only reason people sign up," said Aggarwal. "[They] don't really join because they like the club, although that only applies to very few clubs."

Ling said food adds to the whole atmosphere of Club Day, although it may be a somewhat inaccurate measure of the success of a particular club.

"Clubs just need to remember that food is not the key to having a successful club — there is a lot of other work and effort required," Ling said. ♦

JOURNALISM

## Reporters gain new experiences at J-Day conference

BY Gitika Nalwa  
& Oksana Trifonova

J-Day, a journalism conference sponsored by the Journalism Education Association of Northern California, was held on Sept. 27 at Palo Alto High School's new Media Arts Center. Journalism advisor Mike Tyler and three members of the Falcon staff attended.

The Media Arts Center, which opened this year and cost nearly \$8 million, is two stories with multiple classrooms, has a central atrium and houses the school's journalism, graphic design, photography and video production programs. In addition to classrooms, the 23,250 square-foot center boasts a cafe/ lounge area, a traditional dark room and a portrait studio.

The three Falcon student journalists

who went to the conference were juniors Gitika Nalwa and Oksana Trifonova and senior Trung Vandinh. The event offered three 45-minute sessions, each of which had courses for both student journalists and advisors and a two-hour-long interactive extension activity that allowed student journalists to practice reporting in an "iPhone reporting activity."

Around six courses were offered in each session. Each course covered a specific topic, and topics ranged from "Editorials with impact" to "10 tips for shooting a great video." The association also offered courses for advisers, such as "Adviser survival! Roundtable discussion on scholastic journalism law, ethics and school politics."

Other courses focused less on the writing and more on the details such as selling advertisements. The conference

even presented a small Palo Alto High club that started its own school-wide radio, bringing back the medium along with its old-time novelty.

Courses were taught primarily by journalism advisors and veteran student journalists, such as Jack Brook, the editor-in-chief of Palo Alto High School's magazine, Verde.

"Part of the beauty of being at the Palo Alto Weekly and having such a small staff is that I have gotten to cover so many different topics," Kadvany said. "I have learned about so many different things."

Kadvany also discussed how the in-

troductory journalism course she took "on a whim" in college completely "changed her path." Kadvany then offered advice to students and emphasized the importance of exploring new subjects.

"College is a wonderful place to take a class because you feel like it," Kadvany said. "You might not know what you want to do."

Vandinh, who attended Kadvany's presentation in addition to sessions on photography, website management and sports coverage, found J-Day to be worthwhile.

"[The sessions] were filled with a large variety of classes, ranging from how to better conduct a journalism class to starting up a magazine," Vandinh said. "It was a very educational experience." ♦

# Colleges ask too much of applicants

BY Arman Vaziri

AP class offered.

In fact, so much time is spent doing everything that everyone else does that students lose their individuality in the process.

It is hard to stand out among the waves of students applying to top universities, but students should be able to be accepted without having straight A's and participating in 10 extracurricular activities. It is better for students to excel at what they enjoy doing — at least they'll have an engaging, fun high school experience.

The work required to stand out and impress admissions officers at top schools is not truly worth it, because one could easily receive a similar quality of education from a lower ranked college that has equally strong programs.

Most people don't realize this reality and instead, force themselves work harder to get into a well-known school that would not benefit them academically or socially.

College essays are a way for schools to understand a student's life experiences and reactions to events. However, many students find their own background too indistinctive and instead fabricate a heroic journey out of mundane events.

Most students aren't superheroes. People will never be Superman and should not fake being Superman; simultaneously, colleges should not expect perfect superhero-like beings to apply to their schools.

Having to write 20 personal essays is bearable because the stories are true; however, having to write 20 essays

about a fake persona really means that you shouldn't even be applying to those schools.

Students should not spend their time applying to institutions if their applications are just a work of fiction.

College admission offices should provide essay prompts that speak to the creative sides of its applicants and should make more of an effort to get a genuine impression and more thorough understanding of its applicants and future students.

After all, while few of us will ever save the world, at least we can all succeed at the college level by being ourselves. ♦

&gt;&gt; candidcaricatures



KELLY XIAO

Thank you for your application for admission to Virginia Tech. Members of the Admissions Committee have carefully reviewed your application and we regret that the university cannot offer you a place in the 2015 freshman class. This decision is not a dismissal of your academic ability or promise, but a reflection of the keen competition among the applicants for the limited number of freshman slots. In reviewing your application, we considered the strength of your academic record, your standardized test scores, as well as other factors. The application process for the Class of 2019 has been the most competitive ever. More than 15,000 applicants competed for 5,300 freshman seats. Since you have a strong desire to attend Virginia Tech, you may wish to consider applying as a transfer student after you have successfully completed one or more years at a community college or other accredited college or university. About one-fifth of Tech graduates first entered the university as transfer students. The university

## COLLEGE WOES

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: ADJUSTING TO COLLEGE

Dear Editors,

the Top 10 writer and possibly the laziest editor the Saratoga Falcon had ever seen (I never said it was a positive identity). But all of that would be gone in college. No more of those activities and extracurriculars.

Hell, I wasn't even sure if people would take me in, because guess what? Not everywhere in America is filled with Asian-Americans. (Gasp!) But seriously, the Asian-American population at Purdue was much smaller than anything at Saratoga High and in places like Indiana, you may see some racism. (Don't get me wrong — the people here are really nice, it's just one or two unfortunate encounters I've had.) That would probably only be worsened by the fact that Purdue has one of the highest populations of international students from China. So basically, I felt I was going to have a hard time fitting in with the Indiana natives (which primarily as a demographic are white) or the guys straight from China. I was a filthy halfbreed.

Well, guess what? That happened to me. Yup, I didn't get into any of the colleges I really wanted to. Instead, I ended up in the middle of bloody nowhere at a college called Purdue University in Indiana. At the time, I was hesitant about attending. After all, I wasn't ready for the weather (I mean, I'm from California. I don't even KNOW what winter clothes are). I certainly wasn't ready for going to a place filled with cornfields and not much else to do.

Most importantly, I was worried about finding my place there. I would have to find friends and figure out where I belonged in that university.

At Saratoga High I at least knew my identity there. I was the guy who looked like an Asian nerd and struggled with grades still, the debate member who never actually showed up to practice. But here's the thing I learned. Ul-

ences in college. It's the best time to try something and fail at it. It's all one steep learning curve.

As for classes? Well, after hyper competitive Saratoga, you might feel blessed to not attend an Ivy or similarly prestigious college.

You can kick back and relax and watch your friends suffer, cause even if you're not the best in Toga, guess what? Silicon Valley is filled with the best. And as a Saratoga student, you're already above average. I'm glad I managed to endure Mr. Yim's difficult math classes, now I'm cruising through college math. For now.

Classes will give you more chances to meet up with people from various backgrounds and studying together is always beneficial. Unless you have a 7:30 a.m. class like me. Then your only interaction with anyone will be when the pretty girl next to you asks you to stop sleeping on her shoulder. Oops.

I came in hating my college. And I am sure that lots of the seniors this year will feel the same way. But it's OK if you don't get into an Ivy League or your dream college and instead, end up in the middle of a huge cornfield. In fact, you might even find you like the cowboy-hats-and-boots look. Just don't take a class at 7:30 a.m. ♦

—Nelson Wang, SHS class of 2014

October 17, 2014

THIRDPERIOD  
STAFFPOLICY

The Saratoga Falcon is published six times per semester by the Advanced Journalism classes of Saratoga High School, 20300 Herriman Ave., Saratoga, CA 95070. Views expressed in *The Saratoga Falcon* are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the administration, faculty or school district.

## MISSIONSTATEMENT

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

## LETTERS THE EDITOR

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

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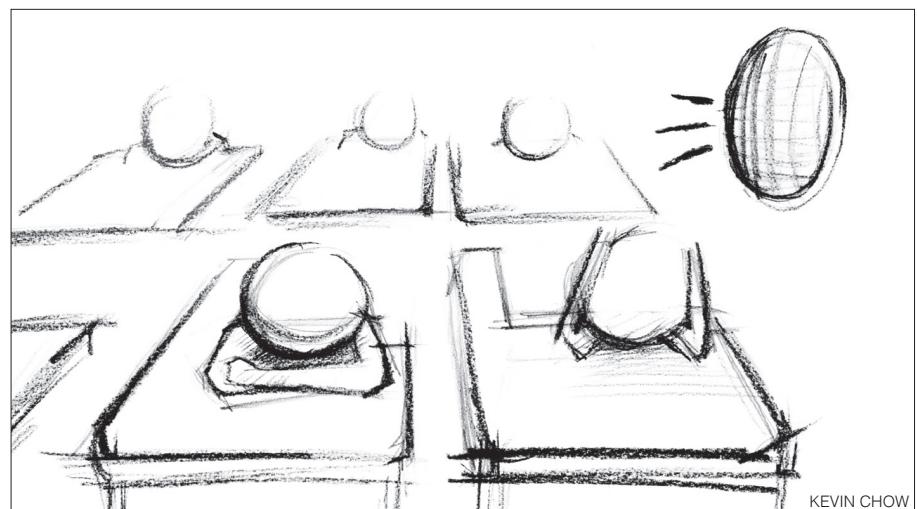
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## Daily announcements ineffective

## &gt;&gt; candidcaricatures



KEVIN CHOW

Each school day, second-, third- or fifth-period teachers set aside five minutes at the beginning of their class period to listen to the school's announcements. Meanwhile, students take the time during announcements to socialize, cram for their pop-quiz or finish homework. With virtually no one actually paying attention, announcements are becoming completely ineffective and are often a waste of time.

This is not to say that announcements are unimportant. It's just that the delivery could use some work. Students only pay attention to the SHSTV broadcasts on Fridays; on other days, they just chat like it's part of break.

Visuals mixed with audio are much more appealing than audio alone. Even live broadcasts of reporters reading the announcements would be twice as effective as the current audio-only format, because visuals are much more engaging than students monotone reading the announcements over speakers.

It is everyone's responsibility — teachers and students — to allow others to listen. Teachers should have a no-talking policy during the announcements; if they were talking to the class, they would demand their students to be quiet and listen.

While students are to blame for part of the problem, the announcements

themselves are flawed. Although there are some important reminders, certain events or reminders don't have to be repeated every day.

For example, students understand that others still need to pick up their school photos, but may have already received their own. Therefore, a good number of students do not want or need to hear the same announcement daily.

This kind of needless repetition adds to students' tendency to tune out.

Instead, it would be best to repeat

announcements only once or twice a week. Announcements need to be new and fresh or else they lose their value and become as meaningless as a giant "blah," "blah," "blah."

Announcements have become a time for students to socialize, which is unfair to the students who actually want to listen to them as well as those giving them. If students actually listened, announcements would be more effective; likewise, if the announcements did not repeat unimportant information every day, maybe more students would be willing to listen.

It's time for the ASB, teachers and administrators to take a serious look at announcements. With just a few simple reforms like switching to video announcements and cutting redundant reminders, announcements will become more effective. ♦

## &gt;&gt; Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

Editors-in-chief  
Megana Iyer  
Amy Lin

Opinion Editor  
Bruce Lou

Reporter  
Miles Albert

The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 38-0 in support of the editorial.



## Negotiations with terrorists should be considered

BY MayaPrasad  
& SayaSivaram

We don't negotiate with terrorists.

Although the U.S. has repeated this mantra for years when dealing with hostage situations, the policy's effectiveness has come into question recently.

American officials have had much experience giving trades and bribes to save civilian lives, yet they refuse to change their one cemented policy: They do not negotiate with terrorists.

In 2014, the U.S. has had to deal with terrorists a number of times, the most high profile cases being once with Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl in Afghanistan and now with the two journalists who were captured by the Islamic State. The government's approach was radically different for each case.

Whereas the government managed to negotiate to save Bergdahl's life by releasing several prisoners from Guantanamo Bay, they were not able nor willing to negotiate for the release of the journalists, resulting in their gruesome beheadings, which were made public on YouTube.

So, the question must be posed: Should the United States change its hardfast policy?

There is no obvious answer. One thing seems rational, though: It's smart to keep negotiations as an option, so when faced with a difficult situation, the government has plenty of paths to explore.

It is true that negotiating can give the impression that the United States is weak, but in fact, leaving the option open eliminates some of the desperation of a situation, allowing for the government to avoid making rash decisions because they are under pressure.

In the last month, there have been two beheadings, which is more than acceptable. Sadly, these deaths were avoidable.

Granted, the U.S. government should be applauded for putting forward a prin-

cipled stance, but with its long history of negotiating with repressive regimes, this message is tarnished with hypocrisy. Instances of negotiations have spanned the decades, going from the Iran-Contra affair during the Reagan presidency to the cases of Mike Rogers and Peter Moore during George W. Bush's time.

Despite America's unmovable outlook, a major reason terrorists keep coming back with offers of negotiations is that there have been so many occurrences where deals and trades have been cut. Why did he not save the lives of two innocent journalists and then enact this? There are some problems that negotia-

tions with terrorist groups could lead to, however. Negotiating for appeasement could easily be done accidentally, and will not benefit the U.S. or its people.

For example, the World War resulted when British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain attempted to appease Hitler. Giving in to such dangerous people gives them power over us, and should not be considered as a solution.

Unlike the U.S., European countries have a policy of negotiating for every single hostage, leading to these ransoms that essentially fund terrorist groups.

This is a problem in the long term. A better funded group can impact its target more thoroughly; in the short term, though, it saves the lives and allows for more flexibility in dealing with such complicated issues.

Of course, going soft on terrorism is not ideal. We suggest that the United States merely keep the option of negotiating open. The United States has assets that Europe does not, namely, our large and powerful armed forces.

The U.S. is actively combating terrorism, so there should be no harm in negotiating, saving the hostage, and then finding a way to defeat the terrorist group in the long run. In President Obama's speech concerning the recent beheadings, he said in clear terms that he would utilize the U.S. army to "degrade and ultimately destroy" ISIL.

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# The top of the cheerleading pyramid?

PROFESSIONAL CHEERLEADERS SHOULD MIMIC THEIR STUDENT COUNTERPARTS

by Deepthi Sampathkumar  
& Saya Sivaram

Cheerleading. The image that comes to mind is a group of highly flexible teenage girls clad in brightly colored uniforms performing stunts that many could only do in a dream.

At the professional level, it's not exactly the same picture.

Cheerleaders like those for the 49ers or Raiders probably have more in common with women who work at a strip club that intends to attract male customers. The key difference is that one serves as a sport, while the other is a form of scandalous entertainment.

The evolution of cheerleading is dramatic and controversial. If the women who cheer at professional football games are supposedly the more professional and intensified versions of high school cheer teams, teenagers are making a huge mistake if they try to emulate them.

In all honesty, the two different levels of cheer are almost total opposites. For one, the intentions for each are very different.

For high school girls, joining the cheer team is an opportunity to be a part of a team and to be an athlete. The type of cheer that is practiced by these girls is

by all means a sport.

For the cheerleaders at the professional level, cheering is an occupation and a primary source of income and, many hope, a launching pad for careers in modeling or acting.

According to Megan McArdle, a writer for Bloomberg News, many cheerleaders also pursue this career for the glamour.

They enjoy the status and the joy of being able to dance in front of thousands of people, and most importantly they take pride in ogling eyes that watch their low-flying routines.

In contrast, high school cheerleaders are part of a community and are not a spectacle appreciated for their looks alone.

They are lauded for raising school spirit and being involved.

High school cheerleaders should not attempt to imitate their professional counterparts. The teenagers should take pride in the conservatism and professionalism that exists on the high school

level.

At the professional level, cheerleaders are forced to stay at a certain weight, to do their hair and makeup in a certain way and to dress provocatively. At a high school level, girls are embraced for

>> candid caricatures



whatever form of beauty they have.

Sadly, many parents and others look down at cheerleading in any form.

Because of this, cheerleading has sometimes had a bad reputation, and its true values can be buried.

If outsiders don't know better, they can miss the cohesiveness of a cheer team, the amount of strength it takes to hoist teammates into pyramids, and the time management skills that come from balancing

schoolwork with rigorous cheer schedules. Cheerleading at the school level is something that is appreciated and respected as a sport.

Along with the new reforms made to NFL in terms of domestic violence, maybe NFL officials should work to also change the objectified status of cheerleaders at the pro level.

Then they would deserve the same respect as high school cheerleaders. ♦

## Vouchers will improve U.S. education system

by Atirath Kosireddy

It sucks things in, and gives nothing back. The victim enters into it, and their chances of escaping are very, very slim.

This is not a black hole, but rather the failing public education system.

According to the libertarian think tank the Cato Institute, the federal government has increased its spending on education by nearly three times per student since 1970 (even when adjusted for inflation), yet test scores have dropped or remained the same.

Impoverished students are often unable to get a quality education since underperforming public schools are the only choice they have.

The current system favors the rich, since wealthy families can afford to pay taxes for public education and still have money left over to send their kids to private schools or can live in areas like Los Gatos and Saratoga where public schools are good.

One solution to this problem is a voucher system.

Vouchers allow parents to use the money that is normally allocated to public schools and use it to pay for private schools, allowing less fortunate students to have a chance at success and forcing public schools to improve.

Some may say that increased funding has kept test scores from plummeting.

However, if the government has to continuously pump money into the current system just to keep it afloat, it is clearly inefficient and an enormous waste of money.

The free market rewards innovation and punishes inefficiency.

The exact opposite is true in the current system. Substandard schools are given more money so they can be

"fixed" while high-performing private schools receive money only from tuition, fees and donations.

Defenders of the current public school system argue that vouchers would take money away from public schools and make them worse, but these schools are bad to begin with because they do not have any incentive to provide competitive service and prices.

The truth is that teacher unions and many public schools keep bad teachers in front of bright, intelligent students and prevent young teachers with new ideas from entering the education market.

Every child has potential that could be unlocked. We must stop trying to use one key to unlock everyone.

So-called advocates of the First Amendment complain that vouchers violate the separation of church and state since most private schools are re-

ligious.

This is irrelevant since the parents are free to send their child to a secular school; it is their choice.

Schools stay profitable based on the demands of parents and students.

If there is a demand for non-religious curriculum, non-religious schools will open up to meet their needs.

One of the fundamental problems right now is schools are run like factories. Private schools are known to provide a more individualized education for each student.

After all, students all have different strengths, weaknesses and ways of learning. Public schooling assumes all students learn the same exact way, and thus gives them a one-size-fits-all education.

Every child has potential that could be unlocked. We must stop trying to use one key to unlock everyone — and vouchers are a good place to start. Every child has potential that could be unlocked. ♦

## Humans aid in environmental healing process

by Becky Hoag

It can be depressing to read the news because humans seem to have an obsession with focusing only on the negatives.

Wars are raging. Innocent people are dying from Ebola. Terrorists are beheading captured journalists. Jellyfish are even taking over the oceans, destroying the marine ecosystems!

But this way of thinking can lead to people giving up entirely, convinced that there is nothing they can do that will change the current situation of our planet.

The truth is, good things really do happen, and it is important that we embrace them as a source of hope. The past few months, for example, have proven that we can change our bad habits and that environmental damage thought to be irreversible can be healed.

actually shrinking. This news is monumental since scientists thought it would take hundreds of years for the damage to even come close to recovering.

The ozone layer protects us from the sun's ultraviolet radiation, which leads to skin cancer and dramatic changes in the world's food supply.

This particularly big hole was caused by chemicals called chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) that were used in the 1970s by refrigerators and air conditioning systems. Considering how many countries used air conditioning, a huge number of CFCs were released.

Luckily scientists around the world

caught the problem in time, and in the 1987 Montreal Protocol, the world agreed to phase out CFCs. Since then, the hole has been decreasing in size at a rate that suggests that it will be back to the size it used to be by 2050.

W a i t . . . t h e world agreed on something and it worked? As cliché as it sounds, the Montreal Protocol proves that if everyone works together, we can make a difference. Yes, humans have screwed up royally, but we can fix many problems.

And it is not too late. Encouraged by NASA's discovery, 120 UN countries met on Sept. 23 in New York City to discuss the carbon

emissions.

Demanding that the meeting be as effective as possible, about 400,000 people joined together in New York City for a 4-mile march.

It's good to know that average citizens have realized that global warming is a problem and support doing something about it. And that march was just one out of 2,646 other events that took place around the world. Now that's what I call working together!

So now that we know that the environment can heal itself, and that hundreds of thousands of others are on the right side of history, there's no excuse to sit around doing nothing.

We've always underestimated ourselves. Let's pick up where we are now and do something about our world's current condition. Working together, we can ensure the world will be beautiful for the generations to come. Now that would be a great news story. ♦

## What it's like to be 'the Ayas'

aya-mese twins

Maya Prasad and Saya Sivaram

"Are you guys identical or fraternal?"

No, we're not. We aren't cousins, sisters, twins or even the same person. We have two completely different brains and bodies, but sadly, our differing physical traits seem to go unrecognized by most people.

Driven by the state of confusion that seemed to follow us throughout the past year, we quickly became inseparable. This, of course, did not help matters much.

Now, rather than just the two of us, our entire families are being mixed up. Instead of being Maya Prasad and Saya Sivaram, we've become Saya Prasad and Maya Sivaram. It's all pretty annoying.

To be honest, we're sure that our parents confuse us every now and then when we're together. There have been many times when our parents would give up trying to remember who is who, and just bark a collective "You!" to get our attention.

We'll admit that we don't make things easy. There are some things that make us uncannily similar, such as the fact that we have the same mannerisms and often finish each other's sentences.

In order to cope with the challenge of keeping our names straight, people have resorted to yelling "Aya" in our general direction and seeing which one of

us turns around first. It's become our collective noun.

Even our math teacher last year used "Aya" whenever he wanted one of us to do a problem on the board. It was rather frustrating, since he always gave participation points to the wrong person.

Our conversations are often unintelligible to an outside audience, since we have intense debates about "Star Trek" and "Lord of the Rings" that are almost incomprehensible to an outsider.

But when people do know what we're talking about, they tune us out, as we have a great affinity for bad jokes that only we find funny. And besides our cringe-worthy jokes, the only other humor that we are capable of understanding is sarcasm.

For this reason, most people shy away from having a conversation with both of us at the same time.

While our friends attend parties and hang out on the weekends, we lounge on the reclining sofa in Maya's house watching Netflix. When our classmates boast about their impressive cross country stats, we brag about our half marathons. They consist of watching four out of the eight "Harry Potter" movies.

So after reading this story multiple times, we can start to understand how it's slightly difficult to tell us apart. But still, if we can do it, so can you. ♦

>> togatalks

Who is your celebrity look-alike?

"Everyone thinks I look like Anna Kendrick from 'Pitch Perfect.'"

senior Emily Riccomini

"I've been told that I look like Kevjumba from YouTube."

freshman Kyle Wang

the Van man

Trung Vandinh

It was admittedly nerve-racking.

Despite hours of anticipation the night before and years of unprofessional experience I had gained humming and singing to myself around friends and family, the prospect of opening my mouth in a classroom environment to sing was dreadful.

Upon stepping foot on campus, I was ambushed by a few of my classmates who obviously expected me to meet them with a smile.

I accepted [the challenge] with great enthusiasm, unaware of the difficulties in accomplishing such a feat.

I rarely participated in any musical performances growing up but still have always prided myself on the ability to remain relaxed during awkward situations, so when the challenge to speak only in a sing-song voice for an entire day presented itself, I accepted it with great enthusiasm, blissfully unaware of the possible difficulties in accomplishing such a feat.

friendly greeting. But feeling flustered at my first interaction of the day, I was unable to respond, unsure of how to start. They looked at me with puzzled and worried faces as I choked on my words.

"What song should I sing? Will they make fun of me if I just start singing?"

These were the panicked thoughts that arose in my head, and unable to cope with the stress, I shook my hands, walked away and avoided eye contact.

"I'll think it out first this time," I told myself on the path to my fourth-period class with Gov/Econ teacher Mike Davey.

This time I was able compose myself as I was walking in, properly greeting my classmates with a song and receiving a range of responses, from confusion to laughter. The rest of the day went more smoothly as I overcame my embarrassment and grew comfortable with singing.

Even Mr. Davey ignored me when I responded to questions in song, treating it as a joke and continuing with his lecture. He asked the class, "Who remembers the four pillars of an economic system," and I sang back, "Capital, Entrepreneurship, Land and Labor" to the tune of "Wheels on the Bus," only to receive a short "yeah" in response.

The day went on, uneventfully, other than a few instances when I was questioned about my motives. Still exhausted from having to consider so many things just to converse, I refrained from hanging out with my friends after school and went home immediately. A wave of relief rolled over me as I slipped in my bed to take a nap and hummed to myself. ♦

the Van man

Trung Vandinh

On one hand, I had the choice to easily explain away any questions with an "it's for the newspaper."

The alternative would be to add to my embarrassment by not justifying my actions. So, of course, I went with the latter.

With that decision made, I embarked on an unforgettable journey to sing for a day. You may think I am over dramatizing the situation, but it was an arduous task.

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ASK SARA

Editor's Note: These questions were gathered and were then answered to the best of "Sara Toga's" ability. If you would like to submit questions for upcoming issues, please ask them on ask.fnn/AskSaraToga.

Dear Sara, what are your genuine thoughts on gay marriage, and the issue of gay members on a sports team in the locker room?

To me, marriage signifies the union of two people who are in love. And if two people are in love, they should be able to get married. Whether both of them happen to be of the same gender or not isn't really a part of the definition of marriage.

As for gay people in the locker room, I feel that it shouldn't be a problem.

The locker room is used for one main purpose: changing. I believe the problem is that people think that gay people have more of an incentive to "check someone out," but contrary to the stereotype,

## Sparkly purple candy apples

**Ingredients:**  
 8 apples  
 8 candy apple sticks  
 2 cups of sugar  
 1 cup of light corn syrup  
 1 cup of warm water  
 1/8 teaspoon of Cinnamon Oil or Vanilla extract, edible shimmer dust and food coloring.

Combine the sugar, corn syrup and water in a pan and bring the mixture to a boil, stirring constantly. To check if it's the right temperature, pour in some cold water. If it hardens immediately and easily breaks in half, it's ready. If it sinks to the bottom and is malleable, keep boiling.

Take the pan off the stove, add in the cinnamon oil (or vanilla extract,) red food coloring and blue food coloring.

Dip the apples and set them on a baking sheet lined with wax paper and wait for them to dry. In between dipping, it helps if you have a pot of hot water to suspend the candy mixture in to keep it from hardening.

Brush the edible shimmer dust on the finished apples once they harden.

Enjoy your apples and share them with friends!

-Lauren Louie



FALCON // LAUREN LOUIE

## Litterbox cake

**Ingredients:**  
 1 package of German chocolate cake mix  
 1 package of white cake mix  
 2 packages of instant vanilla pudding mix  
 1 package of vanilla sandwich cookies  
 3 drops of green food coloring  
 ½ package of tootsie rolls

**Other materials:**  
 Clean Kitty Litter Box  
 Kitty Litter Box Liner  
 Clean Pooper Scooper

**Directions:**  
 Prepare both cakes according to package directions.

Prepare pudding according to package directions.

Crumble sandwich cookies into tiny pieces. Separate 1/4 of it apart from the rest and add the green food coloring to that 1/4.

When the cakes have cooled, crumble them together into a large bowl. Mix in 2/3 of the pudding and 1/2 of the non-dyed cookie crumble.

Line clean kitty litter box with kitty litter box plastic liner.

Put the mix into the litter box.

Unwrap tootsie rolls and heat them up in the microwave until soft (about 20 seconds).

Mold tootsie rolls into realistic poop shapes and add them to the kitty litter box in a way that will ensure the most scenic experience possible. (Hiding some under the litter and draping one over the edge of the box is recommended for optimal effect.)

Add remaining cookie crumbles, both dyed and not, to top of cake mix and place in pooper scooper.

Enjoy!

-Becky Hoag



FALCON // BECKY HOAG

AS HALLOWEEN NEARS, STUDENTS RECALL FUNNY AND SPOOKY STORIES FROM HALLOWEENS PAST

## Captain America battles the bushes

BY Maya Prasad

It was a dark, clear night, the streets flooded with children chattering excitedly and clutching empty bags that were waiting to be filled with candy. And that Halloween, during the fall of 2012, current sophomore Julia Vita was dressed as Captain America as she and eight friends strolled down Aloha Avenue in Saratoga, ready to stock up on sugar and sweets.

The girls were expecting the usual haunted houses, morbid costumes, tombstones, the works. But that year, Vita and her friends weren't greeted by these normal frights. Instead, her memory was scarred by boys covered in poky, large, green pieces of

foliage. In other words, boys dressed as bushes. It was getting pretty late into the night and Vita could barely see three feet ahead of her.

Unexpectedly, three boys in a leafy costume jumped out and sprayed silly string all over Vita and her friends.

"My friends and I screamed, while the guys were laughing," Vita said.

Vita, blinded by a sugar and adrenaline rush, could not control her next set of movements aimed at the boys, who were challenging her heroic costume.

"I chased the boys down the street, while using my strength to attack them with my candy-filled pillow case," Vita said.

The candy within the bag shattered and crumbled with

every thwack. As soon as one boy turned around to face Vita, she smacked him so hard that blood began to drip from his nose.

"I stopped after 5 minutes when I got tired of running," Vita said. "On top of that, I even think a parent was staring at me."

The boys scampered off and Vita returned to her friends as the true Captain America of Halloween, who sacrificed the life of her own candy in order to punish the boys. But after looking back at her Halloween memory, Vita recalled her actions with a hint of regret.

"I feel bad now because I actually hurt him and it was during Halloween," Vita said. "But it still was really funny at the same time." ♦

# NIGHTMARE ON HERRIMAN AVE.

## Mythical Queen of Spades deals her card

blonde power

Oksana Trifonova

an ace, which turns out to be a Queen of Spades. Suddenly, the queen turns into the countess and winks at him.

Hermann goes insane and is committed to an asylum, where all he can say is "Three, seven, ace; three, seven, queen of spades."

Many people in Russia summon the Queen of Spades. My grandmother used to tell it to me on cold winter nights, and every time, the creeping chill from the story dimmed the warmth of the crackling fireplace. And afterwards, card-playing held a certain eerie charm for me.

On a night nearing Halloween about two years ago, I was home alone and found myself extremely bored. Listening to the wind howling outside and raindrops drumming on the windows, I remembered the legend of the Queen of Spades. Even though I didn't believe in grandmother's tall tales, there was something unsettling about the idea.

Yet the desire for excitement was stronger than reason. I found a mirror and rubbed it with soap, which is supposed to prevent the countess from exiting the mirror. Then I drew stairs on the mirror with a black marker and put a dot at the top.

At midnight, I lit a candle and put a queen of spades cards in front of the mirror, so that the reflection flickered in the

shadows. According to the legend, the dot is supposed to start moving downwards, and when it reaches the bottom, the Queen of Spades appears.

Sitting in front of the mirror I recited the incantation three times. Holding my breath, I stared hard at the glassy surface.

Just as I was starting to feel stupid for believing old legends, the candle flame sputtered out.

The room went pitch black. I tried turning the lights on but they didn't work: probably because of the storm. A chill crept down my spine. After finding

**N**aturally, I have resorted to thinking about a rational explanation for this occurrence ... I am not willing to try it again.

a flashlight and directing it toward the mirror, to my horror I noticed that the dot had moved a bit, which I tried to convince myself was because of the marker smearing. A second later, something moved and

the shadows started taking the shape of eyes, staring at me, unblinking; a low wail followed.

At least, that's what I thought I saw. My imagination quickly got ahead of me, and I began to convince myself that there was a supernatural spirit in the room with me.

Perhaps it was a game of shadows and the sound of the wind, but I wasn't taking any chances.

Backing toward the door, I threw a blanket at the mirror and sprinted down the stairs into the kitchen. I sat there until morning when I finally became brave enough to come back.

The room looked just as before, but the mirror had split in two; perhaps because of the impact of the blanket knocking it onto the floor.

After a few moments I noticed that something was missing: the Queen of Spades card. It was nowhere to be found.

To this day, I wonder what really happened on that stormy night.

Naturally, I have resorted to thinking about rational explanations for this occurrence; whether it was a trick of shadows or some kind of a specter, I am not willing to try it again.

Three, seven, Queen of Spades. ♦

## Horror movie experience results in emotional catastrophe

kelly jelly bean

Kelly Xiao

would seem less intimidating.

Of course, I was probably asking for it when I walked into "The Conjuring" with no experience with horror movies. By the movie's halfway point, I was cursing the guy who had convinced me to watch it with her.

Despite being someone who had never uttered so much as a peep of fear before — not even on roller coasters tilted at 90-degree angles — I found myself yelling like a hooligan during several scenes.

For the entire movie, I was tense and trembling like a hapless rabbit. Alas, my friend could offer no comfort. She, a toughened horror movie fan, remarked afterwards that "The Conjuring" was "boring."

At one point in the movie, the evil spirit lifts up a girl's hair strands and begins yanking her around the room, smashing her into walls and objects. While my reasonable side noticed that under other circumstances, the scene might look comical, I was too numb by fear that moment to react in a lighthearted manner.

Not so for my friend; she took one look at the hair scene and burst out into gales of contagious laughter. I began laughing too, but paradoxically, I was also half mad with

fear the entire time. Indeed, the minute she stopped laughing, I hushed up and went back to being terrified out of my wits.

By the time the credits rolled, I was a changed teen. Life now seemed permanently clouded by dark forces of evil. (Forces of goodness? Pshaw, there were only devils who mocked the holy trinity ...) Even the

bright lights and the smell of popcorn, my usual cure-alls, failed to relieve me.

That night, I stayed up as late as possible, knowing that sleep would be more elusive than ever. My eldest brother Kevin even gave me a "common sense" talk ("Kelly, use your brain; if you were a ghost, why would you waste time frightening people when you could just kill them from the get-go? Don't be silly!") Nevertheless, his logic failed to calm my fears.

The movie featured several scenes where the spirit yanked the exposed ankles of the sleeping girls, fooling them into even glance at my alarm clock.

"The Conjuring" coincidentally emphasized the "witching hour," or 3:17 am, and I drove myself mad, wondering whether I had woken at the "witching hour." What other reason could there be for this sudden disturbance of rest?

I lay there in terror, certain that my doom was imminent. I calmed down only when I heard a bird chirping outside my window. (My reasoning: Birds don't chirp at 3 a.m., and birds don't appear in horror movies except as having died "mysteriously.") Hence, sure as heliocentrity, I was completely safe.

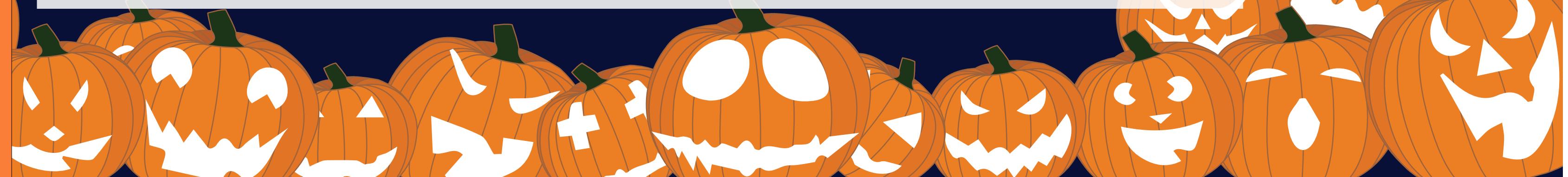
The long-lasting effects of "The Conjuring" far outweighed the pleasure, but after a while, I noticed that my fears had faded somewhat.

No longer checked under the bed in fits of paranoia and I gathered up the courage to sleep with my feet out once more.

It seems that the extreme fright factor of "The Conjuring" has made me immune to milder horror movies and interested in seeing more. Perhaps someday, I will muster up enough courage to watch other classic horror films.

My attitude has changed from unshakable refusal to whole hearted embracement. Bring on the jolting orchestral scores! And the jump scares too, why not?

You see, after a whole year of recovery, I can finally answer the question posed in the movie's basement scene; yes, I wanna play. ♦



October 17, 2014

# Bent on the next generation: the iPhone 6

## DOES BIGGER TRULY MEAN BETTER?

By Dorrie Tang

*"iPhone 6. Bigger than bigger."*

Open the Apple website, and this is the first block of text that fills the screen, accompanied by a large image of the new iPhone 6 and its counterpart, the iPhone 6 plus.

But what exactly does "bigger than bigger" mean? What is Apple saying that its new product is bigger than? It is simply impossible to discern anything from this vague statement. Every time Apple releases a new product, yet another of these meaningless phrases mesmerizes millions of people viewing the page.

Though its past products introduced interesting new features such as the iPhone 5S home button's fingerprint reader, Apple's innovative sense has greatly declined.

To match Samsung and HTC's larger phones with 5-inch-long diagonals, Apple has increased the new iPhone's screen to have a 4.7 inch diagonal — almost an inch longer than the iPhone 5's 4 inch diagonal, while the iPhone 6 Plus has a massive 5.5 in. diagonal. If this trend is continued, the new iPhones will soon become the size of tablets.

Though Apple claims its new products to have a "smooth metal surface that seamlessly meets the new Retina HD display," this is nothing new to the electronic industry.

In fact, Apple is spending too much effort on making its product look sleek and appealing rather than creating more innovative features such as wireless charging. The phone is slimmer than ever before, but many websites have shown them to bend easily (most notoriously, in tight pants pockets).

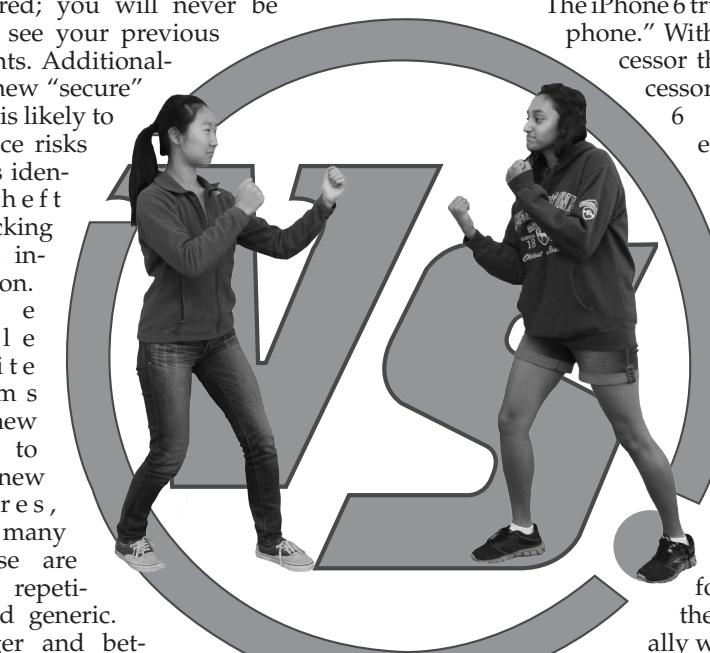
Additionally, Apple's new iOS software introduces Apple Pay — "Your

wallet. Without the wallet." It is a new, contactless way to pay for purchases via mobile device.

The new system saves users from having to scramble through their various cards. Though Apple claims that its new setup keeps card number and identity encrypted from merchants and Apple servers, no transaction details are stored; you will never be able to see your previous payments. Additionally, the new "secure" system is likely to introduce risks of mass identity theft and hacking of card information.

The Apple website claims the new iPhone to have new features, but many of these are simply repetitive and generic. A bigger and better display, a powerful and efficient chip, a better camera, faster wireless and iOS 8 ("the biggest iOS release ever") — do these sound familiar?

Ultimately, the new iPhone is only worth your money if you're looking for a replacement of an old, broken phone. Apple falls short of many of the features of other phone companies, such as Android's widgets, personalized keyboards and customized home screens. ♦



GRAPHIC BY JANE PARK

By Maya Prasad

6, the designers clearly kept people with hands of all sizes in mind. Now, it's easier to send text messages to others without worrying about elongated fingers accidentally pressing something else.

To make it easier to turn off the phone, the power button has been moved to the right side so that people with small hands don't have to reach all the way to the top—a simple yet effective addition.

Contributing to technology worldwide, Apple has come up with a new program called Apple Pay only compatible with the iPhone 6. This new feature is a salvation for those who are victims of identity theft.

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The best advice is that if the screen is too big to manage, the phone lets the home page scroll down so that it's easy to reach with just two light taps. These added features should pacify the complaints of those who dislike the iPhone 6.

With its numerous benefits, the new iPhone 6 is a technological heaven. Starting at \$199, the iPhone 6 isn't cheap, but millions have already bought it and started to become awestruck and addicted to its splendor. Once again, Apple has successfully impressed me. ♦

## THINNER, TALLER AND GREATER

By Maya Prasad

Whenever a new iPhone comes out, seemingly everyone in the modern world wants to own one. The iPhone 6 does not disappoint, and it is rumored that people have heard angels sing when they pulled the device out of the box for the first time.

The iPhone 6 truly is a "smart phone." With a faster processor than its predecessors, the iPhone 6 downloads every app quickly and efficiently. Even surfing the Internet is faster.

On top of this, owners were pleasantly surprised when they found out that the camera actually works. In previous versions of the phone, many struggled with taking pictures because the camera either took too long to load or photos turned out blurry or grainy.

The iPhone 6 has high resolution and takes pictures in great detail and vibrancy. It even has added features such as time-lapse to vary the kinds of videos users can take.

Even though there have been concerns about the large size of the iPhone

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October 17, 2014

# Can you talk like Miranda Sings for a day?


**amulyan  
bucks**

Amulya Vadlakonda

Miranda Sings, a satirical YouTube character played by singer Colleen Ballinger, is incredibly hard to emulate. Originally aiming to mock singers on the Internet who have no talent at all, Ballinger developed an entire way of thinking, speaking, acting and dancing for Miranda, and avid fans easily spot her strange quirks.

When I accepted the challenge to speak like Miranda for a day, I was so sure that it would be easy — both of us are sarcastic, egoistic and fabulous. I'm just missing the unmistakably bright red lipstick and her vibrato skills.

But the outcome couldn't have been further from my prediction.

Miranda wears old, baggy button down shirts and sweats. Her hair is pinned all the way back, so as to make her forehead seem as big as possible.

But her most recognizable feature is the bright red lipstick that is smeared past the lines of her lips.

But rather than try to look as absurd — sorry, as fabulous — as Miranda, I tried to mimic her personality. She is blissfully unaware of how terrible her voice sounds, believes she is good at everything and refuses to hear anything different.

Much to the confusion of my friends, I continuously rambled on about how fantastic I was, and I tried to give "vocal lessons" to whoever was around, whether they would listen or not.

Miranda exaggerates all her words,

opening her mouth wide for some syllables, while mumbling others. In a nasal pitch, she "accidentally" mispronounces her words, saying "Susscribe" for subscribe and "quetchion" for question — which earned me several concerned looks when I tried to mimic her affection.

When she sings, she opens her mouth as wide as she can to hit the high notes, and then indistinctly murmurs the low-pitched parts, paying absolutely no mind to key or rhythm.

I was only able to say a couple of Mi-

randa's signature phrases ("Squishy," "That's easy," and "Hey guys, it's me Amulya!"). Carrying on entire conversations in Miranda-speak was nearly impossible for me because I sounded so ridiculous that I didn't know if I actually sounded like Miranda.

But keeping up the act completely slipped my mind once I got to my sixth-period P.E. class. Caught up in an enthralling game of ultimate frisbee and all the five warmups that came with it, it was too hard to concentrate on both talking like Miranda and not tripping over my feet. I fell out of character, and failed my challenge in the last period of the day.

So close.

While my attempt was admirable, I am ashamed to report to my fellow Mirandas that sadly no, I cannot talk like Miranda a Sing for an entire day. ♦



GRAPHIC BY ROTEM SHAKED

## New Smash Club relieves stress for students

By Arjun Ramanathan  
& Rotem Shaked

A new club, the "Smash Club," established by junior Naved Krishnamurthy serves to prove the popularity associated with the game among high schoolers by allowing them a time to practice their skills in the game against real people, as well as opening up an avenue for the community service that the global Smash community has become known for.

Within the competitive Smash scene, many tournaments have held fundraisers in support of a charity called "Child's Play" that provides video games to hospitalized children, and the Smash Club hopes to do the same.

During Club Day, Smash Club had around 80 sign-ups, demonstrating its success. The club aspires to give students a sweet release from the harsh workload with a popular form of entertainment, and is even in talks about having a tournament with Los Gatos

High School, who has also recently established their own Smash Club.

Krishnamurthy, a co-president of the new club, is an avid fan of the Super Smash series and is excited about the new games.

"The game is just awesome because of how fast and competitive it can get," Krishnamurthy said. "There are no limits of play, and Smash has the dual capability of a competitive game and a game to just have fun playing with friends." ♦



## ELECTRONIC ARTS (EA) SPORTS PROMOTES MANY NEW FEATURES

By Anant Rajeev

The world has yet again been taken aback by the widely popular and highly addictive FIFA 15, the latest of Electronic Arts (EA) Sports' annual FIFA video games, released on Sept. 23.

FIFA is a soccer-based video game, which allows players to compete online against people from all over the world.

The FIFA franchise, now in its 22nd year, has millions of fans.

From the addition of new players and new leagues to the improvement in the actual in-game player physics, FIFA 15 creates a new atmosphere of athletic reality.

This allows it to surpass any other previous FIFA game.

One key shift in FIFA 15 is the defensive mentality of the players in the game. In several of their previous FIFA games, EA has allowed easy access to effective player defense with the pressing of just one button on the controller.

In the new game, however, EA has disabled that feature and now requires players to tactically defend and mindfully control their on-screen players to win the ball back, outlining the company's desire to offer a more realistic and dynamic representation of the sport.

FIFA 15 also boasts the addition of a

new foundation for FIFA Ultimate Team, a game mode allowing players to build their own team, manage a franchise and gain money to purchase new in-game players and new "packs," groups of unknown footballers that the player must purchase based on their rating.

Additionally, in the actual game play, all 20 stadiums of the teams in England's Barclays Premier League will be featured for the first time.

The game will also include its fair share of less popular stadiums such as Amsterdam Arena, home of Ajax FC in the Netherlands and the Netherlands national team, and BC Place in Vancouver, British Columbia, home of Major League Soccer's Vancouver Whitecaps.

EA has been subject to a lot of criticism by people all over the world who are confused about their yearly FIFA games and what the difference in each game actually is.

To some people, FIFA 15 may be considered "just another video game," but with EA's determination to improve the game, it becomes a haven for friendly competition and an example of the possibilities of virtual reality.

As a longtime owner of the FIFA games, I am ready to make FIFA 15 the last, and I couldn't be more excited to end my career with it. ♦



## NINTENDO IMPRESSES WITH LONG AWAITED FOURTH INSTALLMENT

By Arjun Ramanathan  
& Rotem Shaked

After a seven-year hiatus, the long awaited fourth installment to the Super Smash Bros. series is being released on two consoles: the Nintendo 3DS and the Nintendo Wii U.

It's been a while since Nintendo, the successful Japanese gaming giant, has released an installment of the popular Super Smash Bros. Franchise.

Emerging in 1999, the first game, simply titled Super Smash Brothers, was an instant hit in Japan, prompting Nintendo to release copies of the game in English.

Since then, the game has become incredibly popular and had two more games released on the Nintendo Gamecube and Nintendo Wii, titled Super Smash Brothers Melee and Super Smash Brothers Brawl.

The premise of the game is a cartoon style fighting game showcasing different characters from many different Nintendo series and franchises.

The list includes Mario, Samus from the Metroid series, Link from the Legend of Zelda series and Pikachu from the Pokemon series.

Dedicated players will be judging for themselves this month and testing out the new games that are sure to make a lasting impression on the Smash community as a whole. ♦

the new games are simply titled Super Smash Bros. for Wii U / 3DS.

The games' developers have released footage showcasing the new characters of the game that were not featured in previous installments, such as Mega Man, Pac-Man and a villager from the Animal Crossing series.

In addition to the new characters, new stages from popular handheld games will appear in the 3DS version.

Similarly famous and recognizable stages from console games will also be appearing in the Wii U version.

Some players complain that nothing really revolutionary has been done on this front, while on the other hand others consider the new iteration just another take on the already near-perfect formula.

The Nintendo 3DS version of the game was released on Sept. 13 in Japan, just a few weeks before its American release date of Oct. 3.

The game has already garnered several positive reviews, scoring nine out of 10 on a website called Computers and Video Games.

Unlike their predecessors, which had a name like "brawl" or "melee,"

October 17, 2014

# 'Boyhood' brings back 12 years of childhood

BY JENNY QIAN  
& ELLEN WU

A young boy with calm eyes stares up at the sky while he sits by himself in the back of a rather wooden, old-fashioned house. While watching the other neighborhood children wrestle in the mud, he overhears his parents arguing about their marriage. Just hours later, the same boy, now with thickened brows, broad shoulders and a slender jaw is leaving his now stable home environment and heading off to college.

"Boyhood," directed by Richard Linklater, is a coming-of-age film that tells the story of a child named Mason Evans, played by actor Ellar Coltrane, who literally matures in front of the audience's eyes. The film touches upon all sorts of adolescent challenges, including loss, peer pressure and bullying.

But what makes this film different is that the actors filmed segments over

multiple years. The director followed Mason for 12 years. There is no intention in the showing of great action or a climax. The movie simply allows viewers to observe the daily life and maturation of Mason and his family as he grows up.

Throughout his adolescence, Mason experiences real, honest human experiences, such as moving from different schools and even changing families and lifestyles as he grows up. He also watches his mom go through three divorces and questions his sole purpose in life.

Linklater incorporates general problems that most young people face throughout the steps to adulthood in Mason's life. These include peer pressure, bullying and family issues. These songs, which

are mainly alternative and indie rock, are not only appropriate choices for the scenes, but also give a feel for the relationships played out.

Music styles from the last decade remind the audience that the movie was filmed over a long period of time, with hits from the 2000s being played at parties and popping up in random conver-

sation.

The entire soundtrack is suitable to show the development of a child, starting with the song "Summer Noon" by Tweedy, which suggests the innocent and carefree feelings of young children and ending with "Deep Blue" by Arcade Fire, which adds a sense of nostalgia to the film.

Of course, what sets "Boyhood" apart from other films is its unique approach. The process of continuously filming a group of actors for several years is time and money consuming, but the final product is impressive.

Though the movie is highly touching, it lasts for almost three hours and may be too tedious for some to watch all at once. But with its groundbreaking approach, "Boyhood" creates situations younger viewers will easily relate to and brings back memories for the older generations and is well worth seeing in theaters or on DVD. ♦

**There is a sense of understanding and shared emotion between Mason and the audience.**

## Sophomore singer aims to create unique style

BY MAYA PRASAD

When 15-year-old sophomore Esha Krishnamoorthy thinks about her future, she imagines what her life would be like to sing for a living: on the massive stage of Madison Square Garden, the multi-colored lights blaring, the crowd roaring, the microphone held in her hand.

Despite hours of recording, Krishnamoorthy believes that without an official agent, she will not be able to submit her music to major labels. She has been searching for agents by reaching out to record labels throughout Los Angeles, including Hollywood Records, Inc. and The Agency group.

Although extracurriculars and

schoolwork take up much of her time, practicing each instrument for at least 15 minutes a day remains her main priority.

"I make sure to get music in because it relaxes me and releases built-up tension," Krishnamoorthy said. "It's like therapy for me."

Despite hours of recording, Krishnamoorthy believes that without an official agent, she will not be able to submit her music to major labels. She has been searching for agents by reaching out to record labels throughout Los Angeles, including Hollywood Records, Inc. and The Agency group.

In order to land in the big leagues of

the music industry, Krishnamoorthy has also promoted her music via Facebook, Instagram, Soundcloud and YouTube.

Krishnamoorthy also entered a competition through the app, Starmaker, in which she uploaded a cover of the song "Rather Be." People voted for their favorite cover and the winner got a chance to perform in Clean Bandit's concert. However, she came short on votes.

"I was a bit disappointed that I didn't win, but I didn't let it affect me because it's not like this is the only competition," said Krishnamoorthy. "My dad always tells me everything happens for a reason so I just think that there's something better in store for me in the future and that I just have to keep performing and working hard."

Rather than aspiring to be like a particular pop star, Krishnamoorthy works to follow her own instincts and passions and hopes her audience will connect with her style.

With hopes of stardom ahead, Krishnamoorthy says that music is the only career for her.

"I would hate it if I had to spend hours working in a place that I don't even enjoy. Music is the only career I'd love every second of," Krishnamoorthy said. ♦

## 'The Big Bang Theory' loses stellar reputation

BY MEGAN ALYER  
& FIONA SEQUEIRA

Sheldon Cooper hates change. He adheres to a strict hygiene routine every morning, does his laundry every Saturday evening and knocks on every door precisely three times before entering a room. He is a man of structure. And it makes sense: There is no point in changing something that doesn't need to be changed.

There was something endearing about the fact that they were miles away from perfect, but that they did what they loved despite the strict guidelines that society set for them.

Ultimately, that's what it is all about. In its essence, "The Big Bang Theory" is about not conforming. It's about the passion that the gang has for their work. It's about eccentricity and instability.

Throughout the seventh season of the hit sitcom, however, it seemed as if the show's writers were trying to change him. In fact, the entire gang, consisting of Sheldon's roommate, Leonard and their friends Raj and Howard has grown rather one-dimensional and bland.

The past few seasons have revealed major changes for the core characters. Howard and his newly wed Bernadette are now a stable couple and have settled into the humdrum of married life. Penny and Leonard were once a mismatched pair, but their engagement and solidity as a couple have detracted from the spontaneity of their relationship. Even Raj, who was once unable to speak to women without the aid of alcohol, has built a relationship.

As the eighth season goes into full swing, all we can hope is that the hilarious, timeless jokes that once made "The Big Bang Theory" the show it is, as well as the core characters' quirks, will return. These lovable geeks help us remember that although the world is constantly pressuring us to change, it is all right to go against the current, to be unstable and perhaps even a little crazy. ♦

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# Junior comes face-to-face with a lioness

**shaz mattaz**

Shazia Gupta



Squinting past the billowing cloud of dust that obscured my vision, I held my camera up and started clicking away. A lioness was watching her three small cubs roll and play about in the tall grass, not 10 feet away. One of the cubs suddenly paused and glanced up at the 15 Jeeps gathered in a loose circle around them.

I was in Africa.

My family and I were on a two-and-a-half week safari that took us to five national parks around central and southern Kenya.

At the Maasai Mara National Park, The Great Migration, an annual migration of millions of wildebeest and zebra to the Maasai Mara from Tanzania, was in full force. Wildebeests roamed the grounds, forming huge lines that stretched across the plains. Of course, this meant that the predators were out too.

As afternoon approached, we were alerted about a pride of lionesses with cubs not far away, and we immediately sped off in that direction.

Upon arriving, our driver pointed out a pride of 10 lionesses slowly making their way toward us and explained that they would try to bring down one of the wildebeests just across the river. The concentration in their eyes and the tension in their muscles were terrifying.

## >> togatalks

**Where is the nicest place you've been?**



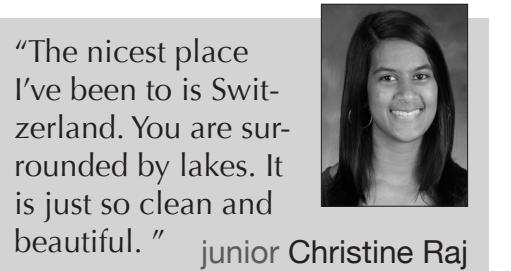
"That's a hard question. There are so many [nice places], but I love Japan!"

senior Supriya Khandekar

"My favorite place was Victoria Island in Canada. It was so quaint and classy."

junior Meera Rachamallu

"The nicest place I've been to is Switzerland. You are surrounded by lakes. It is just so clean and beautiful." junior Christine Raj



# Longtime lunch lady reaches 60,000 sandwich mark

BY Melissa Magner  
& Nupur Maheshwari

Every Monday morning at 8:15, lunch lady Diane Ray arrives at the cafeteria, ready to start the week off fresh.

Ray has a motherly presence, with brown rimmed glasses and a graying bob, and she remains calm and unfurled as she prepares her to-do-list, which consists of cutting meat, bread, tomatoes, onions and other sandwich necessities, pausing during break to put out yogurt cups for hungry students before continuing sandwich preparations.

Ray has made over 60,000 sandwiches for students in the 21 years she has worked at SHS, calculated by multiplying the amount of sandwiches makes per day to the total number of days she has worked.

Currently, she makes 30 sandwiches a day, consisting of 20 paninis and 10 regular sandwiches.

"It can get hectic," Ray said. "The hardest part is making sure I'm on top of keeping up with the demands of students. Overall, however, it's a great job."

Her working life here began in 1993 when Ray, a stay-at-home mom, began looking for work opportunities after her husband lost his job.

Ray originally started out at both Los Gatos and Saratoga High, working for two hours at Los Gatos and then bring-

ing her sandwiches back over to Saratoga to work for another two hours.

She now works Mondays through Fridays for five hours a day, making sandwiches and managing students in lunch lines while checking that the vending machines have been refilled.

After two decades years at the school, Ray has seen many changes in the menu. "In terms of food for the kids, we def-

**Seeing the [students] every day makes me so excited to come in to work.**



lunch lady Diane Ray

initely make way more food now," Ray said. "Not only have we added pizza and breadstick lines, but we also have a soup and salad bar, which we didn't have [before]."

On top of that, Ray said the school itself has gotten much busier.

"There are a lot more students now,"

Ray said. "And that makes lunch time much more hectic, because additional students means more food needs to be made."

"Some of the kids I have gotten to know have come back to visit, and that's always a pleasure for me," Ray said. "A few of them are around 30 years old now, but I still hear from them. It's amazing to be so close to the students."

Other students aren't as kind or well behaved, and she said having to discipline them "is always a drag."

Pam Carlino, Ray's supervisor, ad-

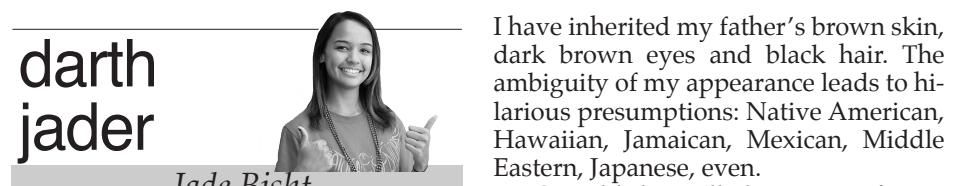


mires Ray and says that she is a great part of the cafeteria staff. "Diane is very creative with her sandwiches," Carlino said. "She brings in different recipes and encourages feedback from the students and staff. She loves to talk with students and teachers, and is wonderful to have around." ♦

# Biracial: half Indian, half white, fully bothered

**darth jader**

Jade Bish



"What are you?"

Without fail, this question has rudely barged its way into every introduction for the entirety of my life. I am a 17-year-old senior. I'm in marching band, play lacrosse, am left-handed, have two cats and an older brother at UC Irvine.

I can't help but wonder if there's an underlying judgment correlating to the question, "What are you?" Why is my ethnic background significant? Does it alter how I'm viewed?

These trivial facts answer the question to some extent, but the questioner is almost always targeting a part of my identity that seems more important to others than all else: my racial background.

I am ambivalent about being half-Indian and half-Caucasian.

My father was born in the northern outskirts of India, and my mother is both German and Finnish. I have many of her features, but

to be my less significant half, borrowing ghagras and dupattas from friends and going to festivals, Dandias and lively, colorful parties. I can pick out random words in Hindi (trust me, this is a significant improvement), and I can "sing" along to popular Indian songs with friends.

Being biracial can be disconcerting. Friends will point out that I'm more this side than that or that my "white side" is showing. Stereotyping and further implications don't ease the struggle to balance two very different cultures.

But the epitome of biracial stress stems from the horrid Scantron scenario.

Never have I ever experienced as

much anxiety and stress as I did sitting in a chair in the McAfee Center last April during the session introducing AP test-

ing. My eyes were fixated on the handout that asked me to bubble which ethnicity I am. I was limited to bubbling one ethnicity and no more.

How do I decide which ethnicity I want to identify with? Which parent do I cancel out?

Honestly, I don't know which side I relate to more. Four years ago, eighth-grade Jade would have definitely chosen

white. But ninth grade whisked me away into Indian Cultural Awareness club's annual show, Bombay in the Bay.

I can't pick between my two races. "What are you?" becomes an ethical and ethnic dilemma of not wanting to be judged by where I come from.

I may be awkward and a little too tall for my liking, but these factors contribute to who I am, just as much as my ethnicity does.

There's more to biracial students than which side they identify with. So please, keep this in mind before asking me what ethnicity I am, or I will most likely convince you that I am Japanese. ♦

GRAPHIC BY KELLY XIAO

by Fiona Sequeira

His long jet black hair, middle-parted and resembling that of Severus Snape, flopped about his face as he sauntered through the halls during passing. Notorious for his Vibram "FiveFingers" footwear and eclectic mind, then-sophomore Cary Xiao felt out of place among the sea of peers rushing around him at Saratoga High.

But that was two years ago.

Now a much happier, more contented senior, Xiao has cut his hair to the scalp and replaced his unique shoes with mainstream plastic flip-flops.

Xiao has found being on a college campus fits his personality better, and he likes the diversity West Valley offers.

To enroll in Middle College, prospective students must complete 110 units by the end of sophomore year at a regular high school with at least a 2.8 GPA and be at least 16. In addition to these prerequisites, an application that includes an essay and two teacher recommendations is required.

The program is considered a privilege, not a right, so it reserves the right



Students pass the West Valley College M.E. Fox Center as they head to their classes.

www.archdaily.com

ness field such as Administrative Management or Business Communication while also completing required high school classes such as Government/Economics. West Valley also offers odder classes such as Film Appreciation or History of Rock and Roll, which also count for credit.

Despite the benefits that Middle College provides, there is still a skewed perception of it within the Saratoga student body. Many consider it an unconventional, somewhat "backwards" route and stereotype it as a refuge for socially inept students who cannot handle the academic rigor of Saratoga.

Xiao said the stigma surrounding Middle College is often due to lack of understanding about what it really is.

"The funny part is, Middle College actually offers students a mechanism for getting ahead."

senior Cary Xiao

The courses, which are unweighted and graded on a 4.0 scale, count for college credit while also fulfilling high school graduation requirements.

According to Xiao, West Valley College offers more advanced courses for a wider array of subjects.

For example, after the equivalent Calculus BC at Saratoga, West Valley offers three additional math courses, including Multivariable Calculus.

While anything offered at Saratoga High is available at West Valley, the latter also has courses for career-specific paths, such as business. A student can take degree-relevant courses in the busi-

ness applications, are required to take the SAT and other standardized tests and still list Saratoga High as their high school on forms.

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Xiao said the stigma surrounding Middle College is often due to lack of understanding about what it really is.

"The funny part is, Middle College actually offers students a mechanism for getting ahead, as they can earn extensive college credits while still in high school," Xiao said.

Students from Middle College are no less successful in their college placements than students at Saratoga High, with acceptances at UC Berkeley and Brown University, to name a few.

Ultimately, Middle College can be a pragmatic path for many students, and Xiao deems it one of the most positive academic decisions he has ever made.

"Since we're all so focused on getting to college," Xiao said, "why not attend an environment that grooms you for it? People here attend Middle College for the college experience as opposed to the high school immaturity." ♦

# The Bubble

*"I complain, but, in the end, I like where I am. I like being surrounded by people who are just as motivated as I am."*

*"Saratoga High is at public school has a culture like a private school, right?"*

## Impact of STEM in school's atmosphere

BY Kevin Chow  
& Saya Sivaram

We've seen the boom of Apple. We've seen Google gain fame and fortune. We've seen Facebook become one of the most successful ventures in the world. As residents of Silicon Valley, we see technology as integral to our lives.

Since this is the case, it is no surprise that the students here feel additional pressure to excel in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Senior Anish Srinivasan acknowledged that this mindset affects student course selection and that this pressure results from the principal industry of the area.

"[As engineers], my parents both are engaged in STEM jobs, so they definitely put a heavy emphasis on the sciences [as opposed to] the humanities," Srinivasan said.

With so many parents making good livings in STEM-related fields, students are surrounded with role models for their future, according to senior Max Chang.

"We have grown up in Saratoga seeing headlines about people like Zuckerberg making it big," Chang said. "And it makes people feel like the only way that they can excel is to go into high tech and to study STEM subjects."

Income is a large influence, and it is not unfounded. A survey, done by the National Center for Education Statistics, of all undergraduate students in the U.S. who graduated in 2008, shows that

students who graduated with STEM degrees averaged an annual income of about \$65,000 four years after graduating, whereas students who majored in anything else, such as English or history, had an average income of \$49,500.

For sophomore Lea Moustakas, societal pressures pushed her to choose the enriched and honors options of her math courses. After signing up for these classes, she realized that they would require hours of intense work and a high level of dedication. While she did remain in the classes, they were exhausting and took time away from her extracurricular activities and other classes.

Another reason students sign up for STEM classes is the pressure to take multiple honors and AP classes.

Advanced English and history courses, such as AP US History and English 11 Honors, start being offered during junior year, whereas students have the option of taking advanced math and science courses, such as Algebra 2 Honors, as early as their freshman year. This early introduction of courses makes students feel pressured to jump into an endless slew of AP/Honors STEM courses as underclassmen.

"Because so many people took Enriched Geometry and Algebra 2 Honors, many students and parents have forgotten

that the humanities and STEM have equal importance.

"We do ourselves a great disservice by ignoring tangible benefits of the humanistic disciplines: history, literature, art, theater, music and languages," he said. "In the humanities we learn how to think creatively and critically, to reason and to ask questions."

Dwyer said acknowledging the importance of patterns in human history and human actions makes contributions just as great as those of the STEM fields. Although many students feel a need to take STEM-dominant classes, assistant principal Brian Safine maintains that the school's course offerings aren't overly focused on STEM. For instance, this year, the school is offering 20 advanced humanities courses as compared to 11 advanced courses in math and science. Furthermore, to graduate, students are required to take only two years of math and science versus four years of English and history.

"Our school offers very strong courses in both the STEM and the humanities fields," Safine said. "We really like to see students exploring their options and trying out all different fields during their academic careers."

While being in the heart of Silicon Valley may create a bias toward STEM, the school has tried to balance the differing interests of its students, he said.

"Education should be individualized and focus on [the student's] strengths," Safine said. "We, as a teaching staff, like to encourage students to take courses that fit their interests and talents."

For Chang, these efforts by the school have changed the way that his school career has progressed and opened his eyes to the various possibilities beyond the focus on STEM.

One of the most influential classes that Chang took was English 11 with Amy Keys. Chang said she helped him try his hand at creative writing and the class discussions were rich with enlightening insights.

"Getting exposure to so many differing topics has led to a much more interesting and intellectually stimulating experience," he said. "I hope to pursue a career that will allow me to blend my interests in STEM and the humanities together." ♦

**These days, fewer and fewer students are choosing low-paying majors like English, and more students are pursuing STEM subjects such as engineering and computer science.**

Even so, many of the students who pursue STEM in college do not finish their degrees or change to other majors, according to US News. In fact, 48 percent of bachelor's degree students who entered the STEM field of study from 2003 to 2009 failed to complete their studies or switched to another, non-STEM major. Many students in advanced STEM classes are unable to keep up with the pace of those classes without outside help. In recent survey of Calculus BC students at SHS, over one-fifth of the students said that they had tutors.

Economics teacher Todd Dwyer said many students and parents have forgotten

that the humanities and STEM have equal importance.

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# Beyond

*"Even my friends lied to me about their summer plans to try and get ahead. I've lost respect for a lot of people."*

*"There is a limit to how much we can do to get into a good college. I think some of us have forgotten that."*

## &

### Notre Dame transfer enjoys school freedom

BY Michelle Leung  
& Trevor Leung

Few visitors would describe Saratoga High School, with its prison-like design and gray lockers, as the most eye-catching campus in the world.

But when senior Claire Strickland first stepped on campus as a freshman shadowing current senior Rachel Hull, she related to the atmosphere, classes and people so well that she decided to transfer from her own high school.

Strickland attended the more restrictive Notre Dame San Jose (NDSJ) during her freshman year before choosing to attend Saratoga High. Aside from the fact that Notre Dame is a private, Catholic, all-girls school and Saratoga High is a public, co-ed school, the two are also vastly different in their class sizes and curriculum, according to Strickland.

Notre Dame has small classes, a tight-knit community and an easily navigable campus, as opposed to Saratoga's much larger community.

Another major difference was that Strickland had to attend religious cours-

es each year at Notre Dame.

"I don't agree or disagree with Catholicism. I simply am not a very religious person," Strickland said. "That made it harder for me to really thrive in the school." She thought it was interesting to learn more about Catholicism, but also said it seemed "unfair that the course was so strictly biased towards Catholicism instead of touching even slightly on other faiths."

Physically, socially and academically, Strickland felt confined at the private school. The Notre Dame campus was closed off by walls and gates. In contrast, despite urban myths about the school being designed like a prison, Saratoga has a spacious campus that doesn't feel confined or closed-off in the slightest, said Strickland. Because Strickland had moved from Los Gatos to Notre Dame solely for the academic rigor, she found it difficult to break into the well-established friend groups at Notre Dame that bonded through similarities like playing on the same sports teams or having

the same religious faith. Worst of all, at Notre Dame, Strickland no longer felt excited about the subject she loved best: English.

"[I] could feel my passion dwindling," Strickland said. "I wanted to be surrounded by people who would motivate me to push my limits, and I finally found that here."

For Strickland, the transfer has paid off. She loves the enthusiasm, support and teachers at Saratoga.

She said she appreciates how her teachers here feel like "real people." She cites one incident in her junior year as a prime example. Strickland knew she wanted to take both AP Literature and AP Language, and not only did her English 11H teacher Amy Keys give her all the paperwork, but she also wholeheartedly supported Strickland's decision to take both classes.

Strickland does find aspects of Notre Dame that she liked better, pointing to a "kickass quidditch team" and "inspiring

language classes."

At Notre Dame, her French 2 teacher gave entire lectures in French about World War 2, never speaking a single English word the whole school year. She also counts Notre Dame's less rigorous physical fitness requirements as a plus. While Notre Dame's requirements involve only "enduring a semester of Zumba, Richard Simmons style," Saratoga's involve an extensive CrossFit program.

"I basically died when I transferred to Saratoga and was introduced to CrossFit," Strickland said. "But at least now I can dangle convincingly from the pull-up bar."

Strickland does not regret the decision to attend Saratoga. Strickland especially finds the school's environment to be unusually positive and well suited to her preferences.

"Saratoga is everything I could have hoped for in a school," Strickland said. "Our faculty is incredibly supportive, inspiring and innovative. Mr. Robinson's weekly emails are the sweetest things on the planet." ♦

### Q&A: how teachers perceive Saratoga High students



**Science teacher  
Janny Cahatal**

Q: WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT CHARACTERIZE SARATOGA HIGH AND ITS STUDENTS?

I'm always amazed at how nice they are to each other; they're nicer than most other students in other high schools. [However,] I think Saratoga students are overcommitted. I am astounded by how involved they are in extracurricular activities, and I think it's costing students sleep, and that is a little worrisome.

What was really striking [when I first came] was how motivated they were academically. Sometimes, students were like, 'We want to have more worksheets,' and I was like, 'Why would you want more worksheets, considering you're overcommitted anyway?'

Q: HOW DO YOUR STUDENTS COMPARE TO THOSE WHEN YOU WERE IN SCHOOL?

When I was in high school, we had no Internet. We only knew our grades when the progress reports or report cards came out; [students here] can monitor their grades any day, any time.

I think when I was in high school, I had time to burn. I did way more reading for pleasure, I watched a lot more TV, I was able to have space and time to actually just think about nothing and daydream. I would not trade that for anything else.



**Math teacher  
Audrey Warmuth**

Q: HOW DO YOUR STUDENTS COMPARE TO THOSE WHEN YOU WERE IN SCHOOL?

I grew up in a "blue collar" neighborhood, [where] a lot of people didn't have college at all. Families were intact, but some people couldn't afford to have a car.

It was a very different upbringing; when you go to a school like that, you're kind of a freak if you care about your grades or want to do something.

I know [some students] feel really stressed out, but the alternative [is having] really no expectations of you.

Q: HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE PRESSURE THAT STUDENTS FACE AT SHS? HOW CAN STUDENTS IMPROVE?

I think a lot of [the stress] is self-imposed, and it's somewhat misplaced in that a lot of students feel like if they don't make it into the handful of "good" colleges, their life is ruined.

One of the great things about living in the United States is that there are a lot of great schools where you actually get an excellent education. It's not just the name of the school, it's the education you get.

I wish kids were more relaxed about knowing that [there are] so many different ways to be happy in life.



**English teacher  
Suzanne Herzman**

Q: WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT CHARACTERIZE SARATOGA HIGH AND ITS STUDENTS?

I think it's dangerous to lump all students together. If I start saying, "Oh well, there are students that are this way and students that are that way," I might shut off an opportunity to teach certain students well. This is my sixth year here and I've met so many different students — not different types of students, but different humans who think differently and learn differently.

Q: HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE PRESSURE THAT STUDENTS FACE AT SHS?

I don't know if the pressure comes from each other or from outside, but many students clearly feel pressure to take difficult classes because it's what you're supposed to do. Here's a place where we have open access to honors classes, [unlike] other schools I've taught in, [where] honors was by exam or application. And I like this, but students feel like they have to take the most rigorous course load or there's something wrong.

I didn't see that as much at previous schools. [Remember], even though high school feels like such a long, long period in life, it's really not. There's a world beyond. Knowing that, we should get better, all of us, at practicing that thinking is something that is good for life, not just for getting into college.

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED BY Dorrie Tang

## >> The Stats

**4** First-place finishes

The cross country team has had four away races and one tri-state meet hosted at Saratoga this season. Senior Steven Sum has placed first at all four of the meets. The team has taken on a new approach this season, as practices and training have changed in general. This season, there has been more weight lifting and longer routes that the runners have had to take, a step up that the team seems to benefit from.

## 13 Wins this season

The girls' volleyball team has won 13 out of their 17 games this season. With the returning veterans, the team is optimistic about its performance so far. "We thought this would be our strongest year in a while, and so far, it is," junior Nicole Chiou said.

## WHO'S HOT

### A power packed team

The girls' tennis team has been nearly undefeated this season, not losing a single game since their tournament at Fresno in September. The team recently performed well at a new annual tournament called the Battle of the Bay, doing well with their matchups. With such performances, the team is hopeful to win CCS. "I think our exceptional individual showing at Battle of the Bay just adds to our confidence for a good chance of winning CCS," assistant coach Jonathan Chui said.

## WHO'S NOT

### A disappointing start

The football team has started their season with a devastating record of 2-3. Despite a 41-35 win to Santa Clara on Oct. 3, the Falcons were shut down with a 49-0 loss to Milpitas on Oct. 10. "We shouldn't be in this division this year," said head coach Tim Lugo. "Our team tends to win games that we're not supposed to and we feel we get punished for playing really hard."

## >> The RANKINGS

- 1 ^ Girls' Volleyball (13-4)
- 2 ^ Girls' Tennis (4-0)
- 3 ^ Field Hockey (4-1)
- 4 ^ Girls' Water Polo (3-3)
- 5 = Football (2-3)
- 6 v Girls' Golf (3-5)
- 7 v Boys' Water Polo (1-4)

## Fantasy football dominates my life

### money maker

Anant Rajeev

added a few players from other teams to strengthen my group.

With stars like running back Marshawn Lynch, quarterback Russell Wilson, wide receiver Percy Harvin, quarterback Colin Kaepernick, wide receiver Anquan Boldin and running back Frank Gore, my team seemed unstoppable at first glance. Game in and game out, these players seemed to be superstars, so I was confident I was able to succeed in my league.

The opening game of the NFL season on Sept. 4 pitted Seattle against the Green Bay Packers. Although I missed the game, I saw the highlights immediately after and was thrilled with the results.

Seattle won 36-16, with players on my fantasy team contributing to the imbalanced score. All I needed was for San Francisco to deploy their 2013 season heroics into their opening game, and I was in the midst of picking what I called a "super team."

Fantasy football allows participants to pick players from different teams to join their online team, and based on the performance of these players in each NFL game, they gain a certain number of points.

I decided to join the SHS Journalism league, comprised of exclusively journalism students, making the entire competition much more enjoyable. Nothing is better than a little friendly competition against some friends, right?

I set out to create my "super team," filled with players from the San Francisco 49ers, and their just-as-talented, bitter rivals, the Seattle Seahawks. I also

ready high score.

I couldn't have been more wrong. Seattle's afternoon match on Sept. 14 against the San Diego Chargers went horribly. Lacking their usual grit and fire-power, they lost 30-21.

Not a good start. But I was counting on the evening matchup between San Francisco and the Chicago Bears in the first official NFL home match at the new 49ers' Levi's Stadium to bring me some points.

To my surprise, San Francisco also lost to Chicago 28-20. In a game with so many ups and downs, the players on my fantasy team underperformed and impacted my score tremendously. I lost 75.92 to 92.38 to senior Robby Gragnola's fantasy team.

These first few weeks have been both exciting and devastating, and because this was my first time participating in fantasy football, I did not know what to expect.

Who knew that there could be such a strong sense of competition, perhaps even larger than that of the NFL, in the world of fantasy sports?

I am hoping my "super team" will lead me to victory, which I will constitute as anything other than last place. As the weeks pass by, there is nothing I'm looking forward to more than seeing the Niners and Seahawks clash and perhaps generate a boatload of fantasy points for me.

I now know why 19 million people all over the world play Fantasy football. ♦

## Star freshmen add depth to varsity

By Caitlin Ju

National Zone Team Championships, a competition in which a select few of the age group's highest ranked players are selected to play on a team representing their section.

This past summer, Carter and Ren were selected to be a part of the Northern California team, providing them with a first-hand experience of being on a national team.

Since they are regular tournament players, the two have added depth to the team with Carter playing No. 4 singles and Ren at No. 2 doubles and often help to secure key matches needed to gain victories over rival league opponents.

"They work well with the team and are not fazed by any pressures," said senior team captain Smita Sabada. "They also have great team chemistry, making them valuable additions."

Before their success came years of dedication and long days of demanding practices. Committing to the school team means additional practices that run Monday through Thursday for over than two hours.

It does not end there. Immediately after her first practice, Carter rushes to the tennis courts at Santa Clara University for an additional two-and-a-half-hour intensive clinic where professional coaches continue to push her limits. On the 20-minute drive to the courts and back, she manages to fit in several pages of homework. Finally, she arrives home at around 8:30 p.m., her body aching for a break but knowing the following day will be exactly the same.

Carter, who started playing the grueling sport after trying it out when she was 9, is ranked in the top 20 in Northern California.

Fellow freshman Stephanie Ren, who also began competitive tennis after finding her niche in the sport when she was 11, is in the top 30 for her age group.

Both Carter and Ren are key assets to the girls' tennis varsity team and have brought with them their experience of playing years of competitive United States Tennis Association (USTA) tournaments.

One such USTA tournament is the



FRESHMAN Stephanie Ren hits the ball to her opponent at a game against Gunn on Oct. 9.

such as piano and guitar, to make time for tennis."

Despite having to constantly manage their time efficiently, the girls enjoy the feeling of being on the school team.

"My favorite part of being on the team is that everyone is so supportive so there is less pressure, and it's really relaxed and fun to play with your friends," Ren said.

Both Carter and Ren find that team trips, such as the one to Fresno for the California Tennis Classic tournament on Sept. 5, in which the varsity team placed third overall, are special because they provide the girls with a strong support system throughout their matches.

"[Fresno] was a really memorable experience," Carter said. "It was where I got to bond with the other players on the team and play challenging matches."

Ren added, "Being a freshman on varsity is fun because even though you are younger than everyone else, you don't really feel like a freshman. Everyone acts the same toward you."

The team's acceptance of them has increased their enjoyment of being on the school team.

Carter said, "Although tennis is an individual sport, it is nice to be on a team. Teammates give you unconditional support and become like second family." ♦

## Footgolf proves itself a failed form of sport

### SOCER AND GOLF PLAYERS PROVIDE PERSPECTIVES ON UNIQUE COMBINATION

BY Arman Vaziri

Why would anybody decide that it would be a good idea to put soccer players on the golf course?

FootGolf is a trend being played at golf courses nationwide. A precision sport, FootGolf requires players to kick a soccer ball into a proportionally sized hole in as few shots as possible. It is essentially golf played with a soccer ball instead of a golf ball.

The ball has to be barely moving right at the edge of the hole to actually go in; if not, the ball goes right over the hole, adding to the frustration.

Additionally, it baffles me why one would ever pay to play soccer on a designated golf course.

From a golfer's perspective, FootGolf adds an unwanted factor into golf course management. It is chaotic to allow both FootGolf players and actual golf players on the same course at the same time.

Simply put, golfers and FootGolfers are two different types of people.

in my legs that persisted for many days following.

Golf's leading officials thought that they would be able to increase participation in the game of golf by having foot golfers participate on the course. However, FootGolf has already actually caused problems at many golf courses due to differences in pace of play and complaints from golfers.

It is also detrimental to golf courses, since FootGolf players tear up the grass when they play.

In order to gain popularity, FootGolf should follow frisbee golf's lead and play in spaces specifically designed for it rather than taking up space at real golf courses. Until then, FootGolf will continue to disrupt golf courses until the activity is consolidated to its own space or simply fades away. ♦

BY Fiona Sequeira

As a soccer player, I found FootGolf mildly amusing. It requires minimal technical skill, as one only needs to kick the ball with the proper pace and accuracy. While the element of fun plays a large role in the lure of FootGolf, it offers virtually no player development for aspiring golf or soccer players to improve their respective games.

Additionally, it baffles me why one would ever pay to play soccer on a designated golf course.

This hybrid of two sports, sharing little in common other than the grassy surface on which they are played, attempts to bridge the gap between popular culture and a sport that is perceived as a pastime of the upper class.

When I played FootGolf at Pruneridge Golf Club, I found that it barely resembled golf and was basically target practice for soccer. Luckily, I avoided hitting any sand traps, trees or bodies of water. However, one drawback was the long delays because of the inexperienced FootGolfers in front of me, and their slowness ruined the pace and continuity of my own game.

FootGolf would be greatly improved if it were played in an area designated solely for it rather than on a legitimate golf course. This would allow players of varying skill levels to separate themselves, eliminating frustrations at any long delays.

Although FootGolf probably won't gain much more of a foothold (no pun intended) in the sports world, it is an innocuous pastime that provides amusement and comic relief.

FootGolf is undeniably ludicrous. Yet as an avid soccer player and fan, I must say that it is pretty entertaining, although it definitely isn't the optimal endeavour for serious training. ♦

## STAR ★ ROOKIES

### Athlete juggles golf, tennis

BY Oksana Trifonova  
& Jihau Yu

Freshman Sarah Lo stands at about 5'4" and weighs no more than 100 pounds. She might not look like a star on the golf course. But don't be fooled.

Lo is the only freshman player on the girls' golf team. She has already earned the position of fourth best player.

The players from other schools are really good, but I know what I'm competing against, so I can rise to the challenge," Lo said.

However, when practices or tournaments are especially long, Lo can feel burned out and overwhelmed.

"At times I'm on the verge of almost losing interest," Lo said. "But then I think about how far I've come. It makes me work harder and keep doing my best." ♦



### >> falconfigures

4

5

6

1

Lo's position on the golf team as a freshman

Average number of strokes per hole that Lo averages

Number of Lo's favorite hybrid to hit off the fairway

Number of years that Lo has been playing golf

## Kim carves place as key player on varsity

BY Jenny Qian  
& Ellen Wu

high school to playing basketball. When senior year came along, he decided to pick up football once again.

So far, Kim said he has been able to juggle the two sports, classes and college applications through smart time management. Kim tries to get all of his homework done during tutorials so that he has more time at night.

From reviewing plays to spending time conditioning, Kim is constantly preparing for games during the season.

This is Kim's first year playing football at a high school level. As a senior rookie on varsity, Kim has already had impressive performances against Hillsdale and Santa Clara as both linebacker and running back.

"I couldn't ask for a better guy to be on team," said head football coach Tim Lugo. "In the game against Santa Clara, [Kim] was able to step up, rushing 192 yards, which gave us the biggest play right when we needed it."

Kim has seen the work needed to succeed in football.

"Playing football is worth all the sweat and hard work and I get to play with all of my brothers," Kim said.

Kim is not entirely new to football, however. He spent much of middle school playing Pop Warner, a youth football league in the Bay Area. However, because of other time commitments, Kim stopped participating in football when he entered high school.

He devoted his first three years of

"[The camp] really helped me get back into rhythm and realize that high school football is definitely a different pace [from Pop Warner]," Kim said.

Although Kim is new to the team, he has forged strong friendships. Junior punter Abhiram Yellamilli said Kim is someone "you can always count on to lift other teammates' up." Kim has shared his motivation with teammates.

"He's a natural leader and is always helping [young players] on and off the field," said sophomore defensive back Aidan Peck.

Kim has proved to be a key addition to the team and hopes to improve more.

"We're a young team, which is [not necessarily] a bad thing because it means that we're going to grow," Kim said. "I hope this season will be successful for [the entire team]." ♦

October 17, 2014

## GIRLS' TENNIS

## Winning league streak boosts team's confidence

BY Caitlin Ju

"S-A-S-A-R-A-T-O-T-O-G-A, S-a-r-a-to-g-a, Saratoga High!" Arms around each others' shoulders and huddled together, the 13 members of the girls' varsity tennis team felt their pulses rise and heartbeats quicken as they stomped and screamed at the top of their lungs.

Following a 7-0 win at home against Los Gatos on Oct. 2, the team prepared for the first annual Battle of the Bay tournament in which Central Coast Section (CCS) teams competed against those of the North Coast Section (NCS). Though the tournament was held at several different schools in the Bay Area, Saratoga played at home along with fellow CCS school St. Francis High. Twenty teams from the Central Coast, Peninsula, Salinas Valley and South Bay were put head to head against 20 teams from the East Bay, Honolulu Bay, North Bay and San Francisco Bay.

The tournament took place Oct. 3-4, and each CCS team played four matches against four randomly selected schools from NCS and vice versa. Whichever side first won the necessary 41 out of 80 games would be declared the winner.

Saratoga cruised through the tournament with four wins against NCS

schools Miramonte (5-2), Amador Valley (6-1), Piedmont (6-1), and San Ramon Valley (7-0). Once again, the team's strong lineup proved impenetrable.

Though lineups varied throughout each of the four matches, there were several key wins and tough matches.

Junior Shaya Nikfar played two exhausting consecutive matches at No. 2

**Saratoga cruised through the tournament with four wins against NCS schools.**

singles against Miramonte and Amador Valley in 95 degree weather.

"I was already tired, but I knew I had to win for team," Nikfar said. "So I stayed positive and tried to get back even after losing the second set both times."

Yet, Saratoga's contribution of 4 points to the overall score did not prove enough for CCS to win the overall tournament. The final score was CCS 38 and NCS 42.

"The team has not lost a single match

since the Fresno tournament," assistant coach Jonathan Chui said. "Even though overall CCS lost, our exceptional individual showing at Battle of the Bay just adds to our confidence for a good chance of winning CCS."

The first league match on Sept. 16 proved the effectiveness of the team's elevated depth this season with a stronger singles lineup and powerful doubles teams.

A 5-2 win against one of its rivals Los Altos, compared to a difficult 4-3 win and 4-3 loss last year, set the bar high for the rest of the season.

Two easy wins of 7-0 over Gunn and Lynbrook, on Sept. 18 and Sept. 23, respectively, continued to boost the team's confidence as the big game against longtime rival Monta Vista neared.

Tension was high as the team prepared for the much anticipated matchup. In the end, nerves were cast aside as the team prevailed in a seemingly lopsided 6-1 win over the Matadors.

"It felt really amazing to win against our biggest rival," said captain senior Smita Sabada. "It bodes well for CCS."

The team played a home match against Monta Vista on Oct. 16, which the Falcon was unable to cover due to publishing deadlines. ♦



Junior Shaya Nikfar serves the ball in a game against Gunn High School, Oct. 9.

BY Cassandra King  
& Dorrie Tang

The cross country team began the season with consistent improvements during its first three meets at Lynbrook, Central Park and Crystal Springs on Sept. 9, Sept. 23 and Oct. 2, respectively, as well as the annual Saratoga tri-meet at home against Prospect and Lynbrook on Oct. 7.

Senior Steven Sum placed first in all four meets, and seniors Andrew Harter, Valerie Lensch, Carolyn Qi and Christine Schlossareck and juniors Kimberly Chen and Stephen Law have also been consistently contributing points to the team with their high scores. Freshmen Allison Borch, Amit Nag and Lillian Zeng have also placed high during meets.

"Last year we used to [take some easy days], but this year we're just powering through everything," Krishna said. "The mileage is going up, the workouts are harder and we're just trying to be aggressive with our training."

Newcomers to the team have felt the intense training to be very beneficial. Nag finds high school level practices much more competitive than those in middle school.

"I think I've improved more because we practice every day and [the team] is more organized," Nag said. "[Lifting] weights builds

Borch found that she had to focus on herself and her personal goals in order to effectively improve.

"I think the best help for improving is to push yourself because it creates mental toughness and the ability to ignore the pain and thoughts of, 'I'm tired,'" Borch said.

Through intense training, the runners have become more connected to each other, improving the closeness of the team as a whole.

"There's been a lot more bonding between us on runs and much more humor," Krishna said. "We have a singing thing going on where we sing while we're running."

Overall, the team has seen dramatic improvements in times from that of previous years.

"Seeing where we were last year compared to where we are this year, it's almost like [we are] just completely different people running," Krishna said. ♦

## FOOTBALL

## Falcons back to earth with shutdown by Milpitas

BY Arjun Ramanathan  
& Devin Zhao

In a high-scoring contest, the Falcons generated their second win of the season against Santa Clara on Oct. 3 with a score of 41-35. However, that bright spot was demolished by a 49-0 loss to Milpitas on Oct. 10, putting the Falcons' overall record at 2-3 and their league record at 1-1.

Sophomore quarterback Will Liddle completed 17 out of 41 attempts for 210 yards. Senior running back Alvin Kim gained 202 yards on 26 attempts and caught six passes for 65 yards, accounting for more than half the Falcons' yard-

age. Other notable contributors were senior wide receiver Joey Medeiros and junior Vinny Taylor with 97 and 90 yards in catches and runs.

Despite another touchdown by Medeiros in the third quarter, passes by Priest allowed Santa Clara to lead 28-21. However, great blocking by the offensive line allowed Kim to run a 50-yard touchdown to cut the lead to 28-27.

The Falcons got started in their running game using Medeiros, who ran a 12-yard pass to junior wide receiver Joseph Eschen to give the Falcons a 34-28 lead in the fourth quarter. Liddle then extended the lead to 41-28 by throwing a pass to Taylor in the corner of the endzone.

## GIRLS' VOLLEYBALL

## Falcons find success in underclassmen players

BY Trung Vandinh

Senior outside hitter Sara Parden won the final point and concluded the girls' volleyball team's first league match against Lynbrook High School last Thursday. The match ended in 3-0, boosting the team's record to 13-4 overall and 5-0 in the El Camino League.

Last season, the Falcons tied with Cupertino High for second in the league, with one win and one loss. After defeating Lynbrook on Sept. 23 and Cupertino on Oct. 9, the Falcons are feeling good.

The players, who worked hard in the beginning of the season to assimilate the new players and develop confidence and familiarity in their teammates, started to show the hours of practice paying off through their cohesive playing.

According to Parden, current team has successfully filled the gap left by the departed players.

This was evident in the team's match results for the tournament on Sept. 27 at Cupertino. At the tournament, they beat Cupertino High School, East Side College Prep, In-

dependence High School and Silver Creek High School but lost a match against St. Ignatius College Prep.

The players attribute this success to the work of their new players, including sophomore Julia Vita.

"Though she was always a strong player, [Vita] has improved since the beginning of the season," senior middle hitter Rebecca Lee said. "Despite being an underclassman, she is earning her time on the court by proving her ability."

Because it is her first year on varsity, Vita has learned to show dedication at practice to compete for a starting position in games.

According to Lee, the team has managed to keep up a five-win streak since league started on Sept. 23, but the ones against Cupertino and Lynbrook were crucial as the matches against the teams that impeded their league win last season.

"This year our team is strong offensively and defensively because we worked hard, driven to win league," she said. "It looks optimistic too, especially since we've crushed the teams that we struggled against last year." ♦

## BOYS' WATER POLO

## Team regains momentum after shaky start to season

BY Nupur Maheshwari  
& Gitika Nalwa

Pawar points to the youth of the team as a disadvantage.

"Being in an upper league and losing over half of our varsity team in the same year has really affected the [number] of games we have won so far in the season," Pawar said. "[However], given the fact that we have an extremely new team, I think that we improve a lot with each game we play, whether we win or not."

In particular, Pawar says the team can improve on its awareness in the pool.

"[We can make] sure that the work is evenly distributed on both offense and defense in order to effectively play to our many unique players' strength and weaknesses," Pawar said.

Having made eight goals each, Lee and junior Davis Robertson are leading the team.

The boys have made a total of 30 goals during this season.

Sophomore Micah Lee said leadership has gotten better over the season.

"I personally think that the captains [Graham Schmelzer and Mason Lee] and our team as a whole communicated really well [in the Homestead game]," Micah said.

The team is looking forward to avenging its loss against Monta Vista during its home game on Oct. 30.

The day will be a matchup that will pit two evenly matched teams against each other. ♦

Junior Erin Norris steals the ball away from Los Altos at an away game on Oct. 10.

Senior Priyanka Pradhan sprints towards the finish line at the Saratoga Tri-Meet against Lynbrook and Prospect on Oct. 7.

Junior Sabrina Clark makes her way to the goal at Los Altos on Oct. 10.



FALCON // DEEPTHI SAMPATHKUMAR

FALCON // JADE BISHIT

FALCON // DEEPTHI SAMPATHKUMAR

October 17, 2014

## CROSS COUNTRY

## Runners take strides to further improvement

BY Cassandra King  
& Dorrie Tang

The cross country team began the season with consistent improvements during its first three meets at Lynbrook, Central Park and Crystal Springs on Sept. 9, Sept. 23 and Oct. 2, respectively, as well as the annual Saratoga tri-meet at home against Prospect and Lynbrook on Oct. 7.

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just trying to improve slowly until then and do our best there."

Daily training, including interval workouts, weight training and long distance runs have helped the runners improve their skills and stamina.

"Last year we used to [take some easy days], but this year we're just powering through everything," Krishna said. "The mileage is going up, the workouts are harder and we're just trying to be aggressive with our training."

Newcomers to the team have felt the intense training to be very beneficial. Nag finds high school level practices much more competitive than those in middle school.

"I think I've improved more because we practice every day and [the team] is more organized," Nag said. "[Lifting] weights build

Borch found that she had to focus on herself and her personal goals in order to effectively improve.

"I think the best help for improving is to push yourself because it creates mental toughness and the ability to ignore the pain and thoughts of, 'I'm tired,'" Borch said.

Through intense training, the runners have become more connected to each other, improving the closeness of the team as a whole.

"There's been a lot more bonding between us on runs and much more humor," Krishna said. "We have a singing thing going on where we sing while we're running."

muscle and interval workouts help [us] gain stamina, and I've imagined the meets as a hard workout rather than a competition."

## FOOTBALL

## Falcons back to earth with shutdown by Milpitas

BY Arjun Ramanathan  
& Devin Zhao

In a high-scoring contest, the Falcons generated their second win of the season against Santa Clara on Oct. 3 with a score of 41-35. However, that bright spot was demolished by a 49-0 loss to Milpitas on Oct. 10, putting the Falcons' overall record at 2-3 and their league record at 1-1.

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age. Other notable contributors were senior wide receiver Joey Medeiros and junior Vinny Taylor with 97 and 90 yards in catches and runs.

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## GIRLS' VOLLEYBALL

## Girls learn from losses

BY Nupur Maheshwari  
& Gitika Nalwa

The girls' varsity water polo team is in the middle of a successful season, with a record of 3-3, and is adjusting well to its new coach, Nick Berg.

The team is in the Cupertino league and has made a total of 27 goals this season, 14 of which have been made by senior Madison Gress. On Sept. 23, the team suffered a 7-5 loss against Palo Alto, but came back strong with a 5-3 win against Los Altos on Sept. 25. Then, on Sept. 30, the team lost 8-4 against Gunn, and on Oct. 2, the team beat Homestead 6-1. More recently, the team lost to Los Gatos on Oct. 7 with a score of 6-0. Senior Amanda Moriarty said that the team's morale contributed to the loss to Los Gatos.

"We went in feeling really good, but ... we began to lose our momentum and we weren't feeling as great," Moriarty said. "We lost the mood of our team, which hurt our [performance]."

Junior Alexa Frieberg said that the team needs to move forward from its loss.

"We need to forget about this loss and just try to win one game at a time," Frieberg said.

Senior goalie Puck De Roos said that while her team is good at keeping its opponents moving, it could improve on "being able to move the ball around more and score."

Frieberg said that her absence due to a concussion three weeks ago has weakened the team's offense.

"Our time players get really tired," Frieberg said. "Playing a whole game can be really strenuous on a person, but we have some sophomores that step up when they have to."

Frieberg also noted that Los Gatos has "a whole second set of girls."

Moriarty said that because of its size, the team cannot participate in scrimmages or "really set up an offense or defense."

Senior goalie Puck De Roos said that while her team is good at keeping its opponents moving, it could improve on "being able to move the ball around more and score."

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## &gt;&gt; snapshots



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA



FALCON // ELLEN WU



FALCON // DEEPTHI SAMPATHKUMAR



FALCON // JADE BISHT

**Matt Nobles (12)** comforts a sobbing **Saya Sivaram (10)** at the dress rehearsal for the fall play "The Matchmaker" on Oct. 9.

**Drum major Eddie Chen (12)** conducts during the marching band's run-through of their show at a rehearsal on Oct. 9.

**Stephen Law (11)** and **Andrew Harter (12)** pass the finish line at the cross country meet at home on Oct. 7.

**Christina Crolla (12)** faces off against Los Altos at an away field hockey game on Oct. 10.

## buzzworthy &gt;&gt; FB Compliments page brings smiles to Toga

BY Cassandra King  
& Amelia Schwabe

Sophomore Will Liddle clicks open Facebook after a long and trying day. He's lost his favorite pencil, received an unfavorable math test back and has at least four hours of homework ahead of him. But as he reads the Facebook notification that Saratoga Compliments has posted something nice about him at the top of his page, he begins to smile.

"I was surprised and happy," said Liddle about the compliment he received about his role as the starting quarterback for the varsity football team.

Founded as a personal account on Facebook by a student who prefers to remain anonymous, Saratoga Compliments launched last April.

The idea sprang from the founder's dream to spread positivity around school and was inspired by similar pages at other schools.

The account allows for students to post compliments about people at the school anonymously.

Students message the account and the account will then post it anonymously while tagging the person the compliment is directed at.

By remaining anonymous, the account gives people a chance to not feel embarrassed or awkward when they post compliments.

Thus far, the account has posted over 50 compliments on Facebook.

"It's a nice way to unite the community by providing students random compliments when they aren't expecting it," senior Rahil Khasgiwale. "Seeing nice things said about you on the page can definitely lift your spirits."

During its beginning stages, the account had some difficulties with people messaging in-

appropriate or sarcastic "compliments" about others.

Some of the initial compliments were disguised insults that went onto the page.

This resulted in a blow to the account's reputation, and its credibility was called into question by some.

The page's creator emphasized the account is intended for compliments, not pranks. Liddle also saw some issues with how the page operated.

"Sometimes I can't tell if people are just making fun of other people and just joking, but usually I see [Saratoga Compliments] has pretty sincere com-

pliments," said Liddle.



Since sarcasm is hard to distinguish over cyberspace, the creator of the account has asked everyone to respect the sanctity of the account.

According to the page's founder, it has grown since its conception and has become more encouraging, adding, "The reason most people shy away from giving compliments is that they worry about being judged. Through this account, submitters really do not have to worry about that." ♦

## Pants: overrated and unnecessary

## SOPHOMORE REFLECTS ON BENEFITS OF WEARING SHORTS

uno, dos, tres



Apoorv Kwatra

Eighth grade graduation — a day of goodbyes, tears and pants. I have a confession to make; I haven't worn pants since then.

OK, now get that image out of your head; in lieu of this overly hyped article of clothing, I wear shorts.

Yes, it's the beginning of fall, and yes, it's the norm for students to don shorts. But when the cold gusts of winter begin to sweep away the leaves of autumn, I stay true to my collection of shorts.

Every other person will resort to longer pants and jeans in times of cold, but not me — I am a fighter. Of pants.

My passion for shorts blinds me to the haters. On a daily basis, friends and classmates will approach me and ridicule my outfit choice. "Apoorv, are you stupid? It's like 30 degrees outside bruh!"

In one ear and out the other. Rain or snow, I will still wear my shorts.

Even if my shorts are fitting for the weather, say, on a warm September day, I am still met with criticism. Maybe my shorts don't match my shirt or they had already been worn that week. I've become increasingly suspicious that class-

mates find excuses to target my choice of clothing just for fun.

OK, yes, I am wearing the shorts equivalent of "graduation goggles" right now. But honestly, the almost non-existent downsides to wearing shorts are easily outweighed by all the comfortable benefits.

Back in the dark ages, when I sometimes wore pants, I had a bad experience with them. In seventh grade, I walked out of science, excited for basketball practice. I ran outside and met my teammates at the gym. After putting my shoes on and stretching for a while, I started warming up.

Everyone looked at me with a confused look on my face. I followed their gaze to my pants. I had forgotten to bring a change of clothes, and I had to practice in boxers that day.

Not a good day.

Shorts are much more comfortable to wear than pants. Even sweatpants do not give the comfort that shorts do.

One day in the cold depths of the 2010 winter, I turned to sweatpants to alleviate my shivers. I walked around with the itchiness of my pants never leaving my mind. In fact, they were so exasperatingly itchy that I turned back to the dependable article of clothing, the one I could always count on: my beloved shorts.

In all honesty, I don't care what people think about my clothes. Comfort is much more important than that.

Conveniently, I've been dubbed "shorts guy" as years have passed and

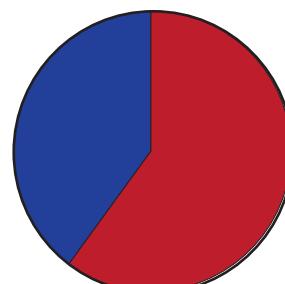
pants have remained absent in my life. I have proudly reversed people's expectations, as the surprise factor as I walk onto campus on a breezy December day is now nonexistent.

So, advice for the shorts inclined — the haters gonna hate, hate, hate. So shake it off, and understand that people are too worried about how they look to really care about your allergies to pants.

It is best to just use one's best judgment on whether to wear shorts. Regardless, I will wear a sweater to stay warm, but not pants. Never pants. ♦

## &gt;&gt; falcon poll

Which do you prefer: shorts or pants?



The Falcon polled 100 students.

## &gt;&gt;topten

## TOP 10 REASONS TO LOOK FORWARD TO HOMECOMING

**10** **The final product.** All your work, dedication and time spent complaining finally paying off.

**9** **Hanging out with friends at the Homecoming movie night.** ...I mean dance.

**8** **Homecoming football game.** Can we possibly beat Monta Vista?

**7** **Huge swarms of people in the quad.** Not being able to move or see is part of the experience.

**6** **Bollywood dances.** Somehow India correlates to everything.

**5** **Twerking from guys of all grades.** Because a guys' dance isn't complete without it.

**4** **Disqualifications.** Which class will it be this time?

**3** **Sadie's cancellation jokes.** Wait, hasn't Rally already been using that reference for the past six months?

**2** **ACT is the day after the Homecoming game!** Hooray for standardized testing!

**1** **Anticipation.** Hopefully a repeat of last year's freshman quad day.

>> Anant Rajeev and Summer Smith