



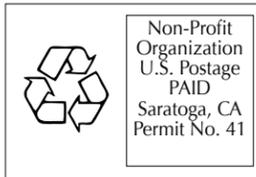
Marching band preps for Rose Parade.



Reflecting on the history of SHS.



Girls' tennis places second at NorCal.



# THE saratogafalcon



Saratoga High School >> Saratoga, CA 95070  
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## Hitting the right note

### JUNIOR TRIUMPHS AT SARATOGA IDOL

BY EleanorGoh & TrevorLeung

The Saratoga Idol judges laughed hysterically last Friday night as junior Lea Moustakas threw them a wink while delivering her "New York cabaret" version of Taylor Swift's "Blank Space," as judge and physics teacher Kirk Davis described it.

Moustakas took home first place at the annual singing competition, which was attended by roughly 100 people. The event was organized by the junior class officers and judged by Davis, choir teacher Andrew Ford and drama teacher Sarah Thermond.

Although there were three judges, the winner was decided through voting by the audience — judges mainly provided commentary to amuse the crowd.

"I thought [Moustakas's] performance was fun and interactive," junior Jason Kao said. "She kept a hold of the audience's attention throughout and received a large positive reaction from

>> **IDOL** on pg. 5

FALCON // SHAZIA GUPTA

#### PETITION

## Parents push for earlier physics class

BY EmilyChen & ArjunRamanathan

A parent has created a petition that asks the school to offer an algebra-based Physics class to freshmen and sophomores as a way of lightening the heavy workloads of junior and senior year.

By taking a Physics class with its prerequisite as Algebra rather than Chemistry, students could take the class as underclassmen and have the opportunity to take the AP class the following year, as students can do with Biology and Chemistry now. This would lessen the difficulty of "jumping directly into AP [Physics] in junior year," said Felicia Deng, the petition's author.

Deng created the petition after realizing that her freshman son, who loves physics, could not take the

>> **PHYSICS** on pg. 5

#### FALCON FOCUS

#### >> what'sinside

#### TEST DEBATE Handing back tests

Students and staff discuss the ongoing debate about whether to hand back tests for students to keep. **pg. 12**

#### TUMBLR Feminism online

Tumblr is notorious for its "feminist" community, but with many actively hating on men, it may have begun to go too far. **pg. 18**

#### MODELING Anya Herne

Junior reflects on the fashion industry through part-time career in modeling. **pg. 19**

#### BASKETBALL Students advocate for court lights

With over \$200,000 in its funds, ASB is discussing the idea of adding lights to the outdoor basketball courts. **pg. 25**

## Siemens honor began in Stanford laboratory

BY FionaSequeira

After rapidly typing code for the third straight hour at his cubicle in the Laboratory of Imaging Informatics of Dr. Daniel Rubin, senior Rishi Veerapaneni took a moment to glance outside at students playing frisbee on the manicured lawns of Stanford University's campus on a hot August day.

Soon, his summer research internship would be nearing an end, and in September he would be submitting his research project to the team category of the annual Siemens Science competition. Little did he know that in his first year applying to Siemens, his project would go on to become one of 466 semi-finalists from a pool of nearly 1,800 submitted projects.

While the glory and prestige of the Siemens science fair attract thousands of students every year, Veerapaneni's original intent was not to enter the competition but rather to simply conduct cutting-edge research and gain valuable lab experience.

"If you do research over the

summer, you hope to at least submit a paper," Veerapaneni said. "If the Siemens competition makes sense, you go from there."

In mid-March of his junior year, Veerapaneni applied to different summer science programs and reached out to professors at local universities for research opportunities. He sent 125 emails and received 47 responses, some of which had compelling offers for summer internships.



Veerapaneni

He decided to work at the Laboratory of Imaging Informatics at Stanford for Rubin. During the internship, Veerapaneni conducted his research with partner Arjun Subramanian, a junior at Harker. The pair was mentored by Asaf Hoogi, a postdoctoral student at Rubin's lab.

Veerapaneni's project focused on improving a complex computer algorithm that would automatically locate and outline the boundaries of cancerous tumors using computer vision and machine learning. Subramanian handled the machine learning aspects of the

>> **SIEMENS** on pg. 22



Students play soccer on the newly turfed field during break on Dec. 7.

#### MEASURE E

## Field of dreams: Turfing of upper field completed

BY EricSze & RachelZhang

In mid November, the girls' soccer team switched its practice venue to the newly turfed upper field. With practices running later than 5 p.m., the stadium lights, completed late last month, provide the much-needed illumination for the girls to see and continue drills in the dark.

The renovations began on June 8, and were anticipated to finish fall of 2015. Plants operations supervisor Brian Moran said the construction workers are working furiously to complete the turfing of the softball field, which is expected to finish by mid December.

The total cost of the project was \$3.75 million of the \$44 million of the Measure E bond

money allotted to the school. The renovations aimed to modernize and enhance the area for student use.

Replacing the natural grass field with artificial turf required a lot of initial work. Besides leveling the field, a new drainage system and underlayer using base rock were formed to create a surface for the artificial turf to rest on. The process was far more extensive and time-consuming than the turfing of the Benny Pierce field in 2012, since the lower field needed only to replace the first-generation turf.

Principal Paul Robinson compared the two turf projects to house renovations.

"The lower field was already turf so all we had to do

>> **FIELD** on pg. 5



news >> briefs

Boutique raises \$3,000 for senior class

More than 60 vendors from shops in Saratoga, Los Gatos and Cupertino came to sell various items...

Each year, the senior class holds the fundraiser with the main intention of decreasing the price of prom bids.

This year, the class raised about \$3,000, according to senior class president Summer Smith.

"We are really fortunate to have this event benefit the senior class because it really rakes in a large amount of money," senior class representative Josh Dey said.

According to Dey, many vendors at the event were very pleased with their sales and made a good profit.

"The event was really successful because we were able to meet so many people from various stores, learn about them, and have it help out our class at the same time," Dey said.

— Anant Rajeev

Fresh off 'Pride,' students see "Emma"

Fresh off their success in the fall play, 29 students from the drama department went to a musical adaptation of Jane Austen's "Emma" on Dec. 2.

All of the students who attended had also been a part of the school's production of "Pride and Prejudice," and many of them describe seeing another Austen show as extremely educational.

"The show was absolutely amazing," sophomore Amelia Berardo said. "We had all spent so much time immersing ourselves in that era for 'Pride and Prejudice,' so seeing another story from that time period was a lot of fun."

The musical is a Theatreworks original, and the actress who plays Emma is a part of the original cast.

"You can really tell that the part was written for [the actress] because she was absolutely perfect for the role," Berardo said. "Generally, it was just an awesome opportunity to see professional theater."

— Sayu Sivaram

>> falconfigures

HOLIDAYS CELEBRATED BY SHS STUDENTS

CHRISTMAS: 73.4%



DIWALI: 20.9%



HANUKKAH: 1.4%



OTHER: 4.3%

THE FALCON POLLED 139 STUDENTS



— Eric Sze

>> picturethis



HOLIDAY BOUTIQUE >> Senior Oksana Trifonova volunteers at the annual Holiday Boutique on Dec. 5, a senior class fundraiser, serving baked potatoes and desserts while vendors sell holiday goods.

DISTRICT

Committee works to finalize school's 2016-2017 bell schedule

by Aditya Chaudhry & Alex Yang

After many complaints from parents, teachers and students in recent years about the Monday bell times and other issues, a district wide group called the Schedule Advisory Committee (SAC) has been commissioned to come up with an improved schedule for next year.

Due to all 29 members signing a confidentiality agreement, specific information about actual possible schedules hasn't been disclosed yet. However, the district website says that SAC is "looking forward to exploring schedule options, examining research, collaborating and bringing recommendation to the board about possible changes to district schedules" in time for the 2016-2017 school year.

SAC has already set criteria for the new schedule, including a restriction on the number of classes students can enroll in and a schedule built around the well-being of students. The SAC also noted that it favors a common district bell schedule, which "could increase opportunities for students to access specific courses at Los Gatos."

In addition, SAC is trying to identify "hot button issues," any topic that could have a major impact on the new schedule design. Among these are: block rotations, starting times, one district wide schedule versus separate high

school schedules, tutorials and class period lengths.

The new schedule, according to committee, is likely to lengthen class periods to support project-based learning aligned with the Common Core State Standards and will allocate teachers the time needed to offer more help and develop strong connections.

The committee, which is being led by a paid professional moderator named Ken Yale, meets two or three times each month, and has had a total of seven meetings since their first convention on Sept 2. A subcommittee will focus on creating additional opportunities for input "once more specificity around a proposed schedule is achieved" and recently presented six types of schedules for the full committee to study.

The first meeting covered SAC's basic purposes, process and membership requirements, establishing a Jan. 12 deadline for SAC to present a bell schedule to the district board.

Subsequent meetings followed a similar structure, discussing a rolling schedule versus a modified block schedule and one-week versus two-week cycles. A more detailed summary about each meeting can be found on the district's website.

The committee created an email link at sac@lgsuhsd.org for the public to provide input for the committee to review at the meetings.

NEWSPAPER

Falcon wins Pacemaker twice in a row

by Deepthi Sampathkumar & Oksana Trifonova

The Falcon has won the Pacemaker award by the National Scholastic Press Association (NSPA) for 2014-2015 in the broadsheet category for newspapers of 17 or more pages for the second consecutive year.

The award, the top honor in scholastic journalism, is given by the NSPA to only a small number of newspapers and magazines each year. According to judges, the Falcon was given the award based on "exceptional reporting, writing and coverage of school and community. Balanced organization and great use of photos and art to aid storytelling."

This year, there were only six finalists in the broadsheet category and only three of them received the Pacemaker, which was announced at the fall NSPA conference in Orlando, Fla., on Nov. 15.

"In sports you compete against other teams to see how good your team is," newspaper adviser Mike Tyler said. "In journalism you don't do that necessarily, but this is the closest it gets."

"I was really happy with how Winter Formal turned out this year," Thumaty said. "It seemed like most of the attendees really enjoyed the plethora of activities available. The food was, in my opinion, the best we've had at a non-prom dance since I've been here [at SHS]."

Besides exploring the different activities around the venue, students also found time to visit the dance floor. This year, the dance commission decided to hire DJ Delicious.

"The DJ selected songs that really hyped up the atmosphere," junior Daniel Lee said. "They were fun. They were 'turnt.'"

In light of this dance's popularity, Thumaty expects more off-campus dances in the future. "I think off-campus dances will really become the new norm for our school from now on," Thumaty said. "The success of this dance really locks that in."

Another local school publication to win the Pacemaker this year is Palo Alto High's Verde magazine.

ORCHESTRA

Sleigh bells, performers spread joy

MUSIC DEPARTMENT DELIGHTS AUDIENCE AT WINTER CONCERTS

by Gwynevere Hunger

Audience members left full of holiday spirit after attending the winter concerts put on by the music department on Dec. 1 and Dec. 3.

The first concert featured the Freshman Band, Symphonic Band, Freshman Orchestra and Philharmonic Strings, while the second featured Saratoga Wind Ensemble, String Orchestra and Saratoga Strings.

"The concert this year went better than others, since we were able to incorporate new elements such as glowsticks and choreography into our show," senior cellist Kayla Kim said. "All three ensembles performed well, with holiday cheer for our Christmas festival at the end of the concert."

The two concerts each showcased nine pieces. At both concerts, the orchestra and band first performed four pieces separately, then came together at the end of concert in a combined holiday performance. The final holiday pieces played were "Silent Night" and "A Christmas

Festival," in the Dec. 1 and Dec. 3 concerts, respectively.

On Dec. 3, Saratoga Strings also played Karl Jenkins' "Palladio," in which they showcased a non-traditional performance. With all the lights off in the McAfee Center, they attached glowsticks on to their bows for visual effect. The bass drum players were the only people on stage, while the cello players sat at the base of the stage and the violin and viola players walked through the entire audience.

"I think this performance was one of our best, as we showed that orchestra can loosen up and have fun while performing," Kim said. "People were really excited by our glow-in-the dark performance."

To add to the holiday spirit, the members of the music groups also incorporated holiday decorations into their performances. For example, the bass string players put tinsel on their scrolls and many orchestra and band members wore Christmas hats.

In addition, leaders of the advanced



Seniors Suneel Belkhale, Alice He and Katie McLaughlin perform at the concert on Dec. 3.

groups put on a Christmas skit at the end of the Dec. 3 concert. Music director Michael Boitz dressed up as Santa and fought against choir teacher Andrew Ford, who dressed up as Jack Frost. In the skit, Jack Frost tried to take Christmas Spirit away by taking Boitz's or "Santa's" conducting baton.

Seniors Shiva Djabbari, Nina Groeneveld and Katie McLaughlin dressed up as reindeers who talked about the joy of Christmas and the holidays. Senior Avi Arjavalingham dressed up as an elf who fully brought back Christmas.

"Ending my last winter concert with a large Christmas fanfare music through a combined band and orchestra finale is a very memorable moment that I will cherish for my high school band career," senior saxophone player Daniel Eem said.

The choirs also came together this past Tuesday for a holiday concert at the McAfee Center, as did the Jazz Bands on Thursday.

Because of printing deadlines, The Falcon was unable to cover the choir and jazz concerts in this print edition.

WINTER FORMAL

Dance draws high attendance

by Gwynevere Hunger & Kyle Wang

Four hundred and seventy-five students enjoyed an evening at the Children's Discovery Museum on Dec. 5 during this year's Winter Formal, themed "Frozen in Time," which lasted from 8-11 p.m. Though ASB initially planned on only having 350 students attend, more were able to go after the school arranged for more buses to bring students to the museum. Many of the students in attendance believed the off-campus venue added to the experience.

"I liked how there were things for us to do such as the hands-on activities at the museum that were unique to the venue," senior Michael Ren said. "At the same time, there were traditional photos and games that were also well-received."

The ASB and dance commission began visiting possible off-campus venues before the start of the school year and chose the Children's Discovery Museum at the end of summer, which gave them ample time to plan for the event.

"We decided to hold Formal at the museum after we heard about Cupertino's junior prom," sophomore dance commissioner Lillian Zeng said. "We visited the museum and asked about prices and decided that it would be a nice place to hold Formal."

Zeng said that holding Winter Formal at the museum allowed attendees to participate in a variety of activities besides dancing. Students were able to enjoy themselves at many of the museum's unique exhibits. With two floors, the venue included Polaroid stations, a photo booth, a corn-husk doll making station, waterways, a shadow light show, games and more.

"If we held Winter Formal in the Large Gym," Zeng said, "then 90 percent of the venue would be the dance floor." In the past, setting up for dances was a long and arduous process, ASB presi-

MARCHING BAND

Musicians prepare for the Rose Bowl Parade

by Claire Chou & Cassandra King

As the Jan. 1 Rose Bowl Parade approaches, excitement is growing among the more than 200 marching band members. They will travel to Pasadena for the event on Dec. 28 and be there until Jan. 2.

General manager and trumpet player junior Peter VandeVort is excited to take on this challenge with what he calls "the strongest band we've had in awhile."

"I'm expecting quite a lot of problems, but I know that we'll overcome each and every one of them." junior Peter VandeVort

The 7-mile parade, watched by thousands of spectators and millions more on TV, requires much more stamina than normal performances, making it difficult for certain sections of the band to play the entire time.

For example, according to band director Michael Boitz, it is challenging for trumpets to maintain their embouchures, or the shapes of their mouth, for the estimated 4-hour duration of the performance.

To combat this, the band has had members practice taking turns playing so that they don't all have to play throughout the entire parade. However, during the first mile and

the "huge infamous turn that starts off the parade," which will be broadcast live on TV, the whole band will play, according to drum major senior Shiva Djabbari.

Extra precautions for the parade will also be taken. For example, the band will bring along extra sousaphones, and uniforms will be carefully checked and rechecked.

At the Rose Bowl Parade, the marching band will perform "Russian Christmas Music" by Alfred Reed, "Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company" by John Philip Sousa and Michael E. Hipp

and "Don't Stop Believin'" by Steve Perry, Neal Schon and Jonathan Cain.

The songs have been assembled by associate band director Jonathan Pwu to create a mashup of the parade and field show at Band-

Bandfest is an event that occurs at Pasadena City College from Dec. 29-30, and it features all the performing bands that will perform at the Rose Bowl Parade in each of their respective field shows.

In addition, they will perform at Disneyland with the Redwood Middle School marching band and will have several dinners to celebrate and spend New Year's Eve together with the other band members.

"I feel like many new memories are bound to be made, and I'm super excited to see what this event has in store for our band family," Djabbari said.

ROBOTICS

# M-SET hosts tournaments for next generation

By Aditya Chaudhry

Local kids got a taste of robotics during the annual Saratoga High FIRST Lego League (FLL) and FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC) qualifying tournaments held over the weekend of Nov. 21-22.

The FLL challenge, which engages students ages 9 to 14, is a small competition where students design robots out of Lego parts and sensors to complete pre-assigned tasks. The challenge this year was called Trash Trek, where 16 teams of around five members had to make their robots remove waste from a Lego dumpster and move a Lego garbage truck to a processing plant, among other tasks.

"Although the actual game and robotics is an important aspect of FLL, it isn't the only focus," junior outreach officer Nicole Lin said. "Children also need to find a real-world problem revolving around trash and come up with a design that is presented to judges."

According to Lin, the whole point of FLL tournaments is to help create a community

approach to getting students involved in robotics and STEM.

The Sunday FTC competition was meant mainly for middle schoolers.

The FTC challenge for this year was Mountain Rescue. The objective of the game is to create a robot to be able to drive up inclined metal rungs and collect cubes and Wiffle balls and place them in plastic bins. The challenge made the tournament bigger and more complete than the previous day, but it was just as much fun.

In FTC, the students need to design an 18-by-18 inch robot that is able to perform tasks such as climbing a hill made of metal rungs and scoring plastic cubes and balls in a plastic container.

Music teachers Andrew Ford and Jon Pwu were the emcees for Saturday's tournament, while junior Daniel Koh had the duties for the Sunday FTC tournament.

"It was great to be right next to the field and see what the teams had built up close while commenting over what was happening during the match," Koh said.



TALISMAN // NAVEED RIAZIAT

Students work on a robot during the FTC competition hosted by the Saratoga High M-SET team on Nov. 20.

At the end of the day teams 8375, vulcan robotics from San Mateo, and 6688, Lambda Robotics from Mission San Jose High School, both advanced to

the next round of competition.

"It was really cool to see so many children these past two days win these awards," Lin said. "It was unbelievable

that as a student in Saratoga I am able to help in some way to make sure the students get this opportunity to grow and expand." ♦

CLUBS

# DECA and FIDM team up for fashion challenge

By Stephen Ding & Caitlin Ju

Looking to expand their club and involve their members in a greater variety of competitions, Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA) presidents Nidhi Jain, Naman Sajwan and Sava Sivaram have partnered with the school's FIDM Fashion Club for the sixth annual 2016 international DECA-led Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising (FIDM) challenge.

In the challenge, participants forecast a fashion trend for the fall and winter seasons, forming teams of three to create an outfit that portrays the trend that they are predicting. Each team must explain the reason behind their chosen outfit and post a 4-minute presentation on YouTube for evaluation by FIDM executives and instructors.



Okada

What makes the challenge especially difficult is the \$20 spending limit on the outfit, but teams may also use clothes from their closets.

Currently there is one DECA team that will certainly be participating, but more teams may join later on.

FIDM Fashion Club president Manna Okada is unsure of how many teams will participate from her club but sees this competition

as a great opportunity for her members to combine their fashion and business skills.

"[There is] a stereotype that fashion is all about fashion design and making clothes, but this challenge shows that there is a business side of fashion," Okada said. "It's not just 100 percent creativity; there are business tactics, and it's really important too."

Sajwan believes the challenge will help both clubs expand.

"We hope to instill some business values within [the

FIDM club members]," Sajwan said. "We hope the partnership does build some values of business, entrepreneurship and innovation, especially with the \$20 budget incorporation."

Additionally, Sajwan views the fashion challenge as an "unique" opportunity for DECA to further its outreach.

"The fashion industry is something which people do take an interest in, but they don't really get a chance to see how it actually functions," Sajwan said. ♦

MAKE-A-WISH FUNDRAISER

# Freshman partners with ARK Club to spread holiday cheer

By Emily Chen & Katherine Sun

Freshman Simran Mallik, then 9, knew something was wrong one day while swinging on monkey bars: She couldn't hold on. Later that day, she left a tetherball game with her left arm "hurting like crazy."

Even after multiple trips to different doctors, Mallik and her family had inconclusive results on what could be wrong with her arm. It wasn't until she had a biopsy a few weeks later that they discovered she had a tumor associated with Ewing Sarcoma, a rare form of bone cancer, and she began frequent stays in the hospital throughout the summer before fourth grade and the school year.

"I knew I'd get out of [the treatment] in nine months. I was afraid at some points, but it was all fine," Mallik said. "Looking back on it, I see that it was a bigger deal than that."

Five years later, Mallik is cancer-free and an active member of the Make-A-Wish Young Professionals Advisory Council Jr. Team. She has teamed up with Acts of Random Kindness (ARK) Club this holiday season to host a Letters to Santa fundraiser.

For every letter delivered to Macy's, the department store that they discovered she had a tumor associated with Ewing Sarcoma, a rare form of bone cancer, and she began frequent stays in the hospital throughout the summer before fourth grade and the school year.

Mallik brought the idea to the school in an effort to contribute to Make-A-Wish, which helped fund her wish of traveling to Hawaii to see the aquatic life when she was 9 and

finished with her treatment. "All I really wanted to do was encourage others to donate to Make-A-Wish and spread awareness about rare childhood

school must be sponsored by a club, Mallik approached ARK. Two weeks into the fundraiser, the box of letters already contained 120 messages to Santa.

"My goal is to get as many letters as possible," Mallik said. "I hope everyone realizes that they can make a difference by taking two minutes to write a simple letter."

For the fundraiser, ARK has been advertising outside meetings and writing letters to Santa during its Friday meetings in room 702. senior co-presidents Under Michael Chyan, Michael Guo and Michelle Huang, ARK has already hosted a few "ARK-tivities" this year to spread happiness around campus.

The 20 or so club members pieced together a paper chain



freshman Simran Mallik

# FIELD >>

continued from pg. 1

was pull up the old turf to replace it with new turf, much like replacing the carpet in your home," Robinson said. "[On the upper field], instead of replacing carpet, we're replacing the entire foundation of the house."

Moran cited minor delays that occurred during the process. The access point to reach the field was difficult for large vehicles to unload equipment and move, since the layout of the back parking lot required them to maneuver around the tight space behind the science building. In addition, the rainy weather contributed to various short halts in construction.

The reception from students has been generally positive, as some see the upper field turf as a much-needed addition to the school both environmentally and practically.

"I think the turf was the right decision, since grass can be such a huge waste of water," junior lacrosse player Megana

Saripella said. "The grass was also uneven, so playing lacrosse on it was really difficult like [scooping] up ground balls [with the lacrosse stick]."

The turf has also received praise from band students, who will be able to practice their formation on the upper field at night. Members said the previous grass field was ridden with flies and often turned into mud when it rained.

The turf field retains more heat than plain grass does, which will be tough for students who use the field during the summer.

Junior softball and field hockey player Maxine Parr welcomes the new multipurpose turf field.

"During the fall when the band, football team and field hockey team need turf to practice, there will be two fields which will make scheduling much easier," Parr said.

But like many other mem-

bers of the softball team, she wishes the softball field hadn't been turf.

"Our softball team sent many emails explaining how it is more dangerous to play on and how we would have a disadvantage during the season

that the two-story building is expected to house the entire music department with spacious rooms for the various orchestras, choir, band and equipment. The second level will include a choir room, several rooms for teachers and individual rooms, where students can practice their instruments.

Junior Sarah Jin, who performs in the Chamber ensemble, is eager to utilize the space and attract new members.

"Hopefully, nicer facilities will attract more students to choir, and our program will eventually be as large as it is in [my] freshman year," Jin said.

Although the renovations encompassed by Measure E appear to be simple, there's a complicated process that goes on behind the scenes.

The blueprints of the music building, for instance, must first be approved by the Division

of State Architecture (DSA), a lengthy process, according to Moran.

When the construction begins, a staging area carved out of the parking lot will be needed to host the supplies and equipment. A plan to avoid some of the traffic from the construction zone is being drawn up.

Near the anticipated music building, the West Wing by the west parking lot now includes three portable buildings that house the CASSY, the TLC and the ASSIST program. The factory-created buildings, which cost about \$300,000, came in two pieces and were assembled on site in early September.

With the renovations to modernize the school in place, Moran said he has had more variety in his work days, balancing both the ongoing construction and maintenance of school facilities. Despite the continuous change, his goal has remained the same.

"My focus is to maintain the facilities as best as possible and to create a safe environment for all the students and visitors every day," Moran said. ♦

"I think the turf was the right decision, since grass can be such a huge waste of water."



junior Megana Saripella

because no other school has a turf field," Parr said.

Another addition, the new music building, where the previous H wing was located near the office, is anticipated to begin construction on April 1 and be finished by late 2017.

The project will cost between \$10 to \$20 million. Moran said

# IDOL >>

continued from pg. 1

[the audience]."

The first competitor to take the stage was sophomore Surya Murthy, who set the bar high with her performance of "Hopeless Wanderer" by Mumford and Sons. Junior Sarah Traina followed up with an emotional rendition of "Gravity" by Sara

Bareilles, and freshman Simran Mallik wowed the crowd with her vocals in "Take Me to Church" by Hozier.

Subsequently, junior Will Liddle sang his version of "Just the Way You Are" by Bruno Mars. Junior Samantha Sherman then displayed her prowess as a vocalist and guitarist with "Thinking Out Loud" by Ed Sheeran and freshman Deyshna Pai showed off her vocals in the old-school "Who's

Loving You" by Jackson 5.

Next up was Moustakas, capturing the crowd with her winning performance. The show concluded with senior Michael Guo's heartfelt interpretation of "Down" by Jay Sean.

Juniors Raymond McCarthy and Zach Grob-Lipkis emceed the competition.

Aside from the performances of the competitors, there were three intermission acts. The first was a special performance

by the band of seniors Ankitha Sarvesh, Chris McMahon, Nellie Jalalian and Max Rossip.

Senior Nina Nelson, who won the competition as a freshman, followed up with the last two intermission performances. Using seniors Sanah Shah, Jalalian, principal Paul Robinson, McCarthy and Grob-Lipkis as her backup dancers, she performed "Hotline Bling" by Drake, which was filled with hilarious parodies of Drake's

dancing. Her final act was "The Hills" by The Weeknd, with Shah on the piano.

This year, the audience voted on paper ballots and everything worked out smoothly.

"It went very well," Srinivasan said. "The emcees were hilarious; our comedy act in between was very entertaining, which was what we were going for. Additionally, our intermission acts were a great way to start and end the show." ♦

# PHYSICS >>

continued from pg. 1

class until he was in 11th grade. This restriction contrasted with her own experience in China, where Physics is first offered in middle school, a much earlier stage. Deng was prompted to ask parents with backgrounds in STEM about the reasoning behind SHS's course track.

"To my surprise, a lot of parents couldn't answer my questions. I began to realize that it is not only my concern," Deng said. "I understand that the Saratoga community works hard and would put more resources on STEM, so I picked up [the] courage to create a petition to see how many people in our community have the same concern."

Beyond her son's interests, Deng seeks to make the school's Physics courses as accessible as those at other local schools, like Monta Vista and Lynbrook, which offer Physics to students in the 10th grade. She helped create a group that researched the Physics programs at other schools to compile a presentation that was shared with assistant principal Brian Safine on Nov. 3.

"The school was very open and listened to us," Deng said. "We really appreciate it."

Safine has passed on the details of the proposal to the science department, which is analyzing the idea "to determine if its something that [the administration] want[s] to roll out the next school year or two years out," he said.

A leadership team composed of the department heads and administrators would decide whether to request the change to the school board and superintendent.

"It's not a bad proposal," Safine said.

"The parents are being pretty reasonable."

Thus far, the petition has garnered 129 signatures of a 1,000-signature goal. Deng is still hopeful that more students will learn about it and support it as well.

Though the petition has earned support from some in the parent community, science teacher Jenny Garcia, the head of the department, said offering Physics to underclassmen would not necessarily reduce their workload in later years.

"It's really a zero-sum game in terms of total classes taken. Maybe I'm missing something, and I'd love to become more informed about that," Garcia said.

According to Garcia, one positive aspect of offering Physics starting in 11th grade is that it allows students to have more time to develop their algebra and trigonometric skills, which opens up more class time to focus on the Physics curriculum rather than teach the math skills needed for the class, even though the only prerequisite for the class is Chemistry. It is only recommended that students earn a C or higher in Algebra I and Geometry to take Physics.

At the same time, however, Garcia said that offering Physics before Chemistry could provide a better path in science for some students.

"There is some logic behind offering Physics before chemistry, as Physics does not require quite as much abstract thinking, so students tend to do better if they take it later during their development," Garcia said. "It really all goes back to how comfortable students are with the algebra [and trigonometry] required."

Garcia and other science teachers welcome the proposal.

"I think it's worthy of a discussion about what is best for all students," she said. "What comes out of that discussion, I can't predict." ♦

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CITY OF SARATOGA

# Quarry Park newly opened for public use

BY Apoorv Kwatra & Tiffany Zheng

The 64-acre Saratoga Quarry Park, located at the base of the Santa Cruz Mountains, was officially opened to the public by the city of Saratoga on Oct. 31. At the unveiling, guests took historic hikes through the quarry. Shuttle services were provided due to limited parking.

According to the city's website, Santa Clara County purchased the quarry in 1921 to obtain gravel for roads. The quarry remained open until 1967, and since then, the barbecue pits, picnic benches and lounging areas have been used and maintained for recreational purposes by county employees.

Through joint funding from the Midpeninsula Regional

Open Space District, Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department and a conservation easement, which preserves the property's natural scenic quality, the city was able to obtain the property in 2011.

The property, located on Congress Springs Road, has since been transformed to include picnic areas, hiking trails, scenic views and more.

People can get there going through Saratoga Sunnysvale Road and then on Big Basin Way. Now, the city is working to add a pond near the picnic area of the park and may also add more hiking trails and a playground.

Students are excited about all aspects of the park, particularly the atmosphere the park provides.

"Quarry Park provides a

safe and fresh environment for people of all ages to take a step back from the stresses of life and enjoy something outdoors," junior Jason Kao said.

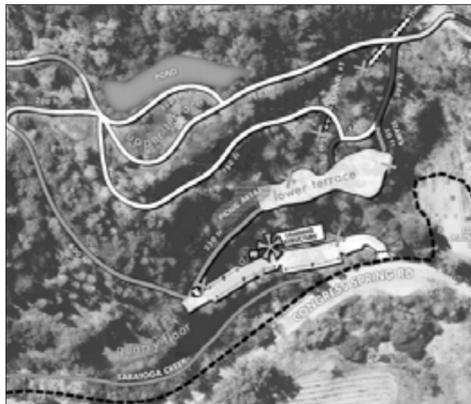
Students like junior Sydney Vo also see the park as a learning opportunity.

"I think it will be a great for people to enjoy the outdoors while being educated about the history of our city," Vo said.

Quarry Park aims to provide a spot for people to relax and experience nature.

Students said it has the potential to be a popular spot among Saratoga residents, old and young.

"I know my parents went up there to walk around and they said it was really nice," senior Anne Rollinson said. "I'll definitely go hiking there with friends when I get a chance." ♦



The new Quarry Park is located at 22000 Congress Springs Road, near the Santa Cruz Mountains. It is open every day from dawn to dusk.

FALCON FOCUS

## Freshman chess master coaches young students

BY Kelly Xiao

Even though most people have played chess for fun, few people understand what is required to reach competition level, let alone the status of chess master. Freshman Tanuj Vasudeva, however, has reached a degree of achievement in chess that many can only wonder at. He already holds the titles of National Master and Fédération Internationale des Échecs (FIDE) Master.



Vasudeva

To put things into perspective, National Master is the highest chess title in the U.S. and FIDE Master is an internationally recognized title.

According to the chess rating system, club level chess is around 1,800, expert is approximately 2,000 and National Master is 2,200. Vasudeva was awarded his own National Master title by the United States Chess Federation once he had crossed the 2,200 threshold through his performance in tournaments, playing against opponents of all ages and rankings. He also achieved a FIDE Master title by winning first place in the 2009 Pan American Chess Championship's Under 8 Division, which was open to all people from North, South and Central America. It's no surprise, then, that Vasudeva's name has popped up in the occasional chess blog.

He first began playing when he discovered his grandfather's chess set from India in 2006. Once Vasudeva understood the basics, he spent days experimenting with the pieces. His two idols were American chess icon Bobby Fischer and Viswanathan Anand, whom he identified more with culturally.

How Vasudeva eventually became so skilled involved a combination of self-studying, trial-and-error and guidance. Instead of studying chess books, he used

Internet resources as well as Skype lessons with a Russian chess coach to progress. After playing at tournaments, he would record the moves that happened, analyzing and recapping events.

"I [would learn] from my mistakes [to] get better the next time," Vasudeva said. "Chess requires a lot of patience and practice, and you won't get good at it unless you actually try to improve, so it's really important that you do so."

Vasudeva said his self-motivation is the biggest key to his success.

"When I was younger I would, practice on my own time without my parents telling me to," Vasudeva said. "If you can do [an activity] on your own and you like doing it, you will probably get good at it."

During each game, Vasudeva tries to calculate ahead and review his opponents' strategies. Since memorizing board positions is one of his weak points, he relies more on planning. Nowadays, he also passes on his love of the game by tutoring fourth and fifth graders. His students come to his house for group or private classes every week, allowing him to grow as both a teacher and a player.

"[Tutoring is] fun, and it gives you a lot of patience too," Vasudeva said. "It's quite difficult, but it makes you feel better because people are improving because of you."

Though Vasudeva does not plan on playing chess professionally, he believes that he will always want to exercise his chess skill, which he still exhibits in the occasional tournament despite his current focus on teaching younger kids.

"I want to be good at [chess]," Vasudeva said, "but I plan on being a doctor most likely. I'll try my best [since] that's what I'm working toward." ♦

## Acharya transitions to regular applications

BY Claire Chou & Katherine Sun

*Editor's note: This year, the Falcon is following the trials and tribulations of the college application process by focusing on students Saro Acharya and Caroline Oliver in alternating issues.*

Senior Saro Acharya could feel the anticipation as he clicked the gray button. He was submitting his New York University (NYU) application on the afternoon of Oct. 31, the day before the deadline.

But nothing happened. The server had crashed. It was "a very frantic hour," Acharya recalls, as he was unable to submit his application. Even after rushing to check with friends, who confirmed they were having the same issues, Acharya could not relax until his early applications for NYU and Loyola Marymount University (LMU) were successfully submitted in the late afternoon.

The week of the Nov. 1 early application deadline came with another unexpected change for Acharya. For his application to Chapman University, he decided to switch his major from film, which only offers an early deadline, to television, which offers both early and regular deadlines. He said that the acceptance rate is higher for television than for film but added that pursuing television will give him the opportunity to diversify his skill sets.

"A lot of people in the industry switch between film and television. So, I think once you break into the industry in one medium, it's easier to go between them," Acharya said.

Because he now had the option to submit his Chapman application with the regular deadline, Acharya only applied early decision to NYU and early action to LMU, leaving Chapman for later.

Counting Chapman, he is applying regular decision to nine private colleges. Like most students, he has what he considers to be safety schools, and in his case, they are the California State Universities at Long Beach and Northridge.

For the NYU supplemental he submitted as part of his early application, Acharya identified his favorite movie and how it had affected him. He wrote about the Alfred Hitchcock crime thriller "Dial M for Murder" due to the movie's influence on his style of filmmaking.

"Alfred Hitchcock is considered a master of suspense and tension, and that's something I really like about him," Acharya said. "'Dial M for Murder' is set in one room, and he uses that to build up a lot of tension. If you look at it closely, there are a lot of shots slowly creeping toward the person, and by the end of the movie, it's very close up shots."

Since the UC deadline passed on Nov. 30, Acharya has devoted himself to his remaining applications. He feels apprehensive but ready to meet the January deadlines.

He allots Saturday afternoons from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. to working on his essays. Outside that block of time, he works on essays "at the most random times," starting them late at night or even very early in the mornings before school.

Acharya has struggled to come up with ideas for the broader prompts because he wants to draw upon personal experiences while portraying his ideas in a creative way.

"Usually, I love creative writing, but when it's for an application, I tend to be more critical and even pessimistic of my work," he said.

Acharya finds the revision process to be especially challenging, since he often has a changed mindset from when he first wrote the essay.

"When you look back on it, you might have a different perspective or a different vision for what you wanted to get across," Acharya said. "It's hard to change that."

With expectations for another stressful month, Acharya is looking forward to a second semester without all the extra work of applications. More than anything, he craves a change of pace by moving away from the area.

"It could definitely help with the creativity," Acharya said. "There are so many opportunities out there. I can develop the skills to get jobs and meet like-minded people." ♦



WINTER GUARD

# Great expectations: Falcons prepare for season

BY Claire Chou & Cassandra King

Winter guard has already begun its pre-season preparations for its first show, which will take place on Jan. 30 at James Logan High School.

The team will forgo its normal attendance at its premiere show on Jan. 9 to allow its members in color guard to focus on the Rose Bowl Parade instead. (Though many students participate on both teams, not all of them do.)

To help the team design this year's show, winter guard instructor Joseph Kidd has hired Todd Ryan, the visual caption head of world-class drum corps Blue Devils.

The team hopes to perform three times at the regional competition Winter Guard International (WGI) Western Championships at the University of Nevada on March 19-20 by making it through preliminaries, semifinals and

finals.

"This particular group is much stronger than years past," Kidd said. "The students have developed maturely into this competitive environment and I think we are building success as we speak."

This year will serve as a gap year for the team to adjust to the new members before they attend the WGI National Championships at Dayton, Ohio, next year. In response, younger members have taken on larger roles.

"I've noticed a lot of juniors have been stepping up and acting like seniors," Schwabe said.

Auditions for the team were held in November; 30 out of 37 students were chosen, and three more were given "shadow spots," a position similar to understudies. Kidd said that students at the auditions were taught a flag phrase and movement piece, which were then evaluated based on four main criteria: confidence, body control, participation and execution, all of which are important in competitions as well.

According to Kidd, because the members are so equal in ability, "all spots are up for grabs at this point" although sabre, dance and flag line members have been designated. Spots will be made permanent by January, and Kidd said

that attendance during rehearsals will be crucial to determining the final lineup.

While the lineup of the team has been consistently easy to manage, a conflict that has often plagued the winter guard each year is a lack of gym space — a problem that has influenced Kidd's decision to maintain a single 30 member guard rather than create two separate JV and varsity groups.

However, this year, the winter guard has worked around the conflict by moving to Foothill Elementary School for weekly practices. Schwabe and junior co-captain Brittany Sample are responsible for showing up early before practices to help move the equipment to Foothill.

"We would much rather practice in our own gym than have to push all of our equipment to Foothill, which has a smaller gym with a shorter roof which limits what we can do," said Schwabe. "But I know that basketball and other sports have priority." ♦

**"The students have developed maturely into this competitive environment. instructor Joseph Kidd"**

SPEECH AND DEBATE

## New parent president sets goals for upcoming season

BY Divya Rallabandi & Kyle Wang

The clock reads 8:34 p.m., and Sunder Raj, father of senior Sweeya Raj, is sitting at a desk in room 705, managing speech and debate tournament registration on his laptop with coach Chris Harris and other parents by his side.

As the current parent committee president, Raj is in charge of communicating with families and coaches, administering tournament logistics and ensuring a smooth season.

Though the work is often tedious, Raj said he enjoys the process.

"It's just like any other job," Raj said. "If you think it's just work, then it's a lot of work; if you think this is a passion

representation at state and national-level competitions.

"When [competitors] enter a room and say they're from Saratoga, I want the kids to take notice," Raj said.

Raj was introduced to the program when his oldest child, his son Sudeep, participated in Parliamentary debate his freshman year in 2010.

Like many other parents of incoming debaters, Raj was originally unfamiliar with tournament routines and other team procedures. The difficulties of adjusting to the system inspired him to help other parents and help out.

"You're going through a learning process," he said, "so you know that a fresh parent coming into the system will have the same questions."



parent Sunder Raj

**"If you think it's just work, then it's a lot of work; if you think this is a passion that you love to do, then it's not."**

Raj said that his children have benefited tremendously from participating in speech and debate.

"[My dad] invests a lot of time in the debate program because he saw my brother gain a lot of confidence by going through the program, and this was his way of giving back," Sweeya said.

Sudeep reached the final round at the California State Tournament in Parliamentary debate as a senior last year, where he and his partner, 2015 alumnus Michael Ong, lost by one vote to the opposition. Sweeya, who competes in Public Forum debate, reached the octofinal round at the Harker School Howard and Diana Nichols Invitational with her partner, senior Nupur Maheshwari.

Next year, Raj will have to decide whether he will continue taking an active role in the program. Even if he decides not to take the position, Raj said he is still willing to help out the team whenever possible.

"To me, it's just about giving back to the debate community that helped my kids," he said. ♦

## Nine students place in prestigious tournament

BY Divya Rallabandi & Kyle Wang

Over the weekend of Nov. 20-22, the speech and debate team competed at the annual Dempsey-Cronin Invitational held at Santa Clara University. Though this year's competition was difficult, five of Saratoga's speech 30 competitors advanced to the final round and four more advanced to semifinals.

Unlike past years, this year's invitational offered "bids" to more prestigious national-level competitions later in the year, such as the National Individual Events Tournament Of Champions (NIETOC).

Senior Arnav Sarin said the chance to earn a bid increased the competitiveness of this year's tournament.

"Because [the Dempsey-Cronin Invitational] is designed to get some of the best speech and debaters fighting amongst one another for the NIETOC bids for finalists it really gets the speakers to try their best," Sarin said.

This year, speech and debate powerhouses such as James Logan High School and Monta Vista High School attended for the first time in three years. Sacramento's CK McClatchy High School also came for the first time, and Leland High School, which has historically dominated local tournaments, was also present.

In spite of the competition, sophomore Tyler Wu performed well at the tournament, placing first in Novice Original Oratory. Since the Dempsey-Cronin Invitational was his first tournament, Wu said he was initially nervous and confused about the process.

"I had literally no expectations," he said. "I just wanted to get some experience."

Though he wrote his speech, which discussed the importance of genuine passion, about a month before the tournament began and consistently attended practices, Wu said that he did not begin memorizing the speech itself until the night before the tournament.

Although he believes that this decision made him more nervous going into each round, Wu said it did not affect his overall performance.

He took first place in every single



Wu

one of his rounds, aside from one second-place ranking from one of three judges in the final. Between rounds, he spent his time memorizing his speech and "having fun with friends."

"I learned a lot about tournaments in general," he said, "and I think I gained a lot of experience from this one tournament."

In light of his success, Wu hopes to begin competing at the varsity level at later tournaments.

To prepare for these tournaments, he said he will continue attending practices and "memorize his speech to the last word." Individual Events coach Lindsey Ayotte said students like Wu who do not skip practices will ultimately perform well at major tournaments such as the Dempsey-Cronin Invitational.

Since the tournament occurs relatively early in the season, many newer team members also view the Dempsey-Cronin Invitational as an opportunity to build their confidence and gain some experience before later tournaments such as State Qualifiers, which occurs in February. ♦

**SCU Invitational Results**

**Varsity Oratorical Interpretation Speech**  
 Varun Viswanath (10): 3rd place  
 Divya Rallabandi (10): 6th place  
 Bijan Naimi (9): 6th place

**Varsity Extemporaneous Speech**  
 Kyle Wang (10): 4th place  
 Arian Rajje (9): Semifinalist  
 Ruchi Maheshwari (9): Semifinalist  
 Nevin Prasad (9): Semifinalist

**Novice Extemporaneous Speech**  
 Sherry Shen (9): 6th place

**Novice Original Oratory**  
 Tyler Wu (10): 1st place

**Varsity Parliamentary Debate**  
 Alex Li (12): Semifinalist  
 Aakash Thumathy (12): Semifinalist

**Varsity Lincoln Douglas Debate**  
 Austin Wang (10): Quarterfinalist

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## Why competition among women should stop

BY Daphne Liu

"If your video celebrates women with very slim bodies, you will be nominated for [VMA] Video of the Year," singer Nicki Minaj tweeted on July 21.

Although Minaj's tweet wasn't specifically aimed toward pop singer Taylor Swift, less than an hour after Minaj tweeted, Swift struck back, interpreting Minaj's words as an attack on her nomination for "Bad Blood" as VMA Video of the Year.

"I've done nothing but love [and] support you. It's unlike you to pit women against each other. Maybe one of the men took your slot," Swift tweeted.

Feuding for over two days, Swift finally ended the argument by publicly apologizing for her misinterpretation, although considerable tension lingered between two of the music world's biggest stars. Too often, women are on guard around one another, and it's exhausting for both the famed and the public. And while this behavior may be the most obvious in the world of celebrities, it is also present in interactions between many women in our far less glamorous society.

A 2013 study by Tracy Vaillancourt, a psychology professor at the University of Ottawa, showed that women, unlike men, express indirect aggression toward others of the same gender in two primary ways: "self-promotion," where they make themselves appear more at-

tractive, and "derogation of rivals," derisively putting down other women.

The root of the problem lies in the fact that many women feel an uncontrollable jealousy toward other women whom they view as "threatening" in some area where the woman doing the criticizing feels inadequate. Women compare themselves with one another so much that celebrating the success of fellow women is often hard to do.

In their research paper "The Evolutionary Psychology of Envy," evolutionary psychologists Sarah Hill and David Buss explain that "[women] experience envy because it has enabled [them] to evaluate our position in the competition for resources. Social comparison is the way we determine where we stand, and how to adjust."

In short, female competitiveness comes into play because women have been taught from a young age to compete with one another because of horizontal aggression, or the idea that the members in a group of people must rank themselves in relation to one another on the social ladder in order to succeed. When this horizontal aggression cannot be positively channeled, it surfaces in dangerous and subversive ways that are then manifested in undermining other women.

These hidden feelings cause the backstabbing and gossip that have sometimes come to characterize women's caty and frankly detrimental relationships with one another, which can be seen at schools where gossip and backstabbing

is used as a weapon to undermine others as an effort to push themselves towards the top of the pyramid.

On top of that, men are conditioned to objectify women because of our society's innately sexist bent, which negatively affects women in more ways than one. Because men often equate women's worth with their appearance, a concept perpetuated by our Barbie-doll favoring Western media, women begin to internalize this treatment and subscribe to the idea that they must vociferously undermine and undercut one another in order to raise their own stock. In accordance with this societal objectification, much of the comparison that occurs between women is centered around appearance rather than other qualities such as intelligence, humor or career success. As a byproduct of their objectification, women have an unhealthy need to be accepted by others.

For example, social media is centered around appearance and displaying one's life in the most positive light. Accordingly, many women base their worth on the number of their likes and followers and experience the urge to look better than their female competitors.

The truth is that women aren't ultimately competing with other women; they're actually competing with themselves. For many women who criticize other women, it is because they look at them and see a more ideal version of themselves. Driven by their insecurities, women then turn on one another out of envy rather than actual spite. Men, in contrast, appear to be far less competitive in trivial matters such as looks or self-promotion, and far more competitive when it comes to their careers.

In a study conducted by the Univer-

sity of Chicago, researchers found that men are more aggressive than women in the workplace and consequently make more money. The study explains the gender pay gap and suggests that women might be better off limiting their competitiveness to the workplace, where drive and aggression help employees earn better wages and positions.

To create a better society, women should focus on their own self-improvement rather than on trying to put fellow women down to feel better. Emily V. Gordon, author of "Super You: Release Your Inner Superhero," put it best when she said, "We don't need to lower the stock of other women, either for the future of the species or for our own psyches. When we each focus on being the dominant force in our own universe, rather than invading other universes, we all win." ♦



### >> togatalks

**What causes competition among women?**

"Women often want to elevate their sense of self-worth by stepping on other women."



senior Kimberly Chen

"Women think of one another as potential competitors whom they must remove through social exclusion."



junior Neeka Nikfar

"It's a result of insecurities caused by a sexist society."



sophomore Mervi Tan

## China's two-child policy: One step in the right direction

BY Caitlin Ju

China's outdated one-child policy, instituted by the Communist Party in 1980, was rightfully ended by the Chinese government on Oct. 29. Chinese couples are now allowed to have two children.

The policy was originally enacted to help solve China's urgent problem of overpopulation. In the 1970s, China boasted a fast-growing population of 975 million people, and according to Time, women were having more than five children on average.

Despite this, the necessity of the one-child policy at the time can be contested, as the birthrate was already falling before the law was introduced.

If the one-child policy had not been implemented then, China could have avoided denying women control of their bodies and as Ma Jian of The New York Times stated, the "basic human right to determine freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children."

However, with urbanization and rising incomes, times have changed for China, and accordingly, so has its stance toward population control. Yet the recent change came too little too late: The one-child policy has already left detrimental and lasting effects on the nation.

To restore a healthy state for the coun-

try, the Chinese government should do away with any population-restricting policy at all.

The first problem China's one-child policy has left in its wake is a severe gender imbalance. In 2008, the gender ratio between boys and girls was 1.22, and by 2020, the National State Population and Family Planning Commission estimates that "males of marrying age will outnumber females by at least 30 million." Chinese families' decision in the face of the one-child policy to prefer sons over daughters explains the gender imbalance.

Chinese society is notorious for being patriarchal, viewing sons as the "worthy" ones for carrying on the family name. According to Newsweek, in the mid-1980s, the Chinese government allowed rural families who had a girl or disabled child first to have a second child, effectively creating an association between girls and the disabled.

In addition, because of the heavy fine on any who violated the stringent policy, many couples took advantage of the technological advancement that allowed them to view the gender of their child, resulting in hundreds of millions of abortions of unwanted girls. Poor women who could not pay the fine and were pregnant with illegal second or third

children were dragged to local clinics and had lethal drugs injected into their abdomens.

According to data released by the Chinese Health Ministry in March of 2013, 336 million abortions and 222 million sterilizations have been carried out since 1971, many of them forced.

An even greater concern than the skewed gender numbers, though, is China's aging population. According to The Washington Post, by 2060, 70-year-olds will form the largest share of China's population.

This will cause problems such as a greater dependency ratio, higher taxes for the working force because of increased government spending in health care and a shortage of workers. China realized this late in 2013 and consequently amended the policy to permit couples to have two children if either parent had no siblings, but this small adjustment did not lead to any significant changes in the population.

Asia-Pacific said analysts predict that with the removal of the one-child policy, the average number of children for women of child-bearing age will rise to 1.93.

However, this is still not enough; the number needs to reach 2.1 to compensate for the lowered population created

by the policy.

The reality is that couples in China, assured by the fast-growing economy, are not feeling the need to have more children.

Additionally, like that of Japan and South Korea, the population of China has become more educated; work takes priority in many families and women start to have children later or not at all, causing birth rates to lower.

All of these countries are struggling with an aged population, and population-restricting policies at this point do not make sense.

Ultimately, getting rid of the one-child policy is a step in the right direction, but the Chinese government needs to act quickly to end all of its policies curbing the population.

The Foundation for Economic Education said the population bomb that emerged as a worldwide obsession in the 1960s and 1970s has "all but defused" as a result of China's economic growth.

The current birth rate in China is not enough to replace the aging population. As time goes on, it will only become harder to reverse the problems, which include a sharp gender imbalance and an aging, slow-growing population, now plaguing China as a result of its ill-advised one-child policy. ♦

# Not adding up: Cal math professor unjustly fired

By StephenDing

Is it possible for a teacher to lose his or her job for teaching too well? In light of recent events at UC Berkeley, it would seem so.

On Oct. 31, the Cal math department made the formal decision not to renew the contract of math lecturer Alexander Coward.

Oddly enough, Coward has received overwhelmingly stellar reviews from his students, thousands of whom flocked to social media to support him after he was let go, launching a Facebook page titled "Protest to Keep Coward at Cal" and even spawning the viral hashtag #StandWithCoward.

It seems that Coward, who earned a doctorate in mathematics from Oxford, lost his position because of his unconventional but effective teaching methods, which have earned him considerable backlash from the university's traditional math department. Specifically, Coward does not believe in standard measures of student progress such as graded homework and quizzes and instead prefers to have his students enjoy working on math rather than doing it for the school requirements.

While Coward's teaching is highly popular and has achieved remarkable student success, it does not align with

Cal's confining departmental expectations, begging the larger question: Is it more important for teachers to adhere to pre-established and out-of-touch norms of how things "should" be done, or to adopt an innovative approach that focuses on the innate subject matter and profoundly impacts students?

Due to a collective bargaining agreement, laws and policies, Cal was unable to comment on Coward's departure. The Cal math department did, however, claim that it was common for contracts not to be renewed.

Following the university's decision, Coward made a blog post showing evidence of his effective teachings methods, specifically improvement in his students' grades.

Out of the three lecture options for Math 1A, the introductory math class, Coward teaches two, each of which has a full roster of nearly 400 students. Most of Coward's students from his 1A and 16B classes score an average of 0.17 (out of 4.0) points higher than their peers in a subsequent math course after taking a course taught by Coward.

As if this were all not enough, the student evaluations from Coward's 2013 courses were not only predominantly positive, but also higher than any scores received by professors in the last 18 years, with Coward scoring an aver-

>> candidcaricatures



age 6.5 points out of a possible 7. It thus appears that Coward is being dismissed for being too competent and a threat to other professors. According to Coward's post, a fellow department chairmen, uncomfortable at Coward's immense popularity with students, even informed Coward he was causing problems because students weren't signing up for other professors' classes on his account, and that he should teach in a "more ordinary" way.

This "more ordinary" approach ap-

parently means teaching mechanically from the textbook rather than embracing student talent and creativity, as Coward did. It means not motivating students through encouragement and inspiration, but instead through busywork in the form of GPA-affecting homework, quizzes and assessments.

As Coward wrote in his blog post, "In a nutshell, what the department said was: Stop making us look bad. If you don't, we'll fire you." And they did — at the expense of quality education. ♦

# Reactions to Paris attack heartwarming and disturbing

By AmulyaVadlakonda

My dad still remembers the frantic phone call he made to my mom from his work on the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, telling her not to drop me off at my daycare. His boss told everyone in the office to close the blinds in their building, just because they didn't know who could be watching. It didn't matter that they were on the other side of the country; the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers in New York had not only all of America but the whole world shaking in its boots.

And now, 14 years later, the terrorist attack on Paris, France, has the world once again fighting against a group of radicals who claim to defend truth and freedom.

In a bombing and gun attack on Nov. 13 by eight terrorists affiliated with ISIS on the Bataclan Concert Hall, Stade de France Sports Stadium and two restaurants, more than 132 were killed and 352 were critically injured. In a time of darkness for Paris, the world lit up with blue, white and red in a show of solidarity, from the Sydney Opera House to the Pyramids of Giza to the World Trade Center.

Just as we did 14 years ago, we have come together to mourn the victims of this tragedy. All over the world, people have been showing their support by

overlapping their profile pictures on Facebook with the colors of the French flag, with the hashtag #prayforparis.

Yet there is a disturbing number of people, especially on social media, who believe that this period of mourning for Paris is the perfect time to discuss the problems in the rest of the world. It is hypocritical to call others out for not honoring the victims

the Paris attack while not giving Paris the respect it deserves after its own tragedy. Posting "#prayforthe-world" on Facebook and Twitter may stem from good intentions, but this only serves to take attention away from the current problem: the crisis in Paris.

It is a valid concern that other places in the world that have been targets of terrorist attacks are not getting the same kind of media attention as Paris. We should indeed be praying for the whole world whenever a major tragedy occurs. However, this concern should have been discussed long before the incident at Paris. It is out of place for this fervent

outray to happen in the midst of our mourning for Paris.

There are also those who criticize the attention that social media has given the Paris attack, simply because they feel that changing a profile picture has no effect on the tragedy at all. Critics claim that those who aren't directly affected by Paris would only be trivializing the tragedy by blindly changing their profile pictures on Facebook.

What they fail to realize is that every single person is affected by the tragedy. Our support comes from a place of concern and love, and the fact that we can, as citizens of the world, come together to soothe the pain that the attack has inflicted is something to be proud of.

But the most disturbing reaction to the attack is the rise and openness of Islamophobia. Islam preaches love and unity: "Humanity is but a single brotherhood, so make peace with your brethren" (Quran 49:10). The word "Islam" is even derived from the Arabic word for peace, yet some people fail to realize

that the peace-loving religion of Islam is different from the radicals who claim to follow it. Quite frankly, it is scary to believe that those who are vying for the presidency are spewing prejudice the way they are.

Bill Maher on "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert" remarked, "It would be one thing if the terrorists did not share ideas with lots of mainstream people who follow the Islamic religion, but they do."

Unfortunately, if I said to you, well, if only ISIS believed that anyone who leaves the religion should be killed, well, maybe then we can finally kill all of ISIS. But what if that is 20, 30, 40 percent of all Muslim people in the world? Making blanket statements that group Muslims and radical terrorists together only demonstrates how we are moving backwards. We need to be worrying about those who are frantically calling their own families in places under terrorist attack, wondering if their loved ones made it out alive.

We need to be worrying about how we can stop radical terrorist groups from furthering the devastating consequences of their violence. We should be putting aside our differences. We should be proud to say that we have the compassion to mourn together for our brothers and sisters. ♦

# Chipotle's E. coli outbreak causes unnecessary public panic

By ApoorvKwatra

It has not been the best of times for many students' favorite lunch destination: Chipotle. The faux-Mexican food chain has seen a number of E. coli and salmonella outbreaks in the last couple of months, raising major public health concerns across the nation.

The scandals have caused dozens of locations to close in Oregon and Washington, and as a result, the company's stock has dropped by around 5 percent. Meanwhile, McDonald's, one of Chipotle's prime competitors, recently posted its strongest numbers in two years.

Perhaps scariest of all is that in August, nearly 100 diners and several employees at a Chipotle chain in Oregon

and Washington contracted norovirus, prompting questions about the risk of dining at the beloved restaurant. But are Chipotle's recent outbreaks really something most of us need to worry about?

Definitely not. After all, after over 900 tests on Chipotle equipment in Oregon and Washington restaurants, no E. coli has been found. It appears that Chipotle's outbreak was an unlucky, isolated incident that should not prevent customers in other regions from dining at the restaurant.

In fact, Chipotle is so sure that its customers should not fear the E. coli incident that they have stated that they will likely be reopening their currently closed restaurants in the near future. A restaur-

ant chain as prosperous and successful as Chipotle would never risk having its customers get E. coli. As far as Chipotle is concerned, the coast is clear to eat its food. While eating at Chipotle should not raise concerns, the company's misleading branding might. The incidents have raised some larger underlying questions about Chipotle's practices.

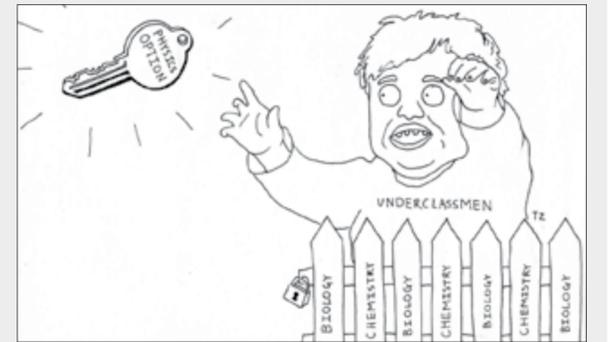
What makes this series of food contamination outbreaks so ironic for Chipotle is that the company markets itself as a quick-service restaurant that, unlike other fast-food joints, serves clean, healthy food. On Oct. 15, Chipotle even tweeted the statement, "Instead of using real corn, typical fast food serves up Maltodextrin. Who's down for some Maltodextrin on the cob?" implying that

Chipotle wrongfully places itself on a pedestal as the ultimate provider of clean food.

Additionally, Chipotle's aggressive attempts to package itself as a restaurant completely free of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are misleading for the unsuspecting consumer — a recent report by Eater.com shows that meat and dairy served at Chipotle are likely to come from animals given at least some GMO feed. So while Chipotle's E. coli, salmonella and norovirus incidents may be chalked up to a case of bad luck rather than something indicative of larger problems in the chain, Chipotle ought to brand itself more truthfully in order to value its customers' best interests and ensure its future success. ♦

# 'Physics first' worth consideration

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A petition, initiated by parent Felicia Deng on Oct. 28, aims to make regular algebra-based Physics an option for ninth and 10th graders in addition to the Biology and Chemistry courses that are prerequisites for taking some of the other science classes. As of Dec. 3, the petition had 129 signatures and is aiming to gather more than 1,000 signatures.

The petition says students lack opportunities to take physics as underclassmen and are consequently limited in the amount of exposure they can have with the subject by the end of high school.

It has always been strange that at such a STEM-focused school, physics is offered only to juniors and seniors. Students who are especially interested in the sciences often want to take advanced classes in all three of the core sciences: biology, chemistry and physics.

To accomplish this, these students have to double up on science courses in their junior or senior year, combining regular or AP Physics with another AP science. Of course, this course load (especially with the notoriously difficult AP Physics) is too heavy for many students to handle, and they are ultimately unable to complete all the sciences they want and maintain their sanity.

Defenders of the status quo may argue that freshmen and sophomores are not academically equipped to take physics, but that is not the problem. As a prerequisite, Regular Physics currently recommends only a C grade or higher in Algebra 1 and Geometry, courses that have been completed by most students by their freshman or sophomore year. The only thing preventing eager underclassmen from taking Physics is that it requires a student to have taken Chemistry.

Furthermore, the petition simply pushes for the offering of the class for students who are interested. Its purpose is not to force students to take Physics as underclassmen; students who do not yet feel comfortable delving into the subject can opt out of the class according to their own interests.

Saratoga High should learn from the approach of other schools such as Harker, where students are required to take physics freshman year, chemis-

try sophomore year and biology junior year.

The school's "Physics First" educational program allows students to build a better foundation for the difficult but important subject, and by junior and senior year, they can elect to take AP Physics C, the calculus-based physics class necessary for college credit. Currently, SHS only offers Algebra-based AP Physics 1 and 2, which do not qualify for college credit.

The "Physics First" program was started by educators in 1990, and Nobel Prize-winning physicist Leon Lederman, a proponent of the program, estimates that around 2,000 U.S. high schools have embraced some version of the program for their freshmen.

The idea behind "Physics First" is that physics provides a better foundation for chemistry, which in turn provides a better foundation for biology. The American Association of Physics Teachers agreed in 2007 that "mastery of the basic physics concepts of electrostatic and nuclear forces and the concept of energy storage and transfer are crucial to the understanding of chemical structures, atomic bonding,

gas laws and the periodic table of the elements."

Though biology may be viewed as more accessible to freshmen, the school should not shy away from introducing more conceptual, math-based sciences like physics to underclassmen, as the early exposure would undoubtedly help students excel in later coursework.

Another advantage of taking Physics early on is that because the subject emphasizes logic, it helps students conceptualize how the world around them works. It requires less rote memorization than biology and is more focused on real-life applications.

There are no state specifications holding the administration back from instituting such a change. State graduation requirements dictate that students must have 10 credits of a biological science and 10 credits of a physical science.

There is no requirement as to the order in which the classes must be taken. In any case, Biology and Chemistry could remain required classes for freshmen and sophomores, respectively, but Physics should at least be an option to interested students of all grade levels. ♦

## Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

Editors-in-Chief: Gitika Nalwa, Dorrie Tang; Opinion Editor: Fiona Sequeira; Reporters: Caitlin Ju, Trevor Leung

The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 25-5 in support of the editorial.



# Money — perhaps only reason to support Trump

By SayaSivaram

Donald Trump is the most genuine candidate running for president.

Yes, you read that right. Despite his radical statements and sometimes unhinged personality, Trump can truly be considered the most independent candidate in the race.

The reason for this is simple: Being a billionaire, Trump is beholden to nobody but himself. Hillary Clinton must kowtow to various donors that keep the Clinton Foundation afloat, Bernie Sanders has an obligation to the NRA, Marco Rubio belongs to major corporations and almost every single other candidate is controlled by their super PACS (Political Action Committees).

It seems impossible these days to find a candidate whose loyalties truly lie in their own causes, and not in those being pushed on them by others.

The reason for all of this dependence? Simply put, it's because of Citizens United, the 2010 Supreme Court case that determined that independent campaign spending is constitutional,

essentially saying that spending money on political candidates is a form of speech.

Essentially, it all but nullified restrictions on campaign donations, and the ability for outside corporations to sway the platforms of candidates is bolstered more than ever.

Instead of donating straight to cam-

**The implications are clear — the people with money have the ability to control the direction of American politics.**

paigns, people can now to form their own, private groups to campaign for certain candidates.

Of course, these groups are not simply endorsing a certain person for kicks. They are utilizing candidates' need for money to advance their own agendas.

Furthermore, these PACS seem to have almost unlimited resources. During the 2012 elections, Restore Our

Future PAC, a conservative group supporting Mitt Romney, spent over \$12 million on campaign necessities. In fact, over half of Romney's funds came from his super PACS, and not from his campaign's direct fundraising.

The implications are clear — the people with money have the ability to control the direction of American politics. If it seemed as though the middle and lower classes were not getting a say before, Citizens United has guaranteed that the top 1 percent has even more say about important matters such as tax policy and immigration.

Super PACS have effectively corrupted the integrity of elections, as candidates are now at the mercy of the corporations with money, rather than being beholden to the people.

In contrast, Trump has his own fortune and does not need to rely on super PACS for funding.

So while he may be controversial and abrasive, there is no denying that his candidacy is the one most likely to remain free of outside influence in the 2016 presidential race. ♦

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# the great DEBATE

Discussion over whether teachers should let students keep graded tests has intensified. The Falcon asked students, teachers and the principal for their thoughts.

By Eric Sze, Amulya Vadlakonda & Kyle Wang

**Q. For teachers, what is your policy on handing back tests?**

**A. JUDI HEHER (computer science teacher):** My policy is Ms. Troxell's policy, which is that tests and quizzes are not handed back outside of the classroom.

**JENNY GARCIA (science teacher):** I give back tests for students to review as soon as I get them graded. Students usually have some time in class to go over the tests, and they can always come in during tutorial to review their tests in more detail.

**PJ YIM (math teacher):** That depends on the class. This year, I've been giving back quizzes/tests to Trig/PCH classes [for students to keep], but not for BC Calculus.

**Q. Does handing back tests have any value to the student?**

**A. PAUL ROBINSON (principal):** I think the interaction between a teacher and a student over any type of assessment is where the real learning happens. Having opportunities for teachers and students to really talk about the assessments and feedback and so forth is really good learning too.

And those are the more valuable things than just, "Wow, I forgot to do this equation this way." I'm not sure that [looking at a test at home is] where the real value of learning is.

**YIM:** I can speak only for classes I teach. Students have the opportunity to check for understanding via lecture material, assignments and assessments. Even when I didn't give back graded quizzes/tests to take home, students still had the opportunity to go over it during class and during tutorial. So, I don't believe it makes much difference.

Students and parents may feel better, but that doesn't mean that it's actually better. When I compare the years when I handed back the graded assessment to take home vs. not, I don't really see any performance gain. If anything, the years when I did not provide solutions worksheets and homeworks online, the students seemed to do a little better.

**Q. Does handing back tests give future students an unfair advantage?**

**A. GARCIA:** I feel there are very good reasons for not handing back tests for students to take

home. When tests are handed back, then some — but not all — future students have access to those tests. This makes the playing field very uneven for the students who do not have older friends/siblings/Facebook accounts where they can access the old tests.

**HEHER:** In all honesty, where I've taught before, students might look over somebody else's shoulder and copy someone, but they've never cheated by having an old copy of my test, so I've given the free response questions back.

Maybe I've been lucky, but my personal experience is that it doesn't happen in the environment [where] I've been teaching.

**MEGHANA KAZA (11):** But, at least for me, it really helps [to hand back tests], especially in subjects like math, because sometimes my parents help me out. When I say "I made a silly mistake" or "I did this wrong," then they don't really know what's going on. Or for tutors, if they actually see where you went wrong, they say, "Oh, OK this is your weak spot. I can help you."

**Q. Is rewriting tests a viable solution to the aforementioned cheating problem?**

**A. ROBINSON:** I think a lot of our teachers [do rewrite their tests every year. But] sometimes [they cannot rewrite] a particular type of a question. [That question] may change in the rotation of questions, but that's all pretty standard. I can only ask you, "Who shot Lennie in 'Of Mice and Men?'" one way.

**JASON KAO (11):** Teachers don't change their tests, and even if they do, they don't change them drastically, because that just takes a lot of effort and could also change how fair everything is. So, I feel that handing back tests to keep is bad, but students need to see what they did.

**KAI DONEZ (11):** If you rewrite [tests], it removes all risk [of cheating and] allows students to look back if they realize they might have missed something. They can take a look at home.

**HEHER:** [But] tests are really hard to write. To write a free response question that you feel is one that might be found on the AP free response section is really a lot of work, and you really want to get a lot of mileage out of it.

There is some valid concern that if you let it leave the classroom, then it's available to next year's class, and then they start using it as a test preparation tool,

and then you've lost the effectiveness of the actual test-taking event.

**ROBINSON:** Sometimes what saddles the teacher into following a particular formula is when you have a class like AP Bio or AP math or AP whatever that says, "Hey, the AP test is going to test these things."

Our students want to perform well on the test, and we want you to be well prepared for that test, so we have to steer in that direction. That AP test is a real prime focal point. There's no doubt about that.

**GARCIA:** It is extremely difficult to write a good test that truly assesses a student's abilities. It often takes several iterations to get a test "just right." If we return tests to students to take home, we are constantly developing new tests which may or may not correctly gauge a student's learning.

**YIM:** I think teachers should do what is appropriate for their classes. It's not my place to say what other teachers should or shouldn't do. I trust that my colleagues will make the right choice, as I know that they have the best interest of students in mind.

In my own experience, my ability to learn never hinged on whether or not teacher allowed me to take the graded test home or not. I simply made a mental note of any mistakes that I made and addressed it.

As mentioned earlier, some tests are easier to rewrite from year to year. When I was a student, I simply assumed that a teacher had a good reason and went about my business. I simply learned to adapt to each individual teacher or individual situation. C'est la vie.

**Q. One of the main complaints from students is that they do not feel they have sufficient time to go over their tests in class. Do you think handing back tests for students to keep will solve the problem?**

**A. ROBINSON:** My question would be: Do you get more value out of sitting with your tutor to go over something that's already been done — something that's already been taken care of in the past — while you're trying to learn something new? Is that really going to increase your learning of that something new?... I know that we have a number of students who put in a tremendous amount of extra time with professional tutors, and everybody tells me that it helps so much. But I'm not quite sure if it does.

There's been this fear [among teach-

ers] that "Oh my gosh, if I let my test go home, it will get into a tutor's hands and a tutor will make copies of all my tests to everybody else out there, saying, 'Look, this is probably something like the test you're going to get on week 3 of your sophomore year in Trig/Precalc, so be ready for this.'" Is that an unfair advantage or not? There's a lot of questions about that.

**DONEZ:** What you can gain in class with your teacher [after] getting your test back is probably greater [than what you can gain at home]. I've never had that problem in my own experience (of not having enough time to review a test in class), but I can see how it might be a problem [for other students].

**ROBINSON:** More tutorial time is something that both sides, teachers and students would like to see. That's currently being looked at through the school advisory committee as a possibility for the future. But usually, the test is a summative final saying, "Hey, we're finishing this unit. It's now time to show what you really know."

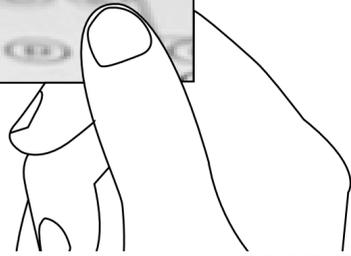
You've had practice questions, practice quizzes; there's all these things leading up to that. Once you get down to the final test, if you still have a lot of questions about that that are really in depth, I'm wondering why you didn't ask those questions earlier.

**KAO:** Teachers need to give enough time in class for students to look at it, but I think that students saying that they don't have enough time to look at it at home is just an excuse. If they have enough time to look at it in class and if they care, they're going to remember what their mistakes are.

And I know most students here are a lot about their test grades so a mistake — big or small — is going to stick with them, and they want to make sure that it won't happen next time. There is really no need to take tests home. Students need to use the time they have in class wisely.

**HEHER:** My goal for everything I do is that you guys get as great an opportunity to learn as you possibly can. I'd never force a student to come to tutorials, whether it's to do test corrections or something like that, but I will encourage people ... "A little extra time in the lab might do you some good." But for me to tell someone how to manage their time?

No way, because if I were queen, everybody would be dropping everything to do AP Computer Science. I recognize that my priorities are different from yours, and I try to find places where we can manage and meld them. ♦



GRAPHIC BY ERIC SZE



*Editor's Note: These questions were gathered and answered to the best of "Sara Toga's" ability. If you would like to submit questions for upcoming issues, visit the Saratoga Falcon: Online Edition on Facebook.*

\*\*\*\*\*

**I need another episode of "Sherlock."**

I need another episode of "Elementary."

\*\*\*\*\*

**I want to be a rapper. Have any tips?**

You're a real professional once you make it to Epic Rap Battles of History.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Any new music suggestions?**

Epic Rap Battles of History.

\*\*\*\*\*

**What's the best way to handle a relationship in which the person you are dating is not going to your school?**

Assuming that this person lives nearby, you should make an effort to meet at least once a week. You could try for a night out of bowling or ice-skating, but it's also fine to do something as simple as a study date, which can keep you from getting overstressed while ensuring that your relationship doesn't fall by the wayside.

The key to your relationship is finding some way to interact each day. Text, call, chat the person — without letting that overrun other aspects of your life. Keep a caring, honest relationship so that you can talk openly if the relationship does start draining too much from you.

\*\*\*\*\*

**I can't stop watching anime, and it has gotten to the point where hot anime guys hold higher priority in my life than school and friends. Should I try to curb my addiction?**

I would tell you to turn off the anime, open your math textbook and start studying.

But if you're watching "Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood," then by all means continue.

\*\*\*\*\*

**What's your best pickup line?**

Are you trash? Because I'd like to take you out.

\*\*\*\*\*

**What is it like to be Sara?**

I sass readers like you and call it advice.

\*\*\*\*\*

# Uncovering hidden treasures

REPORTER TRIES HER HAND AT GEOCACHING IN SARATOGA

cloud princess

Helen Chen

The first time I heard of geocaching was at the end of last year, when seniors Sweeya Raj, Aakash Thumaty and I pulled into the Safeway parking lot after watching a movie.

After parking, Aakash walked over to one of the light posts, lifted the box at its base and showed us a small medicine bottle covered with camouflage duct tape that he had previously found with others.

Inside the bottle was a list of names of people who had found it before and a number of small trinkets that participants could add to or take from if they so chose.

The medicine bottle in the Safeway parking lot is just one of over 1.4 million of geocaches around the world that have been found by over 4 million people since the concept's birth in 2000.

Geocaching is a treasure hunt in which people hide small boxes for others to find, listing a couple of hints and coordinates on website. These clues can then be sent to a phone app to give an approximate location of the treasure.

Participants hide geocaches in public places, but only those who have all the clues on their phone are likely to find them.

After searching the website, the first geocache I went to look for was one

called "Toll Gate," located close to the Starbucks in Downtown Saratoga.

I was unsure of how successful I would be, given the small size of the geocaches, but after deciphering the clue from the sign on the white arch and blindly feeling under one of the chess tables, I found a small, dark green box with magnets attached to the bottom that allowed it to stick to the metal base of the table.

It was surprising to think that around the same time last year, I had sat at that exact table with alumna Eunju Pak sharing cupcakes from Mincakes, completely oblivious to the collection of trinkets right in front of me.

The next geocache that I logged was the one Aakash showed me at Safeway. Though I expected to find it again easily, I actually missed it when I first looked under the light post.

This time, I took one of the guitar picks left by a previous participant and added a puzzle piece that I happened to have in my wallet.

The final geocache I looked for was called "My Name is Stanley." After searching for a few minutes, I found what appeared to be the intended route by Sue's Gallery and Cafe in downtown Saratoga via a sign suggested by a hint



FALCON // HELEN CHEN

One of the geocaches reporter Helen Chen found was "I Light It Up," in the Argonaut Plaza Safeway parking lot.

on the website.

The path led me to a small park-like space close to the creek, but after 20 minutes of walking through dirt, looking under benches and borderline trespassing, all I found were a few orange mushrooms growing in a tree and jar of tea flowers. Though I didn't find the geocache, it was still exciting to find a place I didn't know existed.

Even though it is a little time-consuming, geocaching is rewarding when you are able to find the hidden object.

Though more difficult that I expected it to be, it has made me more cognizant of my surroundings. I've realized that even the most mundane locations that I pass by on a daily basis could hold unexpected surprises, and if I have more time, maybe I'll look for more or even hide my own. ♦

# STYLE FILES — CHRISTMAS SWEATERS



Sydney Vo, 11



Amir Kalantar, 12



Stephanie Hayes, 12

"I got this seater on sale a few days ago at Black Friday. It was discounted a lot and my favorite part is that it lights up with this plug right here!"

"My mom got me this sweater, and I like wearing it during the holiday season. It's a comfy way to spread the holiday joy."

"My parents got this sweater for me last Christmas. We really like the Sharks and go to their games a lot, so it's a nice holiday festive thing that's also hockey related that I can wear to the games."

December 11, 2015

# It's the most wonderful time of the year

## Holiday-free, happy as can be

BY Austin Wang

To sophomore John Noralahi, the significance of winter break has nothing to do with Christmas or New Year's. As a Jehovah's Witness, Noralahi does not celebrate popular holidays such as birthdays, Halloween and Easter that they believe are rooted in pagan traditions.

Noralahi sometimes felt awkward growing up surrounded by holiday situations. In elementary school, his peers excitedly told stories of waking up at the crack of dawn on Christmas day to tear open their presents under the shining Christmas tree, which made him feel as though his parents didn't care enough to buy him gifts. He was also excluded from many holiday-related activities such as Christmas-themed art projects at school.

As he grew older, though, Noralahi came to understand and be comfortable with his own holiday traditions. Noralahi now

realizes that even though his parents may not buy him any gifts on Christmas, they love and care for him.

Even without holiday celebrations, Noralahi's family has its own enjoyable winter traditions.

The family often has reunions at Noralahi's house or a cousin's in Idaho where Noralahi can reconnect with his many cousins in Minnesota and Idaho whom he would otherwise see only once or twice a year.

Although some of his extended family members are not Jehovah's witnesses, they respect Noralahi and his family's religious beliefs.

Instead of having one big Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner, the extended Noralahi family eats home-cooked feasts every day during their reunions.

During winter vacation, the

Noralahi family members also spend time at a beach-side condo in Mexico. Many of Noralahi's fondest memories took place during his winter trips.

"The one time I went swimming with the dolphins was a really extraordinary experience," Noralahi said. "Now I really enjoy going into the water and looking for animals."

Although others may feel that holidays are important in bringing families together, Noralahi believes the large celebrations are unnecessary.

"With holidays, we would get distracted with planning for Thanksgiving and Christmas," Noralahi said. "[Without holidays], it's just our family and us alone, and we have a lot more time to bond, in my opinion." ♦



Sophomore John Noralahi

## I'm dreaming of a Jewish X-mas

BY Sayu Sivaram

If you were to ask junior Zach Grob-Lipkis what his favorite time of year is, his answer would undoubtedly be the holiday season. Grob-Lipkis and his family are Jewish, meaning that his holiday season centers around Hanukkah, the eight-day festival of lights.

"Hanukkah is definitely the best time of the year, especially because of the food and the family time," Grob-Lipkis said.

Along with the traditional lighting of the Menorah on each of the eight nights of Hanukkah, Grob-Lipkis and his family have several different traditions, including playing dreidel — a game centered around a four-sided spinning top.

"I like playing dreidel because it's the only time when my parents will let me gamble," Grob-Lipkis joked. "We don't actually use money, but instead we use chocolate coins, meaning that I'm generally on a sugar-high during the entirety of Hanukkah."

Along with these games, the Grob-Lipkis family has their own tradition of a large, pot-luck style dinner with their closest friends and family.

"The food at these dinners is unreal," Grob-Lipkis said. "My favorite is the challah bread that we get, but everything is just awesome."

For Grob-Lipkis, having the opportunity to spend Hanukkah with the people that he cares about most is one of the main reasons why he appreciates the holiday so much.

"I don't think it matters what holiday you're celebrating. Traditions don't matter and they aren't fun if you don't do them with the people you love," Grob-Lipkis said.

Because Grob-Lipkis and his family have several friends who are Christian, they try to incorporate Christmas into their holiday celebrations. Furthermore, they genuinely enjoy

being able to participate in all parts of the holiday season.

"My family is very pluralistic and we believe in celebrating all cultures, so we like to follow some of the Christmas traditions," Grob-Lipkis said. "We like to get a Christmas tree and then put a Star of David on top of it."

On Christmas Eve, they also have a long-standing tradition of getting take-out Chinese food from their favorite restaurant. The combination of Christmas and Hanukkah has become a norm for Grob-Lipkis, and he believes that the end of the year would not be the same for his family without both celebrations.

"I love Christmas and I love Hanukkah," said Grob-Lipkis. "It doesn't matter to me what religion it's related to, as long as I'm getting presents." ♦



Junior Zach Grob-Lipkis

## Christmas baby embraces double holiday

BY Daphne Liu & Hannah Payne

Sitting down next to a pile of gifts, senior Cole Petters listens to the laughter that fills his house. He begins to tear off the colored wrapping paper that covers boxes marked with his name, and an hour later, they are replaced by unwrapped gifts. But while it is the holiday season, only half of the presents are for Christmas presents; another half are for his birthday.

While many may pity Christmas babies for having their birthday on the biggest holiday of the year, Petters has always loved having his birthday on Christmas, especially since it focuses on two of his favorite things: gifts and family.

The tradition of gift-giving for both Christmas and his

birthday further makes his celebrations more unique, and he doesn't know anyone else who has the same birthday as him. When he was in elementary school, Petters looked forward to receiving twice as many gifts as others did in the space of one day.

Petters recalls many fond memories from his past birthdays, including checking the roof for Santa. One year, Petters received a gift from one of his good friends. He excitedly opened the box and when he looked down, he found himself staring at a lump of coal — a play on his name.

"It was a joke, and I'm a very down-to-earth guy who doesn't get mad at jokes," Petters said. "I thought it was funny."

As he has grown older, Petters has learned to appreciate the dual holiday for reasons other than the plethora of presents, too. Getting to spend time with his family members on such significant holidays has become increasingly important to him, as he practically spends

the whole day with them through a busy yet exhilarating schedule.

"My day consists of me usually going for a run [with my family] at 6 a.m., because I like looking at everyone's lights on Christmas morning while it's still dark," Petters said. "Then, after my run, I watch 'A Christmas Story' every year."

In the evening, around 5 p.m., his cousins and grandmother come over to celebrate his birthday. Although his day is packed with celebrations, Petters can pinpoint one negative part of the day — the lack of time he gets to spend with his friends to celebrate his birthday.

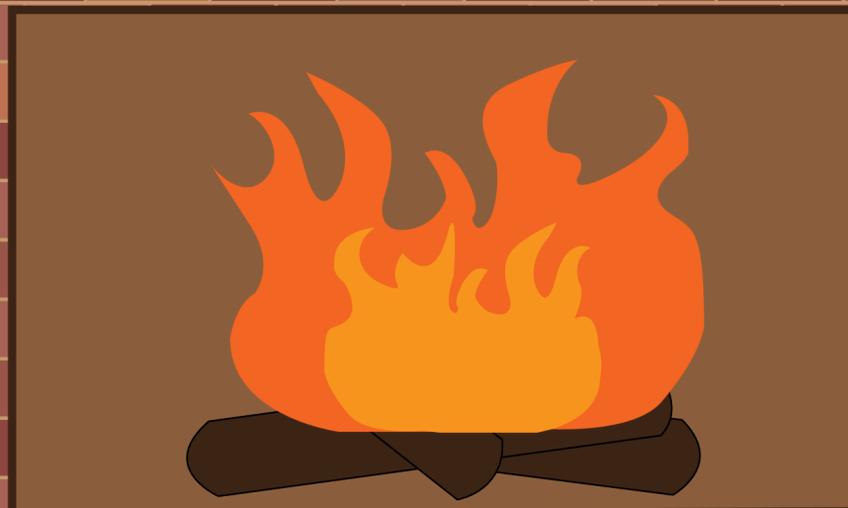
"All my friends go away during the holidays, and Christmas is sort of a 'family' holiday, [so] I have never seen my friends on [my birthday]," said Petters.

Over the years, Petters has learned to view the day as a time to be able to spend valuable time with his family.

"I could be happy without gifts honestly," Petters said. "I just want to spend time with my family, especially because I'll be seeing a lot less of them next year." ♦



Senior Cole Petters



## The perfect gifts for...

### PARENTS

- Head massager because, let's face it, you give your parents plenty of headaches (\$6, Urban Outfitters)
- Scrapbook with pictures of you from sixth to eighth grade, because only they would want to look at those (\$0, 50 free prints at Shutterfly)
- Target or Amazon gift cards, so they can buy more things for you (\$15, \$25, \$50, \$100, found at respective stores)
- A towel to clean up your future messes
- You can borrow it for your tears after college decisions, seniors (personalize the towel at PB Teen for \$17)



### SIBLINGS

- Monoprice Noise Isolating Earphones so that they don't have to listen to your "bad" taste in music (\$9, Amazon)
- "I'm just here to annoy you" T-shirt to remind them that everything they do gets on your nerves (\$17, CafePress)
- The book "The Man Who Didn't Wash His Dishes" by Phyllis Krasilovsky as a slight dig at all those times they did not do their chores (\$12, Amazon)
- A "Bro 2" or "Sis 2" T-shirt — we all know that you're the number one. (\$25, Redbubble)
- A cute Memory Box for the extra-sentimental siblings (\$46, Urban Outfitters)



### RELATIVES

- Who live in California: "Snow In A Can" (\$8, Urban Outfitters)
- Who live overseas and always tell you to bring American brand-name accessories when you visit: Leather Luggage Tag (\$45, Coach)
- Whose name you may or may not have forgotten: A pack of 100 name tags (\$6, OfficeMax)



### FRIENDS

- Who won't text you back because their phone is always dying: Portable Phone Charger (\$24, Urban Outfitters)
- Who love "Star Wars": Chewbacca slippers (\$35, Macy's) or a "Saber Every Drop" mug (\$15, Modcloth)
- Who are the kings or queens of bad puns: a "Peas Pass the Salt Shaker Set" (\$22, Modcloth)
- Who always drop their phone: Candyshell Clear Speck phone case (\$35, Speck)
- Who are always commenting "tfti": "Is Everyone Hanging Out Without Me?" by Mindy Kaling (\$8, Amazon)
- Who are sassy and hate Mondays: "Love You Like a Monday Morning" T-shirt (\$18, Hot Topic)
- Who live for coffee and dogs (if you don't have this friend, then it's probably you): Starpugs Coffee Mug (\$18, Etsy)



— Eleanor Goh and Caitlin Ju

# 'Ronaldo' documentary misses the goal

BY Fiona Sequeira

It is no state secret that I'm a rabid fan of Cristiano Ronaldo, the 30-year-old star forward for Spanish soccer club Real Madrid, the captain of the Portuguese national team and the world's best footballer (sorry, Messi). So when he released his biographical documentary, aptly titled "Ronaldo," I rushed to catch my hero in action, assured the movie would be as stellar as the player himself.

But alas, I was wrong. Even as a die-hard Ronaldo fan, I found his movie to be, at times, a suffocating vanity project, and by the end, I found myself asking the troubling question: Why does this documentary even exist?

Through a series of interviews, "Ronaldo" documents his journey from his childhood to his breakthrough success at Manchester United to his current station at Real Madrid and his immense global fame.

Parts of the film also follow Ronaldo's day-to-day life with his family and friends, including his son Cristiano Jr., his mother, his brother Hugo and his two sisters, Elma and Cátia Lilian.

While the documentary grants unprecedented access into Ronaldo's life, it

lacks any broader context into a story of shape and dynamism.

The film features no input from outside of Ronaldo's circle — no players or managers from Manchester United or Real Madrid to add a different angle or perspective, and as such, the story often falls flat.

In fact, the arc of the story, told over 90 minutes, is overly simplistic, and its overriding thesis threatens to fall into the damning category of cliché: Ronaldo was born into unfortunate circumstances in Madeira, Portugal, he worked hard, he believed in himself and thus he became the best soccer player in the world,



GRAPHIC BY GITIKA NAUVA

revered by millions.

The film is, however, strategically laced with endearing moments, and the intimate details about his family help humanize Ronaldo's rampant egoism.

For example, Ronaldo's father returned from the Portuguese colonial war in Angola a raging, out-of-touch alcoholic who passed away when Ronaldo was just 19.

Ronaldo's agent, Jorge Mendes, is in effect a father figure for Ronaldo, and the film effectively explores their close relationship.

The highlight of the film is the adorable Cristiano Jr., whose mother is not publicly known.

In one scene, he tells Ronaldo, a proud forward, "I'm going to be a goalkeeper, OK Dad?" to which Ronaldo humorously replies, "A goalkeeper, are you joking me?"

Although "Ronaldo" fails as a sports film, it's a fascinating character study into the mindset of a true champion, displaying the fine line that Ronaldo walks between confidence and cockiness.

And while his self-obsessiveness throughout the film may be cloying at times, I can't help but admire Ronaldo and his competitive greatness, his insane confidence and his absolute refusal to be overtaken.

By believing he is the best, by working at all times to be the best and accepting nothing less, Ronaldo has indeed become the best, a perpetual motivation machine whose self-assuredness at his level is not delusion but necessity.

In professional sports, it's hard to get to the top, but it's even harder to stay there, as Ronaldo has, and the film gives viewers valuable insight into his key qualities of incredible intensity, dedication and drive, qualities that one can aspire to at any level.

Say what you will about Ronaldo — he has lovers, he has haters. But for now, this film has only reaffirmed my conviction that Cristiano Ronaldo, while admittedly self-centered, is undoubtedly, the best at what he does. ♦

# WARNING: 'Pride and Prejudice and Zombies' trailer frighteningly funny

BY Caitlin Ju

I was scrolling through my Facebook news feed when I noticed a video by the name of "Pride and Prejudice and Zombies trailer." Intrigued by the title, I tapped on the video, assuming it was click bait.

If the title were real, as I hoped it was, I already had a few questions: Was this video a skit based on Jane Austen's 1813 classic "Pride and Prejudice" starring my favorite YouTubers, or was it a critique of the "zombie-like" monotony of the novel?

And no, I did not know there was an actual book called "Pride and Prejudice and Zombies" by Seth Grahame-Smith, but I will get to that later.

As the video began, I noted the 19th-century English countryside setting and the appearance of familiar "Pride and Prejudice" characters, such as Mr. Bennet, Elizabeth and Jane Bennet. Believing that the video was not an actual trailer, I was immediately impressed by its professionalism and the well-edited shots it featured, but I was also expecting comedic YouTubers like Ryan Higa and Shane Dawson to pop up as the characters. They didn't. In fact, the video seemed fairly ordinary until it revealed a girl with a disfigured right half of her side with blood on her mouth from her prey. It occurred to me then that the "zombies" in the video's title were literal... and scary.

For the duration of the trailer, I slowly convinced myself that I had not misread "Pride and Prejudice." Apparently in "Pride and Prejudice

and Zombies," there is a zombie apocalypse, and Elizabeth Bennet, her four sisters and Mr. Darcy are now all zombie-killing warriors. The actors in the trailer, such as Lily James, whom I recognized from "Cinderella," and Sam Riley from "Maleficent," all seemed legitimate, and I began to believe this trailer was for a real movie. But that did not curb my confusion at how anyone could come up with such an idea — Zombies plus a classic like "Pride and Prejudice"? Considering the zombie blood splatter on the camera and laughably clichéd slides exclaiming "For love" and "For family," I believe my bewilderment was justified.

It turns out to be movie based on a real novel by Seth Grahame-Smith called "Pride and Prejudice and Zombies," a 2009 horror parody of Jane Austen's book. After proceeding to read "Pride and Prejudice and Zombies," I noticed the majority of Austen's wording remained.

Though the zombie aspects of the parody novel seemed forced, I greatly appreciated Smith's portrayal of Elizabeth Bennet as a strong, zombie-killing machine. There are alterations in the book, such as the character Charlotte becoming a zombie and a duel between Elizabeth Bennet and Lady Catherine de Bourgh.

That definitely explained a lot. Now armed with the knowledge of the novel "Pride and Prejudice and Zombies," I am fully prepared to see the entire movie on Feb. 5. In fact, I'm dying to see it. ♦



GRAPHIC BY ERIC SZÉ



time.com

Donald Trump (center) stands between Taran Killam (left) and Darrell Hammond (right).

# The verdict on The Donald's SNL episode: 'low energy'

BY Katherine Sun

Donald Trump stood in the Oval Office in 2018, basking in the successes he'd already reaped as president. He listened while his aides informed him that ISIS had been eliminated, Mexico had paid for a giant wall and Russian leader Vladimir Putin had cried for hours after speaking with him.

Sound like promising satire? This sketch could have been, but the rest of Saturday Night Live's Nov. 7 showing fell far short of the program's usual high standards. Hosted by Trump, the SNL episode can only be described as awkward. As per the tradition for guest hosts, Trump kicked off his appearance with a "monologue" — the definition used loosely because a Trump look-alike joined him on either side.

The Trumps stayed away from anything of substance and boasted about their "nice guy" attitude and "best monologue in SNL history" instead. By the time they started spouting Trump's catchphrases, like "You're fired!" from the television series "The Apprentice," the monologue was more exaggeration than comedy.

"Seinfeld" sit-com co-creator Larry David, who plays SNL's Bernie Sanders, gave hope for genuine laughter when he shouted "Trump's a racist!" from the wings, as Trump still maintains he is "the least racist person there is." David explained that the organization Depoert Racism had offered \$5,000 to any audience member who spoke the phrase.

Trump smoothly responded, "As a businessman, I can fully respect that," without a moment's hesitation and made it clear that the all too-scripted

scenario had been a setup. Still, David's disruption garnered some of the most laughter all night. The show relied too much on "humorous" criticisms of Trump that were only gentle prods, and nothing more.

A "Live Tweeting" sketch by Trump fell particularly flat. While he fake-tweeted insults toward cast members portraying people at a restaurant, they pretended to break down and lose character on stage. Yet these insults, including "Cecily Strong is not a nice person" and "Kate McKinnon was born stupid," were far less scathing than what Trump has actually tweeted in real life. In two separate tweets, he has called The Huffington Post's co-founder Arianna Huffington "unattractive both inside and out" and "a dog who wrongfully comments on me." On SNL, any laughter Trump managed to elicit from the audience was as empty as the insults he made.

When he actually appeared in sketches, he looked and sounded like a bore, which is ironic considering that he loves to label racial candidate Jeb Bush as "low energy." Each forced joke in the show contrasted with the improvised flair and bluntness Trump has shown on the campaign trail. This lackluster tone is a failure on the writers' part because they could have incorporated humor that worked around any fears of "risqué" scenes, rather than making half-hearted criticisms that drew laughter from few.

By the end of the hour-long episode, each lifeless joke was a painful reminder that yes, this was supposedly a comedy show.

It's clear that any of Trump's future attempts at comedy are best left to his

# PARTY ROCK! Sophomore DJs in free time

BY Nidhi Jain & Daphne Liu

Sophomore Ayush Aggarwal gently presses five notes on his keyboard, the computer recording the seemingly simple notes. Moving on to the drum, he plays a few beats, beats that will be repeating throughout the song he is composing. Overlaying the beats with the keyboard notes, Aggarwal smiles with pride at the rough draft of his new song. Eventually, he may choose to add an existing song to the background, but for now, this is a complete original.

In his free time, Aggarwal can be found creating original tracks with a computer, drum pad, keyboard and '90s speakers that he can later DJ with at local parties. Aggarwal became interested in creating his own music during freshman year, when he wanted to do something else besides schoolwork. Although music originally served the purpose of being a distraction, Aggarwal soon realized that he genuinely enjoys piecing and mixing music together.

"I like how universal music is," Aggarwal said. "There is always a perfect song for any given moment, and I try to create music for moments that I personally enjoy."

To create meaningful music, Aggarwal often jots down ideas for new songs in a notebook. Aggarwal thinks that planning the song is one of the most important stages of creating a mix, so

he constantly scribbles down ideas on a beat pad and then compares the different beats after listening to them.

"From there, it's a matter of choosing the right instruments and fitting it to the mood of the song," Aggarwal said.

Aggarwal said the instruments chosen should reflect the song's theme. For instance, according to Aggarwal, a soft piano could be used to emotionally connect the listener to a sad melody.

"The sounds and instruments are all digital, so the notes that are pressed on the keyboard trigger digital notes on the computer," Aggarwal said. "From that point, the notes can be changed, re-arranged, lengthened and shortened."

More often than not, creating and finalizing a song gives him "a sense of accomplishment." On top of this, Aggarwal said his sudden immersion in music showed him how different moods result in different types of music.

Although his talent for DJing has caught the attention of others by word of mouth, Aggarwal said he doesn't accept money for DJing because he's there to enjoy the experience.

He played his first gig at a party for his family friend who needed a DJ at the last minute. From then on he's had more and more requests come in.

"As I started to play more parties, the people at the parties enjoyed the music so they contacted me," Aggarwal said. "They asked me to play music at their parties and so on."



Courtesy of AYUSH AGGARWAL

Sophomore Ayush Aggarwal remixes a track for an enthusiastic crowd at a local party.

Sophomore Shivaum Kumar, Aggarwal's friend, attributes his success to frequent practice.

"He really enjoys being a DJ, so he spends a lot of his free time working on a mix or asking friends for suggestions about something he's working on," Kumar said.

Aggarwal thinks he's successful because of his past musical experience. Having played the piano since the sixth grade, Aggarwal is well-versed in music theory, which has greatly simplified the process of writing music.

Aggarwal also played in the band his freshman year and said that playing the

trombone helped him explore his hobby and music in general.

"Band showed me that there are different parts to a song that combine to make up a big production," Aggarwal said. "It helped me come up with solid baselines and a fluid melody while keeping the final result in mind."

Aggarwal hopes to pursue his passion for music because it gives him an opportunity to experience something different.

"In the future, I really want music to be an outlet for me where I can get away from [my] normally busy life for an hour or two," Aggarwal said. ♦

# Redditgifts spreads spirit through online Secret Santa

BY Helen Chen

As he walked up to his front door, senior Naveed Riazat, then a junior, was pleasantly surprised by the bulky 3-by-3-foot cardboard box that arrived the week before Christmas last year.

The package had been sent by Riazat's Secret Santa, but unlike typical small-scale, local gift exchanges, Riazat and his Secret Santa from San Francisco were two of 212,463 redditgifts Secret Santa 2014 participants from around the world. The exchange has been hosted every year since 2009 by the popular online forum Reddit, and currently holds the world record as the "Largest online Secret Santa game." The system matches two people who have signed up beforehand, so that participants end up playing Santa for their Santa.

After seeing advertisements on subreddits, or other pages on Reddit, last year, Riazat spontaneously signed

up for the game by filling out a short questionnaire about his interest.

"I'd never done it before and it seemed like it would be fun," Riazat said. "Bill Gates also participates, so I was hoping I'd get lucky."

In addition to Bill Gates, who gives a gift and \$50,000 to a charity of his Santa's choice in his or her name, RadioShack and Snoop Dogg have also participated in past years, giving large electronic devices and personalized songs, respectively. Knowing that the possibility of getting paired with a celebrity was slim to none, Riazat said he had "really low expectations" for his present, especially because some

people have taken advantage of the system and do not send gifts to their Santas.

"You don't want to feel disappointed if you don't get something good," Riazat said, "but at the same time, you also want to give a good present."

For Riazat, finding the perfect gift was a challenge that he enjoyed — something he believes is essential to the entire gift exchange process.

"There's a balance between not wanting to spend that much money on a present for the other person, but also wanting to surprise them," Riazat said. "It's kind of a competition to see who can give the best present."

After looking through his Santa's Instagram page, Riazat discovered that she kept talking about top chef Padma Lakshmi, so he bought her a signed Lakshmi cookbook on eBay.

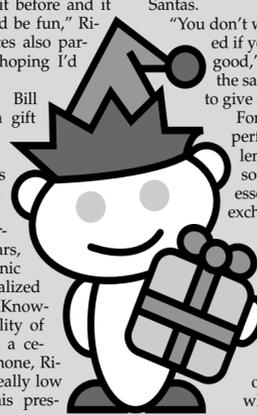
Riazat was happy with the gift he received, especially since he had expected "a small box."

Although he initially didn't want to open the gift until Christmas, Riazat ended up opening the box the day after it arrived, and found records, candy and a winter-themed drink cozy.

"It was thoughtful that my Secret Santa had gone to a used vinyl store and hand picked a few records that matched my music tastes," Riazat said. "I couldn't have asked for anything better."

Because last year went so well, Riazat is excited to participate again this year.

"Ultimately, it's just a fun way to get another present under the tree and get into the festive spirit," Riazat said. ♦



GRAPHIC BY HELEN CHEN

# 'Evanescence' to take stage after its three-year hiatus

BY Eric Sze

Evanescence is a "gothic" rock band that has offered music to those feeling sad or unworthy, with songs characterized by a slow tempo, sad melody and heavy metal influences.

Smash hits like "Bring Me to Life," which has a somewhat spiritual connotation, and "My Immortal," which is about the death of a loved one, brought the band to notoriety in 2003, along with the brilliant voice of lead singer Amy Lee.

To their fans' disappointment, Evanescence hasn't released any new music since 2011. This pause was due to the split of the band among many other conflicts, such as Lee's involvement in a lawsuit in March 2014 against former record label Wind-up Record for over \$1 million in unpaid royalties.

During the hiatus, Lee began to explore film scoring, or composing music for movies, beginning by writing the band Portishead's "It's A Fire."

Then, in April of this year, Evanescence reunited and began performing to the joy of many, including myself.

As an avid fan of Evanescence who bought all three of their albums, I was thrilled after the band announced its plans to go on tour.

Coming back from a long day at school and whipping out a couple of Evanescence recordings while looking at photos from happier times was something that I once cherished.

Adding to my

excitement was that Evanescence was one of the few bands whose live performances could outshine studio recordings. In the past, Lee's soaring vocals and the band's instrumentals made its live performances truly spectacular.

Unfortunately, I soon learned that the Evanescence Tour wouldn't be coming to the Bay Area. The tour began on Nov. 13 at

Nashville and made stops in Dallas and Los Angeles before beginning its journey to Ozzfest in Japan.

However, Lee did mention that the band may go on tour again next year.

Lee also told Rolling Stone that she has been writing solo music and has plans to release this music in the future, which is exciting news given the uncertain plans for Evanescence.

In an era when the charts of the music industry are often topped by artists who can't match their studio recordings live, it's nice to witness the revival of an exceptionally talented, albeit eccentric, band.

Although I may not see them live, I am definitely looking forward to hearing more of the band's undeniably powerful yet melancholy melodies once again. ♦



Courtesy of EVANESCENCE.COM

# tumblr. 'feminism' rears its ugly head

naan and roti

Nidhi Jain and Amulya Vadlakonda

"I still don't understand how people get so offended when a woman says she hates all men. These are the people who actively oppress, murder, rape, abuse and dehumanize us every single day of our lives. Hating men isn't sexism; it's common sense."

This message was posted by user radfemriseup on Tumblr, a social media platform that is quickly being filled with such sentiments. Sadly, they give feminism a bad name.

On Tumblr, when the tag "men are ..." is searched, the suggestions that come up are: "men are gross," "men are pigs," and "men are disgusting." By contrast, when "women are ..." is searched, the suggestions read "women are beautiful," "women are

strong," and "women are not objects." Feminism has to do with equality between the sexes, yet too many people seem unable to grasp that equality doesn't mean increasing respect for women by putting down men.

Indeed, these radical feminists are twisting the definition of feminism so much that women are scared to identify themselves as feminists. According to The Huffington Post, only 20 percent of Americans now identify themselves as feminists. However, when asked if they believe in the "theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes," 82 percent of the survey respondents replied, "Yes."

The sole reasoning behind such a disparity is the fact that the simple word "feminism" brings to mind bitter, belligerent, man-hating women. These days, feminism is often confused with "misandry," the idea of an ingrained prejudice against men.

Because of the new underlying implications of being a feminist, which include being egotistical and man-hating, many

have begun to separate themselves from the movement.

For example, one young woman posted a picture in which she holds

a piece of paper that reads, "I don't need feminism because I believe in equality, not entitlements and supremacy."

But even though women pushing back against a movement that was created to advocate for their rights seems counterintuitive, the pushback against feminism may not be unwarranted. After all, the feminist movement has become perverted by the hypocrisy of radical feminists.

For example, BuzzFeed, which is well-known for supporting gender equality, is criticized for creating a "Dude a Day" Newsletter dedicated solely to sending subscribers a picture of an attractive man every day.

It is illogical to advocate gender equality and condemn those who objectify women while celebrating the objectification of men.

When our society has reached the point where we find logic in disparaging "feminism," a movement that once aimed to ensure equality, we have to realize that the current system is not working.

Radical Tumblr feminists and the backlash against them are detracting from the real meaning of equality for the sexes. Every single time that a radical feminist makes a misandristic comment, more and more people lose faith in the fight against sexism.

So, to radfemriseup and the other misandrist radical feminists out there, hating men is not common sense, nor is



GRAPHIC BY ERIC SZE

it in line with any notion of equality.

Hating men is blatant discrimination and gender prejudice, and it is ignorant to believe that you are fighting against either. ♦



GRAPHIC BY ERIC SZE

## GROOVY!

TEACHERS TAKE ON STUDENT LINGO



MR. DAVIS

Q: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE 'SALTY'?  
A: 'BAD LANGUAGE. VERY, VERY FRISKY.'

Q: WHAT DOES 'TURNT' MEAN?  
A: 'THAT'S BURN'T TOAST. OH DARN, THE TOAST GOT TURN'T'

Q: WHAT IS 'ON FLEEK'?  
A: 'ON FLEEK? THAT'S THE DRUG YOU USE TO STAY UP ALL NIGHT.'



MR. TYLER

Q: WHAT DOES 'BAE' MEAN?  
A: 'I SHOULD KNOW THIS ONE. I THINK IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH BEING BORN ELSEWHERE.'

Q: WHAT IS A 'SQUAD'?  
A: 'YOUR HOMIES?'

Q: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO 'GO HAM'?  
A: 'TO STOP BEING A VEGETARIAN AND TO START EATING MEAT.'

# Why it's totally chill to use words like 'bae' and 'literally'

By TiffanyZheng

As we tumble into 2016, new word memes have exploded across the Internet, sparking a heated debate over the evolution of language.

Some claim that online culture has spawned a new set of vocabulary that is slowly working to devolve the fragile English language.

Others find no fault with the change, recognizing that these words, as ridiculous as they may seem, are a part of the natural evolution of language.

Words like savage, basic and hella (a NorCal specialty) are indeed overused, but they're an emblem of our generation's culture and humor.

The haters of these words are pretty easy to spot.

They often find Taylor Swift and her music to be irritating and basic, they likely deride BuzzFeed listicles daily and probably find themselves believing that they were born in the wrong era. Lighten up, folks. (Some people really have no chill.)

What they don't realize is that Internet slang is fun and loose and the words hold no serious weight.

It's totally casual, makes for a funny Tumblr post and encompasses the hot and cold personality that much of the younger generation exhibits.

These words are indeed slowly redefining English, but why not embrace a little change and diversity?

Take the word "literally," for example. Literally used to mean "exact and in a literal sense," but has been used incorrectly so many times that the Oxford English Dictionary has altered its definition to a term that is used for emphasis.

I'm all for it: Intensify that figurative statement if you need to because

exaggeration is amusing.

The word "bae" holds a particularly close spot to my heart because of its versatility.

Often hated upon by archaic linguists, bae stands for "before anyone else" and is an excellent way of addressing people you like with an ironic nuance.

"Lover" holds too much romantic connotation and "partner" is a creepy, creepy way of describing someone you may only simply like.

"Honey" is probably the closest you can get to bae, but that term is reserved

**Language evolves and maybe it isn't such a bad thing. Internet slang is fun and loose and the words hold no serious weight. It's totally casual.**

for your grandma's vocabulary.

Bae fills the void left open on the market, as it's neither immensely intimate nor asinine.

"Savage" is another term that has been shaped by pop culture's sway.

A few years ago, it was a word that would be repetitively used to describe the boys from William Golding's novel "Lord of the Flies."

Today, however, it's used as a way to appreciate a particularly snappy or witty insult.

Still, certain modern words bring up issues regarding one's authentic self.

Apps such as Instagram, which has over 300 million users, can have a negative online influence on users. The word "goals," for instance, has been thrown around by people envying at-

tractive personalities they observe online.

While seemingly creating a world of praise and self-improvement, "goals" only emphasizes the ill-conceived idea that social media is a realistic place to draw inspiration from.

Rather than worshiping perfect bodies and pretty clothing, the younger generation should be looking to find a stable career and graduating from college as "goals."

Although most Internet word trends are simply humorous and not to be taken seriously, young impressionable people should be aware that social media's obsession with conventional beauty doesn't portray realistic and feasible "goals."

So to the haters: Embrace the generation you live in now, because there will likely be a completely new set of words by the time you're old enough to judge the younger generation for their unconventional speech.

The ever-changing nature of the English language is interesting to trace.

"Groovy" was a trendy term in the '70s, but in "Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery," a film released in the late '90s, "groovy" was laughed at in theaters nationwide. Overused words lose their power as the generation that created it ages.

Language evolves and maybe it isn't such a bad thing.

Internet slang is silly, cute and harmless. It is not a symptom of the "death of language," but rather the birth of something new and probably temporary.

If you hate the trends that much, you can just not use them, but just know that you won't be a bae and you definitely won't be a part of my squad. ♦

December 11, 2015

# << 19 features High heels & haute couture: Junior models

By EleanorGoh & NupurMaheshwari

The harbor wind whipping across her body felt like a thousand needles jabbing harder into her skin with every passing minute. Then 15-year-old junior Anya Herne, freezing and wearing only a bikini, struggled to hold her pose during her first photo shoot in Santa Cruz.

After that experience, Herne, now a model for the local agency HMM Halvorson, realized that modeling was much tougher than it appeared. Yet within the year she began working in the industry, she grew to love "how different it is from everything else" she does.

"I love that you're free — even encouraged — to take risks in modeling," Herne said. "You have to be authentic and sell your own look."

Herne looked into modeling after hearing countless people tell her that she should try it out. She eventually approached HMM. Since she was only 14 at the time, the agency put her in training workshops before the initial shoot.

Apprehensive and unsure of what to do, Herne was surprised to find that it had been a success. She signed a contract naming HMM as her mother agency until the age of 18 and was placed on the website of her agent, Traci Halvorson.

Herne's parents have supported her newfound interest, though they have made it clear that academics always take precedent over modeling.

"I think they've accepted that I really do enjoy modeling," Herne said. "It's a fair bargain that my parents and I have struck when it comes to this activity."



Courtesy of ANYA HERNE

Junior Anya Herne models for a test shoot in downtown Santa Cruz (left) and for PacSun at Spina Farms Pumpkin Patch (middle, right).

The farthest Herne had to travel for a shoot has been Spina Farms Pumpkin Patch. The shoot was for PacSun, one of the more notable companies Herne has worked with, but the photographer made it "such a fun experience that it wasn't stressful in any way."

According to Herne, modeling is not as easy as people may think; it requires quick thinking, a high level of self-confidence and focus, especially in public.

"You have to think of different poses that look good on you on the spot," Herne said. "I'm naturally somewhat

self-conscious, which is a barrier I had to — and am still trying to — overcome."

One of the things that allows Herne to overcome her insecurities is her respect for the people she works with.

"It's a waste of everyone's time if I go up in front of the camera and spend five minutes shying away," said Herne. "The people are on a schedule and I'm on a schedule, so committing 100 percent to the pose produces the best results."

Herne said she wants to continue modeling for as long as she can, hoping to attend college in New York so she can

model part time in school. Though her more ambitious goals include walking the runway for Chanel, Elie Saab and Alexander Wang and shooting a magazine cover for Elle or Vogue, Herne is aware of the commitment it takes to get there.

"I sometimes make the mistake of forgetting about the hard work and pressure involved," she said. "You really have to be something else to make it on that level. [However], if the opportunity for a major fashion campaign comes up for me, I'm definitely for it, and I'll go all the way." ♦



GRAPHIC BY ERIC SZE AND TIFFANY ZHENG

# Defining lines: Sophomore pursues makeup

By MichelleKoo & DaphneLiu

Rushing to junior Julie Cai during tutorial on Oct. 30, sophomore Ania Kranz quickly gathered her makeup to fulfill her friend's request of becoming a comic girl for Halloween, a look involving dark makeup and precise skill.

When she began working on Cai, she laid out her brushes and eyeshadow palettes and began to define lines and dots on her human canvas.

Kranz has become known as a skilled makeup artist, working for drama productions and providing informal help to friends.

She first gained an interest in makeup two years ago when she "decided to start being creative and see what [she] could do." She realized her talent when she participated in the musicals and plays at school. Since actors and actresses had limited time to do their own makeup, they asked her to be their unofficial makeup artist.

After one makeup job was finished, other performers would request that she help



Courtesy of ANIA KRANZ

Sophomore Ania Kranz (left) applies mulberry lipstick for a friend.

darken up their eyebrows or contour the features on their faces.

"Under stage lights, everything has to be darker and more intense than it would be every day," Kranz said.

As others noticed her talent, she soon began receiving requests to do Halloween and prom makeup.

"I think she's very talented. She draws in her spare time and that corresponds to how well she draws on people's faces," Cai said.

Kranz often gains inspiration for her makeup from outside

sources. In doing Cai's look, which relied on outlining facial features and adding harsh lines, Kranz based her designs on comics.

"[While] working with people with different face [types], eye shapes and skin colors, you have to adjust how you approach makeup," Kranz said. "The same technique doesn't work out the same on every person."

Because Kranz's makeup style involves creativity, she gets inspiration and tips from famous YouTuber Samantha Ravndahl, who, like Kranz, got

interested in makeup in high school.

By watching Ravndahl's videos on makeup techniques, Kranz ventured further into the beauty world. She found that makeup had countless aspects and gained more respect for cosmetics as a whole.

"Makeup is an art, and the amount of precision that is required is insane," she said.

By practicing for three to four hours a week on herself, Kranz learned how to perfect difficult techniques. Her hard work paid off when she qualified for the 2015 national competition in stage makeup at the International Thespian Society (ITS) theater conference.

"There were so many people from all over California that had a passion for theater," Kranz said. "I got to see so many amazing artists that liked makeup as much as I did, and it was really inspiring."

After attending the conference, Kranz realized that makeup had become more than a hobby. Although she says that "nobody needs makeup," Kranz thinks it's "great to be able to change someone's face

to fit a time period or style of theater."

Kranz finds that the most rewarding part of the process is to be seeing her friends' reactions to the transformations. One memorable moment occurred during a camp this past summer in France, when she was asked by her roommate to do her makeup for the night.

"When she saw herself in the mirror, she almost started crying and said she had never felt so beautiful," Kranz said. "It's just a really good feeling to be able to make somebody happy and help them feel beautiful."

This experience has inspired her to pursue a career with her talent and study cosmetology in the future. She also hopes to attend some professional classes during high school.

While she continues practicing makeup application and improving her skills, Kranz remembers why she first fell in love with this passion.

"Makeup makes me more confident," Kranz said. "It's like putting on a cute dress — you are still yourself without it, but it makes you feel confident and pretty." ♦

# TOGA THROUGH THE TIMES

GRAPHIC BY ERIC SZE

**Right (1983 Talisman):** Entering his 24th year head coach, Benny Pierce discusses game strategy with quarterback Kyle Druay during the St. Francis game. Falcons finished their season with an impressive third place in CCS.



**Bottom (1982 Talisman):** Fewer students bought school lunches due to the increase in price—from 80 cents to \$1.45. The cut in government subsidies and continuing inflation were credited to the price leap. Cafeteria workers tried to compensate for the price hike by improving the quality of the food served.



## The road well traveled

"I feel like I am in that movie 'Groundhog Day' with Bill Murray, where the alarm just got off. You know — getting in my car, driving across Bear Creek Road, same music is playing. [It's] just my same day — it just starts over."

For 35 years, art and ceramics teacher Leah Aguayo has done just that. As a Boulder Creek resident, she drives across Bear Creek Road, gets to Saratoga and unlocks the door to her beloved ceramics studio each school day.

As the second-longest teaching staff member, Aguayo has seen many changes over the years, each of which has shaped the school into what it is today.

The prevalence of technology has shortened students' attention spans.

Aguayo said that it has become more difficult for students to follow her organic, hands-on approach in ceramics because technology has made everything so instantaneous in their lives.

"Putting a lump of clay or a blank canvas in front of a student and getting the student to be creative and not be afraid to make a decision, whether it be in color or form, is hard right now," Aguayo said.

She has also noticed a change in what students want to do for careers. In the '80s, many wanted to become

doctors or lawyers, whereas now more are pursuing engineering. She said these changes have occurred due to shifts in parents' professions, as many students want to take after their parents.

"[A student's profession] is tied in with their parents' careers and to the times," Aguayo said. "It might be parent pressure of what [they] might become, but I also think it's very hard to know what you want to do when you are 16 or 17."

Yet many of the other influences on students' career choices remain the same. Aguayo recalls that when she ran a support workshop for boys 30 years ago, some of the boys' parents were doctors or dentists, but the boys wanted to become professions like arborists or landscapers.

"Sometimes here in this community it's not acceptable to be a landscaper," she said. "That was an issue 30 years ago, and that's a challenge I still see."

Despite the uncertainties students face in deciding their futures and the demographic changes that have occurred in Saratoga, she believes that students remain much the same.

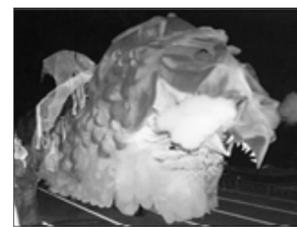
"You guys are still young, beautiful people trying to figure it out," Aguayo said. "As the years pass by, I get new students, and it's awesome. It's a joy to come to work here." ♦



**Aguayo**



**Top (1982 Talisman):** The computer room, open from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., always seemed to be filled. During summer workshop, 25 members of the faculty learned how to operate the new computers and incorporate them into the curriculum. Here a student operates one of the Apple II disc drive units.



**Left (1993 Talisman):** The second place senior float, Puff the Magic Dragon, took the crowd into a world of make believe.

## 95070: Unique tradition

During the '90s, neighboring Bay Area schools contemptuously nicknamed Saratoga "95070," a name reminiscent of the 90210 Beverly Hills zip code that was then notorious for the prosperity and pampering it implied.

Though the 95070 zip code may have sparked resentment from others, the school has long had its distinct culture.

Spanish teacher Arnaldo Rodriguex, who transferred from teaching at Los Gatos High to Saratoga in 1980, recognized even then that the schools "were already different."

He credits much of the school's success to the city residents' affluence and commitment.

"Most parents have an education and have a college degree," Rodriguex said. "It's an expectation of the community that you're going to college."

Back then, the school was already a "place of learning" with dedicated teachers. The stress for students to do well stemmed from the school's strong academics and demanding atmosphere.

"That tradition of rigor has always been there," Rodriguex said. "You put your heart in what you were doing."

A higher expectation for academic excellence eventually led to Saratoga High's unique dynamic of students

and spirit. By the 1980s, rallies were crowded, and Friday-night football games, despite being played on the Los Gatos field, were packed as overall spirit boomed.

As the adviser for the Class of '92, Rodriguex urged the class to participate events and even claimed that the students then had "hella spirit."

He noticed a decline in spirit beginning in the mid 1990s, when many became focused more on academics.

Even as the school has provided top classrooms and an overall positive environment, he has also seen times when problems like drug use became issues.

In particular, Rodriguex pointed to the 1980s as a time when drug abuse hurt stu-



**Rodriguex**

dents.

He said that the school hired two undercover narcotic agents posed as students, who investigated the school for a semester in the late 1980s. Then, Rodriguex recalled, a deputy handcuffed a certain student and arrested another 32 students for possession of drugs.

Having been through the continual "cycle" of good and bad, Rodriguex has still learned to love Saratoga High.

"It's so rich [in] learning, so rich in achievement [and] so rich in accomplishment," Rodriguex said. "I love what I do." ♦

## '71 grad now back in red

As a former basketball player himself, Class of 1971 alumnus Brian Moran, who now works as the plant manager overseeing construction and maintenance at the school, witnessed high-spirited basketball games.

Moran recalls that the gym was "crazy loud" and "packed wall to wall with people" during games.

While the basketball team performed well, the football team dominated even more. From 1959 to 1994, under the guidance of legendary coach Benny Pierce (after whom the football field is named), the team won three CCS championships in 1973, 1976 and 1987.

"[Pierce] was recruited by some of the pro teams," Moran said. "The 49ers were interested, and San Jose State and a lot of colleges were interested, but he loved Saratoga High School. He didn't want to take any other job. He was very happy here."

Besides the crowded gyms, Moran recalls other memories from his

time in school. He said that the Class of 1971 had perhaps 430 students. At the time, between 1,700 to 1,800 filled the campus compared to today's 1,300.

During Moran's early years, male students could not grow their hair long because of the dress code. Once that code eased around 1970, however, many boys donned shoulder-length hair, "a big fashion trend" at the time.

Prior to Silicon Valley's technological boom, the school possessed one computer in the early '70s that the math department tinkered with.

Moran joined the tech industry following graduation, then transitioned to working at the district office.

He remained there for nearly four years before taking a job at SHS in 2007.

"I was on the search, thinking I'd go work for a school," Moran said. "I was a kid walking around here in 1969, and to be back at my age is kind of cool, really." ♦



**Moran**



**Top (1963 Talisman):** Seniors enter smoking lounge.



**Right (1982 Talisman):** Terry Brooks shoots a roll of Tri-X for The Talisman.



**Top (1993 Talisman):** Jenny Tam, sophomore, prepares to hit the water as cleanly as possible. Entering the water correctly was a key factor in a good dive.

## A four-Falcon family

Class of 1988 alumnus Rajeev Gupta remembers challenging a fellow student, Carrie Steineseifer, to a friendly 4 by 100 freestyle swimming race one day. He started with a two and half lap head start and finished breathless, not seeing her and thinking he had won.

Then he looked up. She was already out of the pool, standing over him.

As a high school student, Steineseifer won gold medals in the 1984 Olympics and the 1985 Pan Pacific Games. Looking back at his challenge, Gupta wondered: "What was I thinking?"

Gupta's four years at SHS were filled with memorable experiences. During one Homecoming at Los Gatos High School's track, his class made a float in tribute to the Challenger space shuttle, which had exploded midair in 1986, killing all aboard. The students were surprised to see when a full U.S. military color guard stood at the turn of track's oval

and saluted the float as it passed by.

What has changed significantly at SHS, according to Gupta, is the racial composition of the students. At the time, the school was almost all white and had yet to go through the immigration wave that brought families from other countries to the area.

"When I was there you could count on one hand the amount of kids in each class considered traditionally non-Caucasian," Gupta said.

As an Indian American, Gupta often felt excluded from "just about every social clique." The experience contributed to his outgoing personality.

The bonds Gupta has formed have lasted a lifetime. He sends two children, senior Shazia Gupta and sophomore Maya Gupta, to SHS today.

"Saratoga has been my family home for almost 40 years," Gupta said. "When all is said and done, we will be a two-generation, four-Falcon family." ♦



**Gupta**

**1959** SHS opens with freshmen and sophomores only.

**1964** Steven Spielberg attends SHS.

**1978** There are 502 juniors, the biggest class to date.

**1994** Legendary football coach Benny Pierce retires.

**1998** Voters pass Measure B bond, which includes construction of SHS library and science wing.

**2005** Night football held on Benny Pierce Field for first time.

**2005** The McAfee Center is finished.

**2012** Marching band performs in the 86th Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

**2012** After 36 years at SHS, assistant principal Karen Hyde retires.

**2015** Campus modernization begins with Measure E bond.

SIEMENS >>

continued from pg. 1

project and Veerapaneni used the machine learning results for the actual computer vision algorithm.

"Outlining cancerous lesions in medical images is an important step toward the diagnosis and treatment of cancers," Veerapaneni said.

To overcome this difficulty, Veerapaneni and his partner used level-set, a method widely used for lesion outlining, or segmentation.

Level-set begins with an initial circular outline, which is then modified to contour the edges of the actual lesion.

Veerapaneni and Subramanian worked on improving the level-set process, which is hindered by problems such as noisy images, to control the expansion and contraction of the outline.

"We trained a convolutional neural network (CNN) to predict whether the location of the contour was inside, near the boundary or outside the lesion," Veerapaneni said.

The team's new method, called AdaptSet, proved far more accurate and

consistent than level-set.

Veerapaneni tested AdaptSet on an MRI image dataset of liver lesions, and found that his method was better able to deal with inaccurate initial contours, noisy images and low-contrast lesions.

Throughout the summer, Veerapaneni and Subramanian spent five days per week for about 11 weeks at Rubin's lab from about 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. with an hour-long break for lunch, perfecting their algorithm.

At the beginning of the internship, Veerapaneni read instructional papers on the lab's research that established the expected research standard and gave him a general picture of the problem he was trying to solve.

From there, he and his partner embarked on its long research process.

A typical day included trying out different ideas on the algorithm, a painstaking process of trial and error.

"My daily routine was writing the code, testing the code and thinking of a new idea or a new improvement to try out," Veerapaneni said.

For one hour on Thursdays, the team had meet-

ings in which postdoctoral students presented the different projects they were working on. To balance the demanding research work with some leisure time, Veerapaneni joined Stanford's juggling group, which met every Friday over the summer at 5 p.m.

"I like juggling because when I'm juggling I can't really think of anything else," Veerapaneni said.

Throughout this school year, Veerapaneni has shown his project to math and computer science teacher Debra Troxell on multiple occasions to keep her updated on his progress.

Troxell is impressed with Veerapaneni's research and its implications in the medical field.

"[He] has always been a highly motivated young man with the initiative to take his educational interests to the next level and change the world," Troxell said.

"The internship opened my eyes to the different applications of CS," Veerapaneni said.

At the end of the internship in August, Veerapaneni and Subramanian decided to apply to Siemens. They finished the majority of their research work prior to the start of school.

According to Veerapaneni, the Siemens application does not require personal essays or teacher recommendation letters, as other prestigious competitions such as Intel Science Talent Search (STS) do.

"At first, writing 18 pages seemed kind of daunting," Veerapaneni said.

Although Veerapaneni did not advance to the Siemens competition finalist round, he felt that his summer internship was an invaluable experience, and that his research was able to help Rubin, the university and the entire scientific community.

In college, Veerapaneni hopes to pursue a computer science or electrical engineering major where he may apply his skills in meaningful ways.

"The internship opened my eyes to the different applications of CS," Veerapaneni said.



Rishi Veerapaneni

Signed, sealed, delivered: Writing rec letters

by Daphne Liu, Olivia Lu & Melissa Wagner

'Tis the season of anxious seniors, frantic parents and scrambling staff. Seniors clack away at their keyboards, parents pester their children about upcoming deadlines and staff members carry out their lesson plans as the thought of colleges gnaws at them.

In short, 'tis the season of college apps, and as application deadlines approach, teachers and counselors are putting the finishing touches on a key part of the application process: letters of recommendation.

work," Anzalone said. "That way, I can focus solely on writing the best letters that I can."

Some teachers come in during the summer to start writing letters. Because this is often for pay and allows teachers to dedicate free time to letter writing, it benefits them.

To accommodate the increasing number of letter requests, many teachers have required students to fill out questionnaires before requesting. Those who receive more requests than they

According to Allen, such restrictions on supplemental letters are in place to help students' applications suit the needs of universities themselves.

"Universities usually like to see letters from academic teachers rather than elective teachers," Allen said.

The value of the letter As the college application process looms in students' minds, the value of rec letters cannot be neglected.

Teachers use students' responses to the questionnaires to characterize their strengths and personal evolution in their letters.

"It's helpful when students give you supplemental information," Anzalone said.

Because each student has different skills both in and out of class, teachers try to highlight traits that make students stand out.

"A grade doesn't always capture the entirety of a student," Keys said.

Can write for resort to a lottery system, where they randomly choose a number of students to write letters for.

look at the recommendation letter as a [chance] to talk about students' curiosity or creativity.

teacher Amy Keys



University demands

Students begin the application process as early as spring of junior year by submitting rec letter requests to teachers.

To do this, students must first find the recommendations required by the schools on their application list.

This varies from school to school; many private schools ask for three letters — two teacher recommendations and an administrative report — while public schools such as most UCs and CSUs often do not require rec letters.

The upward trend

Although teachers cannot write an unlimited number of recs, their letters are needed by many. Out of the 331 students in this year's senior class, a whopping 83 percent applied to at least one private school, and 67 percent applied for an early deadline.

More applications means a higher demand for letters of recommendation, creating a greater burden on those involved: teachers, administrators and staff members. For example, AP US History teacher Kim Anzalone is writing around 64 recommendation letters for seniors.

"Sometimes, to focus on the quality of the letter, I will take time off from

can write for resort to a lottery system, where they randomly choose a number of students to write letters for.

Guidance counselor Eileen Allen said this system is "really fair" to both parties.

"It isn't part of the teacher's job description to write letters," Allen said.

Seniors must turn in designated packets, which include green sheets, a parent letter to the counselors and letters written by the student to the counselor, to help the counselors write their letter.

This year, the guidance department has placed limits on third supplemental letters. For example, only students majoring in English or for a journalism program are allowed to request for a letter from journalism adviser Mike Tyler.

As a result, a few students were denied a supplemental letter despite their involvement in extracurriculars.

Senior Kelly Xiao is one example; because she is not applying to a journalism program and was already receiving a green sheet from Tyler, she was unable to request a supplemental letter from him.



FALCON // ERIC SZE

AP US History teacher Kim Anzalone types away at her laptop as she completes letters of recommendation for students.

osity or creativity."

Universities often use the letters to look beyond simply the student's GPA.

According to Allen, schools like the University of Chicago place a great emphasis on students' "vibrance" and participation in class.

"[Writing rec letters is rewarding because] you look back at a student's work and reflect on their growth and remember how they learned," Keys said.

To be completely honest, I'm lazy. It's pretty hard to get me outside in California weather, so you imagine my reluctance when time outside involves a strenuous physical activity like skiing.

Fortunately, to lessen the pain, the geniuses who invented skiing equipped skiers with lightweight poles for flats and difficult situations, making my skiing trips something I actually look forward to.

When removing ski blades, skiers simply push the pole tip into the heel lever that makes the boot come out of the blade. In contrast, snowboarders are forced to either bend forward, potentially falling in the process, or find a place to sit down, usually in the stinging snow, to remove the complicated web of straps and clips. Yes, another oppor-

unity to fall is exactly what I needed. Thank you so very much, snowboard inventor. You know me and my clumsy self so well.

The No. 1 reason that people choose snowboarding over skiing is for the supposed thrill. Skiing tends to be incorrectly labeled as a tame or even outright boring sport, while snowboarding is often believed to maximize adrenaline out in the slopes.

sports saratogafalcon.org/sports

Warriors display unparalleled greatness

BY Apoorv Kwatra

Stephen Curry dribbles up the court and pulls up for a 3-pointer from over 5 feet behind the right side of the 3-point line. But wait, the defender, the Timberwolves' Andre Miller, slaps the ball out of his hands while he is shooting. No worries, Curry just grabs the ball while it is in midair and makes the shot anyway.

The 2015 NBA champs seem to have reached an unprecedented level of dominance over the rest of the league this season. Starting with a 22-0 record as of Dec. 7, the Warriors are off to the best start in history.

Since they have beaten every opponent they have faced, an end to this greatness does not seem near. The Warriors will keep going until someone stops them, and it does not seem like anyone can.

The reigning MVP, point guard Stephen Curry, is playing at a never-before-seen level, overpowering defenders with his dribble moves and much improved shooting. Yes, much improved shooting. Just when we thought it was impossible for Curry to become a better shooter, he proved us wrong.

He is averaging over 32 points per

game on over 50 percent shooting on field goals and over 45 percent shooting on 3-pointers, compared to 23.8 points per game on 48.7 percent on field goals and 44.3 percent on 3-pointers last season.

Usually, a team features an undeniable star like LeBron James, and he tends to carry the team and pick up the slack for other teammates throughout the game. Not so with Golden State. Every single player contributes when he steps on the court. With arguably the most talented starting five in the league, the Warriors also have a productive and efficient bench to choose from during games.

Rounding out the starting five is shooting guard Klay Thompson, small forward Draymond Green, power forward Harrison Barnes and center Andrew Bogut. Each player is contributing more than his share. Even Thompson, who did not have a strong start to the season, is starting to look like his former self again, knocking down jumper after jumper as the games go on.

The team is filled with many

stars: Thompson has been finding his shooting stroke again, Green and Barnes have been ferociously attacking the basket on offense and providing lockdown defense, Bogut has been protecting the rim and cleaning up the boards and Iguodala has been key in assists throughout the games.

The Dubs combine their elite defense and unbelievable offense to achieve a

record best +14.9 scoring margin, which would be the all-time NBA record if they kept it up for the entire basketball season.

At this point, it's hard to comprehend how good Golden State is. They are on pace to shatter several NBA records that many people thought would never be touched.

Personally, I know I will never be able to understand how the Warriors are so good, so I might as well enjoy it while it lasts. Who knows this streak of games may just last for a long time?.

Who knows how far the Warriors can take this amazing start of a season? Will they beat the 1995-96 Chicago Bulls' NBA record for most season wins when they went 72-10? Will they go undefeated? Only time will tell if these events will occur in this year's season. But so far, it seems like shooting guard Leandro Barbosa may be correct when he said earlier: "We gonna be championship." ♦



GRAPHIC BY GITIKA NALWA

I'm snow board of all these snowboarders

BY Tiffany Zheng

Life is a collection of firsts: having a first loose tooth, a first time going to Disneyland and getting a first car. As the weather gets frosty, I am inadvertently reminded of my first time snowboarding at age seven — a perilous acceleration toward the edge of a steep drop, a mouthful of dirt-saturated snow and a handful of bruises — a very unfortunate one indeed.

My issue with snowboarding isn't simply a result of my physical incompetence. My common sense rejects the concept of snowboarding. It is simply against the most basic human instinct to strap both feet to the plastic death trap that is called a snowboard, an act that dramatically reduces physical capabilities in a potentially dangerous and icy situation.

According to the American Journal of Sports Medicine, "injury rates in snowboarders have fluctuated over time but currently remain higher than in skiers." Humans are usually blessed with two legs, so we should use them. And that is why I like skiing: It doesn't present any of the troubles associated with snowboarding.

To be completely honest, I'm lazy. It's pretty hard to get me outside in California weather, so you imagine my reluctance when time outside involves a strenuous physical activity like skiing.

Fortunately, to lessen the pain, the geniuses who invented skiing equipped skiers with lightweight poles for flats and difficult situations, making my skiing trips something I actually look forward to.

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Get on board for a blast

BY Stephen Ding

Snowboarding down a hill littered with inches of soft powdery snow, I quickly moved my body aside, barely avoiding a speeding skier dressed in a murky green jacket.

I watched with wide eyes as he sped down the hill, occasionally performing fancy tricks on his way down. Just as he reached the bottom, though, his skis got caught in soft snow and his legs twisted and tangled together.

I watched from far away, seeing the painful expression on the skier's face. At that moment, I told myself I would never switch back to skiing.

This was five years ago — five years since I discovered the joy of snowboarding.

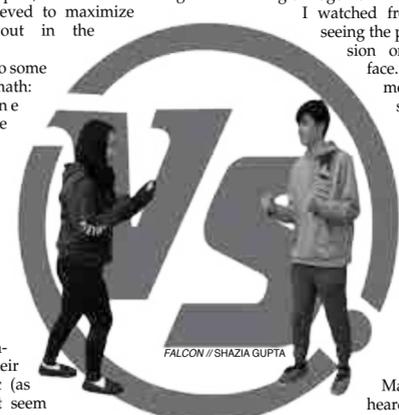
There are many issues that come along with skiing, but the worst thing I've ever experienced was attempting to get off a ski lift along with another three to five people. Without knowing which way the others will go, getting my skis tangled with another person was not uncommon for me. You can really feel the slow embrace of death when you are frantically trying to untangle your skis from the other person while the lift approaches you.

Furthermore, falling on a snowboard also seems much safer than falling on a pair of skis. While riding skis, it is possible for a person to get his/her legs tangled up with the long skis while falling on a snowboard will be face first or backwards. MPORA also states that skiing accidents can result in at least 33 percent more deaths than snowboarding accidents.

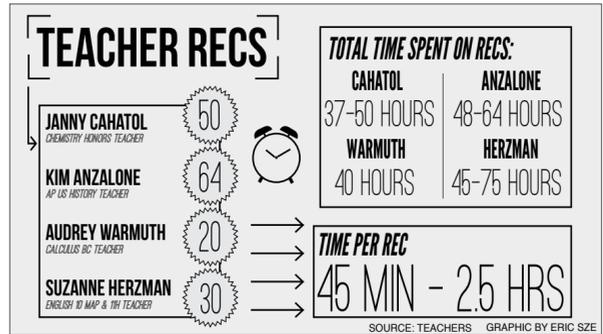
Even snowboarding skills have better sounding names than skiing moves. A stop for skiing is called a pizza or chopsticks while a stop for snowboarding is called a falling leaf.

"Boarding" might sound like "boring," but I assure you, it's far from it. ♦

While skiers need poles like an old man needs a cane, snowboarders do



FALCON // SHAZIA GUPTA



SOURCE: TEACHERS GRAPHIC BY ERIC SZE

## GIRLS' TENNIS

## Menlo edges Falcons at NorCal tourney

By Caitlin Ju

The girls' tennis team had defied all odds to place second at Central Coast Section (CCS) playoffs and reached the Northern California Regional Championship on Nov. 20 as the No. 3 seed.

It continued to amaze when it beat the No. 2 seed, North Coast Section (NCS) champion Monte Vista from Danville in the semifinals 4-3. After a 5-2 loss to Menlo in the finals, the girls placed second overall in the NorCal tournament—a huge accomplishment for a team that struggled at times early in the season against top teams.

Coming into the tournament, the Falcons were certainly the underdogs, having lost four top-level players to outside-of-school tennis teams as the season started and not having reached the NorCal tournament in four years. The girls were also riding a high after their 4-3 win against Los Gatos in the CCS semifinals, which they had thought might be their last match.

Their win against Los Gatos also indicated they would have a strong showing at the NorCal tournament. In the past 10 years, the two teams in the NorCal finals have always been CCS teams. The NorCal Championship includes the winners and sometimes finalists of NCS, the Sac-

Joaquin Section, San Francisco Section, Oakland Section and Northern Section.

The Falcons demonstrated the power of CCS with a 5-2 win against No. 6 seeded Oak Ridge in the second round of the NorCal tournament. Since they were ranked No. 3 in the tournament, the Falcons enjoyed a first-round bye.

Junior doubles player Danielle Berkowitz-Sklar noted that they were careful not to underestimate the teams there, especially because of their experience at the Golden State Classic at Stanford, their first tournament of the season.

"In the Stanford tournament, we were overconfident and lost badly in the first round," Danielle said. "When we played Oak Ridge, we took it game by game and did not focus too much on the reputation of the team we were playing."

The match against Monte Vista was much closer, with wins from junior No. 4 singles player Neeka Nikfar and seniors No. 3 doubles players Allison Lin and Meera Rachamalla. It came down to junior No. 2 singles player Caitlin Ju and No. 1 doubles pair Danielle and junior Shireen Haghshenas, all of whom went into the third set. Ju won 6-4, 1-6, 6-0, and Berkowitz-Sklar and Haghshenas won 6-4, 6-7, 6-2, securing the Falcons' entrance into the NorCal finals, the team's main goal all along.



Junior Neeka Nikfar swings at the ball in a CCS game against Homestead on Oct. 27.

Haghshenas attributed the team's success to its strong doubles pairings and supportive atmosphere.

"Every time a team member finished her match, whether she won or lost, she would immediately cheer on everyone else," Haghshenas said. "We all became so close this season and always did what was best for the team, even if it meant switching partners or playing at a different number on the lineup."

The girls were unable to defeat Menlo in the finals with only juniors Danielle

and Daviana Berkowitz-Sklar at No. 2 doubles winning 6-7, 6-2, 10-5 and Lin and Rachamalla at No. 3 doubles winning 7-6, 4-6, 10-7.

Nevertheless, senior co-captain Shaya Nikfar said finishing in second place at the NorCal tournament was a great way to end their season.

"This was the furthest we have come in four years, and it was best last season I could hope for," Nikfar said. "I cannot be [prouder] of this team that has become my family." ♦

## WRESTLING

## Junior girl competes, triumphs in male-dominated sport

By Aditya Chaudhry

Going into high school, junior Gina Drapal knew she wanted to join the wrestling team. Even if it meant being the only female on a small team, she wanted to participate.

Drapal's journey into wrestling began before she even knew of the sport.

Before she lived in California, Drapal was raised in Oklahoma. There she was introduced to martial arts.

Upon moving to California in sixth grade, however, her love for martial arts slowly dissolved.

"It was stressful moving to California," Drapal said. "Getting used to the new people was challenging and took me away from my favorite pastime."

But during her second month of P.E. in seventh grade at Hyde Middle School in Cupertino, the void in her life was filled. She was introduced to wrestling during a unit, enjoyed it and decided to join the actual team.

Competing at the JV level, Drapal was facing some of the best seventh-grade boys in the league.

In one match, she was down in the third and final round. But Drapal refused to give up.

"The guy was pinning me, and I had

a couple seconds left in the match," Drapal said. "I managed to flip him over and get a pin right before the buzzer for time went off, so I won the match."

When Drapal entered high school, she joined the wrestling team, hoping to share this same joy that she felt throughout middle school.

That happiness was short-lived, however, when the practices started to take a toll and become more intense. With more time commitment needed to do wrestling in high school compared to middle school, Drapal's parents were against her continuing the sport. This led her to stop wrestling early in her freshman season, but with pleading and convincing, she has managed to wrestle for both her sophomore and junior year.

Last year, Drapal was put in a situation of becoming familiar with those around her.

"At first it was weird for the team to see a girl, but over time they came to make me feel like one of the guys," Drapal said.

As a member of the team, Drapal has placed a large amount of time and emphasis on her physical training for the sport.

During the season, the team meets every day of the week except for Sunday, and weekday practices are from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. During this time, team members typically run at least a mile and then do a couple of sets of 100-meter dashes.

They then go to the wrestling room and complete their warm-ups, which include push-ups, sit-ups and other exercises such as carrying their wrestling partners around. After that, team mem-

bers are split into groups of three and they wrestle live, switching out every time someone gets a pin.

Last season, Drapal faced a strange predicament when it came to finding her weight class.

"It was a funny story really," Drapal said. "I started the year wrestling in the 120 pound weight class, but I managed to drop 7 pounds in the middle of the season and made it into the 115 pound category for the second half."

Regardless of her weight class, all her opponents have one similarity. They are all male. Having competed in only one female wrestling tournament, Drapal has preferred to wrestle with the guys and try to push herself.

"It is really funny to see their reaction sometimes," Drapal said. "They see their competitors beforehand by last name and are expecting a guy."

Although she likes to choose wrestling with the guys, she has to compete against other girls in the league. Upon making it into CCS the girls and guys are split into their respective categories and compete for titles in that fashion.

"I really want to place in the top three in CCS for girls in CCS, because it proves that all my hard work has been worthwhile," Drapal said. ♦

They see their competitors beforehand by last name and are expecting a guy.



junior Gina Drapal

## BOYS' BASKETBALL

## Senior big man looks to lead team to victories by example

By Aporov Kwatra &amp; Arjun Ramanathan

Senior power forward Jatin Mohanty can be tough for opponents to guard. At 6-3 and 205 pounds, he fulfills his role on the team, grabbing rebounds on both ends of the court, dominating defenders in the post and being a defensive anchor.

Since last season, Mohanty has been working on the team's plays and conditioning, transforming himself from a solid starter to the star of the team.

"We still have a lot of work to do to become more of a team, but I know we can," Mohanty said. "We just have to have a team-first mentality, and on the defensive end, we need to talk more and

be more in sync."

The team will start its league season Jan. 8 at Mountain View.

"This team definitely has the talent to beat Mountain View," Mohanty said. "The way we are playing right now, I am very confident in starting our season off with a win."

He believes this year's team has even more potential than the talented team from last year, which nearly placed first in the El Camino League after finishing 10-2 and went on to CCS. Despite losing stars such as 2015 graduate point guard Michael Cole, Mohanty has full faith in this



Mohanty

## BOYS' SOCCER

## Senior captain leads younger players

By Michelle Lee &amp; Anant Rajeev

The boys' soccer season is under way, and the team is being revamped with several younger players after the loss of key seniors from last year such as center defender Cian Costello, midfielder Kushol Bhattacharjee and forward Samuel Breck. In turn, this year's seniors are assuming new leadership positions.

On Dec. 1, the Falcons came from two goals down to tie the Los Gatos Wildcats 3-3, and the next day, the Falcons recovered from a 2-1 deficit to win 4-2 against the Gunderson Grizzlies.

If the Falcons are going to keep winning, they are counting on seniors like midfielder Connor Buss.

Buss was a big part of the team his junior year, playing almost the full length of every game and being a key component of the midfield. Because of his importance to the team, he was named co-captain along with senior defender Romteen Masoumi and junior forward Kevin Yu by coach Chris Stott.

Buss played for the Cupertino-based soccer club De Anza Force from 2005 until 2009, when he switched to Pacific

Soccer Academy, a club in Los Gatos, for which he played until 2011.

But there were challenges. In Buss' freshman year, he suffered a concussion after taking a shot to the side of his head from point blank. He received Post Concussion Syndrome for six months and wasn't cleared to play soccer again until junior year.

When Buss rejoined the team last year, it didn't go as well as the team had hoped and the team finished fourth place in the league. But though the team suffered tough losses last year, it did experience some incredible moments.

In fact, one of Buss' cherished wins was from last season. He really wanted the outgoing seniors to have a memorable senior game and with the score tied at 0-0 against the Lynbrook Vikings, Costello scored the winning goal in the final three minutes.

"It was [so] memorable because we had been fighting the whole game and we had chance after chance to score, but could never finish, and eventually he scored the game-winning goal, and the whole team was ecstatic," Buss said.

This season, Buss is looking forward to instilling even more pride in Saratoga



Senior Connor Buss (right) tackles a rival player in a game against Los Gatos on Dec. 1.

High's athletic program.

"I think that other schools view most of our athletic programs as weak so when they hear they are playing Saratoga in soccer, they think it will be a walk in the park," Buss said. "I would say that in addition to being driven to win every game, we are also battling for respect for

our school's soccer team."

With Buss recovered and in high spirits, the team is ready to approach its game against Prospect on Dec. 9 and at Harker on Dec. 10.

Due to printing deadlines, the Falcon could not cover these matches in the print edition. ♦

## GIRLS' SOCCER

## Berardo's goalkeeping anchors Falcons' defense

By Fiona Sequeira

When senior co-captain Isa Berardo made the girls' varsity soccer team as a freshman, she envisioned playing the next four years as a center midfielder. Yet since her sophomore year, despite limited goalkeeping experience in the past, she has been the team's starting goalkeeper and has gone on to become the two-time SCVAL All-League Goalkeeper of the Year.

At age 5, Berardo started playing for a boys' team in England called the Rockslane Rovers, an experience that shaped her into a tougher athlete. After moving back to California at age 8, she played for club teams De Anza Force and Sunnyvale Alliance.

Berardo's transition from field player to goalkeeper began in her freshman year, when the school team's starting goalkeeper was late to the game and Berardo volunteered due to her brief experience with goalkeeper for the De Anza Force. Berardo ended up having a great game, and her teammates made light-hearted comments about how she would be goalie the next year. The idea became

much more of a reality as sophomore year tryouts approached and head coach Ben Maxwell asked her to change positions.

"It was completely new, and I was out of my element, but I was up for the challenge and very excited to continue to improve," Berardo said. "It helped that I was able to play with my feet, too."

Since then, Berardo has gone on to excel at the position and was recently named one of the team's captains.

"I believe I have always had a presence on the team, and now I have even more responsibility to step up as a leader, constantly setting the standard for the

rest of the team," Berardo said. "Some goals of mine are to win Senior Day, reach CCS, and make everyone feel like an integral part of the squad through team bonding."

Some of Berardo's most memorable moments with the team include beating rival Los Gatos last year twice in one season—the second time at their field on their senior day.

"[Los Gatos] has an awful turf field, and I remember coming into the game covered from head to toe with mud from the warm-up," Berardo said. "I was so fired up to play LG that I used it as motivation."

Although beating LG was a season highlight, Berardo had to overcome a serious injury soon after. In the third to the last game of the season, with only one more win necessary for the team to move on to CCS, Berardo dove to save

the ball and was kicked in the head by a Los Altos forward. She ruptured a blood vessel and suffered a nasty concussion. Despite her protesting, she was out for the rest of the season.

"It was really hard having to sit those last games out, and I think it hurt the mentality of our team, knowing that we no longer had a goalkeeper," Berardo said. "That was definitely a hard loss, but I had to take care of my body and I am fortunate to be back for my final season."

Despite her success as a goalkeeper, Berardo says college soccer "is a bit of a wild card." She is still working on getting recruited, but she will play club or try to walk on wherever she goes to college.

"Soccer is a huge part of who I am and I could never give it up—it's a passion, an outlet, and I would not be who I am today without it," Berardo said. "I'm excited to see where it takes me." ♦

## RENOVATIONS

## Basketball players hope ASB funds basketball lights

By Aporov Kwatra &amp; Trevor Leung

With more than \$200,000 in accumulated funds that have piled up over the years, the ASB is looking to spend its money in ways that would help most students. One of the potential projects ASB is considering is the installation of lights for the outdoor basketball courts, a proposal that has received strong student support.

Basketball-loving students often enjoy playing recreational games together on the outdoor courts after school, but have little play time into the evening after the end of Daylight Sav-

ings Time.

The project initially seemed improbable, since it was expected that few students would be affected, but ASB president Aakash Thumaty said now many students are showing support for the lights.

"I can definitely see this going through and being completed," Thumaty said.

However, there are a few concerns that need to be addressed before any plans could move forward. The estimated cost of \$100,000 is one of the biggest obstacles.

In addition, having lights at the basketball courts during the night could bother the resi-

dents living on Herriman Avenue; ASB plans to address this problem by asking neighbors how they would feel.

According to principal Paul Robinson, there would need to be even more support for the lights to become a reality.

At this point, Robinson said there isn't even a timeline for a decision to be made on the project.

Even so, it's not stopping hoopers from hoping for the lights and voicing why they want it.

"Adding lights to the court would be great for all the basketball players around here," senior Noah Quanrud said. ♦

## GIRLS' BASKETBALL

## Spirakis' scoring helps gain two wins

By Aditya Chaudhry

The girls' basketball team has started its season with a non-conference record of 2-1, and senior forward Eleni Spirakis is leading the team in scoring.

The girls played Half Moon Bay at home and won 38-27 on Dec. 6. Despite the low-scoring game, Spirakis led the team with 14 points, while junior guard Ariana Goodarzi had 13.

The girls also played Sacred Heart High School at home on Dec. 3, losing 50-40. Despite playing a hard-fought game against the 2015 Division IV CCS tournament quarterfinalists, the Falcons managed to

close within one point by the end of the third quarter but fell short in the last quarter.

Spirakis led the team with 15 points and Goodarzi followed up with 11 of her own. Senior guard Stephanie Ouchida also added four assists and two steals.

Starting the year on the road, the girls also beat Hill High School 50-22 on Dec. 1.

"We have had some good wins and hope to keep up the mentality for the rest of the season," Prowse said.

Due to the printing deadlines, The Falcon is unable to cover the Dec. 10 home game against Cupertino High School. ♦

# Ball to birdie: Tennis star takes a swing at badminton

All I Ju is win

Caitlin Ju



I was sure I had prepared for embarrassment as I stepped into Bintang Badminton, a well-known academy where Saratoga badminton players often practice, in Campbell on Nov. 10 and faced its intimidating bright green walls and the rows of courts with obviously experienced players. I was not wrong with my expectations.

As a singles tennis player on the varsity team for three years, I originally did not think badminton would be too different from tennis. Both involved racquets, nets, hitting of a moving object with the racquet and a court. It turned out I was wrong.

I had enlisted the help of junior Spring Ma, a varsity badminton player, to teach me all I needed to know about the sport. On courts much smaller than what I was used to, Ma and I started the lesson with "driving," a badminton term for hitting,

When the birdie was hit to my left side, I found I immediately defaulted to my tennis two-handed backhand.

Swinging much harder than I was supposed to, as the birdie was much lighter than a tennis ball and the racquet grip much smaller, I constantly missed the high net or would pop the birdie too high up, giving Ma plenty of opportunities to smash.

Realizing I needed to have a better sense of the court, Ma prepared a footwork training exercise the badminton team often executes called "Six Around." Essentially, multiple birdies are put in one corner of the court, and the player must bring the birdies one at a time to another corner, always making sure to stop in the middle as if getting ready to hit a second shot.

Not only did I get lost as to where the corners were, I also ended up straight up running to the corners instead of "galloping" and lunging with strategic patterns, as Ma instructed me.

This exercise quickly tired me out, and I took a water break, all the while watching the fast-paced games going on around me in awe. Badminton was already proving to be a sport that required

much more stamina and strategy than I had expected.

Junior Jason Zhao, also a varsity badminton player, joined us to play 2 on 1. Since Ma and I were a doubles team on one side, we started in a front-back position, where I stood closer to the net while Ma stood in the back, but soon switched to a side-side position.

As a badminton serve is very unlike a tennis serve, which requires the ball to be tossed up from the left hand and the right arm to swing up to hit the ball over the head, I frequently missed until Zhao taught me the correct motion.

A badminton serve involves the left hand holding the birdie and right hand crossing the body to hit the birdie in a rapid version, similar to a tennis one-handed backhand without the arm extension. Though manageable, the lack of arm movement felt awkward.

When Zhao played against Ma and me, he also used a common badminton combination technique of "clearing," hitting high and up and "dropping," hitting just over the net, which forces the doubles opponents to switch positions and increases their errors.

On one particular point, Zhao hit the

birdie high and back to the left, and on the next shot, hit it high on the right. Finally, my tennis skills kicked in, and I was able to more easily cross the smaller badminton court to reach the second shot and return the birdie.

Ma then taught me "dropping," which proved to be surprisingly difficult.

I was used to hitting drop shots in tennis, but those were over a much lower net.

In badminton, I felt as if I was straining my neck to see the birdie whenever it was hit high and towards the back of the court, and my eyes were blinded by the high, bright ceiling lights.

The stroke I was able to use for these situations was similar to an overhead in tennis but required more wrist action and less arm motion.

More than an hour later, though, after hitting both synthetic and feather birdies, a tradition for many sports teams. The idea is simple: Athletes anonymously give a gift to a teammate and receive a gift from an unknown teammate in turn.

And who knows. You may find me on the badminton court again soon. ♦

# GAME CHANGER

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN ATHELETES TRY NEW SPORTS

## Varsity basketball player struggles to play volleyball

Uno dos tres kwatra

Apoorv Kwatra



Ball is life. But I figured I could at least try something else. Keyword is "try." Turns out, I was not successful at all.

On a recent Sunday, I went to try to play volleyball with a few of my friends, most of them more experienced than I am, thinking that it would not be too bad because it uses some of the similar skills to basketball, which I have plenty of experience in. I was wrong. So wrong.

We split into teams of three and started a game of one set to 25 points. I was excited and expected to play well.

But before I knew it, the game had started, and it all went downhill from there.

First, I learned that volleyballs hurt a lot. No one ever tells you that; players on professional courts majestically hit the ball with perfect form and not even the slightest sign of a wince. So you can imagine my surprise when I tried to hit the ball over the net on the first play: My wrists were sore, and I had to take some time on the side of the court to recover.

None of my friends seemed to notice, though, and we continued to play. I think it is some sort of silent agreement among volleyball players to act like hitting a volleyball is the most painless feat out there, so when we amateurs try it, we play even worse.

The rest of the game was not much better. I may have hit my face with the ball. Twice. On consecutive plays. I really did try to hit the ball forward, but it would just not obey. But let's pretend like that never happened.

My team ended up losing 25-9. And, I must solemnly admit, I did not contribute much to that losing score of 9. It's sad to say, but my team probably would have done better playing two against three.

After this rather humiliating defeat, junior Gautham Arunkumar, my only friend there who actually plays volleyball, decided to teach me how to spike a volleyball properly. I learned to jump up and time my hits better. Or at least tried to.

Finally, it was my time to shine. Spiking involves jumping, and so does basketball. I should be good at this.

WRONG. Slapping a ball is very different from shooting a ball.

To be fair, though, I was actually relatively consistent with my spikes. I hit them into the net almost every time. Being consistently bad is the first step to being consistently good, right? Just let me save some face and agree.

I went home soon after the aforementioned shenanigans, contemplating how atrocious I was at volleyball. It's honestly a really good thing I chose basketball as my sport instead.

I guess this whole experience has taught me a couple of things.

For one, a volleyball will always go in the opposite direction that I want it to go. And two, I should stick to basketball. ♦

## Kicker in the making

SOCCER DEFENDER HITS THE GRIDIRON

I Rajeev I can fly

Anant Rajeev



As a soccer player and more specifically a center defender for five years, I am used to kicking a ball. And so although I have experience only in playing as a center back and sending flighted long balls with a soccer ball, I decided to try out kicking a differently shaped ball: a football.

Ever since I was a freshman, I have wanted to join the football team, even if just for one year, to be a kicker.

Something about going on the field for less than a minute and still being able to put points on the board for the team has always appealed to me.

So, after soccer practice one night, I decided to finally give kicking a shot. Senior Aditya Chaudhry held the ball down for me at the 30-yard line, and I planned to start my football conquest.

The first kick was up. And to my confusion, it sailed wide left. It quivered through the air the full distance, just not accurately.

I stood there in shock, confused at how the ball managed to wobble as much as it did.

Kicking a football was a little more

intricate than I thought.

Second try. I lined the ball up at the 10-yard line again and put my foot through the ball, making sure I had a huge follow through. I smiled as the ball sailed through the uprights, and I moved it back to the 20-yard line.

I had about a 3-yard run up with the same technique, calmly chipped the ball and laughed as the ball sailed through the uprights once again. I was on a roll.

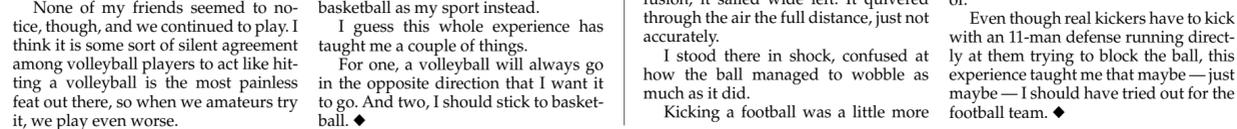
Cockily, I moved the ball back to the 40-yard line, thinking that I could easily make it after two shots in a row, and kicked the ball with the same technique as before.

On the contrary to what I imagined, though, the 50-yard kick sailed wide left. I was stunned. I didn't realize that 10 yards could have so much of a bearing on the direction of my kick.

Giving myself another chance with a slightly easier distance, I pushed the ball up to the 37-yard line.

This time, I was able to put eight out of 10 balls through the uprights. A field goal from the 37 yard line translates to about a 47-yard field goal, and that's definitely something I could be proud of.

Even though real kickers have to kick with an 11-man defense running directly at them trying to block the ball, this experience taught me that maybe — just maybe — I should have tried out for the football team. ♦



# Junior snowboarder takes to the slopes

By Pranav Ahuja & Michelle Koo

On his first-ever snowboard run four years ago, the world zoomed past junior David Doluca as he glided over the snow. Suddenly, the board got caught underneath the snow and in an attempt to regain his balance, he put his hands out and fractured his wrist — the only injury he's ever received while participating in his favorite sport.

Doluca wasn't always a snowboarder. In fact, he started out as a skateboarder, but was discouraged from the serious dangers of the sport, and decided to try snowboarding, a safer alternative to snowboarding.

"I started skateboarding when I was 9, and after two years, I think I just wanted to try something new," Doluca said. "Snowboarding looked appealing to me since you can't lose your board when you go off jumps."

Despite the injury that occurred on his first-ever day of snowboarding, Doluca now goes up to the mountains — usually Northstar Ski Resort — at least four times a year, each visit lasting four days.

"[Northstar] has some nice slopes, a few stunt areas, and a really nice half pipe," Doluca said. "I really like to go on Lookout Mountain."

Doluca said he enjoys snowboarding more than skiing and skateboarding because the motion feels more natural and "the boots are a lot more comfortable to wear."

While snowboarding provides a similar adrenaline rush to skiing, Doluca prefers the safety of snowboarding as it allows him more control over his speed.

"If you fall when skiing, [the fall] is a lot worse, and you can hurt yourself a lot more when skiing," Doluca said.

Although Doluca doesn't snowboard competitively, he is able to hone



Courtesy of DAVID DOLUCA

Junior David Doluca uses his GoPro to capture his run at Northstar Ski Resort in 2014.

his skills with his consistent visits to the resort. When asked how he managed to become such a good snowboarder with only two short lessons of training, Doluca responded that practice was key to his success.

"The rest is just trial and error, [though] I've never really had any bad falls. The worst was when I fractured my wrist, and since then I started wearing gloves with a wrist guard," Doluca said. ♦

# Female teams bond through Secret Buddies activity

By Katherine Sun & Austin Wang

Lifting the red taffeta from a Christmas-themed gift bag, junior Shannon Chen, then a freshman cross country runner, wondered what she would find inside. She had walked into Trig/Pre-Calc Honors and been told that the bag in the front of the class had been left for her. Upon opening it, Chen could not help but smile, seeing the lip balm, hand sanitizer, candy and personalized note.

Chen had signed up for Secret Buddies, a tradition for many sports teams. The idea is simple: Athletes anonymously give a gift to a teammate and receive a gift from an unknown teammate in turn.

These gifts, which have a pre-specified price range and include items such as food and cosmetics, are meant to help team members become closer. Yet while the Secret Buddy system carries heartfelt intentions, athletes hold differing views toward its worth.

Chen was delighted by her gift, and she and senior Michelle Shen decided to

organize a Secret Buddies exchange for the girls' cross country team this year. The gifts are given on the day of each meet and cost anywhere from \$10 to \$15.

"Secret Buddies makes the team closer because you are swapping gifts, like a Secret Santa [exchange]. It's a festive spirit all around," Chen said. "You get a gift, you get to give a gift to someone — that's also fun. And it just makes the meets more enjoyable."

Last year the girls' cross country team grew so large that it did not hold Secret Buddies. This year Chen decided that she wanted the system to be available for girls who did want to participate.

Together, Chen and Shen created a Google form asking participants for their names, school schedules and desired gifts. After randomly assigning the secret buddies, the two girls distributed small slips of paper with the information of each person's secret buddy.

Despite the time and effort they

spent organizing the system, the team's Secret Buddy process remains hectic due to participants who dislike their gifts or who do not give gifts on time.

"I have to track down everyone and make sure that they give their gift," Chen said. "I want to make sure everyone has a good experience. You are giving someone else a gift, so you expect one in return."

While the process can be chaotic and requires commitment from the participants, Chen still believes that the end result is worthwhile.

"It's painful [to organize], but I think it's worth it because people [tend to] enjoy the gifts that they receive," she said.

Girls' tennis also holds Secret Buddies. Like Chen, senior Shaya Nikfar said the tradition serves as a fun way for team members to bond.

"Secret Buddies is just a really fun little gift before every home match to liven up the team and help them get that spirit for the match," Nikfar said. "Tennis is

also a small group of girls, so it brings us closer together."

Secret Buddies can also be found in teams ranging from girls' volleyball to girls' golf, yet rarely does the tradition exist in boys' sports teams. Nikfar believes this occurs because girls take longer to develop solid relationships.

"Boys don't really care and are more chill about sports, while girls need more time to get to know each other and build that teamwork," she said.

For his part, junior Nicholas Sum from the boys' cross country team said no one on his team has ever thought of starting the tradition.

"Instead of doing Secret Buddies, why don't we just run?" Sum said. "Participation would be small because no one really wants to go out to find things."

Sum said the tradition was a "waste of time," citing his workload. As a rule, he thinks boys on his team do not see the point of bonding activities.

"It's not like we're not close. During practices we talk and laugh, so I guess we don't feel the need," Sum said. ♦



Chen



Lee

## Freshman gymnast strives to reach regional level

By Arjun Ramanathan

Freshman Kaitlyn Lee swings back and forth, practicing the moves she's trained for many years. As her 4'11" figure lands with a final touch, she finishes her three and a half hour gymnastics practice, just one of the four practices she has almost every week.

Lee began gymnastics at age 9 after watching the 2008 summer Olympics. Since then, she's continued participating in it, practicing for roughly 15 hours a week.

Lee attends Airborne Gymnastics in Santa Clara and has participated in a number of competitions in areas such as Sacramento, and from time to time, other cities and areas even further away.

The levels of gymnasts ranked by USA Gymnastics (USAG) ranges from 1-10, with 10 being the best. Lee has worked her way to level 5.

Though already participating intently in gymnastics, Lee plans to take it a step further, advancing her skills and qualifying for more competitive and larger scale competitions. Lee continues to practice hard, in hopes to one day climb

from level 5 to a higher spot.

"As you get higher [in the ranks], you start traveling to places like Las Vegas and San Diego for competitions," Lee said.

According to Lee, regional tournaments are only accessible at a certain level of skill, which she has not been able to reach yet.

Regardless of the joy Lee gets from participating in the sport she loves, her time commitment to gymnastics can be tough.

"With the amount of gymnastics practice I do, I have a lot less time to finish my homework and study for tests," Lee said.

Gymnastics has become more than just Lee's favorite sport. Over the years gymnastics has evolved into her passion, one that she wouldn't trade for anything else.

"In my free time, I enjoy practicing skills such as roundoff back handspring tucks, and refining them gradually in order to be capable of performing my best at competitions," Lee said. "Gymnastics is really fun for me because of the feeling I get after I accomplish a difficult skill, and I have a feeling I'll be a part of [the sport] for a long time." ♦

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Senior Nina Nelson performs a parody of singer Drake's hit single "Hotline Bling" during Saratoga idol on Dec. 4.

Sophomore Solomon Bailey steals the ball during a varsity home game on Dec. 2 against Gunderson High School.

Senior class president Summer Smith and her mother Laura Tillett help out during the Holiday Boutique on Dec. 5.

Senior Nihar Agrawal and sophomore Alvin Chung play the flute during a band and orchestra recital on Dec. 3.

**buzzworthy** >> Finals elicit stress and strategies

BY Oksana Trifonova

As the end of first semester approaches and the chill of winter permeates the air, students are preparing for that one last challenge that might make or break their grades: finals.

The excitement can be both motivational and nerve-wracking.

"Every year, all my classes that have finals always happen to be my borderline grades, so that last week is guaranteed to be high-stress for me," junior Alice Bian said.

While finals can seem like cruel and unusual punishment to some, or even pointless to others, they reflect the overall knowledge the students have of a course, so a good grade can feel especially rewarding.

"They are a great way for me to measure how far I've personally come in one semester," Bian said.

For many seniors, however, any positive sides to finals dim due to the balance between finals and college apps. As a result, the upcoming winter break becomes that much more needed.

"I haven't even started thinking about finals because of college essays," senior Lisa Yu admitted. "I plan to finish my applications and finally get some sleep."

Other students are taking a more laid-back, philosophical approach.

"I'm not really thinking about finals right now because the more you think about them the more you stress out about them, and there are more impor-

tant things to think about in life," senior Nate Ney said.

**"I haven't even started thinking about finals because of college essays."**  
senior Lisa Yu

Some teachers have opted out of giving finals, like Spanish teacher Arnaldo Rodriguex.

"I am not giving a final in my advanced Spanish class because everything that we do in class already relates to performance: we're listening, we're speaking, we're writing, and we're presenting," Rodriguex said.

"For me to repeat that as a final just to enter another grade doesn't make sense."

A creative and less stressful approach that the English department has come up

with is projects. Students are required to synthesize the analysis from reading and demonstrate their knowledge to the class through a, a video, a song, a performance or another creative task on the day of the test.



"In English, particularly with plays, there are certain ways you can explore the play that you wouldn't necessarily be able to do in a scantron-only test," English teacher Natasha Ritchie said. "A performance project allows the students to more fully engage and become the characters."

At the end of the day, the final still serves one primary purpose: a useful tool for the teacher to evaluate the students' strengths and weaknesses.

"Finals are a comprehensive way of finding out how much the students have mastered," Rodriguex said. ♦

Rant to me: I will cure your salt

STUDENT FINDS HERSELF HELPING FRIENDS WITH PROBLEMS

the spiffy tiffy

Tiffany Zheng



I have achieved my parents' ultimate dream. I'm a doctor. But the job comes with a couple of hiccups that my parents never anticipated: I don't get paid, my patients are my friends and I mainly treat the emotionally constipated. Call me judgmental, but I'm the therapist of salt and the queen of quality advice.

It's not much of a surprise that most of my friends are over-dramatic and overwhelmingly ratchet. They're all basically salt mines, as proven by our daily salty rants. (For those unfamiliar with a salty rant, it's when one complains and ultimately purges his or her mind of a certain topic in a bitter or "salty" fashion.)

Complaints can run from being excluded from a lunch run to not being part of a certain squad. There's so much sodium circulating in some of my friends' blood, I'm surprised they haven't developed hypertension. But these disturbing salt levels would help to explain their

thirsty, or desperate, attitudes.

Most of these therapy sessions are based on relationship issues. Somehow, regardless of the fact that I'm possibly the most romantically devoid human being on this planet, I'm constantly probed for relationship advice.

What does it mean if he holds open the door for me? Why is he taking so

long to respond to my t e x t s ? Why is his Snapchat story consistently updated with new things to give me FOMO (fear of missing out)? Yes, I know, California's current drought situation can't keep up with their thirst.

On the surface, these are petty worries, even by my standards. Trust me, I must've rolled my eyes enough to wear out several pairs of contact lenses by this point. But in a society constructed around the preservation of a perfect image, anxiety cultivated from some of life's most basic tribulations can erode one's sense of self.

**There's so much sodium circulating in some of my friends' blood, I'm surprised they haven't developed hypertension.**

It's not good to bottle up these feelings when you have the option to lay it out on the table. Worried about how your eyebrows just aren't on fleek? Rest assured, I'm going to throw shade at you for days, but I'll buy you a pair of tweezers. Our relationship, just like your eyebrow game, will be strong.

When it comes to being honest, I'm the queen. Perhaps it helps that I have no filter. If you request my services, prepare to be roasted with my savage remarks. I don't believe in the preservation of your feelings if it detracts from the problem that's causing the emotional trauma.

I won't beat around the bush because I'd rather take that time to beat you with some common sense. If you're in a toxic relationship, I'd probably tell you to dump the chump because you're trash enough on your own. (I'm sorry, do you need some aloe for that burn?) Of course I'm only (half) kidding, because I love all my friends.

Honestly, deep down, behind the savage burns and salty judgment, it's nice being a rock for others. I didn't choose the therapist life. The therapist life chose me. ♦

>> topten

WAYS TO ENJOY THE HOLIDAYS

- 10 Study for the SAT. 'Tis the season of Barron's and tears.
- 9 Get your college decisions. There's nothing like some gut-wrenching sadness to go with the holiday cheer!
- 8 Watch the ball drop in Times Square. (Three hours after it actually happened, of course.)
- 7 Watch the "Home Alone" series. When will Kevin finally get the hint that his parents don't want him?!
- 6 Netflix. Why spend time with family when you can learn about Pablo Escobar, Walter White and other notable TV icons?
- 5 Await El Niño. California finally gets to go from drought to monsoons, real quick.
- 4 Stay up to date with the 2016 presidential election. Whose stocking will Trump put coal into?
- 3 Attend those random Facebook events. Remember to "eat flaming hot Cheetos until you see God!"
- 2 Go snowboarding in Tahoe. It's totally worth it after the first 1,000 falls!
- 1 Listen to Michael Bublé's Christmas album. The undisputed most fiery mixtape of 2015.

>> Anant Rajeev and Arjun Ramanathan