



Junior stage manages for the first time.



Juniors try assorted pumpkin foods.



Field hockey dominates despite injuries.



THE saratogafalcon



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

saratogafalcon.org

Friday >> October 30, 2015
Vol. 55, No. 4

NOT SO GOLDEN

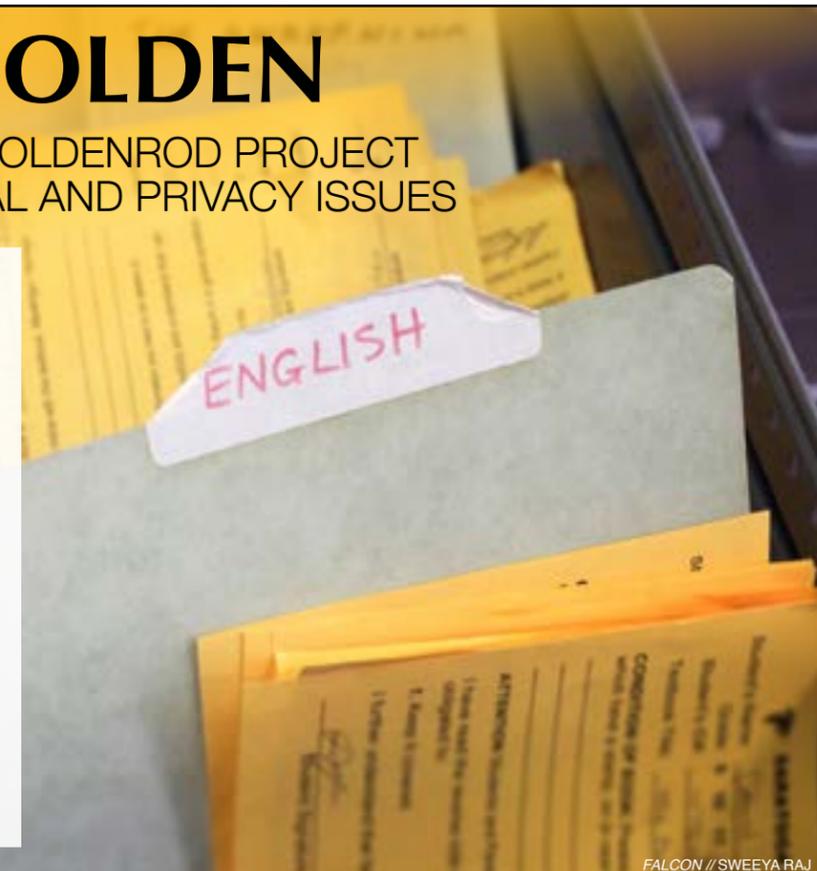
APP DEV'S DIGITIZED GOLDENROD PROJECT DOOMED BY TECHNICAL AND PRIVACY ISSUES

BY Katherine Sun & Rachel Zhang

After nearly seven years, pages of emails and countless hours of work later, the Application Developers (App Dev) Club's project to digitalize the goldenrod forms that record defects with the school's books remains unrealized and is unlikely to be resurrected.

In 2013, class of 2015 alumnus Aditya Aggarwal, then a sophomore, decided to continue the ongoing App Dev project of replacing the existing paper goldenrod system with a digital program. In the following years, Aggarwal refused to let go of his project and continuously approached the administration despite the staff's reluctance and ultimate rejection.

>> APP DEV on pg. 6



DOCUMENTARIES

Senior sheds light on autism through project

BY Divya Rallabandi & Amulya Vadlakonda

Last year in his Anatomy and Physiology class, teacher Kristofer Orre began experimenting with something called the 20 Time program, based on the idea that people working independently on their own pet projects will do extraordinary work.

Orre gave his students the Monday of each week to work on a project of their choosing. Senior Isha Mangal thought about it and decided to devote her time to a cause close to her heart: a documentary about autism.

Mangal has been working with autistic children for over two years, both in India at a school for mentally challenged kids and in the Bay Area with an organization called Son-Rise. The 20 Time proj-

>> MANGAL on pg. 19

STUDENT STRESS

Parent group proposes testing policy changes

BY Fiona Sequeira

If you find yourself anxious at the possibility of having a high-stakes test in every single class on the same day this semester, your plight is beginning to gain some attention, and soon there might be more ways of avoiding this situation.

Every month, principal Paul Robinson has been meeting with Challenge

Student Stress (CSS), a parent-led task force concerned with reducing student stress. He is sometimes joined by superintendent Bob Mistele.

Lately, a big topic for discussion has been testing policies, such as when students have multiple tests lined up on the same day. To give students an out and reduce their stress, the administration is in the early stages of considering a "get out of jail free card" for each student that

he or she can use once per semester in a particular class in order to reschedule a test for a more convenient date.

According to Robinson, the leadership team, comprised of department chairs and administration, is still wrestling with what exactly this system would look like, or if implementing a policy is even necessary.

"Many teachers are already willing to work with students to reschedule a test

on a particularly stressful day," Robinson said. "[But] sometimes, in creating a policy and making everyone follow it, you eliminate the creativity and other things people do when certain situations arise, and the policy becomes more of a hindrance than a help."

Teachers have also been encouraged to collaborate with each other in order to

>> CSS on pg. 6

ALUMNI

Community mourns loss of Class of 2010 graduate

BY Caitlin Ju

2010 alumnus Max Snyder is being remembered as someone who always followed his passions, actively seeking to make a difference, and cared deeply about others.

As he walked with his girlfriend on Oct. 2 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, they were approached by men with knives with unknown motives. Max was stabbed four times, and although his girlfriend survived the attack, Max suffered internal bleeding and did not. He was 23.

Max had just arrived in Tanzania that day and planned on staying with his girlfriend for

one month, as she had transitioned to her new job there with a non-governmental organization called One Acre Fund.

Assistant principal Kerry Mohnike, who taught Max as student in her English 11 Honors class, remembers that he had a passion for biking and made positive changes to the school by helping to incorporate bikes on campus.



Snyder

After high school, Max graduated Cum Laude in 2014 with an economics degree from Seattle University, where he started the university's Cycling Club.

>> SNYDER on pg. 6

SCHOOL SPIRIT

Seniors wow with last Homecoming Quad Day

BY Gwynevere Hunger & Nidhi Jain

Ten minutes before fifth-period classes were dismissed on Oct. 16, the temporary bleachers set up in the Quad were already packed as the remaining students attempted to squirm their way to the front. Once the first lunch bell rang, it already seemed nearly impossible to find a spot with a decent view of the anticipated senior Homecoming performance.

In total, between 250 to 300 seniors participated, as opposed to previous years with 100 to 200 participants.

"The large number of people participating in Quad Day this year really promoted classes unity among students

and made the experience even better," senior Kanaai Shah said. "It made the experience even better because we spent the last week or so with everyone from our grade."

Throughout the lunch period, the seniors took the roles of Star Wars protagonists who were trying to save Princess Leia, played by senior Darby Williams. Seniors Saro Acharya played Han Solo, Nathan Ney was Darth Vader and Anne Rollinson, C3PO. Senior Luke Salin, who, naturally, played Luke Skywalker, was especially involved in the performances, participating in four dances in addition to the finale.

>> HC on pg. 8

>> what's inside

REFUGEES Increasing the quota

Reporter expresses views on the current humanitarian crisis and stance of America. **pg. 9**

NEW MUSIC The latest releases

Reporters listen to and critique new music, ranging from Oh Wonder to Drake. **pg. 16-17**

STEM Closing the Gap

A closer look into the reality of the gender divide in STEM-related fields. **pg. 20**



Measure E continues school renovations

Progress on the Measure E facilities renovation bond is continuing as different parts of the campus continue are seeing upgrades.

Besides the turfing of the upper field and the softball field, which is close to completion, principal Paul Robinson said work is under way in several other areas:

- Workers are currently resealing the gym roof to prevent any leaks during the upcoming rainy season.
- New portal buildings located in the side parking lot now house the CASSY, ASSIST and TLC rooms.
- The tech staff is adding more routers, access points and more fiber optics to increase the WiFi bandwidth and access, as well as working on getting more technology implemented in classrooms.

The large empty space outside the office is space designated for a new music building, which is scheduled to begin construction in early 2016 and finish construction by late 2017. The new building will be large enough to allow all music classes to be held in one building, instead of being spread out in 3 buildings like it is now.

Robinson estimated that all the renovations planned by Measure E will be completed in about three years. However, even though the completion is still years away, Robinson said that "[the changes are] all very exciting to see happen." ♦

— Eric Sze

WiSTEM officers host workshop for RMS girls

Women in STEM (WiSTEM) Club's four officers held a 5-hour application development workshop for Redwood Middle School girls in Saratoga High's Engineering Room on Oct. 10. With the platform MIT App Inventor, the officers taught the girls drag-and-drop programming.

WiSTEM took the girls through the steps of building Mole Mash, a phone version of the popular arcade game Whack-A-Mole, before students created their own projects. The event concluded with club secretary sophomore Caitlyn Chen's presentation on her summer experience building apps. By the end of the day, each student left the event with at least part of her own Android app.

The officers held the event with the hope to not only spark an interest in programming for the girls but also encourage them to pursue fields in STEM. As a result of the workshop's success, the officers plan to hold future events and extend the content to different programming languages.

"The [girls] reminded me about how amazing it is to learn new things," Chen said. "They inspire me to continue to have confidence in my education." ♦

— Katherine Sun

>> picturethis



FALCON // SHAZIA GUPTA

FALL PLAY >> Juniors Saya Sivaram, JT Hulme, senior Emily Ludwig and sophomore Christine Schultz practice their dance for their upcoming production, "Pride and Prejudice," in the McAfee Center.

Students propose ideas for funds

By Aditya Chaudhry & Alex Yang

In a recent survey taken by 29 students, the ASB (Associated Student Body) learned that the majority of students want to see the nearly \$270,000 in accumulated funds spent on everything from boys' bathroom urinal dividers to solar panels in the parking lot.

ASB secretary junior Spring Ma said that the variety of ideas for the money to be spent from students is great to see.

"Most of them were geared toward bettering student life, which I think ASB is really excited because ultimately that's the goal of spending the rollover money this year," Ma said. "We want to make a lasting impact on the students here at SHS [by making] sure we meet their needs."

After conducting an online poll to see what students want the money to be used for, ASB has data showing that most would like to see some sort of improvements on often used parts on campus such as water fountains and bathrooms.

Freshman Joan McCarthy said that many of

the fountains on campus do not work, forcing students to sometimes have to walk a long way just for a drink of water.

Senior Jonathan Hess also thinks bathrooms are "disgusting," since they too often lack clean places to put backpacks and high-quality toilets.

Another possible use for the money is to buy a new scoreboard for the Benny Pierce Field, an idea suggested by principal Paul Robinson because the current one is old, faded and in a bad location.

Robinson is not alone in favoring different sports facilities upgrades. More than 25 percent of the responses from the online survey ASB has received favored these kinds of upgrades.

For example, some want to funnel more money to improve the fields and the tennis courts, while others favor having basketball lights being installed for the outdoor courts.

"As a basketball player, I need time to practice, and even if the gym is open, the players are always kicked out," sophomore Neal Iyengar said. "We need [lights] because the outdoor courts are always crowded and they can only be used for so much time every day." ♦

SPEECH AND DEBATE

Team eases junior's transition to school

By Divya Rallabandi & Amulya Vadlakonda

Three years ago, junior Spencer Robinson did not attend Saratoga High. In fact, he didn't attend any school at all, since he had been homeschooled through ninth grade. As a sophomore new to the school, Robinson had an interest in joining speech and debate, but didn't join because he felt like he couldn't make the commitment and was too far behind other participants.

As he became accustomed to life at Saratoga High, he decided to try the program this year.

"I've always been an argumentative person," Robinson said, "And I also thought that it'd be a useful skill to have, like being able to talk to people and convince them of an idea."

He said the most challenging part has been getting used to the new terminology, but he is catching on. Robinson hopes to try some individual events like Impromptu, but he hopes to focus on Policy Debate, true to the current focus of the team.

Every debater on the team this year is participating in Policy Debate, which is the foundation for all other forms of debate, and head coach Christopher Harris and returning assis-

tant coach Steve Clemmons aim to strengthen this foundation.

"There are inherent components of policy debate that all debaters must understand and learn to exploit to learn to be good debaters," Harris said.

On Oct. 25 during the Super Debate at Milpitas High School, sophomores Sathvik Koneru, Karthik Ramachandran, Arun Ramakrishna and Mervi Tan each had a record of 1-3 as they competed in varsity public forum. Sophomore Austin Wang won a spot in the Lincoln Douglas State Tournament in March with an undefeated record of 4-0, while junior Siavash Yaghoobi came close with his record 3-1, respectively. Seniors Alex Li and Aakash Thumaty participated in varsity Parliamentary Debate and went 3-1. Harrison said each student will hone their skills further by assessing their weaknesses and learning from their past mistakes. The team will attend the Santa Clara University Invitational on Nov. 20-22, where Robinson plans to compete.

As he continues to improve, Robinson has high hopes for the season.

"I want to win debates," Robinson said. "I want to get better and get a foundation to become a power debater senior year." ♦

>> falconfigures

SHS Students (All Previous Years Combined)

UC ACCEPTANCE RATES

UCD	ACCEPTANCE RATE: 56.4%	1813 APPLIED	1042 ACCEPTED
UCB	ACCEPTANCE RATE: 34.0%	1645 APPLIED	559 ACCEPTED
UCLA	ACCEPTANCE RATE: 27.7%	1750 APPLIED	485 ACCEPTED
UCSB	ACCEPTANCE RATE: 51.2%	1307 APPLIED	669 ACCEPTED
UCSD	ACCEPTANCE RATE: 45.4%	1773 APPLIED	805 ACCEPTED
UCI	ACCEPTANCE RATE: 49.1%	1339 APPLIED	657 ACCEPTED
UCSC	ACCEPTANCE RATE: 65.3%	890 APPLIED	581 ACCEPTED

Source: Naviance

— Eric Sze

Senior puts forth his best image for colleges

By Claire Chou & Katherine Sun

Editor's note: This year, the Falcon will be following the trials and tribulations of the college application process. Saro Acharya is one of two seniors who will be profiled in this series. The other is Caroline Oliver.

Listening attentively during the Chapman University college presentation on Sept. 12 in the Library Research Center, senior Saro Acharya found himself surprised. He had already researched Chapman's impressive media program and even toured the campus, but the presentation expanded his perspective of what it would be like to pursue film at the school so much more.

"Talking to the speaker really fleshed the college out for me," Acharya said. "The speaker stated that the primary basis for the film program at Chapman was the art of storytelling, and that caught my attention immediately."

Acharya hopes attending college presentations like these will help him understand whether he aligns with the culture for the schools he is interested in. He tried to keep this new information in his mind as he prepared for his Chapman, New York University (NYU) and Loyola Marymount University (LMU) applications, which have early Nov. 1 deadlines.

Right now, Acharya has completed the three applications. What compound-

ed the difficulty of the application process was that he juggled the different video requirements of each film school. Chapman, for example, requires a specific video prompt rather than a demonstration of skill. NYU wants a portfolio that focuses on artistic influences and demonstrates "imaginative expression of thought," according to its website. And LMU requires a film less than three minutes in length.

For his letters of recommendation, Acharya asked history teacher Mike Davey and English teacher Suzanne Herzman to write for him, considering that both know him well and have been large influences on him.

Davey said Acharya has gained tremendous confidence since they first met, but he is never arrogant.

"He never seeks to be the focus [of] attention," Davey said. "[He] is comfortable helping others and basking in their success, [and he] is incredibly creative and mature beyond his age. I have no doubt he will be very successful in his endeavors in college and beyond."

Herzman not only taught Acharya for English 9 and 10 MAP, but also had him as a teacher's assistant last year. As his senior project adviser, too, she has continually provided guidance for him throughout the past few years.

"Coming in freshman year, I was a very shy kid, and [Herzman's] class honestly helped me come out of my shell,"



GRAPHIC BY MICHELLE CHEN

Students create portfolios for art and media majors

By Anant Rajeev & Divya Rallabandi

If all works out, senior Michelle Wang can see herself living in Providence, R.I., next year, immersed in a curriculum rich in figure drawing, abstract art and ceramics and photography at the famed Rhode Island School of Design.

Getting into this school, though, won't be easy. Not only does it have stiff competition, but it requires a

portfolio of her work that must show off technique, personality and thought process.

Wang is one of several students this year who intend to pursue art as undergraduates and are currently putting together a portfolio, a collection of 20 to 30 personal drawings and sketches, to send to colleges.

For Wang, portfolios are the most important part of her college application process, as their main purpose is to help her distinguish herself from the thousands of other applicants.

"You need to start with yourself, stick to things you like, and then it'll be unique because it's you," Wang said.

In addition to personalizing her portfolios, Wang has to meet different requirements for particular schools. For example, whereas UCLA wants to see concept drawings and problem solving, RISD puts more emphasis on technique.

Her love of art began at a young age when she realized it was what she was best at.

"I did math and science at a Chinese after-school program and teachers would say I wasn't doing very well," Wang said. "Every Friday, we had an art class, and I figured out that art was what I wanted to do with my life."

Like Wang, senior Jenna Chen is also working on her art portfolios, as she aspires to take advantage of her

art skills throughout her career and plans to major in either graphic design or design media arts. She is applying to schools such as UCLA and Boston University.

Chen plans on sending her 3D pieces, photography, interactive motion pieces and fine art pieces to colleges based on their specifications.

"It's very different to stray away from subjects like math or science especially when they seem [to be the] norm in an ambiance like Saratoga," Chen said.

Chen's interest in art was solidified when she had the opportunity to explore graphic design and design media arts at Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) in Baltimore last summer. From then on, she knew art was her calling.

"I'm hoping this all culminates in me being able to work in the design field," Chen said. "It's what I've been working toward for so long." ♦



Courtesy of SARO ACHARYA

This photo is from a short film that senior Saro Acharya shot over the summer with friends.

Acharya said. "She also understands my love of film and has helped me develop those skills."

Herzman described him as a critical reader with a good eye and a quiet leader who never dominates but is always willing to help others. While Acharya is still as full of passion as he was freshman year, Herzman has observed how he has changed.

"The voice that he's always had that has shone through in his media projects comes out more in everyday classroom situations," Herzman said.

Acharya's interest in media developed even before high school when he started to explore different aspects of animation in middle school. As he began selecting courses for high school, Acharya realized that the Media Arts Program (MAP) would allow him to further his hobby.

"I really got interested in film, just movies in general, and MAP really helped me nurture that passion," Acharya said. "It provided me with the opportunity to learn and create more."

After editing and filming his first project during freshman year, Acharya became "hooked" and knew it was what he wanted to continue to do.

"The potential to create and to tell stories through this medium is honestly what drew me into it," Acharya said.

The college application process has challenged Acharya to maintain the originality and creativity that inspired him in the first place — especially so because of the varying video requirements for the schools he is applying to.

"I really just hope I can pull together a solid portfolio that depicts who I am as a person and the kind of content I like to create," Acharya said. ♦

HONORS COLLEGES

ADVANTAGES

- Students get the chance to attend smaller classes taught by full-time faculty.
- Admissions committees look most favorably upon the applicants with the strongest academic credentials.
- Students may receive more favorable attention from faculty members, even those who do not teach the honors-level courses.
- Public honors colleges are attractive alternatives to large state universities for students who know they want a liberal arts education.

DISADVANTAGES

- The high expectations and rigor may not be a good fit for all students.
- Honors colleges and programs can create a perceived "elitist" culture.
- Being in small classes may not work out if there is not a good social fit.
- Honors students represent a small segment of the student body. When colleges are under pressure to make budget cuts, they start with programs that benefit fewer students, so benefits like scholarship dollars could be reduced.

Reporting by Katherine Sun

SERVICE

New volunteering club adds local option

BY Stephen Ding & Katherine Sun

Walking past tables on Club Day, students might have passed by the row of tables dedicated solely to volunteering clubs. Despite the other clubs advertising nearby, a new club called SCOPE still managed to stand out, drawing a crowd through root beer floats, otter pops and enthusiastic shouting.

SCOPE meets each Friday at lunch with adviser Ken Nguyen in room 001 and is the latest to join the ranks of the school's volunteering clubs. Rather than compete with more established service organizations, SCOPE has found a niche by focusing on issues regarding children and the elderly.

"We mainly want our club to impact the elders and the youth because they are sometimes the most neglected group in society," said junior Emily Li, the club's co-president.

According to junior Yoonju Pak, the club's secretary, the club will direct its attention to health and education issues through two main donation and fundraising projects this year.

The club plans to promote education by holding a book drive for nearby schools that do not have enough educational materials.

"We're primarily focused on children because that's where we think education starts," Pak said. "If you don't have a good basis or foundation of education, it's harder when you grow older."

SCOPE's second project will raise money for Eatwell tableware sets to assist people with motor or cognitive disabilities. Each set contains over 20 unique features, such as slanted bottoms of bowls that allow users to gather food on one side without having to scoop. SCOPE will purchase these sets and donate them to places such as the Saratoga Senior Center.

Like other service clubs on campus, SCOPE will hold long-term projects and provide local volunteering opportunities, but it differs from the older clubs in many ways. Whereas SCOPE exists only at SHS, clubs such as Interact and Key Club can be found all over the globe. Interact, which is divided into many different areas within each dis-



FALCON // SHAZIA GUPTA

Junior Emily Li prepares material for the upcoming club meeting, which occurs every Friday during lunch

trict, holds benefit shows, charity dinners and service events.

Areas also work together on an international project and a community project each year. Unlike the local and less-established SCOPE, Interact allows students from different schools to meet and work together.

Key Club and Interact further differ from smaller clubs in that they are sponsored by parent clubs. Kiwanis is the sponsor of Key, and Rotary is the parent organization for Inter-

act. The combination of sponsorship, international acclaim and history at SHS enable Key Club and Interact to attract new members.

"People have extremely high expectations," Interact co-president Felicia Hung said. "I am aiming to create a huge class of underclassmen that have a deep love for Interact."

While lacking this foundation, SCOPE distinguishes itself from larger service organizations by targeting specific issues

rather than a variety of causes. Many of SCOPE's officers previously participated in clubs like Interact and Key Club, but they left to form SCOPE when these clubs began to lose appeal for them.

Despite the wealth of service clubs at the school, the officers believe that there is more than enough room for SCOPE to join.

"Each has different focuses and goals and can benefit the student body and community in its own way," Li said. ♦

MAP EVENT

Professionals reflect on how they achieved success

BY Harshini Ramaswamy

The first installment of the MAP speaker series, scheduled for Nov. 5, will feature esteemed professionals who will share their real-world experiences in the fields of media and video.

The featured speakers are Ram Kapoor, chief marketing officer at UC Berkeley, and Beth Davies, director of corporate learning and development at Tesla. Both will give talks followed by a question and answer session at the McAfee Center from 6-7:30 p.m.

Kapoor and Davies have traveled a long way to be the

people that they are today. According to Media Arts Program Boosters co-chair Sheetal Seth, the goal for this year's speaker series is to invite professionals like Kapoor and Ram to give students insight into the media world and advice on how to approach the future.

"We are looking for individuals to address the students, sharing with them about how they got to where they are," Seth said. "Students want to know how they did it."

Seth and the rest of MAP Boosters chose these two speakers to showcase to students that media can be used in an inno-

vative company such as Tesla as well as at an educational institution like UC Berkeley.

Another reason Kapoor and Davies were asked to speak was that they followed their passions and continue to pursue what they love.

Kapoor first realized his passion for marketing and advertising after attending IIT Kharagpur in West Bengal, and IIM Bangalore. Prior to accepting his current and former dream job at Berkeley in November 2011, Kapoor was an award-winning advertising director and CEO and also held senior management roles at leading

global Ad Agency networks, which include Ogilvy, Leo Burnett, Young and Rubicam, Euro RSCG and Wunderman.

Kapoor's hard work was rewarded with awards from Cannes Lions, New York Fests, London International awards and Asia Pacific awards, making him more than suitable for his current occupation of chief marketing officer.

As the new chief marketing officer, Kapoor launched the first brand platform for UC Berkeley in 2013. His team, designated to help marketing and communications among students of the entire campus, is

also in charge of the main social media channels the school uses, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat.

Like Kapoor, Davies also followed her instinct, quitting her job as a lawyer and pursuing her passion of helping people learn and grow. Central to this mission is the use of high-quality media, especially videos.

Davies will share how her team produces high-impact training using video, as well as detailing some of her work experiences at Tesla and possibly from her past employers, which include Microsoft, GAP and Apple. ♦

ORGANIZATIONS

Glee Club brings community joy through performances

BY Emily Chen & Katherine Sun

Armed with a glittery tri-fold, a box of cookies and a stack of sign-up sheets, sophomores Ketki Palande, Katie Sable and Anya Srivats were ready to take on Club Day. While the wind incessantly pushed over their tri-fold and eventually their box of cookies, by the end of the event the girls had overflowing sign-up sheets and a feeling of triumph for their new club, Glee Club.

"We were not expecting that big of a turnout, [since] this is a new thing and we are just sophomores," Sabel said, "but a ton of people were interested."

Palande, Sabel and Srivats, friends united by their interest in music, have re-established Glee Club with the mission to share music beyond the school's realm. Though the club previously existed at the school, it dissolved when its leaders graduated in 2013.

The sophomores restarted Glee Club to provide people with a way to continue singing, performing and keeping up with music even if they do not have time

to commit to choir.

"I use music as an outlet because I feel like I'm in a very high pressure environment," Srivats said. "This is a way to share my passion with so many people who feel the same way."

The officers plan to host performances at locations that generally do not receive live entertainment, such as hospitals and nursing homes. The club serves as a creative outlet for students to sing songs ranging from pop to Broadway.

In order to hold monthly performances, the club meets every Monday in room MO2 under the advisory of choir teacher Andrew Ford to rehearse songs and choreography. The club, while dedicated to organizing high-quality shows,

invites students of all musical talents to join.

"This club is meant to be a really positive, inclusive environment full of people who want to make music and make a difference in our community," Palande said.

In the spirit of establishing a friendly atmosphere, the club will host club bonding events and sing-along movie nights. According to Sabel, "even the tone-deaf are accepted," and club-building activities will bring members closer together.

Glee Club does not expect its members to practice outside of meetings because the officers want to stress the low-commitment nature of the club. As performances approach, the officers will only call some groups of students to practices in order to work specifically with the different ranges and set lists for the club's

live shows.

"I hope that we are able to bring smiles to some people's faces when we sing for them in hospitals and nursing homes," Palande said.

Sabel already discovered her joy in sharing the arts this summer through Giving Individuals Fabulous Theater (GIFFT), a program that offers live theater for those who rarely get to see live performances. She worked with a group that often performed up to eight shows each weekend throughout the Bay Area. In re-establishing Glee Club with the other officers, she hopes to bring her passion to those involved with the club.

"The thing I want to happen for this club is for the members to see that [they're] really making an impact," Sabel said.

Even with positive reactions to the club at Club Day, however, ensuring the club's success has required personal investment and time commitment.

"There's the stress of wanting to make this work," Palande said. "I had no idea what starting a club would entail. It's been a memorable experience so far." ♦

DRAMA

Behind the scenes: junior manages fall play

BY Melissa Magner & Saya Sivaram

With rehearsals for this year's fall play "Pride and Prejudice" in full swing, the director and actors are working long hours to put on a high quality production. Equally hard at work are the tech members and stage managers.

One of these frantic students is junior Gaya Chatterjee, who is trying her hand for the first time as stage manager for the drama department.

"I actually didn't think much of stage managing until [drama teacher and director Sarah] Thermond asked me," Chatterjee said. "I talked to some friends who had already stage managed and they told me I should do it, so I went for it."

Chatterjee now knows the decision was the right one.

"I have really enjoyed seeing how the cast improves throughout each rehearsal," Chatterjee said. "The accents are improving, the dances are getting better and better and the cast is really enjoying the show. It is really fulfilling to see student excel at and enjoy what they are doing."

Chatterjee, who is co-stage managing with junior Kavya Sadras, said that the job mainly entails taking blocking notes (movements of performers on stage),

writing down important information from each practice and managing emails for the cast. Stage managers help Thermond put on the production, and with large casts like the one for "Pride and Prejudice," this job is especially important.

"There is a lot of organization involved, and sometimes the emails in particular can be tricky, but so far it hasn't been too bad," Chatterjee said.

According to Sadras, Chatterjee is great to work with even as she faces daunting challenges.

"She is so organized and always on top of things, which makes her super easy to work with," Sadras said. "She's really understanding and super considerate about everything the cast, [drama teacher Sarah] Thermond, and I need, and I think she's doing a really awesome job."

A typical day for Chatterjee starts out simply. At the beginning of practice, she takes role. As practice progresses, Chatterjee will often take blocking notes so that the actors know and can memorize their movements onstage, and the stage managers also help teach dances and control the music and sounds. On top of those responsibilities, Chatterjee has also been busy building set pieces for the upcoming show. After the cast moved into the McAfee Center on Oct. 19, Chatterjee



FALCON // SHAZIA GUPTA

Junior Gaya Chatterjee, the stage manager for the drama department, speaks with the McAfee Center technology manager, Adrian Stapleton, during the rehearsal on Oct. 22.

began sitting up in the booth calling the show delivering cues.

Chatterjee said rehearsals are going well.

"The actors have really taken it in their stride to come prepared to every rehearsal, and any notes that have been given to them have been received graciously and the actors usually come back with improvements made," Chatterjee said. "I think that it will be amazing to see how far the actors have grown and improved."

Cast members, including senior Neeki Tahmassebi, who plays Mrs. Bennet, also enjoy working with Chatterjee. "[Chatterjee] is extremely easy to

work with and I always know she has [the casts'] back," Tahmassebi said. "She's really reliable and very easy to talk to so if there is ever a problem, I've seen students confide in her."

Chatterjee, who enjoys working with the cast as stage manager, said that overall she loves "the opportunity to be involved in something so amazing".

"Not only is the work fascinating, but I've made a lot of friends," Chatterjee said. "Now that a lot of the tech alumni have graduated, we are in full recruiting mode. Now, I dedicate my time to making sure everyone on stage and in the audience will be safe, which is the most important thing." ♦

CLASS OF 2016

Students scramble to finish credits before graduation

BY Arjun Ramanathan

As an underclassman, senior Rotem Shaked chose not to take P.E. or the equivalent so that he could take other classes. Having put off P.E. credits until his senior year, Shaked assumed he'd have to endure a dreadful season of a sport or P.E. class with freshmen and sophomores. Instead, Shaked said he has loved participating in cross country and fulfilling his needed credits.

"It actually worked out really well, since cross country practices are quick,

the team is very supportive of new runners and nobody stresses too much about competition," Shaked said.

Shaked is no outlier to the system. Dozens of students each year put off getting needed credits until senior year, whether it be for athletics or for other subjects, such as visual or applied arts.

Like Shaked, senior Miles Peng has found that he enjoys what he was forced to do last-minute for credits. Peng is taking Psychology to complete his applied arts credits.

"I was surprised to find that I didn't mind the class at all," Peng said. "I'm glad that I can find a peaceful and interesting class that helps fulfill my requirements, too."

Though Shaked and Peng have adapted quickly to the experience of a new sport and class, others find them-

selves regretting the decision to wait until senior year for their credits.

Senior Farbod Moghadam, who had to take Ceramics this year in order to fulfill his visual performing arts credits before college, had forgo his interest in classes such as Anatomy and Psychology as a consequence.

"As a senior, there are some classes you have always wanted to take, but have to sacrifice in order to obtain the necessary credits," Moghadam said.

The guidance counselors often frown upon students who decide to procrastinate on essential credits until their last year, and P.E. is a particular problem for some.

If the student is unable to make the team they try out for, it can be tough to meet the credit requirements.

In addition, a senior could be put into class for the sake of credits, but have to face an uncomfortable situation.

"While it isn't the end of a world, a senior could feel a bit silly when forced to take a class full of freshmen, for example, beginner P.E.," guidance counselor Eileen Allen said.

Although often frowned upon, the trend of students putting off needed classes is likely to continue into the future.

"Our students have a lot going on so there will always be kids who procrastinate and struggle to fit [the credits] all in," Allen said. ♦

EVENTS

Seniors take on new roles in Homecoming for the first time

BY Stephen Ding & Austin Wang

"Young Skywalker, you and the rebels can do little to stop the power of LG and the dark side of school spirit," senior Nate Ney said to the crowd before him as he played the role of Darth Vader during the "Star Wars" themed senior Quad Day on Oct. 16. "How will you defeat me when you have so little school spirit?"

While students in the audience were impressed with Ney's accurate imitation of Vader's voice and well-timed entrances on-stage, most of them would not expect that Ney was one of at least 250 seniors who participated in Homecoming for the first time this year.

Ney developed an interest in drama several years ago when he played a part in a Julius Caesar skit for his English 10 class, but never exhibited his interest in acting in the Homecoming skit until last year. Only when he realized that time was running out and his wish hadn't been granted yet that he finally tried out for a role.

"I hadn't done [Homecoming] in freshman, sophomore or junior year," Ney said. "Senior year, I decided that it was the last chance and last Homecoming."

Ney said he was willing to take on one of the biggest roles in the skit, following his class's motto "Go B16 or Go Home."

"I wanted to have a major role because I thought it would be more fun and people would recognize [me]," Ney said. "It provided an opportunity for me to present myself in a different way and show a different side of me."

Ney wanted others to view him in a

different light and to expand his own horizons beyond the academic activities he is involved in at school, which including History Bowl, Science Bowl and Math Club.

Ney practiced for his role three times a week after auditioning for his role and every day during Homecoming week.

Ney said he was struck by stage-fright at the start of the performance. "At first, I was nervous, so I felt I was rushing lines," Ney said. "As the skit progressed, I got more comfortable and I could embrace my part without the nerves of being on stage."

The experience left a lasting impression on him.

"Doing the skit taught me to be more open and [to] go with the flow," Ney said. "[It also taught me] to take things as they come and adapt and trust that things will go smoothly."

Like Ney, senior Nandita Mohan also took on a significantly larger commitment in the Homecoming performances than she had in the past, participating in the girls' dance, girls' hip hop dance, the "21 Guns" singing act, decorations and the finale.

A heavy academic workload also prevented Mohan from performing in previous years' Quad days. With less stress senior year and a desire to be more involved this year, Mohan was more motivated to take on a greater role.

"There was more free time and I didn't want to have any regrets about high school," Mohan said. "It was totally worth it. I got closer to so many people I hadn't had the chance to talk to much before, and the past few weeks of hard work really united our class." ♦

CSS >>

continued from pg. 1

reduce the likelihood of a student having multiple big tests on a single day. Additionally, the administration is working with the district-level Bell Schedule Committee to finalize a full block bell schedule for next year that creates the least amount of student stress.

Another area CSS is working on is policies surrounding handing back tests to students.

According to Robinson, a group within CSS wants every teacher to hand tests back so that students can review the test with their parents or a tutor in order to get help and perform better on future tests.

The current policy regarding handing back tests is not uniform. Some

teachers hand them back for students to keep and other teachers do not let the tests leave their room, while others hand back quizzes but not tests.

To avoid test integrity issues, many teachers currently prefer going over tests in class and setting up an appointment to review a particular test with a student during tutorial or at other times.

Ideally, Robinson said, students can develop strong working relationships with their teachers and can benefit from whatever a particular teacher's policy is.

"I'm not a huge proponent of demanding that every test go home, as teachers use and value tests in so many different ways," Robinson said. "The teacher is the expert educator and the one who is going to make the biggest difference in working with a student, not a parent or an outside tutor."

Robinson is trying to help the community understand that learning how to deal with stress is an important skill that promotes student resiliency.

"We want students to be prepared by a challenging curriculum so that when an opportunity arises, they can grasp it with both hands," Robinson said. "It's a dynamic tension between how hard we push students and how much we should release them so that they don't experience unhealthy stress that hurts them."

Ultimately, Robinson said these and other conversations are helping to foster an environment that alleviates student stress.

"We ask ourselves, what are the things we have the ability to control, and how can we make a difference with students and their educations in the long run? That is what we continue to focus on," he said. ♦

SNYDER >>

continued from pg. 1

Mrs. Mohnike described Max as "upbeat, happy, and a strong contributor to discussions." What she recalls most about Max is his laughter.

English teacher Jason Friend remembers his great sense of humor and his passion to tackle big philosophical questions in his AP Language and Composition class, particularly in one Socratic Seminar on the Walter Kirm's "Loss of the Meritocracy," which described the mindlessness with how people pursued the education system.

"He was one of those students that exemplified having a passion for things and learning to care about learning," Mr. Friend said. "I just remember how much [Loss of the Meritocracy] resonated with him and how articulate he

was when talking about how it echoed Saratoga students."

Mr. Friend also added that Max was always curious about the world and an example to many Saratoga students.

"He was really passionate about making a difference in the world and thinking about more than just himself," Mr. Friend said. "I hope that the type of things he was doing can be an example to Saratoga students that they should not be afraid to think about more than just their own selves and their own self-interests, but really put themselves out there."

Media arts teacher Tony Palma, who had Max as a student for two years in woodshop, said he was "a really hard worker with a great personality and was just a fun kid to have in class. He loved to talk, explore, create, and always had great ideas and great conversations."

When Mr. Palma could not offer more advanced woodshop classes, Max took a digital photography class.

He became so accomplished that he earned money to fund his Eagle Scout Service Project by shooting portraits of people.

Mr. Palma said his former student can serve as a model to current students.

"All I remember is what a great person he was. I don't remember his GPA, what his grades were, none of that matters," Mr. Palma said. "All that matters is how you are as a person and how you look at the world and how you treat the world."

>> the big idea

Parent Group's Ideas to Reduce Student Stress

What is the goal of CSS? The parent-led group aims to reduce stress by making changes in the way that parents, students, and teachers alike communicate.

Key Ideas Parents are pushing for a new schedule to reduce the chance of having multiple critical tests/quizzes on the same day, as well as encouraging teachers to allow students to bring home old tests and quizzes.

What are some potential problems? Teachers often feel more comfortable going over tests in class in order to avoid test integrity issues.

He was really passionate about making a difference in the world and thinking about more than just himself. teacher Jason Friend

APP DEV >>

continued from pg. 1

The failed goldenrod project shows that despite diligence and the best of intentions, students cannot always create the large-scale projects they envision.

"I was motivated to continue on this project because I thought that [it] was done and already usable," Aggarwal said. If the club had been able to overcome the concerns raised by the administration, an online goldenrod book damage system would have made "a big impact on the school."

The project began around 2010 when the Environmental Club, seeking to minimize the waste of paper created by the goldenrod system, approached App Dev to program and build an online system.

Class of 2013 alumni Kabir Chandrasekher and Faisal Albannai framed the backbone of the program and passed the torch to Aggarwal when they graduated, advising him "to make it a main priority for future members of the club."

During his sophomore year, Aggarwal spent hours revising the existing code. As the president of App Dev during his senior year, Aggarwal tried to turn the project into a reality.

A vision without foundation

The current paper system uses a golden half sheet of paper that allows students to record existing damage for checked-out books. The form provides evidence to corroborate any potential disputes that arise at the end of the year when students return their items and fines are handed out for damaged books.

Each year, students turn in hundreds of these goldenrods, which are put into a file cabinet organized by student name. Librarian Kevin Heyman said that the staff members keep the goldenrods for several years in order to keep a more comprehensive record of a textbook's condition.

The idea behind the digital goldenrod system was to use the same information found on the paper form, but simply transfer it to a website. The beta version required the user to enter a login username and password, which then proceeded to the homepage that was sectioned off in three categories: Instructions, Checkout and Book Log. The Checkout page included a questionnaire about the book's condition, while the Book Log page provided a record of their current goldenrods.

Aggarwal hoped that his online version would reduce the time and effort spent by the staff filing paper goldenrods. In reality, however, a disproportionately large effort was required to maintain the digital system.

A matter of design and privacy Heyman cited several technical complications with the program that the club simply could not resolve. The online version required a protection to prevent students from changing the status of a book after noting its initial problems.

For instance, if a student spilled water on a book, the system would have to prevent the student from adding "water damage" to the book's status afterward.

The technicalities of coding such a safeguard proved too difficult for App Dev, Heyman said.

The design of the system became another of the project's shortcomings, as the process required the IT crew to update and maintain the software every

time a book is checked out.

Since each book possesses only one barcode, the information regarding the book's condition would have to be deleted after each student's use to accommodate for new information.

Principal Paul Robinson said, "The decision to not go with the application was based on the fact that it was going to end up causing more work for certain staff members and not necessarily less work to be done, which is what you're always hoping technology is going to do for you."

Another problem stemmed from the system's need for a Linux server that the school did not already possess, which would be costly for the district.

App Dev offered to host the site on its own server, but the district is legally prohibited from distributing student information to outside parties.

This concern for student privacy became a large issue that eventually contributed to the rejection of the project.

Robinson said that despite his inherent trust of App Dev, he could not legally turn over student information to the group, since they would be able to access personal data such as students' Social Security numbers.

"[They would] have a database of every student on campus. We just can't do that," Robinson said.

Seven years of correspondence Aggarwal's determination to turn the project into a success contributed to its

longevity. He admitted he didn't foresee problems that eventually led to the project's failure, including both technical barriers and privacy concerns.

"I did not anticipate this many issues, partly because I thought this was such a mundane part of school life that I thought any improvement would be welcome," Aggarwal said.

According to Robinson, he and other staff members initially showed enthusiasm for the project. Around six months after the project was introduced, school officials began to have concerns.



It's one of the few cases where technology hasn't caught up to paper, and paper is still easier. librarian Kevin Heyman

Advertisement for ELITE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE SAT WINTER BOOTCAMP 2015. Includes a list of 'ELITE PERFECT SAT SCORES' with columns for Score, Name, School, and Year. Also includes program dates, tuition information, and contact details for Northern and Southern California branches.

HC >>

continued from pg. 1

The seniors also placed emphasis on the newly formed friendship between the junior and senior class, pointing out the support that the two classes have shared for each other.

"It's absolutely amazing how this year the competition has turned into camaraderie," junior Mitali Shanbhag said. "By specifically telling the whole school how much this relationship has strengthened during their Quad Day, they really showed what Homecoming is truly about: spirit, not competition. It makes SHS so much stronger."

As Homecoming week wrapped up, royalty was crowned and results of Quad Day were announced at halftime of the football game against Los Altos on the evening of Oct. 16. The football team did its part, winning the game 40-10.

This year, the final round of elections for Homecoming royalty was done through an online voting, a change from the previous paper system. The prelimi-

nary round of elections, however, still used the traditional way of paper slips in each classroom.

After the votes were counted, the Homecoming royalty were announced as freshman Prince Roshan Verma and Princess Cameron Lin, sophomore Prince Akhil Marimuthu and Princess Mohini Dutta and junior Prince Bryan Wong and Princess Taryn Frank. The senior royalty included a total of six people with three princesses, Anne Rollinson, Alice He and Katie McLaughlin, and three princes, Nihar Agrawal, Luke Salin and Davis Robertson.

At halftime, seniors Anne Rollinson and Davis Robertson were crowned Homecoming Queen and King. Their victory came as a mild surprise as it challenged the tradition of enthroning mainly marching band members.

"I am very honored to have been chosen by the student body as King," Robertson said. "I would have never guessed that it would happen but I am glad that it did. There is nobody that I would rather have as queen."

English teacher Erick Rector also announced the winners of each Homecom-



Seniors Anne Rollinson, Saro Acharya and Luke Salin perform Quad Day skit on Oct. 16.

ing category. Each class was judged on the same three categories: Overall, Quad Day and Decorations.

Seniors won overall Homecoming with a total of 489 out of 500 points and won Decorations. The juniors won Quad Day with a total of 235 out of 250 points. The Homecoming commission helped

make the score sheet for the teacher judges and also bought the crowns and sashes for the court.

"The end of Homecoming was bitter-sweet; everything came together perfectly and everyone had such a great time that it is sad to think that this is our last one," Rollinson said. ♦

ENGINEERING

Katchour finds passion leading rocketry team

by Aditya Chaudhry & Arjun Ramanathan

Becoming a leader of anything in the world of engineering is difficult, but being a female leader is harder still.

Senior Diana Katchour, however, broke this cycle as an officer in the school's engineering club, the Mechanical Science and Engineering Team (M-SET). Although she has risen over the years to become an officer and leader of the club's Teen America Rocketry Challenge (TARC) team, getting to her current position required a long progression of learning that began in her freshman year.

"I really enjoyed physics and material engineering in middle school, and had also watched the entirety of 'Star Trek' as a kid, so that really helped me make the decision to join TARC," Katchour said.

The club competes every year, from the beginning of December to the end of April and try to place as high as they can make the National Finals, which are held in May of every year.

The challenge usually involves building a model rocket that can carry two raw eggs, one vertical and one horizontal, to an altitude of 850 feet, stay airborne for between 44-46 seconds, and then return all parts of the rocket to the ground safely as a single connected set, using a recovery device of the team's choice.

After observing the upperclassmen manage the team and complete the challenge, Katchour began to take on more responsibilities.

"I did a bit of everything: computer models, construction, and record keeping," Katchour said. "I paid really close attention to all the details and the way [Class of 2014 alumnus Ivan France] led the team because I knew I wanted to be

the team captain the following year."

The rocket-making process consists of two parts, Katchour said: modeling and execution of the design. Modeling the rocket involves using computer software to design the rockets virtually with different fin and body designs and using the models to run simulations.

"The process is super labor intensive because you spend hour looking at the computer screen looking at your model rocket take different path in the sky according to different variables you change," Katchour said.

After fine-tuning these electronic designs, the team of six students then progresses to create the rocket with wood, mailing tubes and pool noodles.

"Sometimes this process can go smoothly, but other times your computer model may [go] wrong and the rocket you end up with is completely wrong," Katchour said.

Through her hard work, Katchour was made the lead of TARC in May of 2014; she was assigned to begin her role as head at the start of her junior year. On her team were current juniors David Wang, Aden Choy and Rahul Kumar.

Though she reached her goal of becoming captain, Katchour faced challenges in balancing work and leading the entire TARC program, which com-

petes from December to April.

One of the greatest difficulties for her is keeping the team organized, which included sending out weekly emails about meetings and upcoming launches.

At the beginning of the season, the first few weeks in December, the team was off on a bad foot. With low student turnout and less dedicated members than years prior, the team was struggling to meet early deadlines and create a rocket that

they were proud of.

With wings falling apart because of bad glue jobs to pool noodles always spilling out of the rocket's body, Katchour

"The first launch felt like a test of my knowledge and ability to lead a TARC team."



senior Diana Katchour

acknowledged that leading the team was a difficult task because she had to act like an anchor for the rest of the team.

She said these areas made her delay launching her team's rocket for scoring.

Despite these early-season mishaps, Katchour took a stronger role as a leader and got people to get work done before the first launch of the year last March, where she was trying to make sure the rocket was launched off the launch pad and at least made it into the sky.

"The first launch felt like a test of my knowledge and ability to lead a TARC team," Katchour said.

With the preparation from the first launch, Katchour was confident in taking her team to Snow Ranch, a field 30

miles from Stockton where the team's final launch took place on April 4.

Taking the two-hour drive to the ranch on the early Saturday morning was nerve racking for Katchour.

To reach the world tournament, the team had to score under 25 points (where 0 is the best possible score). The team gains points if they do not reach a minimum height or they crack the egg.

When the team ultimately earned a score of 2.6 after the launch, Katchour was ecstatic. She couldn't contain her happiness in knowing that the team qualified for the National Finals.

In May, the team went to Washington, D.C., to partake in the fly off between the top 100 teams.

Going to the East Coast was a life-changing experience for Katchour. "I hadn't ever travelled to the East Coast before and it was interesting to see the differences between Washington, D.C., and California," Katchour said.

Although the team qualified for the World competition, they did not make it past the first round.

Despite the early end of the tournament, Katchour had an experience she says she will never forget.

Through the past three years, Katchour has gained major satisfaction from the roles she plays on the team as well as having the opportunity to learn valuable knowledge along the way.

"I enjoy rocketry because we get to transform pieces of cardboard, pool noodles and epoxy into a rocket that soars hundreds of feet into the sky with the use of explosives," Katchour said. "It's incredibly satisfying to see our rocket shoot up into the sky, and each time we go to a launch site, there's always something new and exciting to experience." ♦

SCIENCE

Three seniors excel in Siemens research competition

by Ryan Kim & Navin Tiwary

Out of the thousands of students who submitted research projects to the Siemens Science competition, seniors Alexander Li, Rishi Veerapaneni and Kristine Zhang were named semifinalists along with 463 others.

Although none of the three advanced to the regional finals, which allows only 97 of the 466 semifinalists, they each worked hard to bring their projects to fruition.

Veerapaneni's project focused on au-

tomatically finding the boundary of cancer tumors using computer vision and machine learning.

"I was interested in learning about computer vision and the most interesting lab that offered me an internship was run by Dr. Daniel Rubin at Stanford, so I joined his lab as an intern," Veerapaneni said.

During his internship, Veerapaneni worked with his mentor Dr. Assaf Hoogi, a postdoctoral student at Dr. Rubin's lab. Veerapaneni described him as "very open-

and instructive."

Veerapaneni plans to publish their project paper by December.

Zhang's project focused on preventing the formation of neurological plaques in the brain in order to cure Alzheimer's Disease.

"I started working on research when I applied to a science internship program at the beginning of high school," Zhang said. "It's been over a year since I started this project



Zhang

and [I've] probably [spent] several hun-

dred hours at least."

Zhang said she received good advice about how to approach Siemens.

"First of all, start early because the lab wants to know you have experience in this, and talk to people who have participated before so you get advice on how to write your paper," Zhang said.

Zhang enjoyed her experience and learned a lot from the competition.

"I'm excited about [Siemens] because there were a lot of good projects and research is a very valuable experience because you apply a lot of things that you learn about science," Zhang said. ♦

Academic silos increase student isolation

by Cassandra King

As I took a cursory glance around my AP U.S. History class on the first day of school, I noted that there were only two unfamiliar faces in a class otherwise full of friends and close acquaintances. Going through the rest of my day, I could not help but notice that I had many of the same people in my classes. As Facebook groups for different classes were created throughout the first week of school, I saw the same names over and over again. Where was the rest of the Class of 2017?

This subtle separation among my peers has been occurring since sophomore year, ever since students could choose between honors or regular classes. With a greater variety of difficulty levels for required classes comes a decreased variety in the faces a student sees in his or her classes. As a result, there are "invisible people," or people who we may know of and see around campus for four years but never talk to because we never share a class with them.

I have attended schools in Saratoga for five years now, and I would like to think that I know, or at least know of, everyone in my graduating class. But the truth is that I don't.

The variety of classes students take can determine their social circles and prevent them from interacting with others in their class. In this way, students are losing out on a diversified experience and a wide range of perspectives.

By opting for AP Biology instead of one of the other sciences or choosing regular English classes over the Media Arts Program, for example, students can eliminate the possibility of sharing a class with many of their peers. By junior year, many students find themselves in a sort of AP/Honors "echo chamber," where the same people are come and go in different combinations in each of their classes, detracting from an ideal and diversified learning experience that strengthens class solidarity.

Although students may not regret the decision to take the classes they did, the missed opportunity to interact with a greater diversity of students is regretted.

Ultimately, as a result of self-initiated tracking, students lose out on a wide range of perspectives that other people in their class can provide. A student may have a very compatible personality with another, but simply never get the chance to interact much with him or her in the first place. Instead, many class connections can only be forged during whole-class events such as rallies or Homecoming, but these events are few and far in between, not allowing students to form close bonds.

To promote class unity and help students expand their "social circles," more class events should be held that help students truly get to know other people in their graduating class rather than just the same group of people they have class with year after year. In the

>> candidcaricatures



TIFFANY ZHENG

same way freshmen are able to see their peers through the Link Crew Ice Cream Social, other classes should have events for their respective classes.

Although many complain that freshmen and sophomores have limited honors options, it is during these two years that students can get to know any other student in their grade. With this in mind, having classes with different skill levels, such as how MAP classes are organized where students in honors and regular are in the same class, would promote more unity.

In addition, all can make a better effort to step out of our comfort zone and talk to people outside of classes. This issue cannot be solved by just class officers trying to help, but must be by the entire student body making a unified effort.

Regardless of the classes we take or the people we talk to once a year or daily, the experiences that will remain will be the ones of a unified, diversified class. And that is what we should strive for, connections with each other to make our high school lives unforgettable. ♦

10k inadequate: U.S. should up Syrian refugee quota

by Fiona Sequeira

In response to the largest refugee crisis since World War II, on Sept. 10, the Obama administration declared it would resettle at least 10,000 Syrian refugees in the United States by the end of September 2016.

While this number may seem significant in comparison to the 1,400 Syrians the U.S. has taken in over the last year, it's far from a sufficient quota, and prompts the fundamental question: In the face of such an intractable humanitarian crisis, what kind of nation does America want to be?

Since the Syrian War began in 2011, more than 11 million Syrians — half the nation's population — have been displaced from their homes, and over 4 million have fled the country, primarily to Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. And while the U.S. has donated \$4 billion in aid to refugee agencies and host governments — more than any oth-

er country — we are still guilty of inadequate action that hardly reflects the lofty ideals we pride ourselves on upholding.

In short, as a dominant world power and leading democratic nation, it is our responsibility to extend our hand to a significant number of refugees, each of whom deserves the basic human rights of safety, freedom and justice. The U.S. needs to allow a higher number of Syrians to resettle here under a long-standing program that grants them permission to work upon their arrival and seek citizenship within five years.

Exactly how many refugees the U.S. should accept is no doubt a difficult question. This year, Congress agreed to take a maximum of 70,000 refugees from around the world. In September, the Refugee Council USA, a group of 20 advocacy organizations, urged the U.S.

to accept a total of 200,000 refugees, including 100,000 Syrians. Although accepting even 100,000 from a pool of millions may not entirely solve the problem, it is surely a better alternative than the proposed 10,000, and would more effectively alleviate the scope of suffering.

In the face of such an intractable humanitarian crisis, what kind of nation does America want to be?

Additionally, the U.S. should continue to support infrastructure in Middle Eastern countries such as Jordan, a nation that is bursting at the seams with severely underfunded refugee camps. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that member nations of the UN have

only met around 35 percent of its requested budget to deal with the crisis, a shamefully low statistic that should prompt countries around the world to honor a collective responsibility to help those in crisis.

Critics of increasing Syrian resettlement — most notably in the political sphere, Donald Trump — believe it increases the likelihood of allowing terrorists such as ISIS militants to enter the U.S. However, those accepted for the resettlement are required to pass an extensive background check: first by the UNHCR and then by the Department of Homeland Security and other U.S. agencies, a vetted process that takes about 18 to 24 months.

One solution to increase the refugee quota while minimizing the risk of terrorist threats is to take women with children who may have lost a husband or family breadwinner. Children would not directly com-

pete with the U.S. workforce for jobs, and their mothers could be trained to work in the elderly care sector at places such as assisted living facilities, where there is a serious shortage of workers. The optimal strategy would be to take these refugees from camps in Jordan and Turkey in order to help ease the pressure in those areas.

Obviously, resettlement quotas are symptomatic of a larger problem, and achieving peace and stability in Syria so that millions of people may return to their homeland is the ultimate goal. Yet the war in Syria has devolved into a proxy war with no sign of ending anytime soon.

In the meantime, it is our national duty to alleviate the suffering brought about by the chaotic diaspora of millions of people. If we do not respond with swift and urgent action, then the very ideals that have shaped our national character stand on shaky ground. ♦

Gender neutral Homecoming court a step back for gender equality

by Rachel Zhang

Every autumn, thousands of high schools across America celebrate the tradition of Homecoming court, honoring students deemed worthy of queenship or kingship. Since the 1950s, the Homecoming court tradition has symbolized part of the American high school experience.

Recently, Monta Vista High School announced its change to a gender neutral Homecoming court. Instead of dividing the nominees by gender, the two who acquire the most votes are selected as the reigning royals.

The new court was in part established to allow for gay and lesbian couples, but with this dramatic change comes some

drawbacks.

The long-established approach of awarding the title of queen and king supports gender equality, since a male and a female are equally represented. The transition to a process that selects the top two students who have garnered the most votes means one gender could be excluded altogether.

Those who oppose the traditional system argue that it discriminates against transgender students. As shown by Mona Shores Public Schools in Norton Shores, Minn., the prejudice against transgenders comes not from the system, but from the discriminatory rules against them.

In 2011, Mona Shores's switched to a gender neutral court after a transgender

student named Oakleigh Reed was earlier prohibited from running as the gender he identifies with: male. The administration there acted according to the official Homecoming guidelines and discarded the ballots voting for Reed, saying that because Reed was enrolled at the school as a female, he violated the rule that the nominees for king must be male.

Undoubtedly, the administration was at fault, since it failed to promote an open and safe environment for Reed and other transgender students.

However, to alleviate the media uproar instigated by the administration's backwards decision, Mona Shores decided to implement a gender neutral Homecoming coronation. In doing so, the school overcompensated and failed

to correct its actual mistake.

The problem lay not in the tradition of a gender-separated Homecoming selection, but in the school's Homecoming selection process.

By removing the "official" code that marginalized and discriminated against transgender students, the administration could have effectively resolved the issue at its source and continued with the traditional mode of Homecoming royalty.

The ideal Homecoming court welcomes both transgender and non-transgender students while continuing the long-established "high school experience," ensuring that both males and females have a well-deserved spot on the podium. ♦

India to replace China as next tech frontier

by NidhiJain

On Sept. 25, India's prime minister Narendra Modi began a 2-day visit to the nation's center of technology: the Silicon Valley. Within 48 hours, Modi met nearly a dozen CEOs, including Apple's Tim Cook, Google's Sundar Pichai, Microsoft's Satya Nadella, Adobe's Shantanu Narayen and Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg.

Modi's visit is evidence of India's obvious ascendance in the tech universe. However, most people still see China as the U.S.'s first priority for technological expansion, as it already is in the lead for the consumption of technology.

According to Forbes magazine, China still takes "the trophy" of being the world's largest Internet market. Following behind it are the U.S. and India.

Although China currently booms with its extensive use of technology, it is inevitable that India will surpass it, since India is quickly modernizing and providing its citizens with the latest technology without censorship. For example, all Indian citizens with access to technology

have the capability of using every single existing social media platform.

India is the world's fastest growing economy, and it would be foolish for American companies not to target India as a future market.

Within the past year, China's Internet usage increased by seven percent, while India's grew by 33 percent, according to Forbes.

In cell phones, China's growth increased by 21 percent this past year, while India's grew 54 percent.

At the rate that India's citizens are gaining technology, it is likely that India will quickly become the highest consumer of technological goods, thus providing new markets for American companies.

China's 1.35 billion population makes it capable of being the world's techno-

logical leader, but its extreme censorship and restrictions on popular sites like Google and Facebook prevent it from reaching its maximum potential.

Without access to these leading websites, China significantly stunts its growth in technology fields, thus discouraging the U.S. from putting effort into expanding its technology there.

As of now, Chinese leadership continues to be extremely restrictive and unwavering toward their Internet policies.

India, on the other hand, is a much easier frontier to work with, and it already has made efforts with Silicon Valley companies to promote the use of technology and open itself up to American markets. For example, Google and India have formed a deal whereby Google provides free public Internet in

It is clear that U.S. companies that are hoping to increase their profits would benefit from focusing more on India as it rolls into a prosperous future.

Grade bump encourages ambition and excellence

by RyanKim & AmulyaVadlakonda

Recently, the debate over removing the GPA boost that comes with taking AP or Honors classes has become a topic of discussion. Many parents worry about the stress students face with their overwhelming schedules filled with advanced classes. Yet this obsession with APs has nothing to do with a love for endless nights of homework, and everything to do with a tiny number that sums up the entirety of a high schooler's accomplishments.

Whether it's right or wrong, GPA is one of the key ways to measure academic prowess, and ambitious students are doing their best to boost their number.

The 1-point GPA boost is a motivating reason many students take Honors or AP classes, but the real question is: Is this GPA fixation so bad?

The main complaint is that students overwhelm themselves with too many college-level classes.

Some critics think the magic solution is to remove the extra grade point, and students won't take the classes that stress them out, thereby creating a healthier learning environment for the school.

In trying to do so, however, it is easy to overlook many positive aspects of the GPA boost.

AP and Honors courses are more difficult and sometimes require at least double the time commitment as regular college prep courses.

Instead of removing the grade bump, the school can better reduce student stress by teaching students how to manage their time and work-load.

Beyond such training, each student is making informed choices about how they wish to spend their time. At some point, the kids have to take responsibility for their own scheduling.

It isn't fair for the school or the parents to take on the unnecessary responsibility of regulating a student's informed decisions, just as it isn't fair that mature high schoolers complain about their own choices. Because students are informed, they should take classes that they feel would most benefit them.

Without the grade boost, there is much less of an incentive to take high-

er level classes. It doesn't make sense for a school to be advocating mediocrity. Taking out the GPA boost would even discourage people who are genuinely passionate about the subject from taking the course, because it would be easier and less risky for them to take a less rigorous — and usually less educational — course.

There is an inherently difficult struggle in taking AP and Honors courses, and students ought to be rewarded for taking on the extra rigor and responsibility.

Although some argue that colleges take the difficulty of a student's schedule into account, it is one thing for colleges to ambiguously "consider" the difficulty of a course level, and a tangible academic comparison like their GPA.

However, teachers have argued that the boost makes students less motivated to study or work as hard to learn above-and-beyond material in that specific class.

The flaw with this reasoning is that it assumes that students are most motivated by the content of the class, when in reality, students — especially SHS students — are highly motivated by their grades, and will therefore strive to do the best that they can in any class that they take.

It is universally accepted that a C in an AP or Honors class is not preferable to an A in its college prep equivalent. Students' desires to improve their GPAs inspires them to study harder; thus, they learn more by being inspired to work for their grades.

At an academic powerhouse like Saratoga High, competition forces students to put a lot of care for their grades. Even though the merits of this mentality are highly disputed, it breeds success among students, as long as they are informed about the consequences of taking higher level classes.

Each student strives to excel at the norms of our academic world, and as desperate as it may seem, that means that students need any boost that they can get. So keep the AP and Honors grade boost as it is. ♦

Removal of GPA boost would promote learning

by AustinWang

Students at the school often sacrifice sleep and sanity in the pursuit of academic excellence, which they measure not in actual knowledge or contentment, but instead by a number like 3.75 or 4.23 or 4.78.

As the thinking goes, the higher, the better, and the GPA number is all that counts. These students put themselves on the AP/Honors track, forgoing classes they are actually interested in to take as many GPA-

boosting classes as possible. Because of the 1-point grade bump the school offers for AP and honors classes, students often sign up for them mindlessly.

For years, the school has been looking for a way to lower stress among students. They have tried promoting better student-staff relationships, warning students about stress and overworking, and even teaching students how to meditate.

But the only way to effectively reduce student stress comes down to those three magic letters: GPA. AP and honors classes are the primary cause of student stress; each one can pack in three or more hours of homework than a college prep class per night and involve difficult tests.

Too often the workload of these classes leaves students with little time for extracurriculars and even less time for sleep. If the school were to remove the AP/Honors grade bump, most students would take fewer of them, ultimately leading to more sleep and less stress.

More sleep is essential for student's health and well-being. A 2014 article from The New York Times said insufficient sleep in teenagers increases the risk of heart diseases, obesity, diabetes and depression. Supporters of the grade boost argue that it is a powerful tool

that motivates students and helps them get into college.

However, grade bumps only motivate students to take these classes; they don't actually motivate legitimate learning. Grade bumps actually have a counter-intuitive effect when it comes to the pursuit of knowledge.

Removing the grade bump weeds out uninterested and unmotivated students, leaving only ones with genuine love for the subject.

This promotes a better learning environment where students with similar interests will be put together and can learn from one another, while also helping students focus their attention on the fields they are looking to pursue in the future.

While it may seem that the AP and Honors grade bump is beneficial for college admissions, it isn't nearly as beneficial as students think.

For example, Cupertino High School does not offer a grade bump for AP and Honors classes, but it still has many students attending top colleges.

The truth is, colleges take into account whether high school weights its students grades, so having the entire school with unweighted grades would render them at the same competitive level.

In addition, many schools such as the University of Michigan and Purdue University

un-weight the grades of all of students applying, making them equally competitive no matter what their high schools' policies are.

Colleges, in fact, look for more in a student than GPA alone, and students should internalize that truth to add more color in their lives.

Contrary to the popular student mindset, colleges know that a person's academic ability is determined by far more than a single number, especially at a time when GPAs tend to be inflated.

For many students, removing the GPA bump would effectively set them free to pursue the classes and activities they want to do. The school should consider this change seriously. ♦

THE saratogafalcon >>

THIRDPERIOD

STAFFPOLICY

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

MISSIONSTATEMENT

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Editors-in-Chief

Gitika Nalwa
Dorrie Tang

Associate Editor

Melissa Magner

News Editor

Helen Chen

Opinion Editor

Fiona Sequeira

Sports Editors

Aditya Chaudhry
Anant Rajeev

Lifestyles Editors

Emily Chen
Amulya Vadlakonda

Entertainment Editor

Saya Sivaram

Associate

Entertainment Editor
Nupur Maheshwari

Features Editors

Katherine Sun
Rachel Zhang

Backpage Editor

Arjun Ramanathan

Head Copy Editors

Caitlin Ju
Trevor Leung

Head Broadcast Editor

Rotem Shaked

Head Photographer

Shazia Gupta

Head Graphics Editor

Eric Sze

Head Art Editors

Tiffany Zheng
Photographers

Eric Sze

Gwynevere

Hunger

Weekly News/Web Team

Cassi King
Claire Chou

Business Manager

Nidhi Jain

Reporters

Pranav Ahuja
Derek Chen

Stephen Ding
Eleanor Gong

Jarod Kim
Ryan Kim

Michelle Koo
Michelle Lee

Angela Liu
Daphne Liu

Olivia Lu
Mary Maccoun

Hannah Payne
Divya Rallabandi

Harshini
Ramaswamy

Navin Tiwary
Austin Wang

Kyle Wang
Alex Yang

Adviser
Mike Tyler

Attendance policies counterproductive

>> candidcaricatures



Arriving just moments after the bell has rang, the chronically late student is almost always marked tardy and forced to endure the consequences that come as a result.

Tougher attendance policies this year are intended to ensure that nobody will get away with over double-digit cuts and tardies, as multiple students said they did in the past. To do this, the administration has upped the consequence for excessive tardies from one lunch detention to two one-hour detentions after school. This new punishment applies to students who have been tardy five or more times total or have one to three cuts.

The strictness of these new policies may seem like a positive change at first, but in reality, the tougher enforcement simply blurs the line between tardies and cuts and does not give students much of an incentive to avoid cuts once they are late to class.

To punish a student who is 10 minutes late to six classes and misses up to 50 minutes the same as someone who cuts three block periods and misses 270 minutes seems unjust at best.

The results of a recent Falcon poll show that these new policies are affecting many students. In a poll of 85 students conducted by the Falcon, 27 answered that they had received detentions as a result of tardies.

These after-school detentions are often inconvenient for students as involved in numerous activities, many

of which may in fact be academic.

Of course, it can be argued that it is students' fault for not caring enough about their education to wake up a few minutes earlier to be on time for class.

However, detention may be even more detrimental to the education of a student who is forced to stay at school for an extra hour, when they could be working with a tutor or attending a college counseling meeting.

For students who don't have seventh periods, detentions on Tuesdays and Thursdays are even more inconvenient. They have to wait at school after third period until detention ac-

tually starts at 3:20. In effect, the attendance policy ends up taking away even more time than the intended two hours of detention for many students.

Clearly, the school has to encourage students to go to class on time. But it is in administration's best interest to make policies that motivate students to get to class on time, or at the very least go to class even if they are late.

This can be accomplished by giving shorter detentions to late students and increasing the consequences for cuts.

Additionally, the number of tardies necessary to receive a detention should increase, so it is not as close to the number of cuts necessary to receive a detention. A fairer number would be nine tardies before detention kicks in.

The administration may think its new policies will reduce cuts and tardies, but in fact, more students may make the choice not to come to a class at all if they perceive the punishments as being equal. ♦

Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

Editors-in-chief Gitika Nalwa Dorrie Tang	Opinion Editor Fiona Sequeira	Reporters Helen Chen Apoorv Kwatra
--	---	---

The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 17-0 in support of the editorial.

Personal finance should be a greater part of Economics

by AnantRajeev

Elasticity. Market Price. Scarcity. Seniors read these words over and over, memorizing their definitions for the next Economics test. The current curriculum for the required class explores the basic principles of the subject: supply and demand, advantages and disadvantages of different kinds of businesses, and the price system. But in this class and perhaps in others, seniors should be learning something even more basic — personal finance.

Seniors are immersed into a curriculum where they learn the applications of money in an economic system, but they learn little knowledge to apply to their daily lives. The truth is that high school graduates need to know how to manage their money, save, invest, pay bills, buy houses and cars and insurance, and deal with the large debt they will accumulate in higher education.

Personal finance is not only an explanation of how to save and spend, but also a guide to managing checking accounts, loans, and essentially any interaction between a customer and a financial institution. If seniors receive an education on these topics, they will be more prepared for college and beyond.

For example, a personal finance unit could teach students how to make useful purchases on essentials they will need to buy. They will know better than to spend all their money on snacks or clothes, and will save more of it for necessities such as toiletries and supplies.

One way teachers can incorporate personal finance into the curriculum

is through simulations, which should be straightforward to organize. For example, students can practice using ATM machines or rehearse safe monetary transactions in class-wide "mock markets." Or they could simulate trying to put the money together to buy a house.

One problem that would hinder adding a personal finance unit into the Economics curriculum is lack of time. Since Economics is combined with AP or college prep Government and Politics, teachers are only given one semester to teach Economics before they have to switch over to the next topic.

Still, given its importance and relevance, teachers should not use lack of time as a reason to omit personal finance completely; instead, they should rearrange and cut down on less relevant units to make space for it.

For example, one of the topics currently covered in Economics, the market system, could be reduced and supplemented by a unit on personal finance.

Seniors will likely not be able to apply the concept of finding the market-clearing price or the elasticity of demand in the near future, but they will be regularly engaging in crucial monetary transactions such as the difference in loan rates. Seniors will soon be on their own, free to make their own decisions.

Learning about personal finance would provide a necessary introduction to financial situations. After all, personal finance is the backbone of anything and everything in economics, and if we're headed to college soon we should probably know more about how to manage our money. ♦

Pharmaceutical companies require stricter regulations

by SayaSivaram

Daraprim is an antibiotic used to treat babies, AIDS and cancer patients, and victims of malaria. It is not a new drug, having been on the market for 62 years. Recently, however, its price rocketed from \$13.50 to \$750 overnight when a company called Turing Pharmaceuticals bought it and decided to jack up its price.

Turing is led by Martin Shkreli — a notorious hedge fund manager and entrepreneur known for his radical business ideals.

The effect is clear: Many hospitals are being forced to use alternative methods of treatment that are not nearly as effective. The distributors of this drug are endangering the health of millions of people with this massive price change.

Unfortunately, Daraprim is not a unique case. Pharmaceutical companies often justify their excessive pricing by saying that the excess profit goes to research and development.

In this case, though, Turing Pharmaceuticals is not a developmental company; it is merely in charge of marketing and distribution.

So, in order to justify this monumental injustice, Turing claims that the drug is used so infrequently that the impact on the health system is miniscule. Clearly, however, this is not the case, es-

pecially for the individuals who depend on it.

For people's safety and well-being, further restrictions need to be placed on pharmaceutical companies to ensure that they are not charging unfairly for life-saving medicines.

Pharmaceutical companies have largely been left alone, as questions of access to health care have dominated the medical field for the last decade, and as a result, several extreme price rises have gone under the radar.

Doxycycline, another antibiotic, went from \$20 a bottle in

October of 2013 to \$1,849 by April of 2014. Isuprell and Nitopress, two large pharmaceutical distributors, raised their prices by 525 percent and 212 percent, respectively.

It is time for Congress to step in. So far, we have seen legislators be almost completely occupied by other parts of the health care industry, what with ObamaCare and Medicare, but this pharmaceutical issue is just as pressing and requires as much attention as possible.

The pattern is clear: Pharmaceutical companies are taking advantage of the government's blindness.

It is imperative that this issue be dealt with in a timely and efficient manner — with legislation that makes it illegal to buy and resell drugs with excessive markups. ♦

October 30, 2015

everyday nightmares



The Sixth Sense: Missing direction

laughy daphy

Daphne Liu



BEEP. BEEP. I opened my eyes in the darkness of my room, my head dripping in sweat. In the days leading up to the first day of school, I dreamed of intimidating teachers, forgetting my locker combination and everything else that could go wrong. And still, I somehow assured myself that sophomore year wouldn't be an apocalypse. Big mistake.

When the dreaded first day arrived, I went to school and read my schedule repeatedly, trying to remember my classes. And when the first bell rang, I felt prepared to take on the day. First period, Trigonometry PreCalculus Honors, Yim.

In the math quad,

I opened the door of what I thought was Mr. Yim's classroom. But as I looked up, I saw a tall, brunette woman, who was definitely not Mr. Yim. Humiliated, I slowly backed out of the classroom, not bothering to figure out whose classroom it really was.

Just as I thought that the situation couldn't get any worse, the bell rang. Fantastic: I was already late to the first class of the year.

I searched helplessly for five minutes before sitting on the bench with my head down, ready to give up. A few moments passed before I lifted my head up and, like a sappy '90s rom-com, there it was: Taped on the window across from me, where the old computer lab used to be, was a sign that read "Yim's Classroom." I could have leapt for joy.

But alas, my excitement soon faded to angst, and my palms grew damp as I anticipated what Mr. Yim would say for being late on the first day.

His former students, I knew, had agonized over the mentally taxing course and time-consuming homework, deeming Mr. Yim one of the toughest teachers in the math department. I was sure to be castigated, I thought. But I had no choice:

I had to press on, to face Mr. Yim, in all his notorious "Yimdragon"-ness.

I swung the door open, and my face grew hot as my new classmates stared at my arrival. I looked up to find a mountain bike in the corner and a man with glasses at the front: Mr. Yim.

He edged closer, thankfully only to reassure me that most students had trouble finding his classroom and that I could sit anywhere I wanted. Relieved, I surveyed the classroom, but found that the only open seat was in front of the teacher's desk, the one place I hated sitting.

As I sat down, he started reviewing the syllabus. I began to calm down, thinking he wasn't that strict, until he suddenly pounded the table, yelling, "Do your homework until it's impossible for you to make a mistake!"

My eyes grew larger as I stared in shock. I had already failed to deliver. My whole morning was a mistake.

Two months later, I can still remember the fear I had on the first day of school. My only comfort is that no day will be worse than this one, that is, until I take Mr. Yim's next test. ♦

Paranormal Activity: APUSH lurks

queen cassandra

Cassandra King



'Twas a Tuesday night in early October, and all was quiet and dark, save for one flickering light. A bitter wind howled through the streets, debris slapped against my window pane and an ominous shadow loomed over me. I heard an eerie scratching and then a door creak, and I jumped in fright.

My heart rate slowed once I saw that it was only my mother who had opened the door, checking to see when I would finish my homework. OK, I'll admit that the howling was caused by a filter my dad had put in my room, and the spooky sounds were just my dog's nails at the door, but I remained unhealed, for the sinister shadow cast by the mountain of homework on my desk was nothing short of a nightmare. And this pile of homework I had to conquer before class the next morning only seemed to be growing while the clock ticked away.

Let's flashback to 9:30 that evening, when I had just gotten home to start my homework. At that point, homework was the furthest thing from my mind. I was starving, so I slashed open a pack of beef-flavored ramen (desperate times call for desperate measures).

Little did I know that my inhaling its MSG and trans fat marked the tip of the iceberg, the beginning of the endless horror that became my night.

At around 10:30 p.m., satiated with a mediocre meal and the latest gossip I could glean from Facebook, I was ready to get to that trigonometry and AP Bio homework. For the time being, all was under control.

Then, at 1:53 a.m., I got a text. My friend frantically asked, "Did you do APUSH homework yet?" I felt a terror blaze through my body. Due once a week, APUSH homework was the spectre that had been quietly gliding about in my mind, present, but not yet a threat... until now.

I had, it seemed, wrongly assumed that the homework was due next week and so naturally, this simple question from my friend catapulted my brain into a numb-

ing paralysis. APUSH homework. Due. Tomorrow.

The clock flashed 1:57 a.m. No, it was due today, in approximately nine hours.

The feeling of dread crept up my spine more rapidly now, and it was not long until I was elbow deep in amendments, taxes and battles, and I could sense the cold clasp of the Constitutional Convention at the nape of my neck.

At 4:03 a.m., fed up with conflicts of a budding democracy, I slammed my textbook shut, resolving to get to at least three hours of sleep before waking up to wrap up my last theme paragraph. And I did.

At 8:40 a.m. on Wednesday morning, I trudged to school, homework done, ready to start the day. Upon my arrival, the friend who had sent me that night-ruining text bounded up to me, peering curiously at my drawn face and ringed eyes.

"Did you really do the homework?" she wondered. In that horrific moment, I realized the implications of her question: The homework wasn't due until next week. ♦



The Birds: Reporter flees excrement

saya-nara

Saya Sivaram



Before you begin to read, I must warn you that this is not for the faint of heart or the weak of stomach. This is not for those in search of lightheartedness or encouragement, but if you are truly brave enough to venture onwards, then I wish you good luck.

As I am to type these words — nay, these horrors — onto the page, my hands are trembling.

It is difficult, scarring, impossible for me to relive the occurrences of the day everything changed, just about a fortnight ago — I must, however, for the good of others.

They must be warned.

It was cold that day in the Quad. The clouds shrouded the light of the sun and a chilly wind ruffled the crisp leaves of the oak trees. The birds were strangely absent — all except for the pigeons. Against the gray backdrop of the sky, the huddle of pigeons advanced like a menacing cloud, blocking whatever light had percolated through the fog.

I felt the darkness before I saw it. I stood outside, bundled in a sweater and attempting to ward off the bone-chilling cold that had conquered my body when suddenly, it was as if the world had gone completely dark.

The birds were here, and they wanted me.

I ran as fast as I could. All I needed was to reach shelter and I would be safe, but alas, I was too late and

there was no escaping them. Across the back of my neck, I felt the gooey splatter of bird excrement. Reaching up, I touched my hair and withdrew my hand, only to find my fingers covered in the awful sticky mess.

I dare not say anymore for fear of worsening the residual effects of that day — my everlasting phobia of birds. Simply recounting the experience has left me cold and clammy, and I haven't even gotten to the truly gory details. I spare you those terrors for your own good.

I depart solely after imparting this fragment of wisdom: They will be back. If ever you hear the clamorous beating of wings, run. Run as fast and as far as you possibly can, for that is your only chance to survive. I was simply not lucky enough to make it through unscathed. ♦

Night of the Living Dead: The SAT

by Caitlin Ju

SAT books on her left, stacks of school homework on the right. Her light is the only one still on in the house. The clock's bold red numbers spell 4 a.m.

It's a typical night for junior Shreya Ingle. As the "available" Facebook status indicates, it is also a late night for many other juniors, and the school nightmare does not end in the early morning for Ingle. Instead, it morphs into an endless cycle of caffeine jolts during first period, attempted short naps in the afternoon after tennis practice and private SAT classes that ended at 11 p.m.

Ingle's breaking point came on Oct. 2, the day before the SAT. Sitting by the tennis courts at a tennis tournament, Ingle was attempting to cram all of Princeton Review's "Word Smart" into her head before the big day.

"As I read the book, whenever I saw a word I didn't know, I would become terrified," Ingle said. "I had this irrational fear that the one word I didn't study would be the one on the test."

Because of the endless vocabulary lists, she developed a migraine that worsened with the realization that there were only three other chances to take the current SAT; the new SAT debuts in March of 2016.

To relax, Ingle repeatedly calculated the number of hours she needed to sleep to optimize her performance. She was afraid that too much sleep would cause her body to want even more sleep, knocking her off her A-game.

On the morning of the SAT, Ingle awoke, realized she was almost late and panicked. She rushed to the testing center at Archbishop Mitty High School and took a seat, as ready as she could be for the test. Four hours later, Ingle felt like crying but soon realized that it was useless to worry about the few problems she was unsure about.

With the SAT over for now, Ingle thought she had conquered the monster known as junior year, but

alas, she had fallen into the grasp of the test's evil younger sibling: the newly changed PSAT that struck on Oct. 28.

Ingle feared that with the PSAT approaching, she would revert the dire state of stress caused by the SAT. Such a state had urged her to shut herself away from her friends and had even made her think about quitting tennis, though she did not in the end. The result was that Ingle had precious little time to study, first for the SAT and then for the PSAT.

"Junior year makes it impossible to take the number of practice tests I want to," Ingle said. "I'd make a plan to take a full PSAT practice test and realize how unreasonable that plan was, or the plan would not work out, and I'd fall apart."

Still, Ingle was not disheartened. She pushed through the nightmarish weeks, looking forward to the time when standardized testing would be a distant memory. But Ingle was far too optimistic.

Reality check time: The nightmare never ends, and juniors, beware — if you are not a nocturnal zombie yet, you will be soon. ♦

5-word horror stories



"It is due before midnight."
— Meghana Kaza (11)



"10 missed calls from mom."
— Fiona Sequeira (12)



"Took APUSH. Procrastinated till Sunday."
— Allen Li (12)



"Benedict Cumberbatch loses his cheekbones."
— Max Rossip (12)



"Everybody get on the line."
— Apoorv Kwatra (11)



"Mom: So I checked Aeries ..."
— Isabelle Tseng (11)



"Eats Nutella. It's not Nutella."
— Jacky Lee (12)



'Honeymoon' offers complex, moody tracks

BY Eric Sze

Once again, the queen has dropped a fabulous album.

There's nothing quite like the voice and songwriting of Lana Del Rey, who has the ability to stir up both nostalgia and sorrow, emotions rarely evoked by today's fast beats and brassy tunes. Since rising to prominence with the release of her album "Born to Die" in 2012, Del Rey has delivered one outstanding album after the other, with "Paradise" in 2012, "Ultraviolence" in 2014 and her long-awaited album, "Honeymoon," on Sept. 18. "Honeymoon" focuses primarily on Del Rey's struggle with relationships and love. With 14 tracks and replete with Del Rey's soaring vocals, the album is one of her strongest to date.

The album's first and title track is "Honeymoon," a melancholy ballad in which Del Rey reminisces about her past love. The song opens with a slow tempo, accompanied by a couple of string instruments, and dies down before she begins her first verse. As with most Lana Del Rey albums, the highlight is her voice, which, in this song, is more refreshingly raw than ever. Del Rey surprises and delights, both with her voice and with her lyrics.

Despite its enchanting title, "Honeymoon" is not an ode to rainbows

and sunshine, but rather an account of hopelessness and grief, of yielding logic to dreams as life passes by.

We are taken even further into Del Rey's complex and distressing love life with the album's lead single, "High by the Beach." In this track, Del Rey shoves her past lover into the ocean, singing, "You could be a bad [expletive], but that don't make you a man, now you're just another one of my problems."

In this track, Del Rey proves her utter transformation from her persona in "Honeymoon," emphasizing that she now has power over her lover and isn't going to be another girl who allows her dream man to take control of her. "24" is one of the darker songs on the album. Del Rey sings of spending her days dealing with an abusive lover, lamenting that "there's only 24 hours in a day, and half of those, you lay awake, with thoughts of

murder and carnage."

The value of this song lies in its relatability: Del Rey describes a difficult situation that some people face every day. In a somewhat ominous tone, Del Rey then warns, "Be careful of the ones you choose to leave." She could be referring to her lover in this line and in the final line of the song, where she sings "you're cold to touch"; "you're" perhaps references the lover that she possibly murdered due to his actions towards her.

In a way, this song could be talking about the type of life Del Rey does not want to be trapped in, and she reveals what such a situation would do to her well-being.

Although this track has a eerie, fairly frightening tone to it, I still found it to be one of the strongest on the album, as it showcased Del Rey's ability to hit both high and low notes. An odd, but interesting twist to the album isn't in any of songs, but in the album's cover art itself. Embedded on the Starline

Tours vehicle on the album is the number 800-268-7886.

Although no longer active, calling the number before the album was released would direct the caller to the "Honeymoon Hotline," which would give out information about the album and play a prerecorded message from Del Rey, subsequently allowing the caller to listen to "Terrence Loves You," a Ted Talk by billionaire tech entrepreneur Elon Musk, or a talk on the origins of the universe. Although the album was released over a month ago, it still occupies a large chunk of my playlist. And as the album has had 105,000 sales to date and became the No. 2 album on Billboard in its first release week, I'm sure many of her songs take up space in others' playlists as well. ♦



rollingstone.com

"Honeymoon"

(OUT OF FIVE)
 Artists: Lana Del Rey
 Reporter's favorite track: "High by the Beach"
 Genre: Alternative

Sivan's new E.P. elicits 'Wild' response

BY Tiffany Zheng

Australian actor, musician and YouTube Troye Sivan has stepped up his game since his last extended play or EP, "TRXYE." An EP is a collection of music that is too short to qualify for a full album, but too long to qualify as a single. The strong vocal range and collaborations in his most recent EP, "WILD," have blown away fans, including America's favorite pop princess Taylor Swift and most importantly, me.

When I plugged in my auxiliary cord and heard his sweet, beautiful tunes, I imagined him garbed in a satin robe, serenading me with "EASE" while sliding down a winding cedar staircase. His album is pure poetry. Listeners can hear the progression in Sivan's writing skills since he wrote "TRXYE" in 2014 (his first time writing music). As Sivan said in an interview with Billboard, this past year involved "writing a lot of really, really terrible songs and writing a couple of really, really good ones." His much awaited sophomore album, "WILD," which reached No. 1 on the charts in 41 countries, has six alternative pop songs with foundations of dark, thought-provoking lyricism.

The album's opening song, "WILD," shares the same title as his album, and deservedly so. The production magic that took place in this first song is un-

imaginable. Even Taylor Swift felt the need to call his song "STUNNING AND AWESOME" in a tweet. Yes, Taylor, you are spot on. The juxtaposition of his soft voice with the heavy electric backdrops in this piece creates an undeniable spark in listeners.

Sivan turns down a darker road with "BITE," a song inspired by his first experience at a gay club. On the surface,

When I heard his sweet, beautiful tunes, I imagined him in a satin robe, serenading me while sliding down a winding cedar staircase.

many of Sivan's songs seem shallow and unoriginal, as they possess the mellow pop vibes prevalent in commercialistic radio music. Upon a closer listening, however, it's evident that Sivan's songs boast depth, both in their messages and in their deliveries. In "BITE," the bass swells with a thick and personal bout of emotion to create a truly exhilarating piece that only enhances Sivan's album.

Next on the album is "FOOLS," arguably his second most popular song behind "WILD." The instrumental of "FOOLS" complements Sivan's breathy voice perfectly. But Sivan had me at the hook: "I see swimming pools and living rooms and aeroplanes/ I see a little

house on the hill and children's names/ I see quiet nights poured over ice and Tanqueray/ But everything is shattering and it's my mistake."

Sivan channels how we all feel when we realize that we've fallen for someone toxic. The relatability of his lyrics complements his voice in every song of the album. Sivan didn't fail to impress with the next song in the lineup, "EASE." When I listened to the song for the first time, I had evacuate the premises because it is so fire.

But I couldn't keep away for long. "EASE," which is now my personal favorite, is a product of Sivan's collaboration with Broods, a New Zealand group that was a surprisingly big addition to the budding artist's album.

Before the song was released, Sivan published a picture on Twitter with an excerpt of EASE and Broods' name underneath, and fans went appropriately insane for the song's release.

His voice pairs with that of Broods' lead singer Georgia Nott like milk and cookies, but the song's aggressively catchy pop background keeps me from drifting off.

Like whipped cream on top of an already "grande" sundae, Sivan's DKLA (Don't Keep Love Around), featuring Australian artist Tkay Maida, had me smiling like a big dope. The song starts slow, but draws the listener into something heavier and darker. The line "Dis-

tance makes the heart grow fonder/ / Said by someone stronger than me," still gives me shivers. Sivan concludes the album in the only way he can: ideally.

It's obvious that Troye Sivan is a potential goldmine of artistic and production genius. "WILD" is startlingly autobiographical, allowing

Sivan's listeners to connect with him on a more personal level. But this impressive mini-album is only the start to something even bigger and greater, so the music industry really should keep its ears open.

And to the critics that "Don't Keep Love Around" for Sivan, these FOOLS who have yet to EASE into THE QUIET lull of this artistically divine gem, I will definitely go WILD when you all BITE the dust. I can only pray your ears start functioning again. ♦

"Wild"

(OUT OF FIVE)
 Artists: Troye Sivan
 Reporter's favorite track: "Ease"
 Genre: Pop/Alternative



Oh Wonder releases technically unique album

BY Olivia Lu

With its hit single "Technicolor Beat" boasting 7 million streams on Spotify, Oh Wonder has defined a new standard for musical groups in the alternative genre.

The English duo includes singer Josephine Van Der Gucht and singer/producer Anthony West, who have established a mellow yet unique sound through their duets. After a year of releasing new singles each month, Oh Wonder has finally made its debut with its first album: "Oh Wonder."

Although the duo worked quickly to release the album, they did not prioritize deadlines over quality and still managed to produce thrilling tunes and sweet beats. Much of the band's struggle, in truth, was not in meeting its deadlines, but in learning how to put egos aside.

"Previously to this, I had always been in the front of a band, and [Van Der Gucht] had always been in

the front of a band." West said in an interview with FaceCulture. "Now, there's a balance; everything we do now is not just what's best for ourselves. That's down to writing, it's down to interviews, it's down to being on stage — it's all gotta be for Oh Wonder."

The album sets Oh Wonder apart from other pop duos such as Alex and Sierra and Us the Duo, as Oh Wonder showcases its experience in musical production through its integration of various sound effects.

Piano, strings and rain all emphasize the album's chilling undertones, low bass and refined beats, thus marking the album an indie/synth-pop wonder.

"Melodically, I used to write songs that were just really odd and not very 'catchy' or not very sonically appealing, but [West] has tamed that," Van

Der Gucht said in FaceCulture. "There's a level of not wanting to be predictable but you want to be melodious."

Though each song on the album is unique in its tempo and melody, all songs are tied together with similar piano progressions and slow rhythms at their beginnings.

The songs also convey meaningful messages about love and relationships, mental illness, money and fame.

While many other artists write about similar topics, Oh Wonder relates them differently. For instance, in its song "Drive," the band refers to artists who sing "the same songs with the same old rhymes, tell me to shake it off and swing from the lights," a reference that serves as a metaphor for the redundant essence of relationships.

In the song "Dazzle," the duo says that they're "not in it for the money, just in it for the thrill, living in the moment, paying for the kill" to ensure that their fans know that they truly care about the content they put out, and are not just part of a marketing plan to boom and then bust.

The duo sets these intriguing lyrics to electronica ballads, essentially formulating the perfect wind-down album.

With the album, Oh Wonder has separated itself from mainstream bands through breathtaking melodies and contemplative lyrics. Though the band started touring just this year, it has already sold out shows and toured internationally.

These new kids on the block are slowly but surely creeping up the charts, leaving fans wondering whether Oh Wonder continue to rise to success. Whatever the answer may be, one thing is definitely certain: The duo has opened the eyes of listeners, or ears rather, to new, idiosyncratic, wonderful music. ♦

"Oh Wonder"

(OUT OF FIVE)
 Artists: Oh Wonder
 Reporter's favorite track: "Drive"
 Genre: Alternative

Drake and Future ignite music world

BY Arjun Ramanathan

"What a Time to be Alive." Most people may perceive this as a simple statement of appreciation for today's day and age.

However, since Sept. 20, Hip-Hop and Rap fans everywhere have known it as something else: the title of a highly anticipated mixtape by a collaboration of Drake and Future, two popular hip hop/rap artists.

The album certainly didn't disappoint, and I have to say it now holds its place as one of my favorite works by either artist. The mixtape was initially brought to attention by radio show hosts such as DJ Skee and Angela Yee.

An official announcement of its release date premiered on Drake's Instagram account on Sept. 19, just one day before its release.

Fans of both artists had high hopes for the mixtape, as Drake and Future released albums "If You're Reading This It's Too Late" and "DS2,"

respectively, earlier this year.

Both albums placed first in the billboard top 200 albums soon after their releases. Drake and Future are known for rapping on beats with heavy sounds, drums and other strong sound bytes, producing up-beat, booming music.

But while Future almost exclusively releases songs that follow this formula, Drake can instead sing mellow, more emotional songs like "Marvin's Room" and his recent hit single "Hotline Bling."

This key distinction between the two had fans anticipating a unique mix of music for the mix-

tape, and "What a Time to be Alive" was generally able to deliver the fans what they wanted. Critics with Billboard, Rolling Stone

and Complex had generally positive ratings for the album. However, Entertainment Weekly and Pitchfork Media criticized the album's quality, attributing its shortcomings to a still-developing chemistry between the two rappers.

Being a fan of both rappers, I fell into the category of eager fans awaiting the arrival of the mixtape.

Since I primarily listen to music using Spotify, I had to wait an extra five days for the mixtape to be available, and I made sure not to read any reviews or criticism so that I could experience the mixtape for myself.

My opinion of the mixtape can be summed up with a word often used on the web to describe music with a good beat or catchy raps: fire.

Right off the bat, the album's first track, "Digital Dash," had me hooked.

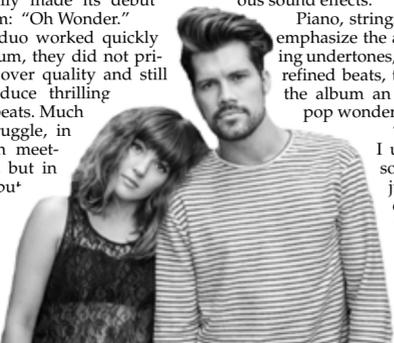
With a unique beat and a calm but addictive flow, the song had me excited to hear more, and I spent the next hour of the night listening to the whole mixtape. I was quite impressed with the tracks, which were produced by producers such as Metro Boomin, Boi 1-da and 40, all of whom are famous

for producing many Drake and Future songs. Though I was satisfied with how the mixtape turned out, only "Digital Dash" "Big Rings" and "Jumpman" appealed to me as instant-classics, songs that would be hard to forget.

Considering their frequently different styles, Drake and Future have done a great job making a popular mixtape for most rap fans to enjoy. Like most fans, I'm hoping a second collaborative mixtape from the two artists that will be released in the future, enriching their track record and building their synergy in the process. ♦

"What a Time to be Alive"

(OUT OF FIVE)
 Artists: Drake and Future
 Reporter's favorite track: "Jump Man"
 Genre: Hip Hop



indiesance.com

Charitable causes receive celebrity support

BY Katherine Sun & Amulya Vadlakonda

"This year, Planned Parenthood has gone through a series of unfortunate events, and it felt right to make our support more public and more dramatic," Lisa Brown said in an interview with BuzzFeed.

Brown and her husband Daniel Handler, who is more commonly known as Lemony Snicket and the author of the popular "A Series of Unfortunate Events" novels, announced last month that they will donate \$1 million to the embattled organization.

Planned Parenthood, which offers affordable health care services such as STD tests and treatments, educational programs and abortions, has been heavily attacked by Republicans attempting to cut off its funding. In a time when lawmakers incorrectly but persistently accuse Planned Parenthood of selling fetuses for illegal profit, Handler's donation comes as a welcome gift.

Lemony Snicket is only one of many celebrities who have been using their wealth and influence for philanthropic causes. Often celebrities will make large donations to existing organizations.

Some start organizations of their own. For example, Michael J. Fox, the actor most well-known for his roles as Marty McFly in the "Back to the Future" trilogy and Alex Keaton in "Family Ties," has used his own experiences with Parkinson's disease to help those who also suffer from the disease.

After disclosing his condition to the public in 1998, Fox established the Michael J. Fox Foundation, an organization that has since become the largest nonprofit funder of Parkinson's research in the world.

Celebrities like Fox often contribute their wealth through foundations and monetary contributions, but many also use their status and fame to brighten someone's day. Actor Johnny Depp, most famous for his role as Captain Jack Sparrow in the "Pirates of the Caribbean" series, sometimes spends time visiting children's hospitals while dressed as the famous

character.

During his most recent visit to Lady Cilento's Children's Hospital in Australia, the children and their families were delighted by his antics and affectations.

Comedian and actor Russell Brand is similarly approachable. He is known for helping out the homeless and occasionally treating them to a meal. While neither Brand's actions nor Depp's actions are particularly grandiose, they still are meaningful and have drawn praise and attention from the media.

Perhaps the varying efforts of celebrities can best be seen by looking to Angelina Jolie. She first gained an interest in humanitarian affairs in 2000, when she went to Cambodia to film the adventure movie "Tomb Raider." Since then, she has gone on numerous field missions across the globe, personally meeting refugees in more than 20 countries while sharing the same living conditions as do the staff of

the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

But her efforts do not stop there. The Jolie-Pitt Foundation works to eradicate rural poverty, protect natural resources and conserve wildlife. And according to tax records, Jolie and Pitt donated more than \$8 million to charity in 2006 alone.

Jolie has even taken to the media to share her own story in coping with the risk of cancer. In 2013 and 2015, she authored two op-ed articles in the New York Times discussing her decisions to undergo a preventive double mastectomy and surgery to remove her ovaries and fallopian tubes.

By speaking openly about her personal choices and hardships, Jolie let other women know that they are not alone. She encouraged those who might be afraid to take the next step, such as undergoing a mastectomy.

"I choose not to keep my story private because there are many women who do not know that they might be living under the shadow of cancer," Jolie wrote.

The differences that Jolie and celebrities like her can make extend beyond the capabilities of the average person — and the fact that they use their resources to make a change is to be commended. ♦

Celebrities often contribute their wealth through foundations and monetary contributions, but many also use their status to brighten someone's day.

>> togetalks

Would you support a celebrity endorsed cause?

"I would be more aware, but I don't think the celeb could shape my full opinion on the matter."



senior Meghan Shah

"No, because I think most of this support is either fake or not worth the attention."



freshman Hugo Huang

"Yes. The causes backed by celebrities usually have funding which makes them seem more attractive."



sophomore Ayush Aggarwal

Star takes on 'Hamlet'

BY Katherine Sun

Like so many other young women, I follow British actor Benedict Cumberbatch obsessively. Let me put it this way: If BuzzFeed ever made a quiz on the most obscure of his interviews, videos and photos, I would ace that quiz.

By the time Cumberbatch was announced to play Hamlet with National Theatre Live (NTLive), I knew from interviews that he had been looking forward to the role for years. My elation lasted all of 2 minutes before I found out the play would take place 5,000 miles away—in London.

Tickets for the live play sold out in less than a day and at the highest rate in London theater history. So when I heard that NTLive would screen Hamlet in select theaters worldwide on Oct. 15, I was not prepared to take any chances. I immediately secured two tickets online for AMC Cupertino 16.

At this point, it was May. I had five months to figure out the plot of Hamlet. Fast-forward to 10 minutes before the 7 p.m. show, and in the theater seat next to my dad, I had just finished reading the Wikipedia plot summary.

As the lights dimmed and Cumberbatch appeared onstage, I just barely refrained from gushing audibly. Throughout the play, he put his all into every voice, gesture and facial expression (and never have I been more invested in a work of Shakespeare).

During Cumberbatch's soliloquies, the lights around him

dimmed and the characters around him continued moving in slow motion, as if time went on while the audience was let into Hamlet's thoughts. I speak without bias when I say Cumberbatch's trembling voice lent itself to Hamlet's angst and agony. Even during the less consequential scenes, I latched onto each of his lines.

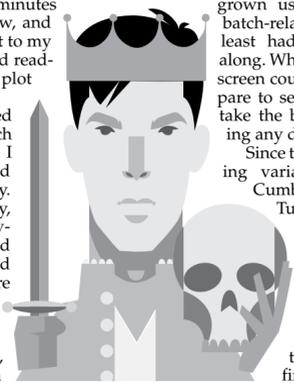
Yet as much as I love to watch Benedict Cumberbatch's acting and his appearances in the most pointless of YouTube videos, even I began to tire of his spotlight. By nature, Hamlet is a bit of a one-man show, but that was no excuse for the director to practically shove other characters off stage.

Luckily, this did not hurt the play too much, thanks to Cumberbatch's nuanced portrayal and my unparalleled love for him. I enjoyed the rest of the performance — the haunting music, the stunning set and the simple, modern clothing.

Three hours after stepping into the theater, I emerged glowing. Dad, who's grown used to my Cumberbatch-related effusions, at least had the sense to nod along. While seeing the play on screen could not possibly compare to seeing it live, I would take the broadcast over nothing any day.

Since then, I've been browsing variations of "Benedict Cumberbatch Hamlet" on Tumblr and Google, in part to relive the experience, and in part to check for additional video clips and photos of Benedict.

If there's anything new, I'll be the first to let you know. ♦



GRAPHIC BY ERIC SZE

'Quantico' redefines public perception of Indian actors

BY Fiona Sequeira

After several major box office hits in India, Bollywood superstar and former Miss World Priyanka Chopra has brought her talents to the U.S. with new TV drama series "Quantico," which premiered on Sept. 27 on ABC.

The show, co-created by Joshua Safran (producer of "Gossip Girl"), centers around a terrorist attack that decimates New York City's Grand Central Station. FBI agent Alex Parrish, played by Chopra, is framed for the attack, and in order to clear her name, she must investigate her former classmates from the FBI Academy in Quantico, Va. The story unfolds in two concurrent timelines: the present-day where Alex must prove her innocence and the past in Quantico, where she and her colleagues compete for coveted spots as full-fledged FBI agents. "Quantico" threatens to fall into banality with its overdone "terrorist thriller" bent. It ignores the realities of life as an FBI agent to further plot lines and create suspense.

While this tactic could quickly bore viewers, the show is refreshing in the sense that it is breaking serious ground in Hollywood with its diverse cast that features several smart, independent and empowered female characters. As the first South Asian woman to headline an American network drama series, Chopra is legitimizing the identities of South Asians in mainstream American media. Her image on major billboards across the U.S. serves as an inspiring source of pride for women of color everywhere as well as an encouraging reminder of changing times.

Chopra is keen on defying Indian stereotypes in American popular cul-

ture. As she says, Indians do not have to be limited to playing stereotypical characters like Apu from "The Simpsons" or the sweater-donning geeky scientist Raj Koothrappali (played by Kunal Nayyar) on the CBS sitcom "The Big Bang Theory." Even Mindy Kaling, who plays doctor Mindy Lahiri on her show "The Mindy Project," often elicits laughs through self-deprecating humor.

In contrast, Chopra breaks free of the South Asian typecasting by playing the role of a sassy modern woman who knows how to pack a punch. In short, Chopra proves that South Asians can fulfill lead roles rather than play second fiddle to white actors. While the show has its flaws, such as an unrealistic plot that moves at breakneck speed, it's a step toward positively representing real Americans of every heritage in pop culture — especially in roles where they are protecting our country's ideals of democracy and freedom.

One of the show's FBI recruits is the hijab wearing Nimah Anwar (Yasmine Al Massri), highly unusual for a prime-time show. Placing Indians and Muslims in these roles is a definitive step closer to a colorblind media. While "Quantico" deals with some heavy content — the pilot episode alone features suicide, domestic violence and a terrorist attack — at its core, it's fun. The show delivers twists that keeps the viewer wanting more. Now more than ever, with our rapidly changing world demographic, viewers will demand to see people who look like them starring in coveted roles on the big screen. "Quantico," with its addictive premise, sly mystery and well-balanced cast, is shaping up to be a breakout show in this fall's TV season. ♦

October 30, 2015

<< 19 features Sunnyvale autism case hits close to home

BY Saya Sivaram

On Aug. 7, 2005, nine days before my sixth birthday, my cousin was born — a beautiful baby with solemn eyes and chubby fists.

As the youngest of three in my immediate family, I had always wished for a younger sibling, and finally, I had gotten someone who would be as close as one. From the moment that I saw him, I decided that I would be the equivalent of his big sister.

For the first two years of his life, I did just that. I spent hours tickling his cheeks and reading all my favorite books to him. When he learned how to crawl, I would inch my way across the floor with him, getting carpet burns on my elbows and knees and loving every minute of it. One thing was worrying, however. By age 2, he had yet to utter his first word.

The family didn't think much of it at first, thinking that a speech impediment was the most likely cause. But after the first appointment with a speech pathologist, that idea went out the window, along with any hope of his case being a mild condition that he would eventually outgrow.

Several months and doctors appointments later, we got the news: My cousin was autistic.

As my cousin began to grow older

and stronger, I watched as the autism began to manifest itself. He was unable to communicate effectively, resorting to bursts of sobbing or screaming to express his feelings.

Unfortunately, these bouts were also accompanied by violence. Being so small, he couldn't do much harm to anyone, but as he continued to grow, his stomping feet turned into scratches, and then into kicks and punches.

I was often on the receiving end of these episodes, always returning with bruises dotting my arms and legs. He required some combination of medication and therapy that we had yet to find, and he would be better. I held that hope with me through the next few years, until about a year ago, when I realized just how unrealistic it was.

In a fit of rage, my now 9-year-old cousin, who was playing in the yard, darted out into the street and pushed a small child off his bike in his Sunnyvale neighborhood. The neighbors decided to file a lawsuit in 2014, claiming that my baby cousin — the little boy that I love so much — was a "public nuisance."

It is not my place to discuss whether

they are justified in pressing charges, but the effects of the case have been numerous and painful.

Autism is a largely misunderstood illness — most people lump all forms of mental disabilities under it as a blanket term. I used to do that as well, even after my cousin was diagnosed. Being so young, I did not feel the need to reach further into the minutiae of this diagnosis.

The public is exposed to a narrow view of autism. They see the distraught parents and the hopelessness. They are privy only to the uncontrolled behavior and the reduced mental capacity. Through all of this, they often forget that children with autism are real children.

Even though autism has determined the arc of my cousin's life, it does not define him. He is still just a kid — one who loves to play games on the iPad and listen to The Beatles. No matter how much his disability has impacted our family, it will never affect our love for him.

That being said, he has still had to go through a lot in order to manage his disability. My cousin had been in several different therapies before the incident.

Even though autism has determined the arc of my cousin's life, it does not define him.



GRAPHIC BY ERIC SZE

MANGAL >>

continued from pg. 1

ect she started in Orre's class has become a 45-minute documentary titled "Believe In Me" that follows her work with autistic children.

Mangal's journey began when she traveled overseas to Mathura, India, the summer after her freshman year to volunteer with Kalyanam Karoti, a nonprofit organization that works with disabled children.

She worked with Sambal, a school specifically designed to help mentally disabled children.

"It's both amazing and humbling to see what [the children at Sambal] have accomplished despite the societal neglect they face," Mangal said. "I have seen how an autistic person can overcome the disorder with support from [his or her] family and community."

Mangal has also seen the opposite. She described how some communities in India neglect autistic children because they believe they are violent or useless. But Mangal learned differently at Sambal.

"While I was there, I was amazed by the amount of progress I saw because a lot of kids had complete conversations with me," said Mangal. "I saw kids that were writing and drawing things. They were even able to operate sewing machines."

Mangal was shocked to learn that, despite all their talents and abilities, autistic children in India often times have little to no support from their communi-

ties and families.

"The kids [I worked with in India] say that their parents are negligent," Mangal said. "One girl said her neighbor calls her crazy. That's not true because she has aspirations: She wants to become a doctor. These kids have dreams, and I was really humbled by that."

During her time at Sambal, Mangal conducted interviews with psychologists, educators and autistic children themselves. Mangal also wrote analysis reports and developed case studies about the children there.

When Mangal returned from her summers of working with the children at Sambal, she knew she wanted to continue her work with autistic children. Mangal searched on volunteer.com for opportunities and finally happened upon the Son-Rise treatment program.

Unlike the traditional Applied Behavioral Analysis therapy (ABA), Son-Rise's treatment views autism as a social issue rather than as a behavioral one.

Instead of discouraging children from exhibiting behavior associated with autism, like playing with their hair or spinning blocks, Son-Rise encourages them to do what they want.

The program's volunteers are trained to mimic children's movements so they feel more comfortable with their actions. Through the Son-Rise program, Mangal met Jackson, a boy diagnosed with autism at 18 months. None of the treatments his family had previously tried seemed to help, but Son-Rise helped Jackson connect with others around him.

"Every time he looks at me, it's really rewarding because I feel like I'm connecting with him in his world," Mangal



Courtesy of ISHA MANGAL

Jackson, an autistic boy in the Son-Rise program, listens to the world around him.

said. "Communication is the biggest barrier, so I know that I'm impacting him and his family."

When it came time to film her documentary this past summer, Mangal wanted it to be a culmination of her work with autistic children and her interest in medicine.

"If we have ample support from the community and from the government, it can really make a big difference for these children and their families," Mangal said. "I wanted to show people in my documentary that, in the end, these children are as normal as we are."

The documentary was posted on YouTube in mid-September and has started to garner publicity. At first, the video

was only distributed among Mangal's close friends, but Mangal soon reached out to different autism organizations like Autism Speaks and Autism Treatment Center of America.

She hopes to air her documentary on PBS and even send it to some film festivals later in the year.

Mangal thinks that although treating autism is challenging, if society starts to increase its acceptance of the condition, attitudes toward it can change.

"I really want to spread awareness about the fact that these children aren't violent; they're not useless," Mangal said. "They're capable of overcoming whatever they have if they have enough support." ♦

One of the most effective was applied behavior analysis (ABA) therapy, which was targeted at stabilizing his behavior. Furthermore, he was under the care of psychiatrists, aides and specialists. It is not his fault that he was not getting better.

This case has not been easy on him. The constant attention, stress and supervision have certainly taken a toll on him, increasing his anxiety and reducing his ability to concentrate, and it kills me to see it.

ABC World News covered the story of the autistic boy in Sunnyvale a few weeks ago, the Mercury News ran a series of articles about the neighbors who started this lawsuit, but neither of them managed to capture the essence of the issue — that autism, as a whole, requires far more understanding, and every case has the potential to be very different from others.

My baby cousin is as perfect as can be, but his mind is marred by autism. He has grown up fighting for self-control every day, struggling to live with such a crippling disability.

To others, my cousin may simply be a headline. To me, he is simply a little boy who is very much deserving of a life full of love and compassion, and like the rest of my family, I want to do everything that I can to give that to him. ♦

GENDER EQUALITY

bridging the gap

GRAPHIC BY ERIC SZÉ

Analyzing the reality of the STEM divide

BY Nidhi Jain & Caitlin Ju

“Girls like you shouldn’t be in this program.”

Just a few seconds before, AP Computer Science teacher Judi Heher, then a sophomore at University of Waterloo in Canada, had simply raised her hand to ask a question about a math problem.

Her professor in Pure Algebra turned from the young man he had just finished helping and stared blankly at Heher. With a look of disgust, he rubbed the piece of orange chalk in his hands and hurled it at Heher before telling her that because of her gender, she did not belong in such an advanced mathematics program.

Flustered and unable to respond, Heher stormed to her dorm room, determined to pack her bags and return to California. With every jacket she folded she felt even more “stupid” and doubtful she could survive in such a rigorous program with a 15-to-1 male-female ratio.

Just as she was ready to leave, her boyfriend turned her helplessness into determination, convincing her to let out her frustration by proving her professor wrong. After spending the entire weekend studying for her math midterm, Heher received the second highest grade in the class.

Though this event took place over 30 years ago, the memory has served as motivation in other aspects of her life.

“I remind myself of [that experience] a lot when I get into places where I don’t think I can do things, because I can,” Heher said. “I just need to remind myself that I’m capable of doing it.”

According to the Washington Post, 80 percent of women across the nation in STEM fields say they have been discriminated against. This gender divide, according to the National Girls Collaborative Project, means that although 47 percent of the total U.S. workforce are women, only 13 percent of engineers are women and 25 percent of women are in computer and mathematical sciences.

Teachers and students say that there has been a growing movement to end this disparity, but the efforts are only now beginning to achieve results.

Why are there fewer women in STEM?

Before the gender gap in STEM can be eliminated, those in these fields say its root causes must be understood. However, there are differing opinions on the primary cause of the gender disparity. AP Biology teacher Cheryl Lenz noted the effects of media coverage of gender discrimination, life choices and the perception of a “boys’ club” in different STEM fields on women’s career choices. “Women have to think about what’s really important to them in the big picture, and so in some fields it’s easier to

balance your life and raise a family versus [in] other fields,” Lenz said.

Heher said women’s traditional devotion to family is a major factor of the gap and a reason there are fewer females in STEM leadership positions.

According to Facebook’s global diversity report in June 2014, its employees are 69 percent male and 31 percent female, while “non-tech” jobs at Facebook are 53 percent male and 47 percent female.

Math and computer science teacher Debra Troxell pointed to a different source for the gap, suggesting that the disparity between the genders is clear from a young age.

“It’s just the things you hear all the time. ‘Girls, don’t do that.’ When you’re 5-years-old, boys play with cars, girls play with dolls,” Troxell said. “It’s just a stereotype that’s going to take generations to get over, and the faster we get over it, the better.”

It’s just a stereotype that’s going to take generations to get over, and the faster we get over it, the better.”

teacher Debra Troxell



The divide in varying education levels

To bridge this gap, both high schools and colleges are working to include STEM programs that encourage girls to join these fields.

For instance, SHS programs like robotics are meant to help guide both male and female students move into math and science-related fields. According to junior Rachel Won, however, a gender gap exists even in these organizations.

Won said that in her freshman year, there were about three girls and 17 boys in robotics, but recently there has been a small increase to eight girls and 25 boys.

Won pointed out that although there is some improvement, the genders in the group are far from balanced. Although Won was only one of three girls when she first joined the program, she said that it did not affect the quality of her experience.

“The [boys in the robotics team were] super friendly and weren’t intimidating towards girls,” Won said. “It was a really good environment to start learning.”

The gender disparity in the robotics team seems to be mirrored in advanced STEM classes.

In AP Calculus BC, there are 28 females and 46 males, as opposed to the less rigorous AP Calculus AB, which has 73 females and 57 males.

Math and engineering teacher Audrey Warmuth attributed the higher

number of males in AP Calculus BC to self-confidence rather than to ability.

“Boys are a little more confident, so if they don’t understand something, they blame it on circumstances as opposed to say, ‘It’s me, I’m not smart enough,’” Warmuth said. “Girls tend to internalize things more.”

The difference in confidence between males and females varies not only in class choices, but also between what they study in college.

In UC Berkeley’s nationally ranked electrical engineering program only 12 percent of students are female, according to the university’s student newspaper, The Daily Californian.

Class of 2012 alumnus Manish Raghavan, who is studying electrical engineering at UC Berkeley, has seen that the gender disparity significantly worsens in college.

He noticed that highly ranked college STEM programs have an extremely male-dominated.

“I never noticed a gender gap at Saratoga,” Raghavan said. “Most classes I took were pretty balanced. At Berkeley, I’ve found that the gender gap is most pronounced in physics and computer science classes.”

Raghavan attributed the increased gender divide in higher education to the fact that in high school, students are required to take math and science classes, whereas in college, students self-select these courses.

He suggested that fewer females select male-dominated STEM courses because they have fewer women to look up to who have already taken those classes.

“It makes them hesitant to enter [those STEM courses]. It’s tough to put yourself in a situation where you’re a minority,” Raghavan said.

Is the gap closing?

Troxell said that as the gender gap in STEM has gained national attention in recent years, numbers for women in STEM have improved.

“There are national promotions to get young kids, old kids [and] girls programming,” Troxell said. “I have seen a consistent positive trend in equaling out the gender in my classes.”

Troxell remembered being the only girl in her engineering class of 35 in college and seeing only two or three girls in the computer science classes she taught years ago. This year, in the AP Computer Science A classes, there are 39 females and 52 males, demonstrating that awareness of the disparity has translated into more equal gender ratios in some STEM classes.

The national movement can be seen in companies like GoldieBlox, which is now making toys that specifically target girls in order to stimulate early interest in STEM and “inspire the future generation of female engineers.”

According to GoldieBlox’s website, 86 percent of engineers are male, and with its “Parade Float” construction kit and “girl inventor” action figures, it aims to change that percentage.

On the other hand, Won said that the gender gap is only perceived to be closing quicker by people living in the Bay Area than in many other places.

“No matter if they’re a girl or a boy, white or Asian, here, everybody’s entire childhood is immersed in STEM,” Won said. “It’s just the environment that we live in.”

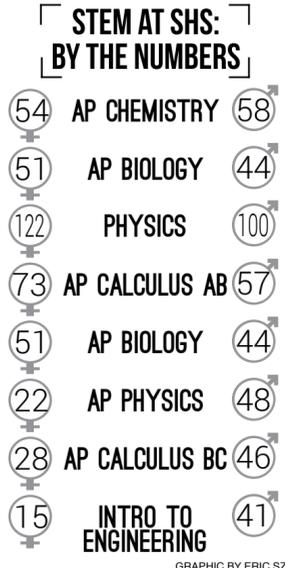
According to students and faculty, the STEM gender gap seems to be narrowing quickly in Silicon Valley. However, statistics regarding college students and the overall STEM workforce demonstrate a much slower closing of the divide.

It appears that while the awareness from students and teachers of the gender gap is rapidly growing, the resulting improvement is gradual. Students, like Won, who have joined STEM programs believe that females should not be afraid to enter the field despite the male dominance.

“First of all, you can get a smart date,” Won joked. “You should [also] be proud you’re a woman trying to compete with guys [in such a male-dominated field].”

Though Won said it is unfair for women to have to put themselves more out there than men in STEM, Won added that it is crucial for everyone to find a way to show his or her presence in any field.

“You have to find a way to get respect,” Won said. “That’s going to happen no matter where you are, whether you’re a woman or a man.” ♦



GRAPHIC BY ERIC SZÉ

Women’s colleges foster close community

BY Gwynevere Hunger & Hannah Payne

With the college app process in full swing for the Class of 2016, seniors are finalizing their college lists. Nearly all will apply to the UCs, an optimistic few will choose Ivy League schools and still others will try for CSUs.

Few will apply to all-female schools, which are often overlooked in the application process. And yet, according to SHS graduates, all-female schools serve as important stepping stones for the gender equality movement.

“Women empowerment is a really powerful force on [those] campuses, and you can see its effects in classrooms,” Class of 2015 alumna Supriya Khandekar said.

Khandekar should know: She attends the women’s college Barnard, one of the Seven Sisters and four undergraduate colleges of Columbia. The school is a prominent liberal arts college with the educational resources of a larger university.

Barnard professors lecture by drawing upon underrepresented viewpoints, especially those of women, ethnic minori-

ties and the LGBTQ community, Khandekar said.

Class of 2014 alumna Zofia Trujillo also attends Barnard and appreciates the home she has found there.

“There really is such a strong sense of community and comfort,” Trujillo said.

Barnard cultivates this community through support programs. With the “Well Woman” program, for instance, students are able to receive massages and de-stress from their college courses.

“What makes Barnard special are the opportunities and programs that focus on women,” Trujillo said.

Often, the idea of having little interaction with males throughout college prevents students from applying to women’s colleges. Trujillo, however, said she spends time with male students every day, as some of her Barnard classes are integrated with classes at from Columbia.

Wellesley College in Massachusetts, another all-women’s university, works similarly, according to Wellesley student and Class of 2013 alumna Bhavana Vadrevu.

Wellesley combines a liberal arts education with offer-

ings of high level STEM classes through cross-registration at MIT, Harvard College and Brandeis University. As a small liberal arts school, Wellesley provides students with professor interaction through small class sizes of 12 to 24 students, allowing students to take core classes with engaged teachers.

Vadrevu, a neuroscience major, takes a variety of math and science classes at MIT and humanities classes at Wellesley.

She has found a stark difference between the college culture and the Bay Area high school culture.

“I think being a part of the Silicon Valley necessitates thinking of things in technical concepts,” Vadrevu said. “It’s interesting to be surrounded by people who don’t care to code.”

Wellesley provides each student with a strong alumni support system. According to LinkedIn, Wellesley’s Alumni Network is sometimes called the most powerful women’s network in the world.

“Every Wellesley graduate that I met was someone I wanted to be like. [They were] all-around amazing people,” Vadrevu said.

For Vadrevu, another deciding factor in choosing Wellesley



Courtesy of SUPRIYA KHANDEKAR

Class of 2015 alumna Supriya Khandekar attends a charity showcase.

was its location in the Boston area. Just 12 miles west of Boston, female students are able to interact with the other 120,000 college students from more than 120 colleges and universities in the Boston Area. This allows the women to interact with men on a daily basis.

The transition from SHS to an all-women’s college is a difficult adjustment for some. Without any male presence on Wellesley’s campus, the dynamics of the school are bound to be different.

According to Vadrevu, there is less emphasis on looks. Vadrevu also noted that social groups in high school tend to form around relationships, whereas at Wellesley, students form connections over personal values and experiences.

Although many female students hesitate to apply to a women’s college, Khandekar and Vadrevu both insist that it is a wise decision.

“I truly feel that this is going to be a transformative experience, and I have never felt more proud to be a woman,” Khandekar said. ♦

Monta Vista adopts gender-neutral bathroom

BY Claire Chou & Austin Wang

For transgenders and those who identify with neither gender — called nonbinary — an act as simple as using a public bathroom marked male or female can be disorienting and even frightening.

When then-Monta Vista High junior Nikki Stuart encountered this problem as a newly out transgender student at the end of the last school year, Stuart decided to do something about it.

Having read about gender neutral bathrooms being put in other schools, Stuart and other members of Monta Vista’s Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) spoke with their club adviser and then went to principal April Scott with their concerns.

Having heard and understood these concerns, the Monta Vista administration decided to alter a single stall bathroom into a gender-neutral bathroom over the weekend of Oct. 10.

Why was the change needed?

Gender-neutral bathrooms are a growing trend across the nation as people recognize marginalized gender identities.

Instead of the male/female gender binary under which most of the world operates, advocates of marginalized genders describe gender as a spectrum, with varying degrees of masculinity and femininity. Stuart, co-president of Monta Vista’s GSA, said that support has grown in the community as more students have come out as transgender or nonbinary and are voicing concerns at school.

Stuart added that anxiety and dysphoria — mild to severe discomfort based on a disconnect between one’s self and the idealized self — can be trig-

gered by using gendered bathrooms, and that all students deserve to go to the bathroom safely.

“Everyone needs to go to the bathroom, and no one should feel uneasy about that experience,” Stuart said. “To make this happen, we need gender-neutral bathrooms.”

Gender-neutral bathrooms, according to the Transgender Law Center, provide a way to eliminate discrimination and harassment and establish the privacy necessary for students to be comfortable with their gender and sexual orientations at school.

Ollie Venzon, a non-binary sophomore at Monta Vista, explained how gendered bathrooms put people of marginalized orientations at a disadvantage. Not only are they uncomfortable with pigeonholing themselves, but they also find the idea of being confronted about what their gender is and why they are in the bathroom “pretty terrifying.”

Scott said both student multi-use bathrooms and staff single-use bathrooms had previously been gendered on campus. Then, the school decided to convert a bathroom in the downstairs of the “A” building because it already had ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) accessibility, was single-use and had stall walls for privacy.

Logistically, the bathroom was fairly simple to convert. The single use bathroom’s lock was changed to not require a key and opened on Oct. 13, but without a unisex sign yet.

Venzon reported that it was

just like a regular bathroom, except for the number of stalls, and said that it was clean and easy to use.

“It’s more comfortable for me to use than the men’s or women’s room,” Venzon added.

The Saratoga reaction

With ongoing construction on the campus of Saratoga High, some students and staff believe that now is the perfect time to consider a gender-neutral bathroom.

“If there are students who are saying or who are feeling

tance and equality, and I think a lot of kids would really appreciate it,” MacRae said.

Principal Paul Robinson said that that the school is looking into the issue. While administrators have watched Monta Vista’s decision and its students’ response, there has not been a push from the community for them.

The administration said it is open to feedback, and Robinson will meet some of the other principals in the area in a month or so to discuss this issue.

A possible objection is that the bathrooms may not be safe, or that they might not be fully utilized once converted.

MacRae argued that it would not hurt binary gender students to change one or two of the bathrooms, and that “if someone isn’t trans, the bathroom isn’t really their business.”

Arguments against gender-neutral bathrooms suggest the new bathrooms will be unsafe and will paint a target on nonbinary students.

This is why having stall walls was so important to MV’s administration when it was choosing a bathroom to convert. With the same partitions for privacy as in gendered bathrooms, Monta Vista hopes it can prevent conflict.

Trend increases across country

Gender-neutral bathrooms are becoming more prevalent in schools across the nation. According to the Huffington Post, more than 150 colleges across the U.S. have gender-neutral bathrooms.

According to recent studies, gender-neutral bathrooms do more than protect transgender

>> #bigidea

Gender-Neutral Bathroom

Implementing the bathroom
A single stall bathroom was changed into a gender-neutral bathroom during the weekend of Oct. 10.

Reasons for change
Gender-neutral bathrooms recognize marginalized genders and provide a safe space for non-binary students.

Taking the idea to SHS
Staff and students are beginning to consider and discuss whether a similar switch should occur at the school.

and non-binary students from dysphoria.

The study found in an article in the Huffington Post illustrated the medical issues indicating their inability to safely access bathrooms in public. Fifty-four percent of those who responded reported complications such as dehydration and kidney infections; 10 percent of the respondents who attended school reported negative effects, such as dropping out and excessive absences related to difficulties with restroom access; 58 percent avoided going out in public because of an inability to access safe public restrooms.

“This fear of ridicule or violence can force trans or nonbinary people to avoid eating or drinking, or simply refuse to go so they don’t have to make a decision between gendered bathrooms,” Stuart said.

As SHS watches and waits, Monta Vista stands by its decision to create a gender neutral bathroom.

“All of our students are due restrooms that allow them freedom of choice,” principal April Scott said. ♦



GRAPHIC BY OLIVIA LU

MESH unites musicians of different ages

BY Stephen Ding & Angela Liu

It was the last scramble before the Music Education with Saratoga High (MESH) Benefit concert in March 2015. Stakes were high, confidence was low, and with only one week left before the concert, high school mentors were bustling about, attending to confused youngsters. But in the midst of such chaos, there was a feeling of unity — of a shared passion for music.

MESH, the club that hosts this concert every year, is an outreach program in which Saratoga High musicians mentor the band and orchestra students at Redwood Middle School. The organization requires members to help students at the middle school at least twice every month, providing an opportunity for students to gain volunteer hours.

Senior concertmaster Danny Gao, co-president of the orchestral side of MESH, has mentored two groups of students so far and had the opportunity to tutor one of the fourth-grade violinists last year.

"[MESH's] goal is to promote musical growth in both the high schoolers and the younger kids," Gao said. "It has been a really fun way for me to connect with both the younger kids and the MESH leaders."

There have been some changes in MESH throughout the five years it's been running, such as the requirement that members help out at Redwood at least a couple of times a month. The change comes as part of the program's goal to foster deeper bonds between older and younger musicians.



Junior Celine Bellegarda helps middle school violinists prepare for the Dec. 17 concert.

Orchestra leadership members like junior Shannon Chen said the program benefits both the mentors and mentees.

"[MESH] helps a lot of [leaders] get better skill-wise because if you're teaching other people, you pay attention to what you do well," Chen said.

According to senior Alice He, co-president of the band side of MESH, the program offers students opportunities to work with others in the Saratoga music programs. An example is the yearly benefit concert held to support Music Team SF, a nonprofit organization that provides children in low-income families the opportunity to learn and play

music.

"The benefit concert itself allows high school mentors and a group of younger musicians to prepare some fun pieces to perform, and it really allows us to have fun and bond," He said.

In preparation for this concert, MESH members work with a group of around four younger students on a piece before performing it during the spring concert. The concert consists of groups ranging from trios to quintets that perform pieces chosen by their MESH leaders. Jennifer Veis, senior violinist and co-president of the orchestral side of MESH, is one of the many students who help to organize

this event.

To prepare for last spring's event, Veis said, MESH members frequently met with their groups outside of school hours to have practice sessions.

The students' efforts paid off. Junior Celine Bellegarda said her group members performed well last March despite their initial difficulties.

She recalled how her group's piece, "Arkansas Traveler," still needed work on fingerings and intonation. Although the group had practiced together since early January, many members had just begun playing their instrument. Bellegarda was pleasantly surprised by what she heard when she walked into a practice session a week before the performance.

"When I heard them play [the piece] that time, I could really tell that they took all my suggestions to heart," Bellegarda said. "The music just came alive."

Such moments between mentors and mentees play a large part in why Veis, Chen and the rest of the MESH leaders aim to promote teamwork and unity this year.

By doing so, MESH leaders hope that the MESH benefit concert and the program itself will turn out to be more engaging for everyone involved.

Ultimately, MESH pushes high schoolers to pursue their passion for music and encourages them to work together to make a positive impact.

"When we go back [to Redwood], we spread our skills and our love of music," Chen said. "It's like a flashback to see where you were and how far you've come." ♦

Teacher forges ties with famed bike maker

BY Harshini Ramaswamy

"Does anyone know Dario Pegoretti?" yelled English teacher Erick Rector to locals hanging out in a bar in Marter, a small town in the Brenta River Valley, Northern Italy. Rector had traveled three hours from Venice, where he was staying in the summer of 2010, in an attempt to meet Mario Pegoretti, the world's greatest bike frame builder. Arriving there, he had no idea how to find him.

"They literally had a living legend in their village, and they had no idea who he was," Rector said. "One guy gave me a phonebook, and there Pegoretti was in the phone book, in just totally normal print. I spent like two hours with Pegoretti when I found him, and probably took about a million pictures of us just talking about bikes."

Rector started biking during his college years, partly because his participation in UC Irvine's rowing team made it mandatory, but also because he found

it fun. While he progressed in his recreational biking career, Rector wanted the best gear for his daily outings, which led him to Pegoretti's frames. Although Pegoretti bikes are notoriously expensive, Rector began saving up to buy his own. He currently owns a custom Marcello, thanks to his friend and penpal Pegoretti.

Meeting Pegoretti had always been a dream of Rector's, but Rector did not go to Italy only to meet his idol. In fact, stopping by Pegoretti's workshop was just a side trip during Rector's travels to Paris in 2010.

"Paris is really flat," Rector said. "The best way to see everything in Paris is to travel by bike. A lot of tourists bike in Paris. Plus, it's faster than walking, [so] you can cover a lot more sightseeing and [don't have to find?] parking."

Rector has not only traveled by bike in places such as Paris, but has also met some people he would not have met if not for his interest in the sport.

One such person is seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong, who was stripped of his wins after a doping investigation.

"Lance is arrogant, I know that, but I liked Lance because he won," Rector said. "I still admire him, even though he was a cheater."

Rector said Armstrong signed his racing bib when he stopped by Sausalito during a stage of the Tour of California. Rector waited in the rain for three hours, and was one of the few whose bib got signed by him that day. For Rector, meeting people such as Armstrong and Pegoretti and being able to bike to fascinating places is part of the appeal of biking.

"One thing that I think sets biking apart from all other sports is its ability to send you places," Rector said. "Traveling is something you can't do in other sports you just stay in one designated area and play."

Rector hopes to be part of a biking club for students at the



English teacher Erick Rector, taking a detour on his bike trip to Paris, converses with bike builder Mario Pegoretti at a workshop in Italy.

school in the future, allowing them to have the kind of experiences he has been fortunate enough to have. He plans to lead the club alongside his biking buddy, math teacher PJ Yim, and take students on rides after school, either mountain biking or road biking, and enroll them

in competitions or marathons. "A biking club would be really good for Saratoga students," Rector said. "Students need to go out and see all of Saratoga, or just anywhere outside their bubble. Biking is fun, a great way to exercise and relieve the stress put on during school." ♦



GRAPHIC BY ERIC SZE

Alumni teach in low-income neighborhoods

BY Sayan Sivaram

Schools across the country have made a stark turnaround from a few years ago. Whereas it was common to be handing out pink slips five years ago during the economic downturn, The New York Times has reported recently that districts are now in a hiring binge.

That means many districts are especially lacking in math, science and special education teachers after the recession and downward trend in the number of students studying to be teachers.

This is where Teach For America (TFA) comes in. TFA, founded in 1989, is an organization with the ambitious goal to "enlist, develop, and mobilize our nation's most promising future leaders to strengthen the movement for educational equity."

Because of this overall dearth of teachers, TFA reaches out to extremely bright yet untrained college graduates, not requiring credentials or specified teaching experience to step into the classroom. These teachers, however, are often placed in extremely challenging teaching positions, having to deal with a severe lack of resources.

TFA has placed over 4,100 teachers in low-income schools around the country, where they teach everything from kindergarten to advanced high school physics. This group of teachers comprises of graduates, including SHS alumni, from over 830 different colleges and universities.

2007 alumnus Abhinav Dev, who graduated from UC Santa Barbara, was familiar with the Teach For America community before applying to join the corps, and was surprised by the unmotivated teachers and lack of resources he discovered in these areas.

Dev had several family members in the corps, and describes days spent in classrooms in the South Bronx, rural Mississippi and East San Jose. He currently teaches at a KIPP charter middle

school and San Francisco. He said that he was appalled by the difference in education that they were receiving compared to student in a place like Saratoga.

Class of 2011 alumna Nandini Ruparel was similarly inspired to join the TFA program after witnessing the poverty that pervaded the community around her college: USC. In 2011, 27 percent of the population of Los Angeles fell below the poverty line, the highest poverty rate in all of California.

"I was surprised that such stark poverty existed right in our backyards," Ruparel said. Ruparel majored in English Literature but decided that her time would be better spent teaching for a few years rather than pursuing a graduate degree immediately.

"Going to SHS, I got an amazing education — although at the time I thought that it was fairly standard — and so I was lucky enough to arrive at college prepared both socially and academically to succeed," Ruparel said. "[Other students] could be set up for success in the same way you and I were."

Hoping to help ensure equal educational opportunities, Ruparel applied for TFA during her senior year and, after a grueling interview process, secured a position to teach in at Aspire Public School in East Palo Alto. Her current plan is to continue with TFA for the two-year commitment and then head to law school to study education policy. Dev, who is in his fifth year at Teach for America, sees himself continuing to pursue a career in education, but not necessarily with TFA.

In East Palo Alto, where most students are low income and Hispanic, Ruparel has enjoyed the chance to bond with some of her students during her advisory class, a period analogous to homeroom. Recently, she showed them a video of a Bollywood song, and the students loved it.

"We watch it every morning, and some of my students have even memorized the dance!" Ruparel said.

Despite the fun described by Ruparel, Dev characterized teaching as a very up and down experience, citing times when lesson plans were not cohesive, or students would not show up to class for weeks. Even so, he sees teaching as a truly rewarding career.

"There is a moment in a day when a student realizes [he or she] understands a concept or students who don't get along work in a team, or the student that always gave the roughest time gets a good grade and smiles," Dev said.

"I know that I can ask every teacher I had as a Falcon for advice and they would give it to me in a heartbeat," Dev said. "I want to be able to form those relationships with students." ♦

Teaching has also been a challenge for Ruparel, especially since education is often challenging in East Palo Alto. To further the difficulties, Ruparel has not had previous experience teaching and is still learning how best to communicate with her students.

She describes all of the students in her classes, seventh and eighth grade reading and literacy and ninth grade English, as "incredibly bright — more than I will ever be," but explains that their attitude toward education differs from the one held by most Saratoga students.

"You have to imagine that for my students, education is something they don't trust or really understand," Ruparel said. "There's a lot of pushback when I ask them to write essays, do assignments, or even just read. I'm still working on the motivation part."

Despite the hardships, Ruparel believes in the work that she is doing and the importance that education has in the lives of youth everywhere.

"I knew I wanted to solve [a] social issue, and I found education as a gateway to success," Ruparel said.

Dev iterates that this opportunity has given him a chance to fully appreciate his teachers at Saratoga High.

"I know that I can ask every teacher I had as a Falcon for advice and they would give it to me in a heartbeat," Dev said. "I want to be able to form those relationships with students." ♦

“I knew I wanted to solve [a] social issue, and I found education as a gateway to success.”
alumna Nandini Ruparel



ALI DRIVING AND TRAFFIC SCHOOL
PHONE: (408) 370-9696 and (408) 626-7684
We are insured and bonded private lessons.
Pick up and drop off at your choice of location.
Certificate issued upon completion.

Alumnus discovers bliss while biking on local roads

BY Trevor Leung

For Class of 2013 graduate Todd Nguyen, who attends the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, biking has become a refuge from the pressure and stress of college.

He took up the sport at a young age under the influence of his uncle, who worked at a large bike company.

"I started biking a lot more after college, started to stay in shape and [to] relieve some stress," Nguyen said.

Nguyen has done both mountain biking and road biking, but favors road biking as he finds it to be more scenic and more satisfying.

"Road biking is pretty cool because you get to see a lot of things on your ride," Nguyen said. "You notice more of your surroundings when you're biking as opposed to driving, and you can pretty much stop anytime if you want to check something out."

Though as much as he loves biking, Nguyen has found it difficult to pursue. "With [college] being so hectic, it is hard to get time to bike," Nguyen said. "I have not really biked [since] the beginning of the year."

During breaks, however, it's a different story. When Nguyen comes back home, he goes on bike rides with his high school pals, such as class of 2013 graduate Chad Nachiappan and senior

Naveed Riaziat.

"Biking is more fun with other people," Nguyen said. "Going around with others feels more purposeful than going by yourself."

Last summer, Nguyen, Riaziat and Nachiappan took a roughly 20-mile bike ride to Stanford University and back. The trip took about four hours.

"[Nguyen's] really into biking, so he had pushed for it for a while," Riaziat said. "[Nguyen] had done a lot more biking so he was very confident and supporting of the younger kids."

The trip was challenging for all of them except Nachiappan, who does triathlons, and the three supported one another to complete the journey.

"[Nguyen] actually helped me out at the end because I crashed and got a giant gash on my leg about three miles from home, so he sprayed it with his first aid kit," Riaziat said.

They all found the trip to be worth the effort and time. "It was challenging but lots of fun. The views, helping each other and talking on the way there made it worth it," Riaziat said.

Nguyen has also biked to places like Mount Diablo in Contra Costa County. "Overall, I find biking to be satisfying," Nguyen. "I just enjoy pedaling to new places and seeing new things." ♦

Mountain biking takes senior down new paths

BY Navin Tiwary & Alex Yang

Senior Uday Singh remembers the first time he went mountain biking. It was 2011, and Singh, then in seventh grade, had gone with his father to try the sport at Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve.

As the wind hit his face and his bike made crunching noises as it sped through gravel, Singh grinned. He marveled at the rolling hills beneath him and knew he wanted to feel this way again.

Singh said that he got into the sport because of his father. However, they no longer go biking since Singh has challenged himself with more intense forms of mountain biking.

Singh enjoys biking with other people, including a couple of his teachers. He has taken rides with math teacher PJ Yim as well as English teacher Erick Rector.

"Two years ago, during [my] sophomore year, somehow Mr. Yim found out I liked biking," Singh said. "He [said], 'Hey, one day we should bike together,' and I said, 'Sure.' That very Friday we went on a bike ride, we talked and had fun."

Singh said he paid a lot of money to get his current bike, a 2011 Stumpjumper Evo, which he got used at a 70 percent discount.

"[There is a] high price [for some] mountain biking equipment, but it shouldn't be a barrier to entry," Singh said. "For example, my first mountain

bike cost \$250, and I had a blast on it." Singh described his ideal bike ride as one where he gets up at 6:30 a.m., bikes for two hours, takes a break, bikes for another two hours before lunch, and then returns home.

"When I'm biking, it kind of pushes me to my limits," Singh said.

Still, Singh admits, mountain biking has its drawbacks.

"There's a lot of risk. [I need to know] my descending limits so I can go faster without killing myself," Singh said.

Singh bikes frequently during breaks from school and said biking is his main method of exercise. According to him, it helps him stay in shape.

Singh has a couple of favorite trails in Saratoga: One leads to Fremont Older and the other to Skyline.

"Fremont Older is like a walking trail that goes to top of a short mountain," Singh said. "It's pretty fun, pretty flat, pretty simple. [Almost] anyone can manage it."

Singh added that the Skyline trail descends "all the way down the mountain and back toward downtown Saratoga."

Singh said that he has learned a lot from the sport and it has led him to explore other parts of the biking process, including the mechanics, production, and maintenance of different kinds of bicycles.

"For every hour I'm out riding, I spend another hour at home tinkering with my bike or fixing problems that may have arisen during the ride," Singh said. "Biking in general has helped my mechanical skills quite a bit." ♦

Nationally ranked wakeboarder dives into success

BY Rachel Zhang

Junior Jacob Porter mounted on his wakeboard and prepared to leap into the air. Four hours and countless of failed attempts later, Porter, gliding at a speed of 31 feet per second, propelled 20 feet of the trick.

"It just took confidence," he said of the trick.

After a mere two years of wakeboarding, Porter has completed feats such as the "kicker to rail" that takes him high in the air.

He started his journey to become a nationally and internationally ranked wakeboarder at the beginning of last year.

"I passed by [a few wakeboarding parks] with my parents and I thought [to myself], 'That looks pretty cool,' so I went," Porter said.

During the first few months, Porter taught himself all the basic skills by watching the more advanced wakeboarders at the sites where he practices, Wake Island Watersports and Velocity Island Park, both of which are located in Sacramento. Nowadays, he makes the 3-hour-long drives to the parks almost every weekend to use their facilities.

"Wakeboarding comes pretty naturally, if you just put your brain to it," Porter said. "Watching other people really helps because you see what they do and almost copy them and make it your own."

Porter's training in the first few weeks resulted in numerous mistakes.

"I could barely get off the dock during the first three weeks," Porter said. "But I got better and better as I practiced more."

Designing his practices, Porter begins with warm-up laps around the "giant circle-shaped lake" a couple of times before transitioning to more specialized workouts. Porter uses the elevated, rectangular structures known as rails situated in the water to practice his jumps and



Porter

perfect his tricks.

On the weekdays, Porter often practices for hours in his backyard pond. With the recent installation of an extending cable attached to two support beams, Porter has been able to work on his jumps and other

skills.

The long, often brutal workouts have taken a toll on Porter's body. Last year, Porter dislocated his kneecap by slamming it into a rail, forcing him to be out for a month.

"A couple of my injuries have taken me out of the sport for a moment in time, but I've been pretty lucky so far," Porter said. "Some injuries can take a long time to heal so I'm not going to complain too much."

Currently, Porter is training for upcoming competitions. This past July, Porter hired a coach to help navigate him through the competition.

At a competition hosted in Graham, N.C., on Aug. 29, he arrived four days early to scout the competition and prepare a list of tricks.

"People have many different

[takes] on the sport and I think doing your own thing is the important aspect," Porter said.

At competitions and in practice, he's gotten to know other wakeboarders, many of whom he considers to be close friends.

"We all push each other, so it is pretty productive," Porter said. "There are some party poopers, but it doesn't really affect the great vibe overall."

In 2016, Porter plans to attend two international competitions, FISE World Montpellier held in France and the Bricks Open located in Germany.

For now, he plans to pursue wakeboarding, but also hopes to dabble in other sports such as snowboarding.

"I want to pursue other things, but [wakeboarding] is definitely a goal I think I can accomplish," Porter said. ♦

Ready, set, Kart: Sophomore pursues high-speed racing

BY Gwynever Hungler & Tiffany Zheng

At age 11, Arul Venkatesh sat in front of the television set, his eyes glued to the Formula One competitors speeding around the track in polished go-karts, blurring past the world beyond them and obeying only the drop of the checkered flag.

From that point, Venkatesh was inspired to become a professional kart racer, and he soon found a place to practice: Sonoma Raceway, 34 miles north of San Francisco.

Kart racing is a sport in which single racers compete one another on tracks in go-karts or smaller model cars.

Go-karting first became a sport in the 1960s after American Art Ingels made the first go-kart in Southern California. Since then, the sport has become popular all over the world, from Paris to Berlin to the Bay Area.

Although Venkatesh has participated in two regional competitions and one national competition, he is not part of a team because he said he prefers individual sports over team ones. He recently competed in Sanzaru, a racing se-

ries held at Sonoma Raceway, where he placed fourth out of 30 racers.

The sophomore usually practices twice a week in 3-hour sessions at Sonoma Raceway. Each weekend, he travels up to the racetrack to meet his coach. His practices qualify him for ISPE (Independent Study Physical Education) credit.

In an average practice, Venkatesh warms up his go-kart by heating his tires by slowly driving around the track. Then, he keeps running the track for the remainder of the practice to find a personal best time for each practice.

"A typical practice involves being safe, but pushing yourself to the limit at the same time," Venkatesh said.

But he said races differ greatly from practices.

"A race is more aggressive, since there is more contact and bumping, and it becomes about endurance when you are doing a 2-hour non-stop stretch," he said.

Although most people might find the adrenaline-fueled nature and high

speeds to be nerve-racking, Venkatesh values these aspects of karting.

"My favorite part is the adrenaline rush you get from driving at over 75 mph and pushing yourself to the limit," Venkatesh said. "It is an extremely visceral experience."

Venkatesh also described go-karting as more "pure" in the sense that it has few athletic scandals, unlike football (think Tom Brady) or baseball (think Alex Rodriguez).

Venkatesh added that karting is "relatively cheap" to get involved in compared to formula open wheel racing, which involves larger, actual cars.

The most difficult thing for Venkatesh is finding the balance between his kart's speed and maneuvering around the perfect lines around the track.

One trick that he uses to improve his time is "taking the right lines" or lanes: Venkatesh starts an outside lane and quickly swerves into an inside lane during a turn.

He advises go-karters to break as late and as hard as possible. Venkatesh



Venkatesh

ISPE unfairly overlooks classical Indian dance as sport

Amulya bucks



Amulya Vadlakonda

Some people seem to have been born to run a mile in less than 5 minutes — others to shoot hoops, kick a soccer ball or swing a bat. I am none of those people.

But even though I have always struggled with doing the standardized curriculum of a P.E. class, I know that my physical strength lies in my ability to dance.

However, when I first went in to talk to my guidance counselor about joining the Independent Study Physical Education (ISPE) program in freshman year by participating in a form of Indian classical dance called Kuchipudi, I was immediately discouraged.

I learned that countless students were in the same situation, and few, if any, were actually approved after they applied. Granted, some requirements for ISPE make perfect sense. For example, each student has to report at least 10 hours of physical activity per week for 17 weeks per semester, which compares to the time that would be used in P.E. or

in a sport.

But the school also sees fit to require students to compete at a state or national level in their sport and area of expertise.

These qualifications of the ISPE program, set by the school district, undermine its goal of students to participating in their own sport. Even though Kuchipudi is as rigorous as school sports and P.E. classes, it is rejected because there is no way for participants to compete at a national or state level.

But that doesn't negate the fact that over the last year, I spent at least 10 hours every week practicing for my arangetram, a solo 3-hour performance that marks the beginning of a dancer's career.

It has become routine for me to practice two to three hours in a day. Throughout the summer, I practiced three hours in the morning and another three at night. Clearly, meeting the ISPE time requirements for my sport of choice wasn't an issue.

To address any objections that dance would not have provided me with the same physical rigor as P.E., I might add that I practiced core body movements, arm and leg workouts, balancing techniques and endurance every practice.

And, as a student of both the P.E. program and Kuchipudi, I can guarantee

that dancing a complex 20-minute item is more physically taxing than running a timed mile.

I understand that it is in the best interest of the school to maintain its P.E. program, reflected in the fact that there are

249 students in P.E. while there are only 33 students in ISPE. I concede that ISPE ought to be solely for those who are serious about their sport, but there is a serious issue in that for some sports, there is an impossible standard to reach. ♦

Saratoga Tutor

Over 30 Years Experience

Private Tutoring Service

Tutoring Saratoga High School students since 1998

Specializing in language arts, essay writing, SAT prep, and college application essays

408-203-6527

SaratogaTutor.com

Alyssa Delaney, M.S.Ed.

FOOTBALL

Falcons rebound after string of losses

BY Aditya Chaudry & Ananti Rajeev

After the Falcons' 35-28 road win against Homestead on Oct. 23, they are 2-4 overall and 1-2 in league going into tonight's game at Wilcox. The win over the Mustangs was crucial for the Falcons as they try to stay alive for CCS.

The Falcons went into the half of Homestead's Homecoming celebration tied 21-21. With a tense third quarter remaining scoreless, the Falcons once again found their footing and picked up the scoring in the fourth quarter, ending the game on top 35-28.

The five touchdowns came from two players: senior running back Alex Hawks and junior wide receiver Kian Ghelichkhani.

The Falcons also had a key win again Los Altos during their own Homecoming night on Oct. 16. Losing the previous four games by an average of 16 points, they poured their heart into the game giving them the win.

"We came into the game confident as we always do," senior wide receiver Vinny Faylor said. "It started in the first half when we scored and we had the momentum throughout the rest of the

game."

This season has had its share of ups and downs.

"We needed to focus on building up the defense and ensuring that our players are healthy to win the crucial games," team coach Tim Lugo said.

The Falcons will be traveling today to face Wilcox with junior Will Liddle and his 1,000 passing yards and Hawks with his 669 rushing yards and wide receiver Faylor with his 556 receiving yard in tow.

Although the team is riding a wave of success, the last three games of the season are crucial. According to Lugo, the Falcons would need five wins in total to secure a CCS spot. With four wins, however, they would need Hillsdale to clinch their league championship to make the cut.

"We're still alive [for CCS] in the new point format," Lugo said.

Even though the team is alive, they are facing some of the toughest opponents in the league: Wilcox tonight and Milpitas on Nov. 6 at home. Both teams are known powerhouses with Wilcox being the easier opponent.

"Wilcox, despite being a very polished team in the league, is the easier of



FALCON / SHAZIA GUPTA

Senior running back Alex Hawks dodges defenders on his way to the endzone on Oct. 16.

the two opponents we will face in the next two weeks," Lugo said. "Milpitas is a very strong team only having lost only two games this season and are flawless in their league record."

The final game of the season, against Fremont High School on Nov. 13, is an easier matchup with the team being the

bottom of the league.

Although the Falcons are going against two powerhouses tonight and next week, they think they can compete.

"Winning games is tough in this sport and our guys understand that," Lugo said. "Anytime we play well enough to [win a game], we feel pretty good." ♦

GIRLS' WATER POLO

Closer loss against Gunn shows growth, progress

BY Nidhi Jain

Sometimes a loss can feel like a win.

At least, that's how members of the girls' water polo team felt after they lost to Gunn 7-2 on Oct. 13.

The girls were proud of their performance since they lost 14-1 the first time they played the Titans in September.

The girls attribute their improvement against Gunn, which currently ranks No.1 in the De Anza League, to understanding of one another's skills as well as confidence in plays.

When preparing for the second Gunn game, the girls altered their plays in an effort to counteract those of certain teams.

As the girls continue to improve they hope that they can make progress in the De Anza league. Currently standing at 2-7 in league, the team has been trying new formations to end the season at a point they can build on for next season.

Within the past few weeks, they have placed an emphasis on 6-on-5 plays, where a player from the opposing team is not in the pool as a penalty. During this penalty, the team with all six play-

ers in the pool has a huge advantage and can pile up scores.

In addition to practicing 6-on-5s, the team has also taken advantage of "drives" and made a point to become skilled at them.

As the girls have spent more time practicing this past month, juniors like Jessy Liu and Kanika Vora have stepped up to be leaders who serve as role models for the rest of the team.

"Usually, players think, 'Oh the older people will score the goals.' The juniors on the team have realized that now, we are the older people that others look up to," Liu said.

Despite the juniors' leadership skills and new confidence, the team still ultimately depends on the seniors, who are "undeniably the best players in the pool," according to Liu.

Seniors hole-set Alexa Frieberg and captain driver Jace Welton currently lead the team in scoring.

"Our team has worked very hard in practices," Welton said. "The team has come together throughout the season and our skill set is a lot more advanced than it was in the beginning." ♦

GIRLS' VOLLEYBALL

Players praise efforts of team's fill-in coach

BY Gwynever Hungler

With regular head coach Brad Fredrickson out for family reasons, the girls' volleyball team will be coached by Steve Chiou, father of senior setter Nicole Chiou, for the rest of the season.

In the past, Coach Chiou has been a main coach for the Mountain View Volleyball Club.

"[Coach Chiou's] coaching technique is to focus on one specific skill such as blocking or serve receive for a long period of time in order to make one specific aspect of our game extra strong," senior captain Jennifer Chen said.

The Falcons have a current record in the De Anza League with a record of 2-7 as of Oct. 23.

The team lost 3-1 against Mountain View on Oct. 22 after having to go into a fourth tiebreaker set. The team also lost 3-0 against Los Gatos on Oct. 20.

One specific skill that Coach Chiou has been working on with the team is serve receive. The team is working on making sure that each first touch to the

ball is correct in order to end the set strongly.

According to Chen, the team has been adjusting well to switching coaches in the middle of the season. The team works for two hours most days and consistently stays over practice in order to strengthen skills together.

This extra work may have helped the team beat both Gunn 3-1 on Oct. 15 and Homestead on Oct. 13. These wins helped reverse the losses from the first league matchups.

To make CCS, the team has to finish in the top three teams in the De Anza League. This would mean that they have to beat Mountain View, Palo Alto and Los Altos.

"Even with a big transition to a new coach, we have improved quickly as a team," Chen said. "We all have the mindset to fight hard for the remainder of season in order to make CCS."

Remaining games are against Palo Alto on Oct. 27, Los Altos on Oct. 29 and Homestead on Nov. 3 could not be covered because of printing deadlines. ♦



Chen

CROSS COUNTRY

Team works through injuries, looks to make states

BY Nupur Maheshwari & Tiffany Zheng

As league finals and CCS approach, runners on the cross country team are continuing to try to peak at the right time. At Santa Clara Valley Athletic League's (SCVAL) third meet at Baylands Park held on Oct. 21, senior Stephen Law completed the 3.1-mile course in 16:35 and sophomore Amit Nag finished seventh, running a 17:10.

SCVAL Finals will take place Nov. 3 and CCS Finals will occur on Nov. 14. Both races will be hosted at Crystal Springs, a course known for its challenging hills. Freshman Sarah Pickard said

runners have improved their stamina for the longer distance "flats," but need to work on hilly courses.

"I'd say we need to improve on running hills, and pacing ourselves during the course, as I know a lot of us have trouble with starting too fast and burning out later in the race," Pickard said.

According to Nag, one of the 53 runners who clocked a personal record during the first Lynbrook meet, the primary goal for the boys' team is to return to the state meet this year — a goal they can accomplish by finishing in the top three at CCS — but he said more work is needed.

"Some people on the team aren't trying their best, but the ones who are have

significantly improved," Nag said.

According to Law, many people thought the team would fall off significantly after alumnus Steven Sum, a cross country star who consistently placed in states, graduated last spring.

"I don't want these people to think that [Sum] carried us to states every year," he said. "Individually, we're all talented at running and hard-working, and I want to show them that their efforts are going to be paid off."

Senior varsity runner Nina Nelson said that individual runners are continuing to move toward their personal goals.

"Ultimately, we're all improving," Nelson said. "Not a lot of us started out

as runners, but now we're athletes that enjoy testing our endurance."

Despite these improvements, injuries have been holding back the team. Injured runners include Pickard, who sat out the Baylands Park meet, and sophomores Chloe McGhee and Allison Borch, who are both experiencing ankle pain.

The boys' team has also been battling to stay strong.

"We've had a lot of setbacks with guys getting sick or injured, but in the long run, you can tell we're getting something done," Law said.

Due to printing deadlines The Falcon was unable to cover the Oct. 29 meet at Lynbrook. ♦

GIRLS' TENNIS

Falcons tie for league championship with Los Gatos

by Caitlin Ju

It was arguably the most important match the team has had all season as it determined if Saratoga was to be the winner of the De Anza league championship. The result of the game on Oct. 22 against Los Gatos was disappointing for the girls: They were no longer certain they could add to their four-year streak as De Anza league champions. Instead, there was now a tie.

Los Gatos won all four of the singles matches, while Saratoga swept the three doubles, resulting in the Falcons' 4-3 loss. Los Gatos was undefeated except for their previous loss to Saratoga on Sept. 29 and Monta Vista, but because the Falcons had lost to Monta Vista in the first round of league play, the match resulted in a tie between Los Gatos and Saratoga for De Anza league champions.

Los Gatos had three new freshmen in their top 3 singles and was a completely new rival, whereas Monta Vista had always been a strong competitor. The loss to Los Gatos overshadowed a significant win the previous week over Monta Vista.

Against Monta Vista, the wins came from three of four singles players and one doubles pair: senior Shaya Nikfar at No. 2 singles, junior No. 3 singles player

Neeka Nikfar, No. 4 singles Hsu and seniors No. 3 doubles Allison Lin and Meera Rachamalla, the Falcons managed to edge out the Matadors 4-3 for their biggest win of the year so far.

Head coach Florin Marica attributed the win mostly to the tenacity of the singles players.

"The singles players were very resilient in their matches," Marica said. "It took a lot of mental strength for them to win the game for us."

The team had come into the game with strategic doubles pairs different from the last match against Monta Vista on Sept. 22, when they lost 4-3. Each doubles player had a new partner who hit with a style different from hers. The plan was to sweep doubles and maintain No. 1 singles win or at least have wins from two doubles and two singles. After No. 1 and No. 2 doubles each lost in three tough sets, players began to grow nervous. Neeka saved the team by winning both her sets 6-4 against sophomore Carol Lei, the same Monta Vista player she had lost to last time.

"I thought the doubles were all winning, so I was able to concentrate more on my game, and I played better," Neeka said. "[But] in the last deuce point at 5-4, I became so nervous at the thought I



Sophomore Elizabeth Lee hits the ball during the game against Monta Vista on Oct. 15. FALCON // SHAZIA GUPTA

might have to play a third set."

Similarly, Hsu played a difficult match, winning 7-5 and 7-6 (5). Lin and Rachamalla, the last doubles players to finish, won 6-3, 3-6 and 6-4.

On Oct. 6, the team defeated rival Los Altos 5-2 and on Oct. 8, they beat Palo Alto 6-1. Continuing their winning streak, the girls then beat Lynbrook, which Monta Vista had lost to in a surprising upset, 6-1 on Oct. 13. Despite the loss to Los Gatos, Marica believes his team is heading in a good direction.

"We knew it would be a tough match against Los Gatos, and [although] we didn't win that match, we are still doing well in league," Marica said. "As always, we would like to win CCS, so hopefully we will have better luck than last year."

The team defeated Homestead 4-3 on Oct. 27. They will play Los Altos on Oct. 29, and the tie-breaking match between Los Gatos and Saratoga will occur soon. At the time of this article's publication, the time and location of the game had yet to be determined. ♦

BOYS' WATER POLO

Tourney to determine CCS

by Helen Chen & Alex Yang

With a 11-1 record, the boys' water polo team has maintained its position as the No. 1 team in the El Camino League. But after a recent loss to Homestead, the boys will advance to CCS depending on the results of the league tournament during the first week of November.

In a close game away on Oct. 20, the Falcons lost 12-11 to Homestead, their top rival in the league, in double overtime and sudden death. Though the team was up 4-2 in the first quarter with three goals by senior driver Noah Quanrad, the lead decreased to only one goal at halftime and the score was tied at the end of both the third and fourth.

In the final minute of the second overtime, Homestead scored, leading 11-10. With only seconds left, senior Andrew Jiang caused a turnover, passing the ball to senior Graham Schmeltzer, who hit a lob shot as time expired, again tying the score 11-11. During sudden death, the team was caught off guard by an unmarked player who scored the winning goal for Homestead.

If they had won, the Falcons would have secured the only spot for CCS from the El Camino League. As it stands, the league tournament will determine which team advances to CCS.

"We still have a good shot at making CCS," senior captain Mason Lee said. "It's just a matter of reaching that potential. We beat [Homestead] by five goals [earlier this season], and we can definitely do it again."

The team faced tough competition at the Carmel Tournament from Oct. 23-24, where they lost 10-7 to Carmel High School, 8-5 to Saint Ignatius and 11-6 to Pioneer.

On Oct. 22, the team beat Cupertino at home 12-2. Cupertino scored both its goals in the fourth quarter, one of which was due to a penalty. Junior David Nguyen scored three of the 12 goals, and senior Arnav Pawar and junior Armin Agha-Ebrahim both added two.

The Falcons also beat Milpitas 20-4 on Oct. 15 and Fremont 12-5 on Oct. 13.

Due to printing deadlines, the Oct. 27 game against Lynbrook and the Oct. 29 senior night game against Santa Clara could not be covered. ♦

GIRLS' GOLF

Individuals prepare for playoffs; team misses cut

by Apoorv Kwatra & Trevor Leung

Upon ending their season with a 212-227 loss on Oct. 19 against Lynbrook and a 224-226 loss against Gunn in a three-way match at home, the Falcons finished their regular season record with a 6-8 record. They are preparing for the Santa Clara Valley Athletic League Playoffs (SCVALS) that will take place at Santa Teresa Golf Club (par 71) on Oct. 27 in order to try to make CCS.

The team did not qualify to compete, but individual players such as senior Ankitha Sarvesh, juniors Anya Herne, Raina Kolluri and Cynthia Yang, sophomore Sarah Lo and freshman Janelle Jin will compete there as individuals.

According to Kolluri, the team played well against Gunn (11-1-1), one of the best teams in the league. Despite the loss, the team showed that it has the capability to compete against top teams.

Despite having lost their No. 1 and No. 2 players, Vivian Roan due to graduation and senior Carrie Chen, who moved to Florida, the team is doing well. Jin, in particular, has given the team something to be proud about by consistently shooting low scores.

"I was surprised how close we got to beating Gunn in our last match," Kolluri said. "It really shows our potential as a team, [and] I look forward to playing these teams again."

Yang said the team could have made SCVALS as a team, but fell short because of narrow losses against comparable teams, like their 228-229 loss against Los Gatos on Sept. 14.

To prepare for SCVALS, the team played a practice round on Oct. 22 at Santa Teresa Golf Club.

"We want to get to know it so that we can do well during the actual [round]," Lo said.

Due to printing deadlines, the Falcon was unable to cover SCVALS in the print issue. ♦

FIELD HOCKEY

Veterans injured for season play key leadership roles

by Emily Chen

The field hockey team has continued to hold its own thus far, with an overall record of 12-1-1 and league record of 7-1-0, and has a strong mentality of earning a high league ranking and making CCS.

"I think [the team] is a very committed group of female athletes [who are] playing solid team hockey," head coach Lifon Huynh said.

Even so, Huynh said that there are still improvements to be made.

"The team needs to step it up more to show that we are a CCS team and we're out to get to the finals," Huynh said.

At Homestead on Oct. 20, the Falcons defeated the Mustangs 6-1. Junior forward Tina Miller had four goals and one assist, junior midfielder Emily Chen had one goal and one assist and junior

forward Kelsey Kinoshita had one goal. On Oct. 15, the team beat Cupertino 8-1. Clark attributed the big win to the players' cohesive spirit and play.

"Everyone showed up with their A-game and played through the adversity of the refs and the other coach," Clark said.

Chen led the team with four goals, junior midfielder Hannah Leonard scored two and Miller and junior winger Rachel Davey each had one.

The Falcons took on the Los Altos Eagles on Oct. 13, winning 3-0. Despite dominating the ball, the Falcons could not finish and the match was tied 0-0 at half. The team, though, came out with greater intensity and found its rhythm in the second half. Davey scored within the first few minutes of the half, and later Chen added two more goals.

Despite the absence of senior goalkeeper Sarah Price and senior forward Anne Rollinson due to injuries, the team is doing well. The two, though, still contribute to the team's efforts.

In her freshman year, Price tore her meniscus, and after playing on it for her sophomore and junior years, Price's knee could not handle the stress of another season.

Price now helps train freshman JV goalkeeper Judy Yang and sophomore varsity goalkeeper Maya Gupta.

"I really like [Price's help] because I know that the advice I'm getting is real and can actually help me" Gupta said.

Rollinson, who tore her ACL this past spring while playing lacrosse, will likely remain unable to play during the season.

Rollinson has also assumed a supportive role for the team. At games, Rol-

linson offers advice to players and helps direct them on the field.

The relationships that Price and Rollinson have kept with the team prove to be beneficial for themselves as well as the team.

"Although I am not playing I still feel like I am important and appreciated," Price said. "The girls are great, like family!"

With the continued support of Price and Rollinson, the team has a positive outlook for the remainder of the season.

"I believe this is a championship team — the right ingredients of maturity, team players and drive," Huynh said.

Due to printing deadlines, the team's games on Oct. 27 against Lynbrook, Oct. 29 against Monta Vista and Oct. 30 against Christopher could not be covered. ♦

COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

Take the Current SAT this Fall-Winter before it changes!

The ACT Essay has Changed. Did You Know?

SAT Subject Test Math Level-2 Be Prepared

- UC App
- Common App
- College Essays
- Early Admissions
- Appeals & Waitlists
- Financial Aid

Join SAT Boot Camp starting Dec 19th

Join ACT Boot Camp starting Dec 21st

Join the SAT Subject Test Math Level-2 Boot Camp starting Dec 21st



For more information:

Cupertino: 1601 S De Anza Blvd, Ste 108 | 408-252-5050

insight-education.net | info@insight-education.net

Apply to College - Prepare for Life!

>> snapshots



Courtesy of JADE BISHT



FALCON // SHAZIA GUPTA



FALCON // ERIC SZE



FALCON // ERIC SZE

Senior Chloe Koon's hair flies as she does the "whip" in the girls hip-hop dance during Quad Day on Oct. 16.

Juniors Zach Grob-Lipkis, Raymond McCarthy and Kate Smails perform in the junior Homecoming skit on Oct. 15.

Siblings Ryan and Dylan Madani battle to pop each other's balloons during a game at the Homecoming rally on Oct. 12.

The sophomore boys enjoy performing their guys' dance during the Quad Day, taking place on Oct. 14.

buzzworthy >> Inktober floods social media

BY TiffanyZheng

This October, an artistic trend has been making its way around the Internet. Inktober is a concept created by artist Jake Parker in 2009. According to Parker, he came up with the idea in an effort to improve his drawing habits.

Not surprisingly, Inktober has also become popular among student artists. The rules are of the challenge simple: Draw something in ink, post it with "#Inktober" on some form of social media and repeat every day for the month.

Students participating in Inktober include seniors Joli Chien, Matthew Peterson, Joyce Zhang and Katherine Liu.



Although art is often seen as a solitary activity, Chien finds motivation from her "fellow artists." "It really helps to look at other people's

art and sometimes, when I can't think of what to draw, I'll just start something random and see what comes from it," Chien said.

Chien described her art style as a mixture of precise, detailed pieces along with looser, and even messy works.

Some of her pieces include a Darth Vader, in honor of the senior class Homecoming theme, a cherry blossom tree and a kite.

For Inktober, Chien simply uses ink and paper to create her artwork.

"I have pens especially made for inking, so I usually use those to do the basic outline and shading, and then I use colored pens to brighten things up," she said.

Although Inktober is exciting for Chien, she said "keeping up with everything and being able to think of what to draw" poses challenges. Even though Chien enjoys sharing her own artwork with the online community, her favorite part of Inktober is seeing the work that other

people come up with.

"It's not often that you see people willingly post their art for the public to see, so it's really exciting to see that so many people share my love for art," she said. ♦

“When I can't think of what to draw, I'll just start something random and see what comes from it.”
senior Jolie Chien



Above is one of Peterson's works, which is shared to his Facebook profile page.

Senior finds home in coffee shop

CHROMATIC BRINGS JOY TO OTHERWISE BLAND WORK TIME

cloud princess



Helen Chen

It wouldn't be too far of a stretch to say that I live at Chromatic Coffee in San Jose. After alumnus Anshul Aggarwal showed me the café early last summer, it feels as if I've spent more time there than with my family at home.

I initially didn't realize the extent of my obsession because I was gone for six weeks over the summer. Ever since the two words all seniors dread — college apps — became a part of my life, Chromatic has become something of a safe haven.

It has allowed me to reach my peak of productivity as I write essay after essay. The fact that I write this column as the bittersweet aroma of coffee engulfs me should be evidence enough of that.

Though a little farther than I'd like it to be (12 minutes away on a good day!), Chromatic remains my most frequented coffee shop.

While Facebook says I've checked in 15 times, given that I'm past my fourth free drink, it's really more along the lines

of 30 times since the year started. The distance also comes with the additional perks of blasting my SoundCloud playlist without judgment and not having to deal with the awkward hellos that accompany seeing people I know at closer coffee shops such as Starbucks.

My love for Chromatic has become somewhat notorious among my friends who, upon the rare instance of seeing me elsewhere after school, often ask me if something's wrong.

Rather than dissuading me from going, however, my friends' snarky comments only further encourage me, resulting in a string of "TFTI" messages when people find out that I do go.

Chromatic has also permeated other areas of my life, taking up three out of 11 of my Instagram photos since the school year started. When I saw that @chromaticcafe had liked the most recent of my Chromatic photos, I fell out of my chair in surprise.

Though it can be argued that Chromatic's "coffee shop vibes" are by no means unique, I have yet to find an adequate replacement (and believe me I've

tried, especially when Chromatic was closed for renovations for a week in August).

From my various adventures, I've found that Big Basin in downtown is OK when I don't have a car, and Philz Coffee is nice when I don't need to stay and work. Big Mug and B2 in San Jose are too far to be convenient, and Los Gatos Roasting Company doesn't have enough parking.

Bitter and Sweet in Cupertino is almost up to par, with ice cream and pastries not offered by Chromatic, but lacks natural lighting and enough seating.

Regardless of the time of day, there's just something about Chromatic that is the epitome of cool.

Perhaps, it is the iced latte in a mason jar or the vibrant art-covered wall, the hipster choice of background music or the tall stool two seats from the window table.

Whatever it is, if you ever need me, you're likely to find me there for the foreseeable future.

Actually, don't come: I'd rather keep Chromatic for myself. ♦



Shown is one of Chen's three Instagram photos of coffee.

>> topten

HALLOWEEN ACTIVITIES

- 10 **Do the monster mash.** It's time to let those dance moves out of the grave.
- 9 **Go to a haunted house with your significant other.** Get frightened purposely so you have an excuse to hold them.
- 8 **Show off your art.** Ceramic students, put your pumpkins out on your front porch. The paint job will be scary enough.
- 7 **Make your own Halloween costume.** Grab anything in an arm's reach and make it work!
- 6 **Watch a scary movie.** Try your hardest to be more freaked out than when you see your plummeting GPA.
- 5 **Carve your own pumpkin.** Nothing can go wrong with a good old DIY, right?
- 4 **Neglect trick or treating.** Who needs candy when you can be working on early applications?!
- 3 **Watch Disney Specials with younger siblings.** Reminisce on the happier (and easier) days in life.
- 2 **Shop for candy the day after Halloween.** Penny Pinchers, stay vigilant for discounts following Halloween.
- 1 **Eat pumpkin Spice everything.** What better way to spend fall time than eating things with all the same flavor!

>> Stephen Ding and Olivia Lu