



Seniors create 'Little Rock Nine' music video.



Students speak up for change and share stories.



Girls' basketball on track to make CCS.



Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Saratoga, CA  
Permit No. 41

# THE saratogafalcon



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

saratogafalcon.org

Friday >> January 29, 2016

Vol. 55, No. 7

LGSUHS

## Community protests lead to bell schedule revision

BY Allison Lin & Summer Smith

During a heated Jan. 12 school board meeting, a new rolling block schedule for next year was recommended and explained by a committee that had put in months of studying and creating it. However, the proposed changes provoked a strong negative reaction among

hundreds of Saratoga community members.

The opposition's arguments were powerful enough to lead superintendent Bob Mistele to revise that schedule in favor of one that has more in-class instructional minutes instead of counting an eighth period as instructional minutes. In particular, it was unclear whether counting the eighth period as instruc-

tional minutes would have held up legally if parents had contested that part of the schedule with the state.

The latest schedule, which came out on Jan. 25, no longer includes an eighth period and has classes starting at 8:15 a.m., 25 minutes later than the current start time, in an effort to give students extra sleep. Classes alternate between an odd day with periods 1, 3, 5 and 7 meet-

ing and an even day with periods 2, 4 and 6 meeting.

Classes will be for 90 minutes instead of the current 95 minutes, and a daily 35-minute tutorial will occur after the first period of the day. Lunch will be at the same time every day and is 35 minutes, cut down from the current

>> **SCHEDULE** on pg. 6

## ONE TEAM, ONE DREAM

SPEAK UP FOR CHANGE WEEK SPREADS AWARENESS OF CRITICAL ISSUES

BY Caitlyn Chen & Jay Kim

As sophomore Camilla Taysi finished telling the story of her struggles with depression and bullying in recent years during a schoolwide Speak Up for Change assembly on Jan. 18, the entire gym filled with applause. One by one, students began to stand — some of the them had tears in their eyes, while others held each other's hands.

All faced the podium at the front of the gym. Their fellow classmate stood before them, her brave story still fresh in their minds.

"Honestly, it was such a relief to finally tell my story to everyone," Taysi said. "So far I have gotten nothing but positive support."

>> **SUFC** on pg. 7



Junior Mitali Shanbhag introduces the next student speaker, senior Abhay Aanabathula, at the assembly on Jan. 19 of Speak Up for Change week.

TALISMAN // JERAME KIM

### ACADEMICS

## POSSIBLE GPA CHANGE FOR CLASS OF 2020

BY Caitlyn Chen & Elizabeth Lee

After much deliberation over the difference between the school's GPA scale compared to those of other nearby schools, the administration foresees a possible change in the grading system for the Class of 2020.

Unlike Los Gatos High and most other local schools, Saratoga High implements a different GPA for pluses and minuses within grades. While Saratoga uses a 13 grade-point scale, Los Gatos uses the traditional four grade-point scale with a 5.0 scale grade bump for APs and honors classes.

For instance, someone with all B-plus grades in regular classes would have a GPA of 3.33 at SHS, while at Los Gatos,

>> **GPA** on pg. 6

### KUCER

## Retired science teacher substitutes for AP Chem

BY Eileen Toh

When AP Chemistry students entered room 1011 on their first day back from winter break, substitute teacher Robert Kucer immediately greeted them with a cheerful grin as he donned his thin-rimmed glasses and signature khaki shorts.

This semester, Kucer has been welcomed back by the school's staff as he substitutes for science teacher Kathy Nakamatsu, who is currently on maternity leave.

Kucer taught Chemistry Honors, AP Chemistry and AP Biology at the school starting in 1995 before retiring in the summer of 2012.



Kucer

According to former students, Kucer made his classes enjoyable for students with his quirky jokes and stories and tie-dye shirt traditions, while also challenging them to become better learners.

"His class was difficult," said 2012 alumna Stephanie Shimizu, who took Kucer's Chemistry Honors course. "But Kucer encouraged his students to apply themselves academically as he challenged them through college level coursework."

After his retirement, Kucer began living in Beijing due to his wife's job transfer. But after two years, he wanted to come back.

>> **KUCER** on pg. 7

### POLICE

## Deputies increase efforts to counter rising crime

BY Frederick Kim, Angela Liu, Rachel Zhang & Jason Zhao

Residential and vehicular burglaries in Saratoga have increased in the past three years, as its affluence and the at times lax security of the neighborhoods have made the community easy prey for burglars at a time when the state is making an effort to release non-violent offenders from prisons.

According to the sheriff's department, 73 reported residential burglaries were reported in 2013, 98 residential burglaries in 2014 and 123 in 2015. Fifteen vehicles were burgled in 2013, 34 in 2014 and 44 in 2015.

After the FBI conducted a study on the number of criminal offenses in 2012, the city of

Saratoga was awarded Safest City in California by notable ranking sites such as safewise.com and neighborhoodscout.com.

Since then, however, Saratoga has fallen to fifth place on safewise.com, behind cities like Hillsborough and Imperial.

Howard Miller, a council member for Saratoga, attributed the trend of increased property crimes in the city in part to the approval of Proposition 47 and the reduction of police forces in San Jose.

Prop 47, which was approved in late 2014, reduced the state's prison population by releasing thousands of inmates, especially those who had been imprisoned for

>> **CRIME** on pg. 8

### >> what's inside

#### ROSE PARADE

##### From NY to LA

Band seniors discuss the differences between two big parades. **pg. 3**

#### DISPUTE

##### New schedule

Is the new rolling block schedule a positive change? **pg. 11**

#### RESOLUTIONS

##### New year, new me

Reporters and students try to stick to New Year's resolutions. **pg. 14-15**

#### KOBE BRYANT

##### Bidding goodbye

Remembering the legacy of retiring NBA Lakers all-star. **pg. 23**



**Annual Jazz Cabaret returns as fundraiser**

The school's jazz band is hosting its annual Jazz Cabaret dance on Feb. 6 from 7 to 10 p.m. in the Large Gym. Jazz Cabaret features swing dancing to the jazz band's music, and admission costs \$10 per student.

Last year, the event was canceled due to scheduling conflicts, but it is back again this year, open for all to attend.

Jazz Cabaret offers the chance to try new styles of dancing for both students and adults alike. The performance brings in both Saratoga High's Jazz I and Jazz II classes, Redwood Middle School's jazz band and a professional hired group to play music.

Junior Peter VandeVort, a Jazz II student, said he loves how Jazz Cabaret is a different kind of dance from other school dances such as Winter Formal or Prom.

"I love the atmosphere there and how different a type of dance it is," VandeVort said. "It's really easy going but gives you a sense of being transported into the past."

The event is meant to be a social experience for students as well as an opportunity for the jazz bands to show off their talents.

"Overall, it's just a really relaxed environment that I enjoy because it's a great time to socialize with friends and meet other people you might not know but are interested in jazz," VandeVort said. "Plus, the professional group that comes in is always killer."

— Roland Shen

**Leaders to attend Disneyland conference**

Twenty-eight students from Leadership, ASB and class office positions are attending the annual Youth Leadership Program conference held by USA Student Travel at the Disneyland Resort in Anaheim from Jan. 28-31.

These student leaders will emerge from this experience with a new perspective on their roles within the school, according to activities director Rebeca Marshburn.

"Leadership [on campus] is related to the school, but [the conference will] talk about how to become better citizens and individuals," Marshburn said. "Students will learn how to use these skills to make not only the school, but also the community a better place."

Student leaders have been attending the conference since 2014, meeting other campus leaders from around the state and exchanging perspectives.

This year, however, Marshburn has added a new workshop to the itinerary to make the trip "constructive," where attendees will work with Disneyland employees to see the behind-the-scenes action and leadership behind several rides, such as Splash Mountain.

As the trip's departure date nears, the attendees look forward to spending three days learning and having fun at "the Happiest Place on Earth."

"I'm excited to go backstage with the employees since we'll learn how they work and what they do," Homecoming/Spring Fling commissioner Yuna Kim said. "I've always thought Disneyland was a magical place to be."

— Spring Ma and Eileen Toh

>> picturethis



**ELECTIVES NIGHT >> Junior Rachel Davey gives parents of eighth graders pamphlets and shows them information about the Media Arts Program in the small gym at Electives Night on Jan. 25.**

**BOMBAY IN THE BAY**

**ICAC prepares for 12th show**

By ElizabethLee

Back for the 12th year in a row, the school's Indian Culture and Awareness (ICAC) club is preparing for this year's annual Bombay in the Bay after a successful show last year.

The cultural dance performance hosted by the ICAC, Bombay in the Bay, will take place Feb. 12-13 in the McAfee Center. The show will consist of acts including dances from each grade, traditional dances like bhangra and classical and one singing act.

According to senior ICAC president Anant Rajeev, the three most anticipated dances include Toga Tamasha, the All Men's Dance (AMD) and All Girls' Dance (AGD).

The AMD and AGD are the final two dances of the show and are typically longer and comprised of the most experienced members.

The show, which began 11 years ago on the small stage at

Argonaut Elementary School, gained popularity through the years as more students and parents became involved.

Eventually, the event moved to the school's own McAfee Center in 2008 and is now considered one of the biggest performances of the year, with a total of about 200 participants.

According to ICAC president Sanam Mohan, the production has sold out twice in the last three years.

Due to high attendance rates, the club presidents contemplated having a third show last year, but decided against it because they feared it would exhaust the performers.

Unlike previous years, club presidents have set up a calendar so that they are able to make sure that important parts of the show are finished early to avoid

last-minute preparations.

Besides providing entertainment, the event's profits from ticket sales are sent to a local charity.

All the proceeds this year will go to Maitri, an anti-trafficking organization in India that helps women's rights.

"This is our first year donating to Maitri," Mohan said. "Last year, we donated \$15,000 to a charity called Pratham and we felt that we could make a greater impact by choosing a different charity." ♦

>> Bombay in the Bay

**Feb. 12** The first show will be on Feb. 12 at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$12.

**Feb. 13** The second show will be on Feb. 13 at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$20 including dinner.

**FIELD TRIPS**

**Students visit Catalina Island**

By NeeharThumaty

Thirty-one Marine Biology and AP Biology students experienced two nights of discovery from Jan. 17-19, as they traveled to the Catalina Island Marine Institute. This was the second year for a field trip designed to teach students about marine organisms and marine and land environments.

The students stayed in dorms and ate at dining halls at the Catalina Island Marine Institute, which lies 25 miles off the coast of Long Beach. They were chaperoned by Biology teacher Cheryl Lenz, who coordinated the trip, Earth Science and Biology teacher Lisa Cochrum and Astronomy, Marine Biology and Chemistry teacher Jill McCrystal.



Shang

Students learned about marine science and island ecology, granting them an appreciation for the marine ecosystem that surrounds the island.

"It was a great opportunity to be immersed in nature," junior Nathan Shang said. "I learned countless facts about marine biology and the ocean."

Students were treated to hiking and snorkeling on the island and were educated through lab rotations and astronomy nights.

"My favorite activity was snorkeling since this was my first time, and I was able to identify many species of fish that I had learned about earlier in the trip," Shang said. "That ability to apply my knowledge in such a direct way was definitely something that you don't ex-

perience every day in the usual STEM classes at Saratoga."

Junior Alice Bian said that the astronomy night was her favorite.

"This astronomy hike covered a topic that we did not touch upon in AP Biology," Bian said. "I felt like I was not in control of the 'experiment' because the sky was so vast, and in this way, it differs from the classroom labs because I gained a deeper sense of appreciation."

The lab rotations included identification of plankton, learning about and interacting with sharks, rays and fish, analyzing algae, taking readings on the water in the ocean and learning about and petting ocean invertebrates.

"I was completely taken back by all the experiences the island had to offer," Shang said. ♦

**BAND**

**Rose Parade caps unforgettable year**

By KarissaDong & KatherineZhou

As members of the marching band and colorguard performed Journey's "Don't Stop Believin'" during Pasadena's 127th annual Rose Parade on Jan. 1, they saw thousands of eager spectators packed into the street curbs on Colorado Boulevard, a quarter of a mile into the 7-mile march, where the live television broadcast cameras focused on them.

"Performing for such a huge event was incredible," junior general manager and trumpet player Peter VandeVort said. "[At one point], we passed by this tower with balconies, and each and every one of them was packed with people [trying] to get a view of us. It really helped me realize the magnitude of the event that we were in."

After sending in an application two years ago — with video recordings, detailed letters of recommendation and a portfolio of accomplishments — the school's band was among the 18 bands selected to perform in the prestigious event.

The band played "Don't Stop Believin'" nonstop for the parade's first mile; for the remaining 6 miles, the musicians alternated between playing that piece, performing the percussion routine and playing Russian Christmas Music.

Leaving Saratoga on Dec. 28, the musicians returned from their excursion in the Los Angeles area on Jan. 2, exhausted but proud of their immense achievement.

Dedicated months of practice, as well as rehearsals starting the day after Christmas, had helped prepare them for the daunting trek.

"All the Rose Parade performances were beyond our expectations as staff," music director Jonathan Pwu said. "The students performed well, overcame obstacles on the spot and had the stamina to finish the entire route without anyone dropping out."

With an exact 110-degree turn onto Colorado Boulevard, the marching band hit the right notes at the right time while the color guard performed its show in red and black uniforms and silky white flags.

"Everything went as planned, including the turn, which we had practiced many times during rehearsal," junior alto sax player George Wang said. "The [cheering people along the route] of Colorado Boulevard helped us push through."

Before their big performance, band members visited Disneyland, spent time at the beach and attended a circus show.

The eventful itinerary allowed them to relax and celebrate the end of the holiday season with friends, Wang said.

In addition, Pwu commended the musicians for their behavior throughout the trip.

"The level of care and respect band members had for each other was very high and the band had a mentality of 'we before me,'" Pwu said. "Band members [constantly] checked with each other regarding health, gave each other reminders and overall just watched out for everyone on the trip."

The Rose Parade concluded this year's marching band season. After a highly successful year — from a sweeping victory at Bands of America in November to the ostentatious display at the Rose Parade — band members now look forward to concert season: freshman band, symphonic band, jazz band and Symphonic Wind Ensemble (SWE).

In March, musicians will participate in the California Music Education Association (CMEA) competition.

"Looking back on the season, we have this tendency to come together in the end," VandeVort said. "We buckled down as a family and worked hard to prepare ourselves. I couldn't be prouder of how it turned out." ♦



music director Jonathan Pwu



The band marches on the seven-mile route in the 127th annual Rose Parade.

Courtesy of MARGERY CHEN

**Band Q&A: Rose vs. Macy's Parade**

On Jan. 1, the band performed in the annual Rose Parade in Pasadena, Calif. Four years ago as freshmen, many band seniors marched in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Three seniors compare their experiences marching in these two national parades.

**Q: How did the audience at the Rose Parade compare to the audience at the Macy's Parade?**

Sandeep Suresh: Rose Parade had way more people. There was a corner [where] there [were] like five miles of people so I would say a million plus [people]. The people at Rose Parade were way more drunk and they were like 'Yeah! Keep going! Yes!' Macy's was way more professional but it was cool because both had a lot of TV time.

**Q: What was different about the marching at the Macy's parade and Rose Parade?**

Aakash Thumaty: Macy's was more fun in my mind because I was a freshman and there were more seniors. One day I will sit in front of the TV with my kids and we will watch the Rose Parade. I'll be like "I marched in that parade." It's experiences like Macy's Parade and Rose Parade that make a 12-hour trip worth it.

**Q: How did the actual trip for the Rose Parade compare to the Macy's Parade?**

Manna Okada: Both experiences were events that'll stay with me for my entire life. For the Macy's Day Parade, just the thought of being in New York City was enough to hype the entire trip and it really made my freshman year special. Everything was so exciting. As for the Rose Parade, personally, I felt that we had been to Los Angeles before for Bands of America Long Beach Competitions and it wasn't very far from Saratoga so I didn't have the same expectations that I had for Macy's.

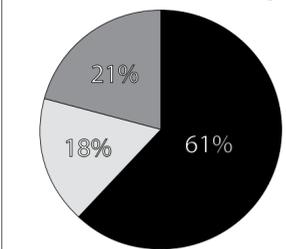
—Angela Lee and Isabelle Yang

>> correction

In the Dec. 11 issue, the Falcon mistakenly stated that science teacher Jenny Garcia is the science department chair. The department chair this year is physics teacher Kirk Davis.

>> falconfigures

**Is the new schedule a good change?**



Students were asked about the original schedule proposed by the Schedule Advisory Committee at the board meeting on Jan. 12. (See story on page 1 for details).

Yes  
Indifferent  
No

The Falcon polled 93 students

— Roland Shen

**FALCON FOCUS: MAX ROSSIP**

**Senior drummer preps for Jazz Cabaret's return**

By AmiNachiappan

When his dad encouraged him to learn an instrument, senior Max Rossip, then a 6-year-old, only knew what he did not want to play — not a wind instrument because it was his dad's expertise, not a guitar because it was too common and not a brass instrument because it looked uncomfortable.

"I wanted to beat my dad at his own game by choosing an extremely loud and cumbersome instrument: the drums," he said.

Since then, Rossip has played drums for almost 12 years and is currently part of the concert band and evening Big Band, a part of the school's music program that practices every Thursday from 6 to 8 p.m.

The Big Band is a group of 17 musicians, including four trumpet players, four trombonists, five saxophonists, a pianist, a guitarist, a bassist and a drummer, who play sheet music with specific solo sections to help them learn improvisation.

Rossip also has participated in Jazz Cabaret, a Saratoga Music Boosters fun-

draiser that entertains guests with jazz music, for three years.

"I like that the Jazz Cabaret provides an atmosphere for people to just enjoy themselves," he said. "For me, I love performing and seeing others have fun to my music."

Rossip is "really happy" to play in this year's Jazz Cabaret with his new jazz quartet. Rossip met his members at San Jose Jazz Camp in the summer of 2014.

His quartet consists of Leland High sophomore Jordan Ando playing piano and Los Gatos twin juniors Graham and Ian Houts playing guitar and bass, respectively.

"So far, they have played around venues in San Jose and Los Gatos, like Cafe Stritch, the Holiday Club and The Testarosa Winery; they occasionally earn money for their gigs."

His quartet will play "Proto Cosmos" by Alan Pasqua, "Red Baron" by Billie Cobham, "The Eye of the Hurricane" by Herbie Hancock and "Donna Lee" by Charlie Parker at the Jazz Cabaret.

In preparation for the event, which will take place on Feb. 6 from 7 to 10 p.m. in the gym, Rossip has been sight reading and practicing jazz standards, musical compositions, whenever his groups have time to practice.

His combo is a group of students who play melodies with specified chord changes and forms. After playing a tune, each musician takes turns improvising form and chord changes.

"We were trying to play catch up since everyone was rejoining from the Rose Parade," Rossip said.

Rossip's combo has prepared songs like "Recordame" by Joe Henderson, "Billie's Bounce" by Charlie Parker, "Fly Me to the Moon" by Bart Howard and "Giant Steps" by John Coltrane.

Since Jazz Cabaret was canceled last year because it conflicted with Junior Prom, Rossip is looking forward to performing with his quartet.

"I'm excited because this way, even if I am away next year for college, the younger members of my group can get

regular gigs or form new groups," he said.

As a senior, Rossip said it is hard to inspire younger musicians to pursue jazz as many students who take part in marching band do not have time to invest in jazz.

"Jazz is an extremely complex form of music and sounding good takes really long with no clear result." In marching band, you practice for a few months and then are compared to other bands," Rossip said. "But jazz is a very nonjudgmental community, so people may feel disheartened [by lack of outside recognition]."

Since Rossip has developed a passion for playing music through his combos and quartet, he is grateful for the experience he has had playing jazz and encourages others to pursue it as well.

"As the great trumpeter Wynton Marsalis put it, 'Once you start to put a backbeat or machine on your music, you have popularity, but lose flexibility,'" Rossip said. "I really think everyone should explore jazz because there is just something missing from the popular music of today." ♦

## CLUBS

# Playing ukulele in group helps students relax

by Angela Lee & Summer Smith

Music programs have always been a major part of the culture at Saratoga, from band to orchestra to choir.

Now, more students have the ability to become involved with music on a smaller, less time-consuming scale with the Ukulele Club, started last semester by sophomores Nayoung Kim and Olivia Lu.

According to Kim, the purpose of the club is to create a relaxing environment to enjoy music and learn a relatively easy instrument.

"We just wanted to start a club that acts like stress-reliever, not something you join to put on your college apps," Lu said. "It's a really easy instrument to pick up and it unifies a large number of people."

Kim and Lu started playing the ukulele not too long ago when they took a

look at all the instruments Kim had inside of her house; they were able to pick up basic chords within a matter of minutes.

"[Kim] was the person who got me started with ukulele. She would invite friends over, and we saw that she had instruments all [over] her wall," said Lu.

Lu and Kim were able to learn basic chords within 30 minutes, and they hope to teach other members to achieve the same.

According to Kim, the club's goal is to create a group talented enough to perform at local senior centers and perhaps hospitals.

In order to achieve this, the club plans on holding fundraisers that will hopefully raise money to purchase more ukuleles.

This will enable more people to participate in the club since it will not cost them anything.

The club, which has roughly 40 mem-



Seniors Andre Djenguerian and Matthew Lee play the ukulele at a meeting on Jan. 21.

bers, meets every Thursday in English teacher Ken Nguyen's classroom. At meetings, members learn simple chords and then progress into learning songs of their choice.

"In the ukulele club, you get a hands

on experience to try out a musical instrument without having to purchase one," said club member senior Matthew Lee. "I caught on quickly, so I invited my friend and taught him how to play some basic chords." ♦

## SPEECH AND DEBATE

# Forensics succeeds at number of tournaments

by Vibha Seshrathi & Roland Shen

The school's speech and debate team is starting 2016 with a flurry of tournaments. The team competed in five tournaments in January. The most recent were the California Forensics League tournaments held at Milpitas High School on Jan. 23-24, and the National Catholic Forensics Qualifier tournament held on Jan. 23.

At the CFL Super Debate held in Milpitas on Jan. 24, sophomores Austin Wang and Arun Ramakrishna had a 4-0 record in Varsity Parliamentary debate and earned a wildcard to the state qualifier tournament.

At the CFL Varsity Coast February Individual Events (IE) tournament on Jan. 23, sophomore Varun Vishwanath won first place in Oratorical Interpretation. Sophomore Divya Rallabandi won second place in the same category and seventh place in Original Oratory. Sopho-

more Kyle Wang placed fourth in National Extemporaneous. All three sophomores gained wildcards, to this year's IE state qualifier tournament.

Junior Siavash Yaghoobi placed first with a 4-0 record at the National Catholic Forensics Qualifier tournament on Jan. 23, held in Sacramento. He entered in Varsity Lincoln Douglas debate.

Students got plenty of practice and preparation for these tournaments from the three invitational tournaments held earlier in the month. The most recent invitationals were the Stanford Invitational and the James Logan Martin Luther King Invitational. Both ended on Jan. 18. Approximately 24 teams and individuals attended the Stanford Invitational this year, while 17 attended the James Logan Invitational.

At the James Logan Invitational, freshmen Arian Raje, Ruchi Maheshwari, Nevin Prasad, Roshan Verma and Wang moved on to the preliminary rounds in extemporaneous speaking.

However, none made it to the semifinals. Rallabandi, Vishwanath and freshman Bijan Naimi all made it to the finals round in Oratorical Interpretation at the Stanford invitational. Vishwanath and Naimi ranked fourth and fifth, respectively in the tournament. Rallabandi won first place in the Oratorical Interpretation event at Stanford. Freshman Ronit Dey went onto the semifinals round for Oratorical Interpretation.

"In complete honesty, winning the Stanford Invitational was something I never imagined doing," Rallabandi said. "As a child, I struggled with issues in my confidence and speaking. I visited multiple counselors, but speech has given me the confidence that no amount of counseling can ever provide, and to see my personal growth has been an amazing experience."

At the same tournament, sophomore public forum debaters Sathvik Koneru and Karthik Ramachandran made it to the double-elimination round. Sopho-

mores Ayush Aggarwal and Ramakrishna made it to the triples elimination round.

"It felt good [to move to the preliminary rounds] because we worked really hard before this tournament so it validated our work," Ramachandran said.

The Arizona State University (ASU) tournament took place from Jan. 7-9.

Aggarwal and Ramakrishna advanced past the preliminary rounds with a record of 4-2, moving on to the triples round. Ramachandran and Koneru had a 3-3 record in the preliminary rounds. Raje reached the final round, placing second out of all the extemporaneous speakers at the tournament.

At this tournament, the teams who qualify for the octo-finals round will automatically qualify to the Tournament of Champions, a selective tournament held each year for the best debaters.

"Because of the level [of competition], to be able to come so close to victory was actually pretty thrilling," Raje said. ♦

## MOCK TRIAL

# Scrimmages prepare team

by Katherine Zhou

The mock trial team competed against West Valley Middle College for its first scrimmage on Jan. 12. The team has been preparing for competition season over the course of the year, creating both a prosecution and defense case for People v. Hayes, a case about the murder of a security guard.

The team is participating in a series of scrimmages in preparation for the Santa Clara County competition, which will start on Feb. 2.

"The team has been having a run-through at every practice," said sophomore Stacey Chen, who plays the part of a witness. "We've practiced going over our lines and using objections."

The team made many changes this year, thanks to the leadership of the

head coach, former attorney Mary McDonnell; in her second year of coaching, McDonnell has created an itinerary for practices so that they are more organized.

"This year, we [focused on] the use of emphasis on certain words that makes the team more confident overall," said junior Jackie Han, an attorney for the school.

The team is more prepared for competition than in recent years, according to Han. She said that the case is much more interesting than those from previous years.

"Saratoga still has a way to go in preparation, but we did significantly better than our opponent in the first scrimmage," Han said. "Although they had some of their lines memorized already, I thought we had more confidence and presence and knew [our] objections much better." ♦

## HISTORY BOWL

# Falcons aim to defend title

by Neil Rao

"In this state, Robert Barnwell led the Bluffton Movement and the Nullification Crisis was sparked by John C. Calhoun."

Immediately, freshman Kiran Rachamalla slammed the buzzer and shouted "South Carolina!" to win the Saratoga High History Bowl competition on Dec. 5. The final match, held in the school, was against a home schooled team, Pioneers.

Having sealed its spot in the national finals in Washington, D.C., during the week of April 20-25, the team rejoiced after a hard-fought match.

Throughout the past year, the History Bowl team has been on course to qualify for the national competition.

Due to the success of class of 2015 alum Bruce Lou, who placed first nationally in the individual History Bee and led the team to first at Nationals last year, the team was able to make a name for itself as it became recognized as one of the best in the nation.

Following Lou's lead, the team is preparing for the nationals.

"We have started increasing the diffi-

culty of problems so when we get to the national competition, we will be more prepared for the harder ones," junior captain Bryant Chang said.

The team is also participating in many more tournaments to train and strengthen the members of both JV and varsity, said Chang. The members have weekly practices with tournaments about every three weeks to keep their knowledge improving as they approach nationals.

Both the JV and varsity teams are looking to continue on earlier successes with a good record at nationals. Last year, the JV team placed second and the varsity team won the tournament. They hope to continue this streak, despite the loss of Lou and those who advanced to the varsity team.

"The JV team won its division, so I am excited for the new members of our team since they played very well in their first tournament," Chang said.

With the national finals approaching quickly, the team is anxious to represent the school and win altogether.

"Even if we don't [win], I'll be proud as we have definitely improved for the future," Rachamalla said. ♦

## ROBOTICS

# Falcons finish 7th in First Tech Challenge

by Maya Prasad & Roland Shen

As the new year takes off, so does the robotics season.

The MSET 7641 team placed seventh in the First Tech Challenge (FTC) on Jan. 23 in Daly City. In addition, the team won the control award at the competition, which ensured them a spot at the regional competition.

The more advanced juniors and seniors on the First Robotics Challenge (FRC) team have also begun to build their robot for the upcoming FRC season.

FTC teams are mostly made up of freshmen and sophomores, since the program features simpler robots.

The competition is meant to introduce students into robotics. Later on, as these students become more advanced, they can join the FRC team, which has more complex robots and more difficult competitions.

The next FTC competition takes place Jan. 30 in Auburn.

The teams started building their FTC robots in November; since then, they have attended one tournament at Sequoia High on Dec. 5.

"To prepare for this tournament, our team met in the robotics room pretty much every day the week before and just worked on making adjustments to

the robot so that it functioned well," freshman Ankur Garg, member of team 7390 said.

There are three FTC robotics teams, each consisting of around 15 members. As the next few tournaments approach, all of the teams are working furiously to finish final improvements to their robots.

On the other hand, the first FRC competition, which will be preceded by an intense six-week building period, will be on March 13 in Madera. In its first week of planning, the team prototyped and brainstormed robot designs.

This year's game is modeled after a medieval theme. The basic concept is to design a robot that can get across nine different types of barriers, like a moat or a draw-bridge.

Then once on the other side, the robot must shoot boulders into the castle and capture the castle by hanging from a bar on the tower.

"Right now, we are in the midst of designing the robot and our strategy for the games," junior Rachel Won said. "Competition is not exactly in our mindset right now because we need to start getting the parts first, which will happen in week four."

In roughly two to three weeks, Won said that team would get the actual parts of the robot and put the physical robot together, because currently the design is entirely on the computer.



Senior Elizabeth Li works on a part during the six-week building time for the FRC season.

Using a computer designing system called CAD (computer-aided design), the robot is designed electronically to make sure the geometry and dimensions work when put together in the form of a robot.

"CAD helps us visualize what the robot will do before we [start] actually physically building it and realize that there is a mistake in the robot and lose the competition," Won said.

As the robotics team gathers its data and material in order to execute this next task, it hopes that the work that they have put in during the six-week building period will pay off at FRC and that they will be allowed to pass onto the next level.

At the end of the qualification period, the top eight robots pick two other robots to join their alliance, fighting until there are four left in semifinals and then, finally, two left in finals.

After attending World Championships in April last year as part of a second pick for the second alliance, the robotics team hopes to lead an alliance to victory with its strong junior and senior lineup.

"I'm really glad that the juniors and seniors have a good relationship because it allows us to get a lot of work done in stressful situations," junior FRC member Kai Doney said. "We're all really good friends outside of robotics as well." ♦

## COMPETITION

# Three students honored in Intel Science Talent Search

by Kelly Xiao

The prestigious Intel Science Talent Search (STS) competition is a nationwide research competition for high school seniors only. Its entry requirements include a research paper, transcripts, multiple essay responses, test scores and instructor recommendations.

This year, seniors Alex Li, Dorrie Tang and Kristine Zhang were named among the 300 semifinalists from across the nation that Intel selected out of about 1,750 applicants. They were not among the 40 finalists chosen for the competition.

For the three, the research projects were the result of many months of effort.

Li wrote computer procedures to analyze NASA data and calculate the energy build-up in the sun's corona.

## &gt;&gt; intelresults

These students were chosen as semifinalists from 1,750 applicants.

Alex Li	Li wrote computer procedures to analyze NASA data.
Dorrie Tang	Tang designed an application running on data networking.
Kristine Zhang	Zhang investigated peptides involved in Alzheimer's disease.

"I was first drawn to [my project] because I heard a NASA press release which explained why this was an important [research topic]," Li said.

For her part, Zhang investigated the aggregation of peptides involved in Alzheimer's disease to further drug and diagnosis development. She completed her research at a UC Santa Cruz laboratory after being accepted to the university's summer Science Internship Program.

"[When I found out I had been awarded], I was very happy and surprised," Zhang said. "There are a lot of high quality projects that are entered into Intel STS, so it was an honor to be chosen."

Tang's research project took an application-based approach to the field of networking and Internet architecture. She designed and implemented an application running a new Internet architecture named "Data Networking."

"I examined what I wanted my application to do and came up with a packet-level namespace design that would work for the use case and with different modules that my application would need," Tang said. "Then I coded the modules, which interacted which each other and the network tested."

For all three of the semifinalists, their success in the Intel STS competition was the product of their strong interest in science and hours poured into the research process.

"Doing scientific research is an intellectually stimulating process, and no matter what result I could've gotten I know I've learned so much from working on my project," Tang said. ♦

**BAY AREA DRIVING ACADEMY**

Looking for Instructor Carrie?

Do you have the best driver training & education possible?

6 Hour Teen Driving Academy Program  
Now Available

Sign up for your first lesson today!

For more information:  
[info@bayareadrivingacademy.com](mailto:info@bayareadrivingacademy.com)

**bayareadrivingacademy.com**

## SCHEDULE &gt;&gt;

continued from pg. 1

40 minutes. The schedule is a rolling block, meaning that the current “skinny Monday” schedule, where all classes meet for 47 minutes, will no longer exist; students will have each class an average of two and a half times per week. School will end as late as 3:45 on “odd days” for students who have a seventh period.

Los Gatos High and Saratoga will have the same schedule next year, but Los Gatos was already on a rolling block system. Los Gatos’ new schedule didn’t generate much parent opposition, as Saratoga’s initially suggested schedule did. A main goal of the new schedule was to align the Los Gatos and Saratoga classes, so teachers can teach classes at both campuses.

After two hours of discussion and debate and protest by dozens of upset Saratoga community members during the meeting, the first schedule revision was heavily criticized; however, superintendent Bob Mistele, the final decid-

ing authority in the schedule question, approved the recommendation by the 26-member Schedule Advisory Committee (SAC) near the end of the meeting.

The district board did not conduct a formal vote on the issue, but Mistele asked the board members for their opinion, and they split 3-2, with Douglass Ramezane, Robin Mano and Rosemary Rossi in favor of the change, and President Cynthia Chang and Katherine Tseng against the first revised schedule.

## Tempers flare board meeting

Hands shot up in agreement as a parent addressed Mistele and the board about the proposed revisions to the new bell schedule. Tension hovered in

the room as some attendees expressed angry opposition in a rancorous, resentful tone. Parents, teachers and students each used 3-minute comments to express either their approval or grievances to the board regarding the changes.

According to several board members, the meeting had the largest turnout in the last seven years. The public comment section was so long that the meeting lasted until 10:30 p.m.

Last February, principal Paul Robinson announced that a new full block schedule would be created for the 2016-2017 school year, because many students disliked the current “skinny Monday.”

Later in the year, the administration from both high schools in the district approved a process for developing a new schedule at both sites: the SAC. Saratoga and Los Gatos students, teachers and parents applied to be part of the SAC

and were chosen based on previous involvement in the district.

The district hired professional facilitator Ken Yale to lead the meetings. Teacher Tony Palma was in

charge of data gathering and analysis, and district secretary Jane Marashian controlled the logistics. Other Saratoga staff on SAC included music director Michael Boitz, economics and government teacher Todd Dwyer, English teacher Natasha Ritchie, science teacher Kristen Thomson, guidance counselor Alinna Satake and assistant principal Brian Safine. Parents of students on the committee included Paige Berardo, Ron Jones, Darrell Miller and Laura Tillett. Seniors Vanessa Bahk and Josh Dey and sophomore Sohini Kar also served.

In September, the SAC was told to build a schedule to allow students to take seven classes, increase opportunities to connect with teachers, allow for

NEW SCHEDULE			
	ODD DAY		EVEN DAY
P1	8:15-9:45	P2	8:15-9:45
tutorial	9:45-10:20	tutorial	9:45-10:20
P3	10:25-12:00	P4	10:25-12:00
lunch	12:00-12:35	lunch	12:00-12:35
P5	12:40-2:10	P6	12:40-2:10
P7	2:15-3:45		

GRAPHIC BY ANGELA LEE

teacher collaboration and align instructional time at both schools. They were asked to do this in a way that aligns with current research about student learning, Boitz explained at the meeting.

After hours of research and meetings, the committee unanimously agreed on a new rolling block schedule.

## Opposing viewpoints come forward

Some teachers said a later start to the school day could be beneficial to students’ learning and health. Some parents, though, are concerned that the late start will encourage kids to sleep later.

“For working parents, it creates a hardship because many of us cannot drop our kids off at the later time and still make it to work on time,” Saratoga parent Sunny Wang told the board during the meeting.

In the original bell schedule endorsed by the SAC, classes were set to start at 8:40 each day so Saratoga teachers could collaborate in the morning. An 8:15 start may be problematic because Redwood Middle School begins at the same time in the morning, and there is so far no set time for teacher collaboration.

These new concerns replace the old one of not enough time in the classroom. Because California requires schools to provide a minimum of 64,800 instructional minutes, parents were originally concerned that including an eighth period in the instructional minutes along

with 85-minute periods would cut down too much on class time. Students would have been only been able to take seven academic classes in that schedule.

Another concern with the first schedule is that a 25-minute tutorial will be too short to make up missed work, or that most students will not use a daily tutorial. Now that it has been elongated, students will have more time to meet teachers and make up quizzes.

Many parents at the meeting said the committee selection process overlooked parents who have not been as involved in the past, but wanted to find a voice in the committee. Additionally, Saratoga parent John Poo said the SAC was formed by the administrations of the schools, not by the Board; therefore, it was not subject to the rules of the Brown Act, which would have required them to hold publicly agendized meetings.

“The SAC did not receive enough community input, and I did not see efforts to publicize the existence and efforts of this committee,” Poo said.

Though the committee did not gather as much community input as some parents wished, Boitz said that the committee completed extensive research with students’ best interests in mind. A series of public meetings are being held in order to communicate further updates on the bell schedule, including a board meeting at the Saratoga High library on Feb. 2. ♦

## GPA &gt;&gt;

continued from pg. 1

the student would receive a GPA of 3.0.

To be consistent with schools like Los Gatos, the administration is contemplating adopting a grading system that applies the same grade point average for pluses and minuses within the same letter category. AP and honors courses would still be calculated on a 5.0 grade-point scale.

According to principal Paul Robinson, out of all plus and minus grades, 55 percent of them are minus grades, while only 45 percent are plus grades. Thus, removing the grade-point difference not only will benefit the students with

the minus, but also will reduce pressure for students who feel obligated to aim for the extra grade boost from the plus, Robinson said.

“A lot of schools around us have this system in place, so I think it would make sense for us to adopt this new system,” sophomore Nathon Chin said. “It could decrease the stress students have over maintaining a certain grade.”

In addition to researching about the plus and minus grades, Robinson said that the leadership counsel and department chairs have talked to admission counselors at universities that students frequently apply to, asking them if removing pluses and minuses from students’ transcripts would impact admissions.

“The feedback we got was that it

doesn’t make that big of a difference,” Robinson said. “Leaving [the pluses and minuses] on [the transcript] or taking it off wouldn’t be the deciding factor of a student getting in or not getting in [to a school].”

Regardless of the plus or minus mark on the transcript, Robinson said colleges and universities will calculate grades the way they want to. They tend to choose a few classes, calculate them in their own fashion and then rank grades against everyone else’s.

“We’re doing a lot of research on the percentage of the plus and minus grades and how they have impacted students,” Robinson said. “We want to make sure we weren’t hurting anybody and [we’re trying to help].”

Since this idea was brought up at

the start of the school year, there has not been a serious discussion about this change. However, administration and counselors continue to further research and receive feedback to make the most efficient decision possible.

“We would implement it next year after we’ve spent this spring informing everyone as to why we’ve moved in this direction,” Robinson said.

If the change becomes official, the administration hopes that it will help reduce stress and competition among the students.

“We want to do what we think will best meet the needs of our students and give them at least a peace of mind that the grades they’re getting are really indicative of what they earned in their classes,” Robinson said. ♦

## SPRING MUSICAL

## Comedy ‘Guys and Dolls’ promises laughter, nostalgia

BY Vibha Seshadri

When “Les Misérables” premiered two years ago in the McAfee Center, some of the audience sobbed with tears of joy as they witnessed their friends and family perform one of their favorite stories.

Last year, “The Mystery of Edwin Drood” held the audience’s attention with its open-ended conclusion. This year, the audience will be gasping for air as they laugh uncontrollably during the spring musical, “Guys and Dolls.” The show premieres on April 22 at 7:30 p.m. and also runs on April 23, 24, 29 and 30.

According to drama teacher Sarah

Thermond, “Guys and Dolls” is a pre-Broadway, “old-fashioned piece of Golden Age comedy.”

“It’s charming, well-paced and just ridiculous enough to keep it exciting,” Thermond said. “It’s a staple for many high school drama programs and I think everyone will see why in April.”

The main characters of the show will be played by an experienced cast. Conman Nathan Detroit will be played by senior Austin Villaneuva and gambler Sky Masterson will be played by junior JT Hulme. Sarah Brown, head of the Save-a-Soul Mission and Masterson’s eventual love interest will be played by senior Nina Nelson. Juniors Gaya Chatterjee

and Julie Cai will be leading the crew. According to Thermond, students will easily connect to the “snappy, energetic” comedy in the show.

Additionally, “Guys and Dolls” will allow cast members to illustrate the versatility of their talents. The show includes many dance numbers, and for the first time ever, choir director Andrew Ford will be a vocal director of the show. Thermond anticipates her main challenge will be participation: There are three other student productions that take place during the “Guys and Dolls” rehearsal period.

“I’ve been joking with the students about how the script explicitly says the

minimum number of gentlemen actors we need for the show, but I’m pretty confident we’ll get the size cast we need to pull this off,” Thermond said.

The show also calls for elaborate set design ranging from the streets of New York City to a spontaneous trip to Cuba at the end of Act I.

For auditions, Thermond uses a technique called tpeacasting, which allows students to understand their characters and their goals during the auditioning process.

“[Auditions are] always [fun], getting to know the people that you will be working with for the upcoming show,” junior Raymond McCarthy said. ♦

## SUFC &gt;&gt;

continued from pg. 1

In addition to Taysi’s speech, the leadership class invited three other students, sophomore Althea Zhao, junior Saya Sivaram and senior Abhay Aanabathula, to speak. Zhao described her struggle to combat anorexia, Sivaram recounted how she had to stop going to school during junior year to deal with mental health issues, and Aanabathula spoke about his recent bout with severe depression.

Also during the assembly, leadership showed two videos made by students in the Media Arts Program. In one of the videos, students were told to read anonymous compliments. It was later revealed to them that those compliments were really about them.

For this year’s Speak Up for Change theme of “One Team, One Dream,” the leadership class chose four topics: substance abuse, student stress, self-confi-

dence and compassion in action.

Each period, the students watched a different educational video, chosen by the leadership class, that related to the topic of the day.

On Friday, the school gathered in the Large Gym once again for an assembly organized by the nonprofit Challenge Day organization.

“The goal is to bring people together and create connections, because the more that we understand each other, the better we treat other,” Challenge Day counselor Angela Aguilar said.

Following Aguilar’s and Challenge Day counselor Christopher Foster’s heartbreaking childhood stories, Aguilar led the students in an activity called “Stand Up,” where she read a series of statements, like “Stand up if you have ever been bullied or teased by someone in this room.”

According to Aguilar, the purpose of the activity was to allow students to physically see what their fellow classmates were experiencing.

“[The ‘Stand Up’ activity] made

I wanted to live.”

When the school needed a chemistry teacher to fill in for Nakamatsu, Kucer was the perfect choice.

“It is so great to see [Kucer] return to SHS,” said Chemistry Honors teacher Janny Cahatol, who was Kucer’s replacement after his retirement. “He’s so brilliant, and I’m pretty sure that if you put all of the teachers’ chemistry knowledge into one brain, that would be his.”

## KUCER &gt;&gt;

continued from pg. 1

“[Going to] Beijing was not how I wanted to spend my retirement and it wasn’t what I signed up for,” Kucer said. “I would find myself cleaning the house, tutoring some kids or going to the gym, but I knew that the Bay Area was where

## COMPUTER SCIENCE CLUB

## Preparations for competitions prove successful

BY Roland Shen

Students walk into Algebra 2 Honors and AP Computer Science teacher Debra Troxell’s room at lunch every other Monday, eager to apply complex algorithms to difficult problems and share their knowledge with other 15-20 Computer Science club members.

Junior Albert Tseng, who leads the club, explained that unlike the older Application Development (App Dev) club, the Computer Science (CS) club focuses on solving algorithm and logic based theoretical problems, while App Dev fo-

cuses on developing and releasing applications.

During meetings, members do presentations on different algorithms and solve problems from previous competitions. Occasionally, an alumnus experienced in computer science is invited to share his or her experiences as well.

The CS club has been actively preparing for its two major competitions: the USA Computing Olympiad (USACO) and the Programming Contest (PROCO).

Students who participate in USACO have four hours to solve three problems every month. Each problem has 10-

15 test cases and takes a large amount of time and thinking to correctly solve. The competition is one of the most difficult competitions for CS club members.

PROCO, on the other hand, is easier than USACO and takes place every May at Stanford.

Junior Mayank Pandey, a club member, has been participating in these contests for over two-and-a-half years.

“I find doing sufficiently hard CS problems very fun,” Pandey said. “I spend two to three hours a day doing USA-”

CO questions.” Tseng and senior Brendan Ney, co-presidents of the club, were delighted by the progress of CS club members in the most recent USACO competition last December. In past USACO tests, many members were unable to advance to the next level, such as from the silver level to the gold level. In December, however, an astonishing eight members were able to move up a division.

In the USACO competition, senior Jacky Lee and junior Yehchan Yoo advanced from bronze to silver division. Senior Nicholas Lai jumped two divisions, from bronze to gold. Tseng and junior William Hu, along with sophomore Tiffany Huang, advanced from silver to gold. Pandey and sophomore Aayush Gupta were able to jump from gold to platinum.

Tseng and Ney attribute the club’s success on the last test to its members’ dedication.

“Seeing a large number of people from Saratoga advance is a very positive event, given the high level of difficulty of the contest,” Tseng said. ♦



Tseng

## CHANGES

## Music teacher leaves SHS

BY Karissa Dong &amp; Katherine Zhou

As a result of a family emergency, music director and AP Music Theory and Modular Guitar Study teacher Anthony Lanzino resigned from his position in December. He has been replaced by former Lynbrook music instructor Dr. John Felder for AP Music Theory, and Dr. Steven Lin for the guitar course.

“Lanzino’s resignation was unfortunate,” said senior Jonathan Hess, who took the guitar course last semester. “He was a great role model and great musician, and I [really appreciated] his guidance.”

Lin, who joined the school’s staff last week, is currently the professor of guitar at San Jose State University, according to music director Jonathan Pwu.

On the other hand, Felder, stepping in for Lanzino’s theory class, was contacted by music director Boitz for the position.

“[Boitz] has known me for 20 years, and he wanted to see if I was available,” Felder said. “Since I retired four years

ago, I’ve helped out for somebody every so often.”

Before retiring, Felder earned a doctorate in composition at University of California, San Diego; he also held a lectureship at the University of California, Santa Cruz for six years, teaching Electronic Music, Music Theory, 20th Century Composition and Music History. For the next 18 years, he taught orchestra, band, jazz band and AP Music Theory at Lynbrook High School.

Felder said that he preferred teaching high school students over college students, who felt the stress of “publish or perish.”

“I think that I just have a particular affinity for teenagers,” Felder said. “With high school students, you can see them over four years, and see them grow from kids to adults.”

Junior Theo Luan, one of Felder’s AP Music Theory students, praised Felder’s efficient mode of instruction.

“[Felder] is very passionate about the subject,” Luan said. “He’s going to present a challenge for students to excel in the class.” ♦

## STAFF

## Chen returns to teaching

BY Allison Lin

After a semester of maternity leave, Economics/AP Government and Psychology teacher Hana Chen has returned to the classroom. After a turbulent first semester with two substitutes for her classes, Chen is eager to help her students get up to speed with the curriculum in preparation for the upcoming AP test; her classes are even more relieved to have their teacher back.

“We had a hard time getting used to the substitutes’ teaching style,” senior Cayla Zelanis said. “The substitutes veered off topic quite often and we all had a harder time adjusting.”

On her first day back from winter break on Jan. 4, Chen asked her students to air out all of their grievances from the past semester. After 10 minutes of venting out their frustrations, Chen’s students were thankful to have their real teacher back.

“Now that I’ve returned to the job I love, it’s time to reel my students back in,” Chen said. “My AP Government

students are currently being brought up to speed to other Government classes.”

The first two Government units were taught at the end of the previous semester after the Economics portion finished, but many students shared with Chen that they were not yet comfortable with the material.

Chen is reteaching the first two units before moving on to the third and has been lecturing for the majority of the month of January.

She promised her classes they would be completely caught up with history teacher Kirk Abe’s class by the end of January.

“I like to make my classes interesting and enjoyable with activities, short clips and projects,” Chen said. “However, I told my kids that the most important task at hand is making sure they are comfortable with the first two units.”

“I think these next few months will be better in terms of communication and relationship with our teacher,” Zelanis said. “I’m excited to get to know [Chen].” ♦



FALCON // HELEN CHEN

Seniors (left to right) Emily Ludwig, Shiva Djabbari, Celine Liang, Karen Chen, Luke Salin, Joe Eschen and Arjun Ramanathan answer questions about school stress.

me realize that lots of people are going through the same thing I’m going through,” sophomore Tiffany Huang said.

“Saratoga was amazing,” Aguilar

said. “It was such a powerful experience for us to be able to be with all of you and see the way that we [all brought] the compassion and energy out of each other.” ♦

CRIME >>

continued from pg. 1

drug-related, non-violent offenses. The measure was intended to save the state \$100-\$150 million statewide. Part of the money was allocated to go to public schools and crime prevention and safety awareness programs to counteract the increase of offenders.

But with the influx of inmates back into communities, crimes have increased throughout the state, including Saratoga.

"As long as the criminals are in jail, our community is safe. Unfortunately, some of our lawmakers didn't see it that way," said Rick Sung, Division Commander at Santa Clara County Office of the Sheriff. "When all these criminals don't get locked up, we see more property crimes."

Sheriff's deputy Chad Garton, the school's resource officer, also attributed the influx in Saratoga burglaries to economic conditions, relatively light penalties and relaxed safety precautions.

"As the economy starts slumping, there are [fewer] jobs available to people, and [because] people need to pay the bills, they turn to crime," Garton said.

How burglaries happen

The penalty for a first-offense residential burglar, in which the homeowners are not present, is up to 120 days of jail time; if the homeowners are present, it is a mandatory three-year sentence. Because of the drastic difference in sentences, Garton said many burglaries occur during the daytime, when most residents are not at home.

Even so, the punishments fail to deter many "burglary crews" from breaking into homes. Garton said that each crew consists of around three or four people, each with a specialized task. One acts as the lookout and driver, who waits around the corner, while the other two to three enter the home and steal valuables.

The sheriff's department has recently noticed a tactic commonly employed by burglars known as "Knock and Talk." A burglar will knock on the door, and if the resident answers, the burglar will either pretend to be a solicitor selling a product or attempt to create an excuse. If the burglar receives no answer, he or she will force entry through a door or a window in the backyard and proceed to steal.

Each burglar crew specializes in stealing specific valuables and targets a particular region. For instance, Garton said that some groups focus on burgling elec-

tronics to resell on sites such as Craigslist, and others target Asian communities.

The Golden Triangle neighborhood, with a heavily Asian demographic, has fallen victim to many cases of burglary.

One victim of crime is senior Sweeya Raj. Last November she parked her car in front of her house in the Golden Triangle neighborhood and accidentally left her purse on her backseat.

In the morning, she found her backseat window shattered, and her purse gone. Though the purse contained only a few gift cards, the purse itself was expensive, and her driver's license was in it. Two other vehicles on her street were also burgled that night.

The deputies arrived at the scene in the morning, interviewed Raj and her neighbors and collected fingerprints. Since then, Raj has not received any information regarding the capture of the burglars.

Raj advised people to practice simple safety precautions.

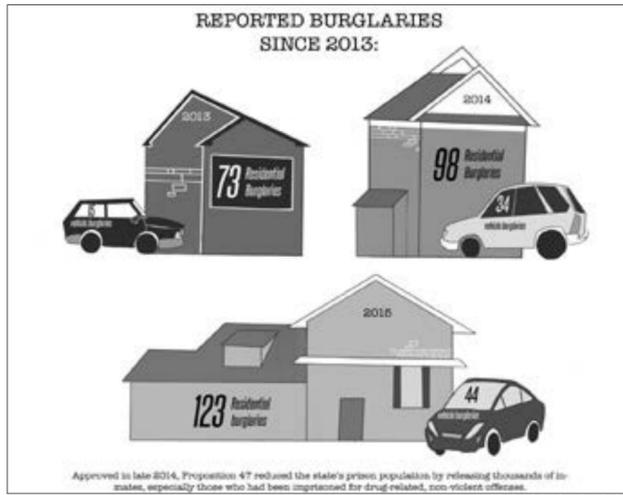
"Don't leave stuff in your car," Raj said, "because no one is going to break into your car if there is nothing worth stealing. I never leave anything in my car anymore, and it shouldn't be a problem really."

Sheriff's efforts to decrease crime

The sheriff's department has taken the initiative to saturate burglary-prone areas with patrols. According to Garton, many sheriff's deputies drive unmarked units and wear inconspicuous attire.

"[The sheriff's deputies] contact people walking on the roads, we contact suspicious vehicles and we basically sit back and watch to see, if anybody is doing anything suspicious like going into a backyard," Garton said. "Using those techniques about three hours ago, we caught three burglars in the city of Cupertino [on Jan. 14.] It works. It works very well."

Sheriff's deputies also use the Internet to inform residents to make them



alert of potential danger.

"We send out a lot of information via Nextdoor, a social network more specific to crime prevention and sharing information, to inform our citizens of what's going on and what the latest technology or methods that criminals utilize so that they can watch out for those types of behaviors," Sung said.

In addition to the sheriff's department's efforts to reduce burglaries, Garton warned residents not to "become the victim easily."

"I say that because a lot of times people leave doors and windows unlocked. Don't do that," Garton said. "Don't leave valuables in plain sight, especially your vehicles. Lock your vehicles up."

Garton also recommended that the community install security cameras and alarms as essential preventive measures.

Junior Swetha Srinivasan, whose family has installed security cameras

after a few houses located in her neighborhood were burgled last August, said creating a community watch group could also further increase security in Saratoga.

"The Golden Triangle is surrounded by three or four schools anyway, so I think people need to try and watch out and have a watch group," Srinivasan said. "I know there are many adults who would be willing to start that and contribute to that."

Efforts to reduce the burglary rate have been implemented by residents and the sheriff's department, but, Srinivasan said that others in the community need to wake up to face the reality of crimes.

"Saratoga residents tend to be too careless," Srinivasan said. "We should think of our homes as a safe. Our safe needs to be locked and protected when we aren't there to protect it." ♦

>> togetalks

Do you feel safe in Saratoga?

"I do; having been in some other sketchier cities, I definitely feel safe in Saratoga."



senior Michelle Huang

"There have been many burglaries [near] my house, so if I'm up [late], I get a little paranoid."



sophomore Lesley Huang

MEASURE E

School prepares to install campus security cameras

By David Fan & Claire Rhee

After a football game last fall, a family returned to its car only to find that the front window had been smashed and one of their bags had been stolen.

Crimes like this have led the administration to install security cameras in the front part of the school. The installation is planned to happen in the early part of second semester, and if everything goes according to schedule, the cameras should be working by February break.

Money for the project comes from the Measure E construction bond. "We have discussed [the security cameras] on and off for the past two

years," principal Paul Robinson said. "It wasn't until this fall that we pushed the idea to the forefront and met with contractors about it."

Although incidents of vandalism have been few, Robinson said the school wants to ensure that the campus is as safe as possible.

The school is considering placing the cameras near the McAfee Center, the cafeteria and the Sports Plaza. However, Robinson said that more cameras will be added in more spots later as the school continues to work with the system and "modernize more buildings throughout the campus."

Currently, the only security cameras on campus are the cameras installed outside the McAfee Center 10 years ago, as

well as the cameras mounted outside the cafeteria looking back at the parking lot.

"The system is somewhat obsolete now," Robinson said. "The system we're looking at has much better cameras and a better way to view the panels from the office."

In addition to the new security system, the school will continue to provide and promote safety in other ways, he said.

Campus supervisors and other staff members consistently monitor different locations of the campus throughout

the day. They can be found wandering around during break, lunch and before school.

Robinson said that the school can only be as safe as the people here make it.

Technology can help immensely in this process, but safety relies mainly on the watchfulness of alert students and staff.

"We want to continue working together, preparing for the possibilities and addressing problems when they arise," Robinson said. ♦

Improve Your English Tutoring Services  
Critical Reading, AP English, SAT Writing

IMPROVE YOUR ENGLISH TUTORING SERVICES INC

Contact us today for a free trial lesson:  
**408-738-8384**  
freetrial@improveyouenglish.com  
www.improveyouenglish.com

**Smart Students Plan Ahead & Start Early**  
"I am currently a student at Carnegie Mellon University and I can honestly say that without Insight Education, I would not have gotten in. My SAT score improved by 400 and the help on my applications was unbelievable. My counselors at Insight didn't lecture or act like normal college counselors. They really put themselves in their students' shoes, and communicate on a personal level, while still maintaining the discipline and professional stance of college counselors."

**HIGH SCHOOL & COLLEGE ADMISSIONS COUNSELING**

- Educational Counseling for students in: 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> grades
- College Admissions: Essays, Applications, Interviews & Financial Aid
- Competitive Summer Internship Applications
- Private High School Admissions & Test Prep for Middle School students

**INSIGHT EDUCATION WINTER & SPRING PREP**

- NEW SAT BOOT CAMP Enroll now!**  
- Winter Break Express Boot Camp starts February 15<sup>th</sup>
- Spring is the best time to prepare for SAT SUBJECT TESTS**  
- Join Insight's SAT Subject Test Boot Camps for Biology, Chemistry & Math Level-2  
- Boot Camps: March 26<sup>th</sup> - April 30<sup>th</sup>
- AP TEST PREP FOR CHEMISTRY & BIOLOGY**  
- 5 full-length Diagnostic Tests + 15 hours of Test Review and Classroom Instruction  
- Test Prep Boot Camps: April 2<sup>nd</sup> - April 30<sup>th</sup>

To register, call us on (408) 252 5050 or email us at: [info@insight-education.net](mailto:info@insight-education.net)

For more information, visit us at:  
1601 S De Anza Blvd, Ste 108, Cupertino  
[www.insight-education.net](http://www.insight-education.net)

**Apply to College - Prepare for Life**

# Hiding grades during break causes anxiety

by Claire Rhee

Over winter break, I got to watch numerous TV shows and movies, finally enjoy ample sleep and have quality family time. But one thing bothered me: the blank screen in the Aeries grade portal.

Every year, the school shuts down the Aeries website (although all teachers will be switching to Canvas next school year) during finals week and opens it back up sometime during the second week of the second semester. This is a school-wide policy that is intended to lower student stress and give the teachers time to enter grades without the immediate rush of emails from students who have concerns about their grades. The school hopes that students will not worry about their grades over the holidays.

But for me and many other students, shutting down Aeries does just the opposite. Instead of forgetting about my final semester grades over break, I end up thinking about them even more. I would be far less stressed if I could see my grades immediately after the finals. That way, I would know my grades right away and would not have to stretch the

agonizing wait into January.

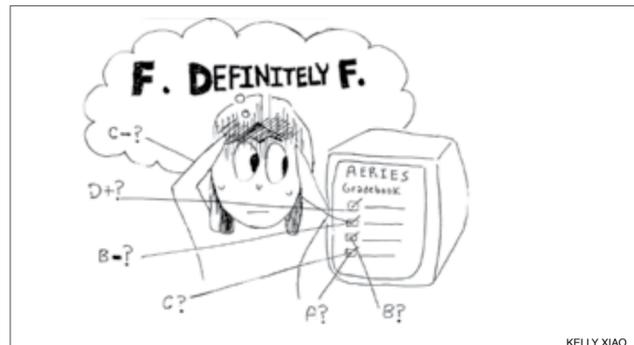
While closing Aeries is also meant to help teachers, keeping it open doesn't necessarily mean that teachers should have to answer to the students' requests to fix their grades right then. Teachers could use the first week of second semester to enter in final grades, not break. They can let the students know that they will finish adding in grade bumps or extra credit when the next semester begins.

Furthermore, most teachers seem to have finalized grades before the break anyway. Even though the final grades cannot be seen, I could see that my grades had been updated on Friday, Dec. 18, the teacher work day before break begins.

Obviously, teachers want to get their work done as soon as possible, so many finish grading on that Friday. Keeping the portal closed so that teachers can finish putting in grades is a well meaning but largely pointless exercise. Besides, closing off Aeries does not in itself grant teachers more time to grade work.

In order to allow for a genuinely stress-free break, Aeries should be left open. Students should be able to monitor their grades through finals week and

>> candidcaricatures



KELLY XIAO

understand where they might need to study a little harder. Since the students would then already know their grades going into break, it would not nearly be as tortuous as going two weeks without knowing how the first semester went.

Unblocking Aeries or Canvas is a win-win. If students can already see what their grades are, the teachers can

avoid being asked the same, tiring question: What is my final grade?

As of now, there doesn't seem to be a point to shutting the grading portal down. The practice just causes more stress over a supposedly "non-stressful" break, and I would prefer not to have to look at a blank Aeries screen again during the holidays. ♦

# The lesson we all need to learn: Exclusion is bullying

by Vibha Seshadri

Most of us remember scenes like this from elementary school: A young girl sprints toward the playground when the recess bell rings. She is meeting up with a group of her friends huddled around the swings, excited to see them. Yet, the moment she gets there, her friends tighten their circle, blocking her from entering. As she gently taps one on the shoulder, the circle grows smaller. The message is clear: she is unwelcome.

Since kindergarten, most of us have been taught that this type exclusion is also a kind of bullying, that we should talk to those who sit alone and allow those who want to play with us to do so. Since children of this age are still learning what normal social interaction is, this rule helps children develop a more tolerant, accepting personality.

By encouraging inclusion, we can teach them to be more open, tolerant adults. As adults, they will have the freedom to take part in such actions due to their plethora of responsibilities. Yet,

they will better understand the extent to which exclusion is unhelpful.

Children, however, have much to still discover about themselves. To teach children that exclusion is bullying is just like reprimanding a child for saying a curse word or for throwing a temper tantrum. It shapes a child's beliefs about acceptable, prosocial behavior. If adolescents learn how to interact with others in their social circles, they will be better equipped as adults.

If children are not taught that exclusion of the lone child at the lunch table, the new student from China or the student in the wheelchair is a form of bullying, complete exclusion of others is legitimized and will be carried on throughout adulthood. The results of these attitudes over a lifetime may be profound.

Imagine an incredibly quirky 15-year-old. He's slightly short, doesn't partake in small talk, shies away from eye con-

tact, is a physics whiz, but is incredibly kind and honest. In short, he's not what most consider a "normal 15-year-old." Nevertheless, it is evident that his underlying personality and genius can plummet him to both monetary and personal success.

Yet for either to happen, he will need support from both his family and his peers. If his peers, however, exclude him by ignoring or outwardly taunting him he may never reach his full potential. Every time he finds an opportunity to put forth his true self, he will remember everything negative that came with doing so, and restrict himself from reaching his potential.

If his peers did not taunt and exclude him, and at the very least seemed interested or supportive of his personality, then this boy would feel comfortable with who he is. He would be unafraid,

knowing that people, whether or not they care to spend a lot of time with him, at least care enough to talk to him.

The simple lessons we learn as children remain relevant in our adulthood in multiple ways. Adults who learned that exclusion is bullying would understand that completely ignoring people is wrong. Thus, they would be more tolerant to diversity.

Furthermore, if a child is the object of exclusion, then he may feel more comfortable telling an adult since he recognizes that he is being bullied. This allows those who were excluded as children to understand that even if it is not considered bullying in adulthood, it is not something to passively accept and condone. Labeling exclusion as bullying allows those who were excluded to be proactive about their situation and realize that the exclusion isn't their fault.

The "exclusion is bullying" rule may seem to only apply to elementary school students, yet if we look back at our childhood, we will realize that this "rule" has made us stronger, kinder individuals. ♦

>> candidcaricatures



OKSANA TRIFONOVA

applicant in a better light — one that cannot be achieved through the old application-only process.

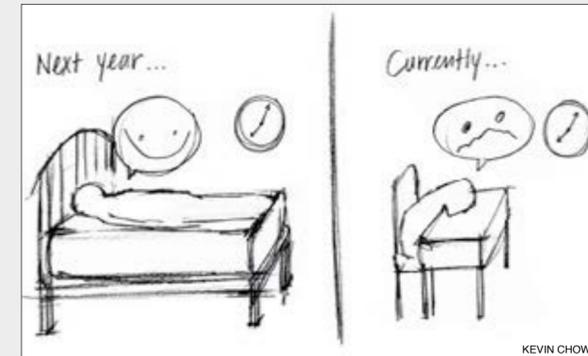
While recommendation letters may be controversial, opponents should realize that they are a fair way to truly eval-

uate a hopeful applicant.

In short, Berkeley's implementation of this practice is a step in the right direction from its previously absolutist system where applicants were treated more like numbers than people. ♦

# New schedule helpful to students

>> candidcaricatures



KEVIN CHOW

Finishing homework for seven classes, participating in extracurricular activities like sports and clubs, studying for tests and still enjoying the weekend has become a pipe dream for many students, especially those feeling the pressure to gain admission to the UCs, Ivy League schools or the equivalent.

But with the implementation of the new rolling block schedule next year, this balancing act will be — though not completely solved — a little easier to manage.

This new schedule will still split each week into odd and even block days. First, third, fifth and seventh period will be held on odd days; second, fourth, and sixth period will be held on even days. The first Monday of the new school year will be an odd day; from then on, odd and even days will alternate every week.

In addition, the school day will start 25 minutes later, at 8:15 a.m. instead of 7:50 a.m. School will end at 3:45 p.m. for those with a seventh period on odd days, and at 2:10 for those without. Tutorial will be held every day for 35 minutes.

The Los Gatos schedule preserves key elements of the original schedule. One such feature is the adoption of a full rolling block, which means that students will have a maximum

of four classes per day. This means that students will not have to suffer through the "Monday Rush" or "Sunday Crunch" to finish homework for seven classes. This change alone will benefit many students.

Under the new schedule, students will also be able to have a regular eating schedule, because lunch will be held every day at noon. Currently, lunch times vary from 11:15 a.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays to 12:15 a.m. on Wednesdays; students are often

hungry halfway through fifth period on those days. Some teachers worry that since classes will only meet twice a week every other week, students in language classes may suffer from the lack of immersion. But in actuality, the new system allows students to have more productive class time than they did under the old schedule. During the 47-minute class periods on Monday, students often wasted class periods since there is not enough time to actually begin lectures or labs for their classes.

While the new schedule has caused controversy and exposed divisions in the community, it is clear that the new schedule still helps students the most. Although the Los Gatos schedule is not as revolutionary nor as beneficial as the original proposed schedule, it is still a clear upgrade from the current situation. ♦

## Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

**Editors-in-chief**  
Ashley Chen  
Ariel Liu

**Opinion Editor**  
Kelly Xiao

**Reporter**  
Neil Rao



The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 28-6 in support of the editorial.

# A dissenting viewpoint: Rolling block problematic

by Frederick Kim

After the Schedule Advisory Committee (SAC) explained the new schedule to the parents at the board meeting in the Los Gatos High Library on Jan. 12, disappointment and disapproval instantly swept across various faces, and many proceeded to express their concerns during the public speaking session.

Many parents objected to the new schedule; ten days after that meeting, superintendent Bob Mistele revised the proposal so that Saratoga's schedule next year will be in total alignment with Los Gatos. However, the Los Gatos schedule does not address all of parent concerns raised at the Jan. 12 meeting.

For instance, many parents shared that the later 8:40 a.m. start time would have meant that school would end at 3:40 p.m. for students with seventh or eighth periods. This would have reduced the amount of time students have after school for extracurricular activities.

In this respect, the Los Gatos schedule is worse; for students with seven classes, school will end at 3:45 p.m. two to three times a week. Unless students reduce their after-school commitments, they will have far less time to complete homework and study. As a result, some may need the extra morning time to do homework rather than sleep in.

Under the schedule proposed by the SAC, school would have started at 8:40 a.m., which would have caused problems for some parents. Many students have two working parents who need to drop their children off before they com-

mute to work; and if school started an hour later, parents would have to arrive at work an hour later as well.

The Los Gatos schedule partially addresses this problem, as school begins at 8:15 a.m. However, this start time presents problems for parents with children at Redwood Middle School, since Redwood also begins at 8:15 a.m. Students' parents will have to drop one child off significantly before his or her school starts. Traffic around the city of Saratoga will also be severely impacted, as Saratoga High and Redwood are but a mere mile-and-a-half apart.

In addition, unlike the original SAC proposed schedule, which has daily, 25-minute tutorials, the Los Gatos schedule has 35-minute tutorials. Longer tutorials mean that students will be more able to complete make-up work and receive help from teachers during this time.

However, the Los Gatos schedule is still problematic because it is rolling block. Under this proposal, students will have their odd and even blocks on different days, so it will be difficult for students to schedule extracurricular activities during the week. Athletes who take seven classes will also face difficulties with the revised schedule.

Despite having taken over five months to think of a new schedule, the district still needed to address many problems which upsetted a wide range of people. But with the revised schedule matching that of Los Gatos, the district should reconsider the existing underlying issues in the schedule and the problems it will cause for students, parents and staff alike. ♦

# Speak Up for Change an inspiring experience

by Claire Rhee

When junior Saya Sivaram began her speech during the assembly on Tuesday of Speak Up For Change, my mood shifted quickly, and I changed from my usual grumpy morning self into an excited student, eager to listen to the experiences of others.

The leadership class this year planned an effective Speak Up For Change week; the week allowed me to learn about different students' life stories and taught me to open my mind to empathize with others.

The week began with a promising start — the Tuesday student assembly, where I had the chance to listen to student speeches, watch videos about the dangers of substance abuse and see students' reactions when they read compliments written about them from other students.

The speeches made me feel as if I had just jumped onto a rollercoaster of the student's life, experiencing each person's highs and lows. During senior Abhay Aanabathula's speech regarding his struggle with depression, I especially remember his gripping description of how he felt alone, collapsing on the street after running away from his house. It was amazing to watch him burst into laughter as he recalled funny hospital memories, a sign of his positive recovery.

Throughout the week, teachers were also asked to play specific videos pertaining to the topic of each day of the week. The one video that caught my attention was the video based around

improving self-confidence, which advised to do something you have been putting off and to show gratitude for others and yourself — a message that I have been trying to keep in the back of my mind.

On Friday, the Challenge Day assembly gave students and staff the opportunity to really learn about each other through its "Stand Up" activity, where students stood up if a certain phrase, like "Stand up if you have been bullied, harassed, or humiliated by somebody in this room," applied to them. I assumed just a few of students would stand up, as bullying seems so rare at Saratoga, but I was shocked to see nearly everyone around me standing.

Still, Speak Up for Change week had room for improvement; though the assemblies gave the student body a chance to hear some incredible speeches, some of them were a little too long. For instance, the original Tuesday schedule planned for an hour-long assembly; when the assembly went on 30 minutes longer, the rest of the day had to be rescheduled.

In order to avoid rescheduling, assemblies should be given a certain amount time and be able to stick to that. Otherwise, it causes difficulties for the students and staff.

Still, the content presented throughout the week inspired me to become more engaged with other students and staff at the school and to truly get to know my peers. Assuming that the school week would be tedious and tiring, I was completely wrong; it turned out to be just the opposite. ♦

# Unequal sympathy reveals ignorance and bias

BY Karissa Dong

On the cold evening of Nov. 13, terrorist attacks took more than 130 lives in the French capital, spurring an international outcry for peace. Paris was included in prayers all over the globe, and millions of Facebook users changed their profile pictures to the French flag. National monuments, from Australia's Sydney Opera House to Germany's Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, lit up in French colors in a pledge of solidarity.

One night before the Paris attacks, Lebanon's capital of Beirut fell victim to ISIL's bombs. A month earlier, in Ankara, Turkey, two bombs killed at least 100 residents. Back in April of the same year, armed terrorists massacred 148 university students in Garissa, Kenya, marking the nation's deadliest attack since 1998.

The world was eerily silent. The outpourings of love and expressions of despair, so powerful and prevalent after the Paris attacks, were notably missing. Mouths — preaching humanity and perseverance to the world after Paris — creaked on their hinges, as if saving their

breaths for a tragedy "of greater consequence."

And indeed, it seems as if Paris mattered enough to provoke outrage. But Garissa, Ankara and Beirut somehow did not.

Rather than seeking to change this, people quickly came to the defense of mourning Paris and only Paris. Several New York Times commenters felt entitled to caring more about Parisian victims because the attacks "happened virtually in America's backyard," by which they meant the elite bloc of first-world, democratic Western nations.

This is a ridiculously self-centered approach to world events. Are we not global citizens, who should be sympathetic to all human beings who inherit this earth — including those beyond "America's backyard fence"? This hierarchy of importance can't possibly be justified.

I understand that American citizens have a closer relationship with France. I realize that many people have visited Paris, whereas not many have traveled to Beirut, Garissa or Ankara. But this is not nearly enough to justify

such a gross disparity in media coverage and international support.

For decades now, powerful, Westernized countries — the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan — have given each other top priority. Their people, imbued with a sense of supremacy, shamelessly exploited the rest of the world with tactics from colonialism to unconscionable war. It should never be our intention to passively continue this mentality.

The unequal responses to Paris and Beirut, Garissa and Ankara evoke the bitter feeling that a Parisian life is worth more than, say, a Garissan one. The sentiment is not difficult to grasp. Historically, Eurocentrism has played a major role in global affairs.

France itself was a major player in European imperialism in Africa, destroying the very fabric of African life and culture during its occupation of Tunisia, Algeria, Burkina Faso and many other countries. Millions upon millions — 10 million were killed in the Belgian Congo alone — died, and the Western Man did not care. Now, over 50 years later, Kenya cries out and still, the Western Man does not care.

What we have, now, is an apparent comparison of life worth. There's simply no way that we can achieve global sympathy by proving, over and over again, that we care more about Western societies than African and Middle Eastern communities.

Others objected to "unnecessarily bringing up Beirut when Paris is bleeding," suggesting that the weight of the

Beirut tragedy lessens when French blood has been spilled. When, then, will the Beirut tragedy deserve attention? From the Eurocentric perspective many currently have, it never will be.

After the Paris shootings, many Americans feared for themselves — if France can be attacked, couldn't the United States fall victim, too? Quickly, we doubled cries for an end to these grisly terrorist attacks; we denounced them, hailed humanity and vowed never to let evil triumph.

But we didn't call terrorism out for its crimes until it hurt the citizens of Western nations. We merely shook our heads, in a sort of resigned acceptance, when we read the news about Ankara and Beirut bombings, as if this was "their reality" and we couldn't be bothered to play a part in changing it.

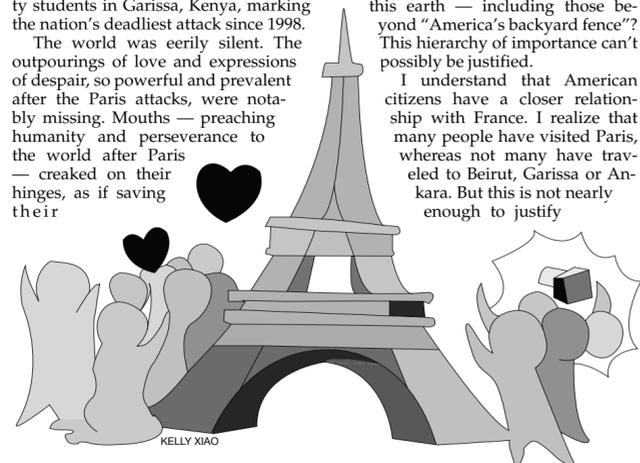
But we reacted in rage when our peaceful, first-world "reality" came under threat.

The truth is that American behavior before and after Paris has been extremely disappointing, from the individual citizen to the national media — controlled by a select group of people, whose views represent the average American's to some degree.

For a "globally-oriented nation," we choose to place our sympathies with only ourselves and those like us.

What America hails herself to be — progressive and compassionate — is, unfortunately, a mere "American Dream." ♦

**For a "globally-oriented" nation, we choose to place our sympathies with only ourselves.**



## ISPE program needs to be more rigorously regulated

BY Neil Rao & Roland Shen

With the school's independent study physical education (ISPE) program on the rise, the administration should implement more regulations to ensure that these top athletes are making real progress in their sports.

ISPE, the school's program for student athletes who compete at a state or national level and practice 10 or more hours per week, grants participants the same credit that a school sport or P.E. class would give.

Unfortunately, because there are so few ways to verify that students are following the requirements, some are able to take advantage of this special program to avoid participating in physical fitness classes or school sports. For instance, some sports such as karate and taekwondo have no real ranking systems, making it nearly impossible to determine whether the participant is actually ranked statewide or nationally.

In addition, some participants lie about completing their full 10 hours of practice every week because the school has no foolproof way of verifying their practice logs. Those who take advantage of the ISPE program in this manner demean students who actually participate in rigorous physical activities and put in the requisite 10 hours each week.

In order to prevent abuse of the ISPE program, the administration should enforce the regulations more strictly. The best way to enforce the rules is through a thorough check of their forms.

Currently, some athletes simply have their coaches sign the form without telling them what it is for. Others lie to them about what the form is about. The paper is a simple sheet log where

students record their attendance; all the coach has to do is sign at the bottom. Because the form requires little to no prior verification of the coach's acknowledgment of the student's ability, it is easy for students to lie about the form.

Furthermore, some coaches are unaware of what the form is for, so they have no idea that they are being used to unfairly grant P.E. credit.

To combat this, the school should require these coaches to submit independent evidence of the athlete's training and ability through training logs that show what the student did during each practice, not just the student turning in a form with a signature and a number of hours. By doing so, the school will be able to differentiate those who should be in ISPE from those who shouldn't.

Even if some sports do not have a clear boundary between regular competitors and state or national ones, the second step should be to strengthen it the 10-hour rule.

Some athletes are turning in forms that state that they practice for 10 hours a week, yet these numbers can be exaggerated or even falsified. The forms require students to state how many hours they practiced, but they don't demand any proof with the exception of a single signature that can easily be forged. The administration should instead ask for clear schedules of the students' daily practices and require some kind of documentation that comes straight from coaches as opposed to students.

The ISPE program definitely makes sense for athletes who spend a lot of their own time practicing their sport. Though the program has a lot of potential, it should only allow dedicated athletes who follow all the standards of the program to reap its benefits. ♦

## Post-final Formal would raise student attendance

BY Caitlyn Chen & Elizabeth Lee

As last semester drew near to its end, students began to focus on studying for finals as dance commissioners started planning decorations for their biggest event of the semester, Winter Formal.

Winter Formal, which was held on Dec. 5 at the Children's Discovery Museum, was the only formal dance during the fall semester. Although it attracted a significantly larger crowd than in previous years, the fact that it was held two weeks before finals discouraged more from attending.

To increase attendance rates and encourage a more relaxed school culture, Formal should be held directly after finals so that students can spend a carefree night out with their friends without worrying about studying during Formal. In addition, some Saratoga parents discourage their children from going to Formal because they put academics as the students' top priority, even before social activities at school.

This change would relieve students from the pressure of their upcoming exams and also make the dance more lively and fun to attend.

Not only would this change benefit students, but it would also help the dance commission members. In the weeks before the dance, commission members must spend dozens of hours on preparation, in addition to juggling schoolwork. Postponing the dance until after finals would permit them to desig-

nate all their time after school into just decorating and preparing for the event.

In the past, dance commission members have felt the stress of planning a school dance while balancing their academic schedules.

"Around finals [and] dead week, everyone has a lot of questions for teachers and last minute things to discuss during tutorials," sophomore dance commissioner Lillian Zeng said. "But, since we're rushing to finish Formal decorations and plans, we have to sacrifice tutorials to do that instead."

The event could also be used as a way to de-stress and relax after a semester filled with worry and schoolwork, which in turn would align with the school's mission to relieve student stress.

Some may say that having Formal after finals would interfere with students' vacation and family time, but most families prefer to wait a day or two before going out of town anyway.

If Formal were held the Thursday or Friday night directly after finals, then the change wouldn't affect ticket sales negatively. Another option would be to hold the dance in early January, but many students would prefer to have at least one formal dance during first semester.

If finals preceded the dance, more students would be willing to take time off for the event, thereby increasing ticket sales. Ultimately, this would both benefit the school's budget through ticket sales and allow more students to attend Winter Formal. ♦

**The fact that [Formal] was held two weeks before finals discouraged more from attending.**

# 16 things to look forward to in 2016



El Niño helps relieve California drought. NOAA/NEWS.COM



Super Bowl 50 comes to Levi's Stadium. SFEXAMINER.COM



Spanish students travel to Cuernavaca. COURTESY OF KANIKA VORA



'Fuller House' to be released on Netflix. PEOPLE.COM



Leap Year adds an extra day to the year. HISTORY.COM



Junior Class to hold Dandia fundraiser. FRANCISCOBAYEVENTS.COM



Bieber's 'Purpose' world tour to be at SAP. NYDAILYNEWS.COM



Harry Potter World opens in Universal L.A. POTTFORMOREWORLD.WORDPRESS.COM



Saratoga seniors graduate high school. COURTESY OF AG KARUNAKARAN



Warriors aiming for repeat NBA win. NBA.COM



'Finding Dory' continues 'Finding Nemo'. TELEGRAPH.CO



Summer Olympics open in Rio de Janeiro. URBANLAND.UJI.ORG



New rolling block schedule starts. BLOGSPOT.COM



Election of 45th president to change USA. CBSNEWS.COM



iPhone 7 thinner and lighter than before. DAILYMOTION.COM



New superhero movies to flood theaters. COLLIDER.COM

## Confession: I'm just another sorry case of senioritis



Name: Andrew Jiang  
Diagnosis: senioritis  
Symptoms: Laziness, procrastination, loss of motivation, constantly hanging out with friends  
Like many seniors, I have recently been diagnosed with senioritis. Although specific symptoms are unique to each senior, the above are general symptoms experienced by all.  
Let's start with the first: laziness. The moment first-semester finals ended, I suddenly felt the need to do ... absolutely nothing. Getting out of bed isn't a necessity anymore, because I have either

Netflix to watch or a good book to read. I've even been too lazy to write this story, which is now around four weeks late (if anyone sees Lifestyles editors junior Spring Ma and senior Summer Smith, please tell them not to kill me).

With so much more free time, I've now both rediscovered lost hobbies and found new ones. After quitting Netflix during the Hell more commonly known as junior year, I have recently finished watching the "Breaking Bad" series and just started "Jessica Jones." I bought FIFA 16 and Madden 16 over winter break. In an effort to try something new (and force myself to leave my house), I have even embraced my inner Indian and joined Bombay in the Bay, dancing away all my obligations.

Alumni friends warned me that I would lose interest in my classes, but I didn't know it would be this bad. I have yet to come to school on time this semes-

ter, "bathroom breaks" during class are short trips to physics teacher Kirk Davis's classroom and desks have become my preferred place to nap.

Now, you all must be thinking that I've taken things a little too far. But in my defense, I think this break is well deserved. For three and a half years I've

endured sleepless nights and an unhealthy amount of stress. I already know what college I'm going to. Excuse me for thinking I deserve to relax.

I would continue to explain the extent of my senioritis, but I would rather play a game of FIFA. Lionel Messi is waiting for me. ♦

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



EXAMINING NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

## Aspiring Marine pursues body-changing dream

BY Frederick Kim

Struggling to catch his breath, junior William Chen sprinted home on his last 100 meter dash, after spending the night executing around 70 bleacher runs at the school's football field. With every day of training, junior William Chen knew he was one step closer to achieving his dream: earning a six pack in preparation for becoming a U.S. Marine.

The life-changing goal, however, was not easy to accomplish.

"It was really hard to stay away from fast food, as I used to eat it every day," Chen said. "I really didn't think I could even make it past 20 [pounds]."

According to Chen, one major obstacle that stood in his way was his history of eating fast food.

Often times Chen said his mother, out of habit, would offer him Jack in

the Box for dinner even when he asked for a salad.

Even though Chen initially struggled with changing his old habits, he set smaller goals to benchmark his progress. Chen first tackled his McDonald's eating habits, deciding to order an artisan sandwich as a healthier substitution for his usual six cheeseburgers.

In the beginning, Chen said he was "confused and overwhelmed with all the nutrition and diet information online." But with the help of his friend junior Max Vo, Chen was able to siphon out the false statistics and misleading data to a more understandable level.

"I let him know what food to eat to achieve a balance of macromolecules (carbohydrates, fats and

proteins) and taught him how to track his calorie intake," Vo said. "It took a while for him not only to learn but also to be able to adapt." Understanding the necessity of

**“When you give things time, you will see what you want to see. Results don't come overnight.”**



junior William Chen

proteins and fibers, Chen became more cognizant of including these aspects into his daily diet. He also made sure to include carbohydrates before his workouts, so that he had the energy he needed to exercise.

Despite the initial hurdles, Chen felt a surge of support when people noticed the change in his body, since many noted that he

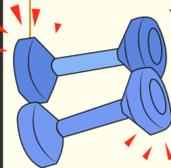
"looked smaller" coming back from summer vacation. After three months of strict dieting and weekly workouts, Chen found that he had lost 51 pounds, 11 pounds more than his initial goal of 40 pounds.

"I was shocked when I passed my initial goal especially since I didn't know what I was doing at first," Chen said, "but getting the results made me happy."

Though his workouts have become more sporadic due to school commitments, Chen is still working towards achieving a six pack by using the school's weight room 5 to 6 times a week.

Through the hours of hard work in the gym, Chen has not only become stronger physically, but also mentally, making him feel more prepared to become a U.S. Marine.

"People should know that when they make New Year's resolutions and when you give things time, you will see what you want to see," Chen said. "Results don't come overnight." ♦



## Blogilates challenge exhausting but rewarding

cait the great

Caitlyn Chen



"Hold it! Hold it! Find comfort within your discomfort!" yelled Blogilates instructor Cassey Ho, her voice echoing from the TV.

My sister and I squirmed around uncomfortably as we persisted through Ho's "Earthquake" exercise, where we leaned back slowly from a sitting position, holding our arms and legs in a V-shape, quivering with exhaustion. "5...4...3...2...1!" Ho counted as I collapsed on the ground, streams of sweat staining my yoga mat.

I thought I was fit because I dance 10 hours a week, but I guess I still have a long way to go. At least, that's what Ho proved to me.

Ho, the founder of Blogilates, is a 28-year-old fitness instructor who creates YouTube videos including various exercises, healthy eating tips and workout vlogs.

Since my sister came home from college, I've been eating non-stop, so when Ho announced her

#30daywaisttrainer challenge for January, I decided to take it and make my New Year's Resolution to do at least one Blogilates workout a day, with the hope of dropping the five pounds I had gained over the holidays.

On the first day of the new year, I was excited, pulling up "Intense Indoor Cardio" at 9 a.m. in the morning. Yes, it was tiring, but the adrenaline of the new year motivated me.

After finishing the video, I continued with "Abs on FIRE," "Butt on FIRE," and more, letting YouTube autoplay run for two hours. Exhausted as I was after my Blogilates marathon, I felt confident that my resolution would last.

The morning after, however, I wasn't so sure. When I tried to stand up, my quad muscles spazzed uncontrollably as I fell back into bed, trying to shake out the involuntary movement.

Throughout the day, I helplessly grasped onto furniture to keep myself on my feet as my legs twitched periodically. Even though I felt dangerously unstable, I convinced myself that the unbearable soreness proved I was just getting stronger. And though

it may have been just a hallucination, I swear I saw a solid four-pack when I looked in the mirror that day.

I spent the next couple of days recovering from my Blogilates binge, taking it easy with only three or four 10-minute videos a day. But just when my legs had recovered, dance rehearsals started again after a two-week winter vacation.

The combination of two hours of dance and 30 minutes of Blogilates a day is physically taxing. Furthermore, school kicked in again and it was difficult to balance my workout and study time.

On the seventh day of my resolution, I ended up doing my Blogilates at 11:30 p.m., right after I had finished my World History readings. All the jumping, unfortunately, woke my mom up. She came into my room, rubbing her eyes and asked, "Why is the whole house shaking?"

By the 12th day, I was only doing one video per day, and honestly, I don't think it was making much of a difference. I no longer felt that satisfying soreness, which as painful as it

was, reassured me that all the time and effort I put into exercising was worth it.

Lying on the ground, breathless after just half of a video, I wanted to give up and go to sleep. I mean, what was I thinking? I can't even sustain a Snapchat streak, let alone a workout streak. This kind of commitment was beyond me.

But the next day, as I was checking Instagram, I saw that Ho had posted a picture that read, "I workout because ..." I realized that I shouldn't be working out to drop pounds, I should be doing it for the health of my body.

With that, I experienced a renewal of hope. I've been doing more videos a day, and I'm hoping to persist with this throughout 2016.

Like Cassey would put it, "Sore today, strong tomorrow." ♦



Fitness guru Cassey Ho

## Gamer suffers from dragon deprivation

tohtohly obsessed

Eileen Toh



Completed with lively harp tunes in the background, my dragon islands succeed once again, crowded with over 200 eager visitors. The visitors stand in awe next to the islands' dragon habitats, each habitat uniquely specialized for different breeds. On one island, Rainbow dragons fly across the skies, breathing multi-colored stars, while on another, dragons are going head to head in a race for artifacts.

I smile contently at my pet dragons as I peer down at my iPhone, only to later look up and be greeted by my concerned friends shaking their heads and saying, "Playing DragonVale, again?"



Call me childish or

just plain odd, but I will never lose my love for DragonVale, an iOS and Android game. DragonVale allows me to immerse myself in a magical world where I can build islands, decorate them with habitats and breed dragons — my quest for the Limited Edition ones is never-ending.

I admittedly spend an excessive amount of time perfecting my islands. Last semester, I always came home right after seventh period, telling myself that I would finish my homework as quickly as possible, but often found myself entering dragons in races until falling asleep.

To make matters worse, last September, my older sister Allison and I found out that we both loved DragonVale and began texting each other nonstop, obsessing over our dragons.

But I wasn't asked give up DragonVale for my New Year's resolution, I laughed and agreed immediately, confident that a life without DragonVale wouldn't hurt me. After all, it's only a game, right?

But I couldn't be more wrong. To get a head start on my resolution, on Nov. 29, the first day of my chal-

lenge, I went to Starbucks to study for an AP Chemistry quiz. After 30 minutes of Lewis dot structures, a blaring noise rang from my phone. I had received three notifications about my dragons, but I mustered up my will power and continued studying.

Before I knew it, my hands started shaking uncontrollably. Lewis dot structures started to look like awkward snowflakes, and I couldn't stop thinking about dragons. I paced around Starbucks as the baristas stared at me.

From that day forward, I have come home after school and stashed my phone under my desk, ready to plow through that day's homework. Occasionally, I have messaged Falcon staff member Spring Ma and told her how much I hated her for making me take on this challenge, only to receive obnoxious LOOOOL or HAHAHAS in return. I felt humiliated. Unwillingly, I began adjusting to this upsetting non-dragon lifestyle.

Heartbroken without my dragons, I trudged through the following weeks of cramming for last-minute projects and final exams. Turns out, surprisingly, living without DragonVale increased my

productivity. I was able to finish my "Hamlet" final essay quickly, and during winter break, I busied myself with work in an attempt to avoid my sister's taunts about her oh-so-wonderful dragons.

But unfortunately, unbeknownst to me, DragonVale happened to host a Winter Frostival, in which the gamemakers gave players free exclusive dragons. When Allison woke me up screaming about her new Dazzling Dragon, the rarest dragon to breed, I grabbed my phone without thinking.

Even though my five weeks of no DragonVale has come to an end, and the game is back into my life, I now better balance my school work and my dragon-breeding side job. My productivity level remains at an all-time high, but I must say that after days of homework and tests, I will always be excited to be welcomed back into the magical world of the app that is DragonVale. ♦



## Junior becomes vegetarian, changes outlook on life

BY Vibha Seshadri

The pop music in Sinos in Santana Row permeated the air of the restaurant. All junior Christine Wang could think about were the honey roasted walnut prawns in front of her. She desperately tried to convince herself that she could just begin vegetarianism the next day.

She knew the meat in the dish was just too tasty. As the excuses to eat the oh-so-tasty prawns swirled in her head, she fervently ignored them. She told herself that she was a vegetarian, even in this moment of temptation.

Prior to this change, Wang had been experimenting with the type of foods she wanted to eat. She ate meat for some time, tried veganism and then went back to vegetarianism.

Wang decided to stick with vegetarianism as her early New Year's Resolution at the beginning of October after staying up until 3 a.m. one night to research the positive effects of this life choice.

"Being vegetarian feels so good," Wang said. "It naturally just becomes easier to be healthy because [I] have to eat veggies to fill [me] up. From that, I have more energy. It [also] feels good knowing [that I'm helping the] environment as well."

Additionally, many of Wang's friends are vegetarian. They aided in supporting and motivating her to keep up her resolution. In fact, one of Wang's best friends, junior Danielle Berkowitz-Sklar, became vegetarian as well.

In fact, Wang and Berkowitz-Sklar worked with each other to figure out their food options. For example, Berkowitz-Sklar initially wasn't sure how to get her protein, so she began eating nine eggs a day.

Wang quickly intervened and worked with her to figure out other options like having an egg for breakfast and eating grains, chickpeas and tofu to gain protein.

"A lot of people say that peo-

ple who don't eat meat are weak or don't get enough nutrition for brain development, but I look at my friends and most of them are athletes and the brightest students in their classes," Wang said.



Wang

Wang's family — although not vegetarian — makes a substantial effort to eat healthy. Due to this, there are always a plethora of vegetable dishes at the dinner table. If Wang wants to eat part of a dish that has meat in it, she just picks out just the vegetables and eats them separately.

Wang also attributes her easy transition into vegetarianism to the many vegetarian options available in California.

Nevertheless, because Wang made a drastic change in her diet, she has had to look for vegetarian sources of protein. Wang also had to give up eating sushi, one of her favorite foods. Determined to find a way to eat it, she has settled for sushi made out of avocado and cucumber. In fact, at one point, Wang

said she "went broke" buying sushi and Chipotle, with guacamole substituted for meat.

Additionally, Wang believes that it is much easier to keep a resolution if people have a genuine reason for changing their lifestyle.

"If you're really aware of how beneficial your New Year's Resolution is for yourself, it's really motivating, and you don't really want to go back to what you did before," Wang said.

In Wang's case, she wanted to be healthier and do her part to better the environment.

"I guess putting my New Year's Resolution in the school newspaper means there's really no going back on it now," Wang joked. ♦



# Is Trevor Noah suitable for 'Daily Show'?

NEW HOST BRINGS FRESH PERSPECTIVE

BY AmithGalivanche

Our grandparents learned about current events by reading large sheets of paper covered in ink. Our parents' generation watched local and national news on television. But our generation? We keep up through late-night comedy talk shows that poke fun at current events.

Although names like John Oliver, Stephen Colbert and Jon Stewart have long been synonymous with this form of news, there is a new face in the business — the South African stand-up comedian Trevor Noah, who succeeded Stewart as the host of Comedy Central's "The Daily Show," following Stewart's retirement from the show in August.

Most of these late-night comedy news shows are similar in their format: They poke fun at current events and heads of state around the world. On established shows, many of these jokes are recycled.

On Noah's show, however, each joke is more creative than the last. Even Noah's humor targeting Trump is original enough to make viewers laugh out loud.

Rather than simply joking about Trump's absurd statements, Noah compared Trump's assertion that vaccines cause autism to Gambian president Yahya Jammeh's claim that AIDS can be cured with herbs and bananas. Noah humorously said that people should not be calling Trump "unpresidential" because presidents in different parts of the world say similar things.

Another example of original humor on Noah's show was a segment called "Mike Huckabee's Food-Based Politics." In this episode, Noah pointed out Huckabee's tendency to work food metaphors into almost any major political issue; one time, Huckabee compared politics to the opening of a Baskin Robbins store.

Noah's comedy shines in its breadth as well. In addition to coming up with new commentary on well-known political matters, he brings to light current events that are not as well-known by the public. He showcased this quality with his feature on Myanmar and the "Buddhist terrorists" in the region. While Noah did make jokes about the

irony of the existence of Buddhist extremism, the segment also debunked the pernicious myth that all terrorists are Muslim.

Another instance of Noah's addressing Islamophobia was with his commentary on the Colorado Planned Parenthood shooting. He staged a "conference" with one of the show's correspondents, Jordan Klepper — a white male — asking him to condemn the shooting, which was carried out by a white Christian male.

Although done in a humorous manner, Noah drew a parallel to the way Muslim religious leaders are asked to condemn acts of Islamic extremism, as if it is their responsibility.

In a day and age when Islamophobia runs rampant, Noah, without explicitly saying so, was able to send a message that not all religious extremists are from an Islamic background and that normal peaceful Muslims should not have to condemn acts of terrorism.

Noah may seem like nothing but a new face in a broad genre. In reality, however, Noah serves as an original comedian who can bring his skills from standup to the studio. But most importantly, he educates and informs the public and disproves stereotypes, challenging his viewers' to change their perspectives and prejudices while still entertaining them with his witty, original humor.

Stewart is one of the greatest political comedians of our time and Noah is doing a fine job filling his shoes, while carving his own original style. ♦

NEW HOST NOT FIT FOR 'DAILY SHOW'

BY IsabelleYang

Proving once again that any outspoken Twitter comedian can become the next host for a big hit late-night show, Trevor Noah's show is a prime example of using offensive humor and misguided logic.

Noah, who has recently become the host of "The Daily Show," has been criticized for everything from his weak, dull comedy, his habit of cracking racist and sexist jokes and his poor handling of the show.

Before taking over this prestigious role from Jon Stewart, Noah had already shown that he had a seriously misguided sense of humor.

In 2009, Noah tweeted, "Almost bumped a Jewish kid crossing the road. He didn't look [before] crossing but I still [would have] felt so bad in my German car!"

Furthermore, Noah has made comments supporting misogynistic and fat-shaming ideas on Twitter, such as, "Oh yeah the weekend. People are gonna get drunk & think that I'm sexy!" — fat chicks everywhere."

Comedy Central, who hired Noah, defends the new host's offensive humor as simply "pushing boundaries" and claims that the scrutiny he has received for "a handful of jokes is unfair."

But even if one can overlook his sensitivity and prejudices, he also has a history of plagiarizing his jokes. Specifically, his jokes have an uncanny resemblance to those of American comedian Dave Chappelle, according to an article by Salon.com.

After reports of plagiarism and an underwhelming pilot episode, "The



Trevor Noah speaks on his first day hosting.

Daily Show" suffered a 33 percent decrease in viewership.

According to Inquisitor.com, "despite all the free hype from every corner of the left-wing national media, Noah bombed during his first week with an average of just 1.02 million viewers."

His jokes often come at the price of being culturally insensitive and inappropriate. Unfortunately, the once-famous show is now in the hands of an unpracticed comedian who is unable to find the balance between idiotic mockery and educating viewers.

Unlike his peers John Oliver and Jimmy Kimmel, Noah comes across as distasteful and humorless.

In his low-brow comedy, Noah has only accentuated the idea that, "Hey, racism is gone so we can joke about it!" and that any racist and offensive man can become the next replacement for a comedic late-night show hit.

With a history of ignorant tweets and remarks, his "bright future at Comedy Central" will be easily overshadowed by his overall humorless show. His hosting style is both unoriginal and is humorless, making Noah a bad choice to replace Stewart. ♦



# New 'Sherlock' promises suspense, adventure

BY JasonZhao

There is something about Benedict Cumberbatch. It might be his needle-sharp jawline, his charming British accent or his deprecating humor. Whatever it is, he's endlessly fascinating to watch as Sherlock Holmes.

The new Sherlock Holmes TV movie, "The Abominable Bride," directed by Douglas Mackinnon and starring Cumberbatch, came out on Jan. 1. As an avid mystery fan, I was eager to watch it.

As in all other Sherlock Holmes movies, Holmes is tasked with solving a seemingly impossible mystery. This time, it's the Abominable Bride, a woman who commits suicide, but mysteriously resurrects and begins murdering people.

In fact, "The Abominable Bride" is based on a real-life case that occurred in 1895 in New England.

The crew portrayed New England in a way that was perfect for the film. The dark, gloomy nights followed by the thick morning fog heightened the suspense and fear of the murder mystery.

Cumberbatch's performance as Holmes is flawless. His clever remarks are truly funny, and his observations and deductions are engaging and well thought out such as when he uncovers

the identity of a woman through her perfume. And who could forget his petty arguments with Dr. Watson, played by Martin Freeman. My favorite from the movie is the scene in which Holmes tries to convince Watson that ghosts are not real.

Though I enjoyed the movie, some elements, like the solving of the mystery and time jumps, detract from film's plot.

First, Holmes doesn't solve this mystery in the trademark way. In other Sherlock adaptations, like "A Study in Pink" and "The Hounds of Baskerville," the audience is privy to Holmes's thought process and the clues that leads him to various deductions.

But in "The Abominable Bride," Holmes seems closed off and tries to solve the case on his own; for instance, he spends three days meditating in his room. Then at the end, I was disappointed at how abrupt-

ly the solution to the mystery was revealed.

I was also confused by the random insertion of an "Inception"-esque moment for Holmes. One scene in particular, he injects himself with cocaine and wakes up back in the present. There, he has a conversation with Watson that sounds like a poor attempt to convey the message that drugs are harmful. However, this scene was out-of-place because it provides nothing relevant to the movie; the film would have been the same had this scene been skipped.

Despite these flaws, "The Abominable Bride" also offers something new: Watson and Holmes have a moment together where Watson just asks Holmes about his personal problems. Not only does this directorial choice give the audience insight into Holmes's

life, it also demonstrates the significance and closeness of their friendship.

In general, despite a few shortcomings, the movie balances suspense and excitement to make it an overall entertaining experience. If you are in the mood for a mystery movie with a twist of horror, or if you just love watching Cumberbatch play this role, "The Abominable Bride" is a must-watch. ♦

The Abominable Bride

(OUT OF FIVE)  
Jason's favorite moments

1. Holmes and Watson share a heart to heart moment.
2. Holmes makes Watson look like a fool for believing in ghosts.
3. Holmes uses his power of deduction to identify someone through her perfume.
4. The movie is both exciting and scary.
5. Cumberbatch is the star.



Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman

# Seniors create 'Little Rock Nine' music video

BY AmiNachiappan & RolandShen

"How can you call me beast or savage as you kick and scream," senior Nina Nelson belts out in song as she struts down the aisle of the Lutheran Church. As the mosaic murals fade into footage of white protesters attacking a young African American girl, the camera zooms into a group of policemen arresting students.

That is just one part of "Little Rock Nine," a video created originally as a class project by Nelson, well known for her singing abilities, and senior Jennifer Chen. Nelson and Chen also received editing assistance from class of 2015 alumnus Nik Aji, who studies music production at New York University and also performed a rap in the video.

Nelson and Chen's production is based on the Little Rock Nine Arkansas incident in 1957. After Brown v. Board of Education declared segregated public facilities unconstitutional, a group of nine black students enrolled in the then white-only Little Rock High School. The video follows Elizabeth Eckford, a student member of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People who volunteered to test the Supreme Court decision — and was physically blocked by a group of angry protestors and the Arkansas National Guard.

"Music and film are two powerful mediums to convey emotion, so we sought to combine music, historical footage and reenactments to produce a powerful project that could capture a small part of Eckford's emotions," Chen said. The girls were inspired to make the video after learning about the Little Rock Nine incident in history teacher Matt Torren's Media Arts Program AP U.S. History class last year. As Eckford tried

to enter the doors of the high school, the crowd physically and vocally abused her, screaming, "Two, four, six, eight, we ain't gonna integrate."

"We were stunned and inspired by Eckford's dignity and persistence even when she was bombarded by racial slurs and death threats from segregationists," Chen said.

As their final project in English teacher Natasha Ritchie's MAP English 11 Honors class, Chen and Nelson decided to create a video depicting Eckford's experience. In May, the girls started on the painstaking yet exciting journey of writing and producing the video.

As a songwriter, Nelson, with help from Chen, decided to write a song that displayed Eckford's emotions and courage.

"[Eckford's] bravery was so inspiring that I couldn't help but to write a song about it," Nelson said. "She was so beautiful and daring that I wanted to write the song from the point of view of [Eckford] herself."

Nelson was inspired by live historical footage shown in a documentary played in Torren's class, specifically the scene of a white 17-year-old girl who screamed and spat in Eckford's face as Eckford was blocked by the National Guard.

"Even though she thought she was more civilized than [Eckford], the [white girl] still did such an immoral act," Nelson said. "But I love how [Eckford] did not let that faze her."

After spending five weeks revising the lyrics, the song was finished. Chen then wanted to film Nelson singing in a church. Along with scenes of Nelson singing in a church, the girls wanted to portray Eckford's experience through acting and visuals.

Instead of fully recreating scenes of protesters yelling at Eckford, the girls



YOUTUBE.COM

Senior Nina Nelson sings in a low, yet sturdy tone, "Whatcha think you'd make me do?"

wanted to actress to portray Eckford's emotions; Nelson ended up casting her friend Natalie Penrose to play Eckford.

"In order to achieve certain emotions, we gave [Penrose] cues, such as 'Your dad just took away your iPhone. How do you feel? Look a little angry, but very determined,'" Chen said.

After a full day of filming was finished, Chen and Nelson found footage of the Little Rock desegregation and combined the historical footage and their re-enactments to make the video with Adobe Premiere Pro. Aji, who produced the music, and Chen and Nelson dedicated 60 hours to editing the video.

Once the project was finished, Ritchie said she "was blown away and really proud of [the girls]."

"Projects like this one remind me why I love teaching and working with students; projects that can make an impact on social issues and move people to care about something are extremely valuable," Ritchie said.

The girls then posted the video in the

comment section of a Humans of New York photo in late November. Since then, it has garnered more than 730 views on YouTube. Chen hopes more people will watch the video since it carries an important and prevalent message.

"Eckford took a risk that morning and her act changed history," Chen said. "With this video, [we] wanted to tell a bit of the history that this courageous girl made." ♦

>> thebigidea

## Little Rock Nine

Who were they and what happened?

The Little Rock Nine was a group of nine African American students who enrolled in a segregated high school in Little Rock, Ark. They were met with racial slurs, violent acts and death threats from segregationists.

Where can I watch this video?

<http://bit.ly/1IADeNG>

# EDM's rising popularity reshapes music production

BY DavidFan

Before electronic dance music (EDM) became more mainstream, it was generally associated with jackhammers and a mix of jarring sounds that compete for the listener's attention. But recently, EDM has become much more compelling.

EDM is a style of music heavily focused on rhythm and beat as opposed to lyrics. According to EDMsauce.com, EDM contains a wide variety of genres such as House, Techno and Dubstep. Each has different origins. For instance, House originated in Chicago and Dubstep in South London.

But since their creation, these genres have increased exponentially in popularity. Many EDM songs are appearing in the top 100 charts, such as "Lean On" by Major Lazer and DJ Snake, which reached number four on Billboard Top 100 chart, and "Summer" by Calvin Harris, which peaked at No. 7.

Junior Julius Woods, an aspiring DJ, said that EDM has evolved substantially since he started listening to it in 2007. He said that it has now become a more involved community, especially because raves bring the genre's fans together.

The style of EDM has also changed drastically. When Woods began listening to EDM, most of the songs belonged to just one genre: techno rave. Moreover, there were only a few popular EDM artists at that time, such as DJ Mangoo and DJ Splash.

"EDM was not big since people were not interested in creating music like that," Woods said. "They were mainly focused on pop songs."

Gradually, more and more people gained appreciation for the sounds of EDM. This has led to the rise in popu-

larity of EDM music festivals, such as Ultra and Tomorrowland. Ultra, which takes place every March, had 330,000 people in attendance during a two-day period this past year, while Tomorrowland drew 400,000 people last July. Both of these music festivals included nearly 30 different artists exhibiting their own unique sounds.

Woods also said that EDM has influenced other popular songs. Many popular songs now include some sort of drop, a musical technique where the rhythm or bass dramatically changes.

With Woods' extensive experience as a DJ, he believes that EDM will not be a temporary trend.

"EDM has become such a big part of music that people will have to be inclined to like it," Woods said.

Another avid EDM listener, junior Theo Luan focuses more on Future bass, a subtype of Trap music, which is a less prominent form of EDM. Trap is usually more experimental, and unlike other EDM songs, do not have to follow a certain style.

Luan enjoys listening to this type of music because it is so different than popular pop music.

"This type of music focuses more on production," Luan said. "It focuses more on the sound quality unlike pop music [where] lyrics encompass the song."

Luan said that EDM is an evolved form of music since most of the songs can be made on computers. He also said that since EDM is made on computers, it is easier to produce.

"Since more people can make these songs, EDM can provide us with a diverse range of different sounds that can also branch out to modern music," Luan said. "EDM will only move up in the music culture." ♦

# Worldwide messaging apps simplify global communication

BY JuliaMiller & ClaireRhee

As many users replace traditional messaging apps with messaging apps that offer free international texting and calling, American favorites such as iMessage may begin to lose popularity.

Some of these apps include Kakaotalk, WhatsApp, Line and WeChat.

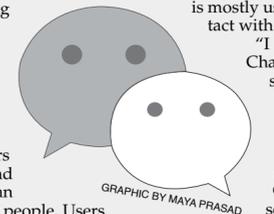
In recent years, a growing proportion of Asian-Americans is mostly used to maintain contact with those in Taiwan.

"I started using [WeChat] after attending a summer camp in Seattle, where [I met] many foreign students from China and Korea," Goh said. "With WeChat, I am able to send text[s], images and video[s] to my friends in China."

According to statista.com, in the third quarter of 2015, WeChat had 650 million monthly active users, Line had 212 million and Kakaotalk had 48 million. According to Mac Rumors, iMessage now only has 500 million.

In addition, while Kakaotalk, Line, WeChat and WhatsApp can be used for multiple different types of phones, iMessage is only accessible to those with an Apple iPhone, which limits its user base.

In time, these apps may come to dominate the worldwide messaging scene, helping build connections that even firewalls can't keep out. ♦



# ComedySportz: workout for mind and abs

BY Caitlyn Chen & SpringMa

"Just then, my ex-boyfriend Jeremy walked in," narrated ComedySportz member junior Raymond McCarthy. McCarthy's teammate, freshman Adina Bidel, stepped into the scene with masculine strides.

"Honey, I want you back!" Bidel exclaimed in her manliest voice.

McCarthy continued to weave twists and turns into the plotline, forcing Bidel to act out another erroneous plot twist: She bulged her stomach, leaning back to embody McCarthy's now-pregnant ex-boyfriend.

With every narration from McCarthy, the scene became crazier, and the audience's laughter louder.

After this round of Dime Store Novel, where one teammate narrates the scene while the others act it out, the audience left with what McCarthy called a "serious ab-workout."

For the "act-letes" who participate in ComedySportz practices twice a week, drawing connections between topics that may seem unrelated is an art to be deliberately practiced and perfected. Every year, the members of the school's team participate in improvisation competitions coordinated by the local San Jose ComedySportz organization.

In a competition between two teams of Saratoga participants, these comedians are challenged with topics randomly chosen by a San Jose ComedySportz referee. Under a strict time limit, and the pressure of the audience's anticipation, members from each side compete for audience laughs as points.

There are relatively no boundaries for ComedySportz performances; students

on stage can bring up anything from operas to animals to make audience members laugh.

"The audience is always a big part of the show," said senior Joseph Eschen, the president of the school's team. "Before every game, the audience [suggests] the scene or act will be based on."

In order to prepare for these fast-paced and high-energy performances, the 12 members of the school's ComedySportz team hold practices twice a week to refine their skills. Although they face the challenge of preparing for a performance that never follows a planned direction, Eschen said the unexpected course of every show "always keeps [them] as the actors and also the audience wanting more."

Just as athletes practice hypothetical situations during practices, the ComedySportz team has developed a list of games to stimulate their creative mindset before a show and be prepared for any topic presented.

McCarthy called the team's "sacred ritual" of "Kitty Cat Career" as his favorite practice game, commenting that "the ancient forefathers of ComedySportz have instilled its secrecy since its founding over 100 years ago."

Though he didn't want to share all the details of this "crazy energizing" game, McCarthy disclosed that the members start off by chanting the phrase "Kitty Cat Career" amidst clapping rhythmically in the background. One member stands in the middle of the circle and incorporates cat characteristics into a topic, which is chosen in a fashion similar to charades.

In addition to its regular practices, the team also has full-day workshops with professional San Jose ComedySportz



Pictured: sophomore Amelia Berardo, junior Kavya Sadras, senior Nithika Arunkumar.

players every semester. During these workshops, the players engage in practice games while the professionals give helpful tips on how to keep a scene alive.

As a part of the ComedySportz high school league, the team receives mentorship that extends beyond their two workshops per year: these professionals not only come to the school to act as referees for the performances, but also serve as advisers for the members.

"At the end of every show the ComedySportz team gathers in a circle with the [professional referee] and go over game by game what worked and what didn't," drama teacher Sarah Thermond said. "They basically extend everything from the workshops into every show, so

[our team can] be constantly reflecting and improving."

These tips prove useful when they compete with other teams in the ComedySportz high school league, like Evergreen Valley High School, one of their biggest competitors.

Every year, the school's ComedySportz team travels to the State Thespian Conference where more than 50 schools compete in Los Angeles. At last year's conference, the team earned second place overall, success they hope to accomplish this year as well.

"It's great to see more and more people coming to our shows, not knowing what to expect, only to leave with a smile," McCarthy said. ♦

## Sophomore excels in unique Indian instrument

BY Katherine Zhou

Dressed in a traditional red vest and white kurta, Varun Viswanath, then 11 years old, passionately tapped away on the mridangam, an Indian drum. He was in Chennai, India: the stage of his debut concert. As a wave of nervousness rushed over him, he looked out to the audience and was greeted by the friendly faces of the numerous members of his immediate and extended family.

The mridangam is an Indian instrument that is made of different woods and leathers, such as jackfruit wood and goatskin leather, and is played on both sides. It is very uncommon in the United States; in fact, the sophomore has to go to India to get it repaired.

"The repair shop is in an isolated area; you can't find any repair shops here," Viswanath said. "I had to go to India four years ago when the flood was going on, [and] we had to carry five [mridangams] through the rain."

Viswanath started playing the mridangam at age 5. He takes weekly lessons and practices for about an hour-and-a-half on most days.

Viswanath has long had a clear sense of rhythm. He would walk around his house treating every other household object as a drum he could play, driving his parents crazy until they finally enrolled him in mridangam lessons.

According to Viswanath, musical talent runs in his family. Many of his relatives also play the mridangam. His

mother plays the veena, an Indian classical string instrument.

By playing the mridangam, Viswanath said he has grown closer to his family. His older brother used to watch him practice, and his family attends all of his performances and encourages him.

During most performances, Viswanath's playing accompanies a singer and violinist. Because of the freestyle nature of the instrument, Viswanath said that there is not much room for error, as he has to create music on the spot. Viswanath practices the techniques of the strokes and methods for playing, but since there is no sheet music, he does not know exactly what he will play when he

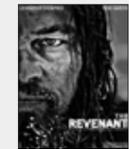
walks on stage. "Once you progress in the 'journey of learning,' as my teacher says, you honestly know where [it sounds good] to play," Viswanath said. "It's learning through experience."

Viswanath also said that the instrument helps to connect him with his Indian community. By performing in local temples and performances, Vishwanath has met many people who share his Indian culture.

Although playing the mridangam requires dedication and extreme concentration, Viswanath said that he wants to continue playing for the rest of his life. "I get to be more creative with what I do, and it just opens up my head," Viswanath said. "To me, it's like playing a video game, or playing sports, [because] you get to express your creativity, like in all music." ♦

## THE GOLDEN GLOBES

THE 73RD GOLDEN GLOBES, WHICH AIRED LIVE ON JAN. 10, TOOK PLACE IN BEVERLY HILLS. DURING THE EVENT, THE BEST FILMS AND AMERICAN TELEVISION OF 2015 WERE RECOGNIZED AND AWARDED. COMEDIAN RICKY GERVAIS HOSTED THE SHOW, ENTERTAINING THE AUDIENCE WITH HIS FAMOUSLY CRUDE HUMOR. A GROUP OF 10 STUDENTS RATED THESE DECISIONS ON A SCALE FROM 1 TO 10, 1 BEING STRONG DISAGREEMENT TO 10 BEING STRONG AGREEMENT.



Best Motion Picture — Drama

FALCON RATING: 8



Best Actress in a Motion Picture — Drama: Brie Larson ("Room")

FALCON RATING: 10



Best TV Series — Comedy

FALCON RATING: 8



Best Motion Picture — Comedy or Musical

FALCON RATING: 8



Best Actor in a Motion Picture — Drama: Leonardo DiCaprio ("The Revenant")

FALCON RATING: 10



Best Actor in a TV Series — Comedy: Gael Garcia Bernal ("Mozart in the Jungle")

FALCON RATING: 8



Best Animated Feature Film

FALCON RATING: 9



Best TV Series — Drama

FALCON RATING: 10



Best Actress in a Comedy — Comedy: Rachel Bloom ("Crazy Ex-Girlfriend")

FALCON RATING: 6

GRAPHIC BY MAYA PRASAD

— Reporting by Shreya Tumu

# Talented twins plan for a life apart

BY Amith Galivanche & Neil Rao

Seniors Brendan and Nate Ney wove up and down the badminton court, seeming to predict each other's exact movements, easily scoring on their opponents and winning their match against Gunn High School's varsity No. 2 doubles team 21-15.

At first glance, the connection these fraternal twins share on the court is clear. But these two are much more than just a talented badminton pair.

The Neys are two of the most recognizable faces on campus. The twins are well known for their academic performance and excellence in multiple school clubs and activities, such as Science Olympiad, badminton, Homecoming, History Bowl and Science Bowl.

Although the brothers' many extracurriculars may make them seem like typical Saratoga students, taking one glance at their schedules is a clear sign of their above-average academic excellence.

For example, the pair both took AP Calculus BC as sophomores and pursued their STEM interests by doubling on AP Chemistry and AP Physics as juniors.

"I think our similarities are due in large part to us growing up together," Brendan said. "We always enjoyed competing against one another, so we naturally developed similar interests."

Brendan, who is more interested in STEM fields than Nate, leads the Science Bowl team as one of its three captains. He is the team's specialist for environmental and Earth-related sciences.

Brendan credits his inclination toward STEM to his "obsessive curiosity." "This can be a bad habit when I waste

time on Wikipedia reading about obscure topics," Brendan said. "But in academic fields, [the habit] takes the form of long-term commitments to acquire knowledge in the search of underlying truths."

While gifted in mathematics and sciences, Nate has also taken an interest in history, as shown through his participation in the school's History Bowl team starting from his sophomore year.

On another note, Nate was involved in the "Star Wars" Senior Quad Day last fall, playing Darth Vader.

Despite his convincing portrayal of a villain in the Quad Day skit, Nate is well known for his lively demeanor. "I enjoy spending as much time away from academics as possible," Nate said. "By spending time doing what I like, I enjoy my life in

school while also striving to do well academically."

Senior Alex Li, who has known the Neys since the three of them attended Argonaut Elementary School, observes subtle differences between the twins.

Li described a time that he and the Ney brothers all showed up in their AP Environmental Science class wearing the same Redwood Math Coach sweatshirt.

According to Li, Nate simply took his off while Brendan discussed probability of all of them wearing the sweatshirt on a given day and concluded that

whoever got dressed first that morning had the right to keep wearing the sweatshirt. Li said that he has enjoyed sharing several classes and extracurriculars with the Ney brothers over the past few years. One trait that both share is their friendliness, he says.

In addition to their academic excellence and sociable personalities, the twins play varsity doubles badminton for the school. They have managed to rank highly within the team, despite not having any formal training in the sport. Teammates would joke that the pair use "twin telepathy" during matches.

"I believe twin telepathy is totally real," Brendan joked. "Let me ask Nate right now what he thinks. He disagrees."

Although the two share a close bond, their drive to succeed forces them to try to outdo each other when they compete.

"During math contests, you're trying to do your best and place as high as you can," Nate said, "so you try to do better than other people, and one of those other people is my brother."

Despite this occasional sibling rivalry, they are able to overcome their differences to avoid straining their close relationship.

"In general, we tend to take part in and succeed at the same activities, and it's nice sharing the feeling of accomplishment and advancing to higher levels of competition together," Nate said.

Whether it be in their advanced math and science courses, behind the buzzer at a trivia competition or even on the badminton court, the Ney twins seem to fit together like puzzle pieces.

Although there are numerous aspects that make them different from each other, they both plan to major in computer science when they head off to college next year, likely at different universities. They think college will be immensely different from what they have grown accustomed to: growing up together.

"College life is a change for everyone," Brendan said, "but it'll for sure be different not being able to immediately talk to [Nate]." ♦



(left to right) seniors Brendan and Nate Ney

## Robotics junior takes part in build season

BY Amith Galivanche & Claire Rhee

On Jan. 9, the school's For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST) robotics team, M-SET FISH, received its challenge for the year: to design a robot that can shoot balls into an opponent's castle, defend itself from other robots and climb to the top of the other team's castle in order to score extra points.

The team is now focusing on using these six weeks, the "build season," to make this robot.

Key to this effort are electronics team member Samay Garg, a junior, and electronic head Elizabeth Li, a senior, who will work on wiring every part of the robot, including its sensors and motors. The team typically spends between 12 and 36 hours per week in the robotics room during build season, usually staying until midnight the night before competitions.

Before and on the day of the event, Garg and Li fix parts on the robot if they break, like motors, control elements and wires. Garg recalled an incident two years ago when a light ring on the robot was shorting out right before they were scheduled to compete.

Garg and Li scrambled to fix the wiring and light ring, rushing around the robot with numerous tools in their hands. The two worked quickly together and

felt relieved when they finished the repair on time.

"There was a huge cloud of smoke basically covering the bottom of our robot," Garg said. "It wasn't bad, it just looked cool and kind of scary."

Li said she and Garg work well together since both of them are "pretty mellow" and "generally happy people." They finish jobs quickly because they do not goof off too much, Li said, but they are not too serious either.

Garg began robotics in his freshman year, when he joined the team to spend more time with his friends.

In the fall of his first year, he offered to join the electronics team, since there was an open spot after the Class of 2013 graduated.

As he tried out for the electronics team, he found that he enjoyed it, eventually deciding to stay with it.

Before the build season, the team began preparing for the season in November and December by training their newer members in computer aided design (CAD) and software. Back then, they only met once a week on Sundays.

Now, the team meets four days a week for three to nine hours a day.

On weekends, the team builds, designs and programs the robot from noon to 9 p.m.

By mid-February, the team will have built two robots, one for practice and the other for competition. Their dedication has paid off recent-



An electronics team member, junior Samay Garg readjusts the robot's wires on Jan. 21.

ly, and the program is on the upswing.

Last April, the M-SET FISH qualified for the World Championships in St. Louis for the first time in 14 years. Garg hopes that the team can return to World Championships this year.

Because the team has many experienced juniors and seniors on the team this year, Garg said he expects it to be a strong year for them.

He hopes that his experience and skills he's picked up in the past three years, from how to wire clean electronics boards to how to manage time efficiently and effectively, will help him improve this year. Though he is not planning on pursu-

ing robotics as a career, Garg would like to join something related to robotics in the future when he attends college, such as a club.

But Garg's fondest memories of taking part in the M-SET FISH robotics team and its intense build season would not so much be about competing but rather learning, working and creating bonds with his teammates.

"I've made a lot of friends and it's just a great atmosphere and a great environment to work in," Garg said. "You can learn a lot of new things, not just engineering-related, but how to work independently, how to work as part of a team and how to make smart decisions." ♦

# An invisible battle

BY Kevin Chow & Eileen Toh

*Editor's Note: This story deals with an account of bullying. It contains a graphic description of self-harm. She spoke to the student body during an assembly on Jan. 19.*

Sophomore Camilla Taysi was picking apart a razor. Minutes earlier, she had stormed into the bathroom blurry-eyed and had snatched it from the cabinet. Now she was on her bed, nudging the blade apart.

Her mind wandered. She could see herself at school with that smile on her face, that nonchalant attitude. Sometimes it tricked her, too.

But with the razor cold against her skin, she knew she wasn't fine. Not fine with depression, not with how people would look at her scars the next day. Yet the red rivulets still gathered on her wrist and the tears streamed down her cheeks.

A night like this wasn't new to Taysi.

In 2014, the National Institute of Mental Health reported that 2.8 million adolescents in the U.S. had, like Taysi, suffered from depression that year. There is no simple reason for these numbers, and Saratoga is certainly not the only high school to struggle with these spiraling issues: bullying, depression — even suicide.

Taysi's battle began when she was a fifth grader at Argonaut Elementary School. Innocently enough, it started with her stomach; Taysi dealt with indigestion when she ate, often feeling the need to vomit.

The problems worsened. At the hospital, doctors told her that her discomfort was caused by anxiety.

Taysi had always known that she was prone to anxiety; she was "a nervous kid." Doctors said stress causes an increase in stomach acid production, resulting in poor digestion and stomach pains.

Her stomach problems were frequent and would often interfere with her education. She would go to school late after fighting pain in the morning or would have panic attacks in class, during which she felt she needed to throw up.

Other times, she would go to the school bathroom in tears and text her mom to pick her up. Or she wouldn't go to school at all.

## Transition to middle school

As Taysi grew accustomed to her indigestion troubles, she entered the unknown hallways of Redwood Middle School.

She saw her classmates transform into people desperate for popularity as they pranced around the hallways in Juicy jackets and short skirts. They seemed consumed

by judgment, stirring up drama within their cliques and

ostracizing those who didn't fit in.

Middle school was an awkward experience for Taysi, to say the least. There were disappointingly few people, she said, who "had their values straight and had compassion."

"Most kids there either only cared about their own business or didn't care about other people," Taysi said.

Taysi tried her best to make friends and adjust to the new environment. She needed all the support she could get, and during this transition, most of it came from her mother.

"Even though we fought nonstop, we still loved each other," Taysi said. "She always supported me."

Even so, Taysi found her anxiety rising as school became less bearable, especially during seventh grade.

She was being bullied. A few months into the year, she had gained 45 pounds. She would walk through hallways, look-

**"I'd cut myself. Then I'd get out of bed in the morning and put a smile on. You know what I mean?"**

ing down at her shoes, and hear her classmates' echoing, snickering voices as they pointed at her among crowds.

It only worsened as sixth grade progressed, when Taysi joined ask.fm, a then-popular social Q-and-A forum. She was expecting to answer frivolous questions from her peers; instead, she received cruel threats.

"They'd call me a 'worthless slut' or say I was too obese to walk," Taysi said. "People would tell me to kill myself."

The effects of her anxiety, the social stress, the atmosphere of middle school — Taysi was left feeling "completely numb all the time." She didn't feel like walking, breathing or living.

"[That mentality] is the most difficult to deal with," Taysi said. "I had no joy, no motivation. It's so indescribable."

Midway through seventh grade, Taysi left Redwood. She knew she had to find an environment that would help her recuperate. Her parents decided that she would try a Home and Hospital Instruction Program, in which she could complete her academic obligations at home.

Taysi also went to frequent doctor appointments, met with at least four therapists and took various medications, while her mother looked for private schools "for kids like me," Taysi said.

She also fostered a dog named Snickers, which motivated her to resume some activities she enjoyed. Since she liked to bike with her dog, the bike rides motivated her to get back in shape and participate in sports again. Gradually, Taysi found herself making more of an effort to be happy.

"There is no magic potion to make you feel better," Taysi said. "But things just started to change."

After months of recuperation, Taysi transferred to Fisher Middle School in Los Gatos during eighth

## A STUDENT'S STRUGGLES WITH A CULTURE OF IGNORANCE

FALCON // SWEEYA RAJ

grade, wanting a fresh start.

In her eighth-grade English class, Taysi wrote a memoir detailing the suicidal thoughts she had battled that year. The responses she received bothered her.

"After reading my memoir, kids told me that they would've never guessed," Taysi said. "They said I was the most happy person they've ever met."

From her peers' reactions, Taysi realized that there was a lack of social consciousness, and it had permeated middle school.

By the time she got to Saratoga High, Taysi had developed a more drastic coping mechanism; despite everything, the anxiety hadn't left. She was turning to self-harm — using a razor to make incisions on her wrists.

According to Dr. Paul Moran, co-author of a 2012 study in *The Lancet*, teenagers are most vulnerable during puberty and may hurt themselves to block out "intolerable emotions."

For Taysi, self-harm was an outlet. Although she felt less suicidal in high school, she felt more depressed. To lessen her constant anxiety, she used cutting as a coping mechanism.

"Instead of shutting down completely, staying in bed, crying all day — it was my way of still being able to continue," Taysi said. "I'd cut myself. Then I'd get out of bed in the morning and put a smile on. You know what I mean?"

## An ongoing effort

Taysi's struggles are just one example of the issues that Saratoga High has combated in the past few years. Ever since the well-documented suicide of sophomore Audrie Pott in 2012, the administration has redoubled its efforts to focus on students' mental health. Pott's suicide suggested that there was something troubling about the school's culture.

When Taysi entered Saratoga High in 2014, Pott's suicide was two years past. If not in the school's collective memory, the incident left a legacy that helped lead to an annual school-wide event: Speak Up for Change week.

With its simple intention to improve student culture, Speak Up for Change is meant to show students the relevance of situations like Taysi's. The idea was proposed in 2013 and supervised by assistant principal Kerry Mohnike, who was then the school activities director.

This year, Taysi shared her story at the Speak Up for Change student assembly. Although Taysi believes that the event is a great idea, she noted that whatever changes never seem to last — everything regresses after the week is over.

"This is a matter of changing our school, and not just for one week," Taysi said. "We need to put more focus on our health and our lives."

Aside from organizing Speak Up for Change, students have sought to improve

the school's culture with groups like Common Roots, a peer counseling club, or "Humans of Saratoga High" (HOSH), a Facebook page that documents Saratoga's culture.

Since 2013, HOSH has posted weekly pictures complemented by personal stories, from quirky experiences to questions against the stigma of depression.

"HOSH has been an outlet for students," said senior Luke Salin, a HOSH member for the past three years. "The page has generated a more open environment by creating a positive social media space."

And though not completely planned, on Sept. 22, Taysi, too, turned to social media. She had something she'd been wanting to say.

It was another low day for Taysi. After three months clean from self-harm, Taysi once again felt the need for catharsis. "I really didn't want to do it," she said. "I mean I wanted to do it, but I knew that it wasn't good and wouldn't help in the long run."

Taysi convinced herself to stay away from the razor, turning to the computer instead. Taysi created a Facebook post detailing a scene of self-harm. It's what would've happened, Taysi said, her sitting on her bed, picking apart a razor.

The post was more than a coping mechanism for Taysi. The first paragraphs are her plea for awareness, for taking action against the stigma of depression. Taysi's post created a case in which people came together, when the ignorance was partially lifted away by a collective realization that people are not alone with their problems. That's what the school is trying to teach students with events like Speak Up for Change.

As of now, Taysi said she is four months clean from self-harm. Even though this past month has been difficult, she has been content with who she is as a person, gaining support from her family, talking about her struggles and reaching out to those who are dealing with these issues now.

And Taysi hopes that someday, things will change for good.

"We're supposed to enjoy high school," Taysi said. "We're going to be adults, and we need to find strength in ourselves to want to change." ◆

8 Percent of youth who have clinical anxiety.  
16 Percent of high schoolers who have contemplated suicide  
11 Percent of teens who dealt with depression in 2014

SOURCES: NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH, CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION



Camilla Taysi

# Sophomore confronts eating disorder

BY Caitlyn Chen & Elizabeth Lee

Sophomore Althea Zhao woke up one morning eight months ago to the monotonous beeps of a heart monitor.

Her heart was beating at 36 beats per minute (bpm), 44 bpm under a healthy heart beat. As she stared blankly at the flashing number on the screen, a nurse entered with a tray of turkey drenched in puke-colored gravy.

Disgusted, Zhao looked away, pretending to fall asleep again in her hospital bed at the Lucile Packard Children's Hospital in Palo Alto. But there was no easy escape from this trap she had made for herself.

Last May, Zhao was diagnosed with anorexia. Since she discovered her eating disorder, she has been fighting to overcome it.

Her battle with anorexia began when she started dieting two years ago. At that time, the 4-foot, 11-inches tall Zhao weighed around 105 pounds and her first decision was to go vegan in an effort to live a healthier lifestyle.

At the time, Zhao convinced herself that her primary motivation was helping the planet by going vegan, but eventually it became restrictive as she had convinced herself that veganism was the only healthy choice.

"Then I began reading into [dieting], and I realized that I could eat [fewer] calories if I ate more vegetables and fruit instead of carbs," Zhao said.

She went to websites like Yahoo Food, MyFitnessPal and PopSugar, reading article after article on weight loss and dieting, slowly indoctrinating herself. Although some of these websites were dubiously accurate, Zhao continued to read on, persuading herself that these articles would only help her achieve her ideal lifestyle.

"The more I read, the [guiltier] I felt

about eating these supposedly bad foods," Zhao said. "I began consuming [fewer] calories, yet I still had trouble losing weight, and I didn't understand why."

Frustrated, Zhao decided to meet with a dietician. Her parents supported the idea of meeting with a dietician because they wanted to make sure that Zhao's vegan diet was balanced and proper.

But after a few appointments with several dieticians, she realized that all of them were saying the same thing: You need to eat more.

Fearing additional pounds, she began intensive workouts last January, running up to 5 miles a day while also consuming fewer calories. Once again, Zhao was on the wrong track to a healthy diet.

As she began exercising for two to three hours per day, while only eating 1,000 to 1,200 calories, Zhao began noticing changes. Her hair fell out, the skin around her knuckles would crack and bleed easily and she often felt cold.

Zhao forced herself to lose weight every week, eventually almost reaching 90 pounds. However, Zhao said that because of her height, she was unsure of whether or not she was actually underweight.

Zhao's parents tried to get her to eat more grains, but she could only stomach foods like salad, avocado, tofu and chickpeas. As she continued to refuse to eat her mother's cooking, she began to distance herself from her mother.

"We fought a lot, and I remember crying because I didn't want to eat more," Zhao said. Worried, her parents brought her to a doctor. Later that day, she was admitted to the hospital and diagnosed with anorexia. At first, Zhao was in denial. With this realization, Zhao worked to control her obsession with calorie-counting and intense exercise.



Althea Zhao

FALCON // SWEEYA RAJ

As months passed, with the support of her friends, family and doctors, Zhao has made progress in her battle with anorexia. She began to hang out with friends more often, whether it was a simple Starbucks run or a lunch out, and reduced her workouts.

"Recovery is something that's hard, but as you keep pushing yourself, the voice [in your head] begins to quiet down," Zhao said. "The eating disorder took a lot away from my life, and it is hard, but in the end, it's so worthwhile to be [finally] free from my problems."

From Zhao's experience with anorexia, her parents hope that others will be aware that eating disorders are

"We hope the story about Althea's experience will encourage people to realize that eating disorders are far more common than most people imagine," Zhao's mom Shirley Miao said. "In reality, it is the healthiest to eat a varied, flexible diet."

Aside from her parents, Zhao appre-

ciates those friends who have stayed by her side. From this experience, she learned to trust the people around her, knowing that they would accept her for how she was.

"I just tried to be there for her, to listen to her," Althea's friend sophomore Andrea Salazar said. "I could tell her experiences I went through and help her relate."

Salazar, who previously experienced an eating disorder, said that through learning about these issues, people can help break the stigma about social image and understand what people like Zhao, and once herself, went through.

Like Salazar, Zhao agrees that body image, which once controlled her life, isn't as important as it once seemed.

"People appreciate more than just body image," Zhao said. "It's just a superficial impression that we have to learn to look past." ◆

## Campus leaders talk student wellness

The Falcon conducted a Q&A with student leaders from schools in the Bay Area. For the full transcript, visit [saratogafalcon.org](http://saratogafalcon.org)

**Q: How are students' opinions represented on campus?**

Malika Singh (Monta Vista): [Every Thursday], we have Legislative Council, where representatives convene, vote on different subjects and talk about what their classes have proposed.

Ishan Sharma (Cupertino): Our ASB has been trying to take in [more] student

opinions. We reformed our Student Senate, [the] secondary student-government body next to ASB so that it is now open to all students, regardless of academic standing.

**Q: Do you feel that there are enough resources at your school for students to go to if they need to talk to someone?**

Sharna (Cupertino): I do feel there are enough resources, but it could be improved. Our counselors are severely understaffed and we only have one student advocate. That itself is a problem, and I think a lot of these [students could be helped] if teachers could maybe make more of an effort to connect with students.

Alex Mo (Harker): With our amazing students and faculty members, there are more than enough people to help someone with whatever they are going through. Whether certain students use [these] resources is a different issue.

Personally, I don't feel like there is an easy solution other than to slowly encourage [them]. Becoming comfortable with people who help you through tough times will take a little bit of work, but at Harker, I believe that everyone is willing to help someone else out.

**Q: What are student leaders doing to create a welcoming school?**

Nihar Agrawal (Saratoga): I think what is so great about kindness on campus is that it can come in simple acts which are still personally impactful. I always try to say "hi" to people in the hallways who are looking down. Given how much the people around me contribute to my happiness, I care about how my classmates feel, and I strive to brighten their mood.

Singh (Monta Vista): We have Peer Counseling Club for those who feel that they need help from others. The club's goal is to raise awareness about social and emotional health at our school by scheduling sessions for those who request them and holding events on campus. ◆

Reporting by Spring Ma and Claire Rhee. Graphics by Helen Chen.

Why we speak up

stories of two students who spoke up for change

# Years in Singapore create cultural bridges

By SpringMa & JennyQian

Junior Neythra Srinivasan remembers her first days as a 6-year-old in her new home of Singapore. Dressed in her cherry-blossom embroidered tunic, she took in the full experience of the Chinese New Year festivities on a crowded street. Her eyes glistened with the vibrant glow of the festival lanterns, as a red dragon dashed through her peripheral vision.

The bustle of the busy street and the cheers of young children packed all around her brought a wide-eyed smile to Srinivasan's face.

Coming to accept her new home, however, was a long journey.

In first grade, when all her friends were just getting used to their new elementary schools, Srinivasan moved two times within one year because of changes in her father's job. When she moved from Saratoga to India and then to Singapore, Srinivasan was thrown into a world foreign to her and her family.

"People who live here [in America] their entire lives don't get how different it is in other countries," Srinivasan said. "It's not just the language or the food, but also how people interact with each other."

Initially, this stark difference scared Srinivasan. Nevertheless, Srinivasan's integration into the Singaporean lifestyle was simplified after she enrolled in

the local international school, Singapore American School (SAS). There, she attended Mandarin classes every day and played the Indonesian Angklung drum during music class, but also took English classes daily. In addition, many of her classmates were native Singaporeans, but they communicated only in English.

"American and Singaporean culture were really fused at [the] school," Srinivasan said. "I made friends from countries all over the world, but we were all American in a way."

Many of the students came from an American background, "whether it was living in America in the past or having American culture somewhere in the family."

Srinivasan also faced an unexpectedly culturally diverse atmosphere outside of her school: In one instance, she remembers meeting a Singaporean taxi driver who spoke Tamil, Srinivasan's native Indian language.

Her friends also helped Srinivasan accept her move. After a long day of school Srinivasan felt grateful for friendships that lasted anywhere.

"Everyone knew everyone," Srinivasan said. "A lot of my friends sat on the bus to the apartment complexes together, and when we came home we played on the playground downstairs."

One of the major differences Srinivasan saw was that Singaporeans often didn't need items most Americans saw as essential. In the densely populated city-state of 5.4 million, her family did



Junior Neythra Srinivasan (pictured inset) carries a windmill for the new year in 2005.

not own "a car not because we couldn't afford one, but because we didn't need one."

Furthermore, Srinivasan said that even though she lived in a relatively small apartment, "nobody thought it was too cramped because everyone lived in relatively the same apartments."

In this tight-knit society, Srinivasan said everyone around her seemed to be part of an extended family. Even during holidays, Srinivasan participated in school-wide festivities, united with her peers.

Even though Srinivasan moved back to America in 2009 for fourth grade, she still holds on to traces of her Singaporean childhood.

She stays in touch with her best friend from SAS, who now lives in India, and she knows two other former SAS stu-

dents at SHS: juniors Sarah Jin and Daellan Denenberg.

"After coming back to the same friends [in Saratoga that] I had known before I left, I sometimes feel like I might have missed out on memories with them while I was gone," Srinivasan said. "But I have seen so much outside of the 'Saratoga bubble' that makes the [missed] time worth it."

Srinivasan returned to America with a better understanding of different cultures, causing her to have a more outgoing personality and willingness to try new things.

"The sense of community in Singapore is something that has stuck with me throughout the years," Srinivasan said. "Being in that society where you could make friends so easily — why not meet new people?" ♦



GRAPHIC BY CHARIN PARK

# El Niño impacts drought

By CharinPark

It was 1998, and science teacher Lisa Cochrum's house was flooded with rainwater. Her roommate thought it was fine to park in the garage. Minutes later, the two found her roommate's car drenched in more than 8 inches of water. Waves lapped at the bottoms of her car doors, as her roommate rushed to open one of them.

"I said, 'Don't do anything! Just leave it,' and she panicked. She opened the car door and flooded her car," Cochrum said. "It smelled like mildew until the day she sold it."

Today, the doors to Cochrum's house are lined with plastic to prevent damage that might occur from El Niño-related flooding.

"People come over to my house being like, 'Cochrum's in flood season,'" she said. "We've never been flooded, but the problem with our creeks is that they start low and then [it's] flooding the house!"

El Niño, which translates to "The Boy" in Spanish, is a chain of ocean-atmosphere climatic disturbances that power-hose California with a series of rainstorms.

This year's El Niño is "larger in strength than the '97-'98 El Niño," which caused over \$500 million in damage and 17 deaths in the state, according to a story in the San Gabriel Valley Tribune.

While it's impossible to tell how much damage the upcoming El Niño might cause, principal Paul Robinson said the school has anticipated the upcoming storms. New Measure E projects have upgraded campus drainage systems to help combat the downpour.

"We're in a much better place now than we were a few years ago," Robinson said. "We look at the drainage in every new project on campus to ensure we can withstand the rains we are expect-

ing, so I think we're going to be OK."

Along with preparations for the upcoming El Niño, the school has also made changes to withstand the California drought — the administration has shut off water to all grassy areas on campus except for those in the quad and in front of the gym. The softball and multipurpose fields were recently replaced with turf as well. Robinson said that these changes will cause "huge savings in water usage on campus."

Californians are counting on the El Niño to replenish their water supplies, but the El Niño may fizzle out before that happens — Ryan Sabalow of the Sacramento Bee writes that El Niños are "notoriously unpredictable." While a southern-bound El Niño may provide some short-term relief to the southern part of the state, it would do almost nothing to replenish California's northern watersheds, which serve as the bulk of the state's long-term water storage.

To combat future water deficits, many Saratoga High students say their families have avoided watering their lawns and tried to take shorter showers. So far, sophomore Aileen Zhang has cut down her shower time to about 6 minutes.

Senior Emma Hoffman, however, believes that conserving water should extend beyond homes. Because fewer than 10 percent of California's water is used domestically, Hoffman said that more needs to be done for Californians.

"The scariest thing is how long it's been going on, and how little people seem to care," Hoffman said. "People are just used to it."

Junior Iris Lu argued that the community needs to change its mindset in how it deals with water shortage.

"Most people don't seem to realize how severe our situation is," Lu said. "The reality of the situation just isn't enough to spur us into action." ♦



chat with college students from your dream school

elite universities represented

- University of Chicago
- Northwestern
- Harvard College
- Columbia University
- UC Berkeley
- Brown



scroll through news feeds, pictures, and videos from schools

stressed about picking the right college?





for what you won't learn on the tour

sign up for free online



uprospie.com

ask us anything! from questions about campus culture, classes and professors, greek life, we have answers to share.

# sports >>

saratogafalcon.org/sports

## >> TheStats

### 16 points

Senior center Eleni Spirakis scored 16 points and grabbed 15 rebounds during a 50-43 loss to Los Gatos on Jan. 19. "It was one of my best games of the year," Spirakis said. "I really woke up in the second half, scoring most of my points then."

### 9 goals scored

Junior striker Kevin Yu has scored nine goals in five league matches. He is currently the top goalscorer for the team. "I try my best to help the team in any way possible," Yu said. "I make it my goal to get the ball and try to score for the team."

### 19 points

Senior guard Joe Eschen contributed 19 points in a 55-53 loss against Cupertino on Jan. 20. "I was just trying to do anything in my power to get the win," Eschen said.

## WRESTLING

### Senior ranks third in CCS

The wrestling team currently has a record of 2-1 in dual meets. Although the team is inexperienced, with but a handful of upperclassmen, the program is rapidly improving. "Technique is required to be good in wrestling and because many wrestlers start at a young age, I was at a disadvantage," said senior Adam Camp, ranked third in CCS. "To counteract that I had to learn as much as possible in what time I had at practice."

## GIRLS' SOCCER

### Team returns to scoring ways

The girls' soccer team was able to end a three game goal drought with a 3-0 win against rival Los Gatos on Jan. 25. "My freshman year was the first time in 10 years that Saratoga had ever beaten LG, and now to do it on their home field, for the last time, is an [absolutely amazing] feeling," senior captain and goalkeeper Isa Berardo said.

## >> TheRANKINGS

- 1 = Girls' Basketball (12-6)
- 2 = Wrestling (2-1)
- 3 = Girls' Soccer (6-3-3)
- 4 = Boys' Soccer (5-3-2)
- 5 = Boys' Basketball (7-11)

# Black Mamba leaves notable legacy

## KOBE BRYANT, 17-TIME ALL-STAR, ANNOUNCES HIS RETIREMENT

By AndrewJiang & AllisonLin

As the shot clock winded down to zero seconds on the court at Oracle Arena on Jan. 14, fans rose from their seats to salute NBA star Kobe Bryant, who was playing his final game in the arena. The same farewell ritual is taking place in NBA stadiums across the country as basketball fans pay tribute to one of the fiercest competitors and basketball legends to play in our generation.

Bryant announced his decision to retire at age 37 on Nov. 28 after suffering several significant injuries and a drop-off in performance in recent seasons. He made the announcement in the form of a poem on the web site of the Players' Tribune.

The 17-time all-star is best known for his tremendous impact as a star shooting guard for the Los Angeles Lakers. Bryant began his illustrious career as the 13th pick in the first round of the 1996 NBA draft by the Charlotte Hornets. He was later traded to the Los Angeles Lakers in July of the same year and has been with them ever since.

Bryant was more than just a basketball player — he was a role model to us. He taught us loyalty by committing himself to one team for his entire 20-year career, drive through his unrelenting desire to

win and diligence through his continual improvement, championship after championship.

For our generation, Bryant was our Michael Jordan. Yes, we admit that Jordan was a better player than Bryant, but we weren't alive when Jordan dominated the 1990s and won six championships. To us, Jordan was merely a collection of passed-down stories. Hearing of Jordan's legendary games just wasn't the same as actually watching Bryant dominate the NBA.

We were firsthand witnesses to Bryant's rise from second-fiddle to former Lakers center Shaquille O'Neal to the unquestioned leader of back-to-back championships in 2009 and 2010. We were awestruck by Bryant's countless game-winning shots, fancy footwork and posterizing dunks.



GRAPHIC BY ANGELA LEE

Bryant made a lasting impression on our 8-year-old selves when he dropped 81 points on the Toronto Raptors on Jan. 6, 2006, scoring the second most points in NBA history.

In fact, Bryant may even be overshadowed because he is underappreciated because he is overshadowed by Jordan. Critics accuse Bryant of "stealing" Jordan's signature moves, but we prefer the term "emulate."

Not many can copy Jordan even if they try. It is also unfortunate that Bryant was recognized as the best player in the league only one time in his amazing career, winning one MVP award, and was stuck on a mediocre Lakers team for the majority of his prime.

Some avid basketball fans may say Bryant is arrogant on and off the court. They may also cite his 2003 sexual assault case and infidelity scandal as reasons to knock him. However, when it comes to his basketball skills and athletic ability, he has few peers.

Bryant may not go down as the greatest basketball player of all time, but he was the king of the hardwood when we were growing up. It's rare to watch a legend, and we are lucky to have witnessed the "Black Mamba." ♦

# Equestrian participates in state competitions

By CaitlynChen

As she brought her left rein back slightly in a half-halt and applied a light pressure to the right shoulder of her horse, Jewel, sophomore Chengzi Guo and Jewel bent into a beautiful, controlled 20-meter circle. Sitting deep into her seat and closing her reins into her hands, she brought Jewel to a stop in the center of the ring. She saluted the judges, satisfied that she had successfully finished the round.

Guo ended up winning first place at the Woodside Spring Dressage on this past May.

"I was really excited for getting the highest score that I've ever gotten," Guo said. "It made me look forward to the next competition even more."

When she was 8, Guo was flipping through a recreational summer magazine when she discovered the sport that she would soon come to love. She enrolled in classes later that summer.

Now, Guo spends six hours every week at the Under the Sun Horsemanship and Garrod Farms located in the hills above Saratoga. On weekends, she competes at regional and state shows from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m., clocking in more than enough hours to qualify for the school's Independent Study Physical Education (ISPE) program.

From the first time Guo rode a horse, more than six years ago, Guo knew that horseback riding was different than any other sport she'd ever tried.

Guo said she initially struggled to stay balanced on the saddle.

"Once I figured out which muscles to tighten and contract at the right times, I became really connected with the horse," Guo said.

Before that summer, Guo thought the sport was just about jumping over bars and trotting around a ring. But she soon realized how complex horseback riding is.

"Horseback riding is one of the most subtle sports," Guo said. "When you're riding, you have to give different aids, like hand, leg and seat signals, and respond to the horse's actions every second."

But horseback riding isn't only riding, Guo said. Some of the most important aspects of the sport are also the most invis-



Sophomore Chengzi Guo takes care of her horse, Jewel, in a private riding barn in Los Gatos.

ble: grooming the horses, tacking up cleaning stalls and water troughs and feeding.

In addition, Guo said that when horseback riding, it's important to restrict your body's movement as much as possible while still instructing the horse to perform an action.

Because Guo doesn't own her own horse, she has been riding on different horses in the past six years, including a Quarter named Spirit, a paint arabian mix named Teddy Bear and a palomino thoroughbred named Honey Boy.

Her first horse, Spirit, was carefree and stubborn. After six months with him, Guo had her first fall.

Teddy Bear, on the other hand, was shy during their first encounter because he had been neglected by his previous owner. "He's pretty spooky, but he's also really sensitive and you can tell that he tries really hard to please you," Guo said.

Her third horse, Honey Boy, is extremely intelligent. When Guo rides him, she always has to be alert and respond to his every move.

Because all three horses have unique personalities, Guo said, she takes different strategies with each one to "yield the same result."

After about one-and-a-half years of

training, Guo competed in her first local competition, Garrod's, in 2011.

According to Guo, she spent 50 hours preparing for the competition.

On the day of the show, Guo woke up at 5 a.m. to groom Jewel, her horse. Combing through Jewel's mane, her hands were shaking with excitement. When she arrived at the competition, she warmed up with her horse around the rink.

Finally, after what seemed like forever, the first class, or contest round, began at 8 a.m. Guo eagerly waited with Jewel while the first competitors entered the rink. When the announcer's voice called Guo and Jewel up, Guo led Jewel in a trot to the center of the rink, confident that this would be a great performance.

This would only be her first round of many classes to come later in the day. By 8 p.m., Guo had performed her different routines four times and was exhausted.

Although riding is tiring, difficult and at times frustrating, Guo finds the sport exhilarating and unlike any other.

"Horseback riding is different because it involves a living animal," Guo said. "I think to place your trust in a prey animal that is 15 times heavier and more powerful than you, and then be able to form a connection with it, is pretty amazing." ♦



Courtesy of ERIC WANG

Junior Eric Wang leaps over a hurdle in the 300m event against Wilcox last April.

## Hurdler's work ethic boosts him to the top

BY Neil Rao

As the winter settles in, long nights of bitter cold nip away at warm daylight hours. The number of students who choose to stay behind after school hours declines as the warmth of their cozy homes beckon. But rain or shine, you're likely to find junior track and field member Eric Wang sprinting down the track or in the weight room.

In recent years, Wang has become known for his intense training and for "giving his heart and soul to his sport" as he tries to make the most out of every moment.

"[Training is] basically day in, day out [of] almost always working on something. Even in the shower, [I'm] working on [my] leg strength," Wang said.

Wang conditions every day of the week to keep up with the lead athletes for the school's track and field team. He runs the 110 and 300 meter hurdles as well as the 4x400 meter relay. His achievements include a personal record of 18.77 for the 110 hurdles, 44.44 for the 300 hurdles and, with his 4x400 meter relay team, a time of 3:55.

Because Wang trains during the off-season as well, he has been able to excel in his sport, as it has helped him gain confidence.

With this rigorous work ethic, Wang is usually more prepared and performs better than others at competitions.

However, this mindset of constant training hasn't always been a part of his daily routine.

"Before I became really intense with training, I used to be like many others," Wang said. "I only really started training when I got a private coach [during my sophomore year] that encouraged me to improve."

But the path to success has not been easy. Wang has faced many challenges along the way, such as leg injuries from the stress he places on his muscles and physical exhaustion.

Despite these struggles, he knows that the pain has led to real improvements, which gives him a sense of accomplishment.

"Most importantly, my motivation to train hard stems from seeing the people around me who are faster," Wang said.

His routine consists of an average of three hours of gym and weight training per week, where he looks to improve his leg and core strength and spends even more time on the track performing stretches and mastering his techniques.

Through all his struggles, Wang has learned diligence.

To those who want to persevere in their own passions, his advice is to "write goals, make a program and follow it. There are going to be days that you don't want to, but you just [have to] do it." ♦

## Three-sport senior looks back on athletic career

BY Ami Nachiappan

After losing a tough CCS field hockey game 2-0 against Los Gatos in late October, senior Erin Norris knew it would be tough saying goodbye to her "amazing teammates," especially since she had to grasp the idea that she would no longer be playing field hockey on Benny Pierce field.

Though Norris felt nostalgic, she was comforted in knowing that she would soon be surrounded by another group of "amazing teammates": the varsity basketball team.

The next day, Norris went straight to the small gym after school with her basketball gear to prepare for the upcoming basketball season, excited to know she would soon be reunited with her basketball family.

"I don't really have any breaks between my sports, but I love playing all of them," she said.

Norris, who plays field hockey, basketball and lacrosse, is one of the school's several dozen three-sport athletes.

She has been on varsity lacrosse since her freshman year and has played varsity basketball and field hockey starting sophomore year.

Growing up in an athletic family with two older sisters who played sports throughout high school, Norris was encouraged to play the sports throughout her childhood and swam at Brookside Country Club for eight years, eventually quitting both sports in eighth grade. She also tried water polo for one week in her elementary school years, but after seeing her older sister break a rib and a few bones in the pool, she decided that water polo was too aggressive for her liking.

In the third grade, Norris' dad forced her to play basketball because he wanted one child in his family to try the sport. She ended up enjoying basketball more than soccer so she stuck with basketball, playing for the Saratoga Suns. In middle school, she also picked up field hockey.

The summer before her freshman year, Norris learned how to play lacrosse and joined the school team instead of swimming during the spring season. Instead of choosing one sport to focus on, Norris decided to play all three sports starting in her freshman year.

"I made a lot of friends, and it was really fun playing with three different

groups of girls [year round]," she said. "Right then, I knew I wanted to pursue all three sports the rest of my high school career."

Norris has enjoyed field hockey the most since she grew up watching her older sister play and immediately "fell in love" with the sport.

After picking up the sport in middle school, Norris liked the way the girls worked as a team to achieve the same goal, liked that not many people played field hockey and liked that it combined her strengths: speed and aggressiveness.

"You have to realize that you are not the only one who is going to stand out [in field hockey]," Norris said. "You can only win if you work and win together as a team, which means playing as a unit."

Norris plays center midfield in field hockey, and standing at 5-8, she plays center for the basketball team. She is able to use skills from those two sports to help her with lacrosse, where she plays center midfield.

"I love that lacrosse combines stick skills from field hockey and footwork for defense from basketball," she said.

Norris said that sports have helped her not only with time-management skills, but they have also provided her with a constant network of support and motivation.

"With sports, I'm reassured that if I'm going through a tough time, I will always have three different groups of girls who I can go to," she said.

Even though heavy homework loads bombarded Norris in junior year, the idea of quitting sports never crossed her mind. Norris attributes this motivation to her teammates and family members, who constantly support her athletic endeavors.

"My parents always encourage me when I'm really stressed out and always come to my games," she said. "Instead of telling me to quit, they told me to have a balance between school and sports."

Though Norris may play club basketball or lacrosse in college, she aspires to play field hockey competitively after high school.

As Norris finishes her high school sports career, she is eager to cultivate similar friendships in college next year.

"Each season, I have a set of girls who become my family," Norris said. "The friends I've made definitely make me want to keep playing sports since I know I will always have another support unit." ♦



Norris

### GIRLS' BASKETBALL

## Team trip to Canada results in fun, victories

BY Jenny Qian

Bundled up in sweats, Uggs and parkas, the girls' varsity basketball team met up at the San Jose Airport at 5 a.m. on the Thursday after finals last December.

This year, the team flew to Victoria, Canada, where head coach Mike Davey has taken his boys' varsity team twice in previous years for winter games. The team stayed from Dec. 17-21 in Victoria, where they played against three Canadian teams and also explored the capital of British Columbia.

Out of a total of three games played, the girls were able to win two, which counted towards a spot in CCS. Davey, assistant coach Aron Mitsunaga and a few other family members of the players accompanied them.

"Because it's the senior year for [many of the] players, it was really amazing to go to such a far place," senior captain point guard Nicole Prowse said. "It was a nice change from Fort Bragg, where we have gone for the past few years."

On the first day in Canada, the girls were able to practice before their first game the next day. Many unfamiliar Canadian basketball rules were explained to the team as well.

For example, instead of a 30-second shot clock, the girls were only given 24 seconds to bring the ball up the court and score. In addition, the three point lines in Canada were a few feet further back, and refereeing was comparatively lenient.

"Because we were given six seconds less, we were forced to execute our plays faster," junior guard Aryana Goodarzi said. "The referees in Canada also allowed us to play a lot more, so the games were pretty physical."

The girls played their first game on Dec. 18 against Oak Bay High School, which is ranked as the fifth best high school team in the British Columbia. Playing with different regulations, the girls gave their best but ultimately lost 59-78.

"Even though we had lost, it was a really fun game," Goodarzi said. "Being our first game in Canada, we were able to adjust quickly to the different rules,



Courtesy of GREG SPIRAKIS

Senior Eleni Spirakis jumps to get the ball in a game against St. Michael's Academy in Canada on Dec. 19.

and we got many steals in the beginning of the game. I think we introduced them to the American way of playing and they weren't that used to that."

The next day, the team played against St. Michael's Academy and won 65-54. Following their win, the Falcons defeated Lambrick Park 69-59 on Dec. 21.

Celebrating their two wins, the girls went sightsee-



Goodarzi

ing in Victoria, having high tea at the Empress Hotel, touring the University of Victoria and visiting the Butchart Gardens.

"This was my first time traveling out of the country, so going to Canada with my teammates made the trip more memorable," Prowse said. "We were given a lot of free time to shop and visit landmarks."

The trip proved to be a great bonding experience for the entire team.

Playing with different rules and regulations forced the players to adapt more quickly.

"It was really fun to play a non-American team and to see how other teams play differently," Goodarzi said. "Through the trip, we became one big family and made great memories together. I'm looking forward to traveling with the team again next year." ♦

## Excited students anticipate Super Bowl at Levi's

BY Amith Galivanche

In May of 2013, it was announced that the 50th Super Bowl would be held in Levi's Stadium, home of the San Francisco 49ers. As Super Bowl Sunday approaches on Feb. 7, many students continue to follow football closely, despite the 49ers' abysmal season.

One such student is sophomore Akhil Marimuthu.

Marimuthu was always a fan of the 49ers, but the Arizona Cardinals captured his interest earlier this season when they beat the 49ers 47-7.

"What really caught my eye was [the Cardinals'] offense," Marimuthu said. "Ironically, I only started following them after watching them beat my main team."

Marimuthu is a self-described "football fanatic" and said that he has been following the NFL since he was "in the

womb." Watching football was an essential part of his Sunday afternoons as he was growing up.

The Carolina Panthers, which finished with the league's best record at 15-1, have caught the eyes of some students as well.

Senior Camille Bismonte, whose family is from Chicago, has always been a fan of the Chicago Bears, but now likes the Panthers as well.

"I think [the Panthers'] main strength this season was that their quarterback [Cam Newton] got a lot more mature," Bismonte said. "He doesn't take as many risks anymore."

On Jan. 24, for the final championship games, the Panthers played the Cardinals, the Panthers winning 49-15, while the New England Patriots played the Denver Broncos, the Broncos winning 20-18. The Cardinals will play the Broncos in the Super Bowl.

Sophomore Jaijit Singh feels that the end result could not have turned out better.

"[The Super Bowl] is going to be a really good game," Singh said. "The Panthers can win because of Cam Newton's leadership, but the Broncos can win because of its balanced offensive game and resilient defense. It's going to be great to watch."

Sophomore Gaurav Mohan feels that, aside from the game being played between two of the best teams in the league's recent history, this year's Super Bowl is monumental for a whole other reason.

"It's really interesting that this Super Bowl is probably Peyton Manning's last, but Cam Newton's first," Mohan said.

"Football isn't just a game for us football fans. It's a way of life."



sophomore Akhil Marimuthu

"Manning is good, but with Newton being younger, he's stronger and faster, and overall just better-performing than Manning."

Though the Niners won't play on its home field in Super Bowl 50, it's likely that hundreds of students will be tuned in to the big game on Feb. 7.

"Football isn't just a game," Marimuthu said. "It's a way of life." ♦

(408) 244-8311 [www.sjaart.com](http://www.sjaart.com)

### Portfolio Preparation Class:

+ 9th-12th Grade students and Junior College Students

+ Courses span 8 sessions year-round

+ Class size limited to 20 students

+ Saturdays: 10:00am-1:00pm

+ Wednesdays: 4:00pm-6:00pm

+ Instructor: Mr. Lee Akamichi

+ Instructor: Mr. Tseing Jerry

This course series prepares a students work for application to a professional art school, with instructors experienced in portfolio building and the college application process. The course also provides a distinguishing extracurricular activity for Ivy League college applications.

---

### Tutoring Club:

+ 3rd-5th Grade students  
Tuesday: 4pm to 5pm

+ 6st-8th Grade students  
Tuesday: 5pm to 6pm

+ Class size limited to 4 students

+ Instructor: Ms. Huang Sharon

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts/Literacy and Math will be the guideline for skills taught, practiced, and assessed during sessions. Each tutoring session will be a blend of cross-curricular activities, including appropriate social studies and science content.

+ Tuition is pro-rated when a new student begins a class after the first of the month

Studio Hours

Monday-Friday: 9AM-7PM

Saturday: 9AM-4PM

2905 Homestead Road  
Santa Clara, CA 95051

BOYS' SOCCER

# Players try to bring defense to higher level

BY Neil Rao

Despite a strong preseason and successful performances in the first half of El Camino league games with a record of 3-2-1 as of Jan. 22, the boys' soccer team sees room for improvement.

The team started the league season with losses to Monta Vista 5-1 on Jan. 6 and Los Altos 5-3 on Jan. 13. However, they made a strong comeback along the way as they defeated Milpitas 9-1 on Jan. 8, Wilcox 4-3 on Jan. 22 and Cupertino 4-0 on Jan. 25 while additionally tying a game against Lynbrook on Jan. 20.



Masoumi

Although sitting in the third position in the El Camino League, the team is hoping to improve with each game in order to make it into the CCS playoffs.

One specific way they are looking to improve is by beefing up their defense.

"Our main goal for this season is to make it to the next division as we have worked hard throughout trainings and matches to maintain a [good] record," senior captain and defender Romteem

Masoumi said. "Even if we win and score lots of goals, it won't help if we let in a lot as well."

Despite early losses, the team is still scoring a lot. Leading the team with nine goals, junior striker Kevin Yu is hoping to pave the way for success.

"Although of course our goal is to make it to the playoffs, I also want our team as a whole to improve," Yu said.

"A lot of seniors will be leaving [next year], [and] we need to prepare for [that]."

The team has also taken new approaches to improve the team as a whole. With returning coaches Chris Stott and Alex Booth in their second season at the school, they have successfully worked their way onto the team.

These coaches have established weekly team dinners in hope of encouraging team bonding as a whole.

"I think that the team dinners are crucial because it allows us to bond and improve our team chemistry, which I think has a pretty big impact on the field," senior midfielder Connor Buss said. "During previous seasons, I thought that our



Junior forward Brennan Wu chases after the ball in a game against Lynbrook on Jan. 20.

team seemed segmented into different friend groups or classes and [that] this was partially because we never went out of our way to bond as a whole team."

Looking forward to the rest of the season, the boys are training extra hard at practices as fitness training increases,

and they want to improve on their technical abilities with handling the ball, said Yu.

Due to printing deadlines, the Falcon was unable to cover the games against Monta Vista and Milpitas on Jan. 27 and Jan. 29 respectively. ♦

GIRLS' SOCCER

# Victory over Los Gatos ends team's scoring drought

BY Karissa Dong & Ami Nachiappan

As the last seconds of the first half ticked away in the Jan. 25 game at Los Gatos, senior fullback Kaitlyn Chen backed up for a free kick and launched the ball into the 18-yard box with a powerful strike from her left foot. Senior captain and striker Lauren Plesse, poised just outside of the box, headed the ball over a clump of players and past the scrambling goalkeeper.

After losing the three previous games, the Falcons finally managed to score — and this time, against their fierce rivals. Freshman striker Isabella Taylor added a second in the start of the second half, and a goal from senior forward and center midfielder Kimberly Chen concluded the game at 3-0.

"[I felt] absolutely fantastic. It's a feeling I will never forget," senior captain and goalkeeper Isa Berardo said. "The whole team came out strong; we knew this was our game."

**The whole team came out strong; we knew this was our game.**

senior Isa Berardo

After an undefeated preseason, the girls have a record of 2-1-3 in the upper De Anza League.

Earlier, on the rainy afternoon of Jan. 22, the team played to a 0-0 tie in a league match against Santa Clara at home. Unlucky shots and wet weather contributed to the frustrating tie.

"We need to make the most of the chances that we get," sophomore striker

Caroline Chen said. "We were unlucky on our set plays [that day]."

Playing away against Palo Alto on Jan. 20, the girls fell short 3-0. In spite of the loss, the team gave its best against one of the league's top teams, managing several corner kicks.

The girls also lost 1-0 in a hard-fought game against Mountain View on Jan. 13, after a first-half strike

from the opponent and a goalless second half. Nonetheless, Berardo praised the girls' performance against last year's league leaders.

"[Mountain View] didn't deserve to win with the way we played," Berardo said. "I'm looking forward to playing them again and hopefully [winning]."

At an away game against Milpitas on Jan. 8, the Falcons won 3-0, with one goal from Caroline and a brace from junior striker Karissa Dong. On the opening game of the season against Homestead on Jan. 6, the girls fought to the last minute but lost; a strike from Kimberly, penalty from Kaitlyn and an own goal by the Homestead defense sealed the close score of 4-3.

"I'm very happy so far with our record, because the level of play this year has been excellent," Berardo said.

Due to printing deadlines, the Falcon was unable to cover the games against Homestead and Milpitas on Jan. 27 and Jan. 29, respectively. ♦

FALCON FOCUS: RICHIE SUN

# Skilled Wushu competitor wields swords, staffs and fists

BY Neehar Thumaty & Jenny Qian

Freshmen and sophomores mingled in the open space of the weight room as they finished their workout of the day in P.E. teacher Yuko Aoki's class. After relentless prodding from his friends, then-sophomore Richie Sun finally gave in as he proceeded to execute a flawless backbend kick over. He looked up and all eyes were fixed on him. A student, awestruck, asked him how he learned to do that. Sun chuckled nervously and answered, "Wushu."

"My parents just wanted me to learn self-defense in case of [dangerous] situations," Sun said. "I was just doing it with a few close friends as a hobby, and I

never expected to one day be attending competitions."

Now a junior, Sun has been practicing Wushu, a form of Chinese contemporary martial arts, at Shaolin Martial Arts for five years. He practices at least four hours every week at the academy.

**My parents just wanted me to learn self-defense in case of [dangerous] situations.**



junior Richie Sun

Sun began competing at age 12, when he entered the Tiger Claw Tournament in San Jose and placed first in three cat-

egories — first, staff and broadsword.

"The different categories you can compete in make it really fun and interesting," Sun said. "'First' is punches and blocks, while 'staff' is done with a large weapon, [and] you use the weight of the staff to spin with your body. The sword is similar to the staff motion-wise, except [with] a sword."

Although Wushu is not a common sport for American athletes, Sun said Wushu is a more traditional and older form of martial arts than kung fu.

"When you compete, the movements are more stationary and you focus more on your expressions," Sun said. "Competitions are [like] performances in that

[they] test your own greatest capability, whereas other sports test your skill against varying teams or players."

Sun was able to place first in the Golden State Tournament in San Jose last October. His victory qualified him for the Ninth Annual International Martial Arts Championship in Anhui, China — his first international competition.

On Sun's first day in Anhui, an inauguration was held for all the attendees, and competitors from many different countries were able to meet each other.

"Since there was no beginner, intermediate or advanced levels, everyone was grouped together," said Sun. "This made everything a lot more competitive as everyone was against each other."

The competition lasted two days, and Sun ended up placing third in the first category and second place in sword.

"It made me realize there are a lot of people who share the same interest[s] from around the world," Sun said.

While Sun has accomplished an exceptional amount in his five-year Wushu career, he still hopes to improve and do well in other competitions.

"Practicing a new move and perfecting it is one of the biggest challenges in Wushu," Sun said. "However, it is people with playful personalities and my optimistic and supportive coach who push me to continue and make Wushu fun."

Although unsure whether he wants to pursue Wushu professionally, Sun wants to continue competing and participating in various events.

"I have heard of clubs in colleges, such as one in UC Berkeley, that host Wushu competitions and events, and I think I would be interested in participating in them," Sun said. ♦

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

# Wins against strong teams show potential

BY Frederick Kim & Jenny Qian

Following a successful preseason, the girls have progressed through the highly competitive De Anza league with a record of 12-6 through Jan. 21.

The girls achieved their most noteworthy victory on Jan. 12, as they defeated Palo Alto 42-39 at home. Paly was ranked eighth in CCS. During the first half, the Falcons trailed Palo Alto, later catching up in the second half by making adjustments to their defense. Senior captain and post Erin Norris led the team with 14 points and 11 rebounds.

"We all came prepared to play, and everyone contributed either on the court," said junior guard Natasha Ramakrishnan. "This was a nice redemption as we had a tough loss against them last year."

Prior to the victory against Palo Alto, the team was also ranked 15th for two weeks among the teams based in the Santa Clara and San Mateo counties in the Mercury News rankings.

The win against Palo Alto and high ranking were a good boost to the team's morale after a 47-43 loss to Mountain View on Jan. 8. Having beaten Mountain View in preseason, the loss was hard for the girls, but they were able to learn from their mistakes in the game against Palo Alto.

On Jan. 19, the team fell to Los Gatos at home 50-43. In the beginning of the game, the girls were able to minimize the number of 3-pointers the Wildcats took, allowing the girls to lead in the first half. By the end of the third quarter, however, Los Gatos had caught up. With three minutes left in the game, the Falcons briefly regained the lead with two free throws by Norris and a put back by senior post Eleni Spirakis. But the Falcons were outscored 13-3 down the stretch.

"A lot of hard work went into this game, and we never gave up, which is what I love about the team," said senior captain and point guard Nicole Prowse.

Earlier, the girls had won 54-41 against Gunn on Jan. 22, following a tough 60-53 loss against Wilcox on Jan. 15. The Falcons started strong as junior guard Aryana Goodarzi led the team with four 3-pointers. But during the fourth quarter, Wilcox was able to catch up with a few 3-pointers and drives to the basket.

"We turned over the ball a lot, and instead of getting back into the game, we let it get into our heads," said Norris. "Wilcox began making more shots, and once they got the momentum, it was hard to stop them."

The girls defeated Los Altos 53-34 on Jan. 5 and won 45-25 against Leigh on



Senior point guard Nicole Prowse dribbles down the court against Los Gatos on Jan. 19.

Jan. 2. Although the two games were not as tough as others, they helped to warm up the girls for the tough games ahead.

The team was able to progress through the league with several victories after starting off the season strong with a 46-34 win against Notre Dame on Dec. 28. The win became a boosting

factor which motivated the girls to work harder.

"We play really well together because we are practically like sisters," said senior guard Stephanie Ouchida. "Pushing the ball down the court and setting our own tempo for the game has helped us in our wins." ♦

BOYS' BASKETBALL

# Victory against Lynbrook boosts team spirit

BY Miles Albert & Ami Nachiappan

As senior small forward Tyler Yoshihara made the free throw at a home game against Lynbrook on Jan. 13, the boys on the bench immediately began cheering and dabbing, the team's celebratory dance move.

"That was definitely one of my favorite moments from the game," senior shooting guard Gabriel Fong said. "When we all started cheering, it really showed the bonds that we've created with each other."

The Falcons won the tough game 60-51. The team was leading most of the game because of good defense and strong shooting skills, key aspects that contributed to their nine point win. Seniors point guard Joe Eschen and power forward Jatin Mohanty have been the

team's top scorers. "We did what we did in practice on the court and got a good victory against a tough opponent," Fong said. "We're looking to keep playing like we did [against Lynbrook]."

As of Jan. 21, the team's record in the El Camino League is 2-3.

At a home game against Cupertino on Jan. 20, the Falcons lost 55-53, a loss players blamed on too many turnovers. According to Mohanty, the Falcons took the lead going into the fourth quarter, but lost it on the last two possessions.

The team also lost 56-43 to Santa Clara on Jan. 15.

"We were in the game the first three quarters, but they got a few steals and easy layups to take a big lead in the

fourth quarter," junior small forward Apoorv Kwatra said.

The Falcons whipped Mountain View 50-35 on Jan. 8 on the Spartans' court thanks to well-planned plays and exceptional teamwork. Though Mountain View is ranked high in CCS, the

team managed to hold the Spartans' best player to only nine points. According to Kwatra, the other Spartan players could not score much, leading to a 15-point win.

"I think we all just understand how to play with each other and know what it takes to win as a team," Fong said.

This is also the first season Fong has played on the court alongside his younger brother, sophomore shooting guard Harrison Fong. Because both boys are competitive, they push each

other to excel on the court. "It really helps when I get support from [Harrison] since we both end up playing better," Gabriel said. "It's really cool getting to play with him since we're constantly giving each other tips on and off the court."

However, for six of the boys on the team, including Gabriel, Yoshihara, Eschen, Mohanty, Alex Guo and Noah Quanrad, this season will be the last of their high school basketball careers.

"[As seniors], this season is an accumulation of all the hard work we've put in the last four years," Gabriel said. "Just playing a sport I love and being out there with my teammates competing for the last time is my favorite part."

Due to printing deadlines, the Falcon was unable to cover the games against Homestead and Mountain View on Jan. 22 and Jan. 29, respectively. ♦

WRESTLING

# Freshman Murabito brother helps lead the team

BY Ami Nachiappan

After listening to head coach Jose Gamez's motivational speech and a few songs to pump him up, freshman Clayton Murabito prepared to wrestle a "pretty strong guy" at a tournament in Cupertino on Jan. 8. Murabito went on to pin his opponent in the first period.

"I think that as a freshman, I've done well since I placed third at a varsity tournament," Murabito said.

He follows his two older brothers' footsteps in wrestling, 2012 graduate Alfred Murabito, who currently wrestles at the University of Pennsylvania, and 2015 graduate Christian Murabito, who won the CCS wrestling tournament last spring and attends Brown University, where he is on the wrestling team.

"It's definitely a lot of pressure, but I've been training for two years now and look up to them as mentors," Clayton said.

After wrestling for three years in mid-

dle school, Clayton said he enjoys high school wrestling because he is able to compete against more experienced opponents.

"I love tournaments because [they] give me a chance to just be with my teammates and bond with them," Clayton said.

According to assistant coach and history teacher Kirk Abe, the young team is improving, winning its first two dual meets against Lynbrook and Harker. The Falcons won 36-24 against Harker on Jan. 14.

"This season has been a mix—we're a very young team and with that there have been some successes at some of the tournaments and matches which we're really happy about, but we also have ex-

perienced bumps in the road that we're learning and growing from," Abe said.

However, the team's second victory against Lynbrook on Jan. 7 required

no athletes to wrestle. Since it was Lynbrook's home meet, it was its responsibility to schedule a referee to oversee the matches. But because Lynbrook failed to get a referee, the match was treated as a forfeit.

The team's goal is to continually improve and peak during league finals, which will take place in the first week of February. Both Clayton and senior Adam Camp are ranked in the top 20 for

CCS, which will take place in March. "At this point we really want to be ready for league finals, and we're hoping to get some guys to CCS and maybe even to the state meet," Abe said.

Though Abe was the head coach prior to 2010, he has not coached wrestling in six years.

As this is his first season back in years, Abe finds coaching to be a rewarding experience, though it is extremely time-consuming.

"I really do enjoy coaching, and even though it's been time-consuming with all of the administrative duties like weigh-ins, lineups and scheduling, it's been so rewarding to work with the kids," Abe said.

With 17 athletes, the team is relatively small in numbers, and Abe hopes to get more people interested in wrestling.

"Our overall goal is to strengthen the team and bring up the numbers," Abe said. ♦

>> snapshots



FALCON // SWEEYA RAJ



FALCON // SWEEYA RAJ



FALCON // SWEEYA RAJ



FALCON // VIVIEN ZHANG

Senior Michael Schillage dances during Challenge Day on Jan. 22.

Members of the dance team perform for incoming freshmen and their parents at Electives Night on Jan. 25.

Senior Nicole Prowse dribbles the ball as she defends herself against a Los Gatos player at the home game on Jan. 19.

Junior Mitali Shanbhag leads Bombay in the Bay practice in the quad on Jan. 14.

**buzzworthy** >> Bieber fever returns with full force

BY Julia Miller

Social media has recently exploded with a name some people assumed had fallen permanently from grace: pop sensation Justin Bieber.

But instead of the usual criticism about his scandalous antics, teens and tweens alike have once again caught the epidemic that swept the nation four years ago. That's right — Bieber Fever is back.

In 2014, Bieber's reckless partying, multiple DUIs and a mugshot — in which he beamed at the jail camera — circulated throughout social media. It seemed he was doomed to the dubious fame of once-great celebrities who had gone too far.

Recent months have shown that reports of Bieber's demise were prema-

ture. After the countless promotions of his new album "Purpose" through his Instagram and various talk shows, along with his captivating new look, Beliebers seem to have risen from the dead.

Senior Aakash Thumaty, a newly converted Belieber, described Bieber's new album as "genuinely pure art."

"His [new] album is straight fire.

It speaks to me," Thumaty said.

Thumaty has especially enjoyed Bieber's hit, "Love Yourself," due to how much he can relate to his lyrics and the message behind them.

"Everything he says is exactly what I'm thinking, but in a more melodic

form."

Unlike Thumaty, who has never had any opinions about Bieber, people who were once filled with passionate hate for the singer have now replaced that hate with utter infatuation, bordering insane craze.

Bieber Fever began six years ago when Bieber was an innocent 16-year-old Canadian boy with an

adorable hair flip and a sweet smile. Fans have seen its peaks and falls, but it's safe to assume that Bieber Fever is here to stay. Not only are the same fans beginning to like him again, his haters are growing fond of him as well, even after all the foul statements they made

about the singer just months ago.

Sophomore Gina Hinojosa said she has loved Bieber since the beginning, but she admits to losing interest in his music due to his bad behavior.

"I liked him at first because he was cute and an amazing singer," Hinojosa said. "When he hit his rough patch a few years ago, I didn't think as highly of him anymore, but I was still a fan."

Now that Bieber cut his hair and changed his sound, teenagers throughout America are jumping onto the Bieber bandwagon.

"I wouldn't consider myself a kind of bandwagon fan, but now that he's cleaned up his act and released his new album, I'm obsessed again," Hinojosa said. ♦



*Confessions of an ex-horoscope addict*

I'M A TAURUS, AND TAURUSES DON'T BELIEVE IN ASTROLOGY

ok-sans

Oksana Trifonova



During the Dark Ages of middle school, I used to be obsessed with astrology. I would read my horoscope as soon as I woke up, trying to divine the true meaning of its verbose and ambiguous predictions.

I visited "horoscope compatibility" websites, read about the "science" behind numerology, tried to predict my future with Tarot cards and even checked out a book on palm reading at the library. Astrology seemed mysterious and secret to me; it was like going back to childhood fairytale books, except these seemed more real and exciting.

I remember talking about my hobby with my grandmother, who disapproved of my "dangerous" obsession. She used to live in a small Ukrainian village where belief in folk tales and witchcraft was deeply held by many and dabbling in something like astrology was taboo.

In fact, while it might seem like something out of "The Crucible," a Arthur Miller's play about a witch hunt, I do recall hearing rumors as a first grader

about one neighbor boiling a large kettle of some concoction and reciting incantations to curse an enemy of hers. I do not know how much of that was made up, but in villages like my grandmother's, gossip and superstitions spread like wildfire — partly because of the community is so small, and partly because there isn't anything better to do in the midst of trees, pastures and cows. The story was probably heavily exaggerated by those who passed it on, sort of like the game of Telephone.

In any case, my grandmother grew up hearing such tales. She said she didn't believe in them, but warned me to stay away from mysticism "just in case."

It was then that I began wondering: Could astrology be true? Whenever I asked adults about it, they all answered with a resounding "no." But then, I would pick up a newspaper and see advertisements for psychics, horoscopes and palm readings plastered all over the pages. Such a discrepancy confused me.

It wasn't until I was a freshman in high school that I got my explanation. I was sitting with my friend at a cafe, when he read a short description that

he said was tailored to my personality. He then asked me if it was accurate. I was amazed. I did have a tendency to be critical of myself, was an independent thinker and could be both introverted or extraverted, depending on the situation. "It's spot on!" I said. "But how did you know?"

In response, he showed me the phone. Turns out, the Barnum effect is the the observation that people tend to relate to generalized descriptions that could be applicable to almost anyone in the population. Horoscopes use this tactic so that readers report high levels of accuracy.

Suddenly, all the broad language and confusing advice made sense: The horoscope wasn't striving for clarity. It was striving for vagueness. The information it gave was in no way magically foreseeing. Astrology had no purpose other than to entertain; there was no need to take its predictions seriously.

Afterwards, I became more interested in psychology than astrology. While the mystery of astrology was fun as I explored it, I'm finding that it's much more satisfying having fascinations rooted in the real world. ♦

**Astrology seemed mysterious and secret to me; it was like going back to childhood.**

>> topten

SIGNS OF SENIORITIS

- 10 **You're late to every class.** What are colleges going to do? Rescind you for too many tardies?
- 9 **You have a lot of absences.** The attendance clerk memorized your ID.
- 8 **You commit small acts of rebellion.** Going off campus during tutorial never felt so good.
- 7 **You, your bed and Netflix are in a love triangle.** Netflix is coming out with 11 shows this year!
- 6 **You can't finish reading things longer than a few paragraphs.** Textbooks become unbearable.
- 5 **Your inflated ego and sense of superiority reign supreme.** You have no time for peasants.
- 4 **You're inflicted with daydreams about college life.** Party life!
- 3 **You're easily irritable.** No, mom's friend, I'm not becoming a doctor, lawyer or engineer.
- 2 **You take frequent naps, trying to make up for years of sleep deprivation.** Luckily, break is near.
- 1 **You don't care what you look like.** Transform into Mia Thermopolis before she became a princess.

>> Andrew Jiang and Allison Lin