



Reporters embark on race to Santa Supremacy.



Jewish and Catholic students find community in faith.



Senior Steven Sum places second at state meet.



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

saratogafalcon.org

Friday >> December 12, 2014
Vol. 54, No. 6

Pushing carts, warming hearts

JANITOR JOHN SEQUEIVA LIVES THE AMERICAN DREAM

BY NidhiJain, VibhaSeshadri & EileenToh

The wrinkles on his dirt-crust-ed hands crease as he fingers the lines on his palm, formed from decades of work. When he speaks, his voice is encapsulated by a Portuguese accent, adding extra slurs to his R's and combining the ends of his words together into soft, harmonizing melodies.

Custodian John Sequeiva, better known as John the Janitor, has worked at Saratoga High for eight years as a night custodian. He is primarily responsible for taking care of the gym. Students who see him in the hallways know him as a friendly janitor with a pair of smiley-face patterned suspenders, and basketball players have adopted him as their No. 1 fan, but under his cheerful demeanor

>> JOHN on pg. 5



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

Editors' Note: Corrections have been made to the "Tutoring in the Shadows" story, which appeared on the front page of the Nov. 14 issue. These corrections can be found on page 2 and are reflected in the online version of the story.

ACADEMICS

Teacher's Zumba extra credit ended

BY LarissaChiu & ArielLiu

On a typical Saturday morning in recent years, dozens of juniors have congregated at Campbell Community Center for a weekly Zumba class taught by their AP US History teacher Kim Anzalone.

For one hour, these students, along with Anzalone's adult Zumba students, alleviated academic stress with their peers while exercising, all just for the price of \$10 paid to the community center. In exchange, the history students also received two extra credit points in the participation category, which makes

>> ZUMBA on pg. 6

CAMPAIGN

Salins' mission trips spur Ebola efforts



Courtesy of LUKE SALIN

Junior Luke Salin poses with his Liberian friend Elkanah Cheabow and Vision Trust worker Jim Ross in an ocean near Liberia.

BY ArielLiu & TiffanyZheng

Annually for the past four years, junior Luke Salin and his family have gone to a place that most of the world now fears: Liberia, specifically the neighborhood of Paynesville near the capital city of Monrovia.

Last spring Salin was following his Liberian friend, 19-year-old Elkanah Cheabow, through the community to his school. As Salin walked through the average Liberian neighborhood, he saw houses barely held together and adults

lying facedown in the dirt.

Salin's family goes on mission trips to Liberia with an organization called Vision Trust, whose mission is to "develop orphaned and neglected children into mature Christians equipped to live in their own culture."

Salin has cultivated a strong friendship with Cheabow during his family's annual mission trips. Their friendship is, however, threatened by the rampant Ebola virus in Liberia. Salin's connection with

>> EBOLA on pg. 6

RENOVATIONS

Upper field to be turfed

BY AdityaChaudhry & AllisonLin

The upper field is set to be renovated and transformed into a turf field, similar to the football field with the goal of making the area much more useful to a variety of sports teams.

"When you replace the grass with turf, you save water and maintenance time," principal Paul Robinson said.

Additionally, the school will be adding stadium lights to help practices that run into evening hours. With prices set and the plan almost complete, the school is waiting until summer break to begin renovations. According to Robinson, the project will cost about \$3.75 million of the \$44 million Saratoga High receives from the Measure E bond.

Assistant principal Kevin Mount said he hopes the project will be completed by the start of the 2015 school year.

The current plans are to put turf on the softball diamond as well as the soccer field, but

the softball diamond would remain elevated above the soccer portion of the field instead of the original plan to level out the entire field. According to Mount, this change saved enough money for the school to invest in other improvements.



Robinson

Robinson pointed out that the field will be more friendly to all types of sports because the lines on the field will be drawn in permanently.

He also mentioned that with the renovations, the field will be safer for athletes and improve seating by the addition of bleachers.

The field, however, is projected to save the school money in the long run. Improving other facilities on campus will open up different parts of the school to more public rentals, they said.

"We anticipate saving labor costs on an ongoing basis, both in terms of upkeep and striping of games," Mount said. "These upgrades will improve our ability to rent the fields to generate revenue." ♦

>> what'sinside

BIENVENIDOS

Exchange students

Students from Cuernavaca, Mexico, visit Saratoga families for two weeks. **pg. 3**

OH SNAP

Shooting and sharing the talent

Junior Uday Singh shares his love for taking pictures as President of the SHS photography club. **pg. 4**

IS IT DYING?

Hopelessness of Humanities

Are those who major in the humanities barred from more lucrative careers? **pg. 7**

BINGE WATCH

Top television picks

What better way to spend break than marathoning a TV show? **pg. 14**



Finals schedule changes for orchestra trip

Unlike previous years, this year's fall semester final will have periods 3 and 4 on Monday and periods 1 and 2 on Tuesday. Period 5 and 6 finals are on Wednesday and period 7 finals are on Thursday. The schedule change was made due to a Saratoga Strings orchestra trip to the 68th Annual Midwest Clinic in Chicago, which takes place from Dec. 16-20.

A leadership team made of teachers from each department and administrators collaborated to create the finals schedule. Saratoga Strings meets in period 2. Moving periods 3 and 4 to Monday helps to lessen the number of finals missed by Saratoga Strings students.

To make up their finals, the members will take their finals the weekend before finals week. They have a choice of making up their finals either Saturday or Sunday.

Even students who are not in Saratoga Strings see the finals schedule an inconvenience for their studying. Nevertheless, they are still supportive of the group's accomplishments and their upcoming trip.

"It's definitely good that the school is able to accommodate for orchestra," junior Ashvita Ramesh said "It shows that they are concerned for the students' well-being, since orchestra constitutes for a large population of our school."

— Michelle Cen and Larissa Chiu

Winter Guard prepares for upcoming season

In October, the Color Guard members rehearsed their field show "Sacred Geometry" with the marching band.

Transition to December, and some faces are familiar from fall Guard, others from past Winter Guard seasons. The rest are new members. All are excited about their show, every component of which was written with the members and their individual talents in mind.

Shi's membership is not the only new development that the Guard has seen this year. New instructor Joey Kidd made several adjustments when he took charge of the program from previous Guard instructor Tony Crapo.

"I want to be a better version of what we were last year," Kidd said. "If you wanna be a better version of yourself, I think that's the best way to succeed."

One change Kidd made this year was holding official auditions, which was a new and mixed experience for returning members in particular.

The Winter Guard plans to attend seven California Color Guard Circuit (CCGC) and Winter Guard International (WGI) competitions this coming season, one of which is a three-day overnight to the WGI regional at Fresno.

— Claire Chou and Isabelle Tseng

>> corrections

On Nov. 14, 2014, The Falcon published an article entitled "Tutoring in the shadows." Although we believe that the article was largely both accurate and fair, the article inaccurately described certain situations or statements. In particular, it inaccurately stated that Samuel Breck was "shocked" by finding that Spotlight Education had materials from Saratoga High School teachers, when in fact Breck only stated that he didn't expect Spotlight to have such materials. The article also inaccurately indicated that Breck had noted "startling similarities" between multiple quizzes he was provided with by Spotlight and quizzes subsequently given in a class he was taking. Breck indicated that he was surprised that one quiz he was provided by Spotlight was the same as a quiz subsequently given in his class, and indicated that other quizzes provided by Spotlight tested the same concepts addressed in quizzes given by his teacher. However, he did not say that the similarities in other quizzes were startling. Addressing why Breck did not speak to others about his experience with Spotlight, the article omitted part of his explanation. The complete explanation of Breck's reasons was as follows: "I don't have anything against Spotlight and I don't exactly want to get involved in whatever issues they have, first of all because it's my Mom's college friend and so I didn't want to get into the mess of that. I think I didn't talk about it because of that." The article also should have noted that both Breck and Meghna Chakraborty indicated that they stopped attending Spotlight after seeing questions appearing on practice quizzes provided by Spotlight in actual quizzes given by their teacher. Finally, in a communication received after the article was published, Spotlight stated that past quizzes constituted less than two percent of its curriculum, and that Spotlight stopped providing past quizzes to students as of Nov. 1, 2013.

>> picturethis



SINGING SENSATION >> Senior Nadia Younes sings an acoustic version of "Toxic" by Britney Spears at the third annual Saratoga Idol competition on Monday, Dec. 1, at the McAfee Center and places first.

by Andrew Jiang & Simi Srivastava

As senior Nadia Younes carefully crooned the last note in her rendition of "Toxic" by Britney Spears, the crowd burst into a standing ovation. Younes was later crowned the winner of this year's Saratoga Idol held on Dec. 1 in the McAfee Center.

Younes has never participated in the event before this year, which made the win unexpected for her. Nevertheless, because of her background singing opera, she impressed the audience with her vocal abilities.

"When [the announcers] called my name, I was really shocked because there were a lot of other great performances," Younes said. "It felt good to know that people voted for me even though I didn't have many people there for me."

The show was emceed by senior Natalie Miller and junior Isa Berardo. After last-minute cancellations from two

IDOL

Senior places first in competition

of the three teacher judges, the judging panel expanded to include professional singer Andy Kline and manager of the rock band Smash Mouth, Robert Hayes as well as MAP teacher Cathy Leather.

"I was really happy with our judges," junior class president Darby Williams said. "I think [the guest judges] were able to give a more professional opinion, but it was also good to have at least one teacher because she knew the students."

Sophomore Esha Krishnamoorthy placed second with "Just Don't Let Me Go," a song she wrote herself, and junior Camille Bismonte placed third with "Feeling Good" by Nina Simone.

As audience members voted, junior Nina Nelson, who won the first competition two years ago, entertained the audience by singing "Chandelier" by Sia while junior Chloe Koon danced on stage.

This year, the show did not include multiple rounds of competition, but instead

had all performers prepare one song for the audience to choose one winner from at the end. Williams said that this was to enable the show to feature more performers but also not be too long.

The show also tried a new system of voting through text messages from the audience rather than using paper ballots. Though there were some technical difficulties, Williams found the text voting more fair and convenient, and recommends it to be used by future junior classes.

"I actually would recommend that [next year's officers] use text voting because it's actually easier and in my opinion more fair," Williams said. "We just had technical issues with it because it was the first time we used it."

Despite some issues with voting, junior class officers said the show was still a success with 117 tickets sold.

"Overall I thought it was a success under the circumstances," Williams said. ♦

DANCES

Winter formal asking competition helps strengthen dance attendance

by Spring Ma & Anant Rajeev

As Winter Formal approaches, countless pictures of askings to winter ball are clogging up students' Facebook newsfeeds. Past askings have involved everything from the traditional poster and flowers to choreographing a videotaped dance. Students are gearing up to win the school-wide best asking competition annually hosted by the ASB. The couple with the most creative asking receives free tickets to the dance.

This year, ASB officers are changing the rules of submission: Participants must submit a photo or video of their asking using the hashtag #shs-formal14 on Facebook or Instagram, instead of posting it onto the "Saratoga High ASB" Facebook page, as participants did in previous years.

"[We decided to use a hashtag] since competitions in the past weren't as popular as we'd hope," said senior Adrienne Kim, president of the ASB. "It was probably because people didn't want to publicize their askings themselves. The hashtag lets friends to submit their askings, not just the couple themselves." Kim hopes promoting the competition on the

Facebook event page, which more than 800 students are invited to, and on the announcements, will result in more creative askings, spreading awareness for the dance and increasing participation.

During one of the many innovative Formal proposals this season, senior Jane Park's friends drove her around Saratoga, dressed in onesie pajamas. They eventually dropped her off in the school parking lot where senior Samuel Breck, dressed in a Santa Claus onesie, presented her with a poster saying "You're the only one-i-sie, formal with me?" A picture of them was posted on Facebook, tagged with the hashtag, shortly after.

"Seeing all my close friends participating in the asking made it a really nice surprise," Park said. "I thought the onesie theme was creative and really out there."

Like many other students, Breck's idea for his asking was influenced by the competition.

"It was a fun asking," Breck said. "I think it's good there is a competition for free tickets because then there is an extra incentive for people come up with creative askings and go to Formal as well." ♦

CULTURE

Mexican students experience SHS culture

by Ariel Liu

Junior Alisha Thanawala glanced nervously up at the clock in her APUSH classroom on Nov. 17, her mind racing frantically. The Mexican student she was hosting, freshman Ana Sofia Villanueva Morales, had left the classroom 30 minutes earlier to go to the bathroom.

As she ran around campus yelling Morales's name, Thanawala couldn't help but imagine the worst — maybe Morales had been kidnapped, slipped and fallen or was simply lost.

She could only think about the sweet 14-year-old girl from Cuernavaca she was just getting to know. Running toward the front parking lot, she breathed a sigh of relief when she saw Morales waiting for senior Analisa Ruff, another host student, to take her off campus for lunch.

"I was just really nervous about having to tell [Spanish teacher Arnaldo Rodrigue] or her teacher since I was respon-

sible for her," Thanawala said.

For the past three years, high school students from Cuernavaca, Mexico, have traveled to Saratoga to immerse themselves in the American culture. This year, five students visited Saratoga from Nov. 16 to Dec. 3.

Hosting a student can be challenging. For example, Thanawala lost Morales because of a miscommunication. Thanawala did not make clear that she was expecting Morales to return after she left class. Due to the language barrier, they at times had difficulties understanding each other.

In addition to the language barrier, Thanawala said there was a clear cultural barrier that made it difficult for them to become instant best friends.

For Thanawala, who has grown up with basically the same people since kindergarten, hosting a Mexican student was a test of her social skills.

"We had started becoming friends, but we were still in

coming up on Dec. 16 Tuesday of finals week, Lu is beginning to envision his life as a second-semester senior.

"I don't think I'll just blow classes off and not do homework," he said. "But my stress level will decrease and I won't be as grade obsessed."

Lu does not see himself being severely affected by senioritis. Because he enjoys most of his classes, he plans to remain the interested student he has been throughout high school.

If Lu is accepted, he is not bound to attend Yale because he applied early action, which is different from binding early decision. Nevertheless, Lu said Yale is his first choice. If he gets in, he plans on removing Northwestern, Pomona and Rice from his list, but he will still apply to the rest of the Ivy League schools and the University of Chicago.

According to Lu, the most difficult part of college applications has been his essay supplements.

"Essay writing isn't the easiest for everyone, so I'm sure everyone has their own way of motivating themselves," he said. "Plan out what you want to do when you want it to be done. As long as you keep on making progress you won't feel as overwhelmed."

A few days away from finding out his future college on Dec. 16, Lu is optimistic but not overconfident.

"I'm not thinking I'll get in, but I'm hoping [to do so]," he said. ♦



Courtesy of GERMAN ALBAVERA

SHS students smile with their exchange students that visited the area.

cultural differences were evident in just their routines.

"[Alvarez] liked to do her homework in the morning, so she woke up very early to do her homework sometimes," Ruff said. "If she didn't do homework, she spent 30 minutes in the morning praying, so she woke up early also. I, on the other hand, take care of everything at night because I love

sleeping." Ruff said hosting the students has changed her perspective.

"What touches me the most is how sincere and thankful the students from Mexico are," she said. "I feel like we don't realize how beautiful Saratoga is and how many things we have offered to us that aren't offered at other places." ♦

Lu prepares supplements, waits for early decisions

by Andrew Jiang & Ariel Liu

Editor's note: Starting in September, the Falcon has been following the trials and tribulations of the college application process. This is the second installment about Lu, one of two seniors profiled in this series.

Senior Linus Lu cracked his knuckles and positioned his pointer finger perfectly above the mouse. Clicking the submit button with a feeling of accomplishment, Lu heaved a huge sigh of relief. It was Oct. 24, and he just submitted his early action application to Yale University a week early.

For many of the 213 seniors who requested early letters of recommendation, the Nov. 1 deadline meant pulling all-nighters to squeeze out essays that could possibly define their entire futures. For Lu, however, this was not the case. With effective time management skills, he was able to finish most of his essays weeks before the deadline.

"I tried to submit early to have it done and not have to stress about it for an extra couple days," Lu said. Lu's planning has been able to save him from unneeded pressure during the college application season. Unlike some seniors who are scrambling to just finish or touch up their Common Application, Lu is now working on additional supplements for his schools.

He plans to send music supplements to the schools that accept them. Lu started playing violin in kindergarten, but switched to viola in fourth grade at his mother's sugges-

tion. He is now the principal violinist in Saratoga Strings, the school's highest-level orchestra group. In addition, he has placed first in numerous competitions, including the Northern California Viola Society Competition and the VOCE Regional Viola Competition.

"Since [playing viola is] such a big part of my life, and since I have had quite a few accomplishments that I'm proud of along the way, it's just natural for me to put it in my college apps," Lu said.

These music supplements differ from school to school. Some want music teacher recommendation letters, some want resumes, and others simply have a 10-minute maximum limit.

"I have all the materials ready," Lu said. "It's just a matter of organizing it to meet each school's requirements."

Lu has also written his fair share of short stories, flash fiction and poetry.

"I'll definitely continue to write, though it isn't the most lucrative of careers," Lu said.

For this reason, he has been compiling literary supplements to schools that accept them. Most schools, however, don't want too many supplements because they're already reading multiple essays.

As Lu works on his supplements, he has been forced to focus most of his energy on college applications and in turn sometimes feels lost in classes like AP Language and Composition, AP Literature and AP Biology. He admits that at times his classmates will ask him about a certain assignment and he has no idea what they are talking about.

With the early action results

Strickland continues through app process

by Claire Chou, Ashley Chen & Shreya Tumu

Like many other seniors, Claire Strickland has a dream college: New York University (NYU). Strickland is looking for a place to be independent, and NYU fits the description: It doesn't even have a campus center.

Accordingly, she is applying early decision to NYU. The results will come out on Dec. 15. If she is accepted, she will not have to apply to other colleges, since early decision admissions are binding.

If not, Strickland hopes to garner admission from the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), a New York state school that is one of the top five fashion schools in the world.

Because FIT does not accept the Common App, Strickland combined a personal essay from the Common App with various supplemental essays into one submission.

Because she has been struggling with some of her regular decision applications, she said she is glad the early decision results are coming out soon.

"I'm very excited and not that nervous," Strickland said. Another school Strickland hopes to be admitted to is Brown University, because of its proximity to the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). Strickland said she is not applying to RISD itself because she visited the campus and concluded that

it would lack the diversity and inspiration she wanted.

"Brown offers the possibility of attending classes at RISD while still attending school at Brown," Strickland said. "This is something I'm interested in."

Although writing essays for eight schools is time-consuming, Strickland said she tries to write her essays with a genuine, laid-back voice.

Strickland said she begins many of her supplemental essays with a personal anecdote for her hook, then explains how this event has shaped her. For instance, Strickland said that in one essay she wrote about the time she and her brother dug a hole in the ground, trying to reach China.

"I connected that to my lack of worldview in certain aspects of fashion, which [is] ironic because it [is] the industry I [am] so interested in," she said. "I went on [writing] about how I deliberately went about discovering the facets of fashion."

Strickland said she second-guesses herself when writing supplemental essays because she isn't sure if what she has written would sound acceptable to an admissions officer.

"The tough thing about college admissions is that you don't get to talk to them in person [or] unless you're fortunate enough to have an interview," Strickland said. "I'd like to say I know [how] to write a well-constructed essay and make it come across as impressive or eloquent, [but I don't]."

Still, Strickland said she isn't feeling overwhelmed; she sees stress as a matter of perspective. Having finished the majority of her supplemental essays, she now has time to study for finals. ♦



CLUBS

Members spread passion for photography

By Emily Chen & Katherine Sun

Scroll down the "Saratoga Photography" Facebook page, and you'll find photos ranging from a sepia vista overlooking London to a bamboo pathway at Hakone gardens to a murky close up of an air vent. The cover photo, a soft "bokeh" arrangement of two Canon cameras with a blurred background, displays the depth and artistic touch the club strives for.

During Photography Club, which meets every other Wednesday in adviser Catherine Head's room 005, members share photography techniques and discuss camera features they find to be useful. About 15 members attend the meetings regularly. Club officers, including junior president Uday Singh and junior vice president Michelle Handoko, occasionally create slideshows to introduce new techniques.

During one meeting last year, members tried their hand at an abstract form known as "ink drop photography" and discussed methods to achieve the desired effect.

In this style of photography, drops of ink or food coloring are dropped into a clear container of water and serve as the subject of the photo.

The shapes the drops of ink created in the water allow for "some incredibly artistic and abstract shots," according to Singh.

He enjoys applying this technique because "simple items like food coloring and water can be converted into beautiful works of art."

Though the club often discusses advanced techniques with expensive film equipment, Singh holds iPhone photography days to emphasize the fact that students do not need high quality cameras to join the club or to take quality photos.

"Lots of people [think], 'Oh, I don't have a nice camera. I can't come to Photography Club,'" Singh said. "In Photography Club we want to make people realize that you don't need a good camera to do good photography."

Singh joined Photography Club as a freshman because his section leader for band, class of 2013 alumnus Todd Nguyen, was club president during the time.

"[Nguyen] was my role model, so I followed him to the club and from Photography Club my interest grew," Singh said. "He helped me outside of school and in the club, so I became more knowledgeable [about photography]."

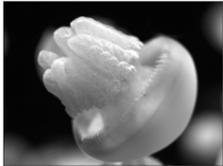
Nguyen and Singh maintained contact after Nguyen graduated, and Nguyen, now a student at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, even added Singh to the photography club groups of colleges like UCLA and Urbana-Champaign. Singh, inspired by the college clubs' system of posting pictures and receiving feedback on Facebook, brought the idea to his own club.

Most photos on the Saratoga Photography Club page have five to 10 likes, and some have suggestions left by other club members.

"Lots of really good pictures have shown up and some really good advice has been given that I didn't even know myself," Singh said. "It's a learning ex-



Courtesy of ANDREW WENG



Courtesy of UDAY SINGH



Courtesy of ALAN TRAN

Photos by members of the photography club of a train station, jellyfish and football game.

perience for everyone."

Singh believes the system of sharing photos online allow members to receive constructive criticism without feeling self-conscious about their photography skills. The suggestions are positive and get people more involved.

"It's definitely very reassuring when you post a picture and people are like, 'Wow, this is great,'" Singh said. "[All criticism involves] just minor things that you can improve upon, and that's what I really like. In our group it's not like, 'This is completely wrong, do everything differently.' It's mostly, 'There's one little thing and you'll have a great picture.'"

By the time Singh joined, the club was contacting the Saratoga Library

each spring to display pictures in the group study room for a month or two. Singh plans to carry on the tradition and has also considered placing a display in the school library this year.

Singh does photo shoots for friends and took his first professional, purchased photos for a Santa event over Thanksgiving break. But he sees many more reasons besides monetary gain to dive into photography.

"No two pictures are alike, and there are so many different pictures you can take. You just have to be able to look for it and know what to get," Singh said. "[Photography] combines the technical aspects of cameras and settings [with] the creative aspects of what you see and how you want to frame it." ♦

JOHN >>

continued from pg. 1

lie memories of war, struggle and hardship. Indeed, Sequeira, 64, has lived through pain but also has acquired beautiful memories from his time in America and at SHS.

A childhood in Portugal

Sequeira grew up as one of 11 children on his family's farm in Portugal. Both Sequeira and his family spent all daylight hours working on the farm and taking care of each other, leaving little to no time for him to receive an education.

When asked to spell the name of his home city, he paused for a few seconds, tilted his head back and sighed, explaining that he never learned to read because he never had the chance to go to school.

After spending most of his first 20 years in Portugal helping his family on the farm, he was drafted to fight for his country, which was then at war in Africa, specifically in Cabinda and Luanda.

At this time, parts of Africa were colonized by the Portuguese. Since the Cubans wanted to claim some parts of Africa for themselves, the Portuguese decided to defend it. Sequeira remained in Africa for 25 months, a time he despised for the violence he witnessed yet also cherished for the continent's beauty.

"I planned to stay [in Africa] because I liked there, [but] my sister was already [in the United States], and she take the papers and send us papers for coming here," Sequeira said.

Journey to America

In 1972, at age 22, Sequeira completed his bitter-sweet service.

Six months later, Sequeira's sister brought him to the United States, where he has resided for 41 years. With the help of their cousin, Sequeira's sister got him his first job: milking cows on a farm.

Sequeira loved the job because it reminded him of his childhood. After this job, Sequeira also built houses and did drywall work and landscaping. Finally, he became a janitor at SHS.

After attaining his green card in 1974, Sequeira initially planned to live in the U.S. for 10 years and make enough money to return to Portugal. In the meantime, however, he got married, became

a father to three children, settled in San Jose and decided to stay in the United States, a country that he now calls his own.

Sequeira found it difficult to assimilate because of his difficulty with English, so he decided to attend night classes at a high school in San Jose.

After three months, however, he stopped going to the classes because he grew exasperated from constantly switching between lower and higher class levels due to recommendations from his teachers.

"I no go back and forth. I go home and that's it," Sequeira said. "I no go to school."

This setback did not affect Sequeira, as he learned to speak English on his own and was surrounded by the comfort of his siblings, who lived close to him. Every three months, Sequeira's mother hosted a large family reunion, where all of her 11 children would visit her at her home in California.

"[The reunions were] amazing," Sequeira said. "When my mom was still here, everyone goes there and, of course, everyone got married and had kids. We were all a big family."

At the reunions, Sequeira and his family talked and played games from their childhood, specifically Portuguese card games like Sueca and Bisca.

"We would go around a big table, and everyone starts playing," Sequeira said. "We would just have a good time."

These reunions, however, stopped after Sequeira's mother passed away, limiting the number of times his family got together thereafter.

"It's part of life, [losing connection with your family,]" Sequeira said. "It's really part of the life."

Besides working and spending time with his family, Sequeira has a passion for gardening. At home, he plants orchids and has more than 230 vases.

Whenever Sequeira has free time, especially on Sundays, he heads to his garden and tends to the orchids, a practice he finds very relaxing.

"If I no feel good, my head hurts, I go there and everything goes away," Sequeira said. "Right now they start blooming and it's really good to take care of them."

Joining the SHS Community

Eight years ago, Sequeira began



John Sequeira takes time from work to watch a varsity boys' basketball game on Dec. 4.

working at the school. For Sequeira, the main highlights of working at the school include his love for students who appreciate his help.

"Everybody respect me the way I am and the way I work," Sequeira said. "It's like a family school. This is what I most love about working here."

Although his shift normally starts at 2 p.m., he comes to work two hours earlier during the basketball season so he can finish working before the games and relax and watch the team.

During his second year at the school, Sequeira remembers being thrown a basketball from one of the team members while he was cleaning the gym. Sequeira, with a rush of adrenaline, ran to the court and shot the ball — it swished in. He never took another shot because he wanted to treasure this victorious memory.

Two years ago, the boys' basketball team wanted to express its gratitude for Sequeira's unwavering support and care for the campus by honoring him during half time.

"[The team] call me in the center the gym, and every kid got suspenders on," Sequeira said as he pulled his own red suspenders. "Everyone take them off [and] then they give them to me. I love them, and they love me back. So it's a good thing. I play jokes with the kids, and they play the jokes with me. It's fun working here."

Everyone on the basketball team reciprocates the love Sequeira has for them.

"There are no words to describe [Se-

queira]," said junior Joseph Eschen, a varsity basketball player. "He is always so dedicated to whatever he does, and I can't thank him enough for that."

2013 alumnus Kyle Dozier remembers Sequeira's friendliness and support for students.

"Ever since I got to SHS as a freshman, anytime I was in the gym, [he] was always so welcoming and comforting and made it more fun for people to be in there," Dozier said.

Now having three granddaughters and one great granddaughter, Sequeira wishes to retire within the next two to three years and spend the majority of his free time with them.

He took a deep breath and paused for a few seconds. "I'm going to miss this place," he said.

Despite his plans for retirement, Sequeira wishes to continue attending every single home basketball game, the way he has since he started working at the school.

Sequeira has certainly come a long way, and he will continue to treasure the many opportunities he seized and memories he was able to experience.

Sequeira hopes that students at this school remain as kind and driven as they always have been. He also hopes that they find time to enjoy their life, just as he has.

"In here, [America] is a free country, and you work hard, but you got things to live good," Sequeira said. "If you no wanna work, of course you have no much, but if you work hard, you'll have the chance to get to live." ♦

EVENTS

TEDxSHS proves successful

By Michelle Leung & Trevor Leung

Eighty-seven students, parents and community members listened to five speakers during a three-hour TEDxSaratogaHighSchool event in the Theron Drama Center on Dec. 7.

Pacing back and forth across the signature red dot carpet of TED talks, the speakers related experiences connected to the theme "Wonder." Two videos of web comic creator Randall Munroe and educator Rita Pierson were also played.

Science teacher Lisa Cochrum spoke about the power of teachers and the potential of children.

"Clearly, we should never underestimate the capabilities of a student," she said during her presentation.

While technology has vastly increased students' interest in curriculum, teachers still need to sell "education like Apple selling its next iPhone," Cochrum also pointed out that learning goes both ways in a student-teacher relationship.

Another speaker was Hendo founder and Arx Pax CEO Greg Henderson, who described his invention, the hoverboard, and encouraged students to "never stop daring to wonder."

Keyvan Esfarijani, vice president of Intel and co-CEO of IM Flash Technologies, put the incredible rate of technology advancement into perspective for the audience.

According to Esfarijani, if the automobile industry advanced as fast as the tech industry, then a \$2,500 car would sell for two cents in a few years.

Senior Mahir Jethanandani, author of self-published book "The Immaculate Investor," defined failure and success through a mixture of personal anecdotes and financial comparisons during the event.

The most important advice to remem-

ber through failures and success, Jethanandani said, is understanding oneself.

"Maximizing your potential — and really listening to yourself and who you want to become — should be the primary driving factor to what your legacy's going to be for the four years you're going to be here," Jethanandani said.

Stuart Friedman, CEO of Global Context Inc., emphasized the importance of reverence for different cultures and different perspectives in the business world with a combination of "I have a friend" stories and interactive slides. For example, he said, in Australia, the maps are "upside down," or so they appear to Northern hemisphere residents.

The takeaway, according to Friedman, is not to treat others the way you want to be treated, but to "treat others the way they want to be treated."

Sophomore Nicole Lin and juniors Kabir Manghnani and Edwin Pan organized the event, a huge effort that consumed many hours.

Senior Anjali Manghnani, who emceed the TEDx event, said that the brainstorming began months ago. According to Anjali, the head organizers "put in their life, and the others of us our weekends, our weekdays, our time to write, draft, memorize, set up."

Junior Luke Salin was head of documenting the event, while junior Darby Williams organized break activities.

"It was, to be absolutely honest, a love of storytelling [that inspired the TEDx event]," Anjali said. "We all absolutely adore TED talks."

According to Kabir, the plan is to make the TEDx event an annual event.

"I hope that everyone will learn that there are always things for us to learn [and] there are always amazing experiences to [find] and stories to discover," Kabir said. "Curiosity didn't kill the cat; it taught it that it had nine lives." ♦



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SPEECH AND DEBATE

SHS places third at SCU Invitational

By Nidhi Jain & Sweeya Raj

The speech and debate team competed in the annual Dempsey-Cronin Memorial Invitational at Santa Clara University from Nov. 21-23. Saratoga High ranked third in Large School Sweepstakes, meaning that out of 51 schools, it received the third most awards.

On the debate side, teams competed in Lincoln-Douglas (LD), parliamentary (Parli), and public forum debate. Junior Shrey Desai placed first in varsity Lincoln-Douglas debate out of 124 people.

"It was a great feeling to win the first big invitational of the year and also win the whole tournament with just enough preparation," Desai said.

Along with his personal achievement, Desai said the tournament shows the team's growth over the years.

"Some of our students are nationally ranked and have done phenomenally at the most recent tournaments, so I have high hopes for the future," Desai said.

Parli imitates British Parliament, and involves two teams of two people debating about a topic they get 20 minutes to prepare for. In the varsity Parli, seniors Jerry Yang and Rohan Bhardwaj were octo finalists and Sudeep Raj and Michael Ong were quarterfinalists.

Public forum is similar to parliamentary debate, in which two teams of two people debate about a topic, but public

forum teams have a month to prepare the topic. Freshmen Karthik Ramachandran and Sathvik Koneru were quarterfinalists in novice public forum. In LD, freshman Austin Wang was an octo-finalist in the novice division.

In individual events, freshman Elora Pradhan finished (ranked in the top seven) and freshman Mervi Tan semi-finished (ranked in the top 14) in novice dramatic interpretation, an event in which the speaker performs a dramatic speech, while freshman Varun Viswanath semi-finished in oratorical interpretation (OI), where the speaker delivers a 10-minute pre-written speech.

Sophomore Nidhi Jain placed third in varsity humorous interpretation, giving her speech about family road trips. Juniors Michelle Cen and Vibha Seshardi semi-finished in novice OI and varsity original oratory, respectively.

Freshman Kyle Wang semi-finished in varsity extemporaneous speaking, where the speaker is given a choice of topics relating to domestic or international affairs, and has 30 minutes to prepare for a 7-minute speech.

Viswanath chose to perform a speech on the importance of "[listening] to [individuals] before helping them."

"SCU was huge and there were lots of people there too," Viswanath said. "I learned that I needed to put in a lot more work if I wanted to win a tournament like that one." ♦

CULTURE

Bûche de Noël brings the French department closer

By Catherine Tang

A handful of SHS French students decorated Christmas logs with icing and candy after school on Dec. 2 for the Bûche de Noël Fête decorating contest, held annually in celebration of the holidays.

In previous years, Los Gatos's French department joined the Saratoga students in the Bûche de Noël Fête decorating contest; however, Los Gatos was unable to participate this year.

Prior to attending the contest, students baked a cake and brought icing to the decorating contest. At the contest, students filled the cake with icing and rolled them up to decorate.

Senior Eunju Pak, who baked a cake

with her friend to bring to the decorating contest, said that "the cakes are usually really good."

At the end of the competition, French teachers Laura Lizundia and Kim Bergkamp also provided prizes for the best decorated cake.

"We never know what the prizes are until the end since they are always kept a secret," Pak said.

Because the French department is not very big, students said this is a good bonding experience for those taking the language.

"Although I'm not taking French this year, I am still going to the festival because I miss my French teachers and friends," Pak said. "It is a really nice way to end the year." ♦

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EBOLA >>

continued from pg. 1

Cheabow, made stronger by his most recent visit, has led him to be passionate about helping treat Ebola.

"We both have similar humor and maturity so he was kind of like Liberian me in my mind," he said. "It was pretty hard to say goodbye to him, because even without Ebola, I didn't know what the odds were that I'd see him again."

According to therichest.com, Liberia is the second poorest nation in the world. The average worker earns just under \$2 a day, and it is still recovering from an 11-year civil war. Salin believes that the Ebola epidemic has "stabbed an already open wound" in this developing country. The Ebola virus broke out in March of 2014 in West Africa and killed around 3,000 people this year in Liberia.

The organization Vision Trust has a team of volunteers going house-to-house to deliver necessities, which include items like fish, rice, soap, bleach and buckets. These supplies cost \$60 per family, and the organization depends solely on donations. So far, Salin's fam-

ily has raised \$600 of their \$3,000 goal.

"When we first heard in the news how many people were infected with the Ebola virus and how many people were dying, they were not just numbers and statistics to us," Salin's mother Denise Salin said. "We think of the children and teachers we have come to love, we see their faces and know their names."

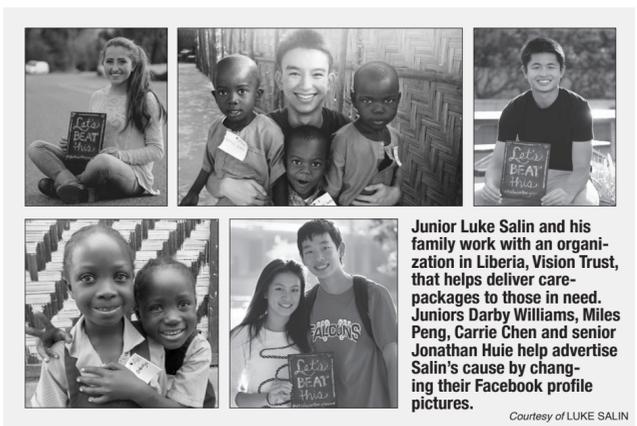
In order to get more donations, Salin has brought his campaign to Facebook, where large audiences are easily accessible, to promote his cause.

"I'm taking to social media to help spread awareness," he said. "Most people treat Ebola like a joke, especially the American media."

According to Salin, the media often dehumanizes the victims of Ebola in Africa by making it seem like the virus will explode any day now.

As a photographer, Salin is able to increase his impact. He has been taking Facebook profile pictures of students who donated to his cause holding a "Let's beat this" sign.

"Photography is the best way to grab people's attention now, especially if it's a really emotion-capturing photo," he said. "It [spreads] awareness across multiple groups of friend networks."



Junior Luke Salin and his family work with an organization in Liberia, Vision Trust, that helps deliver care-packages to those in need. Juniors Darby Williams, Miles Peng, Carrie Chen and senior Jonathan Huie help advertise Salin's cause by changing their Facebook profile pictures. Courtesy of LUKE SALIN

Through the process of using his talents to incite change, Salin has been exposed to amazing moments.

"I don't take my wealthy U.S. life for granted anymore, or at least, I appreciate what I have more," he said. "It's pretty eye opening to have seen something as

it's about to go down in history." ♦

Students can contribute to the cause by donating on https://app.mobilecause.com/ef/EBOLARELIEF/DeniseSalin or taking a photo of themselves holding a sign that says "Let's Beat This" #ebolaintheground and posting it on a form of social media.

ZUMBA >>

continued from pg. 1

up 20 percent of their grade in their APUSH class. Anzalone allowed students to get up to 20 extra credit points per semester.

Due to recent student and parent complaints to the administration, however, the students of Anzalone's APUSH classes will no longer receive extra credit for attending her Zumba classes starting second semester.

One of the students who complained (and requested to be anonymous for this story) based his argument on the idea of

equal opportunity for all students.

"I thought it was unfair to have a system where students would pay directly for extra credit," he said. "It would give an advantage to some students who could afford to go over other students who couldn't afford to go."

Many students say that the decision was unfair and that Zumba was a way to take them away from academics.

"I don't understand why [people] can't appreciate the fact that Anzalone is just trying to help the class," junior Felicia Hung said. "Zumba serves as a breather from homework, and a really fun and cute way to work out."

Hung added that the extra credit was simply an "incentive for people who

have never gone to experience Zumba."

The administration declined to comment specifically on the repeal of Zumba extra credit, but did say there is no official school policy on extra credit.

Principal Paul Robinson characterized extra credit as sometimes having the potential to be valuable as long as it's tied to objectives of the class. He also said that if there is a cost involved, there must be other options.

In class, Anzalone has clarified multiple times that she is not receiving the money directly from the students. She receives an hourly wage from the community centers where she teaches Zumba. This wage is not determined based on the number of students who attend.

"It's a blurry area; you're still paying for something, but you're not paying the teacher," she said.

Anzalone offered other types of extra credit opportunities that do not require money, such as attending the Pizza and Politics political forum in November and writing a reflection about it.

Having been a teacher for 17 years prior to becoming an administrator, Robinson believes that extra credit is beneficial to students as a whole, but should be distributed with caution.

"Our main focus and the extra things that we try to do and give [students] are really things that will benefit you, help you and make you an even stronger student," he said. ♦

BUSINESS INSIDER

SHS named one of top 25 public schools in America

By Emily Chen & Ami Nachiappan

Running through the halls in the morning, teachers hectically enter their classrooms, greeted with piles of lesson plans and homework to grade. They survive the entire day, at times spending more hours at school than at home. Their true dedication to helping students learn shows in the way they teach and present material.

Saratoga's teachers recently received an A plus rating from Business Insider. The magazine released an article on Nov. 4 naming the 25 best public high schools in the country. Saratoga High School was No. 23.

The rankings were drawn from Niche, a school data site that ranks schools based on reviews and opinions of parents, students and residents. Niche analyzed the schools in multiple categories, including student culture and diversity, sports and fitness, health and safety, academics and extracurricular activities.

According to principal Paul Robinson, receiving this ranking was "a great honor and a total shock," especially since there was no application process to be considered for this achievement.

In the category of resources and facilities, the school received an A minus. According to physics and biology teacher Jenny Garcia, who has taught at Saratoga for 22 years, the facilities here "are pretty dang good."

"We have amazing maintenance people who fix anything we need to have fixed [at] any time. [And] our custodial

staff — have you been out there right when lunch ends? Go out a half hour later and the place is completely clean," Garcia said. "They come into every room every night to clean up. So in my mind, they're an A plus."

In addition, most teachers truly believe that the school provides a thriving learning environment for students.

"When I started at Saratoga, it was a really good school, striving to be great," said English teacher Catherine Head, who has taught here for 26 years. "I think it now qualifies as great."

In the category of student culture and diversity, the school received a B plus, the lowest grade of any category.

Robinson believes the school is still very diverse in the variety of beliefs and backgrounds that students and teachers bring to the school. In the academics and teachers categories, the school scored high, earning an A plus for each.

"Our academics speak for themselves because students work so hard to achieve the things they want to achieve," Robinson said. "And I'm extremely happy and proud of our staff because they work just as hard."

Though Robinson is proud, he said it is too hard to compare schools, and many good ones have similar characteristics. In the end, many teachers said there is more to a school than what can be measured in any ranking.

"The people here are fine individuals, and that's something I genuinely believe," Head said. "I really like this school — I like the staff, I like the students and I think we're definitely the best in the country." ♦

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Humanities not path to flipping burgers

By Ashley Chen & Carolyn Sun

"Why would you major in ___?" Fill in the blank with English, history or philosophy — or any other liberal arts major — and you get one of the most common questions among seniors at Saratoga High.

Too often, at Saratoga High and other schools that emphasize STEM fields, students who declare their intentions to major in the humanities evoke instant derision.

Humanities majors are becoming increasingly rare. According to the New York Times, the percentage of undergraduate students who major in liberal arts hovers around 7 percent — compared to 14 percent in 1970.

Even at Ivy League universities, traditionally the stronghold of broad education, interest is declining. Harvard posted a 10 percent decline in humanities majors in just the last decade.

At Saratoga, students strong in STEM eye students who have intentions to major in humanities, inwardly questioning their future career prospects.

They sneeringly ask intended English majors if they're going to be teachers and wonder what graduates could do with a B.A. in history.

Students should be respected for their choices of major, whether they decide to pursue a technical field or not. To combat the disparagement of liberal arts, the school should expose students to more professionals who majored in the humanities. For instance, they could invite speakers or organize more trips during which students could "shadow" a liberal arts major for a work day.

Perhaps, a more troubling trend is that some students who prefer STEM even say that they would not take English or social studies classes if they weren't requirements to graduate. Instead, they would load up on more STEM classes. This kind of thinking is foolish. A liberal arts education, especially in high school, is valuable throughout life, even if one doesn't major in the humanities. English is crucial in not only communicating but also expanding people's capacities to think clearly, and a social studies education is important for participating in politics as an active citizen.

In addition, evidence suggests that reading literary fiction, a strong requirement in most humanities programs, can help people develop empathy and perform better in social situations such as job interviews.

Also, contrary to popular belief, liberal arts degrees don't doom students to a lifetime of flipping burgers. According to a 2012 survey by Millennial Branding and Experience, Inc., corporations actively recruit humanities students at a similar rate to technical students. Humanities majors can pursue careers as teachers or professors, public relations managers, specialists,



political scientists, international diplomats, financial analysts and even medical doctors.

These skills can help a potential applicant get hired anywhere — even a technology firm which publicizes its goal of hiring applicants with "a variety of strengths and passions," not just people who can crunch numbers.

Every company needs to hire workers in both STEM and the humanities fields; productivity and skill is key. While companies may need programmers, they also need workers for the human resources department, communications and finance. Being well-rounded and able to communicate well is crucial to success individually, and as a team.

In short, the humanities aren't as hopeless as they appear. In fact, they aren't hopeless at all. ♦

Distrust of vaccination irrational, dangerous, foolish

By Katherine Sun

Around the world, some parents will search for days to secure vaccines for their children. According to a United Nations Foundation campaign, one in five children lacks access to vaccines, and 1.5 million children in developing countries die each year due to vaccine-preventable diseases.

This begs the question — why would any parent with access to immunization refuse to vaccinate their child?

Today, numerous parents — many of them college educated and well off — delay or even forsake vaccines for their children, clinging to the beliefs that vaccines are harmful to their health or are money-making schemes by the government.

A 2006 study in the Journal of the American Medical Association revealed that from 1991-2004, the portion of children whose parents refused to let them vaccinate increased by 6 percent a year, leading to more than a twofold increase.

Known as the anti-vaccination movement, these parents have accepted the media-perpetuated misinformation, believing that vaccines are risky or that the targeted diseases are not serious threats.

The problem is that vaccine-preventable diseases cannot simply be ignored, as they cost valuable resources and easily avoidable deaths each year.

People who refuse to vaccinate selfishly put others at risk for disease. When enough members of a community are immunized against a disease, most of

them are protected because there is little opportunity for an outbreak.

Groups such as newborn infants, pregnant women, cancer patients and AIDS patients are especially susceptible when the rest of society refuses to be vaccinated, because they cannot receive vaccines.

The safety of the entire community is compromised by those who can afford to be immunized and yet refuse to do so.

Vaccination also requires far less doctors, time and hospital space than disease treatment. People should vaccinate so that resources are reserved for patients who truly need them, rather than wasted on easily preventable cases.

The medical journal Pediatrics reports that for children born in the U.S. in 2009 alone, vaccination will prevent 42,000 early deaths and 20 million cases of disease.

Anti-vaccination proponents often say that vaccines carry dangerous side effects, such as chronic diseases or damage to the immune system. In reality, vaccines' widespread use guarantees that they are held to steep safety standards and regularly checked by the U.S. government. Medical evidence does not support that they lead to side effects listed by the anti-vaccination movement. It's also important to note that the

risk of serious injury from vaccine-preventable diseases far outweighs the risk from vaccination.

According to the World Health Organization, most vaccine reactions are minor and temporary, such as a sore arm or mild fever, and serious side effects are so rare that risk cannot be assessed.

On the other hand, vaccine-preventable diseases like polio and measles have caused numerous confirmed cases of paralysis, blindness and even death.

Another common worry stems from the belief that vaccines serve as tools in a money-making conspiracy between physicians and pharmaceutical companies.

On the contrary, money generated from illness trumps money made from vaccines, as preventable diseases often bear the baggage of hospitalization and expensive treatment.

A report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that hospitalizations avoided and lives saved through vaccination over the past two decades will have saved \$295 billion in direct costs, such as medical expenses, and \$1.38 trillion in societal costs.

Perhaps the most widespread belief of the anti-vaccination movement gained infamy in 1998, when British surgeon Andrew J. Wakefield and 12 colleagues of the medical journal Lancet

proposed that the measles vaccine could cause autism.

In the years since, more than a dozen studies have convincingly shown the findings to be false. The article was retracted by the journal and Wakefield was stripped of his medical license. Unfortunately, the public's fear of immunization has only increased as fresh speculative theories multiply around the web.

Perhaps children are allergic to vaccines, people claim, or maybe they cause autism. The rumors run the gamut from blatantly false to outright ridiculous: there are some who say that vaccines weaken children's immune systems, when the reality is just the opposite.

Though claims range far and wide, people have to remember that the evidence for these claims just isn't there.

Vaccines prevent fatal diseases and spare people from suffering. They carry a high standard of safety that is constantly assessed by medical experts who score no financial gain from vaccine consumption.

Parents have lost sight of the real killers — at the cost of their children's safety and the safety of others.

U.S. citizens are gifted with leading medical professionals, institutes and resources that people in many other countries lack access to.

So why must they insist upon turning down these privileges? Rather than wait for diseases to make a comeback, more people need to consider the lives of themselves and of the people around them. ♦

THE saratoga falcon <<

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Zumba: questioning extra credit

This year's APUSH juniors don't know how good they have it. Some teachers now accept notes that are typed, not handwritten, and complete chapter notes are no longer needed. Only theses and PAMs (perspective, audience and meaning summaries) are still required, but the class is still an academic challenge. Luckily, extra credit is available.

Traditionally, teachers have offered extra credit as a welcome way to help students keep their sanity when grades begin to inevitably slip as the semester progresses through difficult material. Recently, the administration learned that APUSH teacher Kim Anzalone had been offering academic extra credit to students who attended her Saturday Zumba classes, and Anzalone had to change her policy.

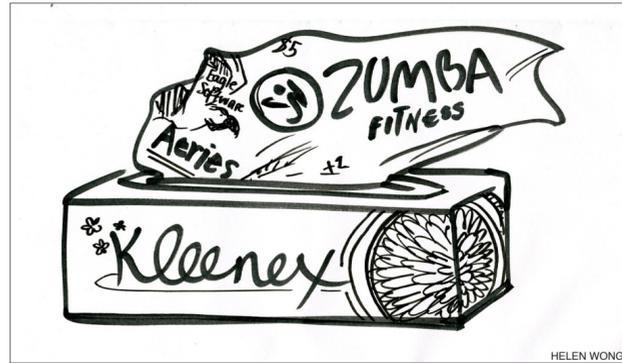
Anzalone is a teacher beloved by students across classes, and the situation unfairly demonizes her for just wanting to help students stay active and healthy. At SHS, stressed out upperclassmen often won't take the energy to take care of themselves without an academic incentive.

Her good intentions were clear, even if her efforts weren't right according to the letter of the law. It essentially allowed students to buy extra credit, as Zumba classes require a fee paid to the local community center where she teaches the class.

Of course, Zumba had nothing to do with U.S. history, but it was a good way to try to boost a teetering grade and gain a dose of sanity at the same time.

The counter argument is that all grades should be related to the mas-

>> candid caricatures



HELEN WONG

tery of class objectives, and attending a Zumba class is not academic in the same way that teachers giving extra credit for tissue boxes is not academic.

And yet, both Zumba and tissue boxes benefit the student: Students exercise

once a week, and they can blow their nose in class without using their sleeves. The problem lies in that they are both connected with money. Increasingly, public schools are trying to enforce equity policies, and Zumba extra credit is an example of something that isn't acceptable anymore.

A contrast to this is the credit given in Spanish 4 and SAP. These students can obtain their required cultural credit by attending movie nights hosted by Spanish Club. Students who attend are encouraged to donate \$5 to the club funds, but the payment is optional.

Ten percent of a grade is a significant enough amount to warrant put-

ting in effort to fulfill the cultural credit requirement, whether it be through attending club meetings or giving \$5 for a movie.

The core of extra credit's allure is the possibility of being able to improve a grade, which appeals to everyone but puts teachers in a tough position to decide how to do it. The loss of Zumba credit is a hindrance, but it's not a serious one: Students can still get extra credit through other means, and they can exercise with friends on their own.

There are plenty of other avenues for extra credit in APUSH in particular, and students don't necessarily have to pay money to do it. There are club events and activities out there that actually connect back to the course material, such as History Day, Model UN, and even historical essay contests. There are lots. So it's time to stop mourning the loss of Zumba. ♦

Zumba had nothing to do with U.S. history, but it was a good way to boost a teetering grade.

Assisted suicide laws may lead to rights abuses

by Rachel Zhang

With \$50, you can buy 10 Subway sandwiches, a pair of Rainbow sandals or a dose of lethal medication.

On Oct. 27, 1997, Oregon passed the Death with Dignity Act, which allows terminally ill patients to end their life through a lethal medication prescribed by their physician. Since then, three more states, Washington, Vermont and Montana, have legalized assisted suicide.

Recently, this act has been highly publicized by the story of Brittany Maynard, a 29-year-old woman diagnosed with terminal brain cancer. She argued that death with dignity would alleviate the intolerable pain caused by series of surgeries and chemotherapy. She attained the lethal medication and ended her life after her husband's birthday on Oct. 26.

In Maynard's case, the Assisted Suicide Act seems to be reasonably ethical. Since she was not depressed nor was she pressured to make this decision, she

showed the positive side of this dilemma. However, she is in the minority.

"Only between 10 percent and 15 percent of [terminally ill patients] who attempt suicide eventually die by their own [will]," Dr. Sandeep Jauhar, a cardiologist, told CNN.

Consequently, the other 85 to 90 percent have to endure the backlash of this act, which proves to promote an already vicious health care system. This law prohibits terminally ill patients who want to live from receiving justified treatment from insurance companies.

For instance, Barbara Wagner, a 64-year-old in 2008, was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer. Doctors prescribed her a \$4,000-a-month medication option that the Oregon Health plan refused to cover. Instead, it offered to pay for the \$50 physician-assisted death drug.

Despite the severity of her diagnosis, she has never considered assisted suicide even at her lowest point.

In Wagner's case, the Oregon health care opted for the significantly cheaper choice that is, essentially, forcing some-

one to die as a result of economic incentives. Pulling the plug early not only violates the right to free choice, but actively hastens death, disrespecting both the patients and their family members who may want to spend their last months together.

"The problem with the Oregon plan is that it sounds like administrators, not physicians, are making treatment decisions," Dr. Jonathan Groner, clinical professor of surgery at OSU College told ABC.

This trend is also seen in a 1998 study from Georgetown University's center for Clinical Bioethics that investigated the link between profit motivated health care and assisted suicide. The study warns us of the dangers of "legalizing [physician-assisted suicide] in a medical care environment that is characterized by pressure on physicians to control the cost of care." Because of this act, there is a real danger that the needs and desires of the patient are disregarded.

In the case described in The Oregonian in October 1999, 85-year-old Kate

Cheney was diagnosed with dementia and was pressured by her daughter to take the voluntary lethal medication. The psychiatrist deemed Cheney's mental situation to be unfit "to weigh the options of assisted suicide" and so declined the authorization of the medication. Upon her assertive daughter's request, Cheney was re-evaluated at Kaiser Permanente and was prescribed the lethal medication.

Cheney was forced into ending her life because of her mental disabilities. Moreover, her physicians cannot face legal consequences, because of the "safe-guard" that prevents any liability against doctors, as long as they claim they acted in "good faith." This "good faith" belief makes the act dangerous and vulnerable to abuse.

For cases like Brittany Maynard's, the decision to die is measured and voluntary. For others like Cheney's, the law is an abuse of human rights, and the risk of more cases like Cheney's happening far outweighs the likelihood of another noble, Maynard-esque case. ♦

American issues exposed with Ferguson

by Claire Chou & Karissa Dong

On Nov. 24, the Missouri Grand Jury declared no indictment for Ferguson Officer Darren Wilson. Wilson shot 18-year-old Michael Brown on Aug. 9, igniting a series of protests that led to the looting of stores, setting of fires and the arrest of hundreds of protesters in cities across the nation.

The grand jury, composed of 12 citizens, was presented evidence by county prosecutor Bob McCulloch, in order to decide whether to indict Wilson.

To begin with, McCulloch was far from the unbiased prosecutor needed for this case. African-American leaders cited his controversial past of siding with the police and requested that a special prosecutor replace McCulloch on the Brown case. The request was backed by a petition with 70,000 signatures, but all came to naught — McCulloch flatly refused, insisting that he's "done a very good job."

It's no wonder that community members don't trust the police. And despite Wilson's blatant denial of any possible racial tensions in his ABC interview with George Stephanopoulos, statistics show an overwhelmingly white police force (of 53 police officers, three were black) in contrast to a black majority in the community.

Wilson claimed that he "did his job right" when he shot an unarmed Brown six times "out of self-defense."

In his grand jury testimony, Wilson said, "It looks like a demon; that's how angry he looked."

It's outrageous that Wilson refers to Brown with the inhuman pronoun "it," describes him with bestial terms like "demon" and "Hulk Hogan" and still insists that he has no racial bias.

Wilson continued to paint this picture of a monster, saying that after several shots, "[Brown] was almost bulking up to run through the shots, like it was making him mad that I'm shooting at him."

"[Wilson's description of Brown] sits flush with a century of stereotypes and a bundle of recent research on implicit bias and racial perceptions of pain," said Jamelle Bouie, writer for the Slate Magazine. "In so many words, Wilson describes the 'black brute,' a stock figure of white supremacist rhetoric in the lynching era of the late 19th and early 20th centuries."

And regardless of racial implications, is it possible to justify the six shots that hit Brown — one of which entered the top of his skull — out of "self-defense"?

Racism in American culture aside, the legal process was ridden with errors — mistakes that are hotly debated in terms of whether or not they were intentional toward getting Wilson a non-indictment. Before Wilson testified to the grand jury, assistant district attorney Kathy Alizadeh passed out copies of an outdated statute regarding police officers' use of force, a portion of which stated that it was legal to shoot fleeing suspects simply because they are fleeing. It was a 1979 Missouri law that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled unconstitutional in 1985.

This shockingly unprofessional quality of district attorneys only continued: Alizadeh, who later corrected her mistake and distributed updated copies, never clarified what portion of the statute was ruled unconstitutional.

According to Justice Antonin Scalia in 1992 in United States vs. Williams, the purpose of a grand jury is "only to examine upon what foundation [the charge] is made by the prosecutor ... The suspect under investigation by the grand jury [has never] been thought to

>> candid caricatures



MICHELLE CEN

have a right to testify or to have exculpatory evidence presented."

Wilson, however, testified for hours. According to CNN legal analyst Sunny Hostin, Wilson's account was "fancible and not credible," and the cross examination was filled with "softball questions" from the prosecutors who "treated him with such kid gloves."

Adding to controversial accounts and evidence, the Ferguson police department claimed that Brown's distance from Wilson's car was 35 feet, but activist Shaun King posted a video in which he measured the length himself, a distance

that came out to be around 130 feet.

Police officers have too wide a leeway in self-defense. According to Brown's attorney, Michael Brown's law (body cameras on all police officers) could solve "this game of witnesses, mirrors and secret grand jury proceedings."

With such changes, Michael Brown's father said, "We won't have to see this play out over and over again all across this country."

This tragic case makes it clear that there is a need for reform in the quality of American policework and justice.

#staywoke Saratoga. ♦

>> togatalks

How do you feel about the Ferguson decision? "It seems like a racist attack on a black person; the officer was not threatened in any way." sophomore Nicholas Sum

"The evidence wasn't complete. [Wilson] washed the blood off his hands after [he shot Brown.]" freshman Sahm Rafati

"I don't think it was right. [Michael Brown] deserved a better trial." junior Jayee Malwankar

>> LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Re: "Rally commissioners frustrated by restrictions on jokes by administration"

Dear Falcon Staff,

I'm writing this letter in response to several pieces in [the Nov. 21 issue of the] Falcon regarding the perceived administrative restrictions on student activities, particularly around rallies and Homecoming skits. First off, I'll say it's reasonable for students to want to exercise freedom of speech. I'm not so old that I don't remember feeling like my voice was sometimes unheard or quelled because of my age. I went to Saratoga too, after all. It's okay too, to be annoyed or frustrated when the adults on campus exercise their authority when they think students are out of line.

What is of grave concern to me, however, is the fact that the editors decided to publish a staff editorial that flatly dismissed concerns about historical and cultural sensitivity. The issue at hand is not at all about censorship; it's about

and the Falcon staff have shown lack of judgment and empathy. No one is saying don't have fun. Be clever. Be funny. But most of all, be better than this. Because you are better and more teachable than whining about the mean grown-ups who won't let you say and do what you want.

I believe the students of Saratoga are open-minded and eager to learn about the bigger world around them. I believe you are thoughtful young men and women who are smart and gracious, especially when presenting social commentary. I believe that you want to be culturally relevant and racially and socioeconomically sensitive to those who are far less fortunate than you. Don't settle for cheap laughs. Expect more of yourselves. Learn. Grow.

I'm here for more than showing you how to fill out your Common Application forms. I'd be happy to introduce you to someone who actually is a day worker in front of Home Depot, so that you can admire their courage and fortitude as much as I do. I'd love to discuss what's going on in Ferguson and why it should matter to us. You want to problem solve about administrative censorship? Let's do it. My door is open. ♦

-Alinna Satake, Guidance Counselor

Re: "Downtown should be less upscale, more upbeat"

Dear Editor,

As the former owners of Wildwood Market, as part of Saratoga High School (Charley Dutro senior, Anna Dutro sophomore) and as part of Saratoga Community since 1960, we feel very sad that the article lacked accuracy: "Wildwood Market ... closed down mainly due to its expensive offerings such as \$7 sandwiches..."

The principle of any journalist is accuracy and we were never approached to ask the reason of WWM's closure.

Closing the business was a very hard experience for our family and also a big financial problem for us. I find a lack of sensitivity towards our family by publishing a lie without any regards to my children, students at SHS and Redwood and if [the writer] feels the need to make a point, it should be backed by facts even if this is an Opinion article. ♦

-Lety Dutro, Saratoga resident

Editor's note: While the writer may not have fully enumerated all the reasons for WWM's closure, she meant to express her perspective on why she and other students did not go to the store; she did not mean to offend WWM or its owners.

>> togatalks

Is assisted suicide justified? "I think it should strictly be allowed if it's for untreatable, terminal diseases." junior Naveed Riazat

"Suicide is a solution to a temporary problem, but there are cases where it's justified." freshman Madison Hung

"The person assisting holds a deep moral battle. In a way it's murder, in a way it's not." freshman Ayush Aggrawal



Millenials are growing up too tech dependent



GRAPHIC BY HELEN CHEN

BY Maya Ravichandran

At 17, I shouldn't feel very old. In fact, relative to the rest of the world, I'm pretty young. But I've recently realized that this year, most freshmen were born in 2000; most weren't part of the 20th century. Coming to this realization suddenly makes me feel ancient.

In my age, elementary school fads included lunchables, smelly erasers that came in various colors, silly putty and Heelys, shoes with wheels.

Nowadays, kids are leaving dolls and blocks to sit in the dust while they happily download the newest app or game. With so many things becoming digitalized, the generation gap has never been more prominent.

Fifteen years ago, the iPhone did not exist, tablets had not been fully developed, and flip phones were just getting popular.

And this, my friends, can actually be dangerous (some say, more dangerous than using Heelys blindfolded). ABC News reports that relying only on digital media to entertain toddlers can displace

other key skills like eyesight, fine motor skills and pencil grip.

The generation gap usually refers to the huge technology gap between the Baby Boomers, born in the 1940s to the 1960s, and the millennials, born in the 1980s and beyond.

This gap is getting ever bigger, even just a difference of five years is a huge culture change.

Advertisers now directly market to young children who see the colorful touch screen devices on television and beg their parents to get them one.

In one ad, a woman is shown switching her phone to "kids mode" and then giving her phone to her young son. Apparently, kids need to play on their parents' phone for entertainment because there is nothing else for them to do.

Children are no longer begging their parents to purchase the newest book or

doll or action figure; instead, they ask for an iPad on which to play games. It seems as if the words "download," "charger" and "app" have become words in every 3-year-old's vocabulary.

The increased concentration on videogames and computer screens is a sign of hyperactivity, a characteristic of ADHD.

Dr. Christopher Lucas, associate professor of child psychiatry at New York University School of Medicine, told

TIME magazine, "The kind of concentration that children bring to videogames and television is not the kind they need to thrive in school or elsewhere in real life."

There isn't a clear way to solve this problem because, in our society, it's almost entirely necessary to be connected to the Internet to succeed.

It is all up to parents to expose chil-

dren to electronics at the right age. There is no need for a toddler to be learning to read an eBook.

In fact, I would argue that the feeling of turning pages and touching the pictures on the book is much more satisfying than pressing a button to continue.

A study done by the National Center for Biotechnology Information concluded that the light from electronic devices can harm humans.

The study said concentrations of melatonin, a hormone that regulates our sleep and wake cycles, were reduced after constant exposure to computer screens. This switch to a technology-focused world might actually be introducing new behavioral and mental problems for the future generations.

Whether we millennials like it or not, our world will become more and more advanced and the younger kids will grow more and more away from what we used to know.

In five years, the world will probably be radically different, both technologically and physically, and all we can do is keep up with the new developments. ♦

Nowadays, kids are leaving dolls and blocks to sit in the dust while they happily download the newest app.

Paid college counselors relieve app stress

BY Sabrina Chen

It's late on a Friday night and I've just submitted my Common App. I proudly skim over the PDF of my submission, giddy from the lack of sleep and the stress that's just been lifted off my shoulders.

Suddenly, my heart stops. At the place where my activities essay was supposed to go, there are three lines of blank space - had I forgotten to paste it in?

Overcome with panic, I start to cry, picking up my cell phone and dialing the first person on my favorites list.

"Hello? Sabrina?" my college counselor says confused, "What's... up?"

I even forget to apologize for bothering him as I explain in short breaths and incoherent sentences what I feared had happened.

"Calm down. Stop crying, it's going to be fine," he said. "You can just add the essay into your supplement - admissions won't know the difference."

Over the past three months my college counselor has become a friend. He's been there for all my mental breakdowns, from "there isn't space for me in multivariable calculus class" to "I just flunked the ACT," and he always has a solution.

A growing business especially in the Bay Area, college counseling has incited much controversy, arousing questions about unfair advantages and ethical implications.

Being a fairly new industry - the Independent Educational Consultant's Association (IECA) was formed just 36 years ago - there is little to no centralized regulation and many counselors in this area are either overworked or charging exorbitant prices for their services.

At the same time, choosing a reliable, dedicated counselor can relieve seniors of significant amounts of stress during

the application season.

Many argue that the large sum of money some parents pay for college counseling puts others without the money to pay for the service at a disadvantage; according to the IECA, the average charge for college counseling is approximately \$4,000 per year.

Yet how is it any different from paying more to go to a private school or paying for a private tutor?

Parents simply want the best for their children, and if they can afford it, college counseling can be a valuable investment.

College counseling provides students with resources that aren't readily available at school. Though I dreaded spending my weekends at all-day essay workshops and three-hour interview lectures, they paid off in the long run.

Unlike many of my classmates who will be frantically navigating Common App at 11:59 on New Year's Day, I've already completed most of my applications.

Furthermore, though the school guidance department does do comprehensive workshops for filling out applications and essay writing, there is no way a single guidance counselor can read and edit the applications of all 90 of her students in the detailed way a private counselor can.

In fact, according to the American School Counselor Association, the student to school counselor ratio is about 470 to 1 in the United States.

Critics of college counseling say that it's not worth the price - that students should be able to handle a couple appli-

>> candidcaricatures



HELEN WONG

cations; after all, there wasn't such thing as college counseling a couple decades ago.

What they fail to realize, however, is that times have changed and that admissions is a rat race with millions of 4.0-plus GPA students, with page long lists of extracurriculars who are all applying to the same elite universities.

College counselors can help to set a student apart, to find "quirks," as my own counselor puts it. When I was having difficulties deciding on an undergraduate major, my counselor sat me down and asked me a series of questions. I organized my thoughts, realizing that I wanted to incorporate science and humanities into my college experience.

My counselor suggested public health, a field I'd hardly ever heard of. After looking into it, however, I realized it was the perfect fit for my personality and aspirations.

While some students choose to use

other resources like collegeconfidential.org for advice and English teachers for essay editing, they lack the advantage of constant, knowledgeable support through the application process. College counselors provide assistance even beyond academics, including emotional support in times of crisis.

My parents too are relieved that we chose to use a college counselor. Dinner table conversations are no longer debates about early action schools and interview strategies.

My mom in particular loves that I no longer beg her to edit my essays or have stress attacks when I come across ambiguous instructions on Common App.

Especially at the peak of college app season, I am beyond grateful to be working with someone who can guide me through each step of the process, though I feel that with a few more surprise phone calls, that feeling won't be mutual. ♦

2014: YEAR IN REVIEW

A QUICK LOOK BACK AT THE DEFINING MOMENTS OF THE PAST YEAR



Best Sports Win: Senior Steven Sum wins second place at the State Competition on Nov. 29.



Best Academic Win: Junior Celine Liang wins first place at Math Prize for Girls on Sept. 27.



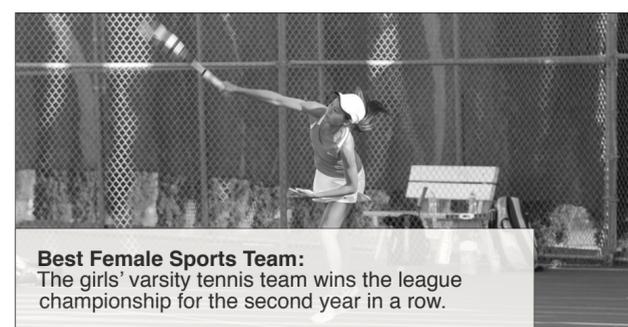
Best Famous Moment: Alumnus Jason Li pitches his company iReTron on Shark Tank on March 14.



Best Prom Venue: Last year's seniors have an unforgettable night at AT&T park.



Best Addition to Campus: The grand opening of the new Sports Plaza in June beautifies the field.



Best Female Sports Team: The girls' varsity tennis team wins the league championship for the second year in a row.



Best Male Sports Team: The boys' varsity tennis team takes home the California Peach Tree Classic Title from Fresno in March.



Most Popular Campaign: Assistant principal Brian Safine advocates for ALS by participating in the Ice Bucket Challenge.



Most Innovative Addition: Marching band includes three string players in the 2014 show.



Best School Assembly: Attendance secretary Mandy Armes poses at the Just Be Kind assembly, which took place in March.

Courtesy of LUKE SALIN

Courtesy of Now and Forever Studios

TALISMAN // NAVEED RIAZIT

December 12, 2014



So you think you can gift wrap

REPORTERS COMPLETE THEIR FIRST CHALLENGE: GIFT WRAPPING A TISSUE BOX IN TWO MINUTES WITH THREE PIECES OF TAPE. THE REPORTER WITH THE NEATEST WRAPPING WINS!



Sophomore Rachel Zhang laughs as she attempts to cover her tissue box with gift wrap, skillfully.



Senior Sherrilyn Ling ponders how she lost, while junior Andrew Jiang looks down in disappointment at his finished gift. Sophomore Spring Ma basks in the glory of winning the competition.



Sophomore Nidhi Jain shows off her partially covered gift with pride.



Junior Ariel Liu laughs as she tries to tape the gift with her last piece of tape.

Judged by Helen Chen and Gwynevere Hunger



Scavenger Hunt Extravaganza

REPORTERS EMBARK TO FIND THE VERY GIFT WHICH THEY WRAPPED. LIFE EDITORS HID THESE GIFTS AROUND THE BACK OF THE SCHOOL, AND THE REPORTERS HAD FIVE MINUTES TO FIND AS MANY GIFTS AS THEY POSSIBLY COULD.



Andrew chases Sherrilyn, trying to grab the gift she just found hidden in the tree. Don't worry, she escaped in time.



Nidhi peers curiously into the bush, thinking there is a present there.



The contestants who found presents stand separate from those who didn't. There were a lot of tears and laughs.

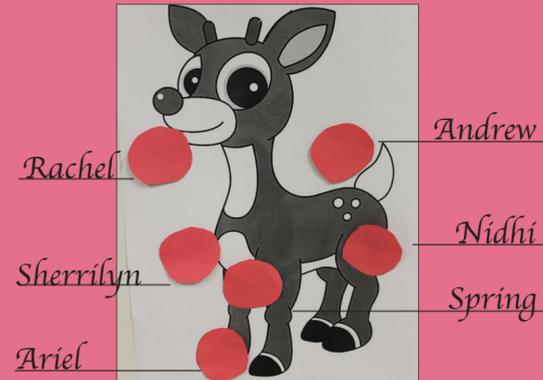


Sherrilyn jumps up with glee off the steps after finding her first present.



Pin the nose on Rudolph the red nosed reindeer

REPORTERS ATTEMPT TO PIN A RED NOSE ON RUDHOLPH WHILE BLINDFOLDED. RACHEL ZHANG WON THIS GAME AFTER USING HER SUPER SENSE TO PIN THE NOSE ONLY AN INCH AWAY!



Fellow staff members guide Spring in the right direction after she turns 90 degrees away from the reindeer.



Nidhi gets ready to pin the nose on the reindeer after being pointed in the right direction.



REPORTERS COMPETE IN A SERIES OF CHRISTMAS-THEMED RELAY GAMES.

ALL GRAPHICS BY HELEN CHEN



Teacher wish lists: Is it a hit or a big fat miss?

REPORTERS COMPOSED A LIST OF TEN ITEMS THAT THEY THINK WOULD BE ON A TEACHER'S HOLIDAY GIFT LIST. TEACHERS GAVE THEIR VERDICTS ON THE LISTS. BELOW ARE SIX ITEMS REPORTERS GOT RIGHT. FIRST PLACE IS THE LEFTMOST LIST AND FOURTH THE RIGHTMOST.

Lisa Cochrum

- 1) Echidna cough drops
- 2) Mute button for students
- 3) Eject button from the classroom
- 4) A ticket to a show of students reenacting the wall of shame quotes
- 5) A bunny
- 6) A date with Mythbusters.

-Spring Ma

10 hits

Amy Keys

- 1) Adverb song
- 2) Basket of persimmons
- 3) Volume of complete works of William Shakespeare
- 4) PDF and Audio version of every book
- 5) Video montage of students acting in Hamlet and Crucible
- 6) Aeries-entering robot

-Ariel Liu

9 hits

Kirk Davis

- 1) New golf clubs to play 18 holes at Pebble Beach
- 2) Super expensive lab equipment
- 3) New projector for the classroom
- 4) Medium Hadron Collider
- 5) Tour of AT&T Park
- 6) Tissues
- 7) Jeans short shorts (No!)

-Andrew Jiang

8 hits

Kirk Abe

- 1) Thai food
- 2) Santa costume for dog
- 3) Metallic balloons
- 4) Basketballs with Warriors logo
- 5) Alarm to keep high school trick-or-treaters away from his house
- 6) Exclusive seat at Homecoming Quad Days every year

-Sherrilyn Ling

7 hits



Rap Battles: spreading the cheer

REPORTERS ENGAGE IN A RAP BATTLE AGAINST EACH OTHER. THERE WERE THREE PRELIMINARY FACE-OFFS AND THE WINNER OF EACH ROUND ADVANCED TO THE FINAL ROUND.



Here is what Ariel said: "You're not the grinch because you're only one inch." An example of Spring's rap is "Your name is Ariel and you think you're the Little Mermaid but all the ponds are frozen."



Nidhi won this round because she got so wrapped up in the moment that she forgot to give Sherrilyn a chance to speak, and left only four seconds for Sherrilyn to rap. A snippet of Nidhi's freestyle: "It's Christmas so you need to get on a bus."



Rachel beats Andrew using unbeatable lines such as "Your name is Andrew Jiang and you are very lame." Andrew had some good lines as well: "I like peppermint bark."



Rachel and Nidhi teamed up against Ariel; Ariel fired back at their lines and used her knowledge of rap to win. Exhibit A: "You can't rhyme Liu with poo twice, that's just offensive"

Judged by Larissa Chiu and Ashley Chen



The ultimate fort making relay

REPORTERS HAD TWO MINUTES TO GATHER WHATEVER THEY NEEDED TO BUILD EPIC FORTS WHICH WOULD PROTECT THEM IN A SNOWBALL FIGHT (IF IT SNOWED IN SARATOGA). THEY THEN HAD FIVE MINUTES TO BUILD THE FORTS.



Spring uses a trash can, two chairs and her friends Ami and Eileen as pieces of her fort.



Ariel and Sherrilyn reappear and have thirty seconds to spare. In a few seconds they conjure up their indestructible backpack forts.



Rachel uses recycling bins, old newspapers and desk chairs to create the ultimate fort.



TOP: After wasting two minutes talking to her friends, Nidhi creates a fort using two chairs, the gifts and a recycling bin, which ultimately won her the competition.



LEFT: Andrew squeezes himself behind two rolls of gift wrap, old newspapers, a backpack and two chairs.

Judged by Tiffany Zheng, Shreya Tumu and Michelle Cen

Completed shows to marathon during break

“Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood” (2009-2010)

Genre: Anime | Action | Adventure
Rating: TV-14
Length: 64 episodes, 24 minutes each
After attempting forbidden alchemy, two teenage brothers search for the Philosopher’s Stone to gain back their original bodies. Joining the military in the process, they discover conspiracies and alchemy secrets. Exploring friendships, truth and human sins, this excellently animated Japanese show can be viewed with English subtitles or in English dub.

“House” (2004-2012)

Genre: Drama | Mystery
Rating: TV-14
Length: 177 episodes, 44 minutes each
Based on the character Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Gregory House, a misanthropic and drug-addicted genius, leads a team of diagnosticians in solving mystifying medical cases. With its abundant medical jargon and sarcastic quips, this show is perfect for those who love both procedural dramas and original, captivating characters.

“The Wire” (2002-2008)

Genre: Crime | Drama | Thriller
Rating: TV-MA
Length: 60 episodes, 55 minutes each
With truthful characterizations of law enforcement and criminals, the show realistically depicts one aspect of the Baltimore crime scene each season: the illegal drug trade, the seaport system, the city government and bureaucracy, the school system and the print news media. This show includes a slowly drawn-out plot, a healthy amount of profanity and slang and a focus on characters.

“Gilmore Girls” (2000-2007)

Genre: Comedy | Drama
Rating: TV-PG
Length: 153 episodes, 44 minutes each
This Emmy-winning dramedy follows the relationship between Lorelai Gilmore, a fiercely independent single mother, and her Ivy-league bound daughter, who also happens to be her best friend. Although it may have a slow storyline, “Gilmore Girls” features witty humor and strong actors and explores the coming of age theme by taking mother-daughter relationships to a new level.

“Dexter” (2006-2013)

Genre: Crime | Drama | Mystery
Rating: TV-MA
Length: 96 episodes, 55 minutes each
Dexter, a socially inept blood spatter analyst for the Miami Metro Police Department, narrates his life. Here’s the catch: he’s also a serial killer who targets only murderers who have escaped the justice system. Although the intimate, candid narration from a serial killer can initially be disturbing, the unapologetic presentation of humanity’s darker side and the moral ambiguity of Dexter’s actions is intriguing.

“Friends” (1994-2004)

Genre: Comedy | Romance
Rating: TV-14
Length: 236 episodes, 22 minutes each
An eclectic group of six individuals in New York City come together and support each other through the struggles and pressures of life. Centering around their comedic, romantic and career adventures, all seasons of this classic have been ranked within the top 10 of final television ratings, which compared it to other shows in the same TV season.

“Lost” (2004-2010)

Genre: Adventure | Drama | Fantasy
Rating: TV-14
Length: 121 episodes, 44 minutes each
When a plane crash leaves the surviving passengers on a seemingly deserted tropical island, they must work together to survive, uncovering the island’s secrets. Lauded by numerous critics as one of the greatest TV shows of all time, this show excels in character development and mythology.

“The West Wing” (1999-2006)

Genre: Drama
Rating: Unknown
Length: 156 episodes, 44 minutes each
An inside look into the workings of a presidential administration, this show follows the political and personal battles of White House staff members in a paraphrase of historical reality. With nine Emmy awards, critics have praised this show for its cinematography and empathetic portrayal of politicians.

“Firefly” (2002-2003)

Genre: Adventure | Drama | Sci-Fi
Rating: TV-14
Length: 14 episodes, 44 minutes each
Traveling around space in the ship “Serenity,” a ragtag team of outlaws performs odd jobs while escaping from law enforcement. Basically, cowboys in space. Despite being cancelled after only one season, “Firefly” has achieved what some call “cult status;” loyal fans attended its Comic Con panel celebrating its 10th anniversary. For those with less time on their hands, this show is short and sweet.

Taylor Swift should not remove her music from Spotify

by Ashley Chen & Katherine Sun

Have you heard Taylor Swift’s new album “1989” yet?

It’s the biggest music event of the year, but to listen to it, you’ll have to pay \$13 — or find an illegal copy online. Why? Because “1989” is conspicuously missing from one of the most popular legal music-streaming websites, Spotify, and the third-most-visited website in the world, YouTube. So are all of her previous releases, excluding collaborations.

Swift may currently have the upper hand over Spotify, which started the Twitter hashtag #justsayyes in an attempt to bring her back to the service. Unfortunately for Swift, however, the streaming industry is growing, and victory will only last so long before her music begins to suffer.

The demise of free, legal music has precedent. Record labels periodically release statements declaring that streaming services such as Spotify are detrimental to regular music sales. Scott

Borchetta, the CEO of Taylor Swift’s label Big Machine Records, defended the decision to pull Swift’s music from Spotify. He said it protected Swift fans who paid for the music from the ridicule of those who would have been able to access the music for free.

Borchetta added that placing Swift’s music on Spotify would not be profitable for the company or artist, noting that while the total payout for her streaming over the past year was \$2 million, Swift received less than half a million of the profits.

Although Swift’s album “1989” has sold more successfully than any album since 2002 and all her previous work, it is unclear whether this is because of or in spite of Swift’s decision to pull her music from Spotify. Swift has many loyal fans who would have bought the album whether or not they could stream it for free. Still, Borchetta and Swift should consider that some of Swift’s listeners

are only casual fans and will not pay money to listen to her music if it is no longer available on websites like Spotify.

In fact, there are countless ways to listen to “1989” without forking over a dime. The initial leak of the album, a few days before its official release, occurred through a password-protected Tumblr site. Additionally, many playlists on the music-streaming site 8tracks.com contain copies of “1989” songs.

For instance, junior Michelle Shen said she went on

Tumblr to listen to “1989.”

“You just search her album name and you can find the songs,” Shen said.

By pulling her music from Spotify, Swift may be turning people who would otherwise listen to Spotify and help her generate profit through advertisements, toward blatantly illegal activity.

In fact, Swift’s decision can be compared to HBO’s refusal to offer the popular TV series “Game of Thrones”

to anyone other than their HBO GO subscribers, who pay for the cable service. As a result, “Game of Thrones” is the most pirated show on the Internet. Swift’s music may be headed down the same path.

Swift’s “1989” is also mostly absent from YouTube. The two songs officially available from “1989” on YouTube are “Shake It Off” and “Blank Space,” in the form of music videos.

Though Swift’s decision to keep “1989” off YouTube may drive some people to purchase the music, many people discover new songs through YouTube and its “suggested videos” feature.

YouTube also pays artists with money generated by advertisements, depending on the number of views for their videos. If an uploader uses copyrighted music in a video, the artist can choose to mute, block or monetize the video.

Perhaps Swift is one of the only artists popular enough to succeed without YouTube or Spotify. To her fans, however, her refusal to appear on these sites may be a big turnoff. ♦

Victory will only last so long before her music begins to suffer.

>>> togatalks

What are your thoughts on “1989” not being on Spotify?

“I don’t really listen to a lot of [Swift’s] songs outside of the radio, so it doesn’t bother me.”



senior Arathi Sabada

“I would never go out of my way to buy a Taylor Swift album.”



junior Lisa Yu

“Some of [Swift’s albums] aren’t on my phone, so Spotify was the place I went to listen to them.”



junior Corinne Bryan

Authors reach out to readers through social media

by Claire Chou & Isabelle Tseng

“You know, it’s a funny thing about writers. Most people don’t stop to think of books being written by people much like themselves. ... They know their stories but not their names, and certainly not their faces. And most writers like it that way.”

So said Fenoglio, the author character in Cornelia Funke’s “Inkheart” trilogy. Once upon a time, his words might have held true, but with the increased popularity of social media, authors today have become much more prominent and publicly connected figures — and this is a positive change.

Though it may seem another sales tactic or even a bad influence on readers, an author interacting with their fanbase is a heartwarming and often entertaining occasion.

Take Rick Riordan, who wrote the “Percy Jackson” and “Heroes of Olympus” series.

In response to a fan’s question regarding the final book — “The Blood of Olympus,” published Oct. 7 this year — Riordan (username @camphalfblood) tweeted, “@HunzGabi-

on are contents of UK’s BoO the same as US’s BoO?/UK edition includes free bonus vowels!! color = colour, etc.”

Riordan’s tweets often display this snarky wit, which his characters are also well known (and beloved) for. His presence on sites like Twitter allows fans to feel closer to their favorite author — whom they affectionately call “Uncle Rick.”

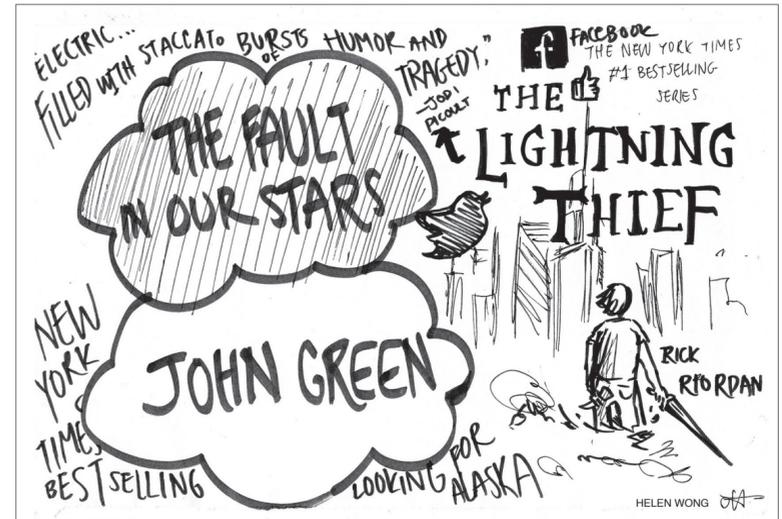
Another media-active author is John Green, author of popular young adult novels “The Fault in Our Stars,” “Paper Towns” and “Looking for Alaska,”

among others. Green and his brother Hank inspired the group known as the Nerdfighters. According

to their website (nerdfighters.org), “We’re Nerdfighters. We fight against suck ... we fight for awesome. We fight using our brains, our hearts, our calculators and our trombones.”

In addition to the vlogs he and his brother post on their joint YouTube channel (vlogbrothers), Green maintains a Tumblr blog: fishingboatproceeds, where anyone can message him, even anonymously.

“Make John Green find the thing” is a popular game Tum-



blr users like to play. Posts that reference Green or his interests will be tagged with tags that he tracks in hopes he will see it.

Fans also had the opportunity to interact with John and Hank Green at Vid Con and the former at Book Con where he talked about his best-seller “The Fault in Our Stars.”

These are only a few examples of how modern authors can and should take advantage of modern technology to connect with their fanbase.

And so authors become, in a

way, cult figures. Readers may not sacrifice animals in worship to them, but author-reader events have become as hyped as 1D concerts. Fans scream and cheer for the creator of their beloved fictional world, just as they would for a pop singer.

The general opinion is that books are on the decline, that electronics and music are rising in popularity instead.

But with Green and Riordan (and various others, like J. K. Rowling) around, books are unlikely to ever completely lose

their appeal.

With its continued improvements, technology becomes not an estrangement from our favorite authors — luring us away from the relative safety of their works into the depths of the Internet — but a way for us to bridge the gap between us and those brilliant creators.

We may not be able to actually hang out with our favorite characters or truly experience their worlds, but we can interact with their creators — and that’s a positive step. ♦

Tumblr under the surface: a source of hate, negativity

by Claire Chou & Karissa Dong

Despite the popularity of Tumblr as a haven of acceptance for all members of society, the social media blogging platform, like many websites, has its pitfalls. One of the most troubling is that users often use Tumblr as an outlet to vent their emotions, without knowing when to stop.

In particular, Tumblr bloggers have established passionate communities for feminism, racial equality and LG-BTQ minorities. The site’s mission of spreading awareness about injustices against these minorities, however, has, quite frankly, degenerated into mindless hate for those they perceive to float comfortably on top of society — namely, straight white cissexual men.

What makes this situation so bad is the Tumblr community’s endorsement of such hate, which is measured by the hundreds of notes on certain posts.

For instance, from the posts we’ve seen, we have learned that misogyny is absolutely unacceptable but misandry is an “understandable cause,” and that real men don’t beat women but real women beat men.

One text post by Tumblr user high-on-horses titled “men are like dogs,” read that “[men] should be kept on leashes so they cant run off and kill somebody” and that “it should be mandatory for them to be neutered so they don’t rape ppl anymore.” The post, which garnered 371 notes, left us with a loss for words.

Several posts regarding racial in-

equality, for another example, became passionate outbursts of “kill all white people.” If the situation were reversed and the cry was instead towards people of color, the Tumblr community would and has used tactics such as doxxing, which is the publishing of personal information, including addresses, emails and phone numbers.

On a blog called f---yeahdead-crackers, a different user asked, “I am white. Give me your reasons as of why I should kill myself,” to which the blogger responded, “22 million Jews. 99 million Africans. That’s just a start. So I’ve [got] about 120 million reasons why you deserve to die. So can you tell me why you deserve to live?” This logical fallacy has received 71 notes since it was posted on July 22 of this year.

Social networks serve as unbridled forums of discussion, but with Tumblr, only one extreme standpoint is accepted — the side that passionately attacks men, white people and the like — even though no end of the spectrum is better than the other. There’s an awful lot of hypocrisy, which is actually quite dangerous in the sense that Tumblr users may begin to think that only this extremist side is acceptable, when in truth neither sides are.

Tumblr has been commonly viewed as a non-judgmental home where people of all identities are able to freely express themselves, but a deeper look into the social media site reveals a growing community of hatred and intolerance. ♦

Junior showcases Bay Area with new YouTube channel

by Gwynnever Hunger & Vibha Seshadri

Two coasts. Six minutes. One student YouTuber.

These are the main components of junior Jennifer Chen’s first YouTube video, “East Coast vs. West Coast,” on her channel, “This is the BAY.”

Chen created “This is the BAY” as a means of experiencing and showcasing the Bay Area’s diverse population and features. One of Chen’s other goals is to break stereotypes associated with the West Coast through her videos, which she hopes to release once a month.

Part of the Media Arts Program (MAP) since her freshman year, Chen wanted to use the media skills she has acquired over the past three years and reach out to others.

“I really wanted to do SHSTV, but I couldn’t have another period [in my schedule], so I thought I could just try to do something similar,” Chen said.

MAP has allowed Chen to further her knowledge in the media field allowing her to use their upgraded equipment. This year, MAP added Canon DSLR cameras with video recording capability and the MAP lab has upgraded to Adobe CS6. MAP students like Chen are allowed to work with increasingly sophisticated software that is parallel to those found in the media industry.

“MAP students learn so much about story development, video and audience critique that it would make sense for them to create their own work,” MAP teacher Cathy Leather said.

During the process of creating her channel, Chen has faced some difficulties. For instance, the process of filming and editing her first video took Chen a

month because she was struggling to balance school, her social life and shooting and creating videos, all by herself.

“After I finish my homework [on weekends], sometimes I would go watch a movie, but now I cut down on my fun time to go work on my videos,” Chen said.

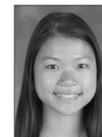
Although time consuming, Chen believes the positive aspects of her project outweigh the negative. One positive aspect includes gaining new skills such as interviewing. In her first video, Chen interviewed passers-by on the streets of West Coast cities and those on the East Coast.

She asked them questions such as, “What’s the first word that pops in your mind when you think of the west/east coast?” Chen, not used to interviewing, found this experience to be not only fun but also a learning experience, since she can now apply this newly acquired skill to future videos and projects.

“When I interviewed random people on the street in the East Coast for my first video, I was actually a little shy doing an interview all by myself, and it was hard going up to a person and not make them feel awkward,” Chen said. “But I learned that a lot of people really want to be interviewed, so I don’t need to be scared.”

Currently, Chen is considering the content of her next video but knows that it will involve traveling, something she enjoys.

“My favorite part is definitely traveling and going to different places,” Chen said. “I love interviewing people because when I ask a good question, it’s very fun to listen to them and get opinions from people I would never have talked to if it weren’t for my channel.” ♦



Chen

Vlogging for two days harder than it seems

By Stefanie Ting

When browsing YouTube, I can't help but wonder how users who are not song artists can reach millions of views for their videos. A secret to their success? They have the gift of talking to themselves in a way that reveals their personality.

In other words, they vlog their lives.

When the challenge of vlogging for a couple of days went up for grabs during newspaper story discussion, I eagerly took it. Having been apart of my friends' vlogs several times, I thought it would be cool to make my own.

The problem was that my life is not any more interesting than the life of a normal human being.

In fact, my days can usually be boiled down into three words: eat, sleep and swim. And a bit of studying in between.

I immediately began planning out the next few days, filling them with fun activities that would give the impression that I have a social life.

Groggily waking up on a Friday, I began vlogging with an introduction.

Deciding that I could not

function properly at 5:10, I resumed when I arrived at the pool.

I misjudged how funny I must have looked, carrying my phone at arm's length as if I were taking a group selfie with only myself; upon my arrival at swim practice my friend quickly asked what I was doing, and my cheeks turned red as self-consciousness consumed me.

Noticing that my vlog was already boring, I eagerly said 'Hi Brad' to one of the coaches on deck and began asking how his morning was. Unfortunately, he turned around and said, straight into the camera, 'My name is Matt.'

Despite my efforts to try to make the vlogs interesting, they were filled with the same friends who avoided talking excessively and me saying "so ... yeah."

But lucky for me, after a gruesome workout, my teammates and I were abnormally hyper. We somehow managed

to turn a conversation about swimming into one about school rivalries, which gave the vlog personality; my friends were randomly giving shout-outs to their high schools.

The next day, though, vlog-



Sophomore Katherine Sun looks on as sophomore reporter Stefanie Ting re-enacts vlogging in a hallway.

ging grew increasingly tedious; I vlogged even less, recording a grand total of two activities, swim practice and a dinner at Santana Row.

When my vlogging series came to a close at the day's end, I was relieved for several reasons.

Vlogging, for one, ate up my phone's battery rather quickly (my battery level dipped under 10 percent over three times throughout the experience).

Secondly, the judgment was overwhelming.

It was barely noticeable at

first, but soon the "Why are you talking to yourself?" and "Those people are staring at you" made me second guess whether I wanted to continue the challenge.

Finally, vlogging prevented me from living in the moment. Although my vlogs lacked consistency and had more awkward silences than talking, having to talk to my phone diverted my attention away from my friends, whom I'd rather talk to.

After trying to vlog for myself, I've developed a serious

amount of respect for vlogging YouTubers. I am baffled by their ability to talk to their cameras in public without being self-conscious.

Maybe it's because they actually have interesting lives that don't consist of only swim practice and homework.

But don't be discouraged from my failure to vlog. For all you thirsty souls who want more of a challenge than 200 likes on your Facebook profile picture, try vlogging.

You might just get 2 million views on YouTube. ♦

Junior pursues Airsoft as an unusual hobby

By David Fan & Isabelle Tseng

Two teams face off from opposite sides of the Fort Ord Airsoft Field in Marina, a community near Monterey. Each team consists of about 40 players, each clad in a unique combination of personalized gear — camouflage outfits, tactical vests, painted helmets.

"Three," the game administrator says. "Two. One."

The whistle blows. Junior Matt Victoria takes off running, gun in hand and ready to shoot. The game has begun, and he is well aware that the other team is on the move as well. His focus is on keeping himself — and the teammate beside him — safe.

Often compared to paintball, airsoft is a strategy-based sport in which players use plastic airsoft guns that shoot airsoft BBs, nonlethal spherical projectiles made mainly of plastic.

Objectives in airsoft can range from basic capture the flag to military simulation ("MilSim"), which mimics real military situations such as hostage rescue. Specific game setup and rules vary from site to site and game to game. Games typically last 45 minutes to an hour.

Victoria's passion for airsoft started four years ago. He was introduced to it by his older brother. After acquiring cheap airsoft guns, the two of them spent some time engaging in "generic backyard" airsoft. He now follows several airsoft communities and Facebook pages and goes airsofting once or twice a month.

As he continued to play, Victoria became interested in what he calls "actual, serious airsoft."

"I started to watch YouTube videos of real people who turned this into a full-blown hobby," he said. "I spent days on



LEFT: Junior Matt Victoria displays his "kit," or equipment, from an August session. RIGHT: Victoria shoots a target during an May game.

the computer watching videos, reading forums and talking to my friends about it. We knew it was an expensive hobby, but we ended up loving it."

Admission to a playing field can cost \$100 in the Santa Clara and San Jose area, he said, since all the anti-gun sentiment in these areas has made it complicated and expensive for fields to acquire all the proper permits. By contrast, fields 40 to 60 minutes away charge only \$25. Airsoft guns can cost anywhere from \$20 to \$200, with extra costs for ammunition and additional parts.

"Anyone who has [equipment] can do what they want to it, so of course some equipment has personal touches to it," said San Lorenzo Valley High School sophomore Tommy Hogye, one of Victoria's teammates. "I've painted helmets in

camo fashions or in other colors to make them [better fit] my personal views."

According to Victoria, many airsofters treat their guns as if they were real firearms. Players are cautious about how they carry and store them, as they look similar to regular guns. In order to prevent a mix-up, players customize them, often with brightly colored paint.

Airsoft teams usually consist of around 50 people per side playing on the same field. They can range from recreational to highly competitive teams. Victoria enjoys playing non-competitively with his friends.

He said that during a game, he has to focus on not only trying to complete the objective, but also making sure he

and his teammates are not eliminated by their opponents.

"[Victoria] is very strong in his use of tactics [employed] in the military forces; he thinks [quickly] and follows directions very well, [and] also gives directions well," Hogye said.

Victoria added that airsoft has given him the opportunity to meet "so many new people from so many different backgrounds," many of whom have become his good friends.

Though airsoft is not a conventional hobby, Victoria enjoys every minute he spends on it.

"It gives me that adrenaline rush," he said. "[I love having] the camaraderie and the ability to shoot someone without actually killing them." ♦

Fugitive: a game of instinct, danger and thrill

By Helen Chen & Andrew Jiang

After band practice ended on a recent Saturday night, senior Anshul Aggarwal and roughly 20 other members from the marching band decided to hang out and play Fugitive, a game that members of band as well as the boys' water polo team have recently begun playing.

Most often, the game starts in the school's parking lot with several groups of two or three playing the role of fugitives and the others cops. The fugitives' goal is to reach Safeway in the Argonaut Shopping Center on foot without being caught. "Cops" drive cars and try to catch them.

For junior Alice He, the appeal of the game is the suspense and thrill.

"You are running around in the dark with your friends, diving into shrubs," He said. "It's not something you get to do on a daily basis."

Aggarwal said his favorite moments of the game are the narrow escapes.

"[I love the feeling] when a car is right on your heels and you need to dive behind a bush at the last second," Aggarwal said. "Although you may be tired from running for such a long time, that last burst of adrenaline is exhilarating."

Because of the relative simplicity of

the game, a game of Fugitive can be set up anywhere with a group of 10 or more people and one or more cars.

Due to the minimal requirements, it is easy for students to play on short notice.

Groups often play Fugitive as a way to get to know each other better.

"During team bonding, we play [Fugitive] because it makes us work with [our] teammates," sophomore water

polo player Armin Agha-Ebrahim said. "This helps build team chemistry and overall brings the team together." Players, though several attempts,

have found multiple techniques that lead to success.

According to senior Brian Lew, runners should always try to be in an area with cover and hide every time they hear a car. Although this may seem like common sense, Lew said it is a lot harder to actually achieve because some streets have few bushes to hide in. Additionally, runners should know which cars are cops.

"One time, I was less than a quarter-mile away from Safeway and I thought for sure I would make it," Lew said. "I saw a red Mustang that looked familiar, but by the time I realized it was one of the cop's cars, it was too late and [the cop] rolled down his window and caught me."

Conversely, when plays the role of a cop, Lew finds ways to avoid detection or drives slowly to minimize the likelihood of passing a runner.

Although students find Fugitive exhilarating, the game comes with dangers. As runners jump into cover to avoid being caught, they often end up with cuts and scratches. According to He, players "don't know what exactly [they] jump into."

"I got this long scratch on my left leg that still hasn't disappeared," He said. "I really don't know how I got it since there were way too many times when I was hiding in a bush."

Even though runners generally try to avoid those dangers, they often act on impulse and frantically conceal themselves anywhere possible.

Additionally, runners often trespass and hide on other people's property, which can lead to uncomfortable and embarrassing en-

counters with complete strangers, as junior Sandeep Suresh knows from experience.

"While I was hiding out in front of a door with some people, this old couple opened the door and saw us there," Suresh said. "We just awkwardly said 'hi' and they asked what we were doing there. After we explained everything, they just closed the door and left."

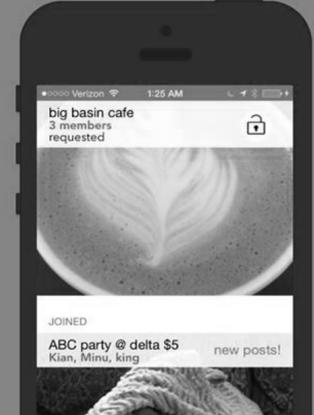
Despite the risks Fugitive poses, most people who have played it agree that it serves as an exciting and thrilling game to play and bond with friends and teammates.

"Fugitive is a basic, easy and good way to spend time getting to know your team better," Lew said. "It's something everyone should try." ♦

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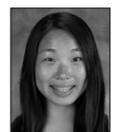
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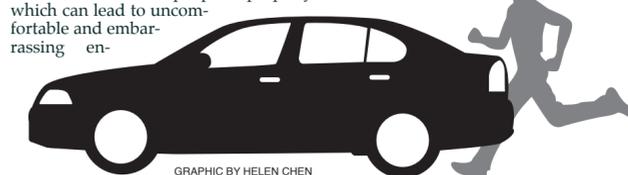
"Frank has been of immeasurable help to my daughter. His kind and patient manner, combined with obvious command of the subject matter made it easy for her to learn."

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You are running around in the dark with your friends, diving into shrubs. It's not a daily [activity].



junior Alice He



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Jewish students find community in religion

BY Vibha Seshadri

Junior Talia Clement glances at the clock, which reads 5:55 p.m., and back at the road as she tries her best to reach the BBYO (B'nai B'rith Youth Organization) meeting on time at 6 p.m. Luckily it's a Saturday night, so she feels relaxed and pleasantly excited to see her friends.

The theme for tonight is "through the decades" and all the Jewish teens in the group will be creating tie-dye apparel and playing games in which they try to guess the price of items from the 1960s. Clement walks through the door of a member's house at 6 p.m. sharp and is welcomed by the loud laughter, chatter and many hugs.

BBYO is an international movement that promotes leadership and strong bonds within the teenage Jewish community.

"[BBYO has] strengthened my Jewish identity and has made me think more about what Jewish teachings I want to question or know more about," Clement said. "[It's] also given me a place where I can feel Jewish and understand what that really means."

For Clement, being Jewish means she has the constant support of the local Jewish community even though she is one of only about a dozen Jews at Saratoga High. She said she feels the encouragement of the community every time she is with her family, attends BBYO events and goes to synagogue.

In addition, Clement attends and is a teacher assistant at the Jewish school in her synagogue, Congregation Beth David. Clement said each of these activities has played a role in shaping her identity.

Jewish culture

Judaism, although a religion, is also cultural. It embodies a sense of community that enriches believers' lives. For example, like Clement, junior Rotem Shaked is also part of the BBYO board and participates frequently.

"This organization, specifically, is less

conservative, so it's not based around making you follow Judaism; it's based on being around other Jewish [people]," Shaked said.

Shaked said BBYO has introduced a form of Judaism that gives him the opportunity to enjoy the faith without being subjected to religious restrictions.

Although Shaked has never considered himself an ardent believer in God, he still classifies himself as Jewish. He views Judaism as a cultural, rather than religious, influence in his life. For example, Shaked is still in contact with members of his synagogue in Israel, where he lived for the first three years of his life.

Shaked sometimes feels that Jews are isolated from other students at Saratoga High. The Jewish religious calendar and other faiths' religious calendars are vastly different. For example, when most of the school is celebrating Christmas, Shaked will be celebrating Hanukkah. Not having these shared experience can lead to a sense of isolation, he said.

Insensitive humor aimed at student

As well as isolation, junior Nina Harris said her Jewish heritage has made her a target for anti-Semitic jokes and insensitive questions in the past.

"If someone I'm friends with [makes a joke], I explain to them that the Holocaust is not something you joke about, [since] most of my family died," Harris said. "If it's someone that I don't really know, I let it go."

During Hitler's reign in Germany, Harris's grandfather left for America before Kristallnacht, the Night of the Broken Glass when Nazis destroyed many Jewish shops and homes. Her grandmother and her family remained in Lithuania.

However, Harris's grandmother was taken to a work camp and was both protected and mistreated by the man who took her there. She was kept alive because she was, according to Harris, "healthy and beautiful." Eventually her



Junior Talia Clement, then 13, reads from the Torah at her bat mitzvah in June of 2011.

grandmother escaped by hiding in a church attic for a long period.

"She died before I was born, but my mom has told me all these crazy stories about her," Harris said. "She was scarred by her horrific childhood — she was only 16 when the Holocaust began. That's how old I am now... I can't even imagine what life was like for her."

In addition, members of her grandmother's family were shot in the head, including her 3-year-old sister Chasya. To honor Chasya's memory, Harris's twin sister's Hebrew name is Chasya.

What it means to be Jewish

Despite the accompanying hardships, Harris said Judaism is central to her identity. Though she doesn't see herself as religious, she thinks Jewish ideals help make her a better person.

One principle Harris finds important is b'tzelem elohim, which means "we are all created in God's image." According to Harris, this principle encourages believers to be more accepting to others

since, as images of God, they are share an unbreakable bond created by God himself.

"I personally don't believe in God, but the idea of b'tzelem elohim is really beautiful," Harris said. "It makes people want to do better."

Harris keeps in touch with her Jewish roots by going to Camp Tawonga, a three-week Jewish summer camp near Yosemite every year. Harris said that camp is her favorite three weeks of the year because she and her campmates work on being independent and forming their own personal identities by using Jewish principles to guide them.

For instance, at the camp, during the women's campfire, they discuss how to empower and respect themselves as they are.

The last thing the girls do at the campfire is sing a song which contains lyrics about love and hope.

"The words remind me every day that I am important and that my life is miracle," Harris said. ♦

Catholicism helps shape lives of two juniors

BY Larissa Chiu & Maya Ravichandran

Entering the St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City for the first time in spring 2011, junior Camille Bismonte gazed at the beautiful scene surrounding her. She stood in front of Pietá by Michelangelo, the stunning sculpture of the Virgin Mary holding newborn Jesus. Above her were arched ceilings depicting intricate angels and saints. The scent of old marble filled the space, as hundred became captivated by the peaceful ambience of the massive building. All around her were people waiting to see the Pope.

Soon there was a noise in the crowd, and Bismonte turned her head to see what the commotion was about. Just 30 feet away, Bismonte caught a glimpse of Pope Francis, who was wearing a simple yet sacred white cassock, a type of Catholic clerical clothing. She called it "one of

the most important moments in her life." Bismonte is one of millions of Americans who follow the Catholic faith.

Bismonte has been a Catholic since birth. Born into Filipino culture, she was also immersed into Catholicism. According to BBC, about 81 percent of Filipinos actively practice Catholicism.

Bismonte said that Catholics worship God and saints, unlike Protestants, who are monotheistic. Catholics are members of the Roman Catholic Church with the Pope acting as its leader.

Over the years, Bismonte has joined the music ministry of her local church, the Church of Resurrection, becoming an integral part. In her music ministry, she strives to encourage and inspire other Catholics through song.

"I've become way more involved in the church, rather than just sitting there

for an hour," Bismonte said. "I enjoy it because it forces you to become more proactive and attentive to the parts of a mass, as well as how the music relates to whatever the readings are for that particular Sunday."

Junior Gabby Fontanilla is also Catholic and has practiced her faith since birth. In fact, both of their families have been practicing Catholicism for the past 300 years.

One Catholic tradition that both students participate in is Lent, which starts on Ash Wednesday in February and continues for the next 40 days.

During Lent, participants must give up something they love. It is meant to symbolize the time that Jesus Christ spent fasting in a desert.

Another major aspect of Catholicism is confession. During confession, Catho-

lics tell their sins to a priest who then absolves them of their wrongdoings.

"You should go every year during Lent, because that's the time you're supposed to reflect," Bismonte said.

While confession may seem intimidating, Fontanilla said it has the effect of lifting the pressure off her shoulders.

Confessing means that the priest is hearing the worst things one has done during the year. For Bismonte, this is the most difficult part of holding true to her religion.

Bismonte also applies Catholic principles to her decision making. If Bismonte feels like something is against Catholic beliefs, she tries to stay away from it.

Bismonte and Fontanilla both said Catholicism will remain a bedrock in their lives.

"Catholicism gives me hope in humanity," Bismonte said. "You learn to see the best in people." ♦



Harris



Vita

BY SpringMa & EileenTeh

In October, sophomore Julia Vita was already strutting down the hallways, confidently showing off her bright red Santa hat adorned with green embroidered lettering spelling out a "Merry Christmas, Eh!" slogan. As she walked to the beat of "Jingle Bell Rock," Vita wished people "Happy holidays!" accompanied with a preceding "Ho Ho Ho!"

Her premature enthusiasm, however, was not mirrored by her peers. Vita received looks of confusion and disapproval as her friends groaned, already accustomed to her quirky Christmas obsession.

For Vita, festivities begin three months before the actual holiday season, just as her birthday decorations are taken down in September. Vita and her family replace their usual furnishings with Christmas lights, "countdown to Christmas" signs and festive quotes scattered around the house.

With Christmas and other holidays just around the corner, many teachers and students, like Vita, have begun their annual preparations for the upcoming season.

This year, sophomore Jessy Liu and her friends are coordinating their fifth "Secret Santa" gift exchange, a tradition started when they were in sixth grade at

Redwood Middle School.

At the beginning of November, she and 12 of her friends created a spreadsheet, where participants filled out their wish list of one food item, a small gift (\$10) and large gift (\$20).

During the week before finals, the randomly assigned "Secret Santas" will deliver gifts to the lockers of their "Elves" over the course of three days. The Santas will be revealed on the last day, when they deliver their large gift in person.

"We wanted to do the gift exchange during dead week because it's kind of like good luck for the upcoming final exams," Liu said. "I love Secret Santa because it brings us together as friends and allows us to bond."

Teachers, similarly, are no exception to the holiday spirit.

"I get into decorating the house with my family," history teacher Matthew Torrens said.

"[We use] about 20 strings of lights on the roof, 15 on the bushes and another 10 on the eaves. Kills our PG&E bill, but it looks good."

For many, such as history teacher Kim Anzalone, the holidays are not so much about the gifts and feasts rather than the time spent with relatives.

"[On Christmas Day] both my husband's side and my side of the family meet for Christmas dinner at my house," Anzalone said. "I always play the guitar,



A sign that is displayed around sophomore Julia Vita's house during the holiday season.

my husband the drums, my son Keegan the bass, and my brother-in law the piano. We always sing Christmas carols and play pool until dinner is ready."

Similarly, Vita's Christmas anticipation and enthusiasm stem from her love of spending time with her grandparents, who visit from Michigan once a year at Christmas.

"[Every Christmas,] everyone gets together and works on decorating the tree

and the whole living room by the fire," Vita said. "It's a bonding experience like no other."

For Vita and others, the holiday season represents a carefree time.

"[The holiday season] goes beyond Christmas," Vita said. "Everyone always seems happy, and there are always things like blanket drives that give back to those in need. People forget about themselves." ♦

Herzman's classes participate in Emersonian Gift Exchange

BY MichelleCen & ArielLiu

Giving any thoughtful gift is difficult, but imagine trying to give a gift to a stranger that reflects your own creativity and the stranger's innate qualities. What does the person like? Does the gift reflect effort and consideration? Will a Starbucks gift card suffice?

These are some of the dilemmas that students in Suzanne Herzman's English 11 Honors classes faced recently.

Herzman is conducting the second annual mandatory Emersonian gift exchange, a form of Secret Santa in which students give gifts that reflect transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson's beliefs.

Students receive a copy of "Gifts," Emerson's essay that explains the transcendentalist approach to gift giving.

They are asked to interpret the essay, which explains that a gift must be a portion of oneself given to the soul of another, in order to come up with a gift for their randomly drawn recipient.

Students have from November to the last day of school before finals, Dec. 12, to give their gifts. Herzman begins each class period with asking her students if one of them has a gift to present. After each gift that is presented, Herzman asks the recipient for his or her approval of the gift.

Past Emersonian gifts have included paintings, photos, films, websites and baked goods. Class of 2014 alumnus Nikhil Goel serenaded fellow classmate Brian Lyu with "Iris" by U2, one of Lyu's favorite songs.

Also that year, Stephanie Liu gave Communist-fanatic Charles Li an Ushanka, a Russian fur cap. Three years ago, Class of 2013 alumnus Nessa Kim wrote a poem to Zach Hansen that in-



Senior Sabrina Chen presents her Emersonian Gift, a memory board with pictures and quotes from friends, to senior Sherrilyn Ling in December last year in Ms. Herzman's class.

corporated many of his witty Facebook posts. In turn, Sasan Sadaat created a painting for Kim that featured an Eleanor Roosevelt quotation they both loved.

Six years ago, Herzman only gave the essay "Gifts" to her students as a holiday gift and made participating in the Emersonian gift exchange optional. The Transcendentalist mini-unit was in May.

Last year, however, English 11 Honors teachers revised their curriculum to be in chronological order, so the

to participate in the Emersonian gift exchange.

"With a test, you don't really fully understand the true meaning of what an Emersonian gift is," junior Felicia Hung said. "All you do for tests is memorize facts, but in the gift exchange, you get to actually experience what Emerson's words really mean."

One major challenge of the gift exchange is that students may randomly draw a classmate they don't know well. The gift exchange requires them to befriend their classmates.

"Students have a problem to solve, and they can't find the answer on SparkNotes. The exchange requires taking a risk," Herzman said. "Ultimately my hope is that students are able to apply this lesson in self-reliance elsewhere in their lives."

Hung encountered many roadblocks as she planned her gift for her recipient, junior Corinne Bryan.

"[I have to] non-discreetly ask her what she likes without making it obvious that I am her Emersonian gift person," Hung said.

Hung, who enjoys making crafts, decided to create a personalized Advent calendar for Bryan. Each day features a mini-gift; for example, for the first day Hung included a photo of her and Bryan in seventh grade.

"I thought the Advent calendar was really cute, and I get little candies from it," Bryan said.

Despite the challenges of making the perfect gift, Hung believes that it is more meaningful than simply going to the store and buying something impersonal for the recipient.

"The concept of an Emersonian gift to me means you have to put your whole heart into the present," Hung said. ♦



Herzman

>> TheStats
20 points scored

Senior Mikayla Davis scored 20 points against Wilcox High School on Dec. 3, leading the girls' basketball team to a 54-33 victory. "It was really rewarding to see all my hard work in the off season pay off," Davis said.

3 touchdowns

The football team scored three touchdowns in its 56-21 loss to the No. 1 seeded Pioneer High School in the first round of CCS on Nov. 21. Senior running back Ken Wu scored the Falcons' first points on a 6-yard rush. "It was the momentum that we needed and it helped get us back in the game," Wu said. "Unfortunately, it wasn't enough but we played our hearts out."

16 points scored

Senior Michael Cole scored 16 points in the boys' basketball team's 55-46 win against Live Oak on Dec. 4. "[The win] gave me and the whole team confidence both on the offensive end and the defensive end," Cole said.

WHO'S HOT

Kickin' off the season strong

The girls' soccer team has a record of 1-0-1 and is aiming for CCS for the third year in a row. "Despite losing six starters due to graduation, we have strengthened our formation to highlight our mid-field players," senior co-captain Anisha Nagarajan said. "I think we have a good chance of winning our league this year."

WHO'S NOT

Two ties but no win

The boys' soccer team has only been able to secure one win so far, but has tied against both Mountain View on Dec. 2 and Harker on Dec. 4. "Although I have been injured, I have seen the team improve a lot these past two games," sophomore forward Kevin Yu said. "It is a big improvement since we lost to these teams last year."

>> TheRANKINGS

- 1 ^ Boys' Basketball (3-0)
- 2 ^ Girls' Basketball (2-1)
- 3 v Girls' Soccer (1-0-1)
- 4 v Boys' Soccer (1-0-2)

Sum finishes second in state in Division III cross country race

By David Fan & Ami Nachiappan

Senior Steven Sum stepped up to the starting line on Nov. 29 as he prepared to run at the state finals at Woodward Park, a 3.1-mile course near Fresno. Seconds before the starter's gun went off, he felt as if time was slowing down, lingering in a moment of suspense.

With the crowd cheering and his heart pumping, he was soon on the course. Immediately, Sum got into his familiar rhythm while maintaining control. Having maintained a fast pace, he crossed the finish line with a time of 15:17, coming in second by eight seconds out of the 195 runners in the Division III race. Austin Tamagno from Brea Olinda High School in Brea, California won first place, eight seconds ahead of Sum.

Sum, the captain of the boys' cross country team, ended up ranking sixth in the state among runners in all divisions. The Falcon team finished in 15th place in Division III.

Sum's teammate senior Andrew Harter ran a time of 16:30, followed by juniors Matthew Peterson, who ran 16:54, Stephen Law, who ran 16:59, senior Rohith Krishna, who ran with a time of 17:08 and junior Kevin Duong Le, who ran 17:31, and Sum's younger brother, sophomore Nicholas Sum, ran 17:58.

The senior started running when he joined the Redwood Middle School cross country team in sixth grade to "get some exercise." After an outstanding first season, Sum's cross country coach asked him if he would be interested in trying out for the Junior Olympics. Sum agreed gladly.

The Junior Olympics race took place in Virginia with more than 300 competitors. Sum ran a time of 10:39 on the 3K course and finished in 19th place. He experienced the "entire race like an adrenaline rush."

"Everything just seemed really big and new," Sum said. "The meet was huge which is crazy to think about, especially [for a sixth grader]."

This season, he said his biggest accomplishment was running his fastest 5K time



FALCON // ELLEN WU

Senior Steven Sum ended with second place in the Division III CCS Championships on Nov. 29

of 15:10 at the Stanford Invitational on Sept. 27.

"It was a really great time and just a culmination of four years of hard work," Sum said.

Sum uses several tactics and strategies in order to maintain a good pace in his races.

For the most part, his race is "crowded with thoughts of strategy, bracing himself for surges and sizing up [his] opponents."

"If I know [my opponent] well, I sort of know how [he] usually runs the race," Sum said. "I try to change my strategy to allow me a better chance to be successful."

In these situations, Sum tries to keep a good pace to stay close to the other runners. This allows him to store his energy until the

last part of the race, when he can overtake them.

Sum continues to run because of his love for competition and to "prove to [himself] and everyone else that [he's] accomplished."

According to varsity teammate Peterson, a new member on the cross country team this year, Sum has been on the team the longest time and "mentors [them], makes [them] better runners and is very

supportive towards others."

He helps out his team members when the coach isn't there, leading them on runs and different workouts.

Sum plans to continue his passion for the sport by running for a collegiate cross country team. He was first contacted by college coaches during the middle of the summer after junior year. Also, this year, the UC Berkeley cross country coach went to the CIF states competition to watch his performance.

Many Division I schools like Yale and Harvard have reached out to Sum and want to recruit him. He said he wants to focus on academics along with cross country. So far, Sum is still looking for the right fit.

"I choose based on how much I like the school [and] the team when I visit," Sum said.

Most of the schools he's interested in, especially the Ivy Leagues, do not offer athletic scholarships, but Sum said that schools that are interested in him will send him a "likely letter" around the middle of December. This letter will likely say they accept Sum to the school.

"I relish the opportunity to race against amazing competition," Sum said. "[And cross country] is something I really have a passion for." ♦



Sum

Soccer players choose club over school

By Aditya Chaudhry & Jihau Yu

Day after day for about 300 days a year, senior Samuel Junqua practices his soccer skills, perfecting every pass, shot and lob. He is considered a virtuoso in the local soccer world, playing for the De Anza Force Academy club team, which is ranked as one of the best in the nation.

Playing at this level, however, comes with a cost — Junqua does not have time to play high school soccer.

He is one of several top soccer players have left the school team to commit fully to club teams.

"High school soccer represents something that is fun, but the club I play with is a higher level," Junqua said. "For me it's a better choice because I want to play in college."

Junqua credits club soccer for improving his skills. According to Junqua, high school soccer only plays for few months compared to his club, which plays for 300 days of the year.

"It's been a huge help for me, and practicing every day without really having an

offseason has really helped me in my competitions a lot better," Junqua said.

For most athletes, their club leagues advise them to choose between the club and school teams. He said playing for the high school team would make him ineligible to play for the winter and spring portion of his club season because his coach does not allow him to leave the club mid-season.

Junior Lauren Plesse, who played for the school's varsity girls soccer team in her freshman and sophomore year, decided not to play school soccer this year due to an added winter league for her club, Force, which plays in the Elite Club National League.

"The league I play for does not have

any restrictions regarding playing high school soccer, but coaches in my club do not recommend it," Plesse said. "They say this because you are taking at least three months off from your club team, so when you go back, sometimes it takes a while to get into the style of play that you used to play."

Plesse thinks playing on a nationally ranked club team offers her a better chance to play at the next level.

"College coaches do not really come to high school events,"

Plesse said. "In club, you are surrounded by people that want to pursue soccer at a collegiate level, so everyone is on the same page." ♦



senior Samuel Junqua

Alumni share collegiate sports experiences

By Emily Chen & Karissa Dong

Second chances aren't common, so when 2014 graduate Drew Bryan got one, he seized it. He had missed his chance to be recruited for cross country and track, since he didn't achieve any standout times until the track season in the spring of his senior year.

A second opportunity came later in the year, when he visited his future college.

"I ended up just applying to schools," he said. "When I got into Carnegie Mellon, I visited and met with the coach and he said that based on my times from senior year, I could definitely have a spot on the cross country and track teams."

Besides Bryan's success at CMU, Stephanie Ho and Stephen Cho, also from the class of 2014, have continued their athletic endeavors at college.

Ho moved from the quiet suburbs of Saratoga to the busy streets of New York, where she attends New York University (NYU) and plays for its Division III soccer team.

During the recruiting process, she received support from her coaches, who helped pinpoint which schools would best suit her in terms of academics and athletics and also contacted

some college coaches on her behalf.

Ho chose NYU based on flexibility with school and sports.

"I decided on a DIII school because academics were my main concern, and soccer is an addition to my college experience," she said. She does not plan on playing professional soccer after college.

One of the biggest differences between collegiate sports and high schools sports, Ho said, is the difference in time commitment.

"In high school and club soccer, the practices are planned primarily around school," she said. "In college, you have to schedule your classes around practice times. Also, balancing [school] work and practice is a lot more challenging."

Soccer, however, is only one of many popular collegiate sports. Bryan, now a freshman at Carnegie Mellon, earned a spot in the Division III cross country

and track teams, but, unlike Ho, his journey to becoming a college athlete was a bit more complicated.

"I never thought I was good enough to run in college until my junior year track season, [when] I qualified for SCVALs in the two mile," he said. "I ran a 10:19 in the two-mile race and after that, I began to realize that I had the potential to run in college."

"Play because you can't live without the sport and would do it even if you weren't on a team."
alumnus Drew Bryan

>> togatalks

How far do you plan to take your sport?

"For now, I want to compete [in cross country], but I think in college, I would just like to run for fun."
sophomore Alice Bian



"I don't know if I want to put in that much dedication, but I do really love water polo and my team."
sophomore Jessie Liu



"I don't have the commitment for Division I soccer, but I want to play for club in college."
senior Anisha Nagarajan



Football players make transition to basketball season

By Andrew Jiang & Jihau Yu

Although the boys' basketball team has begun training to prepare for its upcoming season, the Falcons have been playing short handed.

Missing from the lineup have been senior Alvin Kim, now out for the basketball season with a knee injury sustained in football, senior Joey Medeiros and junior Joseph Eschen.

The three were part of a team that made it all the way to the CCS playoffs. For Eschen, this will be the first time that he makes the transition between the two sports since this was his first season playing football.

"My mom sat me down for about a whole week after school ended and brought up the topic of football," Eschen said. "She initially didn't let me play my first two years, but she came around to it."

For his part, Kim will act as the team's manager.

In as much as it's possible, Kim will continue practicing with the team in

hopes of a miraculous comeback by season's end.

"Even though I'm not playing, I'm going to get back into shape with lots of practice," Kim said. "It's going to take a little bit of time, but repetition after repetition is going to get me back."

Eschen, whose mom hesitated to let him play football for his first two years of high school, is making the transition from wide receiver to shooting guard.

Eschen said that he does not expect the transition to be too hard, since he played basketball every weekend during the football season. In fact, Eschen thinks his experience with football will help him.

"[My experience with football] will allow me to be more physical on the court and finish at the rim through contact," Eschen said.

Eschen added on, stating that his experience with football is also mental.

"I have no time to waste. I need to work extra hard to make sure I'm on the same pace as the rest of the team."
junior Joseph Eschen

"It'll help with my mental toughness to persevere throughout the 42-minute games," he said.

In addition, Eschen said that the conditioning for the two sports will also be a change, as they use different muscles, and one that he needs to get used to as the sports workouts are completely different.

"Football workouts are a lot more intense and focused with more energy," Eschen said. "They're both fun and good,

but they're different atmospheres." Medeiros, on the other hand, has made this transition every year for the past four years. He said football helps prepare him for the basketball season.

Medeiros is in top shape to start the season, allowing him to feel comfortable when it comes to basketball season.

Medeiros makes the transition between the two sports relatively quickly, only taking "a few days to get back into it."

Although this causes a time constraint, Medeiros feels he can work around it and accommodate it into his schedule.

"I have no time to waste, so I need to work extra hard to make sure I'm on the same pace as the rest of my team," Medeiros said.

Eschen hopes that with hard work the team will achieve its goals for this season.

"I feel good about our team this year and we are definitely going to do well," Eschen said. "Our goal as a team is to be El Camino League champions and look to make a deep run into CCS." ♦



Courtesy of DREW BRYAN

TOP LEFT: 2014 Alumnus Drew Bryan now runs cross country at Carnegie Mellon University.



Courtesy of STEPHANIE HO

TOP RIGHT: 2014 Alumna Stephanie Ho plays Division III soccer at New York University.



Courtesy of STEPHEN CHO

BOTTOM RIGHT: 2014 Alumnus Stephen Cho plays Division I water polo at Harvard University.

CREW

Rowers enjoy serenity, benefits of sport

By Gwynever **Hunger**, Nidhi **Jain** & Vibha **Seshadri**

The cool water sprays onto senior Alexandria Bauer's face, which is covered in beads of sweat, while she rows with her team members during a race. Her lungs burn each time she strenuously yanks the oars back to her chest. The finish line lies a mere 15 feet away. Fifteen more feet of torturous pain. Fifteen more feet of teamwork. Fifteen more feet until victory.

Rowing, though a low-profile sport around campus, plays a crucial role in a several students' lives.

Its most attractive qualities, according to these students, are its meditative effect and rewarding benefits, such as the proud feeling of pushing their physical and mental limits.

According to Yahoo! Sports, at the collegiate level there are approximately 2,500 more women participating in the sport now than in 1997. On campus, more students seem to participate in it each year.

A rowing team consists of eight individuals who stroke their paddles in tandem to push the boat across the finish line in the shortest time possible.

A coxswain, seated at the head of the rowboat, tells them when to row. Awards are only given to the first-place team.

For Bauer, rowing is one of the most important aspects of her life. She recently committed to Loyola Marymount University (LMU), a Division I (DI) school for rowing.

Bauer began rowing in the eighth grade and has stuck with the sport for the past five years.

At the Los Gatos Rowing Club, she was nominated the varsity women's team captain for this season.

The team also went to the Rowing Junior Nationals in 2014 and placed in top eight for both the top varsity and top varsity quad teams.

Like other athletes who play team sports, Bauer said, rowers cannot miss practice whenever they want to because "all members must work together in one boat in order to share the same success at the end of the race."

Starting in the spring semester of her junior year, Bauer emailed college rowing coaches her 2000-meter time in hopes of being recruited.

Bauer specifically targeted DI schools to have a chance at obtaining an athletic scholarship.

Although she was offered several scholarships from different colleges, she ended up verbally committing to LMU after visiting the college last October and earning a scholarship.

During the second week of November, the school sent Bauer its official National Letter of Intent.

Among the other rowers at the school is sophomore Hannah Payne.

She began her rowing career at the request of her friend at The Los Gatos Rowing Club, one of the best decisions she said she has ever made.

"I immediately became obsessed with it," Payne said.

Payne rows for 13 hours a week, two



Sophomore Hannah Payne competes with The Los Gatos Rowing Club in Foster City. Courtesy of HANNAH PAYNE

and a half hours a day on the weekdays and three hours on Saturdays. These practices consist of weight lifting as well as running.

Despite the long hours, Payne said the time spent is worth it.

"It's awesome to see the results of working hard every day and getting stronger," Payne said.

Payne also enjoys the races. Her team competes in eight races per year against other teams in the Bay Area.

Of these races, Payne particularly enjoys the fall tournaments since they are time trials.

Time trials consist of individual teams starting the race every 30 seconds. This allows the competitors to improve as a team.

Payne smiled slyly and added, "You can [also] watch your competitors lose ... is that a mean thing to say?"

Along with Payne, junior Nikitha Arunkumar, who competes in the varsity

division, feels that rowing is a unique yet "meditating-like" sport, as the scene on the water is very serene.

Initially, Arunkumar was hesitant to begin the sport in her freshman year, but after one of her peers constantly encouraged her to row, Arunkumar gave in and ended up loving it.

"You work out three hours a day so that keeps you super fit," Arunkumar said. "I hate exercising, but I like being fit."

Also, the team Arunkumar is a part of can't row at Lexington Reservoir because it has low water levels as a result of the state's drought.

Instead, the team heads to Redwood city.

Arunkumar feels that rowing is a sport more young people should try.

"The people are amazing, and it's like a family," Arunkumar said. "Everytime you go rowing, you can just forget about your problems." ♦

"It's like a family. Everytime you go rowing, you can just forget about your problems."



junior Nikitha Arunkumar

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Team's close bonds benefit play on court

By Nidhi **Jain** & Vibha **Seshadri**

History teacher Mike Davey has coached basketball for more than 20 years at the school. For the first 14 years, he coached the boys' team. Since then, he has coached the girls' team.

The main difference Davey has noticed between the two teams is the girls' unique dynamic revolving around the idea of teamwork.

As a result, Davey and the team have instituted rituals that foster connections, including annual breakfasts and alumni games.

These team bonding events not only build the players' relationships with each other, but they also are important on the court.

"If one person doesn't work hard, then the other four people are left out so you have to be able to sacrifice and subordinate your own interests for the whole team," Davey said. "If the team successfully does that, [then they] can come close to each other."

Besides the breakfast and alumni game, the team has an annual event

called Midnight Madness.

Midnight Madness occurs during winter break. The team scrimmages in the Large Gym and has some pizza afterward with family members.

One of the biggest events that enhances the close bond between teammates is the summer tournament in Sonoma.

The team drives to Lake Pincrest where they venture out into the camp for five to six hours to explore and have fun.

The team also plays 12 basketball games in three days.

This arduous yet memorable trip gives the girls on the team a chance to get to know each other before the school season starts.

"By the end of the week we know each other a little too well," junior point guard Nicole Prowse said. "Another part I like, is when we go up to the lake for a day and just get to relax. Every year we go kayaking and it is so much fun to paddle out and eat lunch."

Davey, however, does feel that having such a close bond can sometimes cause personal problems to interfere with practice and the relationships on the court. This is not as prominent since players get along well.



Junior forward Eleni Spirakas blocks senior Mikayla Davis in a scrimmage on Dec. 5. FALCON // SWEETA RAJ

Davey's favorite parts about coaching such a strong and well-rounded team is the adrenaline rush he gets when there is a close game and the preparation he puts into making sure that the team has a common goal and is set on the importance of teamwork.

Davey also acknowledges the enormous time commitment the sport entails. The team has off-season conditioning practices in the weight room as well as 182 hours of practice, games and conditioning during the season.

Yet, Davey sees these numbers as

proof that teammates need to support each other.

"It's a big commitment, so it's very significant and that's why, again, the group is doing [the sport] together, which means that it's very important," Davey said.

Davey also sees the time these girls spend together as beneficial in the long run and building blocks into what will serve as lifelong memories.

"Winning is huge, but these girls are friends with each other for life," Davey said. ♦

BOYS' SOCCER

Senior supports team as goalkeeper

By Aditya **Chaudhry** & Helen **Chen**

With 10 minutes left in the game against Mountain View last February, senior goalkeeper Edwin Chen was in a dire situation. Just moments earlier, one of his teammates received a red card inside the penalty box, and now it was up to him to stop the other team from scoring on a penalty shot from 12 yards away.

Yet his attempt was fruitless as the other team went on to score the goal, increasing the lead to 2-0.

Due to disappointing moments like this last year, the Falcons finished with a 2-12 record and were pushed down to the lower El Camino League this year. Starting the '14-15 season, Chen has high hopes for the team's improvement.

"Just seeing from practice, we have pretty talented players, so hopefully this year we will do much better and end up getting pushed back up the division," Chen said.

Chen, however, has some worries about the team's size in comparison to other league teams, such as Gunn and Wilcox. Like the year before, the team is physically smaller due to the four freshmen who were pulled up to varsity.

Despite being one of the older members of the team who is

in a position to instruct, Chen believes the role of goalkeeper is no more important than an offensive player.

"I am a leader in a sense, but you can't [just say] someone is a leader, because I think everyone has to contribute equally on the field," Chen said.

Chen first began to play soccer when he was in middle school. According to Chen, his middle school experience at The Harker School in San Jose opened up the world of goalkeeping to him.

"Everyone wants to be the one who scores the goals, but as goalkeeper, it's different," Chen said. "It's really like every shot that you block is scoring a goal for your team."

Chen said he draws his inspiration from no athlete or role model. To him, soccer is a game played for the enjoyment.

For Chen, being a goalkeeper goes far beyond having fun and enjoying the position; it requires a mental strength and requires Chen to focus and not get caught up over one miss.

According to Chen, playing with your head in the clouds is the worst for a goalkeeper, and nervousness isn't far behind.

"You can't worry about your reputation or whatnot. It only helps if you're living in the moment and worrying about just that one save," Chen said.

Chen describes it as blocking



Senior Edwin Chen plays goalkeeper in the boys' soccer game against Harker that took place on Dec. 4. FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

out all of your senses besides your sight on the ball. The only focus for a goalkeeper, in those crucial seconds between a save and a goal, is the ball and its position on the field.

Although people may believe the goalkeeper is at fault for letting the other team score, Chen said it is unwise to "worry about your reputation, because in those situations the entire team should be to blame."

According to Chen, there are 10 other players on the field to stand between the ball and the goal. If the other team does score, it's a collective loss, not just on the goalkeeper.

For example, a good illustration of this phenomenon through Chen's eyes would be the team's overall sadness when the other team scores a goal. He stated that after a goal is scored, the team as a whole lets out a

sigh of disappointment at their collective effort, not only the effort of the goalkeeper.

Regardless of the pressure Chen is put under in his position, he recognizes that it is more about how he responds rather than what happens.

"My mentality is the same no matter what the circumstances are," Chen said. "You should do your best because it doesn't matter what the result is." ♦

GIRLS' SOCCER

Junior twins' chemistry makes for strong season

By Emily **Chen** & Karissa **Dong**

All eyes were on junior Kimberly Chen, who set the ball down to take a corner kick for her team, the West Valley Legends. She took a few steps back, then accelerated forward and chipped the ball. Everyone watched as it sailed through the cold evening air toward the front of the goal, when Kimberly's sister Kaitlyn launched the ball into the San Francisco Vikings' net with a powerful header.

The twins had done it again. "We have pretty good chemistry [and] it's nice to have a friend I can talk to," Kaitlyn said about Kimberly.

The Chen sisters began to play soccer competitively in elementary school, with Kimberly starting in third grade and Kaitlyn in fourth grade. They play together on the West Valley Legends '97 team and practice twice a week when the high school team is not in season.

Play time together on the field helps tighten the bond between the two, as they learn to get through tough moments and enjoy themselves.

In one instance, Kaitlyn had the ball and attempted to pass to Kimberly. Kaitlyn dribbled closer to Kimberly and prepared to transfer the ball, but they ended up colliding and their team lost possession of the ball.

"There's always ups and downs, and we get through that," Kimberly said.

Their ability to play a variety of positions helps increase the opportunities for them to work together on the field. Kaitlyn plays forward, defensive mid-field and center back, while Kimberly plays midfield and forward.

The twins are also especially compatible because Kaitlyn, who is left-footed, has strength, whereas Kimberly, who is right-footed, has speed.

"Having a sister means that I will always [be able to] practice with someone I'm comfortable with," Kaitlyn said.

Both would like to play soccer in college, with the hopes that being recruited could help them get into one of their schools of interest.

Soccer is not the only sport they play. As freshmen, the sisters played two winter sports (soccer and basketball) for the school; this was possible because basketball practices were in the morning, while soccer practices were after school. Kaitlyn attributes being able to double-up on sports to the minimal amount of homework in freshman year.

Kaitlyn and Kimberly, who chose to play basketball over soccer their sophomore year, left the basketball team for the girls' soccer team this season.

The sisters have started the preseason off strong, with solid defense from Kaitlyn and speedy attacks from Kimberly.

On Dec. 1, the Falcons beat Notre Dame High School with a winning goal by Kimberly. The team tied their first game of the Burlingame Tournament 1-1 on Dec. 6 against Menlo High School, with a goal by senior Ciara Bowen.

Looking ahead, Coach Ben Maxwell said philosophy is unchanged.

"The expectations for us are the same as they were for the past two years, which is to continue to try to elevate Saratoga higher," Maxwell said. "And for us, making CCS is really, really important because it continues to show progression; it continues to show that we're moving in the right direction." ♦

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>> snapshots



Courtesy of TEDx // SIMI SRIVASTAVA



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA



FALCON // SWEEYA RAJ



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

Science teacher Lisa Cochrum delivers a compelling speech at Tedx SHS on Dec 7.

Juniors Jennifer Poo and Samantha Guidry sell items in support of the junior class at the Holiday Boutique on Dec 7.

Senior Nik Aji rocks out to "Sweet Life" by Frank Ocean at Saratoga Idol on Dec 1.

Saratoga Strings rehearses with guest conductor Dr. Lawrence Sutherland on Dec. 3. The group goes to Chicago next week.

Seniors spend way too much time at Starbucks

Bi\$ht-money



Jade Bisht and Sherrilyn Ling

The last time we checked a share of Starbucks stock was running at about \$83. This is a high price, but the company is severely undervalued when you consider customers like us.

Anyone who follows our Snapchat stories is fully aware of our constant presence at Starbucks. Honestly, we spend more time sitting on their familiar couches than we do at our own respective homes.

But who can blame us? The casual background chatter, soothing music and warm environment are all too comforting and inviting. It's a pleasant alternative to studying in our sometimes oppressively stressful households. To be

honest, Starbucks is our safe haven with no parents or siblings to keep tabs on us. And there's no denying that their holiday drinks, complete with festive red cups, are well worth their overly expensive prices (not to mention an obligatory filtered picture on Instagram).

Maybe we do have a problem. We've started (casual) fist fights debating which of Starbucks' signature paninis triumphs over the rest (Sherrilyn argues for the Turkey Pesto, whereas Jade wholeheartedly supports the superior Chicken Santa Fe), and junior Arjun Ramanathan has had to step in. It gets pretty ugly.

A fond memory of ours was when Jade was at Starbucks on a warm September evening, working on college essays. Jade received a Snapchat from Sherrilyn of a selfie with the caption "at starbucks!" Jade then proceeded to turn around after a befuddled moment and found Sherrilyn snapchatting happily a couple tables away.

"Sherr?"
"JADE?"

Like a scene from a heartwarming old movie, we stood up dramatically, ran into an unnecessarily large embrace and cried over essays together.

Starbucks is fit for all seasons; it provided a chill environment to hang out during bland summer days when we had absolutely nothing else to do. Their iced vanilla lattes refueled us with energy and their reliable air conditioning was prime protection from the unforgiving sun.

Whereas now, in the winter, their hot chocolate eases the pain of unbearable workloads.

Studying with friends at the critically acclaimed couch tables provides comedic relief when teachers whip out their workload machetes and pour out never-ending assignments.

There are pros and cons to doing work at Starbucks; admittedly, it all comes down to who's around you. Make sure you bring a friend you know you can focus with.

Sometimes you choose a bad day to

come; every half hour, a new friend or classmate will walk through the glass doors for a drink and suddenly, you find yourself increasingly distracted. Some will choose to park their rears adjacent to you, and you can only say goodbye to any sort of productivity.

In our case, we come to Starbucks so often together that we have noticed a pattern; our attempts at studying together have settled into a sort of constant, repetitive routine.

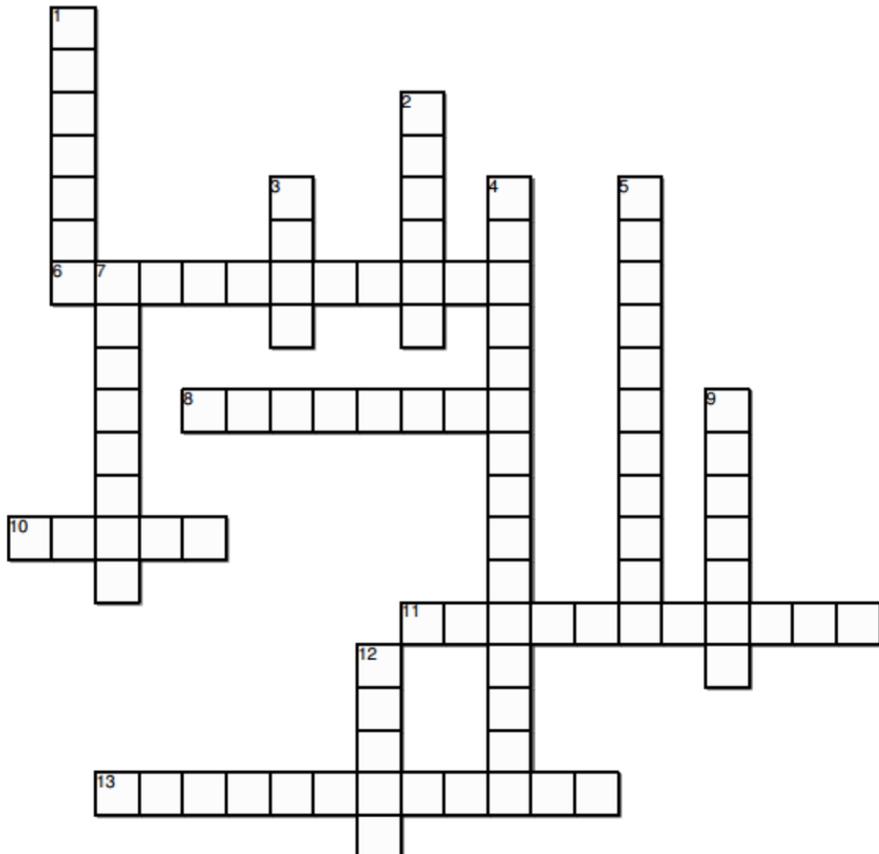
It all starts out great and productive — we will be halfway through our math homework until one of us (usually Jade) unwisely checks Facebook.

From here, we will spend at least an hour stalking various photos and events, Snapchatting every few minutes and commenting on each other's old Instagram posts.

Now, as much as we'd like to continue working on this story, we've been sitting on the Starbucks couches too focused for too long. Ooh look, formal asking on Facebook. ♦

>> crossword

Answers can be found in this issue.
Key online at saratogafalcon.org.



ACROSS >>

- 6. This year's Saratoga Idol winner
- 8. The game that students play with their cars
- 10. The first final on Monday is
- 11. The organization that Luke Salin's family works with in Liberia
- 13. Exchange student hosted by senior Analisa Ruff

DOWN >>

- 1. This teacher's English class participates in Emersonian gift exchange
- 2. Senior Steven Sum placed ___ at States for Division III cross country.
- 3. Jewish youth organization Talia Clement is a part of
- 4. The magazine that named SHS the 23rd best high school in the country
- 5. One of the two employees who run the copy room
- 7. Winner of the rap battle for the Lifestyles section
- 9. The Falcon has this 60 episode long crime show on its marathon list
- 12. Linus Lu plays this instrument

>> topten

THINGS TO DO OVER BREAK

- 10 **Plan ahead for next Christmas.** Only about 378 more days — better start shopping!
- 9 **Makeover.** Salvage whatever's left of 2014 in finding a new style.
- 8 **Treasure trove.** Use the extra time to dig up some dirt on your frienemies.
- 7 **Cry over Early Decisions.** Harvard is overrated.
- 6 **Plan ahead.** Convince yourself that next semester will be better than the last. I-I BELIEVE...
- 5 **Go caroling.** It's like the more effective version of ding-dong ditching.
- 4 **Be a killjoy.** Find ways to boycott Christmas spirit; the Grinch is the new black.
- 3 **Catch up on sleep.** Hibernation is a thing for humans too, right?
- 2 **Netflix.** Baby, it's cold outside? No problem, my laptop will keep me warm.
- 1 **Be productive.** Find a way to access Aeries over break and stress over grades.

>> Simi Srivastava