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Event returns to campus, promotes groups

Clubs fundraise and raise awareness through sales in the Quad. **pg. 3**

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Beyond high school

Athletes consider opportunities in college. **pg. 24**

Operation Benefit

FASHION SHOW ASSISTS TROOPS WITH FUNDRAISER

BY DeepthiSampathkumar & ArmanVaziri

Two hundred students, parents and teachers crowded the Large Gym and clapped vigorously as student models strutted their colorful tastes in fashion down the runway during the 10th Annual Benefit Fashion Show on March 7. The show exceeded expectations this year, making over \$6,000 in ticket sales alone, which is far more than in previous years.

This year, the Benefit Fashion Show raised money for the Fisher House Foundation, which provides soldiers' and veterans' families with free housing. The head commission-

>> **BENEFIT** on pg. 8



Senior Alex Hansen sweeps senior Natalie Miller up during the Prom category of the Benefit Fashion Show on March 7.

FALCON // LAUREN LOUIE

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Students shooting video have run-in with police

BY RachelHull & MichelleLeung

Junior Spencer Yen thought he was witnessing a drug bust as he stood by a picnic table in Wildwood Park on March

3, peering into the darkness as eight police officers walked toward him and a couple of friends. Then Yen heard two words that made him realize the gravity of the incident — and the reason for the police

response. "Hands up!"

It all started late that night, when Yen and junior Kabir Manghnani met with senior Tony Holt in the park to work on a video project about the

Vietnam War for their Media Arts Program class.

Holt, though not in the group, had volunteered to play the part of a Vietnam War veteran. The group had wanted to film a flashback scene in which

Holt was in Vietnam during his night shift.

Holt sat by the creek bed with an Airsoft gun, but there was something different about

>> **POLICE** on pg. 7

CHANGES

New block schedule draws both enthusiasm, criticism

BY CaitlinJu & GitikaNalwa

With a rolling block schedule confirmed to start in the fall of 2016, teachers and students are expressing a range of reactions to the change.

The decision to go to a full block schedule was made by the school's leadership team, which comprises the administration and department chairs and was based on input the team had gathered over time, according to principal Paul Robinson.

Although details of the schedule such as teacher collaboration periods and the exact number and time of tutorials are yet to be confirmed, as of now, Robinson thinks the school will have four tutorials a week and maintain its Wednesday collaboration in the morning.

"Our staff collaborates together so well that I don't see us giving up col-

laboration," Robinson said. "Exactly where it's going to be and how it's going to end up? There may be some flexibility in that."

Underclassmen are already thinking about the change, which will involve four 90-minute periods each day.

Sophomore Jason Kao said a schedule with eight periods is good for students.

"Students can have a late start to get more sleep or even leave two periods early," Kao said. "It's great not to have all seven classes on Monday."

Sophomore Joyce Lai said changes to tutorials in the proposed full block schedule might be helpful.

"Wednesday tutorials right now are not as beneficial because everyone would rather go home than spend another 30 extra minutes doing math, but by having tutorials integrated in the

>> **BLOCK** on pg. 5

TEST PREP

Saint Jay Koo: SAT savior

DOZENS OF STUDENTS, PARENTS SEEK HELP FROM WELL-KNOWN TEST GURU

BY Meganalyer & FionaSequeira

Tennis shoes squeaking on the hardwood floor as he balances a cup of hot coffee in his left hand, middle-aged Korean SAT tutor Jay Koo unlocks his office, adjusts his glasses and switches on the lights. At 8 a.m. on a mid-July morning, Koo prepares his office on Saratoga Sunnyvale Road for a class of about 15 students he is expecting in an hour.

Parents for each of the students are paying \$1,150 for the four-week summer course where one of the area's top SAT tutors can work his magic and boost their scores.

Koo's tutoring career began in the early 1990s, when, unsatisfied with his

job at a financial investment firm, he answered a Princeton Review ad in the local paper.

"I would like to think that it was some sort of epiphany that led me to this line of work, but it wasn't," Koo said. "I needed a job, and I initially thought that [working at the Princeton Review] was a good transition."

Although Koo never intended to continue tutoring, he found that he truly loved working with students and watching them grow.

"I have never looked back," he said.

In 2004, Koo started his own tutoring academy in the Bay Area. Although he is known for his classes on the SAT rea-

>> **GURU** on pg. 20



College Day to be held at Saratoga Library

The Saratoga Library Teen Advisory Board (TAB) will hold its second annual College Day in the community room of the Saratoga Library on March 21.

College Day subcommittee member senior Arhem Barkatullah said that College Day is about educating students about various parts of applying to college.

The event will be similar to the first College Day held by the library last year. According to Barkatullah, this year's will have more panelists and better presentations. Librarian and TAB adviser Birgit Spring said that this event intends to help alleviate current juniors' fears about college.

Panelists include experts from local colleges, community members and two Saratoga High School seniors who just went through the process themselves. Spring hopes that students will be able ask these panelists questions they have and get the answers they need. As further incentives to get students to attend, TAB will also provide cookies and a raffle for SAT practice books.

The two-hour event will feature two 15-minute presentations from Mike Lysaght of LMFT and Katy Fitzgerald from the Mission College Supervisor Financial Services. Seven students and community members will answer questions from the audience as part of a panel afterwards.

The panelists will include Saratoga City Council member and DeAnza College Faculty member Manny Cappello, Saratoga Library Commission Chair Lauren Marty, Los Gatos Saratoga High School District Trustee Katherine Tseng, Lysaght, Fitzgerald, TAB president senior Riddhi Sangam and TAB member senior Sarah Deva.

"I hope that students will gain a better understanding of the college applications process," Sangam said. "I also hope that the presentations and panel discussion are helpful."

— Michelle Leung and Trevor Leung

APES and Marine Biology visit Año Nuevo

For the fourth year in a row, AP Environmental Science and Marine Biology students went to the Año Nuevo Natural Preserve in Pescadero.

The field trip for 175 students took place on March 10 and 11 and consisted of a hike that summarized and tied together the curriculum that was taught in classes.

"It's a lot like a guided nature walk which directly relates to the main idea of AP Environmental Science," said AP Environmental Science teacher Kristen Thomson.

While half the people waited on the beach, the other half followed the tour guide over the dunes for a guided hike to the elephant seals. The hike included an explanation of the geology of the area as well as the story of the near extinction of elephant seals. The tour also discussed the indigenous groups who used to live in the area.

"It's really neat," Thomson said. "Now that I have gone for so many years, I've begun to recognize the same seals that were there year to year, and we've gotten several of the same guides, so I'd say it's a pretty successful trip."

— Deepthi Sampathkumar and Summer Smith

Spring Fling aims for more participation

With the annual Spring Fling week is scheduled to occur from March 30 to April 3, plans for Spirit Week, Powderpuff and the Sadie Hawkins dance are coming together.

The commissioners for Spring Fling include seniors Jane Park, Julianne Lau, Mihir Samdarshi, Amanda Le, Katelynn Moriarty, Madeline Ryan, junior Jenna Chen and sophomore Eileen Toh.

The commission is introducing new themes for the week and hopes to ignite creativity and include more participation. Although the Sadie Hawkins dance was cancelled last year because of projected low attendance, the commission hopes to draw sufficient numbers this year for it to take place. The dance will occur on March 28, and the theme will be SHS Super Sadies.

"We are trying to promote Sadies to be a more of a group of friends thing rather than a couples' dance," Park said. "With the help of ASB, commissioners are optimistic that it will be very successful and won't get cancelled."

— Maya Prasad

>> picturethis



ACTING IN ACTION >> Junior Nina Nelson sings as Edwin Drood in preparation for the spring musical.

DRAMA

Students to compete at conference

By MelissaMagner

Forty members of the SHS drama program have qualified to be members of the of the International Thespian Society (ITS), and will travel to Upland, California, on March 27 to meet for a statewide conference.

While there, thespians from all over California will compete; if they rank high enough, the drama department will compete at Nationals in Nebraska in June.

ITS, which is part of the Educational Theatre Association, chooses thespians based on their performance in plays and musicals, said drama teacher Sarah Thermond. The association recognizes the talent of high school and middle school theater students by having them perform monologues, musical numbers, one-acts and improvisations for judges, who hand out scholarships and awards to the winners.

"For the weeks leading up to the competition, we'll be practicing and preparing by working on certain skills," Thermond said.

After the competition, the students generally spend the weekend participating in workshops led by teachers that will allow them to refine their acting skills. The scholarships and accolades are awarded to winners in different categories later that weekend.

"I'm really excited about meeting new drama kids from other schools, because everyone is so friendly and outgoing," said senior Natalie Miller, who has attended ITS all four years. "However, I'm also a bit nervous about compet-

ing because this is my last year so I want to do well and give a performance that's memorable for myself and the judges."

For junior Neeki Tahmassebi, this year's ITS conference is a new experience.

"I'm really nervous," Tahmassebi said "but I think it will be a new and thrilling experience to perform to different judges, so there's also [an exciting part] of it."

ITS also offers chances for tech members to participate as well.

"There's categories like light, sound and set," senior Melissa Rogan said. "I'm really excited to be doing that, and I think it's great that they have that option."

According to Rogan, categories for makeup and costume design are also included. The variety of possibilities for not only actors and actresses but also techs and other artistically inclined students is what makes ITS so unique.

"I like all the different categories that students can compete in," Thermond said. "People thinking of theater often forget everything that goes on behind the scenes. When our students compete in design, they have to make and defend creative choices just like the actors do."

Thermond also appreciates the constructive criticism that students get at the end of the weekend.

"Because art is subjective, it is often good to know what multiple people think of your work so that you can learn and grow, and that's one of the reasons why ITS is so important," said Thermond. ♦

CLUBS

MUN continues despite struggles

By CassandraKing & JennyQian

Despite low funding, the school's Model United Nations club (MUN) has been up and running, having participated in the Santa Clara Valley Model United Nations conference held at Santa Teresa High School from Jan. 30-31. Among the 20 members, every one of them has been active, practicing for this event and future ones.

Model UN members meet during lunch on Tuesdays in teacher Margarita Morelle's room, led by club president senior Helen Wong. Although they will not be participating in any more official conferences this year, they continue to develop debating techniques.

"MUN helps us look at things from untraditional and non-biased viewpoints, which is a valuable skill," Wong said.

Members of the club are able to practice looking at conflicts from different perspectives by speaking and planning arguments based on the viewpoints and interests of a variety of countries during conferences. MUN stresses the importance of understanding different cultures by allowing students to speak for the perspectives and motives of the countries they represent.

"For example, if we are arguing for a predominantly Muslim country, we have to take

stances according to Muslim values and collaborate with countries that also have similar values," said sophomore Sarah Jin.

At the conference, which was attended by almost 1,000 students from various high schools, the delegates established their positions on the given topics and created blocs, or alliances, with other countries that have similar viewpoints as theirs.

Participating in conferences also allow the delegates to practice making convincing presentations in order to sway the listeners.

"Everyone did very well, speaking often and with good skill," Wong said.

The attendees were also satisfied with their performances and anticipate upcoming events.

"The delegates really get into it and it's fun to see everyone get into character as their country," said Jin.

In preparation for conferences in the years to come, Wong plans on setting up mock conferences with other schools.

"We really want to establish our members and our place so we can set the stage for next year," said Jin.

This year, the club was unable to attend their traditional Stanford conference at Stanford University but they remain hopeful that they will be able to attend more conferences in future years and have more experiences as a club. ♦

COMMUNITY

'Stop Hunger Now' event successful

By LaurenLouie

On Feb. 28, a crisp, rainy Saturday morning, approximately 50 students and adults spent three hours in the school's cafeteria trying to put a dent in the problem of world hunger.

The event was sponsored by the Saratoga Rotary Club, Interact Club and Stop Hunger Now, a national organization that hosts hands-on experiences where volunteers package meals themselves. The atmosphere was electric, and the volunteers busied themselves creating, weighing, counting and packing the Stop Hunger Now meals.

These meals provide for people in need all over the world and go to an array of causes, such as ongoing school feeding programs that provide incentives for education.

Among the volunteers were students from Palo Alto High School and SHS, principal Paul Robinson and Rotary members. As the volunteers got to work,

hairnets and gloves were distributed and hands sanitized.

"It was rewarding to know that such a small sacrifice of [two to three] hours to package food could make such a big difference for people around the world," said senior Josh Pi, secretary of Interact. "It reminded me how lucky I am to have the resources I have, and to appreciate them."

Music vibrated throughout the room through large speakers and a gong sounded for every thousand packaged meals. Volunteers danced, smiled and laughed as they worked together to help resolve world hunger and in three quick hours, a little over 20,000 meals were tucked into cardboard boxes that will travel the world to feed the hungry.

"The people there really knew how to keep morale high," sophomore Peter VandeVort said. "They had music from all generations playing, they had a gong that announced we did a great job [and] they kept a positive atmosphere." ♦



The Rotary Club president Connie Palladino packs meals at Stop Hunger Now on Feb. 28.

FALCON FOCUS: ERICA SMITH

CASSY therapist finds meaning in career

By CaitlinJu & ApoonKwatra

Counseling and Support Services for Youth (CASSY) therapist Erica Smith is a bit apprehensive about her upcoming presentation for her Career Day on March 23.

Smith, one of over 70 presenters expected for Career Day, will be presenting for the "Child/Family & School Social Workers" career for the first time, along with fellow CASSY therapist Jessica Wang.

"I'm a little nervous to talk to people, because I'm more of a quiet person," Smith said. "[We want to] make it more interesting than just two adults [speaking] at you, which you get all the time."

Smith, who had never expected to become a therapist, said she was originally

an art teacher until the early 2000s when her job was cut.

Smith said she found she was interested in being more than just a teacher, and her interest in helping and working with students later spurred her decision to go back to graduate school for ten years.

After first working at Los Gatos High with CASSY in 2009, Smith moved to Seattle the next year with her husband. But she returned to California because she thought CASSY was a "really

great [agency]."

Through her presentation and personal experiences, Smith hopes to relate that the process of finding the right career has no set formula.

think sometimes it's really easy to get caught up in acquiring wealth and success.

CASSY therapist Erica Smith

"Sometimes you look in the pamphlet and you look at the amount of schooling but it actually takes a really long time and a lot of sacrifice to also give someone else the rewards," Smith said. "[I hope to] also give a sense of reality."

Smith worked hard for 10 years to get

to where she is today.

After getting her bachelors degree, Smith focused on psychology with her masters at California Institute of Integral Studies. Later, she got a Ph.D at Pacific Graduate Institute.

Even then, she still had more work to do. "I had to do 3,000 hours of supervised clinical practice [in order to become a certified therapist]," Smith said.

Though Smith recognizes the sacrifice and that her career is not for everyone, she believes she has chosen the right path.

"I think sometimes it's really easy to get caught up in acquiring wealth and success, and my job definitely isn't that way," Smith said. "Maybe it's not the most successful outside career path, but there's a lot of meaning that you can find in it. I feel satisfied." ♦

EVENTS

Second Club Rush helps groups on school campus

By AnantRajeev & DorrieTang

Club Rush, a closed-campus event designed to help groups on campus to fundraise and gain new members, is scheduled take place today at lunch in the Quad. The event is the second one of its type; it debuted in spring 2013.

At the event, any club, commission or class office will have the opportunity to sell a food or drink item and make money for their organization. Food from Chipotle, In-N-Out, CREAM, Jamba Juice and more will be sold.

According to clubs commissioner senior Sherrilyn Ling, Club Rush is meant to give clubs and other groups an easy chance to fundraise.

This year, ASB is adding a new ticket system in which students will be exchanging money for tickets to buy food with, similar to an arcade where money is exchanged for tokens to play games.

Ling said the ASB will be using a ticket system this year. This way, the school can monitor the money.

"We are using the [ticket] system because a lot of clubs organize their money

without going through the school account with Ms. Ybarra at all, which is not allowed," Ling said.

According to head commissioner senior Anshika Maheshwari, this year's Club Rush is a lot more organized than the 2013 event was.

Interact Club secretary senior Josh Pi said the group plans to fundraise at the event by selling hot dogs, as well as "[spreading] awareness of our club on campus and potentially [gaining] some new members."

"Two years ago, we sold hot dogs and sodas, and it was pretty successful," Pi said. "We sold out, and earned a lot of profit. Interact is really excited for Club Rush, and we're hoping that it'll be a big success!"

Indian Cultural Awareness Club co-president Samir Ingle thinks that selling items at Club Rush is a good way to balance expenditures and income.

According to Ingle, ICAC plans to sell samosas in hopes of fundraising enough to compensate for some of the expenses accumulated from Bombay in the Bay. They plan to either donate more money or help pay for the club's costs. ♦

MUSIC

Jazz Cabaret canceled due to scheduling issues

By BeckyHoag & JennyQian

The annual Jazz Cabaret and Swing Dance, hosted by the music department, is usually a major fundraiser for the Saratoga Music Boosters (SMB). This fun-filled tradition has featured not only Saratoga Jazz Bands I and II and choir but also the Redwood Middle School Jazz Band.

Students of all ages have attended — and enjoyed — the event as they are able to enjoy delicious food and top-notch music.

However, because of facility scheduling problems, the Jazz Cabaret was left without a date this year and given no good options to resolve the issues.

"The original date was April 18, and we weren't aware that it was the same day as Junior Prom," said music director Michael Boitz. "We were told in August, so we had to take it off the calendar."

Despite the issues this year, hope is

bright for the future of the event.

"If we can get a date, it'll be great to have it next year again," Boitz said. "[Jazz Cabaret] has been going on before I was here and I am very sad and disappointed to see it be gone."

Because the Jazz Cabaret is only three of the actual fundraisers per year, not having one this year will have an impact. This is the first year since Boitz's arrival in 1997 that the Jazz Cabaret will be canceled.

"A lot of people go to Jazz Cab, so it does generate a lot of money for SMB," said sophomore Jaewoo Lee, a Jazz band member, "but I think the Pancake Breakfast can make up for that, since a lot of people go there as well."

Junior Ursula Bravo, who has attended the event in the past, said that she was disappointed by the cancellation of Jazz Cabaret.

"It's such a bummer," Bravo said. "I like the Jazz Cabaret because they have a lot of food and cool instruments. I really enjoy the environment." ♦



Boitz

ORGANIZATIONS

Club raises money to help fix cleft lips

By Maya Prasad & Fiona Sequeira

In the summer after her freshman year, now-junior Ankitha Sarvesh was staying with her grandparents in Chennai, India, where she worked for an organization called the Smile Train Center. When she met an 8-year-old girl from a small village who had traveled to Chennai for cleft lip surgery, her heart stopped.



Sarvesh

She sensed that the girl wanted to crack a smile, but simply couldn't. After a surgery to repair the girl's condition, Sarvesh witnessed her wide, jubilant grin for the first time. It was a moment Sarvesh said she would never forget.

Following this experience, Sarvesh was inspired to do more to help. Rather

than buy her birthday gifts for her 14th birthday, Sarvesh asked her friends to donate to Smile Train, which aids children with the cleft lip condition in more than 85 developing countries. Children with cleft lips have trouble drinking, eating, hearing and speaking, but the condition can be fixed by an operation costing around \$250.

With the birthday checks given to her in subsequent years, Sarvesh has managed to donate nearly \$750 to Smile Train, enough to help three children.

But Sarvesh hasn't been satisfied by relying solely on her birthdays to donate money. She founded her own organization in 2013, Miles for Smiles, to raise awareness for children with cleft lips.

Miles for Smiles is an official school

club with around 12 members that aims to raise money for Smile Train through fitness and running. Sarvesh's friends and family donate a certain amount of money for every mile that she runs.

"One of my uncles in New Zealand donates a generous dollar for every mile that I complete," said Sarvesh. "By the end of the year, I raised \$1,250, which is enough to save five children."

As more and more of her friends started expressing interest in the organization, Sarvesh decided that it was time to create an event that would raise public attention and help her achieve her goals.

On March 28, Miles for Smiles will be hosting a 5-mile run on the school's track from 8-11 a.m. Sarvesh hopes to promote her cause through a fun social event.

"I'm really excited to go to this event because [Sarvesh] is my friend and we want to support her," junior Meghan

Shah said. "It's also good for us because we get to exercise together while also making a difference in the world."

By asking people to invest in every mile that someone runs, the goal is to raise around \$7,000. With each surgery costing around \$250, Sarvesh hopes to provide surgery to 28 children through funds from this event.

Sarvesh said she also hopes to motivate students to participate by asking the school to award an hour of community service for every \$50 raised by the student.

"The event is going to be a great way to bring attention to the cleft condition," Sarvesh said. "It's a fun way to run with your friends as well as raise money for an amazing cause. I hope that every runner can encourage their own friends and family to donate to their running efforts." ♦

WE DAY

Mohnike wins volunteer trip to the Amazon

By Ariel Liu

"And the winner of the trip is..." "Kerry Mohnike from Saratoga High School!" The host pronounced the last name as Mo-NIKE (like the shoe and apparel brand).

The 40 SHS students attending the We Day event at the SAP Center on Feb. 25 lifted their heads in confusion. They had no idea who this Kerry Mo-NIKE figure was, but soon enough they figured out that of the 25,000 participants at We Day — a Free the Children leadership concert that drew participants from all over the Bay Area — the winner of the big prize was none other than assistant principal Kerry Mohnike.

As a result, Mohnike, along with three students, will be participating on a service trip through the Amazon Jungle this summer from June 30 to July 14. Their plane will fly into Quito, Ecuador, and from there, they will travel to a village in the Amazon.

Free the Children is an international charity dedicated to helping villages in third-world countries. It partnered with the EF Learning Tours organization to give educators and students around the nation an opportunity to give back in a

global sense.

"The whole point of Free the Children and giving one of these trips at the We Day event is to raise awareness about their service learning organization and opportunities for students," Mohnike said. "[Having] an adult go with some students encourages them to buy into the process and get connected through the tours to local villages in a variety of different countries."

The first student Mohnike has decided to bring with her to the Amazon is ASB treasurer junior Aakash Thumaty, who was the student who encouraged her to enter the raffle in the first place.

"He's been involved in ASB all these years, so I feel like if we're really going to do something meaningful on the trip and bring that experience back to the school, he would be the best person," Mohnike said.

Mohnike will open the other two spots to any students interested through a form in the office, but warned that students going on the trip should know they "may not be in for hot showers [and shouldn't] be afraid of bugs."

The trip will include five days in a village in the Amazon Jungle, where the students will work on a project involv-



FALCON // HELEN CHEN

The SAP Center was lit up with bright lights and flashing signs during We Day on Feb. 25.

ing "digging, building [and] mixing and pouring cement," Mohnike said.

The airfare, lodging and food during the time in the Amazon are all paid for by the organization. There is also an optional extension of the trip to the Galapagos Islands.

Mohnike, an avid traveler, said she most looks forward to experiencing the culture and flora and fauna of South America, as it is her first time traveling

there. She also wants the students to be inspired and spread the passion for service back at Saratoga High School.

"I have a vision for this school where our service organizations and ASB unite and do something as a school that is more global that everybody can be proud of pitching in to," she said. "Having a focused place to direct our service is a cool way to promote service and school unity." ♦

CLUBS

Common Roots plans to improve its school presence

By Miles Albert & Lauren Louie

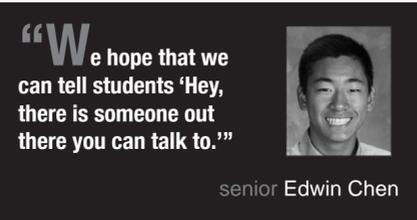
You might have seen multi-colored paper leaves decorating a poster at the top of the Quad steps. Maybe you've been approached by a friendly student who wanted to know about your hobbies. These are both part of an effort from Common Roots to further cultivate a safe and happy student culture.

"Common Roots is trying to get [its] name out there and in doing so, we hope that we can tell students, 'Hey there is someone out there you can talk to, there's a place that you can hang out and it's safe,'" said senior Edwin Chen, who is a member of Common Roots. "I think increasing our campus presence is a huge step for us."

Two major activities Common Roots will focus on for the rest of the year are "weekly missions" and working with the Application Developer's Club to cre-

ate a Common Roots app, which will allow students to communicate with peer counselors and CASSY counselors.

"We are having weekly missions to encourage interaction on campus," said senior Anshul Aggarwal, president of



"We hope that we can tell students 'Hey, there is someone out there you can talk to.'"

senior Edwin Chen

In December, the Giving Tree event was an effort to let all students participate in supporting their fellow students. Club members spent their lunch with pens and paper leaves at the top of the Quad steps.

To counterbalance the stress brought on by finals week, students wrote positive messages of support and taped them to a poster of the Common Roots tree.

"It was amazing to see the tree grow so fast over the week," Aggarwal said. "When students came up during breaks to see what their peers had wrote, I felt that we were having an impact. To me, the tree seemed to connect people. Be it motivational thoughts, a teacher people could trust in or a funny quote, the

ideas people put on the tree were unifying."

Outside of the club, Common Roots is developing an app that makes connecting students and counselors quick and easily accessible. Common Roots mem-

bers will be assigned half-hour shifts to be available to communicate through the app.

The idea behind the app is simple; however, Common Roots might run into some challenges along the way. For example, an anonymous user expressing suicidal intentions may need immediate professional attention.

To overcome this barrier, the creators developed a feature where a CASSY counselor can be added immediately to a chat.

Aggarwal is also exploring the idea of extending the app to Gunn High School. Ideally, the app will be available by the end of the month.

Common Roots is a relatively young club, having only been created three years ago, but organizers say it has remained strong and wants to get stronger.

"We have an event planned in two weeks that will be interesting for students," Aggarwal said. "We're keeping that under wraps for now, [and are] generally just trying to spread good vibes on campus." ♦

CHINESE

Classes plan visit to Asia

By Apoorv Kwatra & Neehar Thumaty

Eleven students from the Chinese language classes will travel to Taiwan and China to experience Asian culture from June 5-19. In total, it will cost just under \$4,000, including living and eating expenses.

The Chinese department has planned similar summer trips in the past, but has never been able to complete it.

The students will attend Xin-Bei High School in Taiwan for five mornings to compare Taiwanese and American education. They will visit iconic landmarks in both China and Taiwan including the National Palace Museum, Tarako National Park and Tiananmen Square.

"I'm going because of the opportunity for another cultural experience since I only know Korean and American culture," said sophomore Alex Kwon, a Chinese 2 student.

After staying in Taiwan for a week, students will travel to China and visit popular tourist attractions, including the Great Wall of China, the Forbidden City and the Terracotta Warriors and Horse Museum, for another seven days.

Both of the school's Chinese teachers, Sara Tseng and Mariam Fan, are looking forward to the trip.

"It is the first time we are doing something like this," Tseng said. "The Spanish department has been to Mexico, and the French to France, and now we get to go to China so I am pretty excited."

Sophomore Chinese student Brennan Wu hopes that the trip will prove a turning point in his learning of the Chinese language, culture and overall lifestyle. ♦

CAMPUS

Vandalism prompts increased vigilance

By Arjun Ramanathan & Deepthi Sampathkumar

Arriving to school on Jan. 22, custodians found the sides of the McAfee Center and multiple poles in the parking lot covered with graffiti, a problem that has grown increasingly common in recent years.

The graffiti on the McAfee Center included various illustrations and scribbles, centered around an SHS alumni's name, a mention of assistant principal Kevin Mount's name and various drug references.

Mount was unperturbed by the mention of his name because it did not defame

him. He said the assailants went to Saratoga High in the recent past or are current attendees at the school.

According to Mount, few staff members or students saw the graffiti because of the quick response of the janitorial staff.

The janitors ensured that the graffiti was removed immediately, a process that involved vigorous scrubbing of the paint followed by a painstaking re-coating of the

defaced wall.

Because graffiti is neither a frequently publicized problem nor an immediately

The vandalism of the McAfee was the most significant incident in the past few years.

threatening issue, incidents have stayed mostly out of the spotlight.

The vandalism of the McAfee was the most significant incident in the past few years.

"I think graffiti is an increasing problem at Saratoga High," said senior Sameer Iyengar. "As a freshman, I don't

remember seeing any kind of graffiti at school, but now I see markings in some of the most random places."

Mount said the fact that the graffiti isn't usually seen is a testament to the diligence of the janitorial staff.

To prevent graffiti, the administration is discussing ideas for a tighter security in the parking lot and McAfee area by adding in more security cameras.

According to Mount, the administration hopes this change will happen in the next few months.

"We are vigilant in reporting [the graffiti] and vigilant in cleaning it up," said Mount. ♦

SPANISH

Students go south to Mexico for field trip

By Saya Sivaram

Thirty-two students embarked on the annual Spanish department trip to Cuernavaca, Mexico, on Feb. 14. The students spent 10 days in a full cultural immersion program.

The trip centered around the Universidad Internacional - UNINTER and its high school program, Bachillerato Internacional UNINTER (BIU). There, the students attended intensive Spanish classes for six hours a day, which included conversation, grammar and interaction.

Two hours of each day were dedicated to interaction with the local high school students, further improving the speaking skills they learned in class.

Through this program, many students formed friendships with the people that they met in Mexico.

"At times it was hard to communicate

because we met students who didn't speak our language," said sophomore Kanika Vora. "They were just so friendly and welcoming that by the end of the 10 days, it didn't matter that we were from different countries because we really cared about each other."



Vora

Many of the students from BIU also accompanied the Saratoga students during their afternoon activities, such as bowling, swimming and excursions to Xochicalco and Taxco, local cities.

One activity that several students found to be the most fun was bowling night, held at a local bowling alley in the Plaza Cuernavaca. The students populated almost the entire alley and several of their Mexican friends came to join in on the fun.

Junior Stephanie Law said the best part of the trip was meeting new people.



Courtesy of NEYTHRA SRINIVASAN

SHS students demonstrate a Bombay in the Bay dance to some students in Mexico.

"[Our] class trips and activities allowed us to talk to people we wouldn't normally talk to," she said. "[The Mexico] trip [overall] made me appreciate all the cultural differences there are between our lifestyle and theirs." ♦

BLOCK >>

continued from pg. 1

schedule, people will be more likely to use them," Lai said.

However, Lai recognizes the inconvenience the new schedule may present. On holidays, for example, rather than missing a short lesson on Mondays, students would miss a much longer lesson because of the block schedule. In addition, in the current proposed schedule lunches are five minutes shorter, perhaps making it more difficult for students who go off campus to make it back to class on time.

Junior Felicia Hung said she is relieved that the change will occur after she graduates.

"I honestly don't like [the change] very much," Hung said. "I think the Monday schedule of having all classes is

a great way to get back on track, and the all-block schedule is just hard to handle."

Responses have varied among teachers, too, with some liking the decisive change but others feeling uneasy about the process. Many, like history teacher Matt Torrens, said that while their voices were heard by the leadership team, their opinions ultimately did not make as much of a difference as some teachers would have liked. Nevertheless, Torrens, who also has two of his own children at the school, welcomes the change.

"The idea of evening out the homework load every night is a good idea," Torrens said. "I like the idea of going to a block schedule. There is a potential for lowering stress."

Still, he believes that other changes would be just as or even more effective at reducing stress. For instance, he sug-

gests that the school reduce the number of AP courses offered to students, thereby preventing students from taking ultra-demanding courses they have neither the time nor energy for.

Others, like government and economics teacher Todd Dwyer, oppose the change, especially the way it came about. Dwyer said the rolling block schedule was not the department chairs' decision, but rather Robinson's decision, and that the decision-making process was far from thorough.

According to Dwyer, the current bell schedule resulted from a 2003 WASC recommendation to consider moving to a block schedule.

In 2004/2005, an alternative bell schedule committee was convened involving all stakeholders, teachers, parents and students. The committee examined 12 different bell sched-

ules from different schools and districts in Santa Clara County, Dwyer said. The decision came about after "thousands of hours of painstaking research, school site visitations and teacher collaborations and workshops."

He said that the current schedule has 237 instructional minutes per week, only three minutes fewer than the traditional schedule, which had all seven periods every day. The rolling block schedule would result in the loss of more than 14 hours of instructional time in the classroom over the year — more than 3.5 weeks of lost instructional time. Dwyer predicts that not only will this change take away from lesson time, but it will also translate to increased homework loads in "content-heavy classes."

Dwyer believes that the teachers should have final say for any changes to the bell schedule — "not administra-

tors, not guidance, not custodial or cafeteria staff, but the professional educators whose job it is to teach the material under that bell schedule."

Despite the criticism of the process and schedule itself, the school will spend the next year preparing for the schedule change, modifying the way certain items are delivered in the curriculum.

Robinson feels that decision was one "that just had to be made." With so many changes in the last few years because of the Common Core state standards, improved collaboration and professional development, Robinson said that the school plans to take its time working out the details of the new schedule.

"It's a move that we [needed] to make because it's good for kids," Robinson said. "I'm very, very happy and extremely supportive of it." ♦

>> togatalks

What do you think of the new schedule?

"It's good because I won't have to do all my homework on Sunday nights."



sophomore Daniel Lee

"Whether it's better or not depends on the classes you take."



freshman Austin Shi

"I think it'll be confusing and inconvenient since the school days will feel longer."



freshman Madison Hung

ORGANIZATIONS

Investment Club joins prestigious competition

BY Trevor Leung & Dorrie Tang

Since early January, the school's Investment Club has been participating in a prestigious high school investment competition hosted by the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business.

When the club participated in the competition last year, it placed in the top 10 in the world. This year, club president senior Mahir Jethanandani said its focus is on "claiming [its] title as No. 1 in the world."

In the competition, each team starts with \$100,000 in virtual money. The goal

is to come up with an investment strategy and trade with various stock options to get the highest return possible in approximately three months.

The final day of trading will be March 23 and finalists are announced on April 3. If the club wins, it will earn \$3,500 of grant money.

To prepare for this competition, the club members read various materials on the topic of investment. For example, according to Jethanandani, they developed fundamentals by reading through the investment encyclopedia "The Intelligent Investor" by

Benjamin Graham. They then read about current micro- and macro-economic principles to understand "what is going on with the market and what to make of it."

In addition, the club members have kept up with current news and discuss the market, formulating presentations and professional-grade analysis for their weekly meetings.



Jethanandani

Even before the competition officially started, the club was preparing by having meetings and writing analysis reports. Currently, members are "actively day trading and profiting off oil plummet-

ing," according to Jethanandani.

Jethanandani said the most difficult part of the competition is the decision-making process, since team members often disagree.

In this year's competition, the team hopes to beat Mohammad Islam, a senior at Stuyvesant High School in New York who claimed to have earned \$72 million in simulated trading stocks during his lunch breaks.

"We know of him purely through news reports, but otherwise we have not met him," Jethanandani said. "It's not a rivalry as of yet, but we would like to challenge him for the [Wharton competition] title." ♦

SCIENCE BOWL

Team faces disappointing loss in Regional competition

BY Oksana Trifonova & Kelly Xiao

The Science Bowl A team competed in the Regional Science Bowl competition on Feb. 7 with expectations of doing well and perhaps winning, having placed second in last year's competition.

As it turned out, the team didn't perform nearly as well as they had hoped.

Though they won against BASIS, Gunn and Leland Team 2 consecutively, they were beaten by Harker in the Round Robin rounds and then by Homestead in the Double Elimination rounds, ending their 2014-15 season early.

This year's team is composed of juniors Brendan Ney, Jacky Lee and Alex Li and seniors Landon Chow and Shivaram Yellamilli.

Li, a co-captain, attributed the team's early elimination to an overly conservative approach to buzzing and poor competition mentality.

The members initially had a 20-point

lead over Harker at the match's halfway marker, but lost by 50 points because of "desperation buzzing," when they began panicking and buzzing in too early to know the answer.

Likewise, they initially had a 60-point lead on Homestead at the halfway point, only to lose by eight points.

"We were really hindered by our fear of what [was] going to happen if we got things wrong while not thinking about the success that would come if we took a chance," Li said.

Although the loss was especially bitter because of the team's success last year, Li and fellow co-captain Chow said they gained experience and knowledge about what to improve upon for next year's competition.

For one, they want less conservatism

while buzzing, and for another, they want more "experts" in some areas.

"I think the team in general faced an issue with having to study a new subject," Li said, "because we didn't really have an expert in Earth Science and Bi-

They gained experience and knowledge about what to improve upon for next year's competition.

ology. I think we placed too much trust in each other, so we just relied on each other without taking action for ourselves."

Both Li and Chow have an extensive background

with Science Bowl. Li has been playing for six years, having started in middle school, and Chow for four years. Li said Science Bowl is most satisfying for those students with a competitive streak.

"If you take other science-based tests such as Bio Olympiad or Physics Olympiad, you [just] take the test [and] get the result like two months later," Li said, "but

with Science Bowl, it's more in-your-face and gives you more of an adrenaline rush; it's just more fun seeing the look on other team's faces when you're able to take the question before them."

Chow, on the other hand, takes a more sociable approach to viewing Science Bowl. He finds that its atmosphere is intellectually thrilling, "especially when we make mistakes that warrant banter, such as the flatness in flatworms and polyploidy in plants."

Though this year's competition did not result in the victory the team hoped for, in Chow's eyes at least, the process of practicing and competing was already a win on its own.

"Though I hoped we [would] improve upon our performance last year," Chow said, "at the end of the day it's just an extracurricular that I found to be particularly enjoyable, one in which I met more students across our county, and one that I will remember fondly in my high school experience." ♦

COMPETITIONS

SHS hosts Olympiad, History Bowl matches

BY Kevin Chow & Maya Prasad

The U.S. History Bowl (USHB) and U.S. Geography Olympiad (USGO) took place at the school on Feb. 27. Directing the event was senior Bruce Lou, History Bowl captain.

The USHB and USGO are both similar to normal History Bowl in that they are buzzer based, with questions composed of hints that start out obscure and then become more obvious as more words are added.

Lou said he decided to host this competition because he had won last year, and the competition needed a Northern California host.

This allowed students from Saratoga High and other schools to put their U.S. history knowledge to the test. Twenty students attended.

Junior Nathan Ney won first place in the competition.

Among the students who competed was sophomore Bryant Chang, a member of the History Bowl team. He said that though the USHB is like History Bowl, the USHB focuses solely on U.S. history.

"While I am quite knowledgeable on subjects like historical figures and wars, I do not know as much about things such as Supreme Court cases and pieces of legislation," said Chang.

As a sophomore, Chang had not yet taken APUSH, which he says would have given him an advantage. However, being a member of History Bowl, he was still quite prepared.

Sophomore George Wang, who is also on the History Bowl team, participated in the USGO.

Wang, who participated in written geography contests during middle school, enjoys geography.

"A lot of people think that geography is just memorizing lists of places, but it's actually learning about the world we live in," Wang said.

Lou was impressed with the performances of Ney and Wang, and said that Wang "blew him away" with his knowledge of geography.

"The questions were pretty difficult and were all well written," said Wang. "I got second place, but I didn't really expect to get that, so I was pretty happy." ♦

COURSES

School to offer non-AP Calculus

BY Arjun Ramanathan & Deepthi Sampathkumar

For years now, students have gone through the numerous levels of math — Geometry, Algebra 2 Honors, Trigonometry/Pre-Calculus — and have had only one main option: to continue with Calculus AB or Calculus BC, both AP courses.

Starting next year, students might be able to continue their math education in Calculus without being subjected to the difficulty of an AP class. For the 2015-2016 academic year, provided that enough students sign up, a Calculus course without the rigor of an AP level class will be offered to students.

College Prep Calculus, the only Saratoga Calculus course without AP credit, will be introduced for students who have finished Trigonometry/Pre-calculus Regular or Honors.

This will not be the first time that CP Calculus has been introduced into the curriculum; it was discontinued years ago because of a lack of signups.

A combination of requests from parents and the results of student surveys conducted by teachers in math classes has prompted the faculty to put out the class for signups next year.

As of now, the faculty members have not yet decided who will teach the class, but teachers feel that it would be ideal for one of the Trigonometry/Pre-calculus Regular teachers to teach.



Math teacher Audrey Warmuth assists her AP Calculus BC class with a problem set.

Trigonometry/Precalculus Honors and AP Computer Science teacher Debra Troxell said that the whole idea came mainly from interested students.

"One student came up to me asking why the school did not offer a non-AP course to continue on with after doing Trigonometry, and she said she and a list of students would have been interested had the course been offered," Troxell said.

Troxell also said that a survey given to students in trigonometry level math classes and above were given about the possibility of a new class from the choices Regular Statistics, Regular Calculus and half Statistics and half Calculus, an overwhelming majority chose the choice of Calculus Regular.

To junior Maya Kumar, the option of a non-AP math class would reduce stress for students.

"Some of the students feel pressured to take as many AP classes as possible, so by offering a regular Calculus class, it helps us lighten the mental load and stress," said Kumar.

The option of a non-AP math class allows students who don't plan on pursuing a STEM path to take a math class their senior year without extreme rigor.

"Math isn't a big focus of mine and something I work on to get done," said junior Luke Salin, who plans to study film in college. "I'm fine with being in a class without AP credits for math since it's not so important to me, so I'm glad it was added for the upcoming year." ♦

ACADEMICS

Engineering program gives students alternative to rigorous AP classes

BY Ashley Chen & Dorrie Tang

Because of the difficulty and rigor of the school's current science and mathematics courses, the school has been working on developing its three-year-old engineering program and making other STEM classes more accessible to students.

Currently, the school offers two engineering classes: Introduction to Engineering Design, taught by Audrey Warmuth, and Principles of Engineering, co-taught by Warmuth and Matt Welander. A new third-year class, Digital Electronics, will be added to the curriculum next year.

According to Warmuth, the school decided to start the program after people noticed that there were no introductory-level computer science classes offered. The discussion then expanded to highlight the need for introductory-level classes in all engineering disciplines, not just computer science.

The goal of the program, Warmuth said, is to encourage students already sure of their passion for engineering and advertise the subject to students "on the fence" about it. The program also supports a third type of intelligence — 3D visualization, a skill essential to engineering that students are "never given any avenue to grow or to practice."

For instance, Warmuth said that because of the commitment required to participate in the school's robotics team, some students may be hesitant to join. With engineering classes incorporated into the school's curriculum, everybody can be exposed to the field.

"At a school like Saratoga, we have so many elite learners [that] so often students will feel like 'I'm not in [AP] Calculus BC, [so] I can't be an engineer,'" Warmuth said. "We want kids

who don't really see themselves as [engineers] to have an opportunity to see 'I really am capable.'"

Warmuth added that the classes hope to promote the study of science, technology, math and engineering (STEM) subjects; if students only see STEM as really difficult math, physics and programming classes with no joy involved, their interest will inevitably wane.

"Part of it is just trying to bring the joy, discovery [and] excitement back into engineering [and] science," Warmuth said, "because if you think about what happened in the science

[and] math department, it's so based upon the standards that teachers have no wiggle room to bring any of these into the classroom."

The program will also help students who want to study engineering in college transition into those high-level courses. At the same time, Warmuth emphasized the classes are hands-on and low-stress, unlike many of the school's STEM AP classes.

"We take kids [through] a series of exercises so they learn [basic material], and then after that it's project-based, and they get to apply what they learned before," Warmuth said. "There really aren't any tests, and kids should be able to do most of what they need to do during class time."

This interactive atmosphere defines the engineering program, Warmuth said. With the addition of a new 3D printer, students can now model a proj-

ect and quickly print it so they can look at it. In Principles of Engineering, a more mechanical engineering-focused class, students learn about levers, gears and different types of energy, culminating in a solar power car project.

This semester, the students are learning the Robot C programming language, which will also lead to a final, open-ended project. The project, Warmuth said, will tie into the Digital

Electronics class, which will look at binary logic, state machines and again, feature a project where students must work to complete a given challenge.

In the future, Warmuth said she hopes the program will be able to open two courses of all

three of the classes, in addition to a fourth-year independent study class where students can define a problem they want to solve and spend the year engineering a solution to it.

For those who are in the program, Warmuth said, their knowledge of Excel, 3D modeling software, basic programming abilities and electronic data collection skills should help students more easily transition into college engineering program.

"Engineering really is a difficult course of study, so is science, it's no joke," Warmuth said. "[But] when the going gets tough, I really hope that kids have a memory of being in a class and saying, 'Gosh, doing robotics was really fun. And I know maybe the math class that I now have to do in college is tough, but I know if I just stick with this, I'm going to get to the robotics types of things.'" ♦

POLICE >>

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the gun — his group members had taped over the orange tip.

"It looked really real," Yen said. Holt said that he thought he had heard before that covering the orange tip was illegal, but this fact did not register at the time.

"It's been a rough past few weeks for me, actually, even though it is second semester senior year," Holt said. "I've been busy with my own senior project, acting in their film, homework, track, so I wasn't really thinking about it."

But he was thinking about it when eight deputies showed up, two of them with assault rifles.

According to Holt, a man walking his dog in the park's parking lot called the police when he saw the gun. It didn't help that Holt was geared up in a helmet and camouflage outfit.

As the deputies approached them, Holt said felt "prepared" for the incident.

His MAP video project last year about Vietnam included several scenes with guns, and he and his group members had talked about how they would react if someone saw them.

"When I saw the [deputy] walking on the bridge saying, 'Hey, can you guys put your hands up?' my first reaction was, 'Ah. Damn it,'" he said.

What he was not prepared for, however, was what the deputies told him next. They said the incident could have escalated into something much more serious if Holt had been holding the gun when they arrived.

By mere chance, the gun had been set by the creek while the group fiddled with flashlights, trying to determine how to film in the dim light.

"If I had been dumb enough to have been holding the gun in an offensive position and pointing it at someone, there's definitely the chance that I could have been killed," Holt said. "But luckily I was not dumb enough to do that."

Still, the consequences were severe. Since Holt is 18, he will be charged as an adult with a misdemeanor for covering the orange tip — though Holt himself was not the one to do so.

He must appear in court on May 1, when a judge will either acquit him or charge him with a misdemeanor and require him to pay a fee.

"Tony isn't even in our group; he was just an actor," Yen said. "So it kind of sucks for him."

When they heard about the incident, Holt's parents had varying reactions: his dad brushed it off while his mom was less amused.

Ironically, deputies also responded the same night to an incident at the Saratoga Library.

Seniors Alex Kim and Jonathan Oh were studying for an AP Language and Composition midterm when a citizen called the police, concerned about their comments regarding "the positive right to kill."

"Deep down inside, I knew I didn't do anything," Oh said. "I mean, I was studying for a Lang midterm, so I [didn't] really have anything to fear."

The two seniors escaped with nothing more than a lecture from a deputy.

Meanwhile, Holt said he felt an "adrenaline high" as part of his own encounter with the police.

Holt said he felt that the deputies would have been called even if the orange tip was not covered.

He referenced an incident two years ago, when a different group of MAP students had a run-in with the police when they, too, used Airsoft guns for their project.

Both times the police cited the students for filming without a permit.

"Personally I've learned that it's probably a good idea to either not use guns, let the authorities know and get a film permit and do all that, go through all that," Holt said, "or face the consequences." ♦

COLLABORATION

RMS teachers meet at SHS to discuss classes

BY Caitlin Ju & Dorrie Tang

Students struggled to keep their eyes open during fourth period on March 4 without the extra hour of sleep that they usually get before school on Wednesdays, although looking forward to the early 1:35 p.m. ending.

That day, all the teachers, counselors and administrators from both SHS and Redwood Middle School gathered together for an after school collaboration from 1:40 to 3:10 p.m. in the Saratoga High library and in other rooms. The modified schedule allowed SHS teachers to match the middle school schedule, since the middle school staff has collaboration time every Wednesday after school.



Robinson

At the collaboration event, teachers were able to discuss items applicable to the schools.

In addition, they talked as a whole about significant topics for each department.

"[It was] an opportunity to bring the Redwood teachers and our teachers together to talk about topics such as Common Core state standards, curriculum and transition from middle to high school," SHS principal Paul Robinson said.

According to Robinson, it has been a long time since faculty from the two

schools have gotten together to collaborate.

"I'm not sure when it was done before, but Redwood is our feeder school and the more we work together the better it is for our students," Robinson said.

The event was Robinson's first attempt to collaborate with a feeder school district.

This is because he only had previous experience in unified school districts.

"I speak with Kelly Green, the principal of Redwood, all the time, but real good work happens when teachers talk with teachers," Robinson said.

According to Robinson, the teachers had considered the possibility of a collaboration, but it was not plausible until Redwood changed its schedule

to have time to collaborate on Wednesdays.

After the schools discussed dates and were able to agree upon the day, they scheduled the collaboration.

Although Robinson is unsure whether collaborations will continue in the future, he hopes the event will benefit both schools.

"This time together may raise more questions at first, but the more we do it, [the more] we can find answers that make a difference for students," Robinson said. "We both are excited about the possibilities." ♦

SPEECH AND DEBATE

4 students will proceed to state competition

BY Maya Prasad & Amulya Vadlakonda

As the end of the speech and debate season nears, freshman Varun Viswanath and seniors Supriya Khandekar, Sudeep Raj and Michael Ong qualified at the state qualifications tournament at Leland High School on March 2. No Saratoga High competitor qualified at the tournament on March 6 at Westmont High School.

Both Vishwanath and Khandekar placed high at the tournament, winning second and third in Oratorical Interpretation, respectively. Khandekar is also an alternate in Original Oratory, along with sophomore Mitali Shanbhag. Junior Jui Malwankar is the alternate in International Extemporaneous Speaking and Raj and Ong qualified in Parliamentary Debate.

All the qualifiers will attend the state tournament at Vista Murietta High School in Murrieta, California, from April 17-19.

"We didn't break in our sophomore or junior year, so it's nice that we got a chance to break to states," said Raj. "It means a lot because it allows us to try and make parliamentary a prominent

event for the team."

Due to the prestige and difficulty of this tournament, each participant worked hard to perfect their event. As an experienced orator who has participated in states for four consecutive years, Khandekar used the same techniques that have led her to victory in her previous years.

"I didn't want to overdo practicing because I was afraid that I would go into an autopilot mode, and just blindly say my speech without thinking," said Khandekar.

Out of the approximately 30 students who attend state qualification, only 14 competitors break through to semi-finals per speech event.

For debate events, each debater must win at least four out of five preliminary rounds. If they win all five, they qualify automatically. If they win four, they must win two more to qualify.

The students hope to compete at the National qualification tournament from March 20-22 at Bellarmine College Preparatory School, and at the national tournament on June 14-19 in Dallas. The remainder of the team will compete in local tournaments like the Santa Clara University Philaletic Invitational. ♦

Due to the prestige and difficulty of this tournament, each student worked hard to perfect his or her event.

FASHION >>

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ers this year, seniors Uma Kumar, Emily Penuen, Megan Marshall, Jennifer McAfee and Jessica Uong and junior Sabrina Clark, wanted to give to a smaller charity than they had in previous years to ensure that their donation would make a bigger difference.

"We really wanted to focus on giving back to military members and veterans who have sacrificed so much for our country," Penuen said. "We believe that the money we raised will go to a good cause in supporting wounded military members."

The entire show reflected the military theme, with models dressed in camouflaged Benefit Fashion Show shirts and a Navy Flag hanging in the room outside

the Large Gym.

Stores including Banana Republic, Tuxedo Wearhouse and Kitsch Couture sponsored the show by providing clothes for the models to wear. Additionally, other stores provided small items for the silent auction gift baskets. The show also had a Bollywood theme for the first time this year, where parents and community members provided their old clothes for the models.

"Stores let students wear their clothes in exchange for advertising," Penuen said. "Parents were also really nice to let Bollywood models wear their old clothes during the show because without them, the theme wouldn't have been able to happen."

The show starred around 150 student models, and the event was coordinated by the commissioners and activities director Rebeca Marshburn.

Students were divided into ten

groups: Toga Wear, Outdoor, Rock 'n' Roll, Beach, Girls' Night Out, Boho, Broomance, First Date, Bollywood and Prom. Each group was led by theme heads, who helped the commissioners organize the models. The theme students were put into depended on a combination of grade level, previous experience with the fashion show and personal preference.

"I have been in Benefit all three years since I was a freshman and my favorite part of Benefit this year was the actual performance and just hanging out backstage with the girls who were in it," said junior Erin Norris, who was one of the theme heads for Boho.

Planning for the show began in February when the heads of each theme and the commissioners asked different stores to provide clothes to support the show. Once stores agreed, models were instructed to go get fitted for the clothes

on specified dates.

"We started prepping for the show as soon as we knew who was in our group," Norris said. "We had to make sure our group members knew where to go for fittings and make sure that they were matching the theme."

Ticket costs ranged from \$10 for general admission with ASB, to \$35 for front row VIP seating with complimentary snacks and refreshments. A silent auction held after the show with prizes including gift baskets, a three-month membership to the Bay Club for a family of four and an iPad.

The show gave students a chance to be a model and show off clothes from their favorite store or fashion style.

"Walking the ramp was my favorite part of the show, because this is probably my only time and opportunity to be and act like a model," junior Kimberly Chen said. ♦



BY Rachel Hull & Michelle Leung

2014 alumna Jennie Werner shouted out a combination for bingo — one number after another, uttered in rapid succession. Two of her friends stood by her side, banging their hands on the table.

She was in a casino, but it wasn't in Las Vegas. It was at SHS, dressed up by the dozens of parents involved in creating a great final Grad Night for the Class of 2014.

Grad Night is an extravagant affair that concludes a memorable four years for many seniors. It requires hundreds of hours on the part of Grad Night committee parents — but also hundreds of dollars on the part of students.

At a maximum price of \$235, Saratoga's bids are much more expensive than the maximum of \$170 at Monta Vista and \$175 at both Los Gatos and Lynbrook. For its part, Cupertino High has a sweet deal: \$80 as a starting price. And even Homestead, with a final bid price of \$200, is cheaper.

So why are SHS's bids so pricey? Grad Night co-chair Kristin Gragnola suggested that since schools larger than SHS have more students, their individual bid prices aren't so high. And this certainly holds true for schools like Monta Vista and Homestead, whose senior classes contain 500 to 700 students, as opposed to Saratoga's 356.

But some local schools with senior classes closer in size to that of SHS have cheaper bids. If every senior attended Grad Night for the minimum bid price, Lynbrook's committee would receive about \$46,000, and Cupertino's, just over \$37,000.

SHS, on the other hand, expects to earn and spend about \$64,000 — almost

twice as much as Cupertino.

Gragnola said that the expenses breakdown for SHS is as follows: activities for \$44,000; decorations and electrical for \$6,000; food for \$6,000; bids and giveaways for \$3,000; and fencing, security, memory boards, permits and miscellaneous for \$5,000.

Perhaps the difference, then, lies not in the number of students, but in the quality of the Grad Nights. In years past, SHS's committee has rented a giant slide, a zip line and a carnival rides. According to Gragnola, this year's night will boast a casino, karaoke and DJ, as well as "lots of surprises."

Other schools' Grad Night activities, however, seem comparable to Saratoga's. Cupertino, for instance, offers — among other things — Segways, miniature golf, a casino, games, henna tattoo and caricature artists, a photo booth, a fire pit with s'mores and unlimited food and drinks. And this is all at a maximum of \$150 per student.

Werner said that Grad Night is ultimately not about the activities; it is about reconnecting with one's peers.

"You're not spending the last moments at SHS with just your current closest friends, but with everyone who made your high school experience what it was, for better or for worse," she said.

Of the 25 to 30 students every year who decide not to attend Grad Night,

expense is a major factor, however. Senior Minda Lee is one of those students who decided not to attend Grad Night because of the steep price.

"It's 200 bucks to be stuck at school for how many hours? Like seven?" Lee said.

Senior Anna Sabel said that the school's Grad Nights need not be so "over the top."

"I think graduation ceremonies, especially the Grad Night celebration, should be — not to be super cheesy — but it should really be celebrating as a class," Sabel said. "That's what it's supposed to

be for. So do we really need all this special fancy stuff that we have?"

Gragnola said that Grad Night is meant to break even — and any excess money is saved for future reunions. She also said that this year's bids are no more expensive than those from previous years dating back to at least 2008.

Still, the Grad Night committee has revenue of \$64,000, a disproportionately high number for any high school celebration. It may be worthwhile to look into solutions to lessen Grad Night expenses.

For example, the committee could hire less expensive vendors, the kind other schools seem to have found.

The committee could also remove some of the less popular yet more expensive Grad Night activities such as car-

nival rides. Or it could take a cue from Homestead by holding fundraisers and selling items such as wreaths, cookie dough and pies to lower bid prices further — even though the income might not be significant, every little bit helps.

Of course, the Grad Night committee is a commendable group of parents who work to keep costs to a minimum. In the past, members have spent countless hours and, in some cases, even personal funds to supplement the expenses of Grad Night activities. The committee also reuses old decorations and negotiates prices with vendors, while providing scholarships to students who need financial assistance.

Sabel commended these efforts but wondered if the need for scholarships hints at a larger problem.

"Should we have to get to the point where we have to subsidize things because it's so expensive that people can't pay to participate in Grad Night?" she asked.

Ultimately, Grad Night is meant to be a celebration of the past four years and a place where students can celebrate in a safe, inclusive environment. Werner said that she would have gone to Grad Night "no matter the price."

"I think it didn't really matter how much was spent on Grad Night," Werner said. "My favorite part was just being in the SHS quad one last time with everyone I had spent the last four years with."

This sentiment holds true for roughly 330 seniors who are expected to attend this year.

By bringing bid prices down to the \$150 range, perhaps the school's Grad Night could attract more students and weigh less heavily on the wallets of parents and seniors alike. ♦

Robotics wins first Innovation in Control Award

BY Michelle Leung

The robotics team buzzed through the night between the cafeteria and the robotics room, adding last-minute light

While we may lack experience, the amount of dedication the team has is just beyond belief.

junior Naveed Riaziat

designs to their robot. It was two days before the deadline of their first competition: the Central Valley Regional in Madera from March 5 to 8, where the SHS robotics team ranked 13 at the competition and brought home their first ever technical award, the Innovation in Control Award.

According to club president junior Naveed Riaziat, the competition started with "load in" on Thursday, when the

robotics team arrived, and proceeded to practice matches on Friday, qualification matches on Saturday morning and elimination rounds on Sunday.

"[Because this was an] earlier competition, it [was] more of a learning experience for us," Riaziat said. "We want[ed] to see how the robot does, and figure out what changes we want to make for the next competition."

According to Riaziat, this competition was also theoretically easier than the next one, Silicon Valley Regionals, which will be considerably more challenging because "people have had more time to make their robots bet-

ter."

Because robotics requires a huge time commitment, team members often "disappear" during build season because they spend so much time in the robotics room. Last year, said Riaziat, former club president Class of 2014 graduate Mihir Iyer began posting pictures updating his friends about what robotics was doing every five hours he spent building.

"He started it, and [junior] Kabir [Manghani] and I thought it was a cool idea," Riaziat said. "This year I'm hoping to post updates of what's going on, [to give] people an insight into what's happening in robotics. It's less of like a concrete thing and shows the fun side of it, and I don't just disappear off the face of the earth."

In fact, after staying until 4:30 a.m. on the day before their deadline, the robotics team returned less than four hours later and stayed until midnight the next day to work on their robot, named

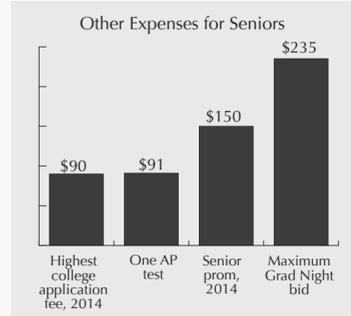
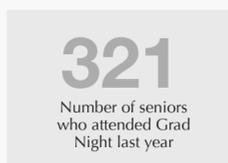
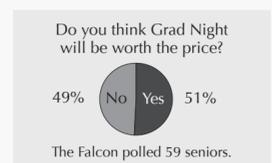
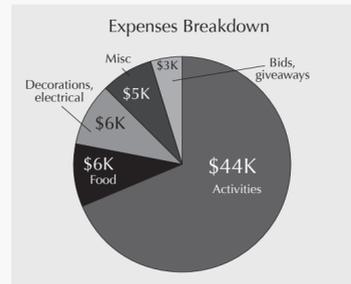
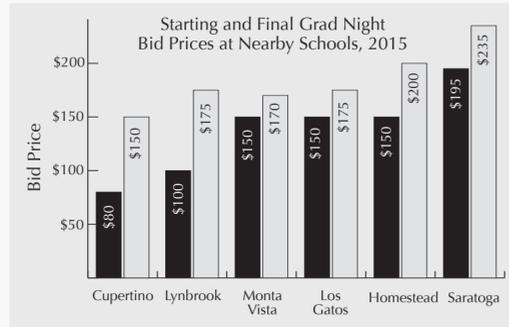
Nessie after the Loch Ness monster. At one point, head of outreach sophomore Nicole Lin said, a team member left the keys to the robotics room inside the room, locking them all out.

"We had to call [band director Jonathan Pwu] to come back on campus [at 11 p.m.] and open the room for us, which was really awesome of him," Lin said. "Thanks Mr. Pwu!"

As a token of their gratitude, the team gave him the first cupcake from their traditional cupcake party afterwards.

Riaziat forees a solid season for the robotics team.

"While we may lack experience, the amount of enthusiasm and dedication the team has is just beyond belief," Riaziat said. "Even if you don't have a certain amount of skill, just spending that amount of time in the room and [having] that much passion for robotics basically guarantees that you'll do something good." ♦



Uber critics prove themselves foolish

By Airthath Kosireddy

Progressives often love to claim that they are fighting to prevent big businesses from running (and thereby ruining) our lives. But this isn't the first time that they are, in fact, doing the opposite.

Uber, a San Francisco-based transport company, came under fire in 2014 for not following certain regulations that "protect" the consumers, despite the fact that it provides superior service. Uber works differently than traditional taxi services by allowing consumers to use an app to request a ride. Uber drivers do not need a permit, the way taxi drivers do, in order to serve customers, and work as independent contractors instead. This is where the controversy arises.

To make sure drivers provide good service, Uber looks at user feedback and ratings. In Nevada, taxi drivers have been swindling tourists by taking the wrong way from the Las Vegas airport to the Vegas Strip. The authorities have tried to combat this for years by setting up roadside checkpoints.

By contrast, Uber managed to solve this issue by using GPS tracking to ensure the fastest possible route. This way, the company can see if drivers are taking their passengers the correct route. Uber could also reduce the the inci-

dences of drunk driving accidents. If someone does not have a designated driver to get home after a night at the bar, he can simply use his phone to get a ride that will arrive quicker and more cheaply than a taxi cab.

Some complain that it will take away taxi drivers' job and put taxi companies out of business. If this is the case, then perhaps these companies should find ways to compete with Uber in the marketplace.

If consumers still dislike Uber despite all the advantages, they can simply refuse to use the service instead of dictating others' lives. Rather than legislating Uber, progressives should simply use the traditional services that they do support.

It's difficult to see why people would oppose this company. The money that is saved from cheaper service will go to the creation of companies, which means jobs, or will pay someone's wage. Also, Uber is used by ordinary people, and they use it because it benefits them.

The situation is another classic case of big business using the government to bully and eliminate competition.

Providing a service that consumers use and enjoy is not greedy; if anything, using the government to eliminate competition and forcing people to buy an inferior service is greedy. ♦

The situation is another classic case of big business using the government to bully and eliminate competition.

Collaboration between SHS and RMS necessary

By Deepthi Sampathkumar & Summer Smith

We won't lie — coming to SHS from Redwood Middle School was a big jump for us. Everything was new — the social scene, the seemingly enormous campus, the longer classes. But looking back, the main disparities between middle school and high school had to do with the homework load and fast-paced curriculum.

At Redwood we could finish homework before dinner easily and enjoy the rest of the night. Now, homework sometimes takes several hours, with students working until the wee hours of the morning, with few breaks for eating and procrastinating. It was an enormous change that many of us were not fully expecting.

Students at Redwood are monitored closely by teachers and given strict timelines for projects. In contrast, the high school encourages a more independent learning style, which gives students the huge responsibility of managing the entirety of their homework and ongoing projects by themselves.

Because of this, freshman year can come as a shock to some incoming students. The collaboration between SHS and Redwood that took place March 4 aimed to address how the middle school can better prepare students for high school.

One possible solution could be providing a more rigorous curriculum for eighth grades; although this would not

be popular among the middle schoolers, it would provide them with more benefit in the long run.

In addition to helping prepare middle school students for high school, the two schools should collaborate on classroom content especially in math and language courses, which depend on sequential knowledge.

Most Redwood students who attend SHS have taken classes at RMS, such as Algebra 1 or Spanish that are prerequisites for classes in high school. However, students who start Spanish in middle school may not be fully prepared to take the next corresponding class in high school.

Any jump from a middle school math class to a high school one is a shock, especially if freshmen go straight into an honors class such as Geometry Enriched or Algebra 2 Honors.

Besides the academic gap between the schools, there remains a huge difference in atmosphere. RMS teachers are more laid-back and easygoing, sometimes putting on movies in class and assigning much less homework as a general rule. Many high school teachers, by contrast, assign massive loads of homework and push students toward high levels of mastery with arduous work.

In order to make freshman year transition easier, more collaboration between Saratoga and Redwood teachers is essential — an hour less sleep once or twice a year for high school students is a small price to pay. ♦

New block schedule a positive change

>> candidcaricatures

After years of discussion about a possible switch to a full block schedule, the school made the decision to switch to the format in the 2016-2017.

The schedule would repeat every two weeks; for example, if Day A is periods 1, 2, 3 and 4; and Day B is periods 5, 6, 7 and 8, then a rolling block schedule for the first week would be A, B, A, B and A. The second week would be B, A, B, A and B. Then, the schedule would reset.

Although these changes may seem complicated and unnecessary at first, they provide obvious benefits for both students and teachers. Under the full block schedule, students will have 90-minute classes every day, ensuring productivity and depth in each class.

Changes will also likely include an extra period and tutorial. This would give the guidance department more flexibility in scheduling, and prevent athletes from missing class for games.

Best of all, the new schedule resolves the inefficiency of the current Monday agenda. After announcements, most classes only have 30 minutes or less left of content before the bell rings. Half an hour is not enough time to give a complete lecture or teach a new topic, leaving students with only a partial understanding. Mondays are also notoriously bad for testing with so little



time on the clock.

In addition, the stress placed on students to finish homework for each class for Monday will be alleviated by the implementation of the full block schedule. Instead, homework will be due in only half of the classes, giving students with busy weekends an extra day for the rest of their homework.

Opponents of the full block schedule worry that the extra period

will motivate students to take an eighth class. However, if the school enforces its vow to ban students from using the extra period, this should not be an issue.

Additionally, some teachers may argue that they will not be able to have enough time to teach their students with only two meetings every other week. Nevertheless, since the other weeks will consist of three classes per week, it will average 2.5 classes per week, around what the schedule allows for now. The extra tutorial added to the new schedule will also allow for more individual help, if needed.

Although there are some uncertainties and risks with the new schedule, the benefits outweigh the drawbacks, making for a welcome change. ♦

Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

Editors-in-Chief Megana Iyer, Amy Lin

Opinion Editor Bruce Lou

Reporters Apoorv Kwatra, Neehar Thumaty

The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 19-15 in support of the editorial.



Vaccinations should be required for children

By Fiona Sequeira & Saya Sivaram

Disneyland: the happiest place on earth. That is, until it becomes the source of a measles outbreak.

The outbreak prompted Sens. Richard Pan and Ben Allen to present a bill to California legislature making it more difficult for parents to opt out of vaccinating their children.

Vaccinations should no longer be a personal choice, but a government requirement. They are a civic duty that involves the health and strength of our entire nation.

It's terrifying to witness unvaccinated elementary schoolers wading into the ranks of young schoolchildren, endangering the health and safety of their peers. It's widely accepted that young children do not have the best hygiene in the world. The immunity that they receive from their vaccinations is one of the few forces keeping most students from suffering severe illnesses like the flu and MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant staphylococcus aureus).

While many anti-vax parents harbor misconceptions about the effects of vaccines, they seem to disregard their responsibility not only to their child but to the children of others whom their ideas are endangering. With the recent outbreak of measles in Southern California, it has become all the more pertinent to enforce nationwide vaccination requirements on vaccinations to students throughout the country.

Since the first case in December, California has confirmed 104 cases and, according to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the disease

has spread into 27 other states, resulting in a total of 644 cases in the U.S.

For a while, it was conceivable to believe a connection existed between vaccines and autism, a conception perpetuated by a 1998 article in British medical journal The Lancet. That report was later proven false by at least 13 studies, and all claims were retracted.

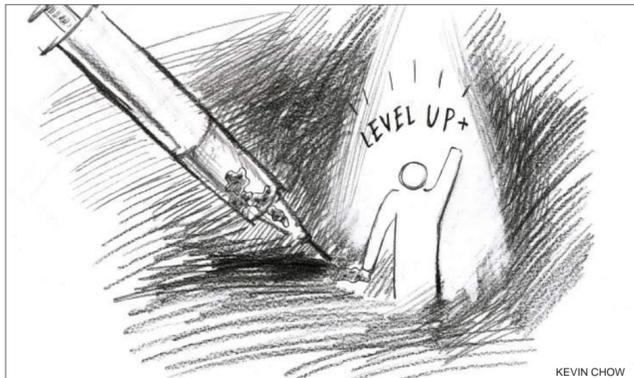
Somehow, despite these revelations, the belief in the dangers of vaccines has caused parents all over the country to utilize "personal belief exemptions" to avoid vaccinating their children. This has led to an alarming 9 percent non-vaccination rate for measles in the U.S., lower than that of Bangladesh and Somalia.

While some countries are fighting governmental and terrorist restrictions on their health care, affluent cities in the United States, especially on the West Coast, are willingly sacrificing the general well-being of their population by avoiding vaccines due to irrational suspicion about their malignant effects.

Since the outbreak of measles, a flow-chart has been circulating social media, detailing the irrationality of the parents who refuse vaccinations. One of the most applicable paths discusses the sources from which these rumors stem. Celebrities and the mass media seem to be the largest advocates for restricting vaccinations. And of course, whatever a celebrity says has to be true.

Actress Jenny McCarthy is one of the biggest anti-vaccine proponents, and she was recently quoted saying, "Yes, a wave of 12 children with measles in San Diego is a troubling thing. But, there are more than 20,000 children in San Diego with autism! 20,000 vs. 12?" Well, judging by the fact that there is

>> candidcaricatures



no link between vaccines and autism, it's not unreasonable to say that both are pretty troubling numbers.

Another justification that many anti-vaccination parents use is that of herd immunity. This theory describes the effects of large scale immunization and the reduced rate of exposure that results from it. Parents assume that if all other kids are immunized, then their kid should be able to evade vaccinations and still only have a minimum amount of exposure.

This flawed logic actually further endangers the herd, as 92 to 94 percent of the population needs to be vaccinated for measles in order to preserve the health of the general populous.

As more and more people stop getting vaccines, this percentage decreases, rendering herd immunity useless. In Colorado, there is only an 81.7 percent rate of immunization, according to the CDC. One of the major areas of concern is schools where there are several ways for students to evade vaccines through

methods such as "personal belief exemptions." All students attending a public school should be required to receive proper immunization.

The state of Washington has already taken steps in the right direction, with Gov. Jay Inslee working to eradicate non-medical exemptions in public schools. While some parents may consider this legislation stringent or even radical, it's simply responsible.

The bottom line is that the measles outbreak in California was avoidable, and easily so. With this experience under our belts, it is only logical that the country takes immediate steps to pass preventative legislature requiring vaccines. These laws have the opportunity to save lives, prevent widespread illness and promote public health by making our schools safer.

Besides, if we allow unfounded medical myths to dictate our health system, we would still be bleeding people to ward off the evil spirits that made them sick. ♦

Time management classes beneficial for AP students

By Kelly Xiao

When the phrase "junior year" is uttered, the first image that pops into many students' heads is that of a student scribbling at 2 a.m., powered only by caffeine and a burning desire to get into college. As a result, during course selections, counselors and teachers alike emphasize taking fewer APs to spare students' health.

One way to curb the "student-dies-then cries-over-APs" issue is to offer time management lessons or tutorial sessions to increase students' ability to handle rigorous course loads.

In an ideal world, students would faithfully follow the administration's advice to lighten the course load side, but the truth is that most students will continue to cram as many APs as they think is needed for college. And for their part, elite colleges will continue to select students who are taking AP-filled schedules over ones that have an easier course load.

Time management lesson plans could do wonders if they were offered to freshmen. By their junior and senior years, they would at least have better habits with study discipline and scheduling. It is far better to prepare for hard times early on than during the actual onset of hardship. Junior year is a highly inconvenient time to realize that one's old cramming and procrastination methods don't work.

The skills these underclassmen would learn would last far beyond their high school years. While few students will remember the obscure African countries they studied in World Geography, having basic time management skills will come in handy in college, in the workplace and in just about every aspect of life.

If we can offer an elective course as

specialized as guitar or American Sign Language, then we can well afford to give students some education on time management that would actually be applicable to school work itself — something every student struggles with on a daily basis.

In order to maximize such an offering's impact, the school should either incorporate more time management lessons into one of the mandatory freshman classes or make it a bigger part of Falcon Focus.

The course could consist of different ways to study, take tests or even organize one's binders. It would also give students practice in creating daily schedules, in preparation for busier times when obligations are too numerous to keep track of. The whole goal would be to teach students to work as efficiently as possible.

With better time management, students will be able to better handle their AP classes. ♦

>> #bigidea

Time Management Classes

Why do we need to add a time management class to our curriculum

Students tend to cram as many APs as they think is needed for college which creates schedules overloaded with arduous classes. Time management class can either prevent or help this.

Who would take the class

This would be a mandatory class for underclassmen, like driver's ed and health.

How would this benefit the students

Having basic time management skills will come in handy in college, in the workplace and in just about every aspect of life.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: FULL BLOCK SCHEDULE

Dear Editors,

The modified block schedule SHS is currently on resulted from a 2003 WASC recommendation that Saratoga High investigate an alternative bell schedule in order to try and reduce student stress.

In 2004, an alternative bell schedule committee was convened, made up of students, parents and teachers. That committee pored over 12 different bell schedules from schools like Gunn, Paly, Monta Vista, Homestead, Westmont, Lynbrook, St. Francis and Valley Christian. Then there were school site visitations by the committee to Monta Vista, Lynbrook, Homestead and Westmont.

The rolling block (A/B schedule) was not considered an option due to the excessive loss of contact days as well as the loss of instructional time in the classroom. Foreign language teachers would only meet with their students 10 times per month instead of 12, and only have their students two-days-per-week, twice-a-month. The rolling block would shave more than 14 hours of classroom instruction over the course of the year — 3.58 weeks of lost instruction per class.

SHS teachers voted for the schedule we have now in 2005. That vote required a 2/3 supermajority in order to approve the schedule. It passed with 69 percent of the vote. Administrators did not vote; guidance did not vote; custodial staff did not vote; food service workers did not vote. In 2011-2012, without any explanation from the administration other than they wanted both Los Gatos and Saratoga High to be on the same schedule, an attempt was made to move SHS to the LG rolling block schedule. That schedule change failed to get the 2/3 super-majority votes by SHS teachers. That attempt at a schedule change was not an organic, bottom-up, teacher-led initiative, but a top-down,

inorganic attempt to align the SHS and LG bell schedules. It was a very divisive, toxic and corrosive attempt that divided teachers on campus, rather than bringing them together.

Incredibly, the very next year, another attempt was made by the incoming principal to again align both schools on the rolling block. But in that 2012-2013 vote, the goal posts were moved by the principal from a 2/3 majority to a simple majority vote. What is more, the principal allowed administrators, guidance, secretaries, custodial staff and food service workers to also participate in the vote. While our classified staff and guidance counselors are just as professional and integral to the success of our school as anyone else, they do not have to teach the content heavy courses in the classroom that teachers do.

Despite the attempts to rig the vote, the rolling block failed to even gain a simple majority approval. That vote was an even more caustic attempt than the vote the previous year, and the principal told the faculty in an April 8, 2013 e-mail that he was "happy to announce that this will bring to a close ALL bell schedule discussions, and barring something catastrophic, apocalyptic, and/or completely earth shattering, we will not be approaching a bell schedule discussion again."

Now, less than two years after that e-mail was sent, the schedule is simply being mandated, without any vote, of any kind, against the will and collective wisdom of a staff of professional educators. This is a radical departure from past professional practice at Saratoga High School. SHS has a long tradition of mutual trust between teachers and administrators. That trust has been shattered. ♦

—Todd Dwyer, Gov and Econ Teacher

Oklahoma's American History plan ludicrous

BY Apoorv Kwatra & Fiona Sequeira

Sick of APUSH? Move to Oklahoma. On Feb. 16, a legislative committee in Oklahoma approved a bill that bans the teaching of Advanced Placement United States History (APUSH) in the state.

The bill's author, Republican Rep. Dan Fisher, asserted that the new APUSH framework emphasizes "what is bad about America," and does not stress American exceptionalism, the idea that the United States is somehow different and therefore better than other nations.

Fisher hopes to replace the AP curriculum with a state-manufactured alternative at an estimated cost of \$3.8 million. The replacement framework would cover America's founding principles of constitutional government instead of "marginalized people." Speeches by Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush would be an integral part of the proposed course. Does anybody else sense a political slant here?

As ludicrous as the bill is, Oklahoma is not alone. Legislatures in Georgia, Texas, South Carolina, North Carolina and Colorado, spurred on by the Republican National Committee (RNC), say that the curriculum focuses too heavily on U.S. "blemishes."

Fortunately, Fisher retracted the original bill and proposed a thorough review of the current course instead. However, the fact that Fisher and other states are even considering this action is troubling.

Fisher's claims are false. AP and Common Core standards allow teachers and schools discretion in what and how they teach, outlining broad critical-thinking goals rather than a concrete syllabus, textbook or specific lesson plans. If an APUSH teacher wants to highlight the heroism of our Founding Fathers, he or she can by all means do so.

Additionally, Fisher's outrageous allegations of revisionist history are not grounded in sound evidence. According to College Board President David Coleman, the Founding Fathers and their ideas are present throughout the APUSH exam. Every question of the test requires students to demonstrate an understanding of America's important historical documents and leaders.

Furthermore, it is entirely possible to teach American history in its entirety — the good and the bad — without fear of students abandoning their patriotism.

America is indeed a nation of lofty ideals, ideals we have failed to meet as a result of their height and our own humanity.

These failures have led to numerous shameful events, but instead of denying their existence, we can use them as learning experiences for the future.

Of course, history is written by the winners, and for most of American his-

tory, the winners have been heterosexual white Anglo-Saxon Protestant males. Women and minority groups have undoubtedly been oppressed, but in studying all of the country's groups, we are celebrating what makes our country special: the ongoing struggle for achieving equality, freedom and democracy for all.

To glorify America's past with no reference to the negative is a lie. If we force a sugar-coated version of American history down pupils' throats, manipulating the historical narrative to serve a political agenda, then what makes our educational system different than that of a totalitarian regime?

If we institute the curriculum Fisher suggests, we would be no better than the

Japanese in their history textbooks, enshrouding their unethical World War II activities in smoke and mirrors. If we perpetuate the myth that the U.S. is unblemished in world politics, then we are perpetuating the discrimination, racism and intolerance that have plagued our nation.

Students deserve the opportunity to learn the raw facts and then make interpretations for themselves. American history is anything but crisp and clean. The Three-Fifths Compromise, slavery, Jim

Crow laws, genocide of Native Americans, lack of women's suffrage until 1920, Operation Ajax and the Banana Wars are just some of the immoral pieces of our history.

The reality of those facts is frankly embarrassing, but instead of erasing the truth, we should use it as inspiration to ensure that similar events will never occur again. We must be willing to teach both our failures and our successes to paint a comprehensive picture of American history — a history not so much written by the chest-thumping winners but instead guided by a solemn commitment to the truth.

Even our own APUSH program at SHS is taught in a way that refers to the U.S. as "us" and other countries as "them," thus demonizing them. Despite Fisher's claims, learning about the "marginalized peoples" and "bad" events has not made APUSH students anti-American.

On the contrary, it has helped them hone a stronger sense of the ideals behind this nation and develop a firmer conviction that they support America's ideals. Despite or even because of the U.S.'s failures past and present, students feel compelled to play a role in bringing American ideals to fruition in the future.

Filtering our history in favor of preaching "exceptionalism" in the classroom is not only ignorant, it's dangerous. Instead of rewriting history, we should promote a comprehensive understanding of our past to write a better future. ♦

We must teach both our failures and successes to paint a comprehensive picture of American

Lower prices would help students with AP costs

BY Devin Zhao

This year, the price of taking an AP exam has risen to a whopping \$91. While the price increase is won't bankrupt anyone by itself, it is disproportionately high compared to the benefits the score provides.

Back when College Board took over the AP program in 1955, it was clear that APs were reserved for only the academically elite, so there is some reason for prices to be high since fewer people were taking them.

In 2015, it's commonplace for an upperclassman (and ambitious underclassmen) to take several AP tests a year and pay hundreds for the privilege. College Board has essentially turned two weeks of testing in May into a cash cow, raking in millions

Critics might argue that AP tests are worth the price. By scoring a 4 or 5 on an exam, students can bypass first-year courses in colleges, saving them hun-

dreds or thousands of dollars. On the other hand, many schools, including some top-tier colleges, do not accept these scores and make students retake the courses.

If AP tests have such a minimal effect on students' future education, why take the test?

Not taking it would save standardized testing expenses on a per-student basis, and students would still receive a college-level education for close to nothing.

If AP exam registration were cheaper, students would have a greater incentive to take them, and their scores would show that the teachers prepared students well on a college-level basis. As a result, colleges might be more likely to accept high-

school level classes for genuine college credit.

Now that taking AP exams has become so common, especially in academically elite schools, College Board can do a lot to alleviate students' financial stress.

While College Board does offer financial discounts for lower-income families on AP exam registration, all exam registrants could do with a price reduction. College Board has several ways to make money from college-going students, so losing potential profit in one method won't hurt the organization much.

In fact, College Board may reap more profits since students wouldn't be as scared of prices when registering for exams, and may feel more comfortable tak-

ing multiple exams. As an incentive for multiple test registration, College Board could offer group discounts, where registrars would pay a smaller fraction of registration costs for each successive exam registered for.

In fact, College Board could offer various reductions and benefits for different levels of median household incomes. As it currently stands, many families do not qualify for low-income discounts but struggle to pay for exam costs. Such benefits could include various amounts of discounts per AP test and a variable number of sending test scores for free. With a tiering benefits system, students could register for a price reasonable to what their family can afford and College Board can still make a reasonable amount of revenue every year.

More reductions and discounts for AP exam registration can keep students taking these tests and showing the results of their growth without having to fork out so much money. ♦

College Board has essentially turned two weeks of testing in May into a cash cow, raking in millions.

Privacy alert: Boys' restrooms need dividers

BY Devin Zhao

A boys' bathroom at SHS looks no different from any other male public restroom; there are urinals, a stall for privacy and sinks to wash hands.

Yet, when entering one of these rooms, there are unused urinals amid students doing their business, and boys generally look up to the ceiling to avoid the discomfort of standing so close to someone with no barrier in between.

Without dividers, the tension between males in a school restroom becomes thick, as they do not have any privacy.

Whenever possible, to minimize discomfort, two males take the the corner urinals and face the corners, never looking down; for five urinals, a third male takes the center urinal and stares straight ahead.

Either way, two urinals in each rest-

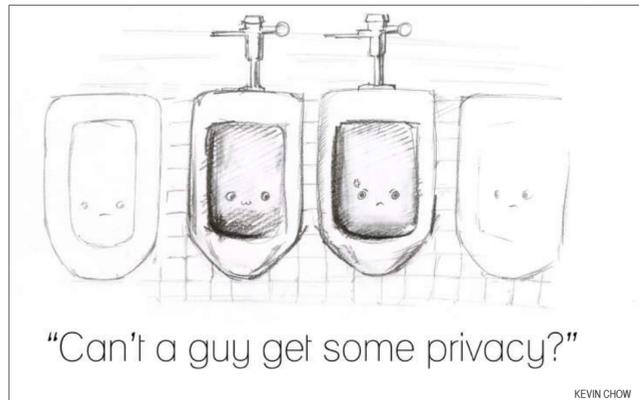
room are often not used. The lack of usable urinals creates lines of males during passing, lunch and break periods, when males frequently relieve themselves, in addition to being a waste of two perfectly good urinals that could be usable with the addition of the kinds of dividers so frequently seen at public places like airports and stadiums.

A cynic might argue that if needed, males can go into a stall to do their business. Yet, those stalls are often too full with boys trying to find privacy in there.

As a result, males often wait in lines to use the stalls and the occupied urinals, making the entire restroom routine incredibly time-consuming and inconvenient.

This story is all about a topic none of us talk about, but all of us know about. Dividers should be built between urinals to preserve the privacy that all males deserve. ♦

>> candidcaricatures



Jersey Mike's for the bite

BY Atirath Kosireddy

Having visited the restaurants on Prospect Road a number of times, I was intrigued when I noticed Jersey Mike's, a new sandwich place, being built next to my favorite barbecue spot. When it finally opened in December, I couldn't wait to try it.

I was lucky enough to catch the employees in the middle of a testing day and received a free sandwich and drink. The quality of the food prompted a visit when they officially opened, and I was greeted with a clean interior and simple layout.

The store is decorated with art and text on the walls that tell of the history of the restaurant.

The place had a '50s-style atmosphere to it, and was bustling with enough customers to keep the workers constantly making sandwiches.

I was pleasantly surprised to find that all its food was made on the spot.

I could tell the employees were serious about keeping their food fresh; they cut their meat immediately before putting them in the subs, allowing for fresh sandwiches. What's more, the tuna that is used in their Tuna Fish sub is prepared in the restaurant itself.

I chose the Chipotle Cheesesteak with jalapeños for \$8.50, and the employee handed me a ticket. I reached the end of the line and handed it to the cashier, along with my money, and I took a seat at a table. It was a quick five-minute wait to receive my meal.

As I unwrapped the foil, a warm roll of white bread with cheese oozing out greeted my eyes.

I dug into the sandwich and tasted a mixture of steak, onions, peppers, jalapeños and chipotle mayonnaise.

The bread was warm and fluffy, complimenting the meat and sauce. The sandwich was filling and spicy. It also had a soft texture to it.

While I did find their sandwiches to be quite enjoyable, there is, of course, always room for improvement. It would be better



FALCON // ATIRATH KOSIREDDY

Customers wait in the line at Jersey Mike's.

for Jersey Mike's to serve soup to go along with their subs for a more balanced meal. Breakfast sandwiches could also be an option for Jersey Mike's to look into, because all of their current choices are on the more filling side.

In general, though, my experience was pleasing enough to make me want to visit this sandwich joint again. The sub was around 7 inches long, filled with freshly grilled steak and had a reasonable price, with a minimal waiting time.

I can certainly say the quality of Jersey Mike's food is above sub-average. ♦

Jersey Mike's

(OUT OF FIVE)

Where: 5385 Prospect Rd, San Jose, CA

Type of food: Sandwiches

Price range: under \$10

Reporter's favorite: Chipotle Cheesesteak

STYLE FILES

J. Crew flannel: \$60

Robotics club T-shirt: free

iloveSia shoes: \$80

Gap khakis: \$30

Target watch: \$30

Kabir Manghnani, 11

ASK SARA

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

Dear Sara, I have two friends. One is the fun one that I go on wild adventures with and the other one plays it safe but is reliable. They refuse to hang out together and it's beginning to become difficult to find different times to hang out with them. What should I do?

It's nice that these two are opposites, in that you can experience two different things with each of them. But hanging out with friends isn't meant to be a chore. If you really can't get them to hang out, then it's OK. You have friends, not because you have to see them every day. Hang out with whichever one you want whenever you feel like it. And remember, communication is key. If you don't want to hang out with one of them, tell them. If you do, tell them that too. And it doesn't hurt to be frank with one friend about hanging out with the other.

Dear Sara, I want to get to know someone better, but I'm really nervous about approaching them because I'm a pretty shy person. How do I get up my nerve to make new friends?

When you get to know someone, there is a quota of awkward silences that two people must struggle to fill. Mutual crisis always brings the two parties together, and this is exactly what will happen. And if not, then clearly, you're not awkward enough. Sorry.

Dear Sara, I don't like pants. What should I do?

I would say go in your underwear, but really, only Neil Patrick Harris can pull that off. Or shorts, but unless your name is Apoorv Kwatra, that's taken. Looks like you'll just have to tough it out.

Dear Sara, I'm really sensitive about what people think of me. I often feel like people don't like me. How do I become more confident and stop worrying about this so much?

Let me start out by telling you: You are not alone in this feeling. So many people struggle with low self-confidence and self-image. When just one person tells you that you are ugly or annoying, it is incredibly difficult to believe the hundred other people who tell you otherwise. It's an understandable feeling, and is definitely not easy to overcome. But it's just a matter of knowing yourself. Be secure in who you are. Whether that means telling yourself every morning what your best attributes are, or if it means dressing better (trust me, the perfect accessories can do wonders), it's all up to you. And, just to understand the situation differently, ask yourself what the worst case scenario is. Did someone say that you're too loud? Too quiet? Too skinny? Too fat? Who cares? Not me, and definitely not you.

Dear Sara, how do I not die?

Just keep swimming.

Dear Sara, what's the best way to get through the six weeks with no breaks without losing my mind?

Make your own breaks. We all get it: We have to make time for our academics, our extracurricular activities, our families, our friends, and most importantly ourselves. But let's be honest. We can spare a few minutes every day for a little bit of relaxation. Put down the APUSH homework or the SAT prep, and just take a second to breathe. And then get back to work, because that homework won't finish itself.

Dear Sara, I get really nervous when I go somewhere where I don't know anybody that well. How can I integrate myself into a social situation where I'm really nervous or unconfident?

You must've heard of the saying, "fake it till you make it." Most of the world pretends that they're a lot more confident than they really are. It becomes easier to meet and interact with new people once you realize you're all on the same playing field. Your anxiety is definitely not unfounded, but it becomes much easier to understand and overcome when you think about what you're really nervous about. Chances are, everyone else is just as nervous. Anyways, it's really normal to be like this. Think about it, if you were totally comfortable with it, wouldn't they be slightly unsettled? There's a healthy amount of "faking it;" take advantage of that.

Overcoming the biggest bridge: Junior faces her fear of heights

da
deepster

Deepthi Sampathkumar



Just looking at it gave me the chills. The intricate steel lines glistened in the sun as they wrapped around each other to form an enormous parabola. The Pacific Ocean roared beneath the bridge, thundering against the boats that sailed across it.

The bridge's beauty was undeniable; it gave me a sense of awe. But secretly, I looked at it with extreme fear. My pulse quickened as I clutched the harness around me, breathing in and out, in and out, trying to stay calm. I had to scale this 463-foot monster suspended over the Sydney Harbor, and I couldn't even take the first step.

Before we left for Australia last summer, I received lot of advice about the erratic spiders and poisonous reptiles that I needed to watch out for. But honestly, none of this bothered me — I had a much bigger fear in mind.

Every year, tourists flock to Sydney to see the Sydney Harbor Bridge. Suspended over the Sydney Harbor, the metallic bridge is known to be one of Australia's most famous structural beauties.

When my family arrived at our hotel, the concierge suggested we try the Bridge Climb, a tour that allowed people to climb to the top of the bridge and marvel at the city that unfolded beneath. The only problem? I'm terrified of heights. And not just normal terrified of heights, either.

I spent much of my time in Australia worry-

ing about the tour, shivering every time I thought about the enormous bridge and the vast expanse below it.

But before I knew it, the day of the climb had come and I stood among the climbers in a stuffy room.

My heart was pounding, my hands clammy — I was about to have a heart attack until I noticed an 80-year-old man standing there said he had climbed the bridge before. This calmed me down a bit, but once the waivers were passed around and I read about the dangers of the climb, which included suffocation, stroke or possibly falling off the bridge, I paled.

The chatter and anticipation that filled the room became a low hum as I tortured myself with thoughts of falling, of being stuck on the bridge. I paced the room biting my lip, my brows furrowed with worry.

The tense moments before the hike was interrupted by the arrival of our bridge leader, an over-enthusiastic man with a wide grin across his face. As he entered the room, everyone's face lit up; on the other hand, my face tensed up even more.

Noticing my fear, the bridge leader, suggested that I stay right behind him during the entire climb. So, 19 brave adults and one petrified teenager embarked on the "Climb of our Lives" — that is ... if we managed to live through it.

The over-enthusiastic bridge leader herded our group into a tight elevator that took us up to the

entrance of the bridge. At this moment, I realized I was one door away from possibly the last two hours of my life.

As the doors opened, my stomach did a somersault.

The cold wind gushed onto my face and 400 feet beneath the perforated metal bridge that I stood on, I saw the Pacific Ocean in all its enormity. From this height, the cars looked like specks and our hotel, a miniature dollhouse.

I decided that the best way to get through it was to just stare at my feet and walk steadily. So I did precisely that; my unbelievably excited parents squealed with delight over the breath-taking views, but I steadily ignored their exuberance and focused on my feet.

A sense of comfort began to grow as I walked slowly, step after step. My comfort was temporary, however. As soon as I began to ease into a routine, the climb leader stopped, and I was forced back into reality.

Beside him was a 10-foot steel ladder; that of course, I still had to climb.

Wonderful, I had thought. I have to go even higher.

I anxiously put one foot on the first rung and climbed a few steps till I was halfway up the ladder.

To my left, there was the support of steel railings, but to my right there was nothing — absolutely nothing. I could see the road and the cars



Junior Deepthi Sampathkumar poses with her family and others at the top of the Sydney bridge in Australia.

whizzing across the bridge, one horrific fall away. This was the breaking point for me.

Oh, no.

I began to lose feeling in my fingers and was overcome with dizziness. With tears streaming down my face, I whirled my head toward the guide and screamed, "I can't do this!"

It took a 30-minute pep talk from five members of the staff before I could finally continue.

The rest of the climb participants anxiously waited for me to renew my composure and continue.

Once I reached the top of the bridge, I felt my fear slowly dissipate. Standing on top of the bridge, I could feel the sun's heat on my face and the birds that once seemed so high up in the sky were now within the reach of my hands.

I did it. I had actually done it. I had conquered one of my worst fears.

In that moment, as pride rushed through me, I realized that the difference between fearing or not fearing something is but a very small difference; it all depends on the willingness to keep taking one step forward. ♦

The cold wind gushed ...and 400 feet beneath the [bridge was] the enormous Pacific Ocean.

Fear-Busters

REPORTERS STARE THEIR BIGGEST FEARS IN THE FACE

Sophomore attempts to defeat her 'bug-est' fear

maya-onaïse

Maya Prasad



Before I read the "Harry Potter" series in first grade, I loved bugs. I was one of those kids who loved to get her hands dirty, enthralled by the little creatures I'd find in my backyard.

But after I read about Aragorn, the enormous, freaky arachnid that nearly eats Harry, Ron and Hermione alive, my mindset was instantaneously changed. The ants that I had once seen as dear pets had become savage, deceptively small monsters that would gorge on every fiber of my being if they had the chance.

Now, all bugs are generalized to hairy, slimy, multi-eyed nuisances that

quietly wait in the shadows to attack and eat humans.

I guess you can say that I have a slight case of entomophobia (a fear of insects and other bugs).

After using my friends as human shields against bugs one time too many, they decided it was time to get over my "irrational" fear. The guidelines of my challenge were set: I was to hold a bug for one minute without screaming or dropping it.

My desensitization began and ended on a Tuesday afternoon in the sunny backyard of fellow sophomore Saya Sivaram's house. My stomach roiled with the anticipation of the disgusting, terrible insect I was going to be forced to hold.

I closed my eyes and held out my hand, waiting for Saya to find a bug and plop in my palm. Finally (and unluckily for me), Saya managed to find the most creepy, disgusting and enormous roly-poly in the entire garden. I opened my eyes, took one look at the hideous creature, screamed bloody murder and dropped it.

I came extremely close to squashing it,

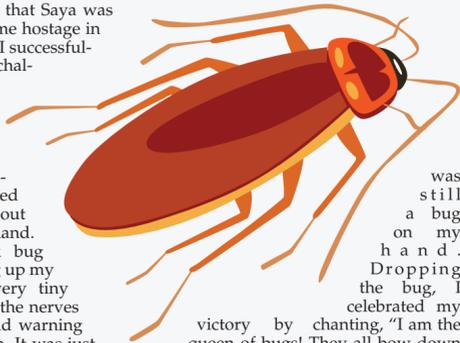
but then I realized that Saya was intent on holding me hostage in her backyard until I successfully completed the challenge (meaning that I held a bug and didn't have a heart attack).

So, for the second time, I closed my eyes and held out my trembling hand. The round, black bug was slowly inching up my pointer finger. Every tiny movement caused the nerves in my hand to send warning signals to my brain. It was just too much. I couldn't handle this torture. I dropped it again ... and then I squashed it. Whoops.

As they say, third time's the charm, right? Intent on seeing this challenge through, I used my meditation skills to push through this roadblock in my life.

With a new sense of determination, I forced my hand forward and beckoned for a new roly-poly to crawl upon my hand.

I don't remember much of what the roly-poly did as I was in my zen mode. But when the ringing of the timer broke through, all I could comprehend was that I succeeded and that there



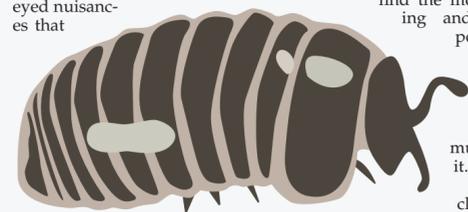
was still a bug on my hand. Dropping the bug, I celebrated my

victory by chanting, "I am the queen of bugs! They all bow down to me!"

By this time, I'm sure the neighbors were a little worried about what was happening, but I was too amazed by the fact that I actually held a bug for an entire minute. As soon as I went home, I had a sense of pride in the fact that I had "gotten over my fear."

The happiness that came with overcoming such a huge damper in my life lasted for a while. It dawned upon me later that I wasn't 100 percent over my fear — when a spider crawled toward me on the wall next to my bed.

Let's just say it didn't end well for both of us. ♦



Acupuncture is a jab well done

SOPHOMORE OVERCOMES HER FEAR OF NEEDLES THROUGH SURPRISE ACUPUNCTURE TREATMENT

saya nara

Saya Sivaram



If you've been following my newspaper articles recently then you'll know that I'm always injured and I'm always complaining about being injured.

Surprisingly enough, this story is not about one of my various external injuries, but instead about one of my greatest weaknesses: my debilitating fear of needles.

No, I'm not talking about the kind that my grandma uses to hem her handkerchiefs. Those are cool with me. I'm talking about the terrifying, sharp objects that doctors like to jam into my arms every time I go for a checkup. I hate those almost as much as I hate jello (ew jello), but I digress.

After I complained to my mother about the residual pain from my stint in a neck brace, she decided to take action. Somehow, she managed to convince me to go to a chiropractor,

describing it like going to a luxurious spa.

I was apprehensive about going to my first consultation, scared that the chiropractor would end up bending my back in some unnatural way and fracturing my vertebrae. Luckily, he didn't.

Unluckily, it was so much worse than that.

My mother had taken me to an acupuncturist.

I had no idea what was going on

To my horror, I realized that the prick was from a needle, protruding out of the back of my neck.

when the doctor told me that he was going to "start the treatment now", so I lay facedown on one of those massage tables with a heating pad under my stomach, feeling pretty good about myself.

The doctor rubbed some "ancient Chinese ointment" behind my ears

in order to "even out my mood", and within about five minutes, the fumes began to make me a bit lightheaded.

So there I lay, relaxed and a bit out of it, when all the sudden I felt a prick at the back of my neck. Then, to my horror, I realized that the prick was from a needle, protruding out of the back of my neck.

By the time I realized that there was indeed a needle in my body, I had one more coherent thought about giving my mother the silent treatment for the rest of my life before I passed out.

I don't think that the doctor realized that I was unconscious, because by the time I came to, there were at least fifteen needles in my neck, wrists, ankles, and ears.

Naturally, I passed out again.

Thinking back on this incident, I'm fairly sure that the ointment was at least 30% responsible for my reaction. While it did

smell excellent, my head felt pretty fuzzy after the doctor put the ointment on.

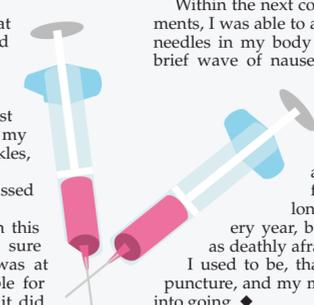
Needle(ss) to say, that appointment did not end too well.

My mother, never one to give up, scheduled another one without telling me, and I found myself back in the office the next Wednesday.

But this time, I actually managed to stay conscious the entire time. In fact, I wasn't that bad when I didn't think about the needles. It felt kind of nice, if I'm being honest with myself.

Within the next couple of appointments, I was able to acknowledge the needles in my body and only feel a brief wave of nausea, which was a proud moment for me.

I'm not saying that I won't try to avoid getting a flu shot for as long as possible every year, but I'm not quite as deathly afraid of needles as I used to be, thanks to the acupuncture, and my mom tricking me into going. ♦



Top Ways to Overcome Your Fears

- 1. Visualize**
When faced with a fear, take a moment to imagine yourself overcoming it, what's the worst that could happen?
- 2. Talk about it**
Often reasoning through it will help you understand the fear. The comfort of discussing it with someone else can also help overcome it.
- 3. Go back to basics**
The easiest way to calm down when anxious is to take a step backward. Take a break from whatever you are doing. Come back after a good night of rest for a fresh start with a clear mind.
- 4. Reward yourself for overcoming it**
Tell yourself that you can have a desired object if you are able to overcome your fear. Reward yourself with sweets or a break from homework.
- 5. Face it**
Avoiding fears only make them worse. Often the quickest and most effective way to overcome fears is to simply face them.

-NHS choices
Compiled by Summer Smith

Top 5 Fears (Student Survey)

1. Checking Aeries
2. Public speaking
3. Spiders
4. Rejection
5. Not being able to support family in the future

'50 Shades of Grey': a lesson learned

ALL GRAPHICS BY JANE PARK

50 shades too deep



Kevin Chow and Deepthi Sampathkumar

To celebrate the Feb. 13 release of the movie, "Fifty Shades of Grey," Kevin read its bestselling book-counterpart by E. L. James.

Following suit, Deepthi found herself in a mostly empty movie theater with an audience of giggly middle-aged women one afternoon.

We are here to lend some insightful commentary to those who weren't foolish enough to experience both firsthand.

This story follows a college senior named Anastasia (Ana) Steele. She crosses paths with multimillionaire Christian Grey, a man she must interview for a student newspaper. What follows is a tragically disturbing affair.

Let's first ask ourselves what we expect out of a story. For us, to put it liberally, it has to be either eye-opening or enjoyable.

Perhaps James meant it as a (albeit, very) subtle commentary on Freudian psychology; whenever Ana is faced with an emotional dilemma, three parts of her human complex manifest themselves. They are her conscious, her subconscious and — we kid you not — her inner goddess.

This is not your typical romance. BDSM, which is an all-inclusive acronym for the alternate practices of bond-

age, discipline, dominance, submission, sadism and masochism, is apparently what Grey most desperately wants from the main character.

BDSM is very thoroughly discussed (and practiced) within this story, whether in the vividly described scenes in the "Red Room of Pain," as Ana calls it, or in the hefty contract that Grey wants Ana to sign before he shows her all his ... playthings.

Moving on to the next point. Is this story enjoyable? By the 10th disturbingly sexual scene, Kevin was trudging through the pages with disgust.

Simply said, where Ana found pleasure in her questionable sexual activities with Grey, Kevin only found pain.

But then again, maybe this story does teach us something.

At its inception, this story was a Twilight fan fiction. It has memorably awful writing like, "I feel the color in my cheeks rising again. I must be the color of the communist manifesto." The main character uses out-of-place phrases like "holy cow" during the most provocative scenes. The plot is a rambling journey of sex and conflict, followed by more sex and conflict.

But there's a point we're trying to

make, and it goes beyond just this story and suggests how easily influenced our society has become.

With writing credentials little to none, the author James was able to convince readers to purchase more than 100 million copies of her book — more books than literary legends Ray Bradbury and Roald Dahl have ever sold.

"Fifty Shades of Grey," the movie, has grossed more than \$400 million; that is more than the seven of the Oscar "Best Movie" nominee films combined.

According to a CNN article, it is also "credited with boosting sales of sex toys, driving women to hook-up sites and fueling a craze over sexual domination."

It's more than slightly sad that something along the lines of peer pressure and curiosity persuaded so many people into purchasing a book detailing an abusive relationship.

Amy Bonomi, PhD, MPH, Associate Professor of Human Development and Family Science at Ohio State University, told Journal of Women's Health that based on analysis, Christian Grey fits the description of a controlling stalker, isolating mate who is emotionally, sexually and physically abusive.

"Our analysis shows that emotional

and sexual violence is pervasive in the relationship," she said.

There are clear examples of its effects. On Feb. 23, Mohammed Hossain, a freshmen at University of Chicago, was arrested for sexual assault. He claims to have been re-enacting a scene from the movie.

This story is disappointing in that it has been legitimizing abusive relationships in popular culture, which has been affecting real life.

Eye opening and enjoyable in all the wrong ways, all in all, this story shows that we consumers are really strange, and probably a bit disturbed.

Thank you, "Fifty Shades of Grey," for teaching us this valuable lesson. ♦

It's more than slightly sad that something along the lines of peer pressure and curiosity persuaded so many people into purchasing a book detailing an abusive relationship.

>> the bigidea

50 Shades of Grey

General Statistics
Total reviews on Amazon
5 or 4 stars: 21,333; 3 stars: 3,659; 1 or 2 stars: 12,812

16 million
Copies of the 50SoG series have been sold so far in the U.S.

50SoG became the fastest-selling paperback book ever, beating out J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter" series.

\$15 million
E.L. James' estimated net worth
Versus J.K. Rowling, who has earned \$17 million this year

Yik Yak app popular among high schoolers

BY FionaSequeira

"Chinese takeout: \$10.55. Gas to get there and back: \$4.14. Getting home and realizing they forgot one of your containers: Riceless."

One can find "yaks" like these on YikYak, a free, anonymous social media app launched in 2013 by Furman University students Brooks Buffington and Tyler Droll that was created for adults who use iOS and Android. The app is loosely based on Twitter and creates communities that allow users within a 10-mile radius of each other to connect and share information through anonymous "yaks."



Rao

Users can contribute by upvoting, downvoting or replying to yaks with comments that can also gain upvotes or downvotes. A user's goal is to boost his or her "Yakarma," the accumulation of points gained from upvotes on yaks, comments and replies.

"YikYak is just another way to connect with [people in] your environment," senior Jimmy Cheng said. "But it's more appealing than other apps because it's anonymous, so you can be more open with your thoughts. It's like admitting your sins without the priest knowing."

There are other anonymous apps on the market. On PostSecret, users mail in their secrets anonymously on postcards, and on Whisper, they send and receive anonymous messages.

Unlike these other anonymous sharing apps, YikYak serves users who live in close proximity to each other. The app has spread to college campuses, where users treat the app as their go-to source for local news, gossip and comic relief.

Although the app is designed for adults, YikYak has garnered a huge re-

sponse from under-age users. However, the drawback for high school students is that YikYak has in-built preventative measures against minors. The app contains geolocation tracking technology which blocks access to users at high-school campuses.

"I know it's trying to appeal to college students, but just like Facebook, we'll always find a way to bypass the system," Cheng said. "If anything, the geotracking feature that makes [YikYak] restricted just makes it feel like the forbidden fruit."

While a central aspect of the app is its anonymity, strict rules are in place to keep YikYak enjoyable and safe for users. The main rules include not bullying or specifically targeting other yakkers and a zero-tolerance policy for posting other people's private information. If a user's yaks are continually reported, he or she risks suspension.

Despite the preventative rules against under-age users, YikYak has found its niche among students.

"YikYak allows [SHS students] to voice their opinion and get advice on topics that they may be scared to ask in person," senior Rohit Rao said. "Even if we can't use it on campus, it's great." ♦

THE OSCARS

The 87th Academy Award Winners for the 2015 Oscars

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| BEST PICTURE: Birdman or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance) Alejandro G. Iñárritu, John Leshner and James W. Skotchdopole | DIRECTING: Birdman or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance) Alejandro G. Iñárritu | PRODUCTION DESIGN: The Grand Budapest Hotel Adam Stockhausen (Production Designing), Anna Pinnoch (Set Decoration) |
| ACTOR—in a Leading Role: Eddie Redmayne The Theory of Everything | DOCUMENTARY FEATURE: Citizenfour Laura Poitras, Mathilde Bonnefoy and Dirk Wilutzky | SHORT FILM—Animated: Feast Patrick Osborne and Kristina Reed |
| ACTRESS—in a Leading Role: Julianne Moore Still Alice | DOCUMENTARY SHORT: Crisis Hotline: Veterans Press 1 Ellen Goosenberg Kent and Dana Perry | SHORT FILM—Live Action: The Phone Call Mat Kirky and James Lucas |
| ACTOR—in a Supporting Role: J.K. Simmons Whiplash | FILM EDITING: Whiplash Tom Cross | SOUND EDITING: American Sniper Alan Robert Murray and Bob Asman |
| ACTRESS—in a Supporting Role: Patricia Arquette Boyhood | FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILM: Ida Argued, Directed by Pawel Pawlikowski | SOUND MIXING: Whiplash Craig Mann, Ben Wilkins and Thomas Curley |
| ANIMATED FEATURE FILM: Big Hero 6 Don Hall, Chris Williams and Roy Coall | MAKEUP AND HAIRSTYLING: The Grand Budapest Hotel Frances Hannon and Mark Couler | VISUAL EFFECTS: Interstellar Paul Franklin, Andrew Lockley, Ian Hunter and Scott Fisher |
| CINEMATOGRAPHY: Birdman or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance) Emmanuel Lubezki | MUSIC—Original Score: The Grand Budapest Hotel Alexandre Desplat | WRITING—Adapted Screenplay: The Imitation Game Written by Graham Moore |
| COSTUME DESIGN: The Grand Budapest Hotel Milena Canonero | MUSIC—Original Song: "Glory" from SELMA Music and Lyric by John Stephens and Lonnie Lynn | WRITING—Original Screenplay: Birdman or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance) Alejandro G. Iñárritu, Nicolas Giacobone, Alexander Dinelaris, Jr. & Armando Bo |

Football player more than just a 'jock'

SENIOR BREAKS AWAY FROM NORMS THROUGH PASSION FOR MUSIC

BY RachelHull & MichelleLeung

On fall Fridays, senior Alec Furlong was a wide receiver for the Falcon football team, running routes and catching passes. Bulky uniform and all, he seemed like the epitome of a stereotypical jock.

Yet Furlong is anything but. For at least five years, he has also dedicated himself to learning the guitar. His athletic and artistic talents may seem at odds, but he said that he often defies perceptions — for example, he plans on majoring in computer science.

"I don't really [fit] the stereotype," he said, "and people who get to know me [know] there are a lot of things that I do that aren't really like the typical football player mindset."

Senior Jordan Vogel, one of Furlong's friends and teammates, said that Furlong is much more comfortable playing guitar than football.

"It definitely shows that he is more passionate about playing guitar than football," Vogel said. "He really likes to play [guitar], and he always gets pissed off when we're talking over him when he's playing."

Furlong's interest in music began when his parents told him they wanted him to play an instrument in elementary school. He initially started with piano but didn't enjoy it because of the restric-

tions his parents placed on him. "If I wanted to play video games, I had to practice 30 minutes of piano before I could play video games," Furlong said. "And basically that system wasn't working."

At that point, his parents signed him up for guitar lessons, hoping that it might be a better fit. Though Furlong enjoyed them at first, the guitar lessons were eventually discarded like the piano lessons, just another activity he was being forced to do. Though dis-

appointed, his parents told him he could quit. Instead, their change in attitude inspired Furlong to continue his lessons and tough it out.

"When my parents first said I could quit, it was a reverse psychology thing, and it made me stay with it," Furlong said. "[Since then] I got an acoustic guitar, and I started [to] really like playing it."

Although Furlong sometimes regrets his decision to give up piano, he is glad he stuck with guitar. He attends guitar lessons for half an hour to an hour every week with his private tutor, who he described as "a total redneck."

"He is one of the most childish people I've ever met in my entire life, and he's as broke as most musicians," Furlong said. "And he's also one of my best friends."

In addition to his weekly lessons, Fur-



FALCON/LAUREN LOUIE

Senior Alec Furlong sings "The Messenger" for the talent portion during Mr. Saratoga.

long practices almost every night on his acoustic guitar. For now, he prefers to stick to covers of songs that are meaningful to him such as "What Might Have Been" by Little Texas. He also occasionally writes his own songs.

Thus far, he has only performed in local competitions like Saratoga Idol and Mr. Saratoga. Furlong also often plays guitar while hanging out with friends.

"He'll play when we're at the beach, and we'll sing along, jam along, have a freestyle sesh while he's playing guitar," Vogel said.

No matter where Furlong ends up in college and beyond, he plans to continue playing guitar. He said that he may join a band in the future, although it would be purely for fun. He dreams of attend-

ing UC Santa Barbara, the alma mater of musician Jack Johnson.

"He comes in and plays at the mess hall every once in a while, and I have this dream of going up and playing with him," Furlong said.

For Furlong, playing the guitar is "like an escape." This activity also acts as an outlet for stress; for example, once when he had an English essay due at midnight, he chose to "wind down" with the guitar for an hour or two afterward.

"It's just relaxing and fun," he said, "and I feel like at this point if I hear a song, I like to analyze it and figure out how to play it myself. And I guess I like the freedom of being able to play anything I can." ♦

NETFLIX Browse Personalize KIDS

Popular on Netflix



Excitement comes with new seasons of Netflix originals

BY RotemShaked

From the exciting continuation of "House of Cards" in late February to the still-distant return of "Orange is the New Black" in mid-summer, Netflix subscribers are seemingly coming out on top as Netflix original series and newly acquired programs start showing up throughout this spring.

Starting out as a DVD-shipping service in the late '90s, Netflix has slowly developed its streaming service over the years, providing television shows and movies for to subscribers for a flat rate every month. Additionally, Netflix is moving into an entirely new iteration as a content creator, as it begins to offer more shows made directly on the site for its customers.

The reason for this shift, many people believe, is that television networks like AMC and HBO have developed their own streaming services (AMCTV.com and HBOgo). Now that they own their own services, it doesn't make sense to offer their AAA shows or blockbuster movies to Netflix, the Number 1 company in the streaming front as of right now.

While it might be a good thing to diversify where the content is coming from, sites and reviewers across the Internet have also shown concern about the "spreading-thin" of these shows across too many services, which puts

consumers in a position of having to pay for two, three or even four different streaming services to be able to watch all of their favorite shows.

The power-struggles between Netflix and TV channels aside, the original content being produced by Netflix is some of the best anywhere, with "House of Cards" actor Kevin Spacey winning both the Golden Globe for "Best Performance by an Actor in a Television Series" and the Screen Actors' Guild's award for "Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Drama Series," coupled with many other similar nominations, for his work.

After a few muddled semi-successes like "Lilyhammer" and some children's shows like "Veggie Tales," it seems like Netflix has worked out its formula for content, and is just now kicking up their production pretty significantly, producing content faster than some viewers can even keep up.

On the other hand, more and more shows aren't having their licensing renewed when their contracts run out, with popular shows like "Adventure Time" and movies like "Freaky Friday" leaving Netflix this March.

This backs up the idea of a new identity for the service, in which it operates more like a premium TV channel than it does as just a general-streamer. Let's hope the newfound competition doesn't sink the general product, though. ♦



Sherrilyn Ling's
**Top 19
MOVIE SCORES**

- 1. **Up**
Michael Giacchino
- 2. **Inception**
Hans Zimmer
- 3. **Gone with the Wind**
Max Steiner
- 4. **Star Wars**
John Williams
- 5. **Forrest Gump**
Alan Silvestri
- 6. **Interstellar**
Hans Zimmer
- 7. **Lord of the Rings**
Howard Shore
- 8. **Schindler's List**
John Williams
- 9. **12 Years a Slave**
Hans Zimmer
- 10. **Psycho**
Bernard Herrmann
- 11. **Ratatouille**
Michael Giacchino
- 12. **The Godfather**
Tom Mack
- 13. **Dark Knight Trilogy**
Hans Zimmer
- 14. **Jurassic Park**
John Williams
- 15. **Pride and Prejudice**
Dario Marianelli
- 16. **Hugo**
Howard Shore
- 17. **Apollo 13**
James Horner
- 18. **Saving Private Ryan**
John Williams
- 19. **Man of Steel**
Hans Zimmer

'GoT' Season 5 trailer promises to surprise

by Oksana Trifonova & Kelly Xiao

Some have deemed it inappropriate for its violence and language; others see it as brilliant because of its psychological impact. Either way, "Game of Thrones," including the 2011 HBO show version and the 1991 book series, has created a fan stronghold for itself through its multiple storyline plot that details the struggles of several characters over a throne. As armies clash, prisoners are taken and bridal vows are made. The trailer for the new Season 5 "Game of Thrones" promises episodes that will satiate audiences with even more drama, death and danger.

According to screencrush.com, the new season will contain many surprises, since it has already caught up to the current endpoint of the ongoing

book series. Among the changes being made are character deaths not covered in the books and the omissions of various "main" characters, including Brandon Stark, prince of the House of Stark, Hodor, the slow-minded servant of the Starks and Arianne Martell, princess of the House of Martell.

The trailer promises episodes that will satiate audiences with even more drama, death and danger.

While the changes being made are numerous, viewers still have much to look forward to.

For instance, one much-loved character, Tyrion Lannister, the prince of the House of Lannister, is featured in the trailer speaking with the royal spymaster Varys.

Their dialogue implies that Varys wants Tyrion to betray his family and support Daenerys Targaryen, the only child of the late head of House of Targaryen.

Furthermore, the Lannisters, the ruling family for the past three seasons,

appear to be on the verge of collapse, as Season 4 leaves them in a highly unstable position.

Not only do the Lannisters face wartime debts, but they must also control the ambitious Tyrell family, with the latter openly demanding greater concessions and key positions of power. At the very least, viewers will be provided with a clash between the Lannisters and the Tyrells for Season 5.

The character roles for the Stark sisters, the princesses of the House of Stark, will also be changing significantly. In Sansa Stark's last scene, she seems ready to use Lord Petyr Baelish to gain more power, which is a far cry from her previously timid character.

Many viewers will be confused as to who is actually manipulating whom, as

Baelish hopes to use Sansa as a way to gain access to Stark lands.

Even more fascinating to viewers are the possibilities of Arya Stark's, the younger princess of the House of Stark's, storyline. The closing scene of Season 4 is Arya leaving the Hound, a skilled warrior in service to the House of Lannister, to sail to Braavos, one of the Free Cities on the continent of Essos.



Many of the show's followers look forward to seeing Arya in her new roles as in the books, Arya's identity changes completely after her arrival at Braavos. With even more characters and more scandalous scenes, the "Game of Thrones" Season 5 promises to keep the viewers on their toes and possibly weeping over the shocking deaths of favorite character. ♦

'The Walking Dead' mid-season premiere stuns viewers

by Atrith Kosireddy

After a prisoner exchange gone bad leaves Beth from Hershel's farm dead, the season kicks off with a rather gloomy setting. The ninth episode of Season 5, which aired on Feb. 8 on AMC as usual manages to do an exceptional job of preserving that setting.

Part of what keeps "The Walking Dead" viewers hooked is its constant supply of ideas from the original comic book series. The other part of what makes the show so good is that each event eventually leads up to another, creating a web like storyline.

The show keeps viewers guessing, providing plot twist after plot twist. For example, at the beginning of the season, the group entered what they think is a safe haven, but is in reality a trap set by cannibalistic cult.

Finding a show with the same amount of creative content is difficult. One may think "The Walking Dead" and assume the place is overrun with zombies, but very few would think of a place where people are turned into food.

The incident further establishes the

fact that other humans can be as dangerous as walkers.

The producers of the show stayed with the strategy that made "The Walking Dead" so great in the midseason premiere.

If four weeks has not been enough for you to get to the midseason premiere, stop here to avoid spoilers.

The midseason premiere picks up in a dark mood, and preserves that. Tyreese, who met the group at the prison, has his arm bitten by a child-turned walker.

As Noah, who the survivors met in Alabama, runs to get help, Tyreese begins to hallucinate, seeing deceased people he once knew, like The Governor, Bob, Beth, Lizzie and Mika.

They mock him, telling him "it's better now," and that he is "earning his keep." His time spent bleeding out from the bite shows the viewer how Tyreese has grown tired of trying to survive.

When help arrives, the group amputates his arm to save him, but he dies from blood loss as they drive him back to the rest of the group.

It's safe to say that this show isn't, and won't be dead for a long time. ♦

>> togatalks

Is 'The Walking Dead' over-hyped?

"After the first season they switched directors and the show just went downhill from there."



junior Rotem Shaked

"No, I still think it's an addicting show. Every season is just as good as the previous one."



senior Nadia Younes

"Character development could be better, but it does a good job of [not being] cliché."



sophomore Jessy Liu

'HONY' raises money for Brooklyn school

by Miles Albert & Amulya Vadlakonda

The Internet has evolved significantly in the last few years — for better and for worse. Too many times have we heard our parents tell us to "get off of Facebook" or "stop Instagramming food." But while the Internet can serve as a distraction, it has also connected the world to enact change in unbelievable ways.

One of the most heartwarming examples of this is the well-known page "Humans of New York" (HONY).

Started by passionate young photographer Brandon Stanton, this site has garnered over 12 million likes and the attention from people worldwide. In fact, many other cities, schools and organizations have made their own "Humans of" page, including Humans of Saratoga High.

These pages, based on the original HONY, intend to showcase photos and stories of ordinary people.

One of Stanton's recent greatest accomplishments was his introduction of a project called "Let's Send Kids to Harvard," which aims to send children of low-income families in Brooklyn to Harvard each year.

Stanton began this project after meeting Vidal Chastanet, a student at Mott Bridges Academy in Brooklyn, and his principal, Nadia Lopez.

Impressed with Lopez's mission to help her students secure their futures, Stanton asked followers of his page to donate to the school, with a financial target of \$100,000. The money, said Lo-

pez, would fund the trip to Harvard each year to show the students that "there is not a single place they don't belong."

Within three hours, the goal was reached, and over the course of a mere 20 days, donations reached more than \$1.4 million.

Many people were so touched by the story that they contributed as much as they could, the donations ranging anywhere from \$5 to \$100.

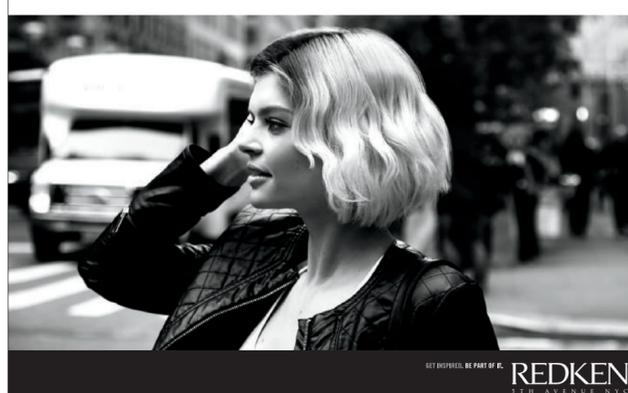
With the remaining money, Stanton and Lopez decided to start a scholarship program for the school's graduates as well, naming it after the first recipient, Chastanet.

This story garnered so much interest that Chastanet, Lopez and Stanton were featured on "The Ellen DeGeneres Show." They also met with President Obama in the Oval Office, where Chastanet was reminded that "there are a lot of people out there who want to provide advice and support to people who are trying to do the right thing. So [he would] have a lot of people helping [him]."

This page brought people together from all over the world, connected by nothing more than a Facebook post and human kindness.

Humans of New York connects people from around the world in a way that many social media sites strive for. Each picture tells an extraordinary story of ordinary people just like us. It has become an intertwined community of complete strangers who continue to share personal stories and spread positivity. ♦

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PULL THE LEVER, KRONK

DISNEY'S UNDERRATED MOVIES PROVIDE BETTER ROLE MODELS THAN PRINCESSES

by Maya Prasad & Saya Sivaram

Almost every young American girl has been obsessed at one point in time with the five most popular Disney princesses: Snow White, Cinderella, Ariel, Belle and Aurora. The sparkly ball gowns, the hilarious animal sidekicks and the romantic endings have appealed to 4-year-olds, who are firm believers of "happily ever after," for decades.

But because these five movies, "Snow White," "Cinderella," "The Little Mermaid," "Beauty and the Beast" and "Sleeping Beauty," continue to be represented as Disney's classics, many other movies such as "Emperor's New Groove" and "Robin Hood" are given short shrift by the Big Five's fame.

But they shouldn't be. The premise of "The Emperor's New Groove," made in 2000 and starring David Spade, completely breaks the mold of hopeless romance, as the story revolves around llamas, and llamas are not at all romantic.

The tale follows an Aztec emperor who is turned into a llama by his advisor Yzma, "the living proof that dinosaurs once roamed the Earth," and her clueless sidekick, Kronk.

Despite its unrealistic premise, the movie uses humor to delve into more serious themes, such as the relationships between social classes and the dangers of excessive power. Including humor allows the viewer to stay entertained, while still learning the basic themes the producers want to expose to children.

The fact that this movie hasn't gained a cult following is appalling to us. We would join that encouraging no

ally gives them some character development and complexity.

Although there is a romantic subplot between Robin Hood and Maid Marian, the main subject matter of the movie focuses more on class struggles due to Prince John's heavy taxation during his reign, while his brother, King Richard, was fighting in a crusade.

The tone of the movie remains light and humorous throughout, but there are serious undercurrents that subtly deliver a message to the child. It discourages the abuse of power, greed and unfairness, while also depicting a historical event.

These two movies, while beautifully made and extremely entertaining, teach lessons that are crucial to the proper education of young children more than the traditional princess story does.

In contrast, classic princess stories tend to sell a romanticized version of the world to young girls, causing them to buy in to the idea of the helplessness of women and romantic idealism.

For example, Cinderella and the Prince fall in love immediately after seeing each other for the very first time. It's not hard to tell that the Prince's main motivation for approaching Cinderella in the first place is that she is fairly attractive.

Furthermore, these movies perpetuate misogynistic ideas by suggesting that young girls always have to find a man in order to better their lives.

In both "The Emperor's New Groove" and "Robin Hood," the female characters are empowered and independent, thereby encouraging young girls not to limit themselves to socially accepted standards.

To be honest, children should not be watching these overrated movies full of princesses flaunting around in dresses and teaching kids unreasonable dreams.

But rather parents should show movies such as "Emperor's New Groove" or "Robin Hood" in order to expose the true realities of life. ♦



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GURU >>

continued from pg. 1

soning test, his academy has expanded to include tutoring for the SAT II Math 2 subject test and help on college application essays.

Particularly noteworthy is that Koo receives “a couple [of] hundred” SHS students every year. According to senior Smita Sabada, who took Koo’s private classes, this can be attributed to word of mouth, as she heard of Koo through several alumni, including her older brother, who is now a senior at the University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign.

“[He helped my brother] by offering a lot of tricks for complicated math problems and input on time management,” Sabada said. “He made the test seem really straightforward.”

Sabada took private lessons with Koo, meeting thrice a week for two hours during the summer. She found she had improved considerably after working with Koo; having taken daily vocabulary and practice tests, her score improved by about 300 points in five months.

What is Koo’s main secret? Simply put, he says improvement on tests comes only with hard work.

“I have always [subscribed] to the philosophy that there are rarely short-cuts in SAT prep — or in life,” he said. “[I believe] that hard, honest work leads to positive results.”

He added that making classes interactive and engaging is

one of his biggest priorities. “I do not think that rigorous test preparation and humor are mutually exclusive,” Koo said. “SAT prep on top of a crushing academic workload of a typical student can be a hard pill to swallow, but humor can make it a bit easier.”

Koo is, in fact, known for his sarcastically dry humor; according to senior Anshul Aggarwal, Koo is “really prickly, but you can tell he cares.”

Junior Andrew Weng took one of Koo’s discipline builder classes. According to Koo, the course is an “a-la-carte option for students who do not require instruction and instead want to benefit from taking numerous practice tests.” Students take two practice tests each week and review them on Sundays.

Weng said that Koo’s ability to lighten the mood helped with his personal learning process.

“His humor is hilarious, but [sometimes offends] a lot of people,” Weng said. “Person-



FALCON // JADE BISHOP

SAT tutor Jay Koo lectures a student on the test’s math portion during an afternoon class at his academy.

and honesty.

“We met him only once, but it was clear that he really knew what he was doing,” said Vic Nalwa, father of 2014 alumnus Sanj Nalwa and current junior Gitika Nalwa. “If we had retained a tutor for SAT, it would have no doubt been him. In a sea of tutors trying to capitalize on parents’ and students’ anxieties, he is frank and honest and cares about making his students perform to their potential.”

One of the distinguishing factors of the Koo Academy, said senior Sumedha Gupta, is the self-discipline Koo preaches.

Gupta attended the first session of Koo’s summer comprehensive class. The class includes

four full-length diagnostic tests as well as lectures three to four times per week from 9 a.m. to noon.

Each class consists of a 20-word vocabulary quiz and a lesson on a specific portion of the SAT. Koo also assigns practice tests for students to take at home, and spends the remaining two hours going over previously assigned exams.

Prior to attending Koo’s classes, Gupta participated in a two-month SAT class at a rival tutoring center that she said wasn’t as effective as Koo’s services.

Unlike other test prep agencies, Koo alters his teaching methods to fit each individual student.

He said he truly believes that success is not measured by the number of perfect scores, but

by the number of students who reach their individual potentials.

Although he is an SAT tutor, Koo said he does feel that the stress that pervades the halls of SHS, along with many other schools of the same caliber, is unnecessary and excessive.

“It does crack me up when a student who got over 2300 on the SAT is extremely upset and wants to retake the test,” Koo said.

However, Koo said the anxiety that comes with the SAT causes SHS students to work for their results.

“I really like working with Saratoga High students,” he said. “They, possibly more so than students of any other high school, clearly understand the relationship between hard work and success.” ♦

“It does crack me up when a student who got over 2300 on the SAT is extremely upset and wants to retake the test.”

SAT tutor Jay Koo

ally, I loved it and thought it made the class entertaining.”

Parents, too, have been impressed with Koo’s openness

A look at one of the Special Education programs

CBI PROGRAM PREPARES ITS STUDENTS FOR FUTURE OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

By Becky Hoag & Neehar Thumaty

For senior Robert Stark, P.E. is a joy. Math, on the other hand, can be a little more tricky. Luckily, he has special education teacher Courtney Crase to help him out.

“The homework [at school] is not too easy [but] the teachers help you do the homework, so it is not so bad,” said Stark.

The school’s Community-Based Instruction program (CBI), based in room X03, is known for providing assistance to students with learning and/or speech disabilities in school. There are now 13 students in the program.

In addition, it provides students with the skills and experience they will need after graduation, when they must care for themselves.

“We focus on functional academics to work on life skills and social skills to transition students into adulthood,” Crase said.

While students might attend some academic classes with other general ed students, most of them are electives like drama or P.E.

Most of the basic courses, such as math and English, are taught in room X03 and they are more focused on what the students will need to know out of school.

CBI includes a workability program and transition course, which teach students how to do certain jobs and how to react to different life situations.

The workability program aims to give the students an advantage when it comes time to support themselves.

“We try to get more students [working] who need vocational training,” said special education teacher Lisa McCahill. “We [sometimes] start them as early as freshman year.”

They look into job sites such as Trader Joe’s and Smart & Final, places with programs that employ CBI students.

Freshman Beau Jensen, for example, will be able to put his current job as a landscaping assistant with the custodial staff after school on Wednesdays on an application later on. He hopes someday to work as an interior painter.

Furthermore, the transition course keeps the students active in their community. McCahill explained the class as one that “[transitions them] from young child[ren] to adulthood. So [it includes] all the skills that you would need to

“They are accountable for the same things other students are accountable for. They really benefit from equal standards.”



Special Ed teacher Lisa McCahill

transition from one stage to the next.”

The transition class is Jensen’s favorite class because the students sometimes have the opportunity to go on outings to bowling alleys, Westgate mall and dances at other schools — a dance for CBI students at Mountain View High School takes place March 13.

“[The transition course] kind of the basis of our program because it is the community-based part,” McCahill said. “So every Friday we are out in the community for most of the day.”

The SAI staff would love to see more peer contributions during the transition outings, though scheduling makes this difficult since many of the events take

place during school. “If we had that type of leadership during outings that would be wonderful because, I [would] much rather have their models be same-age peers than teachers,” McCahill said. “We become kind of the parental figures and it’s just different when you learn from someone your own age.”

Senior Marcus Chan, one of the oldest students in the program, says that it has helped him become more independent. This independence is evident in Chan’s job at his mother’s Santa Cruz restaurant, Takara, where he washes dishes.

Chan hopes to continue this independence after graduation, when he will enroll in classes at West Valley.

Some of the main goals that the CBI program has for its students are integration and acceptance among their peers.

She gives an example of a CBI student going to get lunch but not having enough money.

“It would be the worst thing ever for whoever is behind the counter to be like ‘oh it’s OK. You can have that because that wouldn’t typically happen with general ed students,” McCahill said.

While that response might have short-term benefits for the students, the staff is planning for the long term.

They feel that it is important to educate the other general ed students to treat their CBI peers the same as everyone else.

“They are accountable for the same things that other students are accountable for,” McCahill said. “They really benefit from equal standards.” ♦

Two successes, two seniors: Was it worth it?

By Kevin Chow & Amulya Vadlakonda

In the words of senior Kevin Chiang, senioritis is like “having motivational hemophilia and a cut on your arm at the same time.”

Seniors once entered high school as innocent freshmen, became somewhat disillusioned by sophomore year, only to find themselves delusional after their 15th all-nighter in junior year. And then it was senior year, with the light at the end of the tunnel hidden after finishing a dozen or more college essays and received both acceptance and rejection letters.

Senioritis, occurring in second semester, is a short rest break after three and a half years of scrambling for success.

This story is about the time before that reward — the “scrambling” part, and the experiences of two different seniors each with two different successes.

And in the end, there will be one question: Was it worth it?

Edwin Chen: juggling commitments

Edwin Chen applied for and became drum major without really expecting to get it. This was while he was also soccer captain, a leader in Common Roots, captain of Ultimate Frisbee Club — the list goes on. Still, his biggest commitment in high school has been band.

Chen learned how to play the trumpet and joined band his freshman year, a decision he says was the best he ever made.

As a freshman, Chen was happy that band camp helped him make many connections before school even started.

“You’d meet about 200 people at band camp, so then walking through the hallways on the first day of school wasn’t so terrifying,” he said.

He said that sophomore year was pretty much like freshman year, except better. Junior year, however, was different.

Even before the school year, he was tied up with APUSH summer homework, for which he pulled an all-nighter.

“That was a rough night,” he said. “I was just thinking that everyone tells me that junior year is bad, but before it even started, it was so bad.”

This was before band season began. His schedule then? School, band, eat, sleep, repeat.

With his academic career the typical junior deathtrap, he was hesitant to apply to be a drum major in his senior year.

“It wasn’t my plan originally,” he said. “I was head manager last year, and at the time I was like, ‘You know, I don’t think drum major is really the thing for me.’ But I auditioned anyway.”

As it turned out, the position of drum major turned out to be just “the thing” for him because he proved himself quite capable and never lost his commitment.

The primary purpose of the drum major is to conduct for the band during their practices and performances, but he learned that conducting is only a small part of the job.

Said Chen: “It’s a totally different experience from when you’re on the podium and when you’re on the field. You’re not in charge of the rehearsals; you’re more like an instrument of the rehearsals. You have to provide the type of energy the band needs in order to succeed.”

As drum major, it was not about his needs or his goals anymore, but rather the group as a whole, Chen said. Along with his three fellow drum majors, he presided over a band with more than 200 students.

“I learned that it takes a lot of patience and pride,” he said. “The drummers



Courtesy of ALAN TRAN

and I kept debating [over] the smallest things, but then eventually all those details and all that time paid off.”

Although it was the final stretch of school, filled with the stress of college applications, Chen spent every bit of effort being a capable drum major.

“As a freshman, it felt like time was always running out when it came to balancing band with everything else,” Chen said. “However, if you truly enjoy the process, you won’t find that to be a problem. Don’t look back at all your memories four years later and regret it.”

So was it worth it? “I was really honored to be drum major,” Chen said. “There were bad days when we felt the band wasn’t getting anything done, or it was rainy and everyone was complaining. But then, after being able to conduct the last note the band ever played on the field, it was clear that everything was worth it.”

Christina Crolla: A tough start

“I think the way I did everything in high school is exactly how I should have done it.”

Those are the words of Christina Crolla, a girl who played lacrosse and field hockey all four years, a girl who claims to know over 90 percent of the school population. Clearly, Crolla placed a strong emphasis on sports and strong connections with friends.

“I worked really hard,” she said. “I didn’t always get the grades I wanted though, because I had a learning problem, so I decided to be a [well-rounded] kid instead of focusing on one thing.”

Going into freshman year with an “I don’t know what I’m in for” mentality, she was surprised by the academic rigor. But during her sophomore year, surprise turned to resolve.

“Because freshman year was kind of difficult, I realized that I needed to try to work hard and push through, because in the end it would be worth it,” she said. “Sophomore year is the biggest transition. To me, freshmen are the only underclassmen at school.”

Then came junior year. Though she said that she took an easier route than many other students in terms of classes, Crolla still remembers it as her hardest year.

Despite the large amount of school work, Crolla decided to keep a strong focus on sports and her social life, further packing her schedule.

“I was always doing something; I always had sports, or tutoring, or SAT or something like that,” she said. “But if I’m going to bed at night thinking that I did all that stuff, it makes me feel so good at the end of the day.”

Crolla says that junior year was



Courtesy of CHRISTINA CROLLA

Senior Edwin Chen directs the band as drum major during an October rehearsal for Dublin performance.

Principal Paul Robinson informs senior Christina Crolla that her wish to be principal for a day has been granted.

and see where that takes me,’ but you never know what could happen if you get a 4.0 and you’re student body president, and you’re also all these different things,” Crolla said. “I feel like I don’t regret anything I did during high school, because I tried so much stuff.”

So was it worth it? “I had so much fun. When I first came here, it was such a transition, and it’s pretty much focused on academics here. I was so close to switching schools, but here I stand out, and it makes me kind of individual. I won’t regret anything.” ♦

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ROADS TO RECOVERY

GRAPHIC BY GITIKA NALWA

Q&A: Senior overcomes eating disorder

Carmine Drohan battled anorexia for much of early high school. She has mostly recovered, but still is very much invested in the issue, having shared her story during the Friday assembly of Speak Up for Change Week.

Q: Describe your struggles with your eating disorder. When did they start and how did they impact your life?

My eating disorder started in the fall semester of eighth grade. It's crazy for me to think about now, but I was literally scared of food and what any intake would do to my body. It was an obsession and an addiction; the more malnourished I got, the more I would do to avoid eating, and the crazier [the] actions I [took] would get. My parents, friends and teachers were so worried about me, and meal times were horrific events at my house because I would panic or get angry at whomever was trying to get me to eat. I still don't really know [what caused my eating disorder],

but I think it was just the environment I was in combined with my personality and some other factors. I was kind of just unlucky. I wasn't trying to get an eating disorder; that's not how it happens.

Q: What steps did you take to recover from your eating disorder? What helped?

My parents and doctors were at first the only ones that wanted me to recover; I didn't. I tried out at least seven forms of treatment and centers to find one that would work, and I fought against every one. Eventually, freshman year, I was sent to a place in Utah where I stayed for around eight months, and [gradually] I decided to put everything I had into recovery, fighting against my own thoughts all the time. Mostly, I had to gain a lot of weight to become healthy again and do huge amounts of group, family and individual therapy.

Q: What is one memorable moment from either your

recovery or the time before it?

[After six months at Utah], a kind of horrible thing happened as I was reaching my "goal weight" by having a huge meal plan and all that.

It was looking like I was [recovering] so I went on a home pass for a few weeks, but when I came back my treatment team had decided that my goal weight was not high enough [for me to be] fully healthy, and they broke it to me that I had to go back on weight gain again.

This doesn't sound like a big deal, but I had worked hard in therapy to be OK with the weight I was at, and to have to stay and gain more was absolutely devastating and scary.

Q: What happened after your recovery?

Now that I'm in recovery, I travel to Washington, D.C., a few times a year to lobby with the Eating Disorders Coalition to get eating disorder-



FALCON // LAUREN LOUIE

Carmine Drohan works with representatives to prevent eating disorders.

related legislation passed in Congress. I speak with representatives' and senators' staffers about my history with an eating disorder and the importance of passing whatever bill we are working on. It's always a bittersweet trip because there are several mothers who lobby that have lost children to eating disorders or people whose friends are suffering. Listening to others' stories always reminds me of my own journey and how lucky I am to have reached recovery.

Q: What are some of the

ills you have advocated for in Washington?

[There was] one about looking into the effects of Photoshopping advertisements on people's views of themselves, one about not having BMI testing being reported at certain schools as part of P.E. [and also] one about general eating disorder treatment being covered by insurance. ♦

The reporters for this story are Deepthi Sampathkumar and Kelly Xiao. For the full interview, go to saratogafalcon.org.

Eighth-grade bike accident crushes teenager's confidence

BY ANANTI RAJEEV

It was a sunny, breezy March day in my eighth-grade year at Redwood Middle School when I decided to bike back to school to watch a boys' volleyball game to support the team in their final game of the season.

I reached the intersection of Fruitvale and Allendale Avenues and noticed that there was still some leftover traffic from after school clogging the intersections to the school's entrance, so I redirected my route to enter the back of the school, crossing the Post Office along the way and entering the gym from the back.

Little did I know that this would be my last time biking this route.

A big green bush blocked my view of the exit of the Post Office, so I was unable to see as I approached the concrete sidewalk.

Bam.

The next thing I knew, I was lying face flat on the sidewalk. I peered around, startled. My bike was next to me, twisted abnormally on the dirt, one

pedal seriously loosened.

"Oh my god! Are you OK?"

I heard a lady scuffling behind me as she grabbed my shoulders to turn me over. I brushed her hands off and sat up.

I realized what had happened: Her car had hit my back tire, which had spun me around and sent me careening in circles until I finally lost balance and fell in the dirt.

"I've broken something," I thought.

I stood up after realizing that there wasn't much physical damage, although I was disoriented and upset.

The lady who had hit me looked to be in her mid-50s. Her white Volvo sat slightly turned and abruptly halted in the exit of the Post Office. No dents, no scratches, no scrapes, no damage.

I, on the other hand, had several deep cuts lining my legs, blood slowly welling up almost waiting to pour out. Luckily, my helmet prevented a serious head injury.

As I slowly regained my senses, I realized she had been yelling the whole time. Rather than helping me to my feet, she decided to chew me out for biking too fast on the left side of the road, and in my confused stupor, the only response I could utter was "I'm sorry."

To this day, I still don't know why I was the one who ended up apologizing. As a driver, she should have known to look both ways before proceeding out of the exit rather than simply disregarding the stop sign.

After she made sure I could walk, we exchanged phone numbers. She jumped in the car and sped away, never to be seen or heard from again.

The cuts on my legs had worsened, and blood was now dripping off onto the concrete. Bruised and battered, I stood next to my fallen bike as I made calls to my dad and my mom.

I sat down, tears dripping from my eyes, as I waited for my mom to come pick me up. I knew I wasn't going to

be able to go to soccer practice. I was shocked and slightly confused, but there was one thing I was sure of: One of my favorite pastimes would never ever be the same.

As an eighth grader, I lived for independence. I felt invincible, being able to bike through the streets of Saratoga without any sort of parental guidance. Not only was it a necessary mode of transportation but it was a symbol of my freedom.

After being hit by that car, my independent spirit took a major hit.

I haven't biked much since. The few times I did bike, a lingering doubt remained in my head about whether I would be able to complete my route safely or even make it home that night. Part of me cringed every time I saw a car nearby. My hands became magnets to the brakes. It was really the first time I had lost something constant in my life.

From something I used to boast my independence, biking, since that fateful day, has become something that I can no longer find solace in. ♦



Rajeev

SMOKE AND ASHES

ARSONIST SHATTERS PERCEPTION OF SARATOGA SAFETY

BY Gitika Nalwa

Saratoga: where "all the children are above average," where doors are left unlocked, and where cop cars respond in pairs to lemons being plucked from a wayside tree. You wouldn't expect arson in Saratoga, and neither did I, but that changed one night four years ago.

The night of

Friday, March 12, 2011: All was quiet that night, save for the buzz of the World Cup Cricket Final emanating from televisions in some Indian households.

At 2:35 a.m., the shriek of our phone resonated through our rental house. My mom, my brother and I remained asleep while my dad slumbered out of bed to take the call. Tom Curtis was on the line. He was the grandfatherly gentleman who lived across from the house my dad had been remodeling for nearly two years — the house we were going to move into in two months. That house, the house on the corner of Mallory and Cumberland, was ablaze.

Flames, 40-foot high, shot over the huddle of ranch-style houses at that corner. Bleary-eyed children peeked through their windows in fascination and fear as they watched our house turn to ashes. All the fire engines in town, and some from neighboring towns, battled the blaze. But I remained asleep, snuggled in my engine-red blanket, while my house burned.

The following morning

My mom was the first to tell me, speaking in low and tired tones, her one hand on my shoulder as I lay in bed, her other reaching to draw the curtains. To say it felt unreal is both cliché and utterly true.

I was in shock at first, and then in sorrow. I turned away from my mom slowly, buried my face in my pillow, and let tears soak my saffron-yellow sheets. But the day went on.

Around noon, my mom dropped me off at Foothill Elementary, to a practice for

the school musical, "Beauty and the Beast." Once there, I searched for my best friend, Erin, whose flowing blond hair and smiling blue eyes were easy to spot. She sensed my distress immediately: We had known each other since our second day in Mrs. Green's first grade class at Argonaut Elementary, when we were both the new kids. She had offered me a grape, and said, "Want to be friends?" I had said, "Ya," and we had been friends ever since.

Wiping my tears on the sleeves of my old faded pink sweatshirt, I told Erin what had happened. After that, there was a lot of hugging and nodding, and many smiles of consolation.

Play practice was a blur. I watched my peers whirl and twirl across the yellowed linoleum floor. They hummed and harmonized across the light from the windows, grinning

To say that it felt unreal is both cliché and utterly true. I was in shock at first, and then in sorrow.

and giggling. I felt sick.

Later, my mom picked me up from play practice, and then my brother Sanj from our rental house, and we headed to where my dad was: at what remained of our house. Sanj's brows were furrowed, his lips pursed and his eyes fierce as he stared at the charred remains of our house. He was determined not to cry.

I, however, could not hold back my tears. The site was swarming with firemen and federal agents from the ATF — the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, whose job it is to investigate acts of arson.

My mom, Sanj and I sat in our Honda minivan while my dad talked to the ATF agents. Then, not wanting to look at the smoldering ashes any longer, and seeing that there was little else we could do, the three of us returned to our

rented house.

Sunday morning

When I awoke the next morning, white light peeked through my bedroom window, and the sky was smothered by heavy grey clouds. I stepped outside with my Golden Retriever, Buddy, to find a white orchid with a note on our front porch. It was from Erin's family to ours, offering its condolences for our loss.

I walked back inside, handing the note to my mom. How sweet, my mom said as she read it. I put the orchid on the windowsill in the kitchen and took a seat at our round glass dining table.

Buddy nuzzled against my leg, and I ruffled his ears. Then, I stared at the orchid, its white petals bright against the gloomy morning sky. I breathed in, then out.

Looking back

It's been four years since that miserable sunny day followed by that gloomy grey morning. The ATF agents spent two days sifting through the debris, before declaring the cause of the fire to be arson. They told us that the fire had been started in the master bedroom by pouring a flammable liquid over some scrap paper and setting it alight. The fire had then spread to the rest of the house. The result was roughly \$800,000 in damage.

That year, Saratoga experienced nine cases of arson, the highest incidence of arson in Saratoga since records have been kept. But few in town know this, or choose to acknowledge it. Arson rates showed a steady increase from 2007, when the country entered a recession, to 2011, when the country came out of that recession. Coincidence? Perhaps not.

The police either never found out who committed the arson, or never told us. Quite frankly, I no longer care.

Since the fire, my brother has graduated from high school and moved onto college. And Erin and I, still the best of friends, have moved

onto high school. My attention has turned to grades and college admissions, and to "fruitful" summers.

There has been plenty of time to forget how arson once reduced my future home to ashes. I am no longer disappointed, or distressed, just indifferent.

Sanj, too, has moved on from the events of that night, although I think he had a harder time doing so than I did.

The house on the corner of Mallory and Cumberland is being built anew by my dad.

Although it might not be finished by the time I get to college, it is all right. We have moved through a couple of different rental houses, but I too am all right.

Then, it is a lie to say that Saratoga is a sheltered oasis — a lie perpetuated by either those who do not know better or those who simply want to protect their home values.

And it is a lie that burned down maybe four years ago, maybe many years ago, and left a crying young girl in the midst of smoke and ashes. ♦



Left: Nalwa's house after the arson fire on March 12, 2011, is shown. The damage amounted to about \$800,000. Below: The family room of Nalwa's house, which had been undergoing renovations since 2009 and was two months from completion, is shown.



FALCON // GITIKA NALWA



GRAPHIC BY HELEN CHEN

Seniors discuss path to college athletics recruitment

by Caitlin Ju & Kelly Xiao

Like any debate captain or Intel finalist who has perfected his or her specialty, school athletes also wield aces in the race for colleges. While some seniors continue to wait in anticipation for college acceptances, some are already certain of their futures.

Cross country and track distance runner senior Steven Sum, who holds the school record for a 9:10 two-miler, has already committed to Princeton University, a Division 1 school for track and field and cross country.

"Running is something that I truly enjoy and I think I can really compete at the next level," Sum said. "It is a huge part of my life and something I really enjoy doing so it was sort of a no-brainer that I would run in college, especially after college coaches started recruiting me."

The sports recruiting guidelines of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) allow coaches to contact players in person only during the summer before their senior year.

For some, like rower senior Alexandria Bauer, who already had her goals set on college athletics since she began her sport, it was a long wait.

Bauer, who started rowing in eighth

grade and now competes with the Los Gatos Rowing club, started sending emails to colleges in the spring of her junior year.

Bauer started communicating with numerous colleges, such as University of San Diego and University of California, Berkeley.

After choosing Loyola Marymount University, which is Division 1 for rowing, Bauer knew her college experience would be very different.

"It's a huge time commitment," Bauer said. "For me, it's going to [be] practice in the morning and in the afternoon almost every day."

Not all seniors like Bauer emailed colleges and some, like Sum, were somewhat less proactive.

"I usually went to [the college's] website and then looked for recruiting questionnaires. I filled them out and submitted them," Sum said. "Either that or they had originally found me and sent me let-

ters already."

Other seniors are weighing their options between Division 1 and Division 3 universities, each of which holds advantages and disadvantages for sports and academics.

Senior tennis player Neel Bedekar, who has played on the

"[Running] is a huge part of my life and something I really enjoy doing so it was sort of a no-brainer that I would run in college.

senior Steven Sum

Bedekar recognizes the advantages of going to a Division 3 university, such as more time for academics.

Bauer, Sum and senior swimmer Randy Tsai, who has not committed to any colleges, all agree on the element of time commitment and the positive effect sports has on time management.

"Because you're swimming three hours every day, when you go home you don't have that much time to do your homework," Tsai said. "You have to know how to spend your time wisely."

Tsai, who is planning on swimming in college, has not signed onto any colleges.

However, he is looking at Division 3 colleges, like John Hopkins University, Emory University and Pomona College, and Division 1 schools like Dartmouth University and Brown University.

Like many athletes, Tsai said his sport "provides an outlet for [him] to share an interest with a lot of people."

Sum advises those who are thinking about becoming recruited by colleges for sports to be extremely committed and expect the athletic experience to be different from the one in high school.

"You have to really love the sport if you want to play in college. It will be a lot different too," Sum said. "You have to realize that you're not going to be the best right off the bat." ♦

do not offer athletic scholarships, but the presence of scholarships have not played a major role in Bedekar's decision.

However, he is still waiting to make a choice until all his college results are released in order to weigh all his options.

"Because I've been playing for so long, I really wanted to play tennis in college," Bedekar said. "[However] it's probably going to be difficult to decide what college to choose now."

2014 alumni reflect on college sport rookie season

by Jenny Qian & Oksana Trifonova

From AYSO soccer to high school varsity football, sports have always been an integral part of growing up. But after years of soccer practices and football games, most students abandon their jerseys and prepare for the future. But there are always exceptions.

Class of 2014 alumnus Stephen Cho is one of these exceptions. Having played water polo throughout high school, Cho is a freshman at Harvard University, where he plays water polo for the varsity team.

Like him, many senior athletes had to face the choice of continuing to play for a college team or concentrating solely on academics as they began applying for the various colleges back in September. For Cho, this part was the hardest,

since he had to work to maintain a balance between his sport and his education.

"Time management is without a doubt the most important factor I need during the season," Cho said. "When I practice four hours a day, I need to make sure I'm keeping up with my work and studies. It has definitely made me a more productive person."

Even so, Cho maintains that playing water polo at Harvard has been all that he had hoped for and more.

"My Harvard teammates are some of the most genuine and passionate people I've met at my tenure here," Cho said. "The older guys are great counselors not only in the pool but out of the pool too. You can't really find a flaw in these guys."

Another 2014 alumna, Sara Petterson, also decided to play golf in college and

is attending Santa Barbara City College.

"I did golf in [college] because I thought it would be fun to do something for the school and having something to be committed to," Petterson said. "[It is] a huge commitment."

Petterson has noticed big differences at the higher level of competition.

"[In high school] you can get by without sleeping much and doing homework after practice, but in college you will need all the sleep you can get and it is very important to manage the school work as the practices are much longer and more intense," Petterson said.

Because golf has such a strict schedule as well as a number of tournaments, Petterson struggled to fit all of her schedules into her class time slots. A typical tournament schedule start at 5:30 a.m. and lasts the entire day.

She has even had to take a math class at different university, and a couple online classes to complete her credits.

"I would always bring my laptop with me in the van going to tournaments," Petterson said. "Since we'd usually get up so early on tournament days, I would be exhausted when I came home and it was so hard to study because of how tired I was."

For other athletes who plan on playing a sport in college Petterson advises them to be prepared for hard work and dedication.

"Make sure to get your classes along with a counselor to make sure you have a schedule that is manageable while playing the sport, as well as getting classes on the right days and hours," Petterson said.

Despite the cons of playing sports in college, she does not regret choosing to play golf in college.

"I have really enjoyed playing golf in college," Petterson said. "It sure is a time commitment, but I miss it when my season is over." ♦

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Girls battle hard in CCS, fall short to Branham

by Jenny Qian

Senior captain Samie Davey ran down the court, ball pounding beneath her. The gym was buzzing with anticipation as the girls called out to each other frantically. So began the girls' basketball team's first CCS game against Branham on Feb. 28 at Mills High School.

The team went into the first round CCS confident after having record of 5-7 in a difficult De Anza League. However, the game started off a bit slow as the Falcons were initially intimidated by a few of the big girls for the Bruins.

As the game went on, however, they were able to get back their rhythm and

play confidently.

Senior co-captain Mikayla Davis led the Falcons, going 8-12 from the floor and 3-4 from the line with 9 rebounds. Following Davis, senior Sara Parden had 7 rebounds and went 2-2 from the free-throw line. When the girls found out that they would be playing Branham for the first CCS game, they knew it would be a challenge.

"We swung the ball around really well, and began making more baskets than before," said Davey. The game was a close one, with the Falcons scoring right after Branham did. The girls fell short and ended up losing 48-45.

"[Branham] played really physical

and the refs didn't limit [them], which didn't really help us," said sophomore Aryana Goodarzi. "Despite that, we played our hearts out and it was a really tough loss for all of us."

The loss at CCS ended the girls' season. Despite being in a higher league, the girls were able to prove their abilities in the De Anza League. For Davey, this was an accomplishment, as it was the girls' first season in a higher league in three years while having to deal with the numerous injuries players faced.

The girls were also able to win 50-41 at home against Wilcox on Feb. 18 in their senior day game. "I loved being able to play one last time in the home gym with

my friends on the team," said senior co-captain Jennifer McAfee. "We've been teammates for years now, through highs and lows and it was amazing to have friends on and off the court."

The girls' successes throughout the season included a victorious 61-57 win on Feb. 13 against Gunn. However, on Feb. 11, the Falcons lost to long-time rival Los Gatos for the second time with a score of 44-34. The team will continue to practice throughout the year in hopes of doing even better next year.

"This is the best team I've ever played on," said Davey. "I wish I could have continued playing with them for a little longer." ♦

BOYS' GOLF

Seniors in starting lineup provide strong foundation

by Oksana Trifonova & Arman Vaziri

With four key seniors, the boys' golf team certainly does not lack experience. Despite the 2014 graduation of Christian Galvin, one of its star players from last year, the team plans to rely on its four senior key players to achieve success.

This year, all competing players are upperclassmen, including seniors No. 1 Arman Vaziri, No. 2 Robby Gragnola, No. 5 Noah Jung and No. 6 Lukas Petterson — the leaders of the team.

"It's pretty fun having four seniors on the team because I have been practicing with them for four years and they have made me a better player," Gragnola said.

Furthermore, the camaraderie among the seniors helps keep the team in a light-hearted mood, especially when there are stressful situations.

"Having this many seniors gives the team a lot of spirit," Petterson said.

"Since we have known each other for four years, we have inside jokes and are very comfortable with each other."

Over their four years on the team, the seniors have gained much experience competing against other teams, playing different courses and learning from previous star players such as class of 2013 alumnus Robbie Parden and Galvin.

"I think we have an advantage compared to other schools because when it comes to a pressure-packed situation we know how to remain calm and embrace the challenge," Gragnola said.

During practices, the top six players and coaches Dave Gragnola and Micah Hall try to spend some of their time

helping the bottom six players, who don't compete against other schools, to help prepare them for competition in the upcoming years.

"The team will suffer when four of the top players leave, but I think that if the bottom six players practice hard during and off the season, they will have a chance to replace our spots next year," Petterson said.

Though the future is uncertain, the 3-2 team is focusing on its matches this year, especially against rivals Los Gatos and Monta Vista.

The team dominated Santa Clara at home 200-280 Feb. 23, with Vaziri being the medalist with a one over par 35.

Furthermore, the camaraderie among the seniors helps keep the team in a light-hearted mood, especially when there are stressful situations.

BOYS' LACROSSE

Falcons raise expectations following new additions

by Apoorv Kwatra & Neehar Thumathy

With the addition of new players, the boys' varsity lacrosse team is gearing up for a successful season.

Sophomore defenseman Derek Yun, who is returning for his second year, believes that the team will benefit in general from the new players because of the boost in skill level.

Additions this year include freshman Ryan Caviani, sophomores Kian Ghelichkhani, Nolan Chao, Daelan Denenberg, Kerem Celik, Derek Yun, Aiden Peck and junior Omar Ajane.

As an individual, Yun hopes to become a better player on the defensive side and play better in the midfield because he is also a long stick midfielder. "Defense in lacrosse can't be strong unless everyone knows what they are doing, so I hope our entire defense will learn to communicate and grow with more chemistry," Yun said.

Yun also follows a fitness regimen on his own time to further improve. He understands the necessity of staying in shape and working on one's game in or-

der to benefit the whole team.

Yun said that if everyone takes care of conditioning on his own, the team won't have to worry about it. He hopes the team is able to beat Los Gatos and other tough opponents with his hard work. Beating Los Gatos is not the only goal that the boys' lacrosse team has in mind this season.

"I think we can win our league this season, which is what we are all trying to do," Yun said. "Hopefully, we can win CCS as well. I know we have the talent to make a deep playoff run."

Although building on the previous season is always a

goal for sports teams, this team actually has the talent that makes it possible to do so.

"It's always helpful to have new players that have a team first attitude and are focused on winning," said Aiden Peck

The team went 2-0 in a tournament and lost in their first preseason game against Scotts Valley High School and have played two games since. The team's next game is today against Mountain View. ♦

GIRLS' LACROSSE

Team prepares for season with emphasis on defense

by Jade Bisht & Jane Park

Although the girls' varsity lacrosse team has lost its coach of five years, Eric Wong, when he enrolled in film school in Southern California earlier this year, they are gearing up for the season with the addition of two new coaches.

Former Ann Sobrato High School alumna Krista Cavanaugh and girls' varsity basketball coach Danny Wallace will work together to implement new game plans and skills while following traditional drills from past years.

Head coach Cavanaugh was a starter throughout high school and participated in an all-star team for two years and a local club team, Clovers Lacrosse.

Athletes are confident that their new head coach will help them continue the progress of the past few years.

"[Cavanaugh] knows what she's doing and can relate to us well," senior captain Christina Crolla said. "I think that we'll have a successful season."

A month into the season, Cavanaugh is determined to work on improving each player's skills as well as emphasize the importance of the defense lineup.

"I was taught that defense wins games," Cavanaugh said. "If you have a good defense and the other team can't score then our chances of scoring before them are typically higher."

In preparation for new season, Cava-

naugh met with Wong to gain insight on returning players and successful drills.

"[Wong] was very helpful with giving me a great vision in how amazing the team is," Cavanaugh said. "He gave me a lot of his plays and told me to expect to play with a handful of talented and hardworking girls."

With Wallace by her side to ease the transition into coaching a team at a new school, Cavanaugh felt coaching for the team was much easier than anticipated.

"The girls were really welcoming and nice. I felt very connected to the school program straight off, so it hasn't been oppressive at all."

Cavanaugh's approach to coaching revolves around an emphasis on defensive tactics.

Because lacrosse is a very team-oriented sport, Cavanaugh believes that every position has equal importance.

"I'd like even my offensive players to be really good at defense too, because you always fall back on defense in the game," Cavanaugh said.

The Falcons lost their first pre-season game 13-3 to Menlo-Atherton on March 5, a traditionally strong program. Despite the 10-point difference, the loss showed a good performance that demonstrated the team's competitiveness.

The Falcons played their first league game against Mountain View on March 12, but the Falcon could not cover that due to deadlines. ♦



Cho

TRACK

Star sprinter reflects on experience

BY Caitlin Ju
& Dorrie Tang

"Lunges! High knees! Change directions!"

Head down to the turf after school some day, and you'll see senior Laura Cummins shouting these instructions, leading the track team in their daily warm-up routine.

A key member of the team for four years and now a star varsity sprinter, she first became involved in the sport during the summer after eighth grade when she attended one of the pre-season practice with her older sisters, Michelle and Katie.

Having watched both her sisters compete on the SHS track team for years, Cummins was inspired to join the team the following spring.

Though she had already participated in some summer workouts with her older sisters and their coaches, Cummins started competing the summer before she entered high school.

"I did the All-Comers' meet at Los Gatos, and I never really tried out any other sport because I started out with [track] and liked it so I stuck with it," Cummins said.

Laura, unlike her older sisters, Michelle and Katie, who did jumps and throwing respectively, decided to focus on sprints. Though she sees the 100-me-

ter dash as her main event, she also participates in the 200-meter dash, the 400-meter dash, the 4 x 100 meter relay and the 4 x 400 meter relay.

"I knew I didn't want to do long distance, so I just tried out sprinting right away to see how it was and I liked it," Cummins said.

By focusing on the 100 meter, Cummins saw a significant improvement from her freshman and sophomore year in her junior year. During her freshman year, her 100-meter time was in the 14 second range, but as of last year, Cummins' 100 meter personal record is 12.93 seconds.

Cummins attributes the faster times to "more weight training, more summer practices and pre-season practices and more motivation because that was when [she] started looking at different colleges."

As she was invited to the CCS Top 8 qualifiers meet last year and is the girls' team's fastest 100-meter sprinter, Cummins is seen by her teammates as a hard worker and a star runner.

Fellow relay sprinter senior Avery Gigoux recognizes Cummins as a good leader and an important member of the team.

"She's someone who really believes in everyone. No one's ever had any problems with her," Gigoux said. "She works out three times as hard as every-



Senior Laura Cummins (left) runs with junior Stephanie Ouchida at practice on March 9.

one else and brings the team together."

Cummins hopes to continue doing track in college even though she plans on majoring in either business or biological sciences, and has applied to schools like the University of San Diego and Occidental College, which are both Division 3 in track.

"[Track] is not the only determination," Cummins said. "I would choose academics, but I do have a preference to running at whatever college I choose.

That's my motivation especially for the schools that have a set time for me to make the team."

Though Cummins is unsure if she will be able to continue track in college, she is certain being on the track team has left a positive impact on her life.

"I like the competition aspect [since] it's nice to get the adrenaline going," Cummins said. "It's a good release if you are really stressed. It boosts your confidence and you feel better." ♦

BASEBALL

Freshman players bring perspective, enthusiasm

NEWER MEMBERS ADDED TO FILL GAPS LEFT BY WINTER SEASON LATECOMERS

BY Nupur Maheshwari
& Summer Smith

When looking out onto the baseball field this season, two especially young faces can be seen stepping up to the plate.

These new additions, freshmen Robert Scott, shortstop and infielder, and Nathan Peng, middle-infielder and catcher, have helped the baseball team get through its first few games.

The baseball team began playing games on Feb. 24 with a win, but as of March 5 their record is 2-2.

Due to basketball making CCS, a couple of the players, senior Joey Medeiros and junior Tyler Yoshira, have been late to join the team.

Because of this, head coach Adam Varteressian moved the two freshman on to the varsity team for the beginning of the season.

The two new "puppies" have been put in place to help support the team, but since it is rare that freshman play on varsity, it is possible to boys could play on both teams throughout the season.

"It is quite the experience," Scott said. "It's really exciting and is a lot of fun to learn from guys who are older than you and who have more experience than you. But our coach does like to refer to us as 'puppies.'"

Both freshmen have been playing baseball for as long as they can remember.

For Scott, the game runs in his family.

He was motivated to play by his brother, 2013 alumnus middle infielder and pinch runner Kevin Scott, who had a fiery passion for the game.

"My brother kept me playing because he took it very seriously and is a couple of years older than me. I started to pick up after him," Scott said.

Peng was introduced to the sport through a friend in second grade and developed a love for the sport.

However, the opportunity to play on varsity as freshman is a new experience for him.

"At first I felt really nervous because I was playing with juniors and seniors and I didn't really know them," Peng said. "Once I did get to know them better, it was much easier."

Having more veteran teammates who act as role models is a great learning experience for the freshmen.

Both of them are still developing their skills, according to both Scott and Peng.

"One of our strengths is that a lot of us are friends; we can get along and all of us have fun all the time," Scott said.

Although the team thinks it is well prepared for the season, a lot of the boys are struggling staying focused during the games, Peng said.

The lack of concentration throughout games is one of the team's weaknesses that they hope to overcome in order to win more games.

The freshman are looking forward to beating the team's rival, Los Gatos, and competing for a league title at the end of the season.

Saratoga has won the tough De Anza League title for the past two years in a row, beating top competition like Palo Alto.

"I'm definitely looking forward to winning league and just playing ball games!" said Peng. ♦



Peng

WINTER GUARD

Passionate performer expands beyond school

BY Becky Hoag
& Amelia Schwabe

Set in the middle of the floor, freshman Austin Shi — the only male now on the winter guard team — takes a deep breath and starts counting. Five, six, five-six-seven-dip.

He then tosses his rifle in the air as the music goes silent for this impact moment. The rifle spins six times in the air and heads back to Shi, who catches it with flair.

Although this year has been Shi's first year in winter guard, he has been

encouraged to pursue higher levels of the activity.

In addition to the high school's guard, he also auditioned in late December and January for the Santa Clara Vanguard Cadets and the Concord Blue Devils, two of the most prestigious guard teams in the world.

He practiced hard with members in the guard as well as some outside Vanguard members, husband and wife team Todd and Kristi Ryan. Todd Ryan, who Shi had met in middle school, is the main instructor for movement, such as dance, for the Blue Devils while Kristi Ryan has dedicated seven years to Santa Clara Vanguard.

"I asked [Todd Ryan] if he had any tips and he decided to train me," Shi said. "I would be working with him and his wife for three hours every single Sunday and we would just do a bunch of movement."

Shi eventually ended up receiving a callback after a few days for both Blue

Devils and Vanguard Cadets. He decided to go with the Vanguard Cadets instead, as he received his admittance there before the Blue Devils.

Shi said his friends were his main encouragement to pursue his dream of joining guard.

"A lot of my friends [ask how guard is] and they are sincere in asking," Shi said. "So I would start talking about it and they would be genuinely interested. Not to the point that they would want to join, but they care about it."

Shi encourages more boys to look at guard for themselves and to be com-

fortable with who they are, as he was when he joined the 28-member group.

While guard members have to maintain uniformity, they are able to put their own

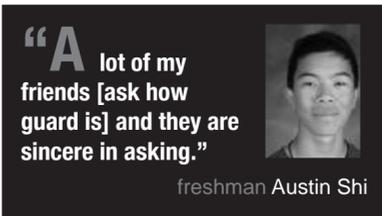
personality in every motion, allowing him, personally, to be more of an individual.

This year's winter guard production is entitled "Star Gazing," featuring a more sophisticated version of the classic nursery rhyme "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star."

While this might raise a few eyebrows at first, Shi says that the way the show is very mature.

"As our instructor likes to call it, [our show is] a step in a new direction for the entire colorguard program," Shi said. "You would think that a lullaby would bore people, but because the tempo is really fast, we're spinning [very fast]."

The winter guard will be competing at Oak Grove High school in San Jose on March 14. ♦



freshman Austin Shi

"A lot of my friends [ask how guard is] and they are sincere in asking."

SWIMMING

Team hopes to have powerful season

BY Arjun Ramanathan
& Rotem Shaked

Although the boys' swim team lost several key athletes to graduation including star alumni Cameron Borch, Patrick Wang and Sasha Samoilov, new additions to the roster are sure to boost the team's chances for CCS.

In particular, the boys will have a new transfer student junior Jack Xie who is coming from China and swims at a high level.

On the girls' team, key freshmen include Jeanette Khowong and Colina Guan.

Khowong practices with De Anza Cupertino Aquatics (DACA), rather than the school's team. This is a common option to take when swimmers feel more comfortable with

their own clubs rather than with the swimmers from the school team.

"I'm pretty confident about achieving CCS cuts because I have gotten those in past meets," Khowong said. "I definitely hope to drop times as well."

Khowong aims to focus mainly on her backstroke this season, training for the 100-yard backstroke event.

"I'm practicing for this season by doing CrossFit with my team and training well with my club," Khowong said.

No changes have been made to the coaching staff, as coaches Kristen Thomson, Christian Bonner, Trent Larsen and Brett Slayton have all returned this season.

Returning swimmers such as senior Madison Gress are opti-

mistic for the new season and the new talent on the Falcons' team.

"I think the season is going to be strong since we have a lot of young speed on the girls team," Gress said. "It'll be exciting to swim with last year's freshmen and the new freshmen."

Gress also said she plans to try to develop her individual cuts for CCS in events like the 100 freestyle.

"I made all four of my CCS cuts last year, but this year I'm hoping to make my individual cuts earlier in the season because I barely made them last year," Gress said.

With the new talent and returning swimmers to back the team, swimmers are optimistic for a successful season of bonding and improvement.

"It's been great being back



Junior Mason Lee dives off the blocks during a practice on March 6.

in the pool after a winter off from club water polo or swimming and I realized how much I missed it," Gress said. "Since our team is separated so much

in the lanes it can be hard to get to know everyone, but the coaches have been mixing up the lanes so I think that has definitely helped with bonding." ♦

BOYS' TENNIS

Talented rookie ignites his spark for future successes

BY Kevin Chow

This year, a single freshman has made the varsity tennis team: Dean Stratakos.

This is a testament to Stratakos' abilities, since the varsity tennis team is one of the best in California. The team had a 12-0 league record last spring and also placed first in the California Tennis Classic tournament in Fresno.

The team remains strong this year, with the return of players like seniors Neel Bedekar, Vikram Ramesh and Hans Sun, as well as other juniors and sophomores. And Stratakos fits in well among them.

Right now, he is playing No. 2 doubles with his partner junior Naved Krishnamurthy. He has been playing tennis for 10 years and has participated in a variety of tournaments, reaching all the way from California to as far as Florida.

Most memorable for him was a large national tournament he attended this past December, called the United States Tennis Association (USTA) National Winter Championships, which pitted

the top 128 qualifying players from all over the country against each other.

"I went in [unsure of] how I would do, so I didn't set my expectations too high," Stratakos said.

In the end, Stratakos finished 11th, losing to an eventual finalist.

"I was extremely happy with my results, because I had gone through several tough matches to get there," Stratakos said. "I learned that I was actually a lot better than I was giving myself credit for, and it gave me motivation to work even harder every time I step on the court."

True to his word, Stratakos practices usually for at least two hours a day.

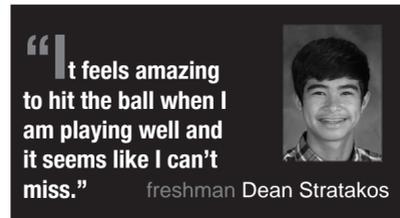
Stratakos is motivated to perform better, especially while on the varsity team, but it's also simply because he loves the game.

"It feels amazing to hit the ball when I am playing well and it seems like I can't miss," Stratakos said.

He also aspires to become "as smooth and composed" as his favorite tennis player, Roger Federer.

"The way he moves around the court is so graceful, and I train hard to become like that," Stratakos said.

Stratakos' playing style demonstrates his confidence, favoring decisive pressure on the opponent coupled with solid baseline gameplay.



"It feels amazing to hit the ball when I am playing well and it seems like I can't miss."

freshman Dean Stratakos

WRESTLING

Murabito wins CCS title

BY Apoorv Kwatra
& Trevor Leung

After winning the CCS wrestling tournament for the 182-weight class on Feb. 27-28 at Independence High, senior Christian Murabito finished just outside the top eight at the California High School State Finals on March 7-8. At CCS, Murabito

won the first two matches with pins and his third match 4-0, which allowed him to advance to the semifinals the next day.

The semifinals match provided more of a challenge for him, but he pulled off a 5-2 victory, bringing him to the finals match.

Murabito had an "even closer finals match" against the second-seeded wrestler, Tony Andrade from Gilroy, triumphing 3-1. At the state meet at Rabobank Arena in Bakersfield, he won his first two matches by fall, but was pinned in his third match, which put him in the consol-

ation bracket. He won his first two matches in the consolation bracket 3-0 and 6-1 before getting pinned in his next match.

Murabito credits his success in CCS to "hard work and patience." Murabito often practices and works out four hours per day.

Although none of the other team members made it to CCS, they supported Murabito's role in the tournament.

"We cheered Christian along the way," said senior Connor Peebles, "and if he needed to work outside of practice or skip it, [the coach] gave him permission."

The team won two matches in their league, but wrestlers were happy with the season.

Five members of the team were first-time wrestlers this year. According to Murabito, they did well for first timers, and they fought well during league matches.

The team will again face difficulties next season regarding experience, as five

BADMINTON

Freshman joins varsity with national-level skills

BY Lauren Louie

Freshmen are often overlooked or seen as an acceptance onto varsity sports team. But this isn't the case with freshman Stephen Ding.

He will likely be playing singles. Ding became a nationally ranked player in his second year of playing in the U15 division.

Practice for a player at his level is arduous and frequent. Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays are spent with three hours of practice, and extra lessons on Saturday with a private coach he has been with for two years.

Originally, badminton came at the recommendation of Ding's father, who played as a teen.

Ding tried several other sports, including soccer, fencing, basketball and swimming. He often grew bored and moved on to another before he found his niche with a racket.

It was a year and a half or two into

the sport when Ding made a couple friends that were "actually really good" that he decided that he wanted to take badminton seriously.

Impressively enough, Ding has only been playing for a short four years.

Badminton happens to be a family sport. Not only does his mother play, but his father has been playing since he was a teen and his older brother, alumni Evans Ding, was also nationally ranked.

On the topic of being nationally ranked, Ding is humble. He says that "it's not really special" and "just really fun."

"... I just find badminton one of my hobbies and something I do really well so I really enjoy it," Ding said. "And so being ranked, it doesn't really [affect me.]"

Overall, Ding doesn't see badminton in his future as a profession. Most likely, Ding says, badminton will remain a lifelong hobby. ♦

>> snapshots



FALCON // LAUREN LOUIE



FALCON // LAUREN LOUIE



FALCON // JADE BISHT



FALCON // JADE BISHT

Clifford Yin (9) scoops rice to add to the food pouch soon delivered to those in need at Stop Hunger Now on Feb. 28.

Harsha Mohan (12) and Samuel Breck (12) walk the runway at Benefit Fashion Show on March 7.

In front of the president of the Rose Bowl, Tejas Siripurapu (12) performs alongside the winter percussion during lunch on March 6.

Brian Lew (12) swims butterfly at a swim practice on March 8.

buzzworthy >> Day in the life of principal Crolla

BY Kevin Chow

Staff lanyard? Check. Red wristbands? Check. Golf cart? Check. On the morning of Feb. 26, senior Christina Crolla began preparing to be the school's principal for a day, a wish she had made to the Leadership team during Speak Up for Change Week.

Crolla realized her wish was an unusual one, but felt it was appropriate given her reputation as a social butterfly.

"Last year I wished for someone to get recognition for something that [he or she] did, but I felt like this year I should do something for myself," Crolla said. "I thought about it for a day and I thought I need to do something really outgoing because people know how outgoing I am. Then I thought, why don't I try to be the ruler of the school for the day?"

As Crolla soon learned, being "the ruler of the school" was not an easy task,

but still a fun one.

Crolla, accompanied by none other than principal Paul Robinson, kicked off the morning of her day by recognizing students and teachers alike "for nice things they had done." With a staff lanyard around her neck, Crolla roamed the school, handing out "It's GREAT to be a Falcon" wristbands to her peers and teachers, including art teacher Diana Vanry, who took her students to an art museum.

"Didn't you notice that Thursday was the best day ever for students because she was in control?" Robinson laughed.

Robinson and Crolla then attended a PTSO meeting, where they discussed WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) plans and prom.

"They [also] asked about powder-

puff," Crolla said. "I [told] them how the juniors beat the seniors [last year] and how it was really exciting."

The two went out for lunch to the Burger Bar in Saratoga. They took "the Principal's truck," and Robinson drove.

"We had a really good lunch," Robinson said. "[Going off campus for lunch] isn't something I do a lot, so this was kind of a treat

for me too."

Robinson finished the day with a confidential meeting that required the presence of an actual principal. While she was waiting for the meeting to end, Crolla "sat in classrooms and observed."

For Crolla, perhaps the most memorable moment in the day was driving one of the school's golf carts.

"It was really fun," Crolla said. "[Robinson] sat in the passenger's seat and I drove it around and people were laughing so hard when they saw me driving the cart."

Crolla said she had a great time being principal for the day and that "it was definitely worth wishing for." And while her time as principal may be over, Crolla still has the staff lanyard and a couple of wristbands as souvenirs of her time in power. ♦



Stressed and depressed about the dress

SENIOR RISKS FRIENDSHIP OVER BLUE AND BLACK QUESTION

\$herr money

Sherrilyn Ling



It all happened one fateful Thursday afternoon. Never has such terror gripped the Internet populis since the downfall of the destined 2012 Mayan apocalypse theory. One dress, an unflattering one at that, has made hundreds of thousands of people all over the world question their own sanity because the confusion over the blue/black or white/gold dress waits for no man.

There was a strange peacefulness lingering in the air as my friend senior Jane Park and I were on our way to Michaels to buy supplies for an upcoming AP Gov/Econ project. That serenity was abruptly interrupted when Jane's phone buzzed with a message notification from her sister. Upon looking at the godforsaken picture of the dress, Jane turned to me, puzzled, and asked why her sister would think that it was blue and black. I laughed, thinking that she was just kidding with me; the dress was definitely blue and black. She retorted that it was truly white and gold, and thus, the first domino fell.

After 10 minutes of driving with heated arguments and hurt feelings, Jane and I were livid as we stormed into Michaels's. The simple dress debacle had escalated into a mini Cold War, and I ditched Jane somewhere in between the felt aisle and the paint brushes. We awkwardly crossed paths in the poster section, and Jane was hellbent on making me admit the dress was white and gold.

Convinced that I was actually color-blind, Jane mockingly asked me to identify the colors of random art supplies as if I were a 2-year-old.

Other customers eyed us awkwardly as Jane pointed to a piece of construction paper and I screamed, "RED" at her in reply. They didn't seem to understand the very stressful situation we were in. Jane was becoming increasingly persistent at trying to prove me wrong, and I was becoming increasingly annoyed at her testing my eyesight.

It was almost reassuring to go home and see that the debate had almost everyone on all social media raving. Friendships collapsed. Couples broke up. The dress was coming for us all.

As the dress threatened to reduce my 10-year friendship with Jane to the point of utter extinction, we decided to solve our eight hour fight with a poll. We asked roughly 30 people whether the dress was blue/black or white/gold. Of

course the results would come out to be an even half and half.

Thankfully, the science side of social platforms quickly offered answers for the question that was haunting the Internet: WHAT COLOR IS THE DRESS?!

As it turns out, the dress varies in color because of the way our eyes work. There are two types of photoreceptors that help our brains translate light into vision: rods and cones. Rods are sensitive to light and can see shapes, but it's up to the cones to register colors. Different people have different levels of rods and cones, and this combined with the washed out lighting in the photo explains why the dress looks either blue/black, white/gold or other combinations between the four colors. But the white and gold dress myth was debunked, as multiple online users posted pictures of the same dress in different lightings and from various angles; the dress was most definitely blue and black.

However, it does not explain why Jane vehemently attacked my pride in Michaels to prove a point, as the original dress is, in fact, BLUE AND BLACK. Jane, if you're reading this, I can't believe you would humiliate me like that.

I expect a five paragraph apology essay in my inbox by the end of the month. I also suggest you get your eyes, and attitude, checked. ♦

>> topten

WAYS TO COPE WITH COLLEGE REJECTIONS

- 10 **Don't worry about the rejections.** Remember, you matter.
- 9 **Eat a tub of ice cream and watch some Netflix.** Contrary to belief, binge-watching counts as therapeutic exercise.
- 8 **Face it.** You probably didn't do enough extracurriculars.
- 7 **Have a bonfire.** Set fire to the rain... of rejection letters.
- 6 **Find your zen.** Put that minute-meditation from math to use.
- 5 **Relax.** You have the rest of your life ahead of you!
- 4 **Brag about numerous acceptances.** Even if you were rejected, nobody needs to know.
- 3 **Make extravagant summer plans.** Gotta be present at every shoreline event!
- 2 **Become the next Steve Jobs.** Who needs a college degree to be successful anyway?
- 1 **Remember that your Aeries account expires in three months.** You're almost there.

>>> Anant Rajeev & Arjun Ramanathan