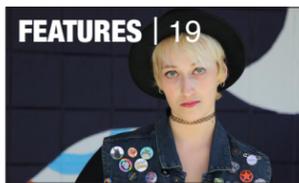




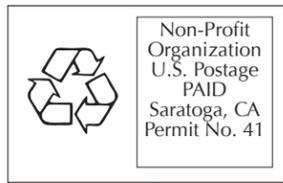
Classical music: the neglected genre.



Junior promotes awareness about bisexuality.



Boys' basketball poised to win league.



THE saratogafalcon



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ACADEMICS

School to adopt rolling block schedule in 2016-2017

BY Megan **MacInnes**

The school will be adopting a rolling block schedule for the 2016-2017 school year, principal Paul Robinson announced at a faculty meeting on Monday. The decision was made with-

out the voting and discussion among staff that had occurred in previous years.

For students, the biggest impact of this change is that all their classes will no longer meet on Mondays, and tutorials are expected to take place four

days a week. The details of the schedule will be finalized in the coming year.

District leadership is interested in having the two high schools on the same schedule to make them more compatible. That way, teachers and even

students could switch between schools during the school day.

A rolling block schedule like the one at Los Gatos would mean that every day would have four 90-minute periods and a 30-minute embedded tutorial, with the exception of

Wednesday in order to keep morning collaboration for teachers. The schedules would alternate each week, so the classes that only meet twice one week would meet three times

>> **BLOCK** on pg. 7

COURSES

ELECTIVES PROPOSED FOR '15-'16

BY Karissa **Dong** & Eileen **Toh**

Next year, aspiring writers and engineers may be given the opportunity to take additional electives that cater to their specific interests.

Among the many proposed classes is Creative Writing, an elective offered by the English department.

If it gets enough signups, it will be "a practical workshop class designed to develop writing voice through an examination and application of a variety of creative writing genres," according to the course description. All students who have completed English 9 or English 9 MAP are eligible for it.

>> **ELECTIVES** on pg. 5

Pandora's Box
OPENING UP COLLEGE ADMISSIONS COMMENTS TO ADMITTED STUDENTS, FERPA TREND RAISES QUESTIONS

BY Ariel **Liu** & Vibha **Seshadri**

Forty years ago, Congress passed the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which, among other things, allows admitted college students to request a review of their application records from admissions offices. Universities are required to give the information in a 45-day period.

This legislation has been rarely used over the years, but it gained attention recently when discovered by an anonymous newsletter

>> **FERPA** on pg. 7

GRAPHIC BY MICHELLE CEN

>> what'sinside

TRUE COLORS

LGBTQ+ awareness

Coexist club strives for acceptance at SHS. **pg. 4**

LIFE-CHANGER

Outside the bubble

Social studies teacher Hana Chen recounts teaching experiences at charter school. **pg. 6**

GOSSIP GIRL

SHS blogger strikes

Anonymous Instagram user perpetuates cyberbullying. **pg. 9**

FRIGHT NIGHT

Friday the 13th

Students share unlucky experiences on the cursed day. **pg. 14-15**

ALUMNUS' GAP YEAR

'MAP'-ing the world

ALUM TAKES MEDIA LESSONS TO SRI LANKA

BY Spring **Ma** & Vibha **Seshadri**

Class of 2014 alumnus Bobby Vithanage scanned the eager eyes of Sri Lankan students, ages 11-18, gathered around him in the humid, packed classroom. He counted one student after another and finally reached a whopping total of 70 students.

He had expected his Media Arts Program to attract some interest, but nowhere near this level.

The students sat ready for the first meeting of the Media Arts Program at St. Thomas College (STC), a primary and secondary education school in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Vithanage, excited by the unexpected attendance, eagerly showed them several videos of the

tourist sights and scenery of Sri Lanka.

He filmed these videos on his GoPro, a wide-angle compact video lens with a handheld extending attachment for rugged travelling. The kids buzzed with excitement, ready to create their own videos just like Vithanage's.

Last fall, as their classmates began to attend various colleges, Vithanage and Gunn High School Class of 2014 alumnus Patrick Skelly (the son of former Saratoga High principal Kevin Skelly) prepared for a new chapter of their own. They planned to spend three months of their gap year experiencing the culture of Sri Lanka, Singapore, Dubai and Thailand before Vithanage heads to Santa

>> **ABROAD** on pg. 22

EVENTS



FALCON // DAVID SPARKMAN

Students perform in the girls' classical dance at last year's show.

BnB senior looks back

BY Jade **Bisht** & Sherrilyn **Ling**

For the past few years, senior Meghna Chakraborty, a talented dancer and choreographer, has dedicated dozens of hours to prepare for the annual Bombay in the Bay shows.

A typical afternoon for her lately in preparation for the Feb. 13-14 shows might look like this: The bell rings and

Chakraborty rushes to the Quad to meet for skit practice, followed by two hours of senior co-ed practice and then two hours of rehearsal for Tamasha, the school's Indian fusion dance team. Afterward, she heads to an outside Cupertino dance studio where she teaches a one-hour class. Finally, she finishes the day with a 90-minute practice

>> **BNB** on pg. 7



Measure E funds allocated to technology

As of January, \$2 million of the \$99 million Measure E funds are now available to be used specifically for technology at Saratoga High.

With the money, the school will work with the PTSO to purchase and upgrade new technology over the next few years.

One of the key areas that the school wants to focus on is making sure that the wifi system has a better bandwidth and more capability, principal Paul Robinson said.

The improvements to technology will not happen all at once; rather, they will take place gradually over the next four to five years.

"One day, you might be able to get on the Internet a little easier, or can access the Internet now down by the stadium," Robinson said. "One day you might see 20 new Chromebooks in your classroom available to do research."

In addition to the new infrastructure, the school also wants to make hardware purchases, including new projectors, larger television screens and newer computers.

The older technology equipment replaced by the upgrades will be recycled or placed in other classrooms if possible.

"A lot of teachers' mindsets now is not getting more dry erase markers, or getting enough copies made, it's accessing technology," Robinson said. "When you look at Measure E, and our foundation and PTSO, a lot of it is enhancing technology as a teaching and learning tool on our campus."

— Eric Sze and Jason Zhao

Clubs collaborate to earn way to We Day

Members of Free the Children Club, Interact Club and ASB will be attending We Day this year on Feb. 25. An annual event, We Day takes place at SAP Center in San Jose and is hosted by Free the Children, an international charity. Past speakers and performers at this event have included actress and musician Selena Gomez, actor and comedian Seth Rogen, former NBA star Magic Johnson and more. This year's speakers have not yet been announced.

Attendees do not buy individual tickets — instead, they earn their admittance by performing service acts or being leaders in their community. Groups take on one local and one global action and report back to Free the Children to earn their way to We Day.

While Free the Children members have been attending every year, Interact Club members were invited this year due to their international project, which is being done in coordination with Free the Children. Interactors across the Bay Area hope to raise \$90,000 to adopt a village in Kenya.

While Interact members are only given general admission seats, four Free the Children officers, senior Meghna Chakraborty, juniors Shreya Sheel and Gwyneth Hunger and sophomore Megana Saripella will be sitting in volunteering seats. They will be part of a group called the crowd-pumpers, essentially helping to run the event.

"I'm really excited to meet the people that are involved in the same organization and be able to celebrate what the club does with them," Saripella said.

— Ariel Liu

>> picturethis



BEAUTY KING >> Senior Addison Polcyn flaunts his white tux after winning Mr. Saratoga on Jan. 28.

ACTIVITIES

Polcyn wins first Mr. Saratoga

By Catherine Tang

Senior Addison Polcyn said he was not planning to sign up for Mr. Saratoga at first, but decided to go with it after his friends entered him in the first event.

"I feel a little like a celebrity," said Polcyn a couple of days after winning. "I feel like Brad Pitt."

Polcyn said he planned most of his acts the day before, except for the talent show portion, which he planned a week in advance. Polcyn appeared shirtless and squirted sunscreen all over his chest as he catwalked in front of the judges, who were guidance counselor Eileen Allen and campus supervisor Jeanine Sevilla. Polcyn and Medeiros danced to "Apache" by the Sugarhill Gang. For Formal Wear, Polcyn was the only contestant to walk in a white suit.

"I've always wanted to wear a white tux and it was free, [so] I was like, why not," Polcyn said.

The Mr. Saratoga pageant was hosted by senior class officers as a class fundraiser.

"It was a success!" senior

class president Josh Pi said. "The contest was super entertaining and we raised about \$2,000."

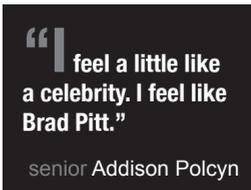
Senior Jordan Vogel won Talent, and senior Tejas Siripurapu won Mr. Congeniality. In the first event, Beach Wear, memorable appearances

included senior Samir Ingle, who dressed up as a life-guard, and senior Jason Tsai, who frightened the judges by wearing only a Speedo. To conclude the Beach Wear section, principal Paul Robinson made a special appearance; he wore khakis, a Hawaiian shirt and a few leis. In the Talent event, sophomores Kian Ghelichkhani and Nolan Chao danced to "Everybody" by the Backstreet Boys, sung by sophomores Kerem Celik and Ricky Holt.

Talent winner Vogel played "Riptide" by Vance Joy on the ukulele and featured Sara-

toga Idol winner senior Nadia Younes. Siripurapu was one of the most unusual performers; he read "All Gold Everything" by Trinidad James. Sophomore Nathan Ching wowed the crowd with his magic show.

For the last event, contestants had to answer questions



from the emcees, attendance secretary Mandy Armes and choir teacher Andrew Ford. Medeiros, Polcyn, Ching and senior Jonathan Huie were asked to

give their best pickup line and sophomore McKenna Seagraves was chosen from the crowd to judge. Medeiros's pickup line, "Are you tired? Because you've been running through my mind," won.

In the end, the senior class officers agreed that Mr. Saratoga was a successful event.

"I hope Mr. Saratoga continues as part of the class of 2015's legacy," Pi said. ♦

TRIPS

Leadership attends Disney conference

By Ami Nachiappan & Stefanie Ting

Members of the Leadership class along with ASB commissioners and class officers attended the Youth Leadership Program at Disney's Grand Californian Resort from Jan. 29 to Feb. 1.

Activities director Rebeca Marshburn planned the trip with the intention of having students learn ways to improve events at SHS.

"Our Leadership students [had] the opportunity to learn and participate in various techniques," Marshburn said.

She also organized the trip due to the "rewarding experiences" had by the students who attended last year. During the trip this year, students from schools in Arizona, Cali-

fornia, Hawaii and Nevada shared ideas, collaborated and had team-building sessions.

According to Marshburn, with help from the Disneyland Resort, students had the chance "to learn how a dreamer built his ideas into an entertainment empire by simply following a vision."

Students received training from Phil Boyte, a motivational speaker who is part of Learning for Living, a program designed to help schools transform their school culture and climate. According to ASB head commissioner senior Anshika Maheshwari, Boyte taught them how to "keep the entire school environment happy, get to know others and engage in conversation."

The students had the opportunity to share ideas on

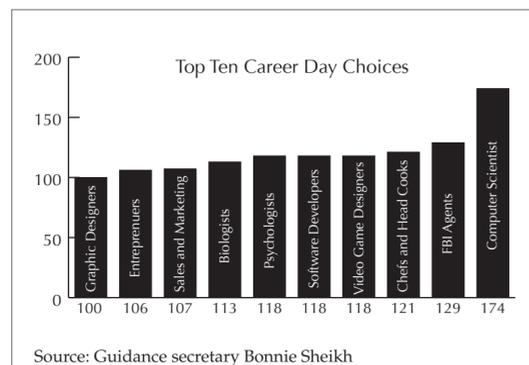
how they can give back to their community through school spirit, teacher appreciation and other activities.

"When students were divided into groups and a representative from each table was asked to come forward, it was incredible to see that 90 percent of the students who stood up were from Saratoga," sophomore class vice president Mitali Shanhbag said.

Being able to spend three days in Disneyland together helped unite the student leaders and created a trip they will cherish for years to come.

"Our school is full of so many passionate and inspiring leaders, and this trip allowed each of us to connect with one another on a level way higher than just a classroom scenario," Shanhbag said. ♦

>> falconfigures



— Helen Chen

Valedictorian, salutatorian announced for 2015

By Ariel Liu

Senior Sabrina Chen is one of four editors-in-chief of the Falcon this year as well as president of WISTEM, a club that encourages girls to pursue science.

Senior Max Chang is president of App Dev club, captain of Mock Trial and concertmaster of Saratoga Strings, the school's top orchestra.

On Jan. 29, both Chen and Chang learned they had received the honor of being the top two in the Class of 2015.

Chen, the valedictorian, holds a GPA of 4.84, likely the highest in the school's history, according to assistant principal Brian Safine, and Chang, the salutatorian, has a GPA of 4.81, also one of the highest.

Chen took 17 AP and honors classes

over the course of her high school career, but she did not take an AP class until her junior year. She attributes her high GPA to her organization, efficiency and laser-like concentration skills.

"When I'm working, no event or person can get me out of the zone," she said. "To balance schoolwork with extracurriculars, I focused on always finishing homework and studying way ahead of time so I didn't get too stressed out."

Despite her desire to get good grades, Chen said she now realizes that "valedictorian is nothing more than a title."

Looking back, Chen said that although hard work is important to succeed in high school, overworking herself was not necessary.

She often disciplined herself to forego time that could have been spent doing

activities she loves. "I could've gotten by without that extra two hours of Chemistry studying or that extra round of Trigonometry homework," she said.

Likewise, Chang has had an academically rigorous schedule throughout high school, culminating in a total of 18 AP and honors courses.

He has managed to balance schoolwork with many extracurriculars by using his academic interests to "pursue extracurricular interests with intensity."

"Whether it be developing apps, writing poetry, playing music, digging into constitutional laws or researching a new technology, my goal is to apply what I've learned in an academic setting beyond the classroom," Chang said.

Both Chen and Chang are admired by their teachers, not only for their brains, but also for their passion for learning.

English teacher Suzanne Herzman said Chen is the type of student who, by example, "won't let teachers slack."



Chen Chang

Strickland commits to fashion career after acceptance to London College

By Ashley Chen

Late last fall, senior Claire Strickland left school early on a Friday afternoon. She got into her car and headed in the direction of a generic San Francisco office building for an interview that would determine whether or not she would be accepted to the London College of Fashion (LCF). The top-tier fashion university boasts alumna like Jimmy Choo, the co-founder of the eponymous \$400-million fashion house.

"The person who interviewed me was a very intimidating person," she said. "I wasn't always sure what to say, but I gave it my best shot."

The statement is surprising coming from the poised, elegant student, who rarely uses "like" or "um" and spins words with the ease of a practiced orator.

At that point, Strickland said, the university had already reviewed her application and decided that she was qualified to attend if she performed well at the interview. After, the interviewer offered Strickland a spot in LCF's four-year Public Relations (PR) track.

The major includes classes in media research methods, creative media platforms, crisis and reputation management and more. All students complete a cultural and historical studies dissertation and final project before graduation.

Graduates often work as PR agents for fashion labels, promoting the brand's image and increasing company exposure.

Although the offer was not binding, Strickland said that after her interview, she felt sure that LCF was the right school and decided to commit.

A week after her interview, Strickland received a response from her early-decision school, New York University (NYU) — a rejection. Still, she said she wasn't disappointed and had

in fact worried about the legal complications associated with her commitment to LCF and the early-binding nature of her NYU application.

One concern she has about LCF, Strickland said, is its distance from home. Because London is so far away, she said she would likely only be able to see her family once a year.

Strickland added that she was concerned that LCF might be too fashion-centric for her, as the school does not have any general education requirements.

"While having that kind of immersion is a phenomenal idea, I am also [afraid] that I would be so immersed

in fashion that I wouldn't have an opportunity to pursue writing, another huge passion of mine," she said.

Other than that, Strickland said she has no worries. While the U.K. has a "different culture," and the only other Saratoga graduate attending LCF is 2013 alumna Karen Peterson, Strickland said she plans to embrace the opportunity.

"I know exactly what I want to do, and I know this is the best opportunity for me to make the most of what I want," Strickland said.

In addition, LCF's international tuition, £15,180 or \$22,800 per year, is lower than the average domestic tuition for U.S. private colleges, which is \$30,000 according to College Board.

Strickland said she is most anticipating going backstage at London Fashion Week, taking figure drawing classes and creating her own PR presentation of "all [my] style inspiration."

Now that she has been accepted to her dream college, Strickland said she has had much more time to pursue fashion.

"I feel liberated now that I'm done with college applications," Strickland said. "I started keeping this big notebook

that I carry with me all the time [to record what inspires me]."

For instance, Strickland said that she once tore out the first page of Vogue, a globally recognized fashion and lifestyle magazine, so she could take notes on the different positions listed on the first page of the magazine and what one needed to do to get these jobs.

She also has been focusing more on her unpaid position as a high school fashion board member for Nordstrom BP.

On the fashion board, Strickland and other high school students work to create a small collection of clothing to sell to people who shop at the Nordstrom Juniors department. Their upcoming deadline is in February.

Since December, Strickland has also been working for Nordstrom as a cashier. She helps organize the displays and bring in new stock. When she turns 18, Strickland said, she will become eligible for a job as a sales associate.

"It's a great opportunity to learn about the ins and outs of how marketing works in a commercial store," she said.

Because of her job, Strickland explained, she has learned to manage time better than ever before. She works five hours on Wednesdays and Fridays, and six to eight hours on Saturdays, so she has to finish all of her homework due on Thursday on Tuesday or before.

At the end of the day, Strickland said, she is grateful for her family and friends and is looking forward to her future.

"It'll be something I love regardless of how many [challenging] experiences I have along the way," Strickland said. ♦



Senior Linus Lu poses at Yale, where he plans on attending next fall.

Senior anticipates smooth transition to Yale University

By Andrew Jiang & Ariel Liu

Senior Linus Lu's hands shook incessantly as he whipped out his phone. It was exactly 4 p.m. on Dec. 16, and this was the day Lu's future would be determined. Furiously refreshing the Yale login page in hopes of faster connection, Lu let out a sigh of exasperation as his frozen fingers fumbled over the keys on his phone.

Trying to collect himself, Lu could barely even type his password into the login box. He was on the Saratoga Strings trip to Chicago, and was about to find out the fate of his future.

The words "You're in!" screamed off the screen at him. Releasing a cry of happiness, Lu suddenly felt as though a weight had been lifted off his shoulders.

"My reaction was overwhelming," he said. "It was more relieving than anything because there was so much stress."

For Lu, this was the end of a long and tiring, but ultimately rewarding journey to college. Yale's mere 16 percent early acceptance rate proved a daunt-

ing obstacle, but Lu was able to overcome it. He added that he feels fortunate for having been admitted, but almost guilty that many others were not.

Although Lu's acceptance into Yale was early-action and not binding, he said he has pretty much decided on Yale for his university next fall. He even visited the school again over winter break, falling in love with the architecture on campus.

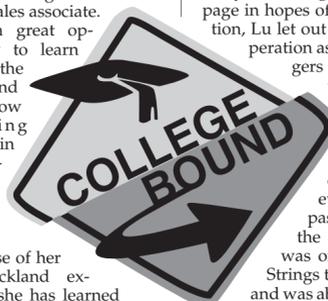
Even though many students who attend East Coast universities complain about the cold weather during wintertime, Lu's experience of New Haven weather was rather enjoyable.

"It was cold, but I was in Chicago two weeks earlier, which was colder," Lu said.

Looking forward to his move next fall, Lu said that he especially appreciates the beauty of the Yale campus.

At Yale, Lu plans to major in Ethics, Politics and Economics. "I just find that to be a perfect blend of the type of abstract thinking that I enjoy with real-world applications that are relevant and increasingly important in today's world," Lu said.

He is also hoping to do a concentration in either English or music. Additionally, he wants to continue pursuing his passion for viola by joining the Yale orchestra, saying he "cannot imagine himself without music." ♦



EVENTS

Juniors organize annual hackathon

By Sweeya Raj & Shreya Tumu

On Feb. 7-8, juniors Aakash Thumaty and Spencer Yen spent their weekend at Paypal Headquarters staying up all night, eating ice cream at 1 a.m., playing video games and most importantly, hacking.



Thumaty Yen

This year, Thumaty, Yen and other representatives from nearby schools helped to host the Bay Area's second annual High School Hackathon. Members of Saratoga's WiSTEM and AppDev clubs also attended the event.

Hackathons attract programmers and web designers. Because most hackathons are at the collegiate level, high school students in the Bay Area decided to start a hackathon specifically geared toward them.

The purpose of a hackathon is to start a programming project and to either finish the project at the hackathon or continue working on the project after the hackathon.

"High schoolers who enjoy programming and have the passion for it come to the hackathon to make something new," Thumaty said. "They can come for the workshops and learn how to code."

At the end of the hackathon, students presented their finished projects. An award ceremony recognizes students who created the best hacks or projects in several different categories such as encryption, coding, app design and java script.

Although Thumaty and Yen have been competing at hackathons since freshmen year, they have not been able to win. A big reason is that their opponents have usually been college students who were therefore more experienced.

The high school hackathon ran for 24 hours, unlike most collegiate hackathons, which average 36 hours.

Students stayed at the venue from Saturday around noon to Sunday evening.

Many students, like Thumaty, chose to spend the entire night working instead of sleeping.

"You can sleep, but it's not as fun," Thumaty said. "The whole idea of the hackathon is that you only have 24 hours."

While most people go to hackathons to have a good time and learn more programming, some take their projects further beyond just the weekend.

According to Thumaty, at collegiate level hackathons, students can go on to create companies from their products, proving that hackathons are more than just a fun social gathering of geeks. ♦

SCHOOL PRODUCTION

Drama prepares for musical

By Vibha Seshadri & Simi Srivastava



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

Junior Nina Nelson and senior Natalie Miller perform during a call-back to audition for their characters Datchery and Rosa on Jan. 22.

The drama department will be showcasing the musical "The Mystery of Edwin Drood" on April 24, 25 and 26 as well as May 1 and 2. Unlike most shows, the audience will get to choose the ending.

"The Mystery of Edwin Drood," a musical based on the unfinished novel by Charles Dickens, was written by Rupert Holmes and was the first Broadway musical with multiple endings.

The main character Datchery is played by junior Nina Nelson. Datchery plays Drood in the musical. Drood is heir to his family's fortune and engaged to Rosa Bud, played by senior Natalie Miller.

However, Drood's uncle John Jasper, played by senior Danny Kawadri, as well as other characters, resent Drood for being so wealthy. When Drood goes missing, there are many different characters who may have been responsible.

At the end of the show, the audience will get to vote on who they think killed Drood by evaluating the motives of each character, and the cast will perform accordingly. The orchestra will also rehearse nine different pieces to accompany each possible ending.

Although the ending requires some improvisation on the cast's part, Rupert Holmes wrote a script for the nine possible endings because Dickens died before he could write the ending of his novel.

As a result of the heavy audience participation, the cast will need to work extra hours

just to prepare the last 20 to 30 minutes of the musical.

"For me, the challenge is to figure out how to train my cast to be ready to improvise and get comfortable interacting so much with the audience," director Sarah Thermond said. "It's not like training them to memorize exact lines and staging; I also need to train them to be confident and creative in the high-pressure situation of a huge performance."

She has already devised a plan on how to prepare her cast for the improvisation. For the last few weeks of rehearsal, Thermond said she will choose a different ending every night so the cast can practice.

In addition, Thermond has included something called the "Audience Ensemble," for students who cannot commit as much time to the show. The ensemble has many roles since their performance is supposed to adapt to the murder the audience chooses. It will also be performing a few of the songs

in the musical. For example, sophomore Naman Sajwan decided to join the Audience Ensemble because he took drama this year, enjoyed it, but could not invest as much time into the musical since he also had soccer and academics to take care of.

"[Thermond] and her crew are just extremely comfortable to be around and so I did not feel any pressure going into it," Sajwan said.

The musical this year will also include more high-energy dance numbers and songs, similar to "Thoroughly Modern Millie" in 2013. The cast is excited to bring that positive energy back to the McAfee Center after last year's more serious show, "Les Mis."

"[The show has] got a great mix of humor and suspense, and watching the actors, crew and orchestra work to make your choices come to life is the kind of thing you don't usually get to see at high school theatre," Thermond said. ♦

CLUBS

Coexist: Striving to achieve acceptance for LGBTQ

By Emily Chen & Katherine Sun

The Coexist club's Tumblr blog, titled "GSA of Saratoga" in bold red, is filled with educational and supportive posts for the LGBTQ+ community. "P is for Pansexual," the image of a green poster reads, accompanied by a description of the word "pansexual" and images of similar posters like "T is for Trans." Another photo features someone holding up a sign that reads, "Gender non-conforming, still human."

Coexist: Gay-Straight Alliance, which has about 15 regular club members, meets every other Thursday with adviser Amy Keys in room 006. The club welcomes everyone and aims to provide a safe haven for queer people at school, raise awareness in the community and contribute to the global civil rights movement for LGBTQ+.

During some meetings, Coexist discusses current events in the LGBTQ+ community, such as the proposed legislation of Leelah's Law, which would ban transgender conversion therapy for minors. The club's fundraisers are often related to these events. The club also educates members by screening LGBTQ+ movies and giving presentations on different sexualities. Outside of club meetings, officers also share interesting links on the club's Facebook and Tumblr pages for members to browse.

Coexist was founded last spring by

senior Matthew Nobles, the club president, and several of his friends. Though there was previously a Gay-Straight Alliance at the school, it disappeared because of lagging membership.

Nobles realized that he wanted to support and guide queer people after struggling to accept his identity as gay.

"You know you're different, but you don't really know how you're different, so you kind of just have to look within yourself to realize that you may or may not be the [way] you thought you are," Nobles said.

Nobles originally believed he was bisexual because "it seemed a little more tame" than being gay. After years of self-examination, however, he realized that he "had just kind of been making that up for [his] own purposes." As a result of this social pressure and other factors, Nobles did not begin coming to terms with his sexuality until late in his sophomore year.

"I found that it was very difficult to come to terms with my sexuality without any support from anyone at the school,"

he said. "Since I didn't have that support, I wanted to provide it for someone else and make it easier for people who may be struggling with their sexuality to accept themselves."

Senior Claire Strickland, the club's event coordinator and one of its founders, also feels a personal connection to the club because a close friend had difficulty coming out.

"Even not being in her position was difficult because I could recognize that it's very unfair that people should have to feel inferior in their own skin just because of the prejudice that other people have against them," Strickland said.

The inspiration for Coexist began after the founders noticed students tossing around words like "faggot" in the hallways.

According to Strickland, they began to think about the school's attitude toward the LGBTQ+ community and decided that they wanted to "initiate some sort of difference at Saratoga." ♦



senior Matt Nobles

"I wanted to make it easier for people who may be struggling with their sexuality."

ELECTIVES

Advanced ceramics, SHS TV seek more students

By Andrew Jiang & SpringMa

"Come in. Relax. Be creative." When Ceramics teacher Leah Aguayo opens the classroom door, she shares these words of encouragement with her excited students.

"You have to work [when you come in my room]," Aguayo said. "But I'm not going to judge [your work], and there's no competition [in class]. I'd like to think of my room as a safe haven."

For the past 34 years, Aguayo has dedicated herself to building the school's Ceramics program. The number of higher-level Ceramics students she sees, however, has declined in recent years: Enrollment in Ceramics 2 and 3 has halved this year. Likewise, SHS TV is also facing similar decreases in the number of students they see in class, and both programs are trying to find ways to turn their enrollment trends around.

Reasons for declines

According to Aguayo, two factors have affected student enrollment: the introduction of the Engineering program and a 2012 policy that allows students to double in AP science courses.

"I get a lot of freshmen every year that are super excited about Ceramics, but then other APs and Honors classes take them their upperclassman years," Aguayo said. "Many kids have a passion with clay but never get to experience its true depth."

One of Aguayo's main concerns is the number of students who leave ceramics after taking Ceramics 1. Even though there are 110 Ceramics 1 students this year, there are only 16 Ceramics 2 students and nine Ceramics 3 students. The advanced classes are taught together

along with Ceramics 1 in one period. Senior Irene Chen, a student in Ceramics 3, also attributes the decrease to the school's competitive nature.

"A lot of students would rather take another STEM class because it looks better on transcripts," Chen said. "People have to realize not everything is about academics or APs."

Chen took AP Biology for one semester junior year, but dropped the class to TA Ceramics 2 the following semester because she thought that biology was not her true passion.

Aguayo hopes that in a time period and location (Silicon Valley) primarily focused on STEM, students can still appreciate the importance of the arts.

"We're at eight art classes in a school this big, and that's just a shame," Aguayo said. "Los Gatos offer[s] fashion designing, culinary, metalwork, woodshop, ceramics and art."

Sophomore Laura Makeever, who took Ceramics 1 freshman year, said Ceramics students tend to take the class for one year as a fun way to fulfill their visual arts credit.

Makeever, like many other Ceramics students, enjoyed the class's active atmosphere but did not continue sophomore year because her schedule was tight when she decided to be part of the three-period MAP program.

Aguayo, however, thinks this year's enrollment issues were an aberration. "It's like I've lost the championship football team," Aguayo said. "Every team has winning champions, but then many graduates leave and the coach has to build a younger team. My Ceramics 1 group this year is like [that new team]."

Aguayo explained that last year, many of her graduating students were "incredible potters that could go on and



FALCON // SWEEYA RAJ

Sophomore Celine Bellegarda practices centering clay using the pottery wheel in class.

teach college classes." Now, Aguayo is focusing on cultivating new members to build a new "winning team."

SHS TV to try new ideas

For SHS TV, the number of students has halved from 28 students a year ago to 14 students this year. A new policy this year requires MAP juniors to take a mandatory elective course, Media Arts 2, which has made the SHS TV crew largely dependent on seniors and the few students who join the staff from outside the program.

Last year, in addition to U.S. History MAP and English 11 MAP, juniors could choose between SHS TV, Filmmaking and Animation for their third required MAP class. Now, they must take Media Arts 2, and can only take these other classes senior year or as additional electives junior year.

Because of this change, SHS TV is only during seventh period, which MAP director Tony Palma said is inconvenient for upperclassmen who "have sports or activities, or do not want a seventh period."

Consequently, Palma and the administration are considering moving the class to another period next year.

The administration has considered opening the class to freshmen who have experience in Griffin News Network, Redwood Middle School's broadcasting elective, in hopes of boosting the program's enrollment.

Similarly, Aguayo hopes the best for the years following the Ceramics program's transition.

"I would pray to God that my class doesn't go away," Aguayo said. "When I (eventually) retire, I hope this room stays a Ceramics room." ♦

COURSES >>

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"We know, just from being teachers in the English department, that students like to read short stories, [that] some of them are into screenwriting," English Department head Natasha Ritchie said. "We wanted to have a class that would be more flexible and open to that."

The course will resemble a writing workshop in the first semester. Students will be instructed to read samples of different genres, such as short fiction, and write their own. Second semester, students will have more freedom to specialize in what they want to do, Ritchie said.

For any of the proposed classes to be finalized, a minimum of 25 students need to express interest by registering for it during spring course selections, assistant principal Brian Safine said.

Besides Creative Writing, other potential electives include American Sign Language, which would be taught by a West Valley College teacher on the SHS campus. The West Valley course would be open to both SHS and West Valley students. The semester-long class, for juniors and seniors, would count for World Language credit.

The math and science departments have also proposed Strategic Geometry/Biology Support for freshmen and sophomores who are also a part of Individualized Academic Support (IAS) classes.

Another potential course, Introduction to Programming and Web Development, aims to teach students how "to think more like programmers," Satake said. The class will cover computing languages more accessible than Java such as HTML, but would not be strictly computer science, as the course will

concentrate on concepts and web development.

Based on the responses from a survey of Trigonometry/Pre-Calculus students, the math department may offer college preparatory Calculus for those who do not wish to take any AP math. The course would be slower-paced than AP Calculus AB and students would not have to prepare for the exam in May.

"Some students might not feel comfortable taking the AP level class, so I think having a 'regular' [Calculus] class as an option is a good choice," sophomore Jessy Liu said.

In the engineering department, Digital Electronics may be a subsequent elective to Principles of Engineering. Sophomores, juniors and seniors are eligible, with the only prerequisite being a B+ or higher in Geometry.

According to the course description, "the class explores the world of binary numbers and arithmetic and basic logic elements to implement complex logic functions." Students will design and build circuits, display the internal behavior of sequential logic systems.

Various other courses include Art 4 Honors, proposed by art teacher Diana Vanry, intended to reward advanced art students who have already completed Art 3 with honors credit. Modular Guitar Study, suggested by music teacher Anthony Lanzino, would cover the basics of guitar. Weight Training for Athletes, proposed by athletic director Tim Lugo, would give non-football athletes a chance to keep up with their fitness during their off-season.

Media Design and Production (for freshmen), taught by a Media Arts teacher, would resemble a multimedia class, and Senior Media Lab will be offered to MAP seniors. It would be valuable to those needing more time to work on their final portfolio projects. ♦



Ritchie

EXAMS

Smarter Balanced test to be given to all juniors in April

By Larissa Chiu & Katherine Sun

Juniors will take the new Smarter Balanced test during the week of April 20, completing math and English portions that together last approximately eight hours. Underclassmen will not take any state-issued standardized tests this year, but in the future, they will also be given the test.

This marks the first year for the full implementation of the new Smarter Balanced testing, in which California will be one of 40 states to participate. According to the Smarter Balanced website, the new test "will go beyond multiple choice and include performance tasks [such as] research, writing and analytical skills."

A practice test available on the Smarter Balanced website offers evidence of these changes. The math section asks students to answer interactive graph questions and explain their work. The English section includes short-answer questions that ask students to draw conclusions and multiple-choice questions requiring analysis of quotations.

The test, taken on computers, adjusts the difficulty of questions for individual test takers based on their responses during the assessment. For instance, a student who correctly answers a question then receives a more challenging question, whereas a student who incorrectly answers a question receives a less challenging question.

Last year, four sessions of approximately 90 juniors each tested in the

library and research center. Assistant principal Brian Safine said that students did well despite technological issues.

"There were some slight problems with last year's research center computers because students had to look down at the monitors," Safine said, "[but] this year, the new monitors will allow students to read the tests at eye level."

The school district is also looking to purchase Chromebooks so that additional students can test at the same time. The Chromebooks would also be used in classrooms during times they aren't used for testing.

In general, seniors who took the Smarter Balanced test last year said that it is a more accurate assessment of students' abilities than the previously administered STAR test.

"I think [the test ensures] that people are rewarded for truly understanding the material, not memorizing answers or randomly guessing correctly," senior Kimberly Zai said.

Because last year's test served as a pilot to assess the electronic testing format and question types, California did not release scores. This year, however, schools will receive the results.

Though this new form of standardized testing will take some adjusting to, Safine is confident that students can handle it.

"Saratoga students are used to doing the type of deeper analysis required in the Common Core [and] Smarter Balanced era," he said. "The good work teachers and students do in the classroom will be preparation enough." ♦

Team shines in Homestead Forte Showcase

By Eileen Toh

Pumped by the cheering audience and roaring music in the distance, the dance team finished their hip-hop routine in their first dance competition of the season on Jan. 31 at the Homestead Forte Showcase.

Performing at Homestead High School, the girls competed in the X-Small Dance (lyrical), Small Dance (jazz) and X-Small Hip-Hop categories. Senior captains Joy Tang and Madison Seagraves also performed lyrical solos. Out of the 20 competing teams, the dance team placed first for their hip-hop performance and fourth in the jazz category.

"The team did so well," coach Kaitlyn Landeza said. "I was able to witness the team's hard work paying off and how

excited they were to perform together. I am proud of how well they adapted to the [competition's] atmosphere and with all the other schools."

The seven girls began to learn their routines and prepare for this particular competition last August. For their lyrical piece, they danced to Emeli Sande's "Read All About It," which "sends a message of speaking up for what needs to be changed to make [your voices] heard," Tang said.

The girls also performed their "fun and sassy" jazz routine to Britney Spears's "(Drop Dead) Beautiful" and a hip-hop routine to a mix of songs by Missy Elliot, Danity Kane and Ariana Grande.

"The lyrical dance is full of emotion and able to tell a story through [the girls'] movements

and expressions," Landeza said. "While the jazz routine is fast and upbeat, hip-hop shows a little bit of everything. [The girls] are cute and girly in some parts, but when the music changes, they become intense and full of swag."

While their performances were executed with confidence and ease, the girls encountered several obstacles throughout the competition. Not only did the team have to adapt to the different floor lines in the Homestead gym, but also, the music for their lyrical performance did not work as they had planned.

"Our music was glitching [at first] since the guy running the music forgot to plug the player into the speaker," Tang said. "When he did, five seconds of the music had already passed,



Freshman Isabel Lin practices for the Monta Vista regional competition.

but we pulled it together at the end."

Despite the minor problems they encountered, the team considers the competition a success.

"I'm really proud of all the girls and how far we've come as a team since the beginning of

the season," Tang said. "We've definitely had some tough times during practices, but all the hard work paid off."

The girls' next regional competition will be at Monta Vista High School in Danville on Feb. 14 before going to Anaheim for Nationals in March. ♦

FALCON FOCUS: HANA CHEN

Teacher recalls experiences at school in East San Jose

By Nidhi Jain & Rachel Zhang

Hana Chen, who has taught history and psychology here for the past two years, was stunned to hear the news of a fatal car accident that occurred in East San Jose on Jan. 27.

A speeding 19-year-old driver killed a pedestrian after he lost control of his silver Nissan. He tried to brake, but it was too late. Kiran Pabla, 24, was pinned against a tree and died instantly.

The driver of the Nissan was Gabriel Becerra, a former student of Chen's at Leadership Public Schools-San Jose (LPS San Jose), a small charter school located in the heart of East San Jose, an area susceptible to gang violence. Becerra is now charged with vehicular manslaughter.

"He is a bright, kind young man who made a poor choice, and will now face some very serious consequences for his actions," Chen said.

Teaching in an area with very different demographics than Saratoga's, Chen worked for three years at LPS. While there, she nurtured and encouraged underprivileged students to achieve success despite their difficult circumstances.

With only 233 students enrolled, LPS offers a close-knit community.

Many LPS students come from low-income families. Approximately 85 percent are Latino.

"I met some of the most incredible

students and fellow teachers during my time at LPS-San Jose," Chen said. "There are still several students whom I continue to keep in touch [with]."

For example, Chen helped a student receive a valid Social Security number through the DREAM Act, legislation that grants permanent residency to certain immigrants who have graduated from high school. The student is now pursuing her college degree, while also working to help support her family.

Chen said many teens there lack emotional support because of the limited guidance counselors at the school and because many of their parents "were absent, either physically or emotionally." "Many of the parents worked long hours or had other things that seemed to occupy their attention," Chen said.

Although some students needed more parental support, most students were fortunate enough to have the community to lean on, as LPS was a "strong

supporter of the mantra it takes a village to raise a child."

"The students at my charter school needed a lot of support, both socially, emotionally and academically," Chen said. "The teachers that were at that school were some of the most caring, compassionate and driven people I have ever worked with."

In one case, Chen helped to rebuild a sophomore's personal life. The student, who had recently delivered a baby, found herself struggling to cope with the idea of having a child while facing academic pressure.

"I helped her stay organized, tutored her in work that she had missed during her absence and [helped] her create make-up [work] plans that were suitable for both her and all of her teachers," Chen said.

With the much-needed assistance from Chen, this student went on to graduate with honors and currently has "a happy, healthy little boy." ♦

I met some of the most incredible students and teachers during my time at LPS-San Jose.



teacher Hana Chen

64 mathletes take AMC

By Ashley Chen & Karissa Dong

Sixty-four Saratoga students participated in the 90-minute MAA American Mathematics Competition (AMC) on Feb. 3.

The AMC 10/12 (the former offered to underclassmen, the latter to all grades) consists of 25 multiple-choice questions in subjects like geometry, number theory and probability; students receive six points for correct answers, 1.5 for blank ones and none for incorrect ones. A second test will be offered on Feb. 25.

Students who score among the top five percent of all test takers, or more than 120 points on the AMC 10 or 100 points on the AMC 12, will qualify for

the American Invitational Mathematics Examination (AIME).

Those whose performances on the AMC and AIME rank among the top five hundred students in the nation will take the U.S. Mathematics Olympiad (USAMO) in late April. Last year, juniors Sean Shi, Celine Liang and Kristine Zhang and sophomore Keshav Narayan qualified.

Math teacher and Math Club adviser PJ Yim hosted meetings every Friday to help students prepare for the contest.

"I wish that my students push themselves to the limit and do their absolute best," he said.

Junior Sean Shi, who was ranked among the top 50 math students in the nation last year, said that he was "quite happy" with his score. ♦



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BNB >>

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for All-Girls' Dance (AGD) — keeping her away from home and homework until 10:30 p.m.

This year's opening show of Bombay in the Bay takes place tonight at 6 p.m. and tomorrow at 6 p.m. in the McAfee Center, which will be decorated in traditional Indian style.

The three-hour event includes a dance from each grade, a Bhangra dance, a classical dance, an all-girls' senior dance (AGD), an all-boys' senior dance (AMD), Toga Tamasha and a brand new instrumental singing performance. The skit features Chakraborty and fellow senior officers Simi Srivastava, Samir Ingle, Kushol Bhattacharjee, Somya Lalwani, Neha Anand and Mounika Narayanan.

This year, the club will donate proceeds to Pratham, one of the largest non-governmental organizations in India that works to improve education for underprivileged children.

The club expects to raise over \$10,000 from ticket sales, thanks to local businesses and realtors. According to Lalwani, they have already raised more money from sponsors than ever before.

The show is on a larger scale than in past years, featuring a record number of roughly 200 performers. Both shows are sold out, with guests attending from all over the Bay Area.

Chakraborty, the current Indian Cultural Awareness Club (ICAC) treasurer, sees BnB as one of the most important parts of her high school experience.

Chakraborty can still recall walking into her first ICAC meeting as a fresh-

man, gazing in awe at the confident upperclassmen and wondering if one day, she might be a club officer too. Although she has danced classical, fusion, semi-classical and Bollywood since she was 4, she came into high school afraid of performing in front of her peers.

"Through BnB, I've become more comfortable and have embraced my love of all styles of dancing and choreography," Chakraborty said. "I've definitely grown as a performer and also as a person in the way I lead my peers."

But BnB isn't always smooth sailing. Especially during the few weeks before this year's opening night, Chakraborty has been overwhelmed with an endless list of "to-do's."

This list included practicing and teaching dances, mixing the music, writing and practicing the skit, scheduling deadlines and rehearsals, coordinating with the tech crew, organizing food with parents, figuring out ticketing and brochures, debating pricing options and advertising the show as much as possible.

"People always characterize Indians as dramatic, which may be true, but they definitely underestimate the work put into BnB if you are a choreographer or officer," Chakraborty said. "All of us want the best show and want to be involved as much as we can senior year, but that tends to get chaotic."

Besides a busy schedule, Chakraborty also has to contend with the notorious "BnB drama" surrounding costumes, choreography, and dance positions.

"It comes from misunderstandings," she said. "Drama comes when two passionate people feel strongly about something and oppose each other, and others mistake it for a power struggle."

But one of Chakraborty's biggest pet



Senior Meghna Chakraborty participates in the Bhangra Dance in BnB last February.

peeves is that participants don't always invest the time and energy that is required to execute a great performance.

"It's always important to have fun, but it gets frustrating when some people don't show up to practices," Chakraborty said. "Sometimes people think I take it too seriously, but I just have high expectations and this vision in my head that I really want to happen."

Despite the tension, Chakraborty has learned to focus on getting what she can control done.

"My favorite BnB memories always include the ends of our dances on stage, when I look around and see that everyone tried their best and is having fun, and I know we've pulled through again," Chakraborty said.

This year, the All Girls' Dance group, which consists of 13 senior girls, has grown into a family after spending so much time together. For senior Ran-

jini Nagaraj's birthday on Jan. 24, AGD members proved their love by throwing her a surprise party at a dance practice.

When Nagaraj arrived at practice that day, the AGD members jumped out and surprised her with cake, balloons, cookies and a card.

"After reading all of their sweet messages on the card I was so happy that such amazing girls were part of AGD this year," Nagaraj said.

As the class of 2015's final Bombay in the Bay performance comes to an end this weekend, Chakraborty sees a satisfying conclusion to four chaotic years of choreographing, endless planning and occasional drama.

"I am going to be so sad but relieved when it's over," she said. It's so nostalgic to think back on how [we] have progressed and changed over the years, how we always come together for this show." ♦

BLOCK >>

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the following week.

Another change in the schedule includes the addition of an eighth period. Robinson said an eighth period would allow for more flexibility with scheduling, but students would only be allowed to take a maximum of seven classes.

In the new schedule, a student could have up to two periods free and could have a late start or be able to leave two periods early. Robinson noted that this would be beneficial to those who play a sport.

In the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years, versions of a rolling block schedule were rejected by roughly two-thirds and 55 percent of staff who voted, respectively. This year, however, Robinson decided the schedule would not be voted on by staff members.

He had previously discussed the change with department chairs and received positive feedback for the switch.

"I know this is what needs to happen for our students' sake, which is why it is not up to a vote," he said.

Some of teachers' biggest concerns are that a full block schedule will reduce the number of days that teachers see their students.

Social studies teacher Todd Dwyer said, "I fear that the loss of class time will only increase homework load and if [the administration] is going to change the schedule to address the homework issues, I don't think that getting rid of three and a half weeks of [contact days] is the way to do it."

French teacher Laura Lizundia also fears that having class two to three days a week

won't be enough for students to learn to carry out conversations fluently in another language.

Other teachers love the idea of a rolling block and think that Monday classes are too short for activities like labs or Socratic seminars.

"The modified block has some persistent problems," English teacher Cathy Head said. "The Sunday night and Monday night homework crunch generates stress (and complicates lesson planning for teachers trying not to add to the crunch), and full block would take care of that."

Many students say they prefer the rolling block schedule because Mondays would be less hectic and homework from every class wouldn't be due on the same day following a weekend.

The schedule change would be for the 2016-2017 school year, since such a massive change takes time to implement, longer than the summer between school years.

"We will spend a lot of time in collaboration next year working on exactly what it will be, and how it will help students," Robinson said. ♦

Proposed Rolling Block			
MON/THUR:	TUES/FRI:		
1st	2nd	TUTORIAL	TUTORIAL
3rd	4th	LUNCH	LUNCH
5th	6th		
7th	8th		
EVEN WED:	ODD WED:		
1st	2nd		
3rd	4th		
LUNCH	LUNCH		
5th	6th		
7th	8th		

*Note: A class period is 90 min. Tutorial is 30 min. Lunch is 35 min.

FALCON FOCUS: IRENE CHEN

Potter carves out her passion in ceramics class

by Michelle Cen
& AmiNachiappan

Senior Irene Chen sits with a straight posture at the potter's wheel during Ceramics 3, placing her hands on a mound of clay while envisioning her final product, a vase.

With one hand holding a sponge, and the other inside the vase, she pinches the clay, causing it to rise up higher and higher. She then takes her carving tool and carves out intricate bands on her vase, rotating the potter's wheel as she goes.

Three weeks later, Chen's work of art is ready to be placed in the kiln. After removing it from the kiln the next day, she sands the rough surface and brushes on layers of powder pink glaze.

What started as a blob of clay has transformed into a beautiful, pink vase.

Chen takes a keen interest in ceramics and intends to pursue it in the future. Her fascination began in middle school, when she spent many hours listening to her older brother rave about the SHS ceramics program.

"I took Ceramics 1 freshman

year and absolutely loved it," Chen said.

In sophomore year, Chen did not take ceramics because she was in the MAP program, which required her to take an extra elective. She only had a free seventh period, but Ceramics was not offered then.

When Chen was a junior, the school began offering Ceramics during seventh period. Chen took two periods of ceramics, as a Ceramics 2 student and teaching assistant for Leah Aguayo. As a senior, she is an advanced student in Aguayo's seventh period Ceramics 3 class.

One of Chen's favorite pieces is a sculpture of Winnie the Pooh that she made during her junior year for her boyfriend. The process involved creating two separate pots, joining the two pieces and then adding clay and carving into it to make it look like Winnie.

While on the potter's wheel, Chen uses many strategies to create a stunning piece of art. For example, when making vases, Chen lifts her pot multiple times before shaping it.

"Shaping [my vase] is the fun part," she said. "You get to

push out with the hand inside the vase to shape it."

The process of making a masterpiece is long and requires patience. When she started ceramics, Chen adopted this quality and learned to accept that "most things will not turn out how you want it."

As a beginner, Chen experienced difficulty when making a coil vase, constructed out of stacked coils. The coil vase fired well, but because she was rushing, she applied the glaze unevenly. Through the experience, Chen learned to take the process slowly.

Chen said that ceramics pieces often look different than expected. After pieces are colored, fired and glazed, the glaze can turn a different color because there are not enough coats of it or it is not mixed well.

But sometimes the piece that comes out of the kiln is even better than Chen anticipates.

"Once I [decided to] just mix a bunch of high fire glazes and it turned out [amazing]. It's like Christmas gifts," Chen said. "You kind of know what you're getting but not 100 percent."

Another one of Chen's favor-



A clay pooh bear and plate masterpiece created by senior Irene Chen.

ite pieces is an elephant plate she made, which involved the intricate carving that is her signature technique.

"People will think it's a sting ray, elephant, scorpion and butterfly," Chen said. "Really, it's the eye of the beholder and it's nice, because that's art."

Aguayo said that Chen's "creativity is just blossoming," due to her hard work in her first years.

According to Aguayo, Chen crafted and sold many clay jewelry holders last year.

"She's got a bit of entrepreneur in her which just touches my heart," Aguayo said.

Aguayo, who has watched Chen progress through three years, also feels that Chen is her "little soul sister in clay." In return, Chen regards Aguayo as the "Clay Master 2000."

Chen said she is interested in pursuing a minor in ceramics in college.

"I really love finding new things to make and making them," Chen said. "Ceramics is my special place." ♦

YOUTH COMMISSION

Senior dance a success

by Allison Lin

Couples waltzed, tangoed and swung the night away at the Prospect Community Center Friendship Hall on Jan. 24 at the "Fly Me to the Moon" senior citizen ball, hosted by the City of Saratoga Youth Commission.

Every year, the commission focuses its time and money into hosting a large event that carries out their mission: to serve the youth of the community.

Last year, the commission arranged a Laser Tag area at the community center for students to de-stress after finals week. This year, the commission decided to shift to a completely different clientele after learning about other commissions' outreach to different age groups.

Inspired by the 1960s hit classic, "Fly Me To The Moon," the commissioners worked for two months to carry out.

Though the event was open to the public, most attendees were either guests of the commissioners, residents of the retirement homes or members of the senior center activity program.

The event was called a "Senior Ball," but families of senior citizens were also welcome to attend. This was the first time the youth commission deviated from its usual agenda of catering directly to the youth in the community.

Instead, it put together a list of different ways teens could help out during the event. The commissioners recruited more than 20 youth members from the community to help prepare for and perform during the event.

With more than 60 guests in attendance, the ball was an effort the commissioners saw as a success. Similar to planning a wedding, the commissioners were given the task of planning everything the dance would require, from catering to stage lights to live music.

The Saratoga High School Jazz Band played classic jazz music during the entirety of the ball. Guests danced the night away to favorite songs.

Members from the SHS Photography Club, junior Uday Singh and senior Alan Tran, set up a photo booth, complete



Senior citizens dance the night away at the "Fly Me to the Moon" ball on Jan. 24.

with studio lights and photo screens.

Youth commissioner Maya Gupta, a freshman, said most of the decorations, tablecloths, lights, and flower arrangements were ordered and paid for.

The commissioners' range of talents came into play when they started to construct balloon arches and centerpieces.

With dinner catered and paid for through the commission's annual budget and other fundraising projects, the commission was left with the question of appetizers, desserts, drinks and coffee.

Someone suggested the commissioners cook and prepare food items themselves. Distributing the job evenly, they each took trips to the grocery stores and found online recipes for hors d'oeuvres, cakes, cookies and other finger foods.

In total, the commission spent over \$2,000 to put on the event, and will look to use the rest of its annual budget in its upcoming events.

"Cooking and cleaning with the commission was a terrific experience, despite the [hard work]," Gupta said. ♦

MOCK TRIAL

Team loses in first round of preliminary competition

by Isabelle Tseng

Sitting in the Santa Clara County Courthouse on the evening of Feb. 5, sophomore Peter VandeVort marveled at how realistic the court experience was. He had a great vantage point from which to watch the proceedings of the trial while he played the role of court bailiff.

He also had a clear view of the court as the judge delivered his verdict in favor of the prosecuting team from Leigh High School.

The Saratoga team let out a sigh. They'd worked hard this season, but evidently not hard enough: They had just lost their second preliminary competition.

While they couldn't say they were necessarily surprised — adviser Dr. Hugh Roberts had recently described them as "solidly mediocre" — it was still disappointing to find that all their practice had not quite paid off.

With a final score of 217 to Leigh's 227, the Saratoga team generally scored lower across the board.

This was quite a letdown, especially compared to the closer scores achieved during the first preliminary competition against Los Gatos defense. (Though that match was still a 232-249 loss for Saratoga, there was less than 0.5 point difference between their aver-

age scores in opening statements, witness performance, direct examination and cross examination: four out of the seven total categories.)

"[But] I think it would be unfair to assess our team performance solely by the record," senior captain Max Chang said. "I witnessed a team that showed conviction, wit and panache. I couldn't ask for more."

The team began competing with the Santa Clara County Invitational on Jan. 17, during which they won their first round and lost their second round. This was quite an educational experience for the team.

"We learn so much through every competition we go through," VandeVort said. "We learn how to improve our case, points that we might not have thought of. The great part about being a team is the fact that we are able to assist each other and learn from each other."

The second round of prelims took place on Feb. 10 and 11. Final competitions will be held on Feb. 17, 19 and 24. Despite their early losses, the team remains optimistic.

"In mock trial, you win some and you lose some," Chang said. "The important part is that we maintain our vigor and enthusiasm while staying hungry for improvement — always moving forward." ♦



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GOSSIP GIRL OF SHS

ANONYMOUS INSTAGRAMMER POSED THREAT

by Eileen Toh

"Poor girl, you said one lie, now you have to live with it."

"There's nothing Gossip Girl likes more than a good fight."

"And who am I? That's another secret I'll never tell. You know you love me — Xoxo, Gossip Girl."

These aren't just silly lines from the popular CW television drama "Gossip Girl," which revolves around privileged high school students who get anonymous text-messaged scoops on recent scandals and threats — it's happening here at our school, and it is something that must be taken seriously.

During December break, an unknown student, possibly several, created an Instagram account called "gossipgirlshs." The account seemed intended to spread nasty rumors about certain students in clearly personal attacks.

With more than 100 followers (most of whom were Saratoga High students), "Gossip Girl" asked in her account biography for users or followers to send in "interesting gossips" for "her" to post anonymously. Instagram users, tempted by the option to be anonymous and unaccountable, could send in any gossip that they hear about their peers, with no regard for the truth or for their feelings.

Despite the ubiquity of social media, it comes with many costs. What we use for efficiency, entertainment or simply communication can turn into a forum for cyberbullying.

Although Gossip Girl did not publicly post the gossip that she received, the account had forwarded several private direct messages to users of Instagram, one of them to an underclassman the Falcon spoke to on condition of anonymity. She received a post recounting every last de-

tail about her behavior at a specific party that she had instantly regretted attending. It threatened her, saying that "she needs to stop, or else sh't will go down."

The victim of this message reported Gossip Girl to Instagram, as the post made her feel "incredibly uncomfortable that someone knew something so private about [her] and was so willing to spread it through Instagram." Feeling "creeped out," she revealed the post to a few close friends, who told her to ignore it because the message was only private and fortunately did not get spread to other students.

Even though she is attempting to forget about the message, she feels unsafe walking on campus with the Gossip Girl. There is a clear correlation between anonymity and cyberbullying. Under a mask of anonymity, people feel powerful, knowing they can say whatever they want without having to worry about being accountable for the consequences.

Moreover, the moderators of the gossipgirlshs account — who were also anonymous, of course — had the complete power to post whatever they want,

no matter how credible or unbelievable the rumors or "tips" actually were.

Why was gossipgirlshs created in the first place? It might be that Gossip Girl could have simply sought attention to boost her self-esteem — she probably felt insecure about herself and fed off of the tips that users sent her.

Of course, this was hardly the first time people used social media for cyberbullying. Take ask.fm, for example, a social networking site in which people answer harmless questions about themselves from anonymous users. Whenever I would visit my peers' ask.fm accounts, I realized only a select few are using the site for its intended purpose. I scroll through derogatory interrogations or insults, some along the lines of: "What is going on between you and ____?" or "You're kind of stupid and ugly. Lol."

True, the students and askers could just be immature or inquisitive or nosy. But no matter what the intention of the forum is, "anons" always have the power to write offensive comments.

In order to solve this rampant problem, students should instead focus on

more positive pages like "Saratoga Compliments," where the moderators make sure that nothing derogatory is posted for anybody to see, though they can sometimes misinterpret sarcasm. On ask.fm, I have also seen victims tell the anons to stop sending intrusive questions in their response. Other users should also stand up for those insulted by the anons.

In Gossip Girl's case, all she did was try to spread rumors. Students, aside from reporting her to the school administration or sending her messages to stop, ignored the account and did not give her anything to spread as they should have.

Gossipgirlshs was deleted as of Feb. 8, no longer invading people's privacy and threatening them. It is almost admirable that Gossip Girl finally put an end to the damage that she had created through forwarding tips that she received. The account spreading threats and rumors, however, is not a one-time-only situation. Hopefully, students can all learn from the end of Gossip Girl and not be tempted to post deceptive gossip under anonymity-cloaks of their own. ♦

Doxxing: ethically dubious vigilante justice

by Claire Chou
& Katherine Sun

After Edward Snowden revealed just how much the National Security Agency spies on American citizens, people have hovered around hot-topic words like "cybersecurity" and "personal privacy." And yet, while the NSA has been labeled as the big bully, many Americans remain unaware of the hacker activists who "dox" people and pose a far more severe public threat.

Doxxing, a term derived from the word "documents," describes the compilation and release of private information about individuals to the public. This information can include full names, emails, workplaces, addresses, phone numbers, photos and Social Security numbers. If it's online, it's susceptible to doxxing.

Some doxers are hackers with petty reasons for revealing information, whether it be money, revenge or bigotry. It's clear that their actions can never be justified; one human's petty satisfaction is no excuse for another's loss of privacy.

However, doxers also include online vigilante groups like Anonymous, known as @youranonnews on Twitter and Tumblr, and Racists Getting Fired, which appears on Tumblr. Anonymous has attacked organizations that range

from media-censoring governments to the Ku Klux Klan, whereas Racists Getting Fired has targeted those they believe to be bigots.

Anonymous unleashed a campaign with the hashtag #OpKKK and took over the KKK's Twitter account in November, taking down multiple pro-KKK websites as well. The group then "unhooded" KKK members by publishing their identities and personal details online.

Some say the KKK members deserved this treatment. After all, the KKK is a hate group that is itself bordering on legality.

One issue that complicates matters is that doxxing often leads to real-life consequences. Racists Getting Fired re-posts people's racist comments. The blog then takes doxxing a step further by posting their work information and allowing its Tumblr followers to inform the target's employers of the racist comments.

In the rare instances when employers take no action, the Tumblr followers promise to boycott their business. The racist commenters whose employers have not been contacted are filed under the tab "Gettin,'" while the people who

have been fired are kept under the tab "Gotten."

People doxxed by Racists Getting Fired and other groups have lost their jobs, have been stalked and have been harassed after their personal information was published. Many of them have families to support and responsibilities to uphold, and regardless of the inexcusable behavior of those being doxxed, doxers do not have the right to inflict that kind of real-life punishment.

In fact, in the recent #GamerGate incident, gaming developers Zoe Quinn and Brianna Wu were forced to flee their homes after their addresses were discovered and they suffered death and rape threats.

Even worse are more disastrous consequences that occur when doxers pick on the wrong targets. Racists Getting Fired shut down for a while after discovering that the Facebook account of Brianna Rivera, who had appeared to post racist comments, had actually been created by an ex-boyfriend. The vengeful ex created the hoax account to get her smeared and fired from her job at AMC Theatres.

Racism is a cultural problem that will only subside through education and discussion.

Although Racists Getting Fired has since updated its submission guidelines to say it will reject "not explicitly hateful" or "incorrect information," there is no guarantee that it will accurately vet all posts.

Even if it could dissuade the few who have heard of it from publicly posting bigoted comments, it cannot change their mindsets or prevent them from sharing their views in private. Racism is a cultural problem that will only subside through education and discussion, not individual threats and attacks.

Doxxing exists more for the immediate satisfaction of the vigilante. Unfortunately, doxers fail to realize that vigilantism is not the path to change and only hurts more people.

Doxxing sets a dangerous precedent. By reasoning that they may violate the privacy of people they deem "bad," doxers claim the power to distinguish between right and wrong. Besides, the difference between morally right and wrong is often subjective and potentially spells disaster for innocent lives.

It's partly ridiculous, partly terrifying to think that doxxing is punishable by law when doxers are so rarely prosecuted. Until law enforcement finds a way to identify doxers efficiently, they are free to run rampant — and any potential target has good reason to fear them. ♦

Alcorn's suicide: a tragedy to learn from

BY HelenWong

Leelah Alcorn is to be buried in a suit with the wrong name on her gravestone. She was 17, born Joshua Ryan Alcorn, and transgender.

The weekend after Christmas, she walked in the middle of the night to Interstate 71, stepped out in front of a tractor trailer and left a suicide note that went viral and burned its way from her Tumblr blog to national media and beyond.

Like hundreds of thousands of other bloggers who were just scrolling through their Tumblr dashboards expecting cat gifs and tired holiday memes the week after Christmas, I ended up sitting in front of my computer angry and horrified, her suicide note blazing on the screen before me.

Her letter must be read, word by word. The punch and the truth of it must be felt.

This was a girl trapped in a boy's body who saw no way out. Her devoutly Christian parents pulled her out of school, deleted her Facebook, took away her electronic devices and kept her isolated in the house for five months. They sent her to Christian-only therapists who told her, continuously, that God doesn't make mistakes.

Leelah Alcorn was not a mistake. She was a trans.

At some point, religious belief must give way to truth.

As much as the conservative religious like to say that gender identity does not exist beyond female/male, the simple

science of it cannot be denied.

Gender identity is a person's innate, deeply felt psychological identification as a man, woman or another gender. Being transgender is not a choice, just as being gay is not a choice.

Most of us reading this now sit easily in our own skins, comfortable with the gender we have. Most of us have never known the struggle Leelah went through. Most of us never will, but the truth is no one has to be trans to support transgender people.

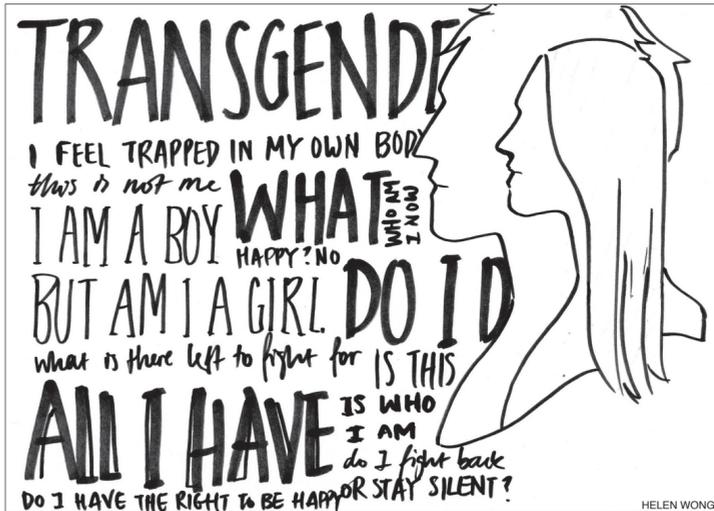
Leelah Alcorn will have the name Joshua Ryan Alcorn on her gravestone, and she will be buried in a suit, not a dress.

Her parents still refuse to acknowledge her gender identity. Her mother's version of the story is that her "beautiful son" was out on an early morning walk — yes, on an interstate highway — and was hit, accidentally, by a truck.

There is still a battle to be fought. The media will forget Leelah, eventually. The posts and the anger will die down. Leelah Alcorn and her story will move out of the public eye.

People will forget not only her death, but also the reasons why she did it in the first place.

We as a society cannot let the trans-



gender fight become yet another issue shunted to the sidelines. Leelah was not alone in her pain — is still not alone — and we must remember, whether it be through expanding gender education at the high school level or just standing up for our friends who don't fit into a gender mold.

We are the living, and we have the capacity to change ourselves and the world around us.

Her note closed with a plea. "The only way I will rest in peace is if one day transgender people aren't treated the way I was. Gender needs to be taught in schools, the earlier the better. My death needs to mean something. My death needs to be counted in the number of transgender people who commit suicide this year. I want someone to look at that number and say 'that's f'cked up' and fix it. Fix society. Please." ♦

First Amendment rights threatened in recent attacks

BY NidhiJain & AllisonLin

A new weapon has emerged from the past, one that is dangerous enough to threaten an entire country's rights and safety. The weapon? Violation of free speech.

Recently, movies such as "The Interview" and satirical magazines like Charlie Hebdo have been targeted for their exercise of free speech rights. In response to the contention over its controversial movie, Sony Picture's computer security was breached and threatened by North Korean hackers, and 12 of the French magazine's staff were murdered by Islamic extremists last month.

No one should lose his life over the words he writes, yet in today's world, stories of dire sacrifices in defense of free speech are everywhere.

It is astonishing how often people say they support free speech, but when it comes down to it, they only want free speech they agree with.

This generally occurs when something you deeply believe in is being criticized. In a civilized society, the best response is to use the power of words to combat the words you disagree with. In a barbaric society, the response to speech with which people disagree is violence.

All civilized societies depend on freedom of speech. Through this right, individuals are able to voice their true opinions and stand up for their beliefs,

ultimately making society better. Without this guaranteed freedom, unpopular opinions would be hidden out of fear of retribution, chilling people from contributing to the free marketplace of ideas. As a result, change and progress come to a screeching halt.

Today, the biggest problem is not the actual existence of free speech, but the failure to respect it.

If offended viewers and readers were to physically attack a publication or a movie every time they disagree, the right to freely voice one's thoughts would not

just be threatened, but destroyed.

Any country or person can take offense to a movie's content; however, responding with violence accomplishes nothing in the long run.

When hackers demanded that "The Interview" be withdrawn, it seemed to many that North Korea was attempting to conceal negative portrayals of the country. This sparked curiosity among thousands in the U.S., including those who were not originally planning to watch the movie. According to the International Business Times, the movie was

"purchased or rented online more than 2 million times during the holiday weekend, making it the highest-selling online movie in the studio's history."

These statistics prove that citizens do indeed value the advantages of free speech.

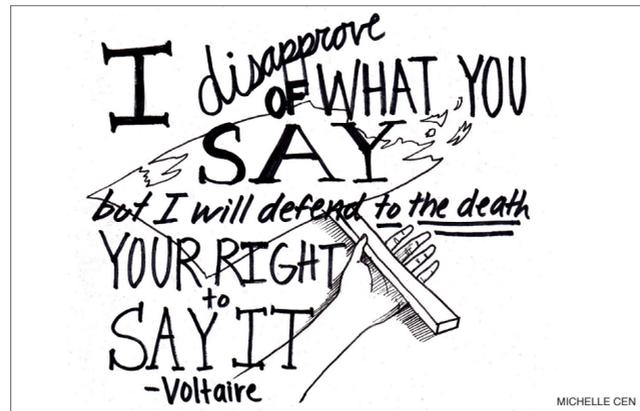
In the Charlie Hebdo attack on Jan. 7, the gunmen were radical Islamic terrorists who only added to the perception of the religion as extreme. They made life harder for every Muslim with their extreme act.

The purpose of satirical publications is to poke fun and shed light on different perspectives on global events and issues.

While it may have seemed like Charlie Hebdo targeted the prophet Muhammad, the magazine also included criticism of many other religious figures and beliefs as well — and it is completely entitled to do so.

Following the massacre, millions of people in France and around the world responded with grief and anger, spurning the phrase "Je Suis Charlie," or "We Are Charlie," which appeared on hashtags, hand-made signs, newscasts, the sides of buildings and even Saratoga High School French classrooms' windows.

Though the First Amendment is far from universal, it should at least be respected and upheld in the realm of the arts, the purpose of which is to convey a variety of attitudes and judgment. ♦



>> togatalks

Who is at fault in the Sony hacks and why?

“North Korea, since they just feel the need to uphold a reputation.”



senior Jonathan Huie

“The blame lies with the hackers, because Sony is protected by the First Amendment.”



senior Neel Bedekar

“Maybe Sony, since it was taking a risk by producing something so controversial.”



junior Kayla Kim

Writing elective fosters creativity

THE saratogafalcon <<

FOURTH PERIOD STAFF POLICY

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Saratoga Falcon welcomes all signed letters of opinion, which are subject to editing for length, accuracy and grammar. Please send them to editors@saratogafalcon.org. For ad information, call (408)-867-3411, ext. 222.

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This is clear and well established. Evidence is thoroughly explained. Analysis is nuanced, going beyond surface observations. Words and phrases are exact. Sentences transition well. Grammar and spelling are flawless.

These are typical criteria on the rubric for analytical English essays, and they're important skills. But where is the category that stresses creativity, the kind required to write short stories, poetry and novels? Those who strive to reach beyond the confines of this analytical mode have few opportunities to shine in a standard English class.

To solve this problem, a new English elective has been proposed for next year: Creative Writing. And it's an idea long overdue.

Right now, the only electives offered in the English department are Introduction to Rhetoric and five journalism classes. These courses alone are not enough to fulfill the wide scope of language that English offers, specifically the portions involving more creative pursuits.

That is precisely why it is so important for the school to offer a class like Creative Writing.

Many students would love to develop their own characters, plots, settings and themes. With Creative Writing, students can become the writers of stories rather than simply their analyzers.

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ceive the necessary feedback and guidance to improve.

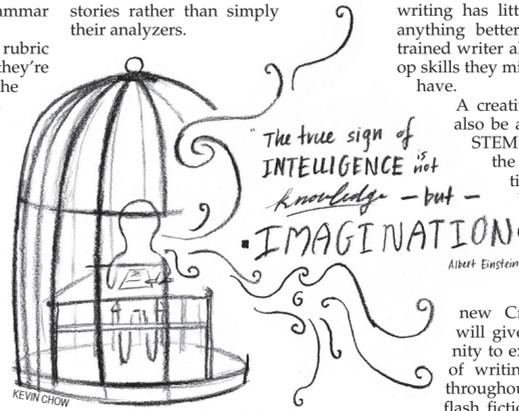
Feedback is key to a good writer. Without a second or third pair of eyes, writing has little chance of becoming anything better. A class taught by a trained writer allows students to develop skills they might not even know they have.

A creative writing elective can also be an enjoyable contrast to STEM coursework. It seems the school adds STEM electives every year. Creative Writing helps combat the perception that the school does not value the humanities equally.

Furthermore, the new Creative Writing course will give students the opportunity to explore important genres of writing that can help them throughout life. From poetry to flash fiction, students will be exposed to the main writing styles that pervade popular literature, allowing them to diversify their abilities.

Skills learned in Creative Writing would also be relevant in preparation for uses in more demanding writing situations, most of which must reach beyond the basic five-paragraph essay and require originality and voice.

Perhaps in Creative Writing, the rubric will read something like this: Writing effectively utilizes character development. Plot is engaging. Setting and theme complement the story well. And lastly: Creativity shines. ♦



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The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 38-0 in support of the creative writing elective.

AP English class not necessary for juniors

BY EileenToh & IsabelleTseng

We all know the complaint: Nearby schools such as Monta Vista or Lynbrook allow their juniors to take classes like AP Literature and Composition (AP Lit) or AP Language and Composition (AP Lang), while juniors at Saratoga High have only two options: English 11 or English 11 Honors.

Though this may not seem fair at first, English 11 Honors students are actually receiving an equal opportunity to take advanced courses in the subject.

Members of the school board have proposed in past years to offer AP Lit or Lang to juniors in order to demonstrate on transcripts that students have taken more challenging coursework. And with course selections coming up, the discussion has resurfaced.

From the perspective of transcripts, English 11 Honors provides the same GPA boost as AP Lit and AP Lang. Moreover, many colleges only offer AP credit for either Lit or Lang anyway, so taking both APs junior and senior year offers little benefit in that regard.

Some argue that allowing juniors to take AP Lit would allow them to focus on AP Lang as seniors; this would give students more interested in English the opportunity to explore different advanced fields of the subject without having to double up on APs during their senior year.

Both of the English APs, however, are designed for students who possess what English department head Natasha Ritchie calls "senior skills." These are skills that are a main focus

of English honors classes.

English 11 Honors is as difficult of a junior year course as AP Lit offered at Monta Vista and Lynbrook. The works juniors read in English 11 Honors are classics and essential for all students to study, especially "The Great Gatsby" by F. Scott Fitzgerald or "Hamlet" by William Shakespeare.

Taking more APs junior year may not be worth missing out on explorations taught through American Literature.

Some people suggest that the English department could use the same English 11 Honors curriculum in junior year AP Lit while adding elements that prepare students for the AP Lit exam. This solution, however, would essentially require restructuring the entire English course pathway just so that students could add another AP to their college applications.

Additionally, the English 11 Honors' curriculum aligns with the U.S. history students learn in their junior year, thus enforcing the material taught in both classes.

The current curriculum of AP Lit, on the other hand, encompasses a much broader scope, ranging from Ancient Greek to Victorian to Modern Literature. If juniors were to take AP Lit, not only would they miss out on essential novels studied in English 11, but they would also lose that correlation between their English and history class curricula.

Yes, high school is meant to be a time to start preparing for life beyond college. But if you forget about impressing colleges and family members for a minute, it becomes clear that English 11 Honors is the best pathway to success in either AP Lit or Lang when students are seniors. ♦

Ticketing: excessive way to enforce student safety

BY HelenChen

When I left my house at 7:42 a.m on a Tuesday morning, I had a good feeling that I'd be on time. Getting onto my bike, I started biking the less than half mile distance to school.

My teal helmet sat in the garage collecting dust as it had been for the past three months.

But I didn't make it to class by the second bell. After greeting my friend at the traffic light (her helmet on the handlebar of her bike), we crossed the street only to be met by a sheriff's deputy waiting to hand us yellow slips of paper.

Though failing to wear a helmet and jaywalking are against the law, it is unreasonable for policemen to wait near the back parking lot to ticket unwary students. Especially here in Saratoga, where the crime and serious automobile accident rate is negligible, ticketing students is unnecessary and ineffective.

Although some argue that officers are enforcing safety, those who jaywalk are usually smart about it, given that pedestrians aren't being run over left and right. For walking a few yards outside of a designated rectangle, fines of over \$100 are a bit excessive.

The fact that Saratoga was named the safest city in California by safewise.com in November 2013 further shows that safety is already well in hand here. This also makes it seem as if sheriff's deputies have nothing to do, as they resort to ticketing students.

While it could be argued that Saratoga is only safe because of the police,

several students have been caught more than once for jaywalking, showing the ineffectiveness of ticketing. Even so, most people who bend the rules have their own safety in mind and assess their situations accordingly.

Additionally, although people may have a vague understanding that jaywalking is illegal, many are unaware of the high penalties. According to the LA Downtown News, the LAPD has been stringent about jaywalking, charging fees as high as \$250. In Saratoga, some cops have instead handed \$100 seat belt tickets out, resulting in a possible citation for the parent of the jaywalker too.

Even more ridiculous are the tickets given to bicyclists who bike without helmets. With no fines, biking tickets instead require people to attend a two hour session of traffic school. Though not a great hassle, forcing students and their parent to attend such classes is more annoying than anything else, as no new information is really provided.

As necessary as some cops may find it to make students late, ultimately their efforts are futile as many students are undeterred by the possibility of getting future tickets. Though this negative reinforcement will make students more wary, they will continue jaywalking if cops are not around.

Whether or not cops pull over students to ensure safety, doing so is ineffective. In Saratoga, we've come to value our education a little more than the safety we take for granted, so let students run along to class: They don't need any more tardies, nor do they need fines. ♦

It is unreasonable for policemen to wait near the back parking lot to ticket unwary students.

Thank you for your interest. The Admissions Committee has reviewed your application, and while we are unable to offer you a place in the class at this time, we would like to review your file again in the spring. The Committee will reconsider your application if you send us any new information you send in the Regular Decision pool. Please arrange for your mid-year report and an updated transcript to be sent to our office as soon as they are available. If you would like to update us on your recent accomplishments, we would be glad to review additional materials. We prefer that you submit these materials through the Portfolio in your online Account. Materials must be received by January 31, 2015. Decisions will be sent by the end of March, and if admitted, you will have until May

DEFERRAL RATE TOO HIGH

SCHOOLS SHOULD REJECT APPLICANTS, NOT RAISE FALSE HOPES

By Maya Ravichandran & Carolyn Sun

For the class of 2019, Yale deferred 57.6 percent of its early applicants, Harvard deferred 68.1 percent and Princeton deferred 79 percent. According to the Huffington Post, Georgetown did not reject any of its early applicants, but deferred everyone they did not accept.

While a deferral from a college may look a lot better than a rejection, the percentage of deferred applicants from most colleges is too high and should be cut down.

A rejection or acceptance from a school lets students know how strong their applications are. If a student is rejected, he can then add more safety schools and lower his expectations for the regular decision round. On the other hand, if a student is accepted, he may choose to apply to fewer schools, saving application fees and relaxing more.

A deferral, however, leaves students wondering whether they still have a chance of being accepted into a college, or if they are harboring false hope. It's like opening a box with Schrodinger's

cat, only to find another box inside.

Furthermore, a deferral from a university with high deferral rates indicates virtually nothing; the university could be deferring a student with the full intention of rejecting them in the spring, or with the plan of accepting them in the regular round.

Or, a deferral could simply mean that the student truly lies in the middle and that the university wants to see the applicant's progress in senior year. Whatever the reason behind the deferral, the students are all in the same position of ambiguity.

If a college has low deferral rates, however, a deferral could provide valuable information for the student. For instance, Stanford defers only 8.5 percent of early applicants. According to Chuck Hughes, president of college admissions consulting service Road to College and a former admissions officer at Harvard, a deferral from Stanford implies that the student has a decent chance at being admitted in the regular round.

In addition, because of high deferral rates, some colleges reject an extremely low percentage of students. For instance, according to the Daily Princetonian, Princeton denied only 49 students, less than 1.3 percent of the total early applicants. To these students, it could be disheartening knowing that they were basically in the 1.3 percentile.

When applying to schools with high deferral rates, students should prepare for the worst by treating a deferral as a rejection. That way, they can ensure they will still have plenty of options come spring, and on the off chance they do get in, they will be pleasantly surprised.

Some may argue that colleges have high deferral rates because they may want to consider the whole applicant pool in the regular decision round before accepting anyone too early. After all, why would a student bother to apply regular decision if there are hardly any spots left? Having more deferrals would increase the number of applica-

tions, which also generates a large profit via application fees.

Most universities like the Ivy Leagues, however, have been making admissions decisions for many years, so they should know by now whether a student is a good fit for their school.

Another likely reason for high deferral rates is to lower the university's acceptance rate in the spring, which is a reflection of its prestige and ranking. As a result, some universities may reserve early spots for mostly athletes or strong legacy students.

To ensure low percentages of deferrals and acceptances, colleges should follow Stanford's example and simply reject the students they believe aren't fit for their school. Then, when students are deferred, they know that they have a decent chance at being accepted regular decision. In the process, students can gain valuable insight from their early decision results, and colleges will have less applications to review in the regular decision round.

With these changes, both parties can stand to benefit more. But until they happen, #rejectmeinstead. ♦

Students should prepare for the worst by treating a deferral as a rejection.

College tracking produces misleading data

By Emily Chen

"Check this if you would like to receive helpful information from colleges and scholarship services," read the PSAT answer sheet. I couldn't leave it blank, I thought; I could miss out on some valuable information.

Little did I know that this "valuable information" would come in the form of seven emails a day from colleges I'd never even heard of.

So many of these emails are full of links directing me to quizzes about which college or major would fit me based on my personality, and some want me to view their guides on the school or admission.

I've never considered clicking any of these links before, but ever since I've learned about Google Analytics, I feel pressured into opening these emails.

Through Google Analytics, universities are able to track when an email is opened or when a link is clicked. This feature allows colleges to track student interest and use that information to make admissions decisions. Besides observing applicants' actions online, universities can also monitor the activities of their students on campus, often through the scanning of ID cards.

Some colleges may use this online strategy to identify interested students, but this information should not play an important role in deciding a student's acceptance into the school. Colleges must exercise caution when judging an applicant's interest in their school by tracking the openings of emails. Anyone can click an email, whether it be on an ancient computer or

the latest tablet, and it does not require much effort. An action this quick should not have an impact on a decision with much more weight: whether or not a student is admitted to a college.

Tracking students through campus visits or tours is far more reasonable than email-based online tracking because actual visits to a college shows a greater interest compared to clicking a link.

Furthermore, a student who is truly interested in a specific college would likely already have visited the college website on his or her own without needing an email to prompt the visit. Colleges are not able to record which individual views their website, so by deeming a student more worthy of acceptance than one who did not open a link would be unfair. A student might already know the information sent in the email and not need to click on the link.

There are also some colleges that make use of technology to monitor the whereabouts and activity of students. While it may seem like an invasion of privacy at first, this system of tracking students is ultimately an effective way of ensuring the success of college students today.

One college that uses this method is Ball State University in Indiana. Studies have shown that those who are involved in college activities have a higher chance of graduating than those who are less engaged, so the university uses a system to monitor students' "campus engagement." Under this system, a retention specialist will contact students who, based on their activity shown through ID card swipes, do not participate in school events.

>> candidcaricatures



It might seem like this school is observing its students actions too closely, but the school kills two birds with one stone by being able to work its way up to higher graduation rates and by making sure its students have a more memorable college experience.

It can be argued that the amount of personal and private information universities collect from its students is overwhelming; however, lots of the information is collected from ID card swipes.

If most colleges already implement the use of ID cards granting access to certain buildings, it makes sense to note data from these scannings. The universities should not and are not going out of their way to gather information.

Another college, Purdue University, uses technology in a similar way. These

schools track student activity in the recreational centers on campus.

Purdue has found (through information collected when ID cards are scanned) that students who went to the rec center more often to exercise earned better grades. The valuable data collected allows universities to observe trends within their schools and make changes to benefit students' lives.

In the end, colleges seem to be able to obtain lots of information from students, whether they be prospective or enrolled students.

But these schools need to keep in mind how meaningful some information is before taking action, as some pieces of information have little worth compared to others. I don't want to be judged for not opening my emails every day. ♦

Colleges must exercise caution when judging an applicant's interest in their school by tracking the openings of emails.

Can you be a Target employee for a day?

By Shazia Gupta & Sweeya Raj

When the Falcon staff dared us to pretend to walk around Target wearing the usual employee garb, we had no idea what was in store for us.

We cautiously tiptoed through the front entrance and carefully peered into every aisle.

We couldn't even find a place to station ourselves because it seemed like there was always an employee in sight, and they would surely know we were frauds. Thinking that there would be fewer workers on the top floor, we sprinted up the escalator.

We were wrong. The top floor was swamped with even more employees. Nasty looks followed us as we tried to blend in with the shelves of toys. We constantly found ourselves pretending to be regular shoppers to avoid an awkward conversation with a Target employee.

They can't kick you out of Target for wearing red shirts and khaki pants, right?

After finally dodging the employees, we decided to walk through the toy aisles because we expected there would be parents with their children looking for assistance. After realizing that there weren't many people in the toy aisles, we headed to the clothing racks and pretended to fold clothes.

Surprisingly, an actual Target employee came up to us and asked "Can I help you?" completely overlooking our carefully planned disguises.

While we were walking through the clothing aisles, ready to give up, a man came up to us and asked if we worked here.

We enthusiastically said yes, and he proceeded to ask us where he could find coffee mugs. After looking around nervously in a futile attempt to find an aisle related to kitchen items, we directed him to the sporting goods section, to which he gave us a confused look but thanked us and walked away.

Because we actually needed groceries, we went into the food aisles assuming that we had finished the experiment. Not too many people had approached us so far, probably because we looked a little too young to be working at Target.

To our delight, one man came up to us and asked where the cupcake mix was. This time, we were (somewhat) able to point him in the right direction through jumbled phrases ("That aisle, over there; no THAT one") and a lot of frantic pointing to various aisles. He was already in the food section; he would find it eventually anyway.

While we were loading our baskets with various groceries, two women came up to us and one of them asked if we worked at Target, her voice booming with intimidation.

We said yes, to which she asked why we had baskets in our hands filled with a random selection of food. To avoid suspicion, we quickly told her we were arranging items and as we left, we heard her say under her breath to her friend, "That's not arranging, that's just pushing things around." Realizing that the



Reporters Shazia Gupta and Sweeya Raj pose outside Target before "helping" customers. Courtesy of Shazia Gupta

chances of being caught were increasing by the minute, we decided to make a break for it.

As we exited the aisle, we saw an employee walking toward us from the right. Turning to head in the opposite direction, we saw another coming from the left.

Looking straight ahead of us we saw another coming toward us from the front.

Cornered behind soda cans and cereal, we immediately looked at each other in fear and ran in opposite directions, heading toward the entrance. We quickly bought eggs, ignoring the questioning look that the cashier gave us, and got out

of the store as fast as we could.

Speaking from the little experience we gained, being a fake Target employee is much harder than we expected. We grew to appreciate the difficulty of working at a retail store, dealing with condescending and rude people on a daily basis.

As for the success of our challenge, we'd say we were just a bit off-target.

To the employees and customers we interacted with, we hope you know that it was a harmless experiment.

Now we just have to find out how to go back to Target without being recognized or banned from the store ... They wouldn't have a Most Wanted List, would they? ♦

Mod Pizza satisfies

By David Fan & Jason Zhao

It was just another typical lunch with some friends on a Sunday afternoon. After browsing the Internet, we found a place that was recently opened at Westgate West called Mod Pizza.

After we drove to Mod Pizza, we walked inside and were greeted warmly by loud welcomes from the staff members. The inside had a bright, modern look that gave off a warm, homey atmosphere, as opposed to the plain, stale exterior.

We got in line and gazed at the looming menu board, which listed endless combinations of pizza toppings. The types of pizzas ranged from an all-meat pizza to a pizza salad (a salad on top of a thin pizza crust). In addition to pizza, their menu also included other sweet tarts, salads and bread sticks. Those items cost around \$3.

The restaurant's signature thin crust pizza, the Mod size, is 11 inches wide and cut into four slices. It was the perfect amount to keep a person full and content. We decided to order a Mad Dog, a pizza topped with pepperoni, crumbled meatballs and mild sausage, and a Dillon James, a pizza topped with basil, garlic, sliced tomato and asiago.

The way the workers made the pizza was similar to the way employees at Chipotle assemble their

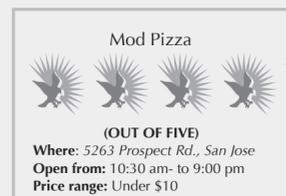
food. All the toppings are laid out in buffet-style, and the workers place each ingredient on the pizza fresh. People can make their own custom pizza since they have a variety of meats and veggies to add on a flatbread pizza and a wide variety of cheeses including mozzarella and gorgonzola. Customers are free to add as many extra toppings as they want to their pizza at no extra cost.

The topped pizzas were placed in an authentic fire stove oven, while we went to the cashier to pay. The price of \$7.87 was a pretty good deal for a freshly made pizza. We also ordered milkshakes and were given free additional drinks because we waited in line for what the store considered a long time.

We waited for five minutes for our pizzas to bake. As we took the first bite, the distinct flavors of all the toppings blended with the crunchiness of the flatbread. We tried to take our time eating the pizzas and enjoying the sensation of each bite, but we couldn't help ourselves and ended up devouring the pizza quickly.

The restaurant had soft drinks and four different homemade drinks such as iced teas and lemonades. Though the lemonades and milkshakes were very sweet, they were still refreshing.

We left the restaurant with full stomachs. Mod Pizza is worth a try. It rids the need to drive seven miles to Pieology for a decent price. ♦



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February 13, 2015

My mother is more superstitious than yours

The real Sim Shady

Simi Srivastava



It was a dreary Monday morning in the fall of 2010 and I was on my way to Redwood Middle School. My mother was driving after having picked up our carpool, and we were en route to school as per usual — or so we thought.

Suddenly, while in the backroads of the Golden Triangle, the car screeched to a halt as my mom gripped the steering wheel, peering over her windshield.

I jolted out of my Monday morning daze and looked around frantically, searching for some large obstruction in the road, blocking our way to school.

Rather than the fallen tree or electricity pole I was looking out for, I saw a tabby cat slinking away into the shadows.

Oh boy, here we go again! I thought to myself.

My mom is extremely superstitious and cannot let small things like this go. Though the common superstition is to not drive past when a black cat has crossed the way, my mom's version includes any colored cat (or sometimes large squirrels — she never takes a chance).

We proceeded to wait for a few minutes until another car crossed the way. It felt like ages to us as we were watching the clock tick away the minutes before the late bell would ring.

Like cats, spiders are another living creature that are very ominous to superstitious people. My mom, how-

ever, lets this rule extend to any kind of bug found in the house. Rather than squashing anything with a shoe, she is more likely to be found coaxing any type of insect onto an old envelope and carefully leaving it outside.

The list of her superstitions gets even more obscure: not walking under a ladder to avoid bad luck, avoiding haircuts on Saturdays and not cutting nails at night — just to name a few.

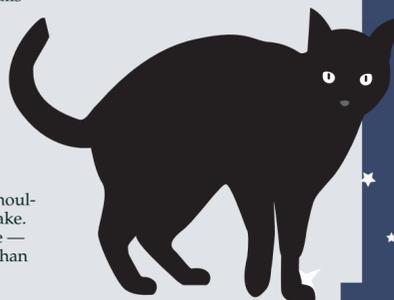
My mom also follows the superstition that requires you to throw salt with your right hand over your left shoulder after you spill some by mistake. But this has always confused me — isn't that just spilling more salt than was spilled in the first place?

When asked about her superstitions, my mom says that she was introduced to them by her grandmother and they've stuck with her ever since. Though she can never explain exactly why any of her superstitions make any sense, I've accepted her superstitious nature as a quirk and hope to be able to understand more about them in the future.

For now, I'll have to settle with being exasperated every time a spider crosses the threshold of my house and I can't touch it. ♦

"For now, I'll have to settle with being exasperated every time a spider crosses the threshold of my house and I can't touch it."

senior Simi Srivastava



FRIDAY THE 13TH

(and other unlucky days)

WITH THE CURSED DAY UPON US, STUDENTS TALK ABOUT SOME OF THEIR MOST UNFORTUNATE DAYS



Senior carries Lush bath 'bomb' into airport

By Nidhi Jain

Most students know senior Supriya Khandekar as the green-eyed overwhelmingly nice girl with an ample number of speech and debate accomplishments who has almost no flaws. In fact, a Facebook page exists by the name of Goddess Supriya Khandekar and has more than 80 likes. Her passions include verifying that everything she touches is germ free, singing and helping others.

Although it may seem as if Khandekar was made of, as one student put it on her Facebook page, "ultimate perfection," she once found herself the victim of a practical joke at an airport in which she was accused of carrying a "bomb" in her backpack.

In point of fact, Khandekar, then a sophomore, was merely carrying a bath bomb. Far from explosive, though certainly odorous, bath bombs liquefy and add different scents and colors to the bath, softening the user's skin.

Khandekar thought back to when she originally purchased her aromatic

treasure, while in Modesto, Calif. with English teacher and former speech and debate coach Erick Rector and other members of the speech and debate team while participating in the 2013 state tournament.

"[Bath bombs] are really fun and I was pretty excited about [my purchase]," Khandekar said.

Because of the strict airport security rules regarding items in carry-on bags, Khandekar was originally unsure whether she would be allowed to take her purchase on the plane, as it was unclear whether the bath bomb was liquid or solid.

"I looked it up on my phone to make sure it could go through TSA, and it could and everything, so I finally became pretty [confident] about it," Khandekar said.

Before traveling to the airport from Modesto, the team made one last stop at a car rental service, where the practical joke started.

"Mr. Rector tells [the car salesman], 'You know, she has a bomb with her,'" Khandekar said. "Then, the [salesman] joked about how they wouldn't allow [me] on the plane."

Despite knowing that Rector was joking, Khandekar felt terrified that she indeed would not be permitted to sit on the plane.

The team finally arrived at the shuttle. It was getting closer and closer to the time when Khandekar would have to face airport security. Khandekar's anxiety built up even more when Rector continued telling a nearby passenger that Khandekar had a bomb in her possession. The passenger responded jokingly, "That's fine, as long as you're not on my flight."

The time had come. Khandekar swallowed a gulp of fear, ready to face TSA.

"I kept on holding my breath and looking back to making sure Rector wasn't telling anyone else [about

the bomb], and he wasn't of course," Khandekar said.

As the security machine scanned her belongings, Khandekar took deep breaths, "making sure that everything would go through OK."

"It was pretty funny to joke around and see her freak out," Rector said. "[Alumnus Sujay Khandekar] and I would keep switching off, saying, 'Don't worry, it should be fine,' and then adding 'except if you tell [security] you're carrying a bomb, which you are.'"

Although Khandekar felt worried about the potential misunderstanding with security, she still had an underlying feeling that she would smoothly make it through the bag-checking. Eventually, the team did reach home without any delays.

"I was really scared at the time, but at the back of my mind, I knew that [Rector] wouldn't joke around like that with the TSA," Khandekar said. "Now, when I look back at that day, I get a good laugh out of it." ♦



Khandekar

Car accident occurs at 'Devil's hour'

SENIORS VEER OFF CLIFF AT 4 AM, SUFFER MINOR INJURIES

By Shreya Tumu & Tiffany Zheng

The winds howled and fat drops of rain slapped against the road as current seniors Reilly Bowker and Ryan Hoag, alumnus Ryan Patrick and senior Aneesa Walden, who no longer attends the school, whipped through the Santa Cruz Mountains in Patrick's car, on Sunday, Feb. 9, 2014.

The four decided to go out for a drive out of pure boredom, unaware of the possible consequences. They were not intoxicated in any way.

At 4 a.m., the infamous Devil's Hour, they drove through downtown Saratoga and then up Big Basin Way and into the mountains. They were unfamiliar with the silent, windy roads. Patrick was driving, Bowker was in the passenger's seat, and Walden and Hoag were sitting in the back.

The stark darkness also disoriented them. Suddenly, the vehicle was rolling downhill as the road veered sharply to the right. Unaware of the sharp turn, Patrick had been caught off guard and the car plummeted off the side of the road.

"When we took that turn, all you could see was the ground disappear from beneath you," Bowker said.

After driving off the road, they hit multiple trees, a lucky break that softened the impact of the crash. Even so, the entire back and side of Patrick's car had caved in. It was totaled. Walden's decision to move to the middle seat might have saved her from extensive injuries or even death, as that part of the car was smashed in.

"Everyone says things like this happen really fast, but for me, time slowed down for a little bit," Hoag said. "Everyone was screaming and it lasted a long time before we hit the trees."

According to Bowker, Walden's neck was "slashed, red and covered with blood." "She was like, 'How bad is it?' and I told

her that it wasn't that bad because I didn't want to freak her out," Bowker said.

At first, the group was unable to escape the damaged vehicle because of the heavy rainfall, muffling darkness and their injuries. They learned later at the hospital that Reilly and Patrick had minor concussions while Hoag suffered from heavily bruised ribs. Afraid of the consequences that would follow if they contacted the police or their parents, Bowker called her twin sister, Maddie Bowker, to come get them.

Maddie initially thought that they were joking, but when Walden began panicking on the phone, Maddie realized the severity of the situation.

"When I got there, I was really pissed off at them for doing something so stupid like sneaking out and driving really fast," Maddie said. "Patrick didn't want to call the cops and we argued about that for like 10 minutes."

Maddie remembers the emotional roller-coaster she went through as she picked them up and drove them to the hospital.

"I was happy to know that they were alive, but I also was also angry at them," Maddie said. "But in the end I was mostly worried about Walden and everyone else."

Reilly recalls the emotional confrontation between Walden and her family at the hospital.

"I first saw Aneesa's dad and little sister

at the hospital, and I remember how emotional it was because her sister was crying so hard that she couldn't even look at her because she was scared for her," Reilly said. "It was crazy, very scary."

At the hospital, the four students were separated into different rooms where each one was interviewed by police.

"I thought they would understand because we were scared teenagers, but they told us that there was an investigation going on," Reilly said.

According to Reilly, earlier in the night of their crash, another accident involving a van occurred near where they had plummeted off the road. The passenger in the van died in the accident, but the driver fled. The twist: The accident occurred during a botched drug deal.

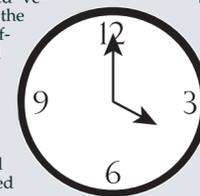
According to Reilly, "pounds and pounds of meth and weed" were in the van. Police knew the four students weren't involved in the first accident, but it was an odd coincidence.

In the end, Reilly said she got into trouble with her parents for not calling 911 after the accident and sneaking out in the middle of the night.

To this day, Reilly and Hoag, who are very superstitious, "feel

lucky that they came out of the accident with only minimal injuries. Reilly has become more paranoid and cautious when driving late in the night. Hoag lost one of his shoes the night of the crash. He keeps the other one as a form of good luck.

"Gut feelings are a real thing; we all felt like we were in danger before the crash, but we just went on with it because we never thought anything like that could ever actually happen to us," Hoag said. "Honestly, I should've just gone to sleep that night." ♦



"Honestly, I should've just gone to sleep that night."

senior Ryan Hoag

A Friday of unlucky events, 2013

I wong the game

Helen Wong



Throw salt over your shoulder, wear those lucky green shoes, avoid your neighbor's strange black cat that always seems to cross your path. Take all precautions and take no prisoners. Bad luck wages a war against you today.

I, a hardened veteran of 17 Friday the 13ths, have witnessed horror after traumatizing horror. I am traumatized from that one Friday the 13th when not one but two ladders nearly collapsed when I was climbing them. I can list all the low-grade, mildly infuriating incidents (shoelaces that don't stay tied, YouTube videos freezing halfway through) that build up over the day until midnight, when the 13th becomes the 14th and finally, I am safe.

Let me tell you a tale of injury and drama, a retelling of a traumatic

almost-24-hour unceasing onslaught of bad luck: September, Friday the 13th, 2013.

I was looking forward to slogging my way through the last day before the weekend. All I had to do was get up on time, make it to school on time and turn all my homework in.

I woke up at 7:50 that morning. I'd forgotten to set my alarm, and the only reason I woke up before 10 a.m. at all was by the unwavering grace of my little brother, who so very kindly slammed open my door to gleefully tell me I was late as hell to school.

To add insult to injury, this was before I could drive. I was forced to bike every day to school, rain or shine, early or late.

So I shoved a piece of bread into my mouth, crammed my backpack, leapt onto my bike and made it to school in a record seven minutes (it usually takes around 15). I think I could have outbiked any speed biker that morning. Desperation does things to a person.

First class of the day, I was miss-

ing my binder, and therefore my homework. I received no credit, a withering look from my teacher, a punch to my grade I couldn't afford and the sinking feeling that things were turning from bad to worse.

How much worse could it really get, you ask? I left my lunch at home; my locker wouldn't open; I tripped and fell enough times over the course of the day to look like I was actively trying to kiss the ground at nearly any given moment.

It was a miracle I didn't break my neck on the steps of the Quad or get run over by a car. Actually, I take that last one back.

A car driven by a crazy senior boy didn't stop when I biked over the crosswalk on my way home. If I'd been just seconds slower, I'd be a bloody mess of broken bones and smashed brains.

Today, I'm going to put on a flak jacket and buy at least 10 sandbags to hide behind. Be prepared, children. It's Friday the 13th, and you need to buckle down and prepare for the worst. ♦

ALL GRAPHICS BY HELEN CHEN

Top 10 Horror Movies

- 1) THE CONJURING
- 2) THE SHINING
- 3) OCULUS
- 4) THE BABADOOK
- 5) 28 DAYS LATER
- 6) ORPHANAGE
- 7) NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET (1984)
- 8) CABIN IN THE WOODS
- 9) THE EXORCIST
- 10) SINISTER

-Aditya Chaudhry



Classical Music: a soundtrack for every person

BY AshleyChen & DeeptiKannan

As fun as it might be to listen to the auto-tuned machinations of artists like Calvin Harris or Jessie J, we need to revive our cultural roots and go back to where it all started: classical music.

There's something enchanting about the haunting pitch of a first violin at the start of a symphony that gives us the "feels." Classical music tells so many stories, from the exciting adventures of Princess Scheherazade to the mischievous deeds of the gypsy Carmen.

Many believe that one must be a classical music buff or play an instrument to appreciate classical music. This couldn't be more wrong. All it takes is an open mind to catch a glimpse of the magical world of classical music, an art form that has been around for more than 1,600 years.

That doesn't mean listening to Eminem or Ariana Grande is worthless, but if we forget the composers who have captured the emotions of the past and the present — the tales that are woven through harrowing chord progressions and the whispers of a flute concerto — we will be neglecting our culture and history.

Without further ado, here are our recommendations for the classical music newbie.

1. **Beethoven, "Moonlight Sonata":** Don't be fooled by the name. The first movement begins with angelic, lyrical chords, but the third movement is pure violence, with cascading, overlapping chords that conclude each measure with a bang.

2. **Debussy, "Suite Bergamasque":** All five dances, reminiscent of a Monet painting from the Impressionist period, will put you in a trance of wonderment with their colorful and mellifluous melodies. Our personal favorite is "Claire de Lune," in addition to "Prelude."

3. **Wagner, "Tristan and Isolde":** This 12th-century French tale of star-crossed lovers who commit adultery to be with each other, and their tragic fate, probably inspired everything from Guinevere and Lancelot to the Nicholas Sparks movie you pretended you didn't watch.

4. Rimsky-Korsakov, "Scheherazade"
5. Dvorak, "New World Symphony"
6. Rachmaninov, "Piano Concerto No. 3"
7. Pachelbel, "Canon in D"
8. Chopin, "Fantasie Impromptu"
9. Bach, "Air on the G String"
10. Handel, "Messiah"

These pieces can be found on YouTube as well as the radio station KDFC. It doesn't hurt to watch live performances. ♦



GRAPHIC BY HELEN CHEN

Perlman violin concert calming, timeless

BY KarissaDong

Since I began to play the violin in third grade, I've listened to CD recordings of Itzhak Perlman, one of the greatest violinists of the past several decades. When I decided to join a youth orchestra in sixth grade, my mom played his studio recordings in the car as she drove me to my auditions; when I picked up a new violin piece, my music teacher played his CD and told me, plainly, "to imitate."

In other words, Itzhak Perlman is no mere violinist in the music community — he's an icon. (For those who aren't so familiar with classical musicians, he performed the theme song solo for the recording of "Schindler's List.")

So when I learned that he was performing on Jan. 18 in Davies Symphony Hall, I hurriedly purchased a ticket online to hear a great musician play live.

I arrived at Davies Hall in the midst of an eager crowd. Overwhelming applause welcomed our venerated guest performer, who entered the stage in his wheelchair. He had been diagnosed with polio at age 4, when his legs became permanently paralyzed.

Perlman began with Ludwig van Beethoven's "Sonata No. 8 in G major,"

and immediately everyone fell silent and still, our eyes fixed on the performer's every movement. His delicate, pearly notes drifted from the brightly-lit end of the hall to the attentive audience seated on the other side. At the end of each movement, a man beside me repeated "phenomenal, absolutely phenomenal" under his breath.

Following Beethoven's piece was Edward Grieg's "Sonata No. 3 in C minor," a passionate, characteristic work by the famous Romantic composer. The piece easily ranked as my favorite of the night; its lively melodies contained many elements of Norwegian folk music and was a lovely lyrical work. The song's soothing tunes and Perlman's swift bow put me at peace in my seat. After a brief intermission, Maurice Ravel's "Sonata in G major" concluded the printed program.

But the violin maestro wasn't finished yet — Perlman performed an additional work, Arcangelo Corelli's "Sarabande and Allegretto." He ended

the piece with a flourish and after our applause, continued with several other short pieces such as the theme song of "Schindler's List," and Prokofiev's "March" from "The Love for Three Oranges." He effortlessly executed each piece with brilliance and fluidity, adding his unique flavor.

The Israeli-American virtuoso and his piano collaborator received a standing ovation. With violin and bow sitting in his lap, Perlman waved to the audience, then disappeared through the stage door.

As a fan of Perlman and classical music, I thoroughly enjoyed the performance. But beyond that,

this genre of music isn't at all limited to members of the music community alone — hearing orchestral music live is a relaxing and enriching experience that anyone can appreciate. The classical era may date back centuries, but its music is a timeless entertainment that I highly recommend exploring in today's elegant concert venues: from the Davies to the antique California Theatre. ♦

Hearing orchestral music live is a relaxing and enriching experience that anyone can easily appreciate.

Devoted junior pianist plans to pursue music major

BY AshleyChen

Junior Sophia Lin, then 11, sat uncomfortably at the piano bench. Before her was a Steinway grand piano that dwarfed her tiny frame. Lin was about to compete in the 10th Annual Russian Music Competition, an international contest among students from countries such as China, Ukraine, South Korea and Hungary.

The competition, hosted at Le Petit Trianon in San Jose, is open to the public but requires competitors to submit an application with a recommendation letter and YouTube link to a sample performance.

After glancing anxiously at the audience in front of her, Lin began to play Bach's "BWV 860 Prelude and Fugue in G Major." Soon she finished the first of four pieces she performed that day.

Lin took home third place and the "Most Promising Young Talent" award in the Junior Division, but more significantly, Lin realized she "was good at piano, not just normal."

When she started learning the instrument, Lin recalled, she "wasn't passionate about music" because her parents had pushed her into it. She started competing at age 6 because her teacher, Mountain View resident Anna Semyanovsky, asked her to, not because she enjoyed playing.

"I hated practicing and would always slack, and the only time I'd get into trouble was [when] I didn't practice," Lin said.

After her finish in the prestigious competition, however, Lin became more motivated.

"I feel like I have something to prove," she said. "I'm inspired to work hard for myself, and I'm motivated to practice by imagining what will happen if I don't practice."

Lin said that she practices one to two hours on most weekdays and three to four hours in her free time. She also listens to and takes notes on other pianists' interpretations of pieces she is playing.

Still, her success has not come without struggle. During freshman year, she suffered her first "failure" at a piano competition when she didn't perform up to her high standards.

"I had to play three movements of a concerto and I'd finished memorizing the last movement the week before," Lin said. "I failed ... I was depressed afterwards [because] it was really humiliating."

After that experience, she vowed to work harder even as school became more challenging.

"When I am stressed out, I just stop and play the piano because it makes me forget everything else that's going on in my life," she said.

Lin said her greatest challenge with piano is her small hands. While the typ-



Junior Sophia Lin poses for a photo for El Camino Youth Symphony.

ical pianist can reach around a 10th, Lin can reach only octaves.

For instance, Lin said that she spent the "entire summer" learning a Chopin Scherzo. By the time the school year started, she had perfected every measure — except for 10 measures at the end that had too many large chords. Lin ended up abandoning the piece for Ravel's "Jeux d'eau."

In the future, Lin said she plans to pursue her passion by majoring in piano performance in college, in addition to another more practical major. During college, Lin said she hopes to perform often to build her reputation. In the long run, she hopes to become a piano teacher.

"[Piano] is what makes me special," she said. "I'm an introvert, so I don't really talk; [instead,] I talk through my music." ♦

Recounting the best moments of Golden Globes

BY SherrilynLing

Providing a lighthearted and laid-back vibe absent in other awards shows, the Golden Globes Awards never fail to bring out priceless moments from presentations by drunk celebrities, to amazing zings by hosts Amy Poehler and Tina Fey.

This year, Hollywood's most remarkable talents of the year from film and television alike congregated in the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Los Angeles for the annual show on Jan. 11.

For their third and final hosting, Poehler and Fey did not let the audience down when they opened with a strong monologue. The duo cracked jokes that were seemingly playful, but had true and important undertones. In their reference to Patricia Arquette's performance in "Boyhood," they quipped that "there are still great roles for women over 40, as long as you get hired when you're under 40."

But perhaps the highlight occurred when they jokingly compared George

Clooney to his wife, Amal Almuaddin.

"George Clooney married Amal Almuaddin this year. Amal is a human rights lawyer who worked on the Enron case, was an adviser to Kofi Annan regarding Syria and was selected for a three-person UN commission investigating rules of war violations in the Gaza Strip. So together husband is getting a lifetime achievement award," Fey said.

One of the more emotional parts of the show occurred when "Selma," which was snubbed of many award nominations this year, won Best Original Song for

"Glory" by Common and John Legend. As Oprah listened teary-eyed, Common gave an extremely moving speech about the Civil Rights movement, even referring to director Ava DuVernay as a "superhero," although DuVernay did not get an Oscar nomination for best director.

Another great speech was given by Maggie Gyllenhaal, who won Best Actress in a Mini Series or TV Motion Picture for her role in "The Honorable Woman." In her speech, she celebrated the wealth of roles for "actual women," saying that this year's female roles have been "sometimes powerful and sometimes not; sometimes sexy, sometimes

not; sometimes honorable and sometimes not."

But my favorite part of any awards ceremony — this year's Golden Globes being no exception — occurred when Kristen Wiig presented the award for Best Screenplay. She was accompanied on stage by Bill Hader and did her usual improvisation, but this time with "well-known movie lines." Wiig and Hader recited the most popular quotes of all time from movies like "Titanic" and "The Terminator," except they intentionally got them comically wrong.

"We all know from E.T., you know when he's pointing his finger into space and he's looking at the stars and he says, 'Kids, I really — I've got to get back to my planet,'" Wiig kidded as the audience erupted in laughter.

Though there were a few disappointments, in particular that "Selma" did not win big, the 72nd annual Golden Globe Awards show was incredibly memorable with heartfelt speeches, ruthless disses from the hosts and many well-deserved wins. ♦



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Pop music snubs other genres of recognition at award shows

BY GwynivereHunger

Good Lorde, get ready for pop. As Lorde awkwardly got up on stage to receive the award for Best Rock Video at the MTV VMA awards, audience members noticed the confused look on her face as she tried to find the right camera to smile into. Meanwhile, true rock artists like The Arctic Monkeys must have sat at home, watching the ceremony on TV in frustration.

Nowadays, pop has seemingly taken over the entire music industry, causing genres such as rock, classical and jazz to receive less recognition at music award shows.

At the MTV VMA Awards in August, Lorde caused a huge controversy among rock fans when she took home the award for Best Rock Video for her song "Royals." While "Royals" may be a top Billboard hit song from the past year, the pop singer beat out actual rock bands such as Arctic Monkeys, Linkin Park and Imagine Dragons.

Many dedicated rock fans were outraged that this teen pop sensation won an award that could have been given to an actual rock artist, a musician who uses traditional rock instruments, such as guitar, bass and drums, and produces music without electronic instruments.

Many critics expressed confusion as to why Lorde was even nominated in the rock category.

Matthew Coyte, editor-in-chief of the Australian version of Rolling Stone, said that the song "Royals" is, by definition,

not a rock song since it uses electronics.

Although pop music is meant to appeal to all people (after all, it is called popular music), it should not be representative of music as a whole and be applied to awards of all genres.

Mainstream award shows such as the MTV music awards, Billboard Music Awards and Grammys do not even have a category for classical, jazz, soul or blues music. By neglecting these award categories at shows, award shows discourage artists from producing new music that does not fit the pop music genre and appeal to the masses.

If non-pop artists are not publicly recognized for their hard work even at award shows, they will become even less motivated to stay true to their original sound. Although receiving awards may not be their main form of motivation, artists still deserve the recognition and publicity that award shows can offer.

In order to help non-pop artists pursue their passion and to keep a variety of music genres easily available for everyone, artists should be properly placed in the appropriate genres at award shows. Music categories should also be more diversified in order to provide new opportunities that upcoming artists can aspire to.

Perhaps one day, pop music won't be the only genre of music filling up all awards and soundtracks. Maybe then, the Arctic Monkeys can finally walk up to that award stage and accept their rightfully deserved award. ♦



GRAPHIC BY MICHELLE CEN

Falcon casts Oscar Predictions

With the 87th Academy Awards airing on Feb. 22, the Falcon staff voted for winners among the nominees of a few main categories.

BY DeeptiKannan & VibhaSeshadri

Best Picture: "Boyhood" for capturing the trials and tribulations of growing up through a series of realistic and relatable vignettes filmed in real-time.

Best Actor: Benedict Cumberbatch ("The Imitation Game") for skillfully revealing the inner workings of the mind of Alan Turing, an English mathematician who created the world's first computer to decode Nazi messages.

Best Actress: Reese Witherspoon ("Wild") for her candid and reflective portrayal of Cheryl Strayed, a woman who hikes the Pacific Crest Trail after her mother passes. Witherspoon flawlessly brings to life a story of grief and self-discovery.

Best Supporting Actress: Emma Stone ("Birdman") for rawly portraying Sam, the main character's daughter and personal assistant, who is fresh out of rehab and is not afraid to speak her mind.

Best Supporting Actor: Ethan Hawke ("Boyhood") for embracing the role of Mason's father with a brilliant realism not present in stereotypical father-son relationships.

Best Animated Feature: "Big Hero 6" for an imaginative spin on the Marvel franchise, complete with a spectacular soundtrack and impressive character development.

Best Director: Richard Linklater ("Boyhood") for uniquely filming in real time the fleeting moments of a young boy's coming of age over the course of 12 years.

Best Original Score: Hans Zimmer ("Interstellar") for capturing the tension and emotion in the storyline of this space epic through powerful compositions.



GRAPHIC BY HELEN CHEN

Senior to attend RISD, prestigious art college

By Helen Chen & SpringMa

As he faces an empty canvas, senior Noah Jung considers the endless possibilities before him: a realistic rendition of the mountains outside, a stylized version of an everyday object. Picking up the brush, Jung begins to create a piece of work that is his, and his alone.



Jung

Although "alone" may not be the first word that comes to mind when describing art, a major factor influencing Jung's decision to pursue art is that he can be by himself. At age 7, Jung began to develop his passion for art with his first art lessons at a private studio in South Korea.

"I immediately fell in love with it," Jung said. "I loved to spend time by myself working on something so creative. [My] confidence in my talent motivated me to continue it for a long time."

His initial feelings about art stuck with him as he became more skilled and learned more

techniques throughout the years, now focusing on drawing people and ordinary objects.

Since moving to the U.S. at the beginning of his freshman year, Jung has taken art as an elective all four years and enjoys the creativity and sense of individuality the classes offer, using the opportunity to explore different mediums. For this reason, Jung describes his artistic style as experimental, although he mostly works with oil paint.

For Jung, drawing and interpreting what he sees contributed to a majority of the work in his portfolio, which he submitted early decision to Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), the No. 1 school in the nation for art. In early December, Jung found out he had been accepted.

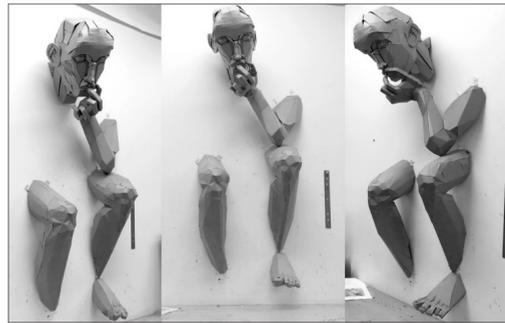
"I was at school when the admission results came out," Jung said. "After five minutes of anxiously refreshing my email, I saw an email titled 'Great News from RISD,' and started to smile. I think [that was] the biggest smile [I've ever] made

in high school." Jung's art teacher, mentor and fan, Diana Vanry, was delighted when she heard the great news.

"I remember telling him when I first saw his artwork [his freshman] year, 'Noah, you're going to be famous someday,'" Vanry said. "At the time he wasn't even considering doing art as a major in college, but I could just see it in him with his drive and passion for art."

Despite Jung's relentless dedication to art over the years, he only decided to major in it fairly recently. Until junior year, Jung assumed pursuing a STEM major was the best path for his future because he enjoys math and because his parents suggested that it is a more practical major. But after taking numerous rigorous classes junior year, Jung felt unfulfilled by the constant competition and stress he experienced.

"I realized that if I am going to compete with [my classmates] who are smart and enjoy what they do, [I would always be stressed] and unsuccessful," Jung said. "[Instead], I decided to do things that I had confi-



Courtesy of NOAH JUNG

Senior Noah Jung's "The Man Thinking How to Get Out of the Wall."

dence in. For me, that was art." Jung said the proudest moment of his art career so far has been completing his piece "The Man Thinking How to Get Out of the Wall," a recycled cardboard sculpture of a man protruding from a wall. It is a project he spent more than 120 hours on.

"I really enjoyed the process of making it; seeing a rough cardboard becoming a human body was really satisfying," Jung said. Jung knows RISD will pro-

vide an environment in which he can thrive, form connections and cultivate his future career endeavors. He is considering both fine arts and graphic design as possible majors.

"While other art schools try to teach their students to become skillful technicians, RISD tries to make their students more thoughtful," Jung said. "Although I'm not very sure what I will major in, or have exact plans for college, I'm excited for what the future has in store." ♦

YouTube: new career starter

By Larissa Chiu & Maya Ravichandran

Swedish video gamer and commentator Felix Kjellberg, more commonly known on his YouTube channel as PewDiePie, made \$7 million from his gaming videos in the past year and is the highest earning YouTuber. In fact, at least 25 YouTubers make more than a million dollars annually.

YouTube is becoming the next big platform for ordinary people to gain recognition and possibly make it in the entertainment business. Many aspiring artists, regardless of wealth or location, use YouTube as a stepping stone to mainstream success.

YouTube, which is owned by Google, has become a money maker for ordinary people, and it will continue to do so in the future.

Kjellberg started his channel just four years ago during his sophomore year in college. In 2013, the number of subscribers for his channel



GRAPHIC BY HELEN CHEN

jumped from about 3.5 million to 19 million; he has received approximately 1.3 billion views.

Because YouTube allows viewers to connect to different video makers all over the world, popular YouTubers essentially have "celebrity status" and are regularly stopped on the street.

Most importantly, YouTube allows creators to actively pursue new projects because of the guaranteed support from their massive fan bases. British vlogger Zoe Sugg, known by her YouTube name Zoella, used her channel to advertise her book "Girl Online," which broke the worldwide record for highest selling first week sales for a debut author. In ad-

dition, Sugg has her own makeup line, Zoella Beauty.

In fact, "becoming a YouTuber" is turning into a career path for many. Many famous YouTubers started their channels when they were younger, in their teens or early 20s, and dropped out of school or other professions to work on making videos full time. Their dedication to YouTube is possible because the site partners with creators and pays them based on the number of views and advertisements.

YouTube is also an easy way for established celebrities to expand their influence. Jimmy Fallon, host of "The Tonight Show," posts clips of interviews

and games from his show and has amassed close to 2 billion total views. Many musicians also started out on YouTube before being discovered; examples include Justin Bieber and violinist Lindsey Stirling. 2014 was a big year for YouTube; thousands of YouTubers earned six figures a year. There are more than 1 billion users on YouTube, and the number will only continue to skyrocket.

2015 will mark the 10-year anniversary of the site's creation. According to "The Guardian," economists predict that within the next year, YouTube's revenues will grow at least 50 percent. YouTube has the possibility of going beyond one person. Companies have begun to use YouTube as promotion for their products, but most users are still independent parties. In the future, we will continue to see YouTube as being one of the biggest sites on the Internet. There is no doubt that YouTube is shifting from being a video-sharing site to a full-blown entertainment venue. ♦

Music sampling offers fresh tastes of originals

By Ashley Chen & Katherine Sun

Anyone who has listened to Kanye West's Grammy Award-winning "Stronger" may recognize its similarity to another Grammy Award-winning song, Daft Punk's "Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger." And those listeners almost certainly have wondered whether a copyright lawsuit broke out between the two hit artists, considering that "Stronger" consists of West rapping over Daft Punk's song.

Surprisingly, there wasn't. In fact, Daft Punk was delighted when it heard the song. "Stronger" was the product of music sampling, an ever-growing trend entwined in the music industry that encourages rather than discourages creativity.

In music sampling, artists take a portion, such as the bass line, of another artist's song and use it in an "original" production. While it has been the subject of serious cases regarding copyright infringement in the music industry, music sampling is tantamount to an innocuous act: paying homage to another artist's work.

Take Nicki Minaj's "Anaconda." Minaj's rapping, juxtaposed with an exaggerated speaking voice, has turned the song into a global hit. What most people might not know is that "Anaconda" heavily samples the second-most popular song of 1992: Sir Mix-a-Lot's "Baby Got Back."

In fact, the sampled lyrics of "Anaconda" are its most famous: "My anaconda don't want none unless you got buns, hun."

Some may argue that artists like Minaj are earning credit they don't deserve. Yet the new songs are successful precisely because of their

combined elements and distinctive style, not the re-hashing of sampled portions.

Even Sir Mix-a-Lot recognized Minaj's song's individual merit, stating that the song "is [Minaj's] creation" and that he "liked the change in feel."

One downside of sampling is that artists, publishers and record companies often sue for copyright infringement. In some instances, the artist chooses to continue the case. Other times, the disputes are settled out of court.

Still, the fact is that when artists sample, they create three or four minutes of entirely original music. The sampled portions likely comprise less than 10 percent of the total song.

Furthermore, the music industry carries so many examples of music sampling that it has generally been accepted as ethical and commonplace. Even some beloved classics are brushed by

the "taint" of music sampling like Elvis Presley's "Can't Help Falling in Love," which is modeled off "Plaisir d'amour," a French love song written by Jean-Paul Martini in the 18th century.

So would Martini mind if he was transported to the 20th century and told that his work would be sung by a rock and roll icon? That's doubtful. Like Sir Mix-a-Lot, he would probably be honored that people are still appreciating what is essentially a tribute to his music.

In short, borrowing a few lines is not stealing, nor is it a copyright violation. Since the days of classical music, people have been sampling and been sampled. There's no need for drama when "Stronger" starts playing — just lean back and enjoy that vocal line. ♦



MacRae poses with her friends, who have supported her in her journey to acceptance. GRAPHIC BY MICHELLE CEN

JUNIOR PROMOTES AWARENESS, ACCEPTANCE OF BISEXUALITY

By Michelle Cen, Larissa Chiu & Eileen Toh

"Just pick one." The out-of-the-blue comment took a few seconds to register in then-eighth grader Ruby MacRae's mind. She had been hanging out with her friends behind the school cafeteria during a normal lunch, enjoying herself, laughing with her friend. But now, she found herself on the defensive.

Offended, MacRae turned to the friend next to her for support, but her friend remained silent and made no effort to help.

MacRae asked the boy to stop, but he continued, calling her a "slut" and saying, "God, it's just so weird. You're so gay." Hearing his insults, she felt ashamed of her identity.

"His comment was the first negative comment I had received about [my sexuality]," said MacRae, now a junior. "I felt mad, depressed and uncomfortable, but what disturbed me the most was that my friend was still dating him."

Today, MacRae, who is bisexual, is proud of her sexuality and wants to bring awareness to the bisexual community, but it was not always this way.

Realizing her bisexuality

At age 11, MacRae began exploring her creative interests through painting, writing and acting. She performed in drama productions, but she said her acting was a mask. Inside, she felt conflicted: She realized that she was attracted to girls when she developed a crush on her close friend in middle school.

beautiful actress Kristen Stewart was or how she had a minor crush on singer Siouxsie Sioux.

A few months later, MacRae, still in eighth grade, started dating a girl. When her friends and family asked, MacRae told them that she was bisexual.

Her parents were more concerned about MacRae dating than the fact that the person she was dating was a girl. MacRae's father had little reaction when she told him she was bisexual, while her mother told her, "I love you no matter what."

Some of MacRae's peers were not as understanding. MacRae said that when she was with her girlfriend, they would look down on her, sarcastically commenting, "That's so cute," or "Awww."

"[My relationship] was invalidated because they didn't take it seriously," MacRae said. "It was very condescending."

A few of her friends even asked her, "How does [being bisexual] work? Do you have a crush on me?"

Instead of being rude about it, however, MacRae explained to them that she was attracted to both boys and girls, she wasn't attracted to all boys and girls. Eventually, the majority of her friends became more comfortable around her.

Finding acceptance in Saratoga

Last April, at Junior Prom, the DJ played a love song, and couples started to slow dance. Their arms rested on each other's shoulders and waists while their hips swayed. Many of the couples occasionally glanced over at the only couple sitting in the back of the room: MacRae and her date, senior Melissa Rogan.

Rogan and MacRae were good friends and had been discussing the idea of going to prom together since MacRae's freshman year. When Rogan asked MacRae to prom as a gesture of friendship, she accepted. Yet on the dance floor, the questioning gazes of straight couples kept them from slow dancing.

"I felt a sense of judgment going

"Anyone who won't accept you for who you are doesn't deserve to be a part of your life."
junior Ruby MacRae

around," MacRae said. "People would later come up to me and say, 'You went to prom with Melissa? A girl?'"

In January of this year, one of MacRae's close friends started to post Facebook statuses questioning his gender and bisexuality, statuses that received derogatory comments from one boy.

MacRae, defending her friend, messaged the boy on Facebook: "As a queer individual, I don't appreciate the way

that you are talking to him because it is hurtful to him and other queer people." MacRae was surprised to see that he apologized for his actions, saying he "didn't know that what [he] did was hurtful."

"It made me feel really happy because I was actually able to teach him," MacRae said. "He didn't choose to ignore LGBTQA."

MacRae also turns to her friends for support. One particularly supportive friend is sophomore J.T. Hulme.

"It doesn't matter if [MacRae is] transgender or gay or bisexual," Hulme said. "She's still my best friend. I love her."

Hulme said that he always stands up for MacRae whenever someone confronts him about her sexuality. "[If] someone would ask, 'Isn't she bisexual?' I would say, 'Does it really make a difference whether or not she likes men or women? It's her thing, not [your] thing,'" Hulme said.

MacRae has many diverse interests, Hulme said. Besides drawing, taking photos and writing poetry, MacRae is involved in performing arts. She takes singing lessons once a week and is working on starting a band with her friends. At school, she is mostly involved in drama, having starred in productions such as "The Importance of Being Earnest," in which she played Lady Bracknell. Drama teacher Sarah Thermond awarded MacRae with Best Comedic Supporting Actress for her performance.

Misconceptions about bisexuality

According to MacRae, Saratoga High is a relatively accepting campus, but many other communities reject bisexuality. It is the lack of support from LGBTQA groups that stings the most.

"Gay rights companies claim to support LGBTQA rights as a whole, but do not support bisexuals, pansexuals or asexuals," MacRae said. "Pride festivals and parades tend to be covered in rainbow flags [representing homosexuality], but you don't see any pink, purple and blue flags [representing bisexuality]."

MacRae explained that straight people often assume that bisexuals are simply gay, while gay people believe that bisexuals are just straight people seeking attention. She also said another misconception is the belief that when a bisexual begins a relationship with a person of the same gender, he or she becomes gay.

"I have been told on multiple occasions to 'just pick one [gender]," MacRae said. "People don't understand that [bisexuals] can't change their sexualities according to their partner's gender."

MacRae is thankful that bisexual recognition is growing. When her older sister attended Redwood Middle School seven years ago, MacRae said people who did not identify as gay or straight, such as bisexuals, asexuals or transgenders, were "unheard of and disgusting."

"I think that there are still uncomfortable notions around different sexualities, but it's not as 'disgusting,'" MacRae said. "It is something that people are understanding, and people are open and willing to talk about it, too."

Reaching out to others

Since the Coexist: SHS Gay-Straight Alliance club's officers are all graduating this year, MacRae wants to start a new LGBTQA club that welcomes a broader range of gender identities. She hopes that members of the club will be encouraged to come out to their parents, learning to embrace their identities.

As of now, MacRae is content with who she is as a person. When she walks around campus, she can be recognized by the dark-colored and men's fashion-inspired outfits she wears. She likes to dress in gender-neutral clothes to break down conceptions of the gender binary.

Having come so far, MacRae hopes for the rest of the LGBTQA community to feel accepted as a whole.

"Anyone who won't accept you for who you are doesn't deserve to be a part of your life. If you are happy, then that's all that matters." ♦



PATRICK SHIH (LEFT) IS WORKING AT A STARTUP, TAWKIFY. ♦ ANGELA CHIANG IS NOW WORKING AT DROPBOX IN SAN FRANCISCO. ♦ ASHWIN SIRIPURAPU IS FINISHING A MASTER'S DEGREE AT STANFORD. ♦

Rhodes scholar works with nonprofits

BY Stefanie Ting & Rachel Zhang

Dressed as a German patriarch in a regal red robe, Class of 2006 alumnus Henry Barmeier furiously shouted at the male suitors as they tried to sweep his wife off her feet. Starring as Theo in the play "The Underpants" in his senior year of high school, the drama newbie spewed out lines displaying his clueless and short-tempered personality. He broke character almost immediately thereafter, a smile spreading across his face as he began laughing uncontrollably.

"It took me nearly until the end of our rehearsals to say all of my lines with a straight face," Barmeier said. "The role gave me a great outlet to channel a lot of stress and anxiety." Barmeier's other extracurriculars included running in the 2004 cross country state championship and participating in a drama production. Barmeier was also the editor-in-chief of The Falcon. After high school, Barmeier attended Princeton University. There, he majored in food and agriculture policy, a unifying focus for economics,

politics, sociology, psychology and other social science disciplines that Barmeier wanted to study.

Barmeier also decided to minor in Spanish.

"I loved my experiences in Spanish courses at Saratoga High and wanted to continue growing my fluency in the language," said Barmeier. "Spanish classes in college were also

a pleasant way to incorporate more literature and film into my studies, which were otherwise quite heavy with policy courses." At Princeton, Barmeier also joined Outdoor Action, a group that organizes pre-orientation and year round wilderness trips. He led groups of freshmen on treks in the Shenandoah National Park in Virginia and even on the Appalachian Trail in Connecticut.

He then spearheaded a one-week organic farming outing in central New Jersey for five freshmen.

"[We received] an invitation to a tomato-throwing fight among the organic farmers," Barmeier said. "Needless to say, I got clobbered and quite messy."

In 2009, Barmeier was named a Rhodes Scholar, a prestigious scholarship given only

HENRY BARMEIER
SIS
CLASS OF '06
PRINCETON
IN AGRICULTURE
POLICY, SPANISH
IN HS: JOURNALISM,
DRAMA, XC



Class of 2006 alum and Falcon editor Henry Barmeier chats with adviser Mike Tyler.

to 32 out of roughly 1,500 applicants. Past recipients have included Supreme Court justice David Souter, former president Bill Clinton and one of Clinton's former advisers and current ABC anchor George Stephanopoulos.

After graduating from Princeton in 2010, Barmeier took advantage of his \$50,000 a year Rhodes scholarship and attended Oxford University. After graduating from Oxford in 2012 with a master of science, international and comparative education and distinction, he has been working as a consultant at The Bridgespan Group in San Francisco, a firm that advises nonprofits.

There, he has presented analysis of measurement and learning practices to the global leader of The Salvation Army and built Bridgespan's first online courses on nonprofit strategy. He credits his

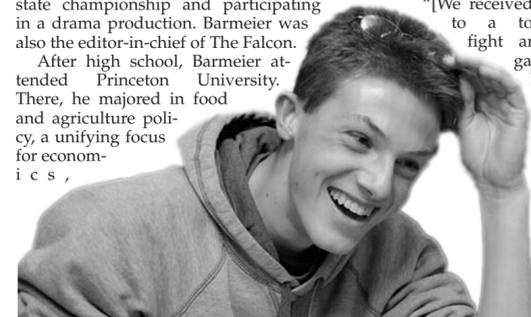
experience as the editor-in-chief of The Falcon as his best preparation for the job.

"[Because of newspaper], I learned so much about how to handle my own stress productively, how to plan weeks' worth of work in advance, how to deal with the unexpected and about what it means to really love what you're doing," Barmeier said.

He even joked that his "job has yet to match the intensity of some deadline nights at the newspaper."

Barmeier said he strives to improve his abilities as a coach and adviser, which he called "a welcome challenge." His optimistic outlook allows him to strive to better himself without becoming complacent.

"I'm really passionate about becoming a trusted and valuable adviser in the nonprofit sector," Barmeier said. ♦



Courtesy of MICHAEL CHEN

Yale lit major opts to go the route less traveled

BY Michelle Cen

Fourteen aspiring writers, who have chosen to spend their summer in the Pyrenees Mountains to learn about travel writing, land at their first stop, a small town called Moissac. They gather around their Yale professor, who instructs them to create a map of the town by focusing on the symbols and desires of its culture.

Before one student begins his assignment, he admires the green hills of Moissac and enjoys the fresh air. He starts scribbling in his notebook once he has collected the local culture through the pilgrimage routes, the French cuisine, and the music of the area.

He is Ed-

ward Dong, the Class of 2013 valedictorian, who earned a total GPA of 4.66.

Dong journeyed to the Pyrenees last summer to study travel writing. Now, he is a sophomore at Yale University who is majoring in Literature.

"The transition [from Saratoga High to Yale] taught me to focus on myself. There's no point in holding on to [the valedictorian] title like that," Dong said. "In college, the horizons are broader; it's about finding what's right for you."

At Saratoga High, Dong excelled in many areas across the academic spectrum. He was a math competitor who qualified for the USAMO.

At the same time, he was an avid poet who recited one of his compositions in the 2013 Speak up for Change week.

Journalism teacher Mike Tyler, who taught Dong for three years, believes that Dong's strengths lie in his "pure love" for learning about any subject.

"[Dong is] one of those people who's not right-brained or left-brained; he does everything and enjoys it all," Tyler said. "He's never doing it for the grade. You could tell that he really loved the knowledge."

Dong, whose quest for knowledge earned him the valedictorian title, believes that "competition [is] not healthy." He realized that he had to narrow his focus to his true passions at Yale.

"When you're surrounded by so much talent, it's natural for you to realize that all you can do is identify goals that actually matter to you and then start working toward them," Dong said.

Still, at Saratoga, Dong pursued many extracurricular activities that he loved.

"[I enjoyed] the energy of newspaper deadline nights, the soccer rivalry between the French and Spanish clubs and the day I spent with friends in Santa Cruz under the pretext of Ethics Bowl,"

Dong said. "Most memorable, perhaps, were the afternoons of studying, crafting and reciting verse, either at a table or out in the hills."

At Yale, Dong has continued to explore these interests. For two years, Dong has danced with the Ballet Folklórico Mexicano, a student troupe. While wearing a mariachi costume adorned with gold designs, Dong has performed for schools, retirement homes and churches.

Between volunteering, dancing and meeting new friends, Dong devotes time to studying literature. Dong said that he hopes to write children's fiction in the future.

Since graduating from Saratoga, Dong has experienced many new tastes, sights and sounds from the ornate halls of Yale to the rugged hills of the Pyrenees. Dong remains open to all the possibilities that the future holds.

"It's hard to say where I'm going to be in five or 10 years. So much can change," Dong said. "I would advise students to focus on looking for ways to broaden their perspectives and enrich their worldviews." ♦

EDWARD DONG
SIS
CLASS OF '13
YALE
IN LITERATURE
IN HS: MATH, POETRY
JOURNALISM, SPANISH



DARYL CHANG (RIGHT) IS NOW A SENIOR AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY. ♦ MYRON ZHANG IS NOW A JUNIOR AT YALE UNIVERSITY. ♦ AKSHAY MADHANI (CENTER) IS A FRESHMAN AT UC BERKELEY. ♦

Physics Ph.D. moves to D.C. to influence policy

BY SpringMa

Class of 2007 alumnus Varun Sivaram remembers receiving the classic yellow call-slip in the middle of an AP Spanish presentation in March of his senior year. He recalls the dreadful pit in his stomach as he left for the principal's office, wondering if his science teacher had finally figured out his strategy of taking bathroom breaks in AP Physics to hang out.

When Sivaram faced then-principal Jeff Anderson, however, Anderson looked upon him with not a trace of disappointment or anger, but rather, pride.

Anderson then presented Sivaram with the distinction and honor of being the Class of 2007's valedictorian, with a 4.74 GPA.

"It was a total surprise," Sivaram said. "When I transferred from Harker to Saratoga [freshman year], I was a little cocky — I took Calculus BC as a sophomore and was pretty good at Spanish. But that feeling evaporated because there was always someone wittier in essays or more instinctive with tirades." During his four years at Saratoga High, Sivaram dedicated himself to much more than just academics. In just his senior year, he constantly found himself spending weekends at speech and debate tournaments, in addition to serving as an ASB School Board and School Site Council representative.

"I learned [what] goes into our education and I was humbled by the dedication that I saw in the process," Sivaram said. "Student government gave me a sense of ownership and community that [made me a] better citizen. In hindsight, Sivaram said his extracurriculars left him with a strong foundation to build his career upon. Several events in high school left a lasting impression on Sivaram. When he went on the Spanish depart-



Class of '07 alum Varun Sivaram receives his diploma at graduation.

ment's Mexico trip, Sivaram fell sick with an appendicitis. He will never forget when Spanish teacher Arnaldo Rodriguex rushed him to a nearby hospital, ultimately "saving his life" and "preventing [his] exploding appendix."

He also recalls singing a "downright awful" performance at Saratoga Idol, where his friends "saved the day by convincing everyone to sway their cell-phones and distract from [his] awful vocals."

After graduation, Sivaram attended Stanford University. Four years later, Sivaram left Stanford in 2011 with a Bachelor's in Engineering Physics and International Relations, Sivaram travelled across the globe to Oxford University. He continued to study physics on a prestigious Rhodes Scholarship.

While studying to achieve a Ph.D. in Condensed Matter Physics at Oxford, Sivaram took advantage of studying abroad to immerse himself in England's culture. In his downtime, Sivaram studied in royal dressing rooms adorned with architectural "spires and turrets" that were almost over 700 years old and "gulped pints" in pubs that famous writers J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis once loved.

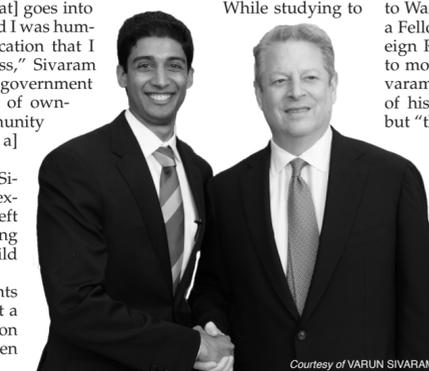
Having obtained his Ph.D., Sivaram moved back to California after Oxford and served as the senior energy adviser for the Los Angeles Mayor, Antonio Villaragosa. Shortly after his stint with the mayor, Sivaram began working for McKinsey and Co. in San Francisco.

Despite his frequent travels, Sivaram has always made time for family, especially his sisters: sophomore Saya Sivaram and Class of 2010 alumna Uttara Sivaram. The siblings have attended three straight Stanford football games, and always make sure to watch the new Star Trek movies together. Toward the end of February, he is planning on moving to Washington, D.C., to become a Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. Despite having to move across the country, Sivaram has already booked each of his siblings tickets to visit, but "they don't know it yet."

His youngest sister Saya said that her brother has "attained a [new] level of maturity and confidence," but he remains the same charismatic and caring brother and son.

"He still has a terrible sense of humor, watches 'Gilmore Girls' with me, sleeps too much and loves pizza," Saya said. ♦

VARUN SIVARAM
SIS
CLASS OF '07
STANFORD
IN INT'L RELATIONS,
ENGINEERING PHYSICS
IN HS: ASB, SPANISH,
SPEECH AND DEBATE



Sivaram with politician Al Gore at a convention in Los Angeles.

Value of valedictorian

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL BRIAN SAFINE DISCUSSES STUDENT RECOGNITION



FALCON // SWEEYA RAJ

Q: How is the valedictorian chosen?

A: The valedictorian is picked based on highest total weighted GPA in the senior class, including 9th to 12th grade, pluses and minuses, honors and AP points.

Q: Why does the school not rank its students?

A: The measured level of achievement is so high that it would be a disservice to our students if we communicated that very high achieving was only at the 50th percentile or only at the 75th percentile because those students are still doing phenomenally well. If in a given year the senior class has 100 students who have over a 4.0 GPA, it would be a disservice to anyone to say that you are only at X percentile ranking because it would portray them in a bad light, but we all know that students are working really hard [every] year. I don't think ranking would help them for the purpose of college admissions.

Q: Have you ever considered choosing a valedictorian based on other criteria?

A: I think the most important thing is for students to understand that there is a much bigger context in terms of student recognition. We spend a lot of time, especially at the end of the year for seniors, looking at a variety of ways to recognize the work they've done around here, the contributions they've made in the community, in theatrical, music, athletic, robotic [and other] arenas. As far as valedictorian goes, it's mentioned at Senior Awards Night and on the day of graduation, but for the other 718 days of a student's existence at school, it doesn't come up. We've considered other criteria and we recognize those other criteria at other events.

Q: How does having a valedictorian contribute to the academic competition here at Saratoga High School?

A: Our focus as a school is not on looking at a pathway to become valedictorian; it is to have students pick classes based on their interests and abilities and to balance their schedule. Everything we do as a school and as a guidance department is designed to promote students to make healthy decisions. This year for the second year we're having students calendar their day and use a 24-hour clock to pick classes that will fit based on their schedule. I think we will continue to promote a message for students living in balance.

Q: How can we ease the competitiveness of our school?

A: I would like to know from students how pervasive [this competitiveness is]. I would much rather have students focus on how can I be the best participant in my community, how can I be the best musician, most helpful musician to my peers, how could I be the best teammate in athletics, because I think we spend a lot of time recognizing those attributes. There are several more, informal ways where students are recognized beyond their grade point averages. This recognition comes at season-ending events for team sports and clubs. Positive recognition comes electronically via Humans of Saratoga High, the "compliments page" and [principal Paul] Robinson's weekly email. We also celebrate students at the district level by naming a student of the month, typically someone who has freely given his or her time to make our [school] community a better place. This is only a small sampling of ways we recognize students beyond the GPA-based valedictorian level.

ABROAD >>

continued from pg. 1

Clara University next year. Inspired by some older friends, Vithanage began saving for his gap year three years ago. He felt that it was the perfect time to go out and experience the world, something he could only do if he took a gap year.

"What really drove me to make the gap year decision was to travel the world at a young age and experience as much as I possibly could," Vithanage said. "I just wanted the most intense adventure you could imagine and break out of the [Saratoga] bubble."

Vithanage arranged to fly to Colombo in early September and spend a week in Dubai, leaving the itinerary for the rest of the three months unscheduled. Skelly and Vithanage wanted to plan each day of their trip spontaneously.

Vithanage and Skelly chose to use Sri Lanka as the base of their travel because Vithanage had family there and it was near other locations they hoped to visit.

"Being able to live the Lankan life gave me insight to how my dad grew up and the struggles he faced," Vithanage said.

In addition to embracing his heritage, Vithanage also embarked on the trip with one main goal in mind. He wanted to construct a fully developed, hands-on Media Arts Program in Sri Lanka with Skelly.

in Sri Lanka, he encountered an unexpected detour in the process, one that landed him in a third grade classroom at the age of 19. Vithanage was going to learn Sinhala, the Sri Lankan language, alongside third graders.

"[At the time], I honestly didn't think not knowing Sinhala would be a problem, but I found out I was wrong about that real quick," Vithanage said. "Less than 10 percent of the population of 20 million could speak English."

During class, Vithanage befriended a Tamilian third grader named Akash. Akash's parents had sent him to boarding school with the hopes of allowing him to achieve his goals and live his dream in America.

Akash helped Vithanage learn Sinhala, and in turn, Vithanage tutored him in English.

Now able to speak minimal Sinhala, Vithanage is thankful for the time he spent at the school, as well as for Akash.

Soon after learning to assimilate into the Sri Lankan culture, Vithanage planned to start a MAP program at STC and also volunteer at the SOS Children's Villages orphanage in Nuwara Eliya.

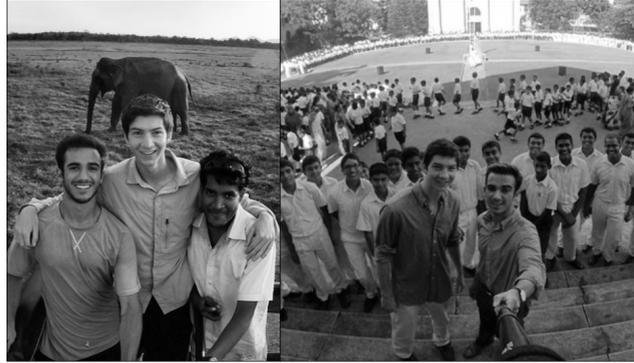
When the school learned he and Skelly were planning to major in economics, STC also asked them to teach their A-level (ages 15 to 17) students the subject.

"We were only going to stay for a couple weeks, but weeks turned to months," Vithanage said.

Vithanage said. "So on enough, two months [of the months we had at Sri Lanka] passed by and we were still at the school."

During the introductory meeting for the media program, Vithanage realized that he was severely under-equipped.

All Vithanage had was a GoPro, but he decided to make the best of it. Students took turns filming with the GoPro, and Vithanage showed everyone how to



Counterclockwise from top: Class of '14 alumnus Bobby Vithanage and Gunn Class of '14 alumnus Patrick Skelly study Sinhala, the Sri Lankan language, in a local classroom. Vithanage and Skelly smile with St. Thomas College student Oshantha Cabraal. Vithanage and Skelly take a selfie with a group of STC students as part of their lesson.

edit the videos on his laptop.

Next, Vithanage split up the students into groups focused on journalism, videography, photography and web design, which meant they had to use the school's limited computers.

By doing so, Vithanage reduced the amount of equipment he needed and gave each student the opportunity to pursue their interests.

Vithanage plans to hold a fundraiser this fall to bring more equipment to the school, and is currently contacting STC alumni for donations.

"It's a slow start but I'm hopeful it will continue to grow," Vithanage said. "Any help is tremendous because a little

bit here goes a long way there."

As for the program itself, Vithanage has given the reins to another teacher at STC and still interacts with the students on a daily basis online. He plans to return to Sri Lanka in June and spend a few weeks at STC.

Despite the current shortage of technological equipment, Vithanage has already met many of their short-term goals for the program, such as the launch of the school's new website.

"[We hope] to cover every event on campus, report every story, and by the start of the next school year, produce a school-wide broadcast once a week just like SHSTV," Vithanage said. ♦

“I just wanted the most intense adventure you could imagine and to break out of the [Saratoga] bubble.”



alumnus Bobby Vithanage

My lovely Saturday school



For the record, I'm Miss Goody Two-Shoes. I still turn my phone off during class, the way everyone supposedly did in middle school, and my attendance record is spotless. The closest I've gotten to trouble is attending Saturday school, which I did as an experiment for newspaper.

My self-inflicted punishment began at the ungodly hour of 8 a.m. on a Saturday. When I rushed to the portable building in the school's back parking lot, where Saturday school is normally held, I was fully prepared to meet a group of incorrigible troublemakers. So after heading up the portable's unattractive grey ramp — akin to a walk of shame — and entering the room, I did a double take. Four students sat quietly at desks, innocent as can be.

I had arrived several minutes early in my desperation not to be late. That did not, however, save me from making eye con-

tact with Chinese teacher Sara Tseng.

"Take a seat," she said. The next few minutes were rather awkward as I explained my situation. I then chose a seat near the back-right corner: the perfect position for people-watching.

I stared not-so-subtly at most students set to work without prompting from the teacher. With a diligence I could not hope to match, they pulled out everything from calculators to grammar workbooks and never looked up afterward.

It was only later that I learned most students who attend Saturday school are so-called one-timers and that their crimes are often cell phone violations or an abundance of tardies. Though I stayed in a room that eventually filled to eight students besides myself, the number of students going to Saturday school grows as the semester progresses and can reach over 30 people. According to assistant principal Kevin Mount, teachers who oversee Saturday School are paid \$125 to watch the students each session.

At 8:15, Ms. Tseng announced that Saturday school would last until noon and that

we would get a 10-minute break at 10 a.m. We couldn't go on our phones, but we were allowed to work on our laptops as long as she could see the screen.

I sank into my seat and finally started to settle down to work. Pulling out my math textbook, I began to trudge through the problems.

Within 10 minutes, however, that trudging grew less sluggish. The room was cool enough to keep drowsiness away. Sunlight trickled in through the blinds of the window near my right. I could hear the gentle rush of cars from the street.

It's strange to think that I felt both relaxed and alert in Saturday school of all places. For once, I didn't want to put in my ear buds and listen to music.

I remained in my state of zen until break was called. While most students shot to the door after grabbing their phones, I decided to walk around.

In hindsight, perhaps I shouldn't have. I stared in silent horror as my Spanish teacher, Mr. Yeilding, emerged from the parking lot and spotted me. "Are you a troublemaker now?" he joked, grinning.

>> candid caricatures



HELEN CHEN

which I was enjoying Saturday school. Admittedly, while I had just gotten the most work than I had in ages, there is no way I'd choose Saturday school over my bed again. With the quiet stillness enveloping the classroom, however, I could nearly say that I savored it.

As the clock struck 12, Ms. Tseng declared that we could leave. Other students scrambled to pack their bags. I lingered and left last.

I'd envisioned Saturday school as a gathering of rebellious students, or at the very least, a mind-numbing four hours of torment. Instead, I stare down at my English journal prompt and wish I could be there all over again. ♦

Fighting chances, senior joins the national Taekwondo team

By Larissa Chiu & Vibha Seshadri



Senior black belt Shayan Moraveji (front row, second from left) poses with other medalists at the ITF-USA Taekwondo Nationals tournament last April. Moraveji won a silver medal.

>> TheStats 18 points scored

Senior Michael Cole scored 18 points in the boys' basketball team's 49-37 win against Santa Clara on Feb. 4. "[The win] got our team's confidence up on the offensive end and it gave us energy on defense," Cole said.

1 win by pin

Senior wrestler Connor Peebles scored the only victory against Santa Clara on Feb. 5, which led the team to a victory of 36-35. "It was a great confidence booster since we haven't had very many wins," Peebles said. "I think I took people by surprise since this is my first year on the team, but I have had experience in wrestling before."

14 points scored

Senior forward Mikayla Davis scored 14 points in the 56-44 loss to Palo Alto, the No. 1 seed in the El Camino League, on Feb. 4. "Even though we lost, we played really well against the first-place team," Davis said. "I'm really proud of everyone on my team."

WHO'S HOT Champion defense

The boys' basketball team has a league record of 8-1 and is aiming to win leagues. The recently beat Santa Clara 49-37 in a close game on Feb. 3. "We played well as a team on the defensive end, holding Santa Clara to only 19 points in three quarters," senior point guard Michael Cole said.

WHO'S NOT Injuries setback team

Derailed by injuries, the girls' soccer team has not won since beating Los Gatos on Jan. 29. "Some of our key midfield players were injured so it left us vulnerable in that area of the field," senior Anisha Nagarajan said. "Palo Alto and Los Altos were really able to take advantage of that."

>> TheRANKINGS

- 1 ^ Boys' Basketball (16-5)
2 v Girls' Basketball (13-8)
3 = Girls' Soccer (5-7-3)
4 ^ Boys' Soccer (4-8-4)
5 v Wrestling (2-3)

Senior Shayan Moraveji took a deep breath and could barely contain his excitement when it was announced that he had placed second in two of his events at the ITF-USA Taekwondo Nationals tournament in 2013. He tried to maintain his decorum for the sake of over 3,000 people in the audience and his fellow competitors, who watched him walk on stage to receive his awards.

But as soon as the competition ended, Moraveji, overcome with happiness, hugged his sister, coach and teammates. He did not even realize that his hands and feet were covered in blood from the fight; all he could feel was how ecstatic he was. Not only did he place in this tournament, he had earned a spot on the U.S. Taekwondo team, awarded to the top three of the 150 competitors at the tournament.

At Nationals, Moraveji participated in three categories: Junior Male Patterns, Junior Male Individual Power Breaking and Junior Male Individual Sparring.

In the sparring event, Moraveji was required to fight another competitor for three and a half minutes and gain as many points as possible in order to move on to the next round.

In the power breaking event, Moraveji competed against 25 other male black belts and had to break five boards using his hands and feet.

In the patterns event, a group of junior boys perform a sequence of 24 movements that symbolize something simple such as a letter or the hours in a day. This event illustrates their ability to perform crisp movements. One pattern is to be practiced by the group of boys beforehand, while the other is chosen at random by the judges during the competition.

Moraveji placed second in Junior Male Individual Power Breaking and Junior Male Patterns. Later, Moraveji placed fifth in Worlds for Junior Male Individual Power Breaking out of 42 junior boys.

As a result of his success, Moraveji was a competitor for the U.S. Junior Males. He has been a member of the US team for two years.

"[Being a part of the team], I was able to witness how hard other nations work in order to become champions and it inspired me to work harder," Moraveji said.

Moraveji was humbled to be competing against the world's best Taekwondo athletes. Because he needed to keep up

with school, however, Moraveji could not participate in the 2014 USA Nationals in Texas and 2015 World Championships in Italy.

Moraveji said that he will not pass up the opportunity again.

"Next year I won't even hesitate to take advantage of the opportunity to participate in Nationals and Worlds," Moraveji said. "I am looking forward to the 2016 World Championships possibly in Russia."

Moraveji started Taekwondo when he was 5 and received his first-degree black belt when he was 12.

Moraveji joined MightyFist Taekwondo in Cupertino after receiving his first black belt, and got recertified for his black belt after six months at the new academy. Now a third-degree black belt, Moraveji will have to wait until he is 21 to obtain a fourth-degree black belt, a degree that

signifies a set understanding of the principal body movements as well as when to use them. It also allows the him to instruct others in Taekwondo.

Moraveji trains four to five days a week for an hour and a half each day. Although Taekwondo takes up hours of his time daily, Moraveji cherishes the mental strength required to succeed in the discipline.

At MightyFist Taekwondo, coaches test students on the technical terms and the history behind each Taekwondo pat-

tern. Moraveji's coach also teaches Korean ideology and terminology.

"At one point in my black-belt career my coach made us write a six- to eight-page essay on the history of Taekwondo and the theory behind it," Moraveji said.

The mental strength that Moraveji has built through Taekwondo has also helped him learn to tolerate pain.

The type of Taekwondo and the movements that Moraveji practices are adapted from the Korean military. During practice, he uses different head, feet and hand gear, similar to equipment used in the military. Moraveji said he has gained abilities such as speed, endurance and flexibility through his training.

Although Taekwondo is an individual sport, Moraveji pointed to teamwork as an important aspect of events such as the patterns.

In the months leading up to the competition, Moraveji and his team members met two to three hours daily to plan their showcase.

"There were times of tension when we would argue and one person would want to quit, [but] we always pulled through," Moraveji said.

Moraveji hopes he can continue his Taekwondo career in college, though it is rarely offered as a competitive sport in college. Schools such as UC Berkeley and Stanford are just some of the few schools with Taekwondo teams. If he does not get accepted into schools with a Taekwondo team, Moraveji plans to utilize his free time to practice Taekwondo and to prepare for competition.

"Taekwondo [is] a way of life to me," Moraveji said. "Besides [it] being a sport, I consider it an art." ♦

March Madness tournament comes to SHS

By Catherine Tang & Jibau Yu

With the approach of the NCAA March Madness tournament, the ASB, in conjunction with the Sports and Athletics Commission, will hold an intramural basketball tournament starting March 1.

According to ASB board representative senior Neel Kattumadam, the inspiration behind this tournament were other schools such as Monta Vista and Cupertino High School, which both have their own annual March Madness tournament.

Winners of the intramural tournament will get four tickets to a Golden State Warriors game.

Signups start early February on Facebook or in the office. The games will take place at lunch, tutorial and after school.

Kattumadam encourages students to sign up fast since there is a 16-team limit. In addition, each team will be required to have two boys and two girls and have a limit of two players who play basketball on the school's teams. The games will be played with a 4 on 4 format and be full court.

Through the tournament, Kattumadam hopes to bring all four classes together and make up for the lack of school activities between now and Spring Fling. "Many times people are separated by sports or other school organizations and basketball is a quick sport to pick up, so I hope March Madness is able to unite people at our school," Kattumadam said. ♦

Winners of the intramural tournament will get four tickets to a Golden State Warriors game.

New year brings new gym memberships

BY AmiNachiappan

Sweat drips down her face as senior Carmine Drohan lifts various heavy free weights, pushing through the pain at Bay Club Courtside, a local gym in Los Gatos. All around her on the sleek and glossy floor are various exercising machines, including treadmills and ellipticals. Though tired and exhausted from the long workout, Sierra, her personal trainer who Drohan describes as “fun and cool,” repeats “you can do it!” over and over. After a few minutes, Drohan moves on to the next exercise.

Drohan is one of dozens of students this year to commit to fitness regimens in local gyms or the school’s weight room either to lose a few pounds or just to get fit.

Motivated by the desire to “feel healthy,” Drohan chose to become a member of Bay Club Courtside, due to its high-tech equipment, hundreds of group body workout classes and personal trainers.

Drohan began training at Bay Club Courtside her freshman year and has continued to go a few times a week all throughout high school. Drohan said she enjoys working out at the gym because it gives her a chance to exert her energy while gaining cardiovascular strength.

A typical visit to the gym consists of a session with her personal trainer that includes assorted exercises that help her build muscular strength.

“I’m all about full body workouts, so



Junior Matthew Zung bench presses during a workout at the school’s new weight room. FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

I really like lunges and planks,” she said. Not only do these exercises help Drohan stay fit, but they also help with her dancing career.

Drohan started dance at age 3, doing tap as a young child, and later moving on to jazz. As a dancer, Drohan chooses exercises that help strengthen her body as she moves on the dance floor.

“I do a lot of cardio from dance so I like to focus on muscle and body weight,” Drohan said.

Other seniors, such as Supriya

Khandekar, have recently joined gyms second semester to get fit before they leave for college.

Khandekar goes to Total Woman Gym and Spa, located in San Jose, most days for about an hour. At the gym, she usually does zumba and yoga group classes, occasionally running on the treadmill or lifting weights.

“Exercise helps you enjoy the moment as it is, and you are able to appreciate it,” she said.

Exercise has been proven not only to

help people physically and mentally, releasing stress from life’s everyday problems. As the academic stress continues to grow and students occupy their minds with schoolwork, Khandekar turns to yoga as a peaceful and relaxing form of exercise.

“Yoga helps me so much. As a result, I’m able to focus on homework a lot more and it doesn’t take me that long,” Khandekar said.

Like Drohan and Khandekar, many athletes, including the senior varsity football players, have also caught onto the workout trend.

These football players, including seniors Jordan Vogel, Jonathan Tran, Alec Furlong and a few others, work out five days a week for an hour and a half at Gold’s Gym, located on Hamilton Avenue in Campbell. According to Vogel, the boys partake in dynamic group exercise sessions and use cardio and strength training machines.

A typical workout includes many Olympic lifts, a series of single barbell weights loaded with weight plates of various sizes. Some of Vogel’s favorites are power cleans and front squats.

Vogel added that exercising helps to strengthen friendships. When working out together as a team, the boys feel a close bond with each other, creating an atmosphere that benefits them all.

“When we’re all in the gym together, it definitely helps [our team bonding],” Vogel said. “It’s just nice for us to spend time with each other.” ♦

GRAPHIC BY HELEN CHEN

Reporters reach new heights through aerial yoga



Stefanie Ting and Rachel Zhang

Trusting that the thin, violet fabric would catch our fall, we began falling backwards, hooking our feet around the fabric to remain suspended. We let out a little shriek as our field of vision flipped upside down.

Blood rushed through our heads, transforming our faces into a flush of a red. Although our throats felt rather constricted, we laughed after we successfully achieved the so-called spider position.

After seeing pictures on Instagram of people hanging like possums from slings, we decided to try out aerial yoga, a series of exercises incorporating regular yoga and aerial acrobatics. The day before we planned to take the class, we signed up for a 75-minute introductory course to aerial yoga at Breathe, a yoga studio in Los Gatos.

It required coordination, balance and upper-body strength, three traits that we definitely do not possess.

After a few feeble attempts, we managed to cocoon our bodies into the hammock, stepping onto a cork block to aid us. From there, we began series of flows, poses synced with

one’s breath intended to work various parts of the body, including core strengthening. Following Krishnamurthy’s directions, we “gracefully” swung, stretching muscles we did not know existed.

Then, just when we thought it couldn’t get more difficult, we were told to perform the spider position — a move that left our hand and upper body suspended in mid-air, only supported by our feet tightly wrapped around the fabric. It required coordination, balance and upper-body strength, three traits that we definitely do not possess.

We watched enviously as Krishnamurthy flawlessly demonstrated the move while the other members followed suit. On the other hand, we stubbornly sat in our fabric, contemplating whether or not to risk our heads smashing against the ground beneath us.

After the relentless mental debate, we decided to trust the delicate fabric and started falling backwards, forming a triangle with our legs that gripped onto the fabric.

Then, we began performing various balancing exercises before doing our last poses of the evening, the owl and the fairy. We returned to the spider-position and then hoisted ourselves up to clutch on the fabric above



Reporters Stefanie Ting and Rachel Zhang relax while hanging upside down from fabrics during an aerial yoga class at Breathe in Los Gatos. FALCON // RACHEL ZHANG

our knees. A burning sensation gripped Rachel’s nonexistent abs and Stefanie’s 12-pack (very funny, Rachel?) as we began “climbing” up the fabric until we reached a seated position. Swinging from side to side, we felt the freedom of being airborne.

In order to get out of the pose altogether, we had to do a front somersault without accidentally falling out of the sling. Perched over six feet above the ground, we peered at the ground beneath us. Unable to even do front flips on monkey bars, this task was more intimidating than taking a Yim test.

Hearing all the other yogi chant “You can do it,” we somersaulted and unwound ourselves from the fabrics’ grips. It flipping hurt.

We ended class the same way we started; we climbed into the fabric, lying inside our slowly-swinging hammock with our eyes closed, taking in the tranquility the practice has given us.

As the class ended, we agreed the experience was well worth the time and money spent. For a mere \$12 (the student price), the class not only gave us an eclectic amounts of exercise, which not only stretched and strengthened various muscles, but also relieved stress.

We dare you to try aerial yoga; yogana have fun. ♦

SPRING SPORTS PREVIEW

GRAPHIC BY HELEN CHEN

BASEBALL

Coach: Adam Varteressian
Stars: Senior infielders Evan Lindeman and Joey Medeiros, and junior infielder Tyler Yoshihara



Lindeman

Key losses to graduation: Outfielders Davis Berryhill, Tyler Plesse, Jacob Marr, Thomas Alexander and infielders Eric Ferguson and Derek Sun

Key additions: Junior Michael Schillage and freshman Nathan Peng

Key matchups: Los Gatos (March 17 and 19).

Prognosis: Though the team lost almost the entire starting lineup from last year, players and coaches have the goal of winning a third consecutive league title.

BOYS' TRACK



>> Sophomore Eric Wang FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

Head coach: Archie Ljepava

Stars: Senior distance runners Steven Sum and Andrew Harter

Key additions: Freshman distance runner Amit Nag and sprinter Daniel Ortiz

Prognosis: The team would like to move up to the De Anza Division next year by placing first in the El Camino Division as well as to send more athletes to compete at the CCS level.

BOYS' LACROSSE

Coach: Bill Kurz
Last season: Last season, the team shifted from an emphasis of conditioning to hand and stick control. While this helped players improve their skills, the lack of conditioning meant the players would get tired too easily, affecting the overall performance. The team played well enough to go from a 5-13 season to achieving a winning record, but they did not make CCS. Their record was 8-7.

Stars: Junior Quincy Owyang and sophomore Aidan Peck

Key additions: Sophomores Derek Yun, Kurt Bench and Anthony Oliveri

Key matchups: Los Gatos (March 27)

Prognosis: Since most players are undersized compared to the rest of the league, the team may have trouble in some matchups this season.

GIRLS' SWIMMING



>> Senior April Khowong FALCON // DAVID SPARKMAN

Coach: Kristen Thomson

Stars: Senior Yayla Sezginer, sophomore Stefanie Ting

Key additions: Freshmen Colina Guan and Jeannette Khowong

Key matchups: Monta Vista and Gunn

Prognosis: The girls hope for another strong season with multiple CCS finalists.

SOFTBALL

Coach: Chris Smith
Last Season: The team placed third in the De Anza League with a 9-3 record, but lost in the first round of CCS.



Spirakis

Stars: Juniors Eleni Spirakis, Ellie Lee and Stephanie Hayes and senior Analisa Ruff

Key additions: Sophomore Rachel Davey, freshmen Chance Gaskin and Eryn Lee

Prognosis: The team lost five seniors to graduation, but still hopes for a successful season with a new coach and more younger players. “I’m looking forward to having Chris as a coach to see what new techniques he can teach us, as well as how far we’ll go in our league and also CCS,” junior Stephanie Hayes said.

BOYS' SWIMMING

Coach: Christian Bonner
Last season: Three individuals and two relays reached finals in CCS. Of the three individuals, one was junior Bradley Newton, who will not be joining the team this year since he transferred to Los Gatos High School.



Lee

Stars: Senior Calvin Shih, and juniors Graham Schmelzer, Harrison Yang and Mason Lee

Key additions: Sophomore Jack Xie (moved from China)

Key matchups: Los Gatos

Prognosis: The team hopes to overcome the losses of their best swimmers from last season. However, there are strong individual swimmers with a good chance at making CCS finals.

BOYS' TENNIS

Coach: Florin Marica
Last season: The team won the California Tennis Classic, a tournament where the best high schools in California compete. They were undefeated during leagues and lost in CCS finals to Menlo School. During NorCal, the team lost in the semifinals to Dougherty Valley.



Bedekar

Stars: Senior Neel Bedekar and junior Karthik Padmanabhan

Key additions: Freshman Dean Stratakos

Key matchups: Monta Vista

Prognosis: The team only lost one player from the starting lineup. With the addition of Stratakos, the team should be able to make another deep run in CCS.

BOYS' VOLLEYBALL

Coach: Jason Cardoso
Last season: The team tied with Wilcox for first in leagues, but did not play in CCS. Their overall record was 20-11.

Stars: Senior Michael Cole, juniors Chester Leung and Spencer Yen, sophomore Joel Schneidmiller

Key additions: Senior Alex Holz

Key matchups: Cupertino, Los Altos

Key losses to graduation: Haret Jhutti, Philip Cai

Prognosis: The team lost several starters, but expects others to step up to fill in those spots. With a focus on improving consistency, they hope to win their league and play in CCS. “We need to be more competitive in every game and not just let our energy go during games we know we’ll win,” Leung said.

GIRLS' LACROSSE



>> Senior Christina Chin FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

Coaches: Krista Cavanaugh and assistant coach Danny Wallace

Stars: Senior Christina Crolla, junior Talia Clement and sophomore Julia Vita

Key additions: Junior Nicole Prowse

Prognosis: With completely new coaches for both the varsity and the JV team, lacrosse is looking to emphasize team bonding this year.

BOYS' GOLF

Coach: Dave Gragnola
Last season: The team went undefeated in the SCVAL League and qualified for CCS because of its perfect record. With a score of 419 at Rancho Cañada in Monterey, the team barely missed out on CCS finals. Alumnus Christian Galvin was able to advance as an individual and tied for fourth in CCS.



Peng

Stars: Senior Robbie Gragnola, and juniors Miles Peng and Lucas Peng

Key loss to graduation: Christian Galvin

Prognosis: The team looks to continue its three-year undefeated streak in leagues and qualify for CCS. It also wants to make it past the first round of CCS for the first time in SHS history.

BADMINTON



>> Sophomore Josh Li Courtesy of CHRIS DO

Coach: Charley Situ

Stars: Seniors Max Chang and Junna Shimokawa, and junior Michael Owyang

Key additions: Freshman Stephen Ding

Key losses: Bryan Chow and Evans Ding

Prognosis: The Falcons anticipate the addition of freshman Stephen Ding to the team. With a new coach, the team hopes to improve its unity.

GIRLS' TRACK

Head coach: Archie Ljepava
Last season: The team placed fourth at the league meet. 2014 alumna Mady Fagan and senior Puck de Roos broke the school records in high jump and heptathlon respectively. The record was 2-4.



de Roos

Stars: Senior sprinters Laura Cummins and Allison Chan, and heptathlete de Roos

Key additions: Freshman thrower Paige Hansen and distance runner Allison Borch

Key matchups: Wilcox

Prognosis: The team would like to move up to the De Anza division next year. The team hopes that athletes make consistent progress toward their individual goals.

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Falcons in position to win league

by Jihau Yu

With a win against Mountain View on Feb. 6, the boys' basketball team, led by star senior point guard Michael Cole, improved its record to 16-5 overall and 8-1 in league play. As of Feb. 6, the team leads the El Camino League.

Although the team easily won its last game against Mountain View 53-34 on Jan. 16, this time the game was a lot closer with the Falcons prevailing 52-49.

The difference was the team's inability to defend the 3-point shot. In fact, Mountain View made 14 3-pointers in the game, which accounted for 42 of their 49 points.

"We executed our offense well, but we didn't get out on their shooters fast enough, which led to them shooting a lot of threes," senior center Kevin Lee said.

On Feb. 3, the Falcons beat Santa Clara 49-37, holding their opponents to 19 points through three quarters.

Cole said the team played well on defense and offense.

"We came out with a lot of energy and intensity from the very beginning and executed our offense and won," Cole said.

The team also beat Cupertino 51-49 on Jan. 30. The Falcons lost to Cupertino earlier in the season, giving them extra motivation for this game.

"Cupertino played really well and they put up a good fight, but our guys were not ready to lose," junior power

forward Jatin Mohanty said.

The first time the two teams faced off, the Falcons lost 53-45. Mohanty said that the Falcons came to this game with a different mentality.

"The first game we were sluggish and played uninspired, but the second game we never really got discouraged and made runs to win the game," Mohanty said.

The Falcons started off poorly and found themselves down 28-21 at half-time.

However, by the end of the third quarter, the team closed the deficit to two points.

During the fourth quarter, the Falcons took a 51-49 lead with less than a minute left in the game.

Junior shooting guard Joe Eschen was fouled and

went to the free throw line to shoot a one-and-one free throw with seven seconds remaining.

Eschen missed the free throw and Cupertino was able to come up with the rebound. With time winding down, Cupertino freshman guard George Ellegood hurried to drive in for a layup; however, Mohanty contested the shot and forced a miss for the win.

Entering the season, the team set a goal to win the El Camino League and move back up to the De Anza League.

With over half of league play finished, the Falcons are in a prime position to achieve this goal, with the team ahead of Gunn High School for first in Leagues.

Since the team beat Gunn previously,



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

Senior guard Michael Cole dribbles the ball in a game against Santa Clara on Jan. 12.

it holds the tiebreaker over Gunn. Because of this, Mohanty said that the team needs to play every single game like it's their last if they want to make CCS.

Cole said that he is excited about what the team has accomplished so far.

"We need to continue improving, and play each game as though it's a championship game," Cole said. "I believe we are looking very good, and I'm confident that we will reach our goal."

An aspect of the offense that the team has been focusing on is getting the ball near the basket to the big men and getting to the free throw line.

In the last five games, the Falcons have shot over 20 free throws a game, winning all of them as a result.

However, Cole believes the team can still improve on the defensive end.

"We need to stick to shooters, close out with high hands to prevent easy shots and make sure we double-team when the other team enters the ball into the post," Cole said.

Cole said that the team is looking forward to the league game against Gunn that is happening today, who is second in the El Camino League, making it an important game in determining who will win the league.

Due to printing deadlines, the Falcon was not able to cover the Feb. 10 game against Lynbrook. The Falcons have an away game against Gunn today and their final league game against Monta Vista on Feb. 17. ♦

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Team dribbles through upper league with wins, losses

FALCONS QUALIFY FOR CCS, LOOK TO FINISH SEASON STRONG

by Nidhi Jain & Vibha Seshadri

With a loss against Mountain View on Feb. 6, the girls' basketball team holds a record of 3-5 in the De Anza League. As of Feb. 6, the team is tied for fourth in Leagues but has already qualified for CCS, which begins Feb. 24.

Turnovers and a better than expected defense from the Mountain View team were the primary reasons for the loss, said junior forward Erin Norris.

"If we just work on our passing and getting through teams when they are pressuring full court, we can complete our passes and do well against teams like Mountain View," Norris said.

For CCS, Norris believes that the work ethic the team has been putting forth for the season will help garner them a win.

"We know that the teams are going to be tough so we are going to prepare, play hard and fight hard because we know that if we come together as a team we can beat [teams in

CCS]," Norris said.

On Feb. 4, the girls lost 56-44 to Palo Alto, a tough team who is first in the league.

"[Palo Alto] was overly aggressive at times, but we were able to go get through it," Norris said.

Seniors forward Mikayla Davis and point guard Samie Davey led the team in points, respectively scoring 14 and 9 points.

The referees in the game were, according to Prowse, "officiating pretty loosely," allowing the girls to have a more physical game.

"Our main focus for the game was to give [Palo Alto] a run for their money, and I believe we accomplished that to the best of our abilities," Prowse said.

In the fourth quarter, though the Falcons were up by four points, the referees began to call more fouls. As a result, Palo Alto was able to get to the foul line and pull ahead to eventually win the game.

The team also lost to Los Altos 48-46 in a close game on Jan. 30. The girls got into early foul trouble, allowing the Eagles to gain easy points through free throws. However, they were able to overcome their foul trouble, and continue competing.

Near the end, the fear of losing the game caught up with the team, causing them to put in more effort in the last

few minutes to keep their lead, Prowse said. Senior forward Sara Parden scored a total of eight points, and sophomore point guard Rachel Davey scored six points.

"It felt like our effort to play well on defense failed when we kept on fouling, but we came together as a team during a timeout," Norris said.

According to Norris, the Falcons were ahead for the majority of the game, but lost momentum due to their premature confidence in their ability to secure a win. In the fourth quarter, Los Altos made a quick comeback early in the quarter, and the Falcon girls were unable to take back the lead.

As a result of moving up to the more competitive De Anza league from the El Camino League, Prowse said the team has been focusing more on their game and strategy rather than worrying about their wins and losses.

"I [am] really proud of the team, because I [think] we are playing really well and becoming closer through our play," Prowse said.

The team beat Wilcox High School 58-46 on Jan. 27. According to Prowse, after the first half, the team was up by four points but was not defending or communicating effectively. The girls quickly improved in the second half,



FALCON // SWEETAY RAJ

Senior point guard Samie Davey drives to the basket during a game against Palo Alto on Feb. 4. Despite the effort, the Falcons lost 56-44.

due to contributions from Samie Davey and Davis.

Samie Davey scored 11 points, including three from free throws. Davis scored 16 points, including eight from free throws, and grabbed four rebounds.

"It was a team effort," Davey said. "We studied [the team beforehand], and Wilcox plays really hard. We were able to execute well to get everyone many looks at the hoop."

This season, many key players have suffered injuries. Senior Jennifer McAfee and junior Janani Velchamy both fractured their ankles, and sophomore Jenny Qian tore her meniscus early in the season.

The plethora of injuries on the team has led to increased

playing time for the girls' who are not injured. McAfee just missed pre season and a few games at the beginning of the season. Velchamy recently began practicing again. Qian is out for the season.

"I think that some of [the injuries] have been really demoralizing and have kind of hurt our confidence in a way, especially this year," Prowse said.

Prowse said the team has rallied around the injuries. For example, even though some of the injured players are out for the season, the team still includes them in whatever they do.

"We're very supportive and make sure to help them out because even if they can't play, they're still part of the family," Prowse said. ♦

GIRLS' SOCCER

Falcons look to make CCS in final games

by Emily Chen & Karissa Dong

Now sitting in fourth place in the De Anza League with a 3-5-2 league record, the girls' soccer team hopes to secure its chances of making CCS in the last few games of the season. The Falcons must win two of their three upcoming matches to qualify for CCS.

On Feb. 5 the team lost a crucial game to Los Altos 3-0. About halfway through the first half, junior goalkeeper Isa Berardo was kicked on the side of her forehead while making a save and had to sit out for the rest of the game. Junior backup goalkeeper Sarah Price filled in for Berardo for the remainder of the game.

The team did not expect this devastating loss; in their first match up against Los Altos (now with a 2-7-0 league record), the Falcons won 2-0.

This loss places even more importance on winning their next games.

"We came out much stronger in the first game [against Los Altos] and hav-

ing our fans support us at home games made a big difference," senior co-captain Amy Shepard said.

At home on Feb. 3, the Falcons lost against the highly talented Palo Alto High School team 2-0 in a hard-fought match. Both goals were scored by junior Jacey Pederson, perhaps the top player in the entire league.

"I think we played a lot stronger than our first game against them and worked harder but I think we were still just a beat behind them," Berardo said. "They are a good team, I'll give them that, but I think not everyone was on their game today, including me."

Late in the second half, sophomore forward Karissa Dong took a hard fall on her face after jumping and getting tangled with a defender to receive a ball from the air. She suffered a concussion and slightly twisted ankle and is expected to be out the rest of the season.

On Jan. 29, the team defeated Los Altos during the Cats' senior day game, the second win against their long-time



TALISMAN // NAVEED RIAZIAT

Freshman Allison Borch passes the ball during a 2-0 win against Los Altos on Jan. 15.

rivals this season. Junior defender Kaitlyn Chen converted a penalty kick in the first half, which proved to be enough for a 1-0 victory.

"I'm really glad that I get to end my high school career with these memories of coming together as a team and beating [Los Gatos]," senior captain Anisha Nagarajan said. "[Even though] they make up only a small part of the season in the long run, those two games have

definitely been ones I will remember for a long time."

The team came up short to Homestead 1-0 on Jan. 27 and lost on Jan. 24 2-0 to Mountain View.

The team's senior day game against Santa Clara on Feb. 12 could not be covered due to printing deadlines. The girls have a scrimmage against Hillsdale on Feb. 14 and their final league game at Mountain View on Feb. 17. ♦

BOYS' SOCCER

Team plays for fun as season's end nears

by Aditya Chaudhry & Helen Chen

The boys' soccer team recently beat Lynbrook High School 1-0 in their senior game on Feb. 5.

The team has a record of 3-5-1 and is sixth in the SCVAL League

El Camino Division. The record means the team can only make CCS if they win their final two games and gain a wild card.

"With the amount of games left, we have a long shot for CCS," senior goalie Edwin Chen said.

The game against Lynbrook, however, was a major win for the boys.

The match was scoreless until the final minutes of the game. "The first half and the beginning of the second half were a bit slow for us," junior right wing Kanaai Shah said. "Near the end of the match, we started getting some shots off and got our offense going."

In the final minutes of the game, the boys had a throw in near Lynbrook's box. Junior right back Abhiram Yellamilli threw the ball into a crowded area. The ball was deflected multiple times before senior Cian Costello scored the winning goal.

"It was a really great goal by Cian," Shah said. "It was even better that it was during his senior night."

Earlier, the boys lost 2-0 to Gunn on Feb. 3. With a powerful defense and menacing attack, Gunn was a challenge for the boys.

"Gunn had great defense that was impenetrable for our offense to score on," Shah said.

On Jan. 29, the Falcons beat Cupertino High School 1-0 for their second league win. The winning goal was scored by senior center midfielder Kushol Bhat-tacharjee.

Senior forward Samuel Breck attributes problems on both sides of the field. "We struggled [to finish] our chances because we've had a lot of opportunities that didn't come through due to bad luck or poor finishing," Breck said. "I also think that in a lot of our games, we gave up goals pretty early, which demoralized us for the rest of the game."

Because the boys have a slim chance of making CCS, they are hoping to play without the burden of pressure.

"Now, we can just play soccer — not to win, but just to play," Chen said. "Hopefully we'll have a really great time playing our last few matches, especially on our home turf."

Due to printing deadlines, the Feb. 12 game against Milpitas could not be covered. The team will play its last league game against Wilcox on Feb. 17. ♦

"I'm really glad that I get to end my high school career with beating [Los Gatos]." senior Anisha Nagarajan



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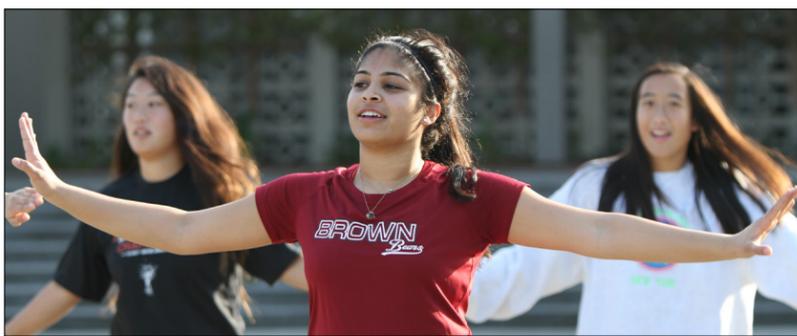
FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA



FALCON // LAUREN LOUIE



FALCON // SIMI SRIVASTAVA

Senior Cian Costello prepares to kick the ball against Lynbrook on senior night on Feb. 5. The final score was 1-0.

Sophomore Raymond McCarthy and junior Emily Ludwig perform in the dress rehearsal of *Cyrano de Bergerac* on Feb. 5.

Senior Samir Ingle acts out his morning routine in the Talent category of SHS's first Mr. Saratoga pageant on Jan. 28.

Junior Karishma Shah shows off her dance moves as she practices for the Bombay in the Bay show tonight.

Traumatic Tpumps pearl tea experience scars sophomores

It doesn't match



Spring Ma and Eileen Toh

Pearl milk tea runs in our veins. On a tough test day, PMT is the answer to all of those blank Scantron bubbles. On a blazing hot day, it will satisfy all your cold drink cravings and save you from going to Starbucks. On a cold winter day, it will melt all your worries away and offer that warm hug that your nonexistent boyfriend wouldn't give. The opportunities are endless. It can also get you lost on the streets, desperately searching for safety. Our unfortunate story begins on a dark December night. After scrolling through countless Tpumps Instagram

posts, the two of us and sophomore Jenny Qian decided to quench our thirst and give the place a go. After choosing our drinks and waiting for 10 minutes, we finally received our drinks and blissfully took the subsequent Snapchat and Instagram photos. Spring, craving cream puffs to complement her sugar high, persuaded us to walk the seemingly petty 0.2 miles to the nearby Cupertino plaza, the Marketplace. After plugging the location into our trusty Google Maps app and seeing that it would only take five minutes to reach there, we were convinced that it would be a worthwhile trip. Let's just say that the walk did not take "five minutes." While happily sipping our drinks, Eileen pointed out which streets to cross; as we continued walking, we found that the streets were getting darker, and the miles stretching longer.

Twenty minutes into our creepy walk toward what seemed like the middle of nowhere, Eileen came to the realization that she put in the wrong address into her phone. After turning 180° and headed in the right direction, we faced two shadowy figures who turned out to be boys a little older than us. A beer in each hand, the boys, in slurred speech, demanded that we empty our pockets and give them our spare cash. We retorted with a blatant "No!" and fast-walked past them, trying to avoid eye-contact. After 10 minutes of crossing multiple streets and holding onto each other for dear life, we turned around and found the two boys trailing a couple steps behind. Panicking, the three of us law-following pedestrians frantically pounded on the traffic light's button to cross the street. As the red hand turned into the

blessed white stick-figure, we sprinted across the crosswalk (dropping our now-warm and watery PMT's), which led to a brightly-lit Beard Papa's. All the while, Jenny was swearing under her breath, "I SEE THE LIGHT!" Crying on the inside — and somewhat on the outside — we dashed to the entrance and were met with the aroma and safety of warm vanilla cream puffs. We finally found our safe haven and spent the rest of the night with the pastries, our dead iPhones and a confused cashier. Maybe we are just wimpy little Saratoga kids who can't handle a couple of drunk strangers outside "the bubble." Maybe there just needs to be more streetlamps in Cupertino. Maybe those strangers just wanted our PMT. But our takeaway is this: THE HYPE IS NOT WORTH THE EXPERIENCE. Sorry Tpumps; you failed us. ♦

How I became a Bombay in the Bay dictator

The real Sim Shady



Simi Srivastava

As my parents never fail to point out, there are very few activities I am willing to get out of pajamas on a Saturday morning for. Yet the past month, as one of two presidents for the Indian Cultural Awareness Club, I have been living, breathing and screaming (literally) all things Bombay in the Bay. The show debuts Feb. 13 and though I have thoroughly enjoyed wearing out my new Converse, losing my voice several times and foregoing many hours of sacred sleep in the process of creating the show, I could not be more excited to get a break from constant dance practice all day, every day. My morning starts off with a Bhangra dance practice at 11 a.m. Bhangra, a lively, high energy dance, is hardly the type of activity most teenagers are ecstatic to do first thing in the day. As a morning person, I'm usually ten times more awake than everyone else and annoyingly excited to be dancing so early on in the day (even though it's actually already 11 o'clock). "COME ON GUYS! GET INTO FORMATION! WE ONLY HAVE A FEW WEEKS LEFT! LET'S GO, GO, GO!!"

After giving this motivating speech, I'm still met with blank stares from people who are still half asleep. As one of the choreographers of the dance, the task to teach all 20 performers falls upon me and three other coordinators. When one is trying to lead a dance practice, being 5'3" and having a voice that doesn't carry far isn't the best combination. It often takes me 10 minutes of shouting at the top of my voice, jumping up and down waving my arms and eventually weaving my way through the crowd to silence each individual before I have everyone's attention. My friends like to make a game of testing how high my voice can go when I yell at practice. It appears that they've come to a consensus that there are three axes of stress, volume and exasperation that determine the pitch of my voice. After Bhangra, I have a short grace period of an hour in which I manage to maybe get some homework done (Homework as a second semester senior? What a wild idea!) before my next commitment: AGD, the senior All-Girls' Dance in Bombay in the Bay. This year, AGD features the 13 girls who have participated in Bombay in the Bay for all four years of high school. Although slightly less stressful for me than Bhangra is, AGD is intense. While under the supervision of drill sergeant choreographer senior Varna Jammula, the other girls and I must practice each portion of our dance to perfection. When

she's not looking though, you'll probably find us secretly eating junk food or sneaking off to Safeway to get some. After AGD comes the Senior Dance. As a choreographer of this dance as well, I often find myself in the same situation as that of Bhangra practice, but worse. Now, instead of working with 20 half asleep teenagers at ungodly hours of the morning (really, people snooze through and miss practice if it's before noon), I now have to assemble 30 people at once at 7 p.m., which seems to be the rowdiest part of their days. I swear, goldfish have longer attention spans than Bombay in the Bay dancers. While my peers casually chatter about parties, the latest gossip or drama (because unlike me, they actually have lives outside of BNB), I am scrambling to read scribbles of formations. It's a vicious cycle. I place people where they need to be and by the time I've set the other side of the "stage," they have begun milling about like a pack of sheep, undoing all the work. Though this may seem like an outlet for my frustration and anger at all things BNB, I do really love working with my friends to raise money for a good cause. In my time as club president this year as well as choreographer in the past years, I've learned so much and I wouldn't trade that for anything. Writing this story was fun, but I seriously need to get back to practice. Please excuse me while I go yell at 40 seniors. ♦

>> topten

THINGS TO LOVE ON VALENTINE'S DAY

- 10 **The day after.** Take advantage of the low prices of Valentine's day chocolates.
- 9 **School.** Use February break to get ahead! That homework isn't going to do itself.
- 8 **Hallmark.** Spend your night reading through this year's Valentine's cards at Target.
- 7 **Cats.** At least they're required to love you.
- 6 **Allergies.** Brace your nose for the unnaturally fresh flowers all day.
- 5 **Taylor Swift.** Convince that special someone that YOU BELONG WITH ME.
- 4 **PG feature films.** Avoid the premiere of "50 Shades of Grey" at all costs.
- 3 **Cupid.** Utilize your archery skills to guarantee that special someone loves you back.
- 2 **Bombay in the Bay.** Who needs love when you can have Bollywood?
- 1 **Yourself.** Send yourself gifts from your "secret admirer" and act surprised.

>>Simi Srivastava