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Reporters challenge each other to truth or dare.



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A look into fundraising efforts on campus.



# THE saratogafalcon



Saratoga High School >> Saratoga, CA  
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*a first for*  
**EVERYTHING**

## SHS LEADERSHIP PULLS OFF FIRST LIP DUB EVENT

BY EliciaYe

Lip syncing and swaying along to Outkast's "Hey Ya," principal Paul Robinson, in his red Falcon bomber jacket, waved his arms to gather more than 1,200 students, all decked in red and lined up from the McAfee Center to the pool deck Monday morning. Robinson began the

>> **LIP DUB** on pg. 3

**Holding a drone, sophomore Isaiah Vivero films the Lip Dub Monday as he heads toward the football field.**

FALCON // MUTHU PALANIAPPAN

### APP DEV

## Former club president hosts LA hacks event

BY DanielBessonov & PatrickLi

Class of 2015 alum Anshul Aggarwal, now a sophomore at UCLA, is one of three students from the school organizing one of the largest college hackathons in the world: LA Hacks. The invitation-only event will pit 1,000 programmers against each other for prizes combining to a whopping \$100,000.

The 48-hour event, in which entrepreneurs, programmers and designers team up to create any sort of software or hardware project, is taking over the weekend of March 31.

However, organizing a hack-  
>> **HACKATHON** on pg. 6

### STUDENT GOVERNMENT

## ASB revises constitution in preparation for upcoming election

BY FrederickKim & SpringMa

The Leadership class is set to enact some major changes in the outdated student body constitution.

The ASB constitution outlines rules on all aspects of the student government from elections to the structure of the government. Many of the updates to the consti-

tution are the result of the school's new Leadership class period. The major changes include:

- **Old to new terminology:** New amendments will remove the references to the now outdated bi-weekly ASB night meetings, as the new Leadership class has taken the place of the meetings.

- **Class representatives:** The number of class representatives will be reduced for all grades. The

freshman and sophomore class offices will not have any appointed representatives. Upperclassmen will keep their appointed representatives, but they can have only two at most.

Previously, class presidents in all grades could appoint up to four class representatives in addition to the two elected ones.

- **Changes to commissions:** Through the amendments, the

ASB decided to create an Outreach commission to the existing list of commissions. The amendments will also remove the Rally commission from the Leadership class.

"The preparation and the time it takes to put a rally together is mostly after school late at night, and it's after all their activities are over," Leadership adviser Matt Torrens said. "It really doesn't match to have the rally kids a part

of the leadership class."

- **Power and requirements of the ASB president:** New rules will allow the ASB president to gain a vote during discussions of issues. The former constitution allowed the president only to vote as a tie-breaker.

Of this change, senior class vice president Jessy Liu said, "What's

>> **ELECTION** on pg. 6

### COMMON CORE

## Algebra 1: the new normal for freshmen

BY ChelseaLeung & ElaineSun

Because of the implementation of Common Core standards at Redwood Middle School, the new grade level math class for incoming freshmen is now Common Core State Standards Algebra instead of the previous standard of Geometry or Geometry Enriched.

Over the years, Common Core standards have been gradually integrated into all classes, with the Class of 2017 as the first group of students with Common Core-aligned courses. At Redwood, the grade level math classes are no longer sixth-grade math, Pre-Algebra and Algebra 1, but instead CCSS6, CCSS7 and CCSS8, assistant principal Brian

Safine said.

According to Redwood math teacher Snehali Marimuthu, students can stay in their grade level class, take an accelerated path or advance to above grade level classes through placement tests.

The accelerated path combines CCSS 6 and 7 as well as CCSS 7 and 8, so accelerated sixth graders would take CCSS 6/7, take CCSS 7/8 as seventh graders and take CCSS Algebra as eighth graders. Additionally, students can skip entire grade levels, in which they would take CCSS 7/8 as sixth graders, CCSS Algebra as seventh graders and CCSS Geometry as eighth graders.

"The middle school does a

>> **MATH** on pg. 5

### BASKETBALL



Courtesy of NOW & FOREVER STUDIOS  
Coach Mike Davey instructs his prepared players during the season.

## Longtime basketball coach steps down to coach JV team

BY HarshiniRamaswamy

The seniors on the girls' basketball team weren't the only ones to participate in their last varsity game late last month: Coach Mike Davey is stepping down after 25 years of leading the varsity boys' team and later the varsity girls' team.

Taking his place as the varsity coach next year will be JV coach Danny Wallace. In turn, Davey plans to coach the girls' JV team. "Originally I started coach-

ing because I loved the game and competition in general," Davey said. "The longer I did it, the more it became about the players and helping create an experience they wouldn't forget and learn some life lessons along the way."

After serving as the varsity coach of the boys' team for 15 years, Davey saw that the girls' program had had five different coaches five years. With his two daughters approaching

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Over 200 students attend renamed dance on March 25. pg. 3

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AP classes more effective with steeper grading scales pg. 8

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Reporters recount how their relationships have affected them. pg. 16

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Link Crew hosts annual root beer giveaway

Link Crew leaders reconnected with dozens of freshmen during a root beer social on March 23 in the quad.

The annual event, according to ASB president senior Mitali Shanbhag, was initially created in order for junior and senior Link Crew leaders to catch up with their freshmen and address any issues or concerns they may have.

"It's really important to revisit that connection that all the Link Crew leaders made with our freshmen during the summer in order to reinforce the idea that they have access to any kind of help if they need it," Shanbhag said.

Senior Link Crew commissioner Neythra Srinivasan said a major goal of this year's social was to make sure it did not feel like an obligation for the freshmen to participate.

"I remember that in my freshman year, Link Crew felt like a real waste of time, since we would just go to some random class during tutorial and sit there till we could leave," Srinivasan said. "So this year, Link Crew hoped to show freshmen that Link Crew events could also be useful, not just something they are obligated to attend."

By making the event non-mandatory, the Link Crew hoped that the freshmen would be already motivated to attend purely to enjoy the drinks and reconnect with their junior and senior leaders — and the event, according to freshman Dhruv Shah, did just that.

"Although I wasn't really expecting much out of the event, it ended up being actually really useful," Shah said. "I was able to talk with my Link Leaders for the first time in a while, and even got a few questions answered about my schedule for next year."

— Daniel Bessonov and Navin Tiwary

APES classes go on trip to Año Nuevo State Park

Three AP Environmental Science (APES) classes took the hour and a half bus ride to Año Nuevo State Park in Pescadero for an annual trip on March 16.

"The main purpose of the trip was to get students outside, apply what they've learned and make connections," APES teacher Kristen Thomson said.

As part of their learning experience, the students went on a two-mile hike through the park and visited the beach to learn about the sea lions and elephant seals living there.

After a history of being hunted, northern elephant seals numbered less than 100 in 1910, but they soon experienced a rebound due to conservation efforts like Año Nuevo State Park, one of the few wildlife reservations with northern elephant seals.

"It was fun seeing all the seals up close and watching them make noises at each other," junior Nikhil Koduri said. "Seals have really large bodies, so watching them move looked really cool."

While there, the students studied the organisms that lived in the area such as coyotes and small deer.

"I had already learned in class that the different organisms living in similar environments help maintain a balance and usually serve a purpose," Koduri said. "But it was really eye-opening to see it first hand at such a cool area outside the classroom."

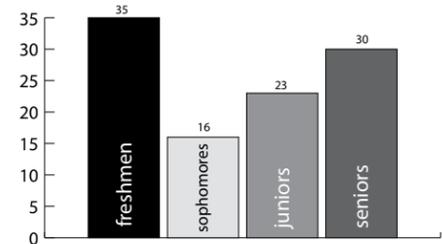
Additionally, students took selfies with seals, or "sea-fies," and also learned about the sea lion life cycle, such as how sea lions travel about 5,000 miles through the ocean for six months after giving birth.

"My favorite part of the trip was getting to see the newborn sea lions up close," junior Roy Ong said. "They were super adorable and about four to five feet long."

— Karen Chow and Chelsea Leung

>> falconfigures

Powderpuff Football Participants



— Roland Shen

>> picturethis



POWDERPUFF RALLY >> Juniors huddle around Aaron Choi as he performs a solo in a wig last Friday.

CLUB RUSH

Lunch time event generates funds

by Lina Kim & Roland Shen

As the lunch bell rang, signaling the start of the annual Club Rush on March 17, chaos erupted as a mass of students sprinted out of their third-period classes.

At the top of the quad steps, students discovered 23 tables scattered throughout the quad, each topped with In-N-Out burgers, Shamrock Shakes, Jamba Juice and more.

Among the participating clubs in this year's rendition of the event were Interfaith, Interact and the newly established Filmmakers Club. To prepare the event, each club and its members had to carefully manage the logistics of fundraising.

According to activities director Matt Torrens, Club Rush is one of the biggest fundraising events of the year for many student organizations.

"The event was really successful for all clubs, and the newer clubs made a lot of money," Torrens said.

"The event was also a great way to bring a large number of students together."

The Filmmakers club, led by sophomores Isaiah Vivero and Nick Bray, was among many of the clubs who fundraised for the first time this year. In order to ensure profit from the event, the club officers were careful in limiting the number of donuts they bought.

"We didn't want to go super big and just wanted to test out how we could sell," Vivero said. "We accounted for the entire school being here and tried to get the right amount of donuts to where it was a safe amount but where we could still make a decent profit."

In the end, the Filmmakers club came out with a clear profit that they are planning to use for video projects that the club will pursue.

As for the coordinating the event itself, club commissioners junior Kedar Abhyankar and senior Ellicia Chiu spent weeks

ensuring that every aspect of the rush ran smoothly. Despite careful planning on the commissioners' part, there were still issues that they ran into during the hectic lunch, such as the lack of music playing in the quad.

"There were a few other last-minute details that we missed such as selling tickets to first-period classes, but Mr. Torrens was a huge help," Chiu said. "We had a few hardships with advertising, but what was most frustrating was keeping students inside the school during a closed-campus lunch."

According to Chiu, the event as a whole was successful in terms of giving clubs the opportunity to profit, as the 24 clubs raised around \$4,600 in total. Several popular items, such as In-N-Out burgers sold by Interfaith Club, sold out even before the bell rang.

"Overall, I think it was a success for our first Club Rush," Fayad said. "We made a lot of money that we can invest right back into making the club better." ◆

TECHNOLOGY

Cafeteria implements new ID system

by Cassandra King & Ethan Ko

Amid the chatter of students making the usual walk through the cafeteria lines during lunch, a new sound has emerged lately — a routine beep as student ID cards are being scanned.

The school started using Meals Plus, an ID card system, on March 6 with a goal to make purchasing lunch simpler by allowing students to make cashless transactions with their ID cards.

Principal Paul Robinson, who has experienced similar systems in other schools in San Diego where he was principal, said the change will improve the cafeteria.

"It's been easy for parents and students in other schools," Robinson said. "It naturally made sense to us to implement it because the benefits of the service outweigh the one-time hardware cost."

Not only does the service eliminate the need for students to carry cash, but parents will also

be able to easily deposit funds into their students' accounts using credit or debit cards on the service's secure website, a change that is appreciated by many.

The service was largely planned by LGSUHS teacher mentor Peter Jordan and Stacy Murillo from the district office.

As opposed to simply having the workers take cash and return change, they had to swipe an ID card for each student, input the amount into the computer, then take cash and give change.

"The new system makes buying lunch hard, but if they start using barcodes on lunch items, it would be faster," Xu said. Sophomore Hanlin Sun also thinks the system is slowing the lines, but thinks it will gradually improve.

"I think the lines are moving slower because the system is new," said Sun. "The lines will become faster, making the system worth it in the long run."

For her part, Murillo sees short-term difficulties but long-term payoffs, especially as more parents take advantage of loading money onto the cards.

If the Meals Plus program proves to be efficient, Robinson hopes to expand the program to include other school activities such as purchasing tickets for dances or other ASB activities.

"We're hoping to grow it and to make it easier for students to purchase things that they need and not have to worry about carrying a lot of cash," Robinson said. ◆

"The benefits of the service outweigh the one-time hardware cost."



PRINCIPAL Paul Robinson

Rebranded dance kicks off Spring Fling week

by Elicia Ye

Decked out in groovy tie-dye clothes from the '70s and iconic neon colors of the '80s, more than 200 students filled the Small Gym in anticipation for the Spring Fling Dance last Saturday night.

With a Roaring Twenties-themed photo booth, curtain lights strung across the walls and cardboard cutouts representing different decades, the gym roared with throwback music blasting and students dancing the night away to kick off Spring Fling week.

Since the Dance Commission and Homecoming/Spring Fling Commission struggled with promoting the annual Sadie Hawkins Dance in the past, the commissioners this year decided to rename the event to the Spring Fling Dance, eliminating the perception that female students are required to ask male students and attend the dance with dates.

In recent years, instead of being in early March, Sadies has only been a few weeks before Junior Prom. Since juniors have been securing their prom dates earlier than Spring Fling week, Sadies became one of the least popular dances on campus.

Knowing this, the commissioners decided to change the way they advertised the dance to keep students interested.

Dance commissioner William Chen said the commission intended to organize the Spring Fling dance so that it was similar

to hosting a second Homecoming dance, except that for this dance, the commissioners "aimed to get everyone hyped up over the weekend prior to the spirit week instead of after it."

Keeping features from casual dances such as a live DJ, an open-air photo booth, theme decorations, a popcorn machine and a cotton candy machine, the Spring Fling Dance created a significant increase in attention and support from previous years but still fell short to the Homecoming dance.

Even though the overall student enthusiasm with dances this year has increased, with at least 500 attendees for both the Homecoming and Winter Formal dances, the Spring Fling Dance was still seen by students as a "more low-key Homecoming Dance, and not many people knew how many of their friends were going," junior Sahana Sarin said.

Chen believes that the commission could have done more marketing to further publicizing the event, such as filming a promotional video on top of promoting through social media and posters.

"Everyone was already hyped for Homecoming Week, so we didn't need to do much to advertise except making sure everything ran smoothly at the Homecoming dance, which was the icing on the cake," Chen said.

For Spring Fling, the dance is buried underneath the prom hype, so we have to be in people's faces." Nonetheless, the revenue gen-



Sophomore girls pose in their '60s style for the dance on March 25.

erated from this year's dance almost doubled from that of last year, with revenue jumping from \$1,322 to \$2,352.

The dance, along with the Lip Dub on Monday, kicked off this year's Spring Fling "Travel through the Ages" spirit week. Corresponding with the overarching Decades theme, students dressed up as representations of memes on "Meme Tuesday," wore bandanas and cowboy hats on "Western Wednesday," imitated 1950's fashion style on "Rock n' Roll Thursday" and wore tie-dye on "Groovy Friday."

"We planned this week so that it turned out to be more successful than in previous years, as we made the spirit days more accessible so that people find clothes to wear from their closets," head Spring Fling commissioner senior Megana Saripella said.

Furthermore, because lunch is closed campus today for the

Powderpuff football championship, the Leadership class, along with some clubs that need to raise funds, are holding a Class Office and Commission Rush, where they will be selling food and drinks like Jamba Juice, In-N-Out Burgers, Chicken McNuggets and Quickly Pearl Milk Tea on the Benny Pierce Field.

According to ASB Board Representative junior Nathan Chin, Homecoming/Spring Fling Commission worked nonstop to plan the spirit week and has done a "spectacular" job.

"I always look forward to an entire week jam-packed with spirited Powderpuff players and cheerleaders, lit music and good vibes," Chin said. "Spring Fling week has always been a fun week of entertainment, and we were glad to see participation in the Lip Dub, Powderpuff dances and spirit day dress-ups from every single class." ◆



GRAPHIC BY CHARIN PARK

Class tensions lead to competitive rally

by Ryan Kim & Neil Rao

Piling into a moshpit in the Large Gym, the senior boys erupted with celebration at the end of their Powderpuff cheer on March 24.

The rally ended happily but teachers and administrators expressed concerns about students colliding head first and possibly receiving concussions or even worse during ultra competitive games.

Rally commissioner junior Allison Borch attributed this animosity to the competitive nature of Spring Fling.

"When it comes to Powderpuff and games, we get competitive because we want to beat each other," Borch said. "It amps everyone up and makes things more fun."

Several games like Steal the Bacon and Powerball caused concerns because students easily could have gotten hurt. In Steal the Bacon, one student from each grade fought for a ball; in Powerball, a pair of students from two grades battled to throw a ball in a trash can.

Principal Paul Robinson acknowledged the need to balance fun with safety by making games based on skills rather than solely on fighting other students.

But according to Robinson, even with these changes, rallies would still be competitive because of inherent rivalry among classes.

"Rallies create class and physical competition, especially with juniors and seniors," Robinson said. "They're upperclassmen and physically bigger."

Nevertheless, rally commission asserted that everything was under control despite the bumps and bruises the 36 competitors sustained. Because of the commission's past experience with these potentially dangerous games, they said they had learned how to handle the situation.

"Whenever things get out of

hand, we have to step in, but that didn't really happen at the rally," Borch said.

Other fun and relatively non-competitive activities impressed the audience, especially the winning Powderpuff junior cheer, which was choreographed by junior Nicholas Di. Despite the audio breaking off during performances, the classes showed dedication and organization in their dances.

"There were some technical issues, but everyone powered through," sophomore class treasurer Roshan Verma said. "We really embraced the spirit of Powderpuff." ◆

LIP DUB

continued from pg. 1

school's first lip dub video. Inspired by the annual Lip Dub that Los Gatos High School started in 2014 as a tradition, the rally commission used the spirit event to highlight the various clubs and sports teams on campus in a vibrant way.

In past years, ASB members have brought up the option of a Lip Dub in discussions, but the idea never came to fruition due to scheduling conflicts. This year, however, rally commissioners took it upon themselves to organize the event to kick off Spring Fling week and pump up spirit to an all-time high.

As part of the planning process, the rally commission posted sign-up sheets in Facebook groups for seniors who wanted to run through the course and sing along to the songs "Hey Ya" by Outkast, "California Gurls" by Katy Perry, "Welcome to the Jungle" by Guns N' Roses, "Year 3000" by the Jonas Brothers and "I Gotta Feeling" by Black Eyed Peas.

Sophomore rally commissioner David Berkowitz mapped out the course of the Lip Dub and divided the hallways, swimming pool and football field into sections for students representing their organizations: soccer, football, basketball, drama and so forth. On the days before the event, Berkowitz promoted these maps and sectioned-off hallways to make sure every teammate and group member knew where to go.

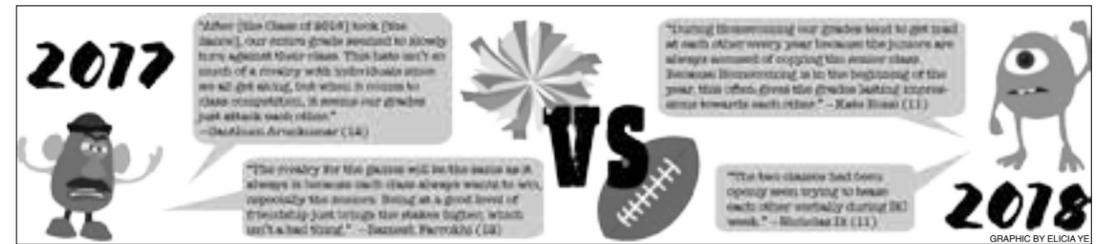
The filming started from at McAfee Center, went through the parking lot and quad and passed by the team room and sports facilities. To end the Lip Dub, the rally commission borrowed a drone from sophomore Nicholas Bray, who also filmed the entire video with the help of sophomore Isaiah Vivero, and zoomed out as all participants gathered underneath the "Home of the Falcon" sign on the football field.

"Nick is someone we know through our Media Arts Program and who happens to own a drone," commissioner Alex Metz said. "We loved working with him, and the video turned out great with the amazing transitions and effects."

Because of the construction of the new music building, the commissioners also had to strategically plan the placement of different groups. For example, they asked the marching band to stay in the parking area outside the McAfee Center in order to block out the green fences.

Activities director Matt Torrens, who initially had misgivings about the weather prohibiting the drone from functioning properly, was amazed by the spirit and support from the students.

"As I drove around the school, it was like a ghost town. There were just a few students that were hanging out in the back campus," Torrens said. "After the dance, the students were so excited that we had the spirit to do a lip dub." ◆



GRAPHIC BY ELICIA YE



**Attention Saratoga Falcon Parents and Fans:**

Saratoga High School is one of the top academic schools in the county, and we also have many of the top athletic teams from year to year. We can only be this successful because of the partnership between athletics and parents. SHS is able to provide excellent facilities and coaches for our student athletes. Financial support for transportation, additional coaches, supplies and other fees is always a challenge. Through the contributions that our athletes families make each year, we're able to maintain the athletic excellence we've come to enjoy.

This year we're unable to meet some of our obligations because the number of contributors has decreased even though our athletic participation remains high. SHS athletics needs your support to fill the gap this year. If you haven't contributed to your athlete's fair share please do so today. If you would like to contribute to help those whose families can't contribute, please do.

"Athletics teaches us that everyone on the team has an important role. We all bring our talents to help the team. No matter how much or how little you are able to bring, it all makes a difference for the team. Please do what you can."

— Paul Robinson, Principal

"Donations are what keeps sports running at SHS. Our district does not fund athletics except for stipends for head coaches. Donations cover costs for referees, transportation, our league dues, uniforms, salaries for assistant coaches, and team expense accounts for equipment and tournaments. They are instrumental for us to run this department and provide a first-class experience for our student athletes."

— Tim Lugo, Athletic Director

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*This message is brought to you by SHS Sports Boosters.*

**About Us**

The SHS Sports Boosters is comprised of parent volunteers and school administrators who are passionately dedicated to improving the athletic experience of every student-athlete.

**Our Vision**

The SHS Sports Boosters organization supports athletic and academic excellence, promotes commitment to team, sportsmanship and character in athletes and builds community involvement while maintaining the history and tradition of being a Falcon for all student-athletes at Saratoga High School.

**Our Goals/Purpose**

- Support all athletic teams and individual athletes
- Enhance school spirit through athletic events
- Recognize outstanding accomplishments of our athletes and coaches
- Supplement school funds to provide for the needs of the athletic programs

LEADERSHIP

**'Toga Reads' helps develop bonds among local schools**

By Ami Nachiappan & Elaine Sun

Senior Puja Maheshwari couldn't help but laugh as the little girl she was reading with screamed out in excitement when she saw the various pictures in the children's book.

In classes all around Argonaut Elementary School, students from the Leadership

would scream about all the different pictures they liked, and it was really cute."

Toga Reads, a new event this year, was planned by the Leadership Class and Outreach Commission to develop connections between the three Saratoga elementary schools and the high school.

The class originally tried to work with Redwood Middle School to encourage high school and middle school relationships; however, after running into timing issues, the class turned its focus to the elementary schools.

"Reaching out to local elementary schools exposes our Leadership students in mentorship, which is a key component of leadership," activities director Matt Torrens said. "The vision of ASB is to find new ways to serve in our community, so this works perfectly."

Helen Jarrett, a SHS parent and a substitute teacher, first brought up the idea of high schoolers reading alongside elementary school children to Torrens in late February.

After working out logistics, Torrens planned to have the students walk to each of the neighboring elementary schools, Argonaut, Saratoga and Foothill during lunch and their fifth-period Leadership class.



Leadership students pose at Argonaut Elementary after reading to students on March 21.

On the day of the event, the Leadership students split into three groups and then walked to each of the elementary schools. Using books from the elementary schools' libraries, the students helped to foster an environment that encouraged learning.

Because the Leadership event was such a success, Leadership students are thinking of

hosting the same event for seniors to read to younger students prior to graduation this spring.

"The Leadership and elementary school students really seemed to enjoy the event," Maheshwari said. "We got so much positive feedback and definitely want to try this out with the entire senior class."

**"The vision of ASB is to find new ways to serve in our community."**



TEACHER Matthew Torrens

class sat alongside elementary school children on March 21 as they read children's books to the young students while they shared smiles and laughs.

"I loved the kids' reactions when we read the books to them," said Maheshwari, who worked with the kindergartners. "When we asked them how they liked the book, they

**MATH**

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good job providing pathways for students who are ready and willing to accelerate," Safine said.

For example, Redwood eighth grader Tiffany Huang, who is currently taking CCSS Geometry, will take Algebra 2 Honors next year as a freshman.

According to Huang, having three dif-

ferent classes to pick from helps individuals choose a math class that "isn't too hard or too easy."

All CCSS classes contain different content than the old math courses, with the Common Core versions being more rigorous and containing material previously taught in higher math classes. For example, some topics from the previous Algebra 2 course are now taught in CCSS Algebra.

Math teacher Kelly Frangieh said members of the math department are looking forward to the change.

COMMON ROOTS

**Club anticipates another successful 'Pennies for Patients' charity drive**

By Stephen Ding & Vivien Zhang

"You know you aren't getting your phones back until the end of the day, right?" AP Physics teacher Kirk Davis said as he confiscated three of his first-period students' phones.

But as Davis saw them later rummaging through their backpacks to find spare bills and coins and placing them into the cardboard box labeled "Pennies for Patients"

According to Bian, Pennies for Patients is a way to give the members a break from all the volunteering and participate in some campus service.

Some teachers have given out incentives for students to donate and even made Pennies for Patients into a classroom game since the club announced that they will reward the winning first-period class with a free breakfast from Roses, paid for by ASB.

Teachers such as Davis and Spanish teacher Arnaldo Rodriguez have been incentivizing their students to donate spare change and bills in order to win the grand prize.

"The amount of donations we get also depends heavily on whether the teacher acts as a role model," Bian said. "Students tend to follow their teachers' actions. For example, last year when Mr. Rodriguez donated \$20 himself, it encouraged the rest of his students to do the same."

While this campaign can be a fun way of creating friendly fire between different classes, Bian recalls that it can also be a bit of a hassle for the committee members.

"It can come off as a misunderstanding; since it's called 'Pennies for Patients,' most people assume you're only supposed to donate coins or pennies," Bian said. "So when we collect the boxes last year, we found that a lot of them were entirely filled with pennies. Last year, we tirelessly counted out about 800 pennies from one class period."

Nevertheless, Committed to Community hopes that this year's drive will turn out to be just as successful as last year's.

"Our club is proud to help such an inspirational organization," Bian said. "It's part of the many ways that Committed to Community gets to help out not just the Saratoga residents but everyone in the areas around us."

**"The donations we get depends on whether the teacher acts as a role model."**



SENIOR Alice Bian

**"We're hoping that they will be more prepared and able to be successful in our Algebra 1 class."**

MATH TEACHER Kelly Frangieh

"The standards have definitely increased and gotten more difficult."

We're hoping that they will be more prepared and able to be successful in our Algebra 1 class."

According to principal Paul Robinson, however, multiple years of Common Core are needed before the school can truly judge its impact on students.

"It's hard to say by looking at next year's course requests if there are any permanent changes or not," Robinson said. "Time will give us a better picture."

**The Jay Koo Academy**

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June Test Prep 5/10, 5/17, 5/24, 5/31 7:30pm-10pm	Schedule B 6/10-7/7 pm	Schedule B 6/10-7/7 pm
	Schedule C 7/8-8/2 pm	ACT Refresher September Test 8/19-9/3 pm
	Schedule D 7/8-8/2 pm	October Test 10/7-10/22 am
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ELECTION

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the point of voting for the head of student government and its various sub-branches if they can't voice their own opinions? Then we're essentially just electing a figurehead or an adviser at most."

"The requirements for to run for ASB president have also broadened, allowing two ways for the candidate to be deemed qualified: either two years of Leadership class experience or one year on ASB. The intent of the change was to allow other experienced individuals, not only those with prior years on ASB, to try their hand

at the position.

• **Freshmen in Leadership class:** Another controversial topic was the necessity of including freshman class officers in the Leadership class. Since Leadership class is a separate period, freshmen face limited class mobility with the required fulfillment of P.E. credit.

"Having an hour and 30 minutes every other day to work on freshman class office is unnecessary," said ASB clubs commissioner senior Ellicia Chiu, who served as a class representative her freshman year. "The amount of planning that the freshmen have is incomparable to the amount of work that the other commissions have to do."

Others argued that the Leadership class

should be representative of all grades. Principal Paul Robinson is among those who strongly support the decision to include the freshmen in the class and argued that "the more students you have involved, the more ideas you have."

ASB has not arrived on an agreement on the issue regarding the freshman class office.

In the next few weeks, ASB will be pushing the amendments to the constitution through the formal procedure of a vote by the Leadership class. ASB president Mitali Shanbhag anticipates the new constitution to be finalized and released in early April before ASB elections are set to kick off during the week of April 10. ♦

HACKATHON

continued from pg. 1

athon of this caliber does not come without challenges — in fact, Aggarwal said that planning this year's hackathon has been extremely challenging in terms of applying for and receiving grants from sponsors, especially since the total amount of money needed such a large size is \$160,000. Complicating this year's event is that a major sponsor pulled out. By re-organizing and re-allocating the budget as well as reaching out to other sponsors, Aggarwal said that he and the LA Hacks team have been able to reach their fund-raising goals.

"The entire year after the large company pulled out we had been reaching out to potential sponsors," Aggarwal said. "We found that a large number of companies, both tech and non-tech, were willing to pitch into the efforts to make the hackathon a success."

This year, LA Hacks has shifted its focus from a purely tech hackathon to a more open event to welcome fields such as design, business and the humanities.

"This change, Aggarwal said, was partially prompted by the need to find other sponsors for the event. "After analyzing our options, we realized that we would have to change our core message for companies to be interested," Aggarwal said. "Thus, we introduced beginner workshops and really focused on making our message one of education and learning rather one of a pure competitive nature."

Furthermore, Aggarwal believes that a viable product must be coupled with an "intense focus" on design and appeal to user.

Aggarwal and the rest of the team found it necessary to encourage designers and other non-programmers to attend the event, as they are "very important to any kind of development."

This year, only 1,000 participants were chosen from the thousands of potential attendees — eight of whom are SHS App Dev Club members.

Freshmen Ujjwal Krishnamurthi and Dhruv Shah, sophomore officers Daniel Bessonov, Patrick Li and Basil Shama and juniors Clifford Yin, Nguyen Do and Roland Shen are among the few chosen to participate.

Aggarwal, who served as App Dev's vice president during his time at the school, said that he made an effort to accept all SHS students, as he wanted to give back to the club that gave him so much invaluable experience.

"App Dev gave me a solid foundation in both the fundamentals of computer science and design," Aggarwal said. "So in a way, accepting the App Dev members was my way of saying thank you to the club and Saratoga in general." ♦



Aggarwal

COMPUTER SCIENCE

Competition participation soars

by Daniel Bessonov & Victor Liu

The school has seen a large increase in students trying their hand at the United States of America Computing Olympiad (USACO), a rigorous online computer science competition.

With a large number of freshmen expressing interest in pursuing jobs in computer science, sign-ups for the 4-hour test have skyrocketed, with nearly a dozen new sign ups this year.

The competition, which occurs every December, January, February and March, serves as an opportunity for students to improve their critical-thinking and analytical skills through computer programming.

The competition's difficulty levels range from "Bronze," a level geared at those with little algorithmic experience, all the way to "Platinum," a level that includes challenges even the best professional engineers have trouble cracking.

All contestants initially begin at the "Bronze" tier before advancing to the following levels after solving a predetermined number of problems.

If contestants solve all the problems in a certain level, they are eligible to receive an "in-contest promotion," an opportunity for them to solve the next level's problems without having to wait until the next competition.

The competition gives contestants a glimpse into what the software engineering world truly entails, with USACO problems mirroring ones asked at interviews for most tech jobs that require computer science knowledge.

"USACO problems are extremely applicable to interviews at large technology companies," said junior Aayush Gupta, who has reached the most advanced level. "The

problems prepare you with the algorithmic mindset needed in order to tackle the more challenging interview questions you would often find at Google, Apple, Quora and other household names."

This recent increase in participation can be partially attributed to the participation of the Math Club.

Freshman Nevin Liang said he was able to work his way into Gold [the second highest level] by first writing mathematical equations for the problems, and then implementing them in code. Although he has not been programming very long, doing USACO has now motivated him to delve deeper into software engineering and learn more about various computer science algorithms.

In addition to the many Math Club students who have found their niche in USACO, many other participants have been motivated to enroll in the competition because of the school's Computer Science Club.

Freshman Dhruv Shah, who is already a Platinum contestant, said that he was initially inspired to participate in the competition through the lectures and activities of the club.

New participants have also signed up for the competition without being a member of either club.

Sophomore Nicholas Zhang, a self-taught programmer, was able to advance from Bronze to Platinum after just one competition.

But to improve his abilities as a computer programmer, Zhang is looking to delve deeper into mathematics.

"I am now trying to split my studies between both computer science algorithms and mathematical concepts," Zhang said. "Competing in USACO has really been a game-changer for my academics because it's helped me view problems in a different angle." ♦



Gupta

MARCH MADNESS

Injuries mount from basketball event

by Patrick Li & Roland Shen

Senior Gautham Arunkumar sprang into the air beside the rim alongside five other seniors on March 9, reaching desperately to get a finger on the falling basketball. As several other players grasped the ball, Arunkumar's foot got tangled in a mess of limbs. He landed abruptly with an aching pain in his ankle.

On Feb. 28, ASB began the school's annual March Madness tournament with 25 teams. After the inception of the tournament by former ASB board representative and Class of 2015 alum Neel Kattumadam, ASB chose to keep the tournament as a tradition for all students to play basketball in a fun, competitive setting.

Soon after Arunkumar's injury, seniors Bala Balasubramaniam and Kush-agro Bhattacharjee got injured the next game, forcing their team "Legit Karan Desai" to reschedule.

The competitiveness of this particular matchup — "Legit Karan Desai" vs. "Naan" — was fueled by the friendly rivalry among the two teams, who were formed from the same clique of senior boys.

"The game got very heated because we really wanted to beat one another and impress the spectators," said senior Naman Sajwan, who played for the Naan team.

The tournament's original rule for injured players is to play down from 4 vs. 4 to 3 vs. 3, with the opponents subbing out one of their players.

"Subbing players from other teams was an issue we had to deal with" ASB board representative junior Nathon Chin said. "Subbing creates unfair matchups, especially when teams choose to sub in really good players."

Though these injuries were caused by the competitive atmosphere promoted by the tournament, no players blame the



Senior Nolan Chao takes on senior Rajat Vora during their match-up on March 20.

tournament itself for any sustained injuries.

"Basketball's a pretty physical sport no matter how hard you play," Bhattacharjee said. "There isn't anyone to blame for any injuries — that's just the nature of the sport."

Although both of these teams fought hard to get a chance at competing in the championship game, eventually, the injury ridden teams fell off, leaving two healthy teams: "Big Toes" (Kian Ghelichkhani, Daelan Denerberg, Kevin Couch and Tony Ramirez) and "Probation" (Jonathan Cai, Tristan Bush, Rajat Vora and Aidan Peck) in the finals, which were played at lunch on March 28.

Despite all the injuries and rivalries that developed, players still believe that playing in the tournament alone was worth the risks involved.

"I usually play basketball with my friends in my free time," Bhattacharjee said. "We all know that there's risk for injury, but that doesn't stop us from playing the sport we love." ♦

ROBOTICS

M-SET finishes build season, competes at regionals

by Frederick Kim & Roland Shen

The M-SET robotics team traveled to Sacramento for its first regional competition on March 22 after the end of the First Robotics Competition (FRC) build season.

For the preliminary round, the team won five out of the eight matches, allowing them to qualify for the elimination rounds.

Going into those rounds on March 24, the M-SET Fish were chosen by the seventh seeded team, Nuns and Bolts, for their alliance. They faced the second seeded team's, the Deep Blue, alliance and lost, resulting in their elimination from the competition.

Though the team did not qualify for the World Championships in Houston through in Sacramento, M-SET will participate in another regional competition on April 5 in Las Vegas and have the chance to qualify there. They would have to be part of the winning

alliance in order to qualify for the world championship.

Despite falling short of their ultimate goal in Sacramento, M-SET still viewed the event positively. The club's adviser,

"I know that our team has the potential to get to World Championships in Texas."

SOPHOMORE Basil Shama

Bob France, was recognized with the Woodie Flowers finalist award, an honor granted to well-respected advisers in the For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST) organization.

France will be attending the World Championships on April 18-21 for a chance to win the Woodie Flowers award.

"We really want to qualify for the World Championship this year, especially

because we went to Worlds in 2015," said sophomore Basil Shama, a member of the software team. "I know that our team has the potential to get there."

This year, FIRST commissioned robotics teams around the country to build robots that could pick up balls that in turn act as "fuel" to power the bots.

After being picked up, the balls are to be thrown into containers near the sides of the court. In addition, the robots have to pick up gears and drop them off in the middle of the court. For a substantial challenge, the robots must be able to hang onto a rope in the middle of the court at the end of the match.

In order to do better in Vegas than they did in Sacramento, the team has been working on a few changes. For example, the team has been improving the accuracy of the ball shooter and trying to write more efficient code.

"These changes are going to make our robot a lot more effective," Shama said. "We are all looking forward to a strong end to the competition season." ♦

CUERNAVACA

Peso value decrease prevents students from visiting SHS

by Alexandra Li & Ami Nachlappan

This past November, foreign language department head Arnaldo Rodriguez struggled to find homes for the students who traditionally visit the U.S. from Cuernavaca, Mexico, as part of an exchange.

The exchange gives the teens a chance to learn about typical American festivities during Thanksgiving, an exclusively American holiday.

The problem he ran into was that too many Saratoga families either had family visiting or were traveling out of town during the holidays. As a result, the foreign

language department decided to have the Mexican students visit in March this year.

As the year began, however, the department was informed of a change in the value of the Mexican peso due to America's growing presence in the international market. The conversion rate used to be \$1 to 10 pesos but is now \$1 to 20 pesos. With the Mexico peso taking a hit, families in Mexico had a difficult time being able to afford the trip and it was canceled for this year.

Rodriguez hopes that giving the students' families time to adjust will allow the students to once again participate in the

exchange program next year.

According to Rodriguex, in the 1980s, through an on-campus International Club, the school hosted around 25 students in total from Mexico, Germany, Finland, Sweden, Spain and Brazil. As the school's demographics have changed and more Asian families have moved into the area, he has had to do more work underscoring the value of playing host to exchange students.

"I'm happy that in the last three years, Asian families are opening their lives and willing to host, which allows the program to continue," Rodriguex said. "The program is all about making friends and breaking the barrier." ♦

COLLEGE BOUND

Seniors deal with influx of acceptances and rejections

By Sava Sivaram

March: the month of anger, anxiety and anguish, also known as the month of college decisions.

Starting at the end of February and going through early April, seniors have been receiving responses from the colleges that they applied to last fall. March 30, just yesterday, marked an important date for many — with all the colleges in the Ivy League releasing their results as well as popular schools such as Stanford University and University of California, Berkeley.

Naturally, each student grapples with the stress and apprehension in different ways, and for many, this differs in the way they choose to open their college decisions.

Senior Daniel Lee is one of the few students who find it palatable to open his decision as soon as they receive it, whether that

be during class, sports practice or dinner. "I'm an impatient person, so I feel like if the decision came out and I didn't check it, then I wouldn't be able to focus on anything," Lee said.

For him, checking college decisions quickly helps to avert some of the anxiety that comes with receiving these emails.

"There's still anxiety, even if I check it as soon as possible, but if I waited, the anxiety would just keep building up because I would keep thinking about it," Lee said.

When asked about how college decision season has been for him so far, Lee revealed the motto that has been getting him through this difficult time. Brandishing his thumb and pointer finger on each hand, he declared, "two Ls make a W!" gesturing

excitedly to illustrate his point. He was referring to the fact that losses can only ever lead to gains in eventuality, an optimistic outlook that allows him to keep moving forward.

Senior Peter VandeVort is on the other end of the spectrum, waiting until he's calm and prepared to open up the decision.

Usually, he gives it a few hours between receiving the decision and opening it, and usually opens it with his father nearby.

"I see no point in opening the decision as soon as I get it. I know that the decision isn't going to change, so I wait until I'm in a controlled atmosphere to open it," VandeVort said. "My dad has helped me through this process so it's nice to finish the process and open up the

decision with him there, so he's always by my side when I look at the results."

For VandeVort, having people around him who are also competing for the same college spots creates a sense of judgment, but being alone allows him to comprehend his own emotions and be content with the decision rather than being preoccupied with the judgment of his peers.

Despite the various ways that seniors are attempting to deal with the influx of college decisions, none are completely immune to the anxiety-provoking qualities that characterize this month.

The universal sentiment that seems to pervade the senior class is a hope that no matter where they end up or how many rejections they receive, they will be happy and successful.

"It's stressful, but I know I'm going to get through it," Lee said. ♦



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FOURTH PERIOD

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## Steep curves necessary in AP classes

As the last few minutes of the first AP Chemistry midterm wound down to an end in November, the sound of pencils scratching across the paper and erasers squeaking across crumpling paper rose to a crescendo.

The timer finally went off as some students desperately quickened their writing speeds to get their last answers down while others threw their hands up in surrender.

The following week, when AP Chemistry teacher Kathy Nakamatsu announced the midterm point total would be decreased from 60 to 52 in order to reach an 80 percent class average, relief washed over the class.

Although this curve provided a grade boost to all students, it also meant that the initial average score was just over a 69 percent.

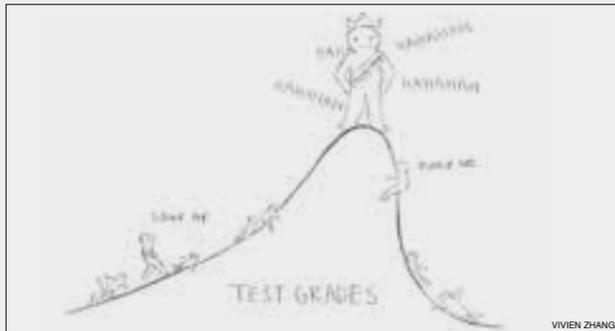
For many students and parents who are sucked into the stereotypical hyper competitive, AP-hoarding, GPA-junky Saratoga culture, getting a test grade below a B is borderline heresy.

In actuality, classes such as AP Physics have average test and quiz grades that regularly drop below 80 percent.

Luckily for the many students who would be on the verge of heart attacks after receiving such scores, physics teacher Kirk Davis "power-curves" the scores up to a B or B-minus average in such a way that the lower scores get a larger grade increase and vice versa.

AP classes are meant to be challenging, and unlike regular courses, students are expected to go far beyond the taught curriculum and apply what they have learned in different contexts. Often times, students do not and should not know how to do every problem on a test.

Although some would argue that it is unfair for students to be tested on questions that apply learned concepts in unfamiliar ways, if a student was familiar with every problem on an exam, the exam would instead be



emphasizing regurgitation over critical thinking.

Exams should give students types of problems that they haven't seen before and aren't necessarily comfortable doing in order to prevent them from merely memorizing the necessary steps to solve certain kind of problem rather than fully understanding the overall concept.

These kinds of exams do run the risk of discouraging students from taking challenging classes due to fear of failure, which is why a curve can be important to prevent students from dropping a class due to a single bad grade on a difficult test.

In the case of last year's AP Chemistry midterm, the average score was well in the C range and was curved up to an 80 percent.

Almost all students reviewed the test in class or during tutorial as even students who ended with As on the exam due to the curve had missed problems and were able to learn from their mistakes and achieve a greater understanding of the material.

On the following midterm, scores rose significantly and a curve was unnecessary.

While some students may find getting a low score demoralizing even if it were bumped up with a curve, this disappointment acts

as preparation for college courses in which exam grades can often drop below 50 percent.

Additionally, writing a good test is difficult in both high school and college, so tests often include overly tricky questions. Curves can prevent students from being punished due to an overabundance of unintentionally confusing questions.

Furthermore, these difficult exams prepare students for AP exams, which also often have low average scores and large curves to compensate.

For example, according to tweets from Trevor Packer, the head of the AP exams for the College Board, students scored very low on certain sections of the 2016 AP Biology exam.

Still, more than 60 percent of students scored over a 3 on the AP Biology exam.

Despite the merits of challenging and highly curved tests, not all tests should be difficult to the point where a massive curve is necessary.

If every test were heavily curved, students would be able to get decent grades without knowing certain basic concepts as long as they were able to get the majority of other questions mostly correct and rely on the curve to keep their grade high.

Some easier, more surface level quizzes or tests are needed to make sure students must know all basic concepts to get a good grade.

In AP and Honors classes, having a low average test score and a high curve on certain exams is not indicative of failure.

More often, it shows that students are being challenged with problems that focus on critical thinking and applying learned skills to new situations and problems.

Although not all tests should be challenging to the point of having a below-C average and a large curve, this kind of testing should be embraced and not discouraged in the school's AP and Honors classes. ♦

Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

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The Falcon staff voted 26-6 in support of this article.

## English lacking nonfiction in its curricula

by Victor Liu

No self-respecting literary blogger, librarian or high school English teacher has probably ever listed a dry, verbose home repair manual on their "Top Ten Must Reads" list, and for good reasons.

Too often they're incredibly dense — chock-full of technical information — and they provide students with little to no opportunity for analysis or interpretation.

Although home repair manuals don't exactly qualify as "page-turners" for most high school students and English teachers, the English department has seemed to gravitate away from nonfiction, with only AP Language and Composition (AP Lang) classes still maintaining significant and continuous exposure to nonfiction reading pieces.

But for students itching to learn nonfiction in English class before senior year, introducing more

nonfiction to classes taken earlier such as English 10 may be their only solution.

Common Core standards adopted by California in 2009 called for an increase in nonfiction taught in classrooms, aiming for school curriculum to be 70 percent nonfiction and 30 percent fiction. However, at Saratoga High, most nonfiction reading is done in other subjects like history and science, not English, which for the most part is still largely dominated by fiction.

Nonfiction easily gets a bad reputation once it's grouped in the same category as automobile manuals, but there's specific merits to the genre in English classes that fiction fails to accomplish. Nonfiction

makes it much harder, if not impossible for readers to write off the very real experiences of authors as unauthentic without sounding callous.

After all, it's a little hard to relate to the group of pig-worshipping British boys on a deserted island in William Golding's "Lord of the Flies." And no matter how spellbinding her novels can be, J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter" series lacks the sense of groundedness that's in nonfiction works like Elie Wiesel's "Night" and David Foster Wallace's "Shipping Out."

On a more educational level,

Computer programming guides and home repair manuals will not top anyone's must-read lists anytime in the near future, but it's time that other forms of nonfiction such as memoirs and biographies, whose unique qualities aren't found in any other genre, made their way into more English classes. ♦



## Redwood should attempt to improve student resilience

by Neil Rao & Alex Yang

Dealing with music, sports, volunteering and any other extracurricular activities all while struggling to maintaining strong grades — these are the realities of high school.

And the load can be overwhelming for some freshmen. More than anything, it suggests the dazed and naive nature of first-year students in a demanding setting but also points to a lack of communication and cooperation with Redwood Middle School.

While efforts have been made to prepare students for specific electives in their freshman year, such as the GNN program as a precedent to SHSTV and Media Arts to parallel the high school's Media Arts Program, there has not been a noticeable positive correlation between freshman readiness and interschool cooperation.

Either Saratoga is addressing the wrong things, or direct intervention simply isn't viable.

Many students see their struggles take shape due to the speed of high school. Unlike middle school, life as a freshman begins to operate at a rapid pace that can feel unrelenting, especially for those who struggle

with time management.

These time issues are also a result of the onslaught of extracurricular activities that force students to spend time away from school work.

While middle school has very few extracurricular activities that take place outside of school hours other than marching band, dealing with these time issues leads to many challenges.

How can RMS do a better job preparing all students for high school?

**Unlike middle school, life as a freshman begins to operate at a rapid pace that can feel unrelenting, especially for those who struggle with time management.**

For one thing, it would be smart to increase workload to simulate the struggles that rising high schoolers will face.

This can be in the form of more projects or a required number of extracurriculars that a student must take. According to Leadership teacher Matt Torrens,

ASB is also looking to work with the Redwood leadership class to help incoming freshmen with the transition.

The class plans to have ASB leaders meet with Redwood's leadership class and advise them on how to inform eighth graders of the troubles they may face in high school. This is a fine idea, but it is only a small step.

Along with Redwood toughening its course load, incoming ninth graders need more practice at handling days when they have three hours of homework and can't get started on it until later in the afternoon. Redwood's lax homework policies do little to pave the way for high school, and by eighth grade, many students are still struggling with turning in every single assignment on time.

With most students at Redwood coming home either immediately or only an hour or two after school ends.

They won't be used to the more rigorous after school activities paired with the greater homework loads of high school.

Although it might not be easy at first, middle school students who wish to succeed in high school should have more chances to practice the juggling act that high school entails. ♦

## Club apparel not worth the expense

by Roland Shen & Ashley Su

Club officers flocked to the quad during club day on Sept. 22, wearing colorful shirts that represented their organizations. They yelled out chants and flaunted their apparel to promote their clubs and get attention from other students, but their efforts just weren't drawing in as many people as they expected.

The main purpose of club-related apparel is to promote the groups and keep members engaged. But does making everyone pay \$15 or \$25 or even \$50 for these items really accomplish these goals?

Club apparel, such as lanyards, jackets and most notoriously, T-shirts, just aren't as meaningful as club officers make them out to be. Many organizations spend hundreds and even thousands of dollars on apparel annually, and even though some gear may look sharp, it doesn't actually help improve club membership.

Try imagining how many times someone stops a student rocking a speech and debate sweater and asks about how to join.

Most students pay little attention to the promotional apparel around campus, and often, the number of group-related items is out of control.

Because dozens of organizations on campus have their own apparel, the clothes start to lose their appeal over time. People don't want to pay attention to so much of the same clothes at school.

Students typically wear club apparel either only when they have to, or if they just don't have anything else to wear. Worn as lazy day throw-on clothes or sleepwear, club-funded shirts then begin to lose their original promotional purpose.

Furthermore, some students seem to join clubs just for the sake of owning club-related apparel. As a result, it may be a factor in the large number of uncommitted members many clubs have.

Clubs and their members are paying hundreds of dollars for their attire and gaining little out of it in many cases.

This wasted money could be used to work on more service projects or given as direct donations to worthy causes, and groups like speech and debate could attend more tournaments.

So while clubs should continue to promote themselves through word of mouth and online, they don't all need their own T-shirts, most of which will end up as goodwill items in a couple of years anyway. ♦

## Sadies by any other name can't improve ticket sales



Eileen Toh

"Buy your Sadies tickets now!" former head dance commissioner senior Danielle Berkowitz-Sklar and I hollered around the quad, visiting the various cliques to reel them into purchasing tickets.

We had just posted on the Sadies' Facebook event nights prior that we were "almost at the 100 ticket minimum" for the dance to run, but students were still not moved at the mere mention of tickets costing \$10 — a price that didn't match one of the least popular dances on campus.

Ever since I joined the Spring Fling commission in sophomore year, planning the annual Sadie Hawkins' dance that kicked off Spring Fling week has always been a struggle.

In 2014, the dance was cancelled, and even though it returned the next year, ASB and commissioners purchased multiple tickets to boost up sales.

When I became head Spring Fling commissioner in junior year, I learned that the dance was taken off the activities calendar. But

when Danielle and I persuaded the administration to hold the dance, we were told we had to meet a 100-ticket minimum a week before the dance.

Despite our coordinated dress-up days for promotion and Facebook posts, we forced our friends from the lunch tables to buy tickets even if they could not attend and talked with physics teacher Kirk Davis, who joked that he would offer extra credit to his students if they bought tickets.

Now as ASB head commissioner, when I met with the dance and Spring Fling commissioners in January, they decided to change the event's name from "Sadies" to "Spring Fling Dance" to make it more obvious that attendees didn't require dates.

Instead, the Spring Fling Dance was publicized as a "second version of Homecoming," the most attended casual dance.

However, on March 17, a week before the dance, the commissioners only managed to sell 29 tickets. It became clear to us that changing the event's name to have a "no date required" connotation didn't produce the success we expected.

Simply put, even though organizing Sadies has been a priority of mine and has had sentimental value all throughout high school, I can still see reasons the springtime

dance remains unpopular.

At first glance, girls traditionally ask guys to the dance, which can seem frightening to students, especially underclassmen.

But even though we made it apparent that attendees can go with their friends, several students still seemed unwilling to go last year.

According to assistant principal Kerry Mohnike, Sadies has consistently been scheduled three weeks before junior prom in recent years. As a result, this year's dance promotions have become overshadowed by junior prom posts.

Most upperclassmen prioritize going to the extravagant off-campus formal dance instead; as early as in February, prom drama is in the air, but Spring Fling Dance talk isn't.

Ultimately, the dance's name change hasn't been as convincing as we had hoped.

While we managed to break the false perception Sadies had as a date-only dance, Spring Fling is much the same: We're still holding the dance in the Small Gym, still using student-made decorations and still pumping everyone up for the week of spirit days and Powderpuff games ahead.

As I learned from the dances I organized, most students decide to attend these dances at the last possible minute.



For example, Homecoming ticket sales mainly come from the students who buy at the door, and Spring Fling is no exception. For us, forking over \$12 at the door is more convenient than paying beforehand.

However, according to past dance attendance statistics, Sadies was once extremely popular.

In 2008, for example, the dance hosted up to 281 students, and

four years ago, this number was still an impressive 246 — far greater than the number of attendees we've had in the past two Sadies dances.

Unless new ideas are more successful and this low attendance starts improving, the administration will be justified in canceling the dance permanently. Now that would be a far cry from Homecoming 2.0. ♦

### togatalks

Do you think that changing the name of Sadies makes it more appealing?

"I think changing it was a smart move because the name 'Sadies' put a lot of pressure on girls to ask guys."



senior Shoumil Sarkar

"Yes, it'll be more fun being a casual dance without having to worry about asking someone."



sophomore Kaitlyn Lee

"Not necessarily, because last year I went to the dance without a date anyways."



junior Smrithi Balebail

# Model minorities find no refuge in Trump's U.S.

BY Amith Galivanche & Austin Wang

At a bar in Olathe, Kansas, on Feb. 22, a 51-year-old white man named Adam Purinton, a Navy veteran, began hurling racial slurs at two engineers who were immigrants from India. He left the bar, returned with a handgun, yelled "get out of my country" and began firing. One of the Indian men, Srinivas Kuchibhotla, 32, died from his injuries.

This incident sent shockwaves through the Indian diaspora community, becoming the first hate crime against an Indian American publicized to an international degree. Still, the murder was a part of a disturbing trend, not an isolated incident.

Purinton's actions cannot be directly connected with the hateful rhetoric of Donald Trump, but it is difficult to deny that there is an implicit link between the two. Trump's xenophobic rhetoric and

actions have empowered white supremacist bullies in the U.S.

Though Trump himself has never personally attacked the Indian American community, he has cultivated a mass-fear of Arab Muslims. Because Indian Americans are commonly mistaken for Arab Muslims, they too are at risk in this changed climate. As evidence, authorities learned that Purinton fled to an Applebee's 82 miles from the bar where the murder took place and told the bartender he had just "killed two Middle Eastern men."

Clearly, Trump's Islamophobic rhetoric is dangerous for all minorities.

But even as Trump targets Mexicans and Muslims, the Indian community has enjoyed a false sense of security, under the impression that Trump isn't talking about them and they are safe because most are well-educated and contributing to the nation's prosperity in the way Kuchibhotla was.

But making this assumption is a huge mistake. White supremacy groups and neo-Nazis have openly supported Trump and have grown more brazen about their visions of a white, Christian and patriarchal America after Trump's election.

With low violent crime rates,

## The Indian community has enjoyed a false sense of security, under an idea that they're safe

a higher proportion of college degrees and higher-than-average incomes within the Indian American community, there is an ill-informed notion that their "model minority" status prevents them from the effects of race-based violence here.

The model minority, in the eyes

of the greater American society, is privileged and therefore cannot experience the same type of racism as minority groups who generally are not as affluent.

But just because Indians do not experience the same level of socioeconomic hardship or government-sanctioned discrimination as other groups, it does not mean that they are immune to the prejudices that are held by xenophobes.

And even though Trump claimed on the campaign trail that the Indian American community would "have a true friend in the White House," his little blurb explaining his reasoning should have clearly shown them that he was doing little more than spewing more nonsense.

When Trump began pandering to Indian Americans, he did so in an almost insulting way. His entire basis on why Indian Americans should vote for him was that he "loved India" and "loved Hindus," showing his admiration for Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Trump's Hindu-sification of all Indians as Hindus clearly shows that he has no understanding of the diversity in Indian culture, which includes dozens of different religions and subcultures, such as Sikhs and Jains.

Furthermore, Trump, through these actions, showed that he views the Indian American community not as Americans but as a homogenous bloc of foreigners. Instead of showing them what their lives in the United States would be like under his presidency, he opted to ramble on about a country that many Indian Americans, especially those born here, view to be completely foreign.

Additionally, he never addressed that 10 percent of Indian Americans are Muslims, the main target of his diatribes. Simply put, minorities in America must stand for one another, setting aside colorblind metrics of success. Doing this would make every person of color in the U.S. that much safer. ♦

## togataks

Have you ever felt victimized based on your race?

"People make superficial remarks about my skin color, and that's hurtful, even if it's a joke."



junior Elora Pradhan

"I haven't really been victimized, mostly because there are a lot of Indians here."



freshman Surbhi Bhat

"I don't think I've ever been racially profiled because our school is very toleran."



senior Siavash Yaghoobi

## Private elementary school education not worth price

BY Ashley Su & Katherine Zhou

Since they have plenty of money and want the highest academic standards for their kids, many Bay Area parents contemplate the idea of enrolling their children in private schools at young ages.

But with the high quality of public schools in communities like Los Gatos and Saratoga, many of which compare favorably with private schools, parents have to decide whether spending \$10,000, \$20,000 or even \$40,000 for annual tuition is truly worth it.

Although many private schools boast small class sizes, the differences aren't extreme. Many local private elementary schools such as St. Andrews, Sacred Heart and Hillbrook have a student-teacher ratio of about 16:1, with local public elementary schools like Argonaut, Saratoga and Foot-hill Elementary having a ratio of about 21:1.

Another enticing feature of private schools is their plentiful funding. This results in additional specialized courses and free school equipment like laptops or iPads for students.

Yet for elementary school education, whose central purpose is to provide a solid foundation in basic subjects like math and English and simply teach kids how to behave in a classroom, course variety seems excessive and unnecessary. When students are still learning how to add and subtract or even learning how to properly speak English, taking a language course like Japanese or Latin doesn't pose much benefit. Moreover, students can easily learn

these languages in middle school or high school, after they've mastered basic mathematical and grammatical skills.

Along with that, many public schools in wealthier areas like

## Private schooling may set an unhealthy precedent of feeling entitled to affluence.

Saratoga already have sufficient and above average resources from their taxpayers, like computer labs and free study materials such as Spanish workbooks.

Some advocates for private schools may argue that going to them allows students to appreciate the cost of education, but young children are hardly ever grateful for their parents' sacrifices, and this may set an unhealthy precedent of feeling entitled to affluent schools and their resources.

Parents may also choose private schools because they have fun social events or field trips that are paid for, but in wealthy areas, public schools have access to many of these events as well. For elementary school in particular, it is much easier for public institutions to match the academic level of private ones. So while private high schools or middle schools may be worth the price tag in some cases, parents should think twice before sending their children to private elementary schools when public schools are equally good and don't charge for a valuable education. ♦

## Republican health care proposal was an absolute debacle for GOP

BY Ryan Kim

After a nerve-racking few months into the new administration, President Trump and the Republican Party seemed to be grasping at straws as they proposed possibly the most absurd idea of the new administration.

Thankfully, facing certain defeat in the House, the bill was withdrawn on March 24.

The American Health Care Act planned to get rid of Obamacare's income-based insurance tax credits, and replace the system with a flat tax credit based on age. This system would have created many hardships for lower-income and older Americans.

Ultimately, such a change would have provided less health care to fewer Americans.

Although President Trump said in an interview with the Washington Post on Jan. 15 that the plan would provide "insurance for everybody," it actually removes 24 million citizens by 2026, according to the Congressional Budget Office, mostly consisting of the poor and disabled, from affordable insurance because of Medicaid reductions.

There's a reason the plan was "dead on arrival" as Fox News called it; it had little to no support from key players in the health industry. The American Medical Association, the American

Hospital Association, American Nurses Association and AARP all disavowed it. Even conservatives hated it: Ultra-conservatives argued that it is too similar to the Affordable Care Act, while more moderate Republicans worried about the economic stability for many citizens in their respective states.

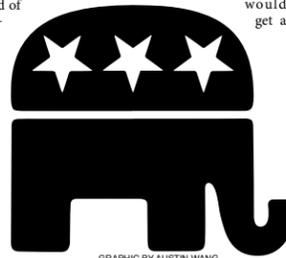
The only people who would have reaped the benefits are the rich, who would get a

The plan did not even reflect Trump's policies of transparency in pricing or competition across state lines.

According to the New York Times, diehard voters who supported Trump by a 59 percent to 36 percent margin would have lost at least \$5,000 in tax credits.

Even congressional Republicans and Trump himself eventually acknowledged the plan's problems.

The scrapping of the Republican plan is one of the first huge legislative defeats for the Trump administration and shows that most Americans know a bad law when they see it. ♦



GRAPHIC BY AUSTIN WANG

## >> the bigidea

### Anatomy of the failure

1. Not much public understanding of the bill.
2. Broke Donald Trump's campaign promises.
3. The bill was opposed by members of both parties.
4. Lacked sufficient support from Donald Trump.
5. Lack of constructive GOP action over the last 7 years.
6. There was no clear plan for the process of repealing Obama Care.

# Hechaa hits the spot with specialty drinks



Caitlin Ju and Eric Sze

As dedicated lovers of boba, an Asian drink with sweetened tea and usually milk and tapioca pearls, we are always looking for the best places to buy it.

That's what drew us to Hechaa, a new tea shop located in Cupertino between Ranch 99 and Home Depot. After doing a quick Google Maps search on our phones, Hechaa appeared to be in plain sight: the red dot popped up on De Anza Blvd. However, it proved difficult to locate it on the road, since Hechaa's entrance is hidden on the side of an inconspicuous tan building and has tight parking spaces.

Once inside, we were immediately greeted with an Instagram-worthy wall of pink and white roses that can perfectly serve as a backdrop for our next posts. The walls of the well-lit rectangular space were lined with



Located: DeAnza Boulevard  
Reporters' drinks: Oolong tea with cheese milk foam and pearl milk tea  
Best Feature: Original cup designs

succulents, and well-placed flowers dotted the entrance. We easily found a spot to sit with the numerous tables, though couches and bean bags could have added to a more cafe-like atmosphere.

Hechaa's menu contains dozens of options, ranging from fruit tea drinks and regular pearl milk tea to desserts and snacks, such as popcorn chicken and mochi. To help customers pick, Hechaa has a Top 10 list, and its cheese milk foam teas, self-proclaimed to be the No. 1 Fresh Brewed Tea nationwide, top the list.

From their menu, we chose a regular pearl milk tea with 50 percent sweetness, as well as the oolong tea king with cheese milk foam, a combination of mocha powder, milk, Australian cheese and sea salt, and tea with 50 percent sweetness, which took much longer to be made than the regular pearl milk tea.

The cheese milk foam tea was impressive, even though it was on the more expensive side at over \$5 and tasted (fortunately) nothing like cheese. The cup was labeled to instruct the drinker to drink the combination of oolong tea and foam at a 45 degree angle. Despite the baristas sticking a label with the instructions on the lid, we found the drink to be a little bit awkward to drink — the lid was designed to flip up, but without a handle to do so, we found ourselves trying to dig the lid open with our fingernails.

After a bit of confusion (we had also ordered pearls but could not reach them with our straws), we were able to taste the foam and tea together and decided it was a must-order — without the pearls. The bitterness



Reporters Caitlin Ju and Eric Sze, who chose pearl milk tea and oolong tea with cheese milk foam, took a picture in front of the wall of roses inside the boba tea shop.

of the oolong tea combined with the saltiness of the cheese foam and a hint of sugar tied the drink together really well; this one was by far our favorite order.

However, the regular pearl milk tea was only average because we could barely taste the tea. Instead, our tastebuds were overwhelmed with a heavy cream flavor. The drink did have an interesting coffee-esque flavor though, and the pearls were delicately chewy and sweet, which helped make up for the excessive cream and lack of tea flavor.

We also noticed that the regular pearl milk tea came in a really nice heavy-duty plastic cup with a plastic lid, instead of one

of the cup sealers that most pearl tea shops use. On the other hand, the cheese drink was a lot smaller. It wasn't a big deal to us, but it definitely made the \$5 for the cheese drink seem on the expensive side. The desserts, which we did not order, averaged \$7, while the regular milk tea was a more reasonable \$3.50.

Our conclusion: We would recommend anyone wanting something new to try out Hechaa and order one of its cheese foam drinks. But those only looking for a standard pearl milk tea should head to another boba shop, as it is easy to find one with better-tasting tea for a cheaper price. ♦

## Can you sing acapella? (We totally can't do it)



Ryan Kim and Austin Wang

If you heard high-pitched screams or a constant low howling that vaguely carried a rhythm while out in the quad recently, you weren't hearing the mating calls of Indonesian proboscis monkeys — we were just singing acapella.

After watching the 11-student acapella group, the En Chords, get crowned at this year's Saratoga Idol competition last semester, we decided it might be a fun experience to try out acapella for ourselves. Since we both have no experience in singing, we watched some videos and found a list of popular songs to begin rehearsing.

When we saw Jimmy Fallon use an iPad app to help him sing acapella on his late-night TV show, we decided that we could also use an app called "Acapella" to help us sing by looping the beat that we made. Every time we sang a tune, the app would replay it over and over, allowing us to sing other parts of the song without repeating that specific section. We used a recording device to separately record ourselves singing bits of "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" by The Tokens over a period of 7 minutes.

That night we discovered why we could never hope to become singers or K-pop stars. We tried singing but in the end, our beat and pitch were both totally off, and we couldn't even match up our basic rhythms.

Despite our initial failures, we decided to try singing the acapella version of "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" again, but in front of a live audience of our friends. While we didn't expect a more successful result, we thought it would be nice for our friends to

have more embarrassing videos to post on our Facebook walls on our birthdays.

Halfway through, the combination of our audience's and our own laughter cut our acapella debut short at two minutes.

Fellow Falcon staff member junior Vivien Zhang immediately pulled out her phone to record us as we opened our mouths. We're assuming we made quite the interesting Snapchat story.

We weren't even able to actually begin singing the iconic chorus, which was a total bummer — although we imagine we wouldn't be too enthusiastic even if we got to the chorus, as we have roughly the same vocal range as that of an elderly chain smoker.

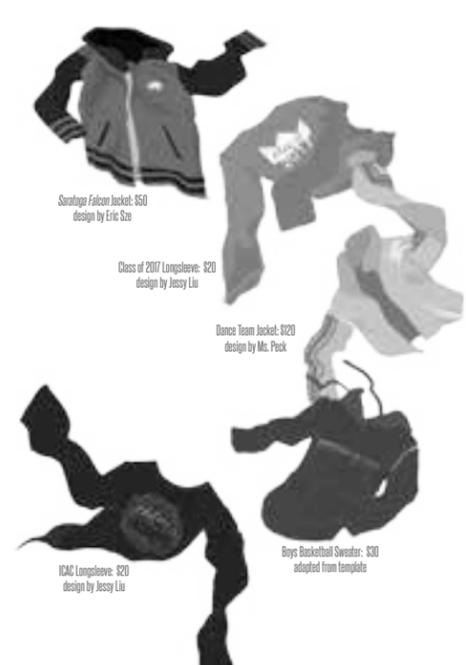
We also couldn't match our tempos, but decided to be more ambitious — for whatever misconstrued reason — and tried out "Hallelujah" by Leonard Cohen. We may have been slightly inspired by Pentatonix, a world-renowned acapella group, but don't worry: We weren't even close.

After Skype-calling for over 30 minutes, practicing "Hallelujah" and trying to sound better than a couple of dying hippos, it's needless to say we killed it — that is, killed any chance at singing we ever had. After that debacle, we had decided that we had had enough self-humiliation for one experiment.

What did we learn? For one, the success of the acapella team, of course, reflects the quality of the singers. But it's not just about the individual talent of the people singing; it's also a union of individual talents and effort to make music. Unfortunately, we lack both the individual talent needed to sing well and the coordination to pull off anything close to an acapella performance.

Luckily, our singing careers haven't truly died; they merely transitioned into a stand-up comedy act with inadvertent animal impressions. Talent show, here we come! ♦

## TOP 5 iconic apparel



GRAPHIC BY CHARIN PARK

March 31, 2017

## REVEALING YOUR MOST MORTIFYING MOMENT

caught in the act

Ava Hooman and Muthu Palaniappan

We were sipping on our Coca Cola Ices and grabbing handfuls of popcorn, careless of the fact that we were a group of five girls making too much noise — when suddenly we saw two employees start their way up the theater checking IDs.

It was a hot summer day in 2015 and we had just come from swimming, eager to see "Ted 2," which had recently come out. Sadly, the movie was rated R, so we knew it wasn't going to be that easy to watch it.

As we were making our way up to the ticket stands, we decided on buying tickets for "Me and Earl and the Dying Girl," a PG-13 movie, so we would be able to get into the cinema.

Once we got into the theater (there were no workers checking tickets), we charged our way to the back row, feeling as victorious as ever.

Unfortunately, our success didn't last.

Soon after we were asked for our ticket and IDs, and

because clearly we were unable to pass off as adults, all of us were quick to admit that we weren't 18. When the employees asked if anyone was there with us, one of our friends said that her 25-year-old sister was in the bathroom.

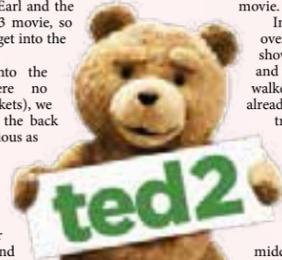
As she was telling her story, it was obvious that she was lying — the rest of us were looking around in confusion. To make matters worse, the two employees were laughing hysterically at the sight of our disagreement.

Walking down the rows of the theater, we could see adults turning their heads and snickering as they watched us being escorted out. The shameful walk felt like it was never going to end.

Once we got out of theater, the two employees high-fived. Just by looking at their faces, we could tell that they were proud to have caught five middle school graduates trying to sneak into an R-rated movie.

In the end, we walked over to the other theater showing "Me and Earl and the Dying Girl." As we walked in, the movie had already started and we had trouble finding seats for all five of us.

If we ever go to an R-rated movie again, we should probably be 18 — or at least not act like vexatious middle schoolers. ♦



## EXPLAIN WHAT YOU'D DO IF YOU WON THE LOTTERY

king ling

Lina Kim

I'm packing my bag, I'm saying goodbye to my family and the majority of my friends, I'm getting on the airplane and I'm going away for a year or more. Next to me is one of my best friends. He understands me — we do everything together — and it never gets lonely or boring when I'm with him.

We start from across the world in Asia, and we work our way back to the U.S. We fall in love with new places and people, and our hearts break when we have to part. We find pieces of home everywhere.

We wake up early every day to eat a hotel breakfast or to find a new restaurant our taste buds have never touched upon. We look up exciting sites in that city, and we go — no tour guide, no forced destinations, nothing. We take a quick nap during the afternoon, but by night, we're wide awake, ready to go out once again.

So, what would I do if I won the lottery? I wrote this five months ago and still stay true to it:

I want to travel to new places with crowded streets humming with people. I imagine walking on the road at 3 a.m. with strangers, overwhelmed with the endless possibilities of being able to do anything. Although we may be sleep-deprived — you can see our heavy eye bags — our eyes glisten with wanderlust mixed with satisfaction. ♦



## topthree TRUTHS AND DARES TO TRY WITH YOUR FRIENDS

- 3 Describe the most disgusting habits you have.
- 2 Explain what you would do if you had one day to live.
- 1 Reveal something your parents don't know about you.
- 3 Carefully lick the ear of the person on your right.
- 2 Let your best friend give you a haircut.
- 1 Make and drink a Chipotle burrito smoothie.

## FALCON STAFFERS FACE TESTS OF BOLDNESS

## CALL RANDOM STORES AND CRACK A JOKE

su-per cool

Ashley Su

I stared at my phone in dread. Though I had initially jumped at the chance to relive the sleepovers of my middle school days, my excitement for this dare was soon replaced by anxiety as the set date for the prank call neared.

At middle school sleepovers, prank callers are usually encouraged by the rest of their friends. Attempting to make these prank calls alone, however, made me feel slightly idiotic as I imagined laughing stupidly to myself while the victim on the line listened and waited, unimpressed by my prank calling abilities.

On the day of my dare, I anxiously pulled an unlucky friend with me to make my calls. Our first two calls were unsuccessful: Pizza Hut immediately hung up on me when I pretended to be an employee named "Barbara" calling in sick.

The next two numbers we dialed made me feel slightly guilty for wasting the employees' time and subjecting them to my immature antics.

When we rang Panda Express for fries and chicken nuggets, the confused lady on the line replied, "What? This is Panda Express."

After dedicated attempts to explain to me that Panda Express only sold Chinese food, she gave up, hanging up when we then aggressively pressed for pizza slices.

Then, at Burger King, the confused guy replied to our order of 2 McFlurries with a string of unintelligible muttering, a quiet "OK" and then an end to the call.

At this point, I was beginning to lose interest in making prank calls that were yielding no interesting results.

But, finally, when we called Jake's of Saratoga, the employee played along with our prank.

After we asked for Domino's number, he replied 1-800-JAKES without pause, even wishing us well on our Domino's pizza order.

Finally, we ended our prank-calling spree with Safeway, which happened to be the most fun one by far.

After asking to reserve a shopping cart, we were met with a few seconds of silence, to which the employee finally asked, "For what?"

"Shopping!" we exclaimed, followed by concealed snorts at the sheer ridiculousness of the reservation request.

Following another few seconds of silence, probably in an attempt to comprehend such a strange call, the employee finally replied, "But we have many shopping carts."

After thanking her, we hung up and burst into laughter.

Looking back on these prank calls, I realize they don't seem as funny as the real experience. However, I can assure you that they were much more entertaining than they probably seem right now in print.

What did I learn? Prank calls are probably not an effective use of time, nor do they demonstrate one's maturity. But they are great for a laugh among friends. ♦



## APPLY MAKEUP WITHOUT A MIRROR

zhou pretty

Katherine Zhou

Did I dare to apply makeup without a mirror? That was the YouTube-inspired challenge I attempted on March 6.

I usually don't wear much makeup to school, but because I wanted to do the challenge justice I went for a more dramatic look.

After washing my face, I decided not to wear contacts and sat on my bed so I wouldn't be tempted to look in the mirror.

As I began putting concealer under my eyes, all seemed well. Moving to my eyebrows, I was worried that I would end up

looking like a clown with dark dashes on my forehead.

Although I desperately wanted to look in the tiny mirror inside the eyebrow powder compact, I forced myself to resist the temptation and continued on, slowly feeling along my brow bone and using light strokes of the brush.

Eyeshadow was relatively easy compared to the real challenge: eyeliner. I looked upwards while moving the brush back and forth along my lash line and almost poking myself in the eye multiple times.

Then, as the final touch, I applied lipstick.

Once I revealed the final look, I was surprised at how "normal" it looked. Because of my hooded eyes, the eyeliner didn't seem so bad, and although the eyebrows were a

little strange, it wasn't noticeable. The main part of the look that seemed off was the lipstick, which was uneven and didn't even match the shape of my lips.

At school, I actually received a lot of compliments on my makeup. When I told them I did it without a mirror, they were totally surprised — I guess my own insecurities about my makeup weren't so noticeable to my peers.

My friend in English class even complimented me on my lipstick, which I even ended up removing later in the day because it seemed messy to me.

In doing this challenge, I realized that people don't pay enough attention to my looks to criticize slightly sloppy makeup, and that I even might just do this again if I'm running late, because no one would probably notice a difference. ♦





## Lifelong friendships worth the bitterness

BY Anonymous

*Editor's Note: Avery is a pseudonym made to protect the identity of the author's childhood friend.*

When I was little, I never imagined that one day, I'd stop chasing those parched, sunlit sidewalk cracks with you. In every still shot of all my best memories, all I had to do was look left, and you were there. Camping at Joshua Tree, basking in the veiny twilight as stars spilled cold and swirling from their primordial salt shaker. Commanding armadas of plush toys together in your dad's old patchwork tent, flashlight on, parents off to sleep.

"All of our stuffs have powers," you whispered excitedly, hugging your scraggly stuffed bird to your chest.

"That way, regardless of how different they were, they all belonged. Remember?"

Remember?

At some point, we forgot. We forgot because our parents forgot, and the rest of the world forgot. Because to them, you were a little dancing bead of sunlight, and I was your diminutive, watered-down, homely satellite, ready to be knocked down by the wind. On every childhood milestone, I'd be compared to you.

**Middle-school-me wanted to be like you, to talk like you, to dress like you.**

Avery. My "role model." "Think about it" my mom muttered over the steering wheel, eyes fixed on the highway. "What would she do?"

Fingering the flowery hem of the dress you gave me, elementary-school-me watched the rain

from the window of our Acura, watching the cars roar across the water. A year younger, I got all your hand-me-downs, but somehow they never quite fit.

What should I do?

To this day, I'm not quite sure, because at some point, you noticed and exploited that.

Middle-school-me wanted to be like you, to talk like you, to dress like you. The grown-ups and friends who swarmed you like flies convinced me that being a duplicate of you was the best thing I could ever be. My greatest life challenge as a sister was insignificant in the eyes of your two weeks of volunteering at a music program for special education students.

"I feel so bad for them," you sniffed. "They're all alone in this world and nobody even thinks of being there to support them."

For the first time in my life, I tasted hatred. So venomously caustic. Eighth grade raced by. What

would she do?

Dress like her — act like her — laugh like her — talk like her — Students whispered excitedly in the hallways.

Cut your hair — wear her clothes — take her classes — Only her classes —

I don't remember when it happened. Maybe "It" was just a series of small conclusions that just clicked into place one day. Maybe I'd shirked my commitments. Maybe, just maybe, I was overthinking it.

"It" was a poisonous tirade I launched over Messenger. I claimed that I'd hated her my entire life. That she was a "nonessential person."

"Read: 3:30 p.m." I sat speechless by the closet, mulling over some weathered stuffies and a moth-bitten floral dress as the bitterness ate a hole in my chest.

I had felt something, and acted on it.

And now, I just feel empty. Hate. Fear. Destroy.

Elementary-school-me stumbled through a simpler time. When the dark was a brew of night sounds warbling from the brush. When the trail stretched clear and bright, and our eyes were webbed with cold, sharp stars. If you looked real close — There! Perseid meteor, blazing mist and fire, arching across the sky —

"I wish we were sisters," you murmured. "Then we could hang out like this all the time."

Glance left, and you were there. Even if you hate a friend, you can't deny that a couple eons back, they'd been there.

They'd always been there. Wherever you wander, their imprint still remains: joy, regret, fear, purpose, memories of happier years that had shaped you so spontaneously.

Timy, whispering, excited truths. Avery. ♦



## High school culture breeds transient relationships

BY Sava Sivaram

I have 91 unread text messages on my phone. To many, this indicates a lack of responsiveness, but for me, it's just an attempt to avoid all of the friendships that have turned negative over the last four years of high school. The texts are nothing but a last-ditch attempt to maintain any semblance of a relationship with those I used to be close to, and replying to them just perpetuates the falsified facade of positivity.

It's inevitable that some of the friendships you form will end up not working out for a whole host of reasons, but I think that the plethora of soured friendships that I have makes me somewhat of an exception.

For a long time, I blamed the people around me. They were too immature, too judgmental and not supportive enough. But as I've grown older, I've realized that friendship is very much a two-way street. I'm as much to blame as others are, and I wish it hadn't taken me so long to realize it.

During my sophomore year, I left school for a significant chunk of time due to health reasons, and when I came back, I was bitter and jaded. Few of my friends had contacted me to ask how I was during that time or where I had gone. I felt abandoned, and when I came back, I pushed everyone away, choosing to acquire a whole new group of friends.

I don't regret it — this moment of catharsis was part of my growth as a whole, but I do wish that I hadn't been so quick to write off

these people.

It was only in retrospect that I realized that the reason people felt so distant from me all the time was that I was hiding behind a towering wall of insecurity and defensiveness. Simply put, it was hard for anyone to become my friend.

**And it's that lack of trust that creates a chasm too great to overcome.**

I'm now trying to repair those friendships and make amends in my last semester of high school, but there are certain things that can never be fully healed and many of these broken friendships continue to hurt me more than they should.

High school is the time of fleeting relationships. I know that once I graduate in June, I'm not likely to ever see some of my peers again. The friends that I have right now are not guaranteed to stay my friends, and

the close inner circle that I have gained will be in flux once we all disperse to different corners of the country.

But the knowledge that many of these friendships are transitory does not justify a worsened quality of friendship. Far too often, relationships are riddled with gossip, rumors and mistrust. I know that for me, I fear telling anyone anything too personal because of how quickly that information could be broken.

Sadly, although we still stay in touch through occasional messages and Snapchats, my best friend from middle school and I now barely see each other and don't maintain a constant friendship. Every time we meet — maybe a couple times a year — we promise to meet more often, but as our busy lives get in the way, we often forget to keep these promises.

Although I feel guilty about not maintaining my relationships, I'm not alone. According to evolutionary biologist Robert Dunbar, a human being can only maintain five intimate friends at a time. I've grown to realize the truth in Dunbar's words. After changing school districts three times, I have found it more difficult to maintain real, close friendships with people I no longer regularly see in person.

When I attended Oak Avenue Elementary School in Los Altos,

## Lost friendships are a natural progression

SOCIAL MEDIA CAN HELP RECLAIM THEM

BY Katherine Zhou

"I want to be friends in high school. Let's make plans to meet every month," my then-best friend told me during the summer before high school as we walked to her house, cheerily marching to music. We were bound for different high schools, and our friendship was soon to be broken.

Then came middle school. At St. Andrew's Episcopal School, I befriended a girl who enjoyed running and English class as much as I did, and we went to the movies every Friday. But as the summer before high school arrived, my friends, who all planned to attend different high schools, seemed to be too busy to make time for each other, and after meeting a few times in the summer, we eventually stopped meeting altogether.

In fact, whenever we occasionally bump into each other such as at cross country meets, we smile and quickly catch up, but the conversation is flat and plastic — the promises to meet again are empty and little effort is put in carrying them through.

With the help of social media, I still keep in touch with many of my old friends, but it's doubtful our relationships will ever go back to the way they were despite our best intentions and promises to recreate what we had. ♦



## Q & A with Mayor Emily Lo



Saratoga's mayor Emily Lo was inaugurated into office in December. She has held multiple leadership positions in the past, including the Santa Clara County Library District Joint Powers Authority and the Cities Association of Santa Clara County. She has two children who both graduated from Saratoga High.

**You came from Hong Kong. How have your experiences in a foreign nation shaped your perceptions and ideals?**

I grew up in Hong Kong at a time when it was a British Colony and a melting pot of the East and West. It allowed me to gain exposure to a multi-cultural environment. I was educated in a high school run by American missionaries (Maryknoll Sisters), with whom I learned and practiced American values in an Asian setting.

When attending the University of Hong Kong, I was elected to be president of the Hong Kong Chapter of a worldwide student association called AIESEC (International Association of Students in Economics and Commercial Sciences).

I enjoyed the diverse experience and carried that to my PTA Co-Presidency, where I recalled organizing a Mahjong Day for the school community, featuring different game rules played in different countries. I still believe that globalization, not isolation, is what propels us forward.

**What made you initially get into doing things like City Council or serving on various boards?**

I like to give back to the com-

munity and make a difference. Saratoga is unique in that it has a strong, engaging community. I strive to reinforce that spirit and help new residents assimilate into our community.

"Small but beautiful" is what I like to describe our city. I would like to see Saratoga continue to be a great place to live and raise families. Our residents are very generous when it comes to giving back. Our local organizations, churches and schools are always ready to step up when societal needs arise. It's a community I am proud of.

**What are your primary goals going into your mayorship?**

Uphold our commitment to public safety, including crime prevention, traffic safety, and fire safety. Crime prevention has always been a subject of discussion in our community. A special page on the City's website [www.saratoga.ca.us/stayingsafe](http://www.saratoga.ca.us/stayingsafe) is dedicated to provide safety tips on crime prevention, as well as steps to set up a Neighborhood Watch group. The City also provide grants to support Neighborhood Watch group activities.

Build a community. Saratoga is a city which embraces diversity, inclusion, and equality. Starting end of March, the City sponsored a monthly "Living Room Conversation," an event which serves to enhance understanding and build relationships, to allow people with fundamental differences of background to understand, work together, and treat each other with respect. The city will continue to support programs that strengthen community pride. ♦

— Reporting by Roland Shen

## 1950s to now: the evolution of Saratoga's downtown

BY Aaron Choi & Elicia Ye

Satellite images looking down upon the Bay Area make it clear that the bustling lights of downtown Los Gatos dwarf those of Saratoga even though both towns have similar populations of around 30,000 residents.

However, the streets of downtown Saratoga were not always so empty. In fact, these streets once harbored rows of stores that attracted crowds of customers.

According to Ernest Kraule, a Saratoga resident whose family moved from San Francisco in the 1940s, downtown then was "very versatile," with many essential services like a library, two restaurants and three grocery stores. He remembers the days when the 1939 classic "Gone with the Wind" played in the theater down on 3rd Street.

A former fire chief, Kraule had also volunteered for the fire department, which has remained a part of downtown and developed into the Saratoga Fire Station that stands today.

Prior to the introduction of Safeway on Saratoga-Sunnyvale Road in the 1960s and later the development of the Argonaut Shopping Center, residents of Saratoga would go to downtown to shop and run errands.

Over the decades, however, the shopping location and marketplace of Big Basin Way gradually became rows of lonely or forgotten cafes and restaurants, said Kraule, who volunteers at the Saratoga Historical Foundation. The once-frequented clothing boutiques, paint stores, auto repair garages, pool hall and hotel that had served Saratoga's residents in the '50s disappeared and become obsolete as other communities grew and shoppers could have their needs met elsewhere.

Now, rather than going to their own town when looking for leisure or adventure, many Saratogans prefer places like downtown Los Gatos, which features narrow alleys



Above: Saratoga downtown's Big Basin Cafe style with outside patio seating is typical of the downtown now.



Left: Saratoga in the early 1900s was primarily agricultural.

and antique street lamps almost identical to those of Saratoga. The big difference between the downtowns is Los Gatos' greater selection of shops, including Los Gatos Cafe, Dio Deka and an Apple store, and their popularity.

Juniors Nicholas Di and Ashok Mohan say teens see Los Gatos as a place for young people and Saratoga as a place for their parents and grandparents.

"Although I see [the older residents] socializing now and then in downtown, they definitely don't explore as much as the younger demographics," Di said. "A lot of the stores that I see pop up fade away because the elderly visit only occasionally, and there aren't enough high schoolers to sustain these businesses."

According to Di, in order for a small business to succeed, it needs constant support from students and young families alike. Those hopeful of reviving downtown through the opening of new shops often see their dreams wither.

When senior Anna Dutro was a freshman, she spent her days after school helping her parents run the

Wildwood Market, a neighborhood grocery store where high schoolers walking into downtown stopped to get smoothies and sandwiches. Although the market gained a strong following, it lost money and eventually closed in March 2014 — only seven months after its grand opening.

Similarly, many other eateries in downtown such as Yolotea, which served frozen yogurt and other desserts, and Blue Rock Shoot Cafe, have gone out of business in the past few years.

As for Kraule and many other longtime residents, they remain largely happy with the decisions that have been made over the years to help Saratoga maintain its unique feel, one free of the commercialism of other local cities. "Said Kraule: "Because the old-timers sought to maintain the rural atmosphere while the new influx of people wanted control over the development of the city, downtown Saratoga underwent slow, orderly changes different from those of Sunnyvale and Campbell, eventually making Saratoga the unique town it is today." ♦

## Conservatives hold beliefs steady on liberal campus

BY Frederick Kim & Victor Li

The Muh Liberty Facebook page has become well known for its daily political posts, but it disappeared without a trace on March 11. Facebook had "opened an investigation" on the fledgling political page after its creation last August, possibly for pushing the boundaries of the political spectrum.

For the time it was up and running, Liberty entertained its followers with posts that ranged from critical to comical, including the occasional socialist meme and "BeingLibertarian" video.

The creator of Muh Liberty is none other than sophomore Rohan Pandey, a self-proclaimed Libertarian. And although Pandey's political views once leaned to the left, this changed after his original candidate of choice in the 2016 election, democratic socialist Ber-

nie Sanders, lost in the Democratic primaries, and his views began to be influenced by capitalist philosophies.

Pandey recalls how a combination of YouTube videos, Wikipedia research and Facebook nudged him to embrace the Libertarian philosophy of freedom and minimal government.

"After spending more time on the internet, I slowly moved toward leftist Libertarianism and general freedom," Pandey said. "But after that, I went to right-wing Libertarianism after being introduced to Facebook."

After the election, Pandey continues to support Donald Trump and is generally happy with what Trump has been doing recently. However, he still disagrees with some of his policies.

"I don't believe in a wall of course but I do believe in increased border security," Pandey said. "The best immigration solution is to also make it easier for unskilled work-

ers from Mexico to receive seasonal working permits."

Like Pandey, senior Andrew Owens remembers how he came to his right-wing views on politics, although his transition from left to right stemmed from a much more personal perspective on government and politics in general.

**"I think that I almost don't have free speech sometimes in this school."**

SENIOR Roy Lee

Owens' parents did foster care when he was younger, and he first gravitated to a more right-wing viewpoint on politics after seeing inefficiencies in government-sponsored programs.

"If a program doesn't work, nothing happens because there's no one that's going to replace them," Owens said. "For example, hundreds of veterans have died on the Veterans

Affairs waiting list and there still needs to be a massive change to fix problems."

Interestingly, living in Saratoga has contributed to Owens' conservatism. He claims that he's not a "counterculture guy," but he thinks that becoming a conservative was a reaction to his environment.

Likewise, senior Roy Lee agrees that his conservatism resulted from examining the liberal and conservative sides in his life.

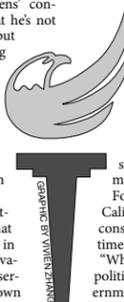
"My whole family is pretty liberal," Lee said. "That made me more interested in the good side of conservatism, and I think the conservative ideology fits my own opinion more."

But Lee feels that Trump is not a proper representation of the conservative in America. Lee believes that Trump is "too extreme" and is not "following some of the Republican Party agenda."

Growing up in a liberal environment, though, has also limited the extent of conservative outlooks on certain issues. Owens does not consider himself to be "socially conservative" and instead identifies himself as mainly a "fiscal conservative."

"It would be harder to talk to people if I didn't think gay people could get married," Owens said. "And people would understand fiscal conservatism more."

For Lee, however, living in California's liberal coast as a conservative makes him sometimes feel uncomfortable. "When we talk about certain political issues in my AP Government class such as abortion, I'm more on the conservative side, but everyone is like 'what is wrong with you' if I'm pro-life instead of pro-abortion," Lee said. "It's a bit exaggerated, but I think that I almost don't have free speech sometimes in this school." ♦



## Students question effectiveness of Club Rush

BY Patrick Li & Navin Tiwary

When Common Roots co-presidents seniors Aarya Mecwan and Sava Sivaram sat down to discuss food options to sell at Club Rush, they agreed that they needed to find an option that was accessible to both vegetarians and meat-eaters. After an elimination process, the two decided on selling McDonald's French fries — they were small, affordable and sure to appeal to hungry high schoolers. However, little did they know just how appealing their French fries would be.

According to Sivaram, on the day of Club Rush on March 17, the pair scrambled to keep up with the high demand that they were not prepared for.

The challenge to make a suitable profit from Club Rush is one that has clubs struggling. This tradition started out as "Club Sweep" in 2013 by then-clubs commissioner Tiffany Yung and has gradually evolved into Club Rush. While some popular clubs on campus leave Club Rush with large profits, many smaller clubs do not reap the benefits that they hope for. For Common Roots, while French fries originally seemed like a good food item to sell, the club found it hard to coordinate logistics, such as container sizes, transportation and heating.

Mecwan and Sivaram both said the profit they gained from Club Rush was insignificant compared to the amount of preparation that went into the event.

"That the profit that we made from Club Rush wasn't worth the amount of trouble we went through," Sivaram said. "The preparation for the event was very lengthy and strenuous, and we didn't even make a significant enough sum to really help our club."

Similarly, junior Tristan Xiao, who is the



From left to right: Chinese Club members juniors Nicholas Di, Connor Reyes and Alan Lu sell Costco pizza during Club Rush on March 17 to a group of hungry students in the quad.

co-president of Science Club, said Club Rush often proves to be a struggle for his club because of the amount of preparation.

"If you don't have the 'best food,' then less people will be willing to come to your table," Xiao said. "Club Rush is difficult because we need to know what students want."

According to Xiao, a large reason clubs struggle to earn money from the event is that there are so many other similar foods that students can buy. For instance, pearl milk tea, the most frequently sold product, loses its glamour when it is placed next to several other PMT fundraisers by other clubs.

"Since there are just too many kinds of the same food, we have to resort to more inconvenient food options, which was french fries

for our club," Mecwan said.

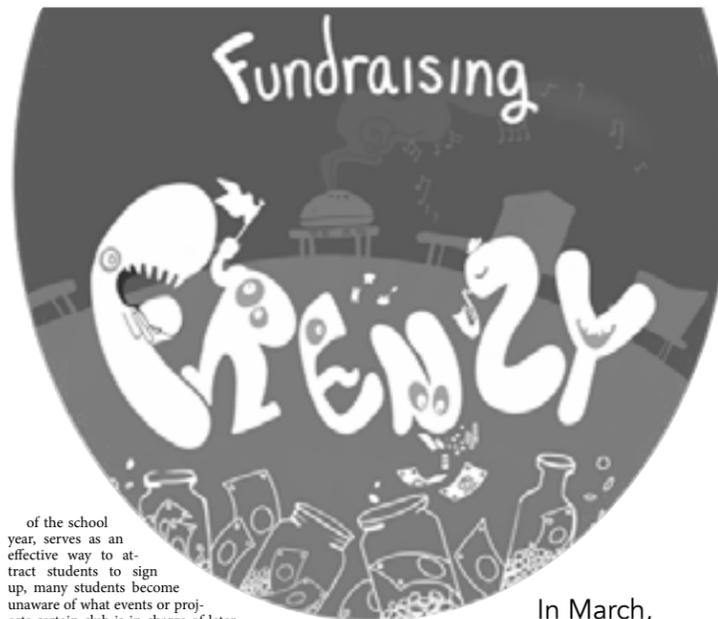
However, according to senior Devin Fleharty, co-president of Linguistics Club, clubs that choose to come up with new and innovative ideas have the possibility of attracting more students. Looking through unique food options while planning for Club Rush, Fleharty and his officers created an "ice cream waffle," which essentially consisted of toaster waffles topped with various ice cream flavors.

To his surprise, because of the easy assembling of the treat and its "out-of-the-ordinary" element, a fair number of students purchased food from his booth.

Nonetheless, Xiao said that Club Rush is beneficial for gaining exposure. Even though Club Day, which takes place in the beginning

of the school year, serves as an effective way to attract students to sign up, many students become unaware of what events or projects certain club is in charge of later throughout the year. The biggest payoff may be that through Club Rush, students have additional opportunities to learn more about clubs that they are interested in.

"I think more important than the amount of money raised at Club Rush is the fact that the event brings us a lot of new club members," Xiao said. ♦



In March, one of the busiest months for SHS students, many campus organizations host fundraising events.

## Powderpuff features new event

ASB CREATES OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMISSIONERS, CLASS OFFICERS TO SELL FOOD AT LAST GAME DURING LUNCH

BY Alexandra Li & Victor Liu

The class offices and commissioners are planning to sell food during the last game of Powderpuff instead of during Club Rush in hopes of increasing game attendance while also keeping Club Rush exclusive to clubs. The idea to create another food-related fundraiser was first proposed by Homecoming commissioner senior Megana Saripella as a way to combat both sparse attendance at Powderpuff games and chaos during club rush.

"Since the event is called Club Rush, we wanted to focus as much attention as we could to clubs and clubs only," senior clubs commissioner Ellicia Chiu said.

In hopes that separating fundraising days would be beneficial for all student groups, activities director Matt Torrens set aside lunch period during the last game of Powderpuff on March 31 for commissions and class offices to sell food with the same ticketing system used during

Club Rush.

"By making it a closed campus lunch and having a variety of food options provided by Leadership, we can hopefully attract people to attend Powderpuff as well as raise money for big events such as junior prom, senior prom and rallies," Chiu said.

The senior class is embracing this new event by selling In-N-Out burgers as well as McDonald's chicken nuggets, hoping that these two popular food choices will sell out.

"I think the class and commissioner rush is special because it's the first time anyone is selling food during Powderpuff," senior class representative Sydnie Vo said.

"We hope it encourages more people to come down and support the teams."

Because many class and commissions have decided to sell full-fledged meals, the junior class opted to sell popsicles instead to cater to students wanting dessert. According to

junior class representative Nicholas Di, the junior class officers hope to raise money to fund for both Homecoming and prom decorations next year. To add the option of beverages,

"It's special because it's the first time we're selling food during Powderpuff."

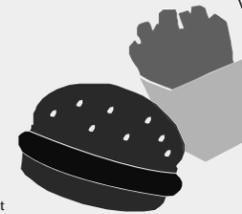
SENIOR Sydnie Vo



the dance commission will be selling pearl milk tea; sophomores will sell chips and guacamole.

For underclassmen who rarely get a chance to purchase food off-campus, this event will allow them to buy from a wider variety of food. Although the freshman class office has never experienced fundraising at such a large-scale, they have decided to participate by selling Costco pizza.

"We know it's early to start fundraising for junior prom, but upperclassmen told us to start early, and it doesn't hurt to save up money," freshman vice president Prosper Chiu said. ♦



## Pi(e) in the face: Senior class hosts unique, iconic fundraiser

BY Aaron Choi & Ryan Kim

Physics teacher Kirk Davis' heart beat rapidly in anticipation as the quad was silenced during lunch on March 14.

All of a sudden, Davis was greeted by a cream pie thrown by an unknown assailant.

As other students began throwing pies in unison, shocked teachers screamed as their students beamed.

The Pi Day fundraiser, organized by the senior class, brought cheers across the quad as students enjoyed drenching their teachers in whipped cream.

Senior class president Rachel Won, who took the lead in planning the event, was glad that the senior class organized the new fundraiser this year.

"It's not every day when your teacher lets you pie them in the face," Won said. "A lot of people enjoyed the event, and the teachers were really good sports — some even pied each other."

Pi day is a holiday that celebrates one of the most iconic numbers in math: 3.14.

Inspired by previous Pi Day traditions, the senior class celebrated its own version with the intention of creating an enjoyable event that would attract a large audience.

To participate in the fundraiser, students bought pies with which to pie students or their favorite teachers.

Around 20 teachers and student Leadership students volunteered to be victims, with English teacher Erick Rector and Biology teacher Kristofer Orre both applying for unlimited pieing.

Davis, math teacher Kelly Frangieh and Spanish teacher Bret Yeilding, along with senior class officers Apoorv Kwatra,

Sydnie Vo and Danielle Berkowitz, all lined up at the booth facing the onslaught of pies.

Students paid a flat fee of \$3 per pie to hit any teacher or student at the pieing booth, which was near the quad steps. Orre said the senior class must have made sizable profits because so many students pelted him with pies.

In total, the senior class raised \$100 from the fundraiser.

"I received a bombardment of pies [from freshman Hayden Cranz and senior William Chen]," Orre said. "The fundraiser was a bonding experience, for sure. The kids seemed to enjoy it."

Though the pies were simple tin plates covered in whipped cream in order to minimize expenses, the event attracted a huge audience of students who filled the quad.

"I absolutely recommend anybody but me to participate in the fundraiser," Davis said.

According to Won, Outreach Commissioner senior Puja Maheshwari originally introduced the concept of pieing teachers as a fundraiser to the senior class leadership team. The team loved the idea.

"My brother's college dance team did something similar last year to fundraise, so I came up with this idea because I thought it would be fun to do it at our school," Maheshwari said.

Although senior class officer Jessy Liu is unsure if future classes will continue the tradition, she was glad the senior class tried the event.

"Students had fun, and teachers enjoyed it too," Liu said. "I mean, who doesn't enjoy public humiliation? That's always a unifying factor." ♦



After getting pied in the face, English teacher Erick Rector looks surprised.

## TEACHER CLUB ADVISERS

The Falcon interviewed Indian Cultural Awareness Club adviser Hana Chen, Spanish Club adviser Arnaldo Rodriguex and Chinese Club adviser Sara Tseng.

**What are your club's main goals?**

**Rodriguex:** Spanish Club is an opportunity to come together and spend time with friends in a positive environment.

**Chen:** Through Bombay in the Bay (BnB), we raise about \$10,000 each year. Because of the impact we have, it seems a worthwhile cause to involve myself in.

**What is your role as club adviser?**

**Chen:** I coordinate between parents and school administrator when we plan for BnB. The key to a successful club is definitely communication.

**What do you like best about being a club adviser?**

**Chen:** I have learned so much about the Indian culture. I love working with club officers and watching the whole event come together from start to finish.

**Rodriguex:** It's just nice to see kids having fun over things that aren't purely grade related.

**Tseng:** I believe learning about the culture of such a major population of our school is very important. The club started out pretty rough, but I like the direction the club is going in.

REPORTING BY VIVIEN ZHANG

## More than just the profit: Jazz Cabaret helps to unify community

BY Eleanor Goh & Esha Lakhotia

The Large Gym was unrecognizable — walking in felt like entering a high-class nightclub. A disco ball hung from the ceiling, and trumpets and saxophones twinkled in the spotlight as people danced on the dance floor to the jazz band's last piece, "In the Mood" by Glenn Miller.

The annual Jazz Cabaret, held this year on March 11, is one of the few events at the school that has been around for decades — it was a tradition even before music director Michael Boitz joined the music department in 1997.

The event started as an end-of-year performance for the jazz choir and band in the cafeteria. Over the years, increasing levels of interest from both students and parents upgraded Jazz Cabaret to a prom-like dance held in the Large and Small Gyms, with live music, dancing and food.

Student and parent volunteers dedicate the entire day before Jazz Cabaret to decorate the two gyms. According to sophomore flutist Deyshna Pai, who was

among those helping out with preparations this year, pulling off the transformation was no easy task with the limited time.

"There are so many elements that go into decorations," Pai said. "It takes a lot more work than people think to stay on top of things and make the gym look pretty."

Every year, the school's choir and jazz band programs gain about \$2,000 in profit from Jazz Cabaret, most of which is used to plan for next year's event. Any money left helps fund the choir and jazz program's equipment and performance venues.

Although proceeds are minimal, the experience performers and attendees gain is well worth the effort and time invested in preparation — for performers and attendees alike, the positive atmosphere of the room is almost tangible.

"Jazz Cabaret is valuable because it's so rewarding to see many diverse music groups of people of all ages coming together just to have a good time," Pai said.

Rather than focusing on the event's money-making aspect, the music department views Jazz Cabaret as a chance

### mesh concert

THROUGH THE YEARS



FALCON // JADE BISHT

2013: The 'One Note at a Time' event took place on May 13. The event was first initiated in 2010 by alumnus Walter Hsiang.



FALCON // SANJANA MELKOTE

2017: Members perform at the 'Beauty and the Beat' themed concert on March 9.

## GIRLS WHO CODE

For their final project, Girls Who Code is creating a travel website and iPhone application to make creating travel diaries and out-of-town arrangements easier. In line with their theme of traveling, the club is holding a clothing and toiletries fundraiser for Asian Women's Home, a local charity.



junior club officer Stacey Chen

Containers will be placed in front of the office until late April, when club members will collect all donated items.



sophomore member Kaviya Nachiappan

"Although Girls Who Code focuses on computer science, I like that it's also about giving back to our community."

REPORTING BY AMI NACHIAPPAN

# Seniors visit college campuses

TOURS PROVIDE UNIQUE GLIMPSE INTO UNIVERSITY LIFE

BY Lina Kim & Alex Yang

When senior Shannon Chen stepped onto Princeton University's campus during February break, she was amazed at its breath-taking architecture, gorgeous scenery and quaint college town that surrounded the university.



Courtesy of SHANNON CHEN  
Senior Shannon Chen stands in front of Blair Hall at Princeton University during her visit in February break.

Impressed by the magnificent campus, Chen couldn't help but imagine what her life would be like at Princeton for the next four years.

Chen, who was accepted early into Princeton in December, visited the school in February for its freshmen orientation for early applicants.

During her stay, she had the chance to sit in on classes, have lunch in the dining hall with current students and tour various facilities on campus, including several libraries.

"College tours, from my experience, are really helpful for choosing where to go," Chen said. "There's nothing quite like physically visiting a college because you can get a really accurate feel for day-to-day life there."

During both February break and spring break, dozens of seniors will travel near and far to figure which university of all the ones where they've been accepted is right for them. These visits play a huge role in where students will decide to go.

Senior Rachel Won, who visited

USC after receiving an invitation from the university to attend its Explore USC event, found that experiencing campus life was helpful in getting a feel for the school.

At Explore USC, Won toured on-campus facilities related to her biomedical engineering major and spoke with admissions officers, current students and the dean of the engineering department.

"The university invited all candidates to also have interviews with professors from their major of interest."

While Won admits that the interview was "nerve-racking,"

she found that talking with a professor who had done research in the exact concentration of biomedical engineering she was interested in was enjoyable, as she got to ask about various engineering projects the professor had worked on. She also got to stay overnight and immerse herself in the school's dorm culture.

"It was cool because people would just pop in and out of my host student's room to hang out or work on homework, and it was nice to be in an environment of collaborative and entertaining students who were also hard-working," Won said.

Senior Alice Bian had a similar experience when she visited UC Berkeley on March 17 and 18 for the Regents' Overnight Host Program.

During her stay, Bian got the opportunity to listen to a panel of current Berkeley students, explore local restaurants and take a nighttime tour of the campus.

Toward the end of the night, the group hiked a famous trail where they overlooked the San Francisco Bay.

During their evening tour, Bian observed a group of students line dancing in the quad until midnight.

"It was exciting because before coming to Berkeley, I had preconceived notions about the school," Bian said. "I expected there to be no social life, but after touring the campus, I realized that it was extremely lively." ♦

# Revamped grant system allows for increase in club activities

BY DANIEL BESSONOV & PHOENIX WANG

As Chinese Club president junior Nathan Chin sat in front of his computer staring at the ASB Grant Google Form, he couldn't help but get excited about funding a club trip to San Francisco's Chinatown. Chin, like many other club presidents on campus, has applied for an ASB grant, a system that provides funds for club activities and fundraisers.

After having applied in early March, the Chinese Club has not yet received word on its application status, but is hopeful it will be granted. The system, originally instituted last year as a part of Speak Up for Change week, is an opportunity for school-approved clubs to earn up to \$500 for club-related activities. This system has recently been revamped in order to both solidify and accelerate the grant application process.

"We had to redo most of the grant application, because our current form didn't have enough details," said junior Roland Shen, the ASB treasurer. "We wanted to see a detail-by-detail breakdown of how every club will be spending their money."

The grant-system has since benefited numerous clubs such as the Future Business Leaders of America Club and M-SET Robotics, helping fund each club's need for extra monetary support for equipment, bus rides and attire.

Senior Lesley Huang, the president of FBLA, said that because of increased participation in club activities this year, her club was in need of more funds to transport individuals and from competitions, including state conferences.

The money also helped pay for scholarships to go to the conferences for students.

Huang, who also manages finances for the school's M-SET Robotics, said that the team also applied for a grant in early March in hopes of receiving money to fund the large costs of purchasing robot parts and equipment. After buying 20 new motor controllers, each selling for around \$100, Huang hopes that the grant system will "alleviate at least some of the expenses."

According to Shen, six clubs have submitted applications as of late March, asking for amounts ranging from \$90 to \$500 — most of the statuses of these applications, Shen said, are still pending.

ASB senior vice president Spring Ma said that the new application process will allow the ASB to figure out why a certain club is asking for an amount such as \$500 instead of \$450 or less.

Ultimately, the main goal of the ASB grant system is to bring more permanent change to the school and student body.

"We've always been making sure that the money is connected to the students," Ma said. "We will try to fund all projects that [have the potential] to have a long-term impact on as many students as possible." ♦



Chin

# Senior opts to join Navy before attending college

BY RYAN KIM & SAYA SIVARAM

In the midst of first semester, senior Orion Milazzo sometimes felt out of place. Rather than spending every spare moment writing lengthy essays for college applications, Milazzo was training and preparing himself for when he enters the Navy after graduation.

Two years ago, Milazzo made the decision to enlist because of the extensive educational perks that come along with a career in the field. After two years of service, Milazzo will be able to attend college free of cost. This means he will not be saddled with the burden of college tuition or student debt.

"Until college, I get hands-on training on a naval ship and get to travel around the world," Milazzo said. "So I'll get all of the educational benefits of college with the added bonus of seeing the world and learning about different cultures."

Milazzo has had his heart set on joining the Navy after his sister and cousin joined the Army in the past five years.

To start his training in his freshman year, Milazzo enrolled in the Naval Sea Cadet Corps, an international program funded by the U.S. government that allows high school and middle school students to experience military life.

Milazzo will graduate from the program once he turns 18 later in the year.

Through the program, Milazzo learned many military operations through the program's simulations. For example, over winter break, he spent 10 days playing war games while travelling on a tall ship, a type of naval vessel, from Chula Vista to Catalina Island and Coronado. Milazzo's ship had no contact with the outside world other than a radio connection with the Coast Guard. His crew dealt with different scenarios, such as searches for enemy submarines.

Along with exercises on ships, Milazzo participated in a three-week training camp in Arkansas for Masters at Arms, a type of military police.

His training included traffic stops, canine search and rescue, SWAT tactics, urban assault tactics and hand-to-hand combat.

Every other Saturday, Milazzo also goes to the Moffett Field for unit training as he travels to various rooms and houses with mock air-soft weapons to learn military and overseas customs. Though he has only been training for three years, Milazzo's experiences with the U.S. Armed Forces has been an educational and transformational process. The hard-working community of individuals involved with the U.S. Armed Forces has motivated him to improve on his skills for his future years of service.

"I'm excited to be able to travel and see the world. I get to do something that's new and very beneficial to me," Milazzo said. "You also meet a lot of interesting and cool people who share the same end goal." ♦



SENIOR Orion Milazzo

## COST OF Belonging\*

**Robotics**

Registration, food, transportation

\$280

2nd at CalGames

"We lost a lot of seniors last year, so this was the first time our team chemistry was tested in a competition environment. Even though we lost by one point, we handled it with grace and professionalism."  
—Nicole Lin (12)

**Marching Band**

Trip, buses, food

\$1100

2nd at BOA

"Competitions mean a lot to us; my favorite part is the adrenaline we get during the performance. Because practices are 1.5 hours a week for 8 weeks before competitions, placing second was just a reflection of how hard everyone worked."  
—Andrew Zheng (11)

**Speech & Debate**

Registration for NEDA account, league tournaments, end-of-the-year banquet

\$80

Freshmen Ashwin Ramakrishna and Ronak Pai placed 2nd in Novice Public Forum at the Santa Clara University Invitational

"Because we have a small team, we stick together and support each other because in the end it's not only a win for individual competitors, but for the entire team."  
—Varun Viswanath (11)

**Toga Math Circle**

Membership fee and competition tests

\$80

Top 10 in standard math contests in the nation: Katie Wu (10), Brandon Wang (9)

"Since we go under the name of a school with so much talent, we try our best so that Saratoga is represented well."  
—Tiffany Huang (11)

\*Annual recommended fees and costs

GRAPHIC BY ELUCIA YE

VOLLEYBALL

# Falcons pick up their game after a rough start

BY KAREN CHOW & IAN FU

Racing across the court, freshman setter Mohan Duvvuri maneuvered through his teammates as he tried to set up a play during a tough match against Cupertino on March 15. He dived for the ball and back-set perfectly to senior outside Joel Schneidmiller, who smashed the ball down for a point.

Although the boys had a rough start — starting the season 3-4 — this kind of teamwork is what makes the Falcons believe they can win their league for the third year in a row. They hope to defend both their CCS and NorCal championships from last year.

"The team this year has really good potential, we just need to work hard because we are such a young team," Schneidmiller said. "But despite being young, everyone is very talented."

The game against Cupertino ended in a 3-0 win for the Falcons. The first set, which the boys won 25-18, was led by Schneidmiller's quick hits and strong blocks. The boys were able to keep their momentum strong

throughout, winning the second set 25-17 and the third set 25-20.

On March 10, however, the team fell short to Homestead 3-1. The team was unable to fully gain momentum.

"Homestead has some pretty good players," Schneidmiller said. "But the next time we play them, I think we can definitely win because everyone was nervous as it was my first game back." Schneidmiller had been playing basketball with the varsity team.

Earlier, on March 8, the Falcons lost 3-1 against Mountain View. Though the Falcons had trouble passing in the first game, the boys were able to pick it up in the second game, winning 25-18. But lacking Schneidmiller in the lineup, the boys didn't have their usual firepower and fell short in the third set.

In their first match of the season, the Falcons won 3-0 against Oak Grove. The win was keyed by sophomore libero Derek Chiou and Duvvuri due to Chiou's great coverage on the back court and Duvvuri's alternating sets.

"This is my first year playing for the school team, and I really love our dynamic,"



FALCON JV VIVIAN ZHANG  
Junior Jason Tran leaps up to spike the ball in a home game against Harker on March 21.

Duvvuri said. "We are hyped for the season and everyone wants to win league." ♦  
Due to printing deadlines, the Falcon

could not cover the the games against Homestead on March 29. They play Cupertino away tonight.

BOYS' GOLF

# String of losses sets team back from league goals

BY AARON CHOI & CHRISTOPHER LEE

The starting six on the Falcon boys' golf team are struggling in their first few matches of the De Anza League season, but hope to turn the tide and capture a berth in the league tournament.

They hold a 1-4 league record as of March 27.

They fell short to Los Gatos on March 21 at La Rinconada Country Club, losing 223-206. The boys were led by freshman No. 2 player Kevin Sze, who shot a 36 for nine holes, and sophomore No. 1 player William Liu, who had a 41.

Earlier, the Falcons fought hard against Palo Alto on March 16 at Palo Alto Hills Country Club but lost 222-198.

"Palo Alto is the No. 1 team so we didn't expect to win, but we wanted to have low scores so we could stay on track to make it to leagues," senior No. 3 player Trevor Leung said. Placement in the league tournament is according to total scoring for each team during the season.

The Falcons were able to grab a 213-202 victory on March 13, when the Falcons beat Cupertino at the Saratoga Country Club.

The scoring was once again led by Liu, who shot a 39, Leung with a 40 and Sze with a 41.

"I think we have a bigger advantage for all home matches against other teams because Saratoga Country Club is a hard course and requires you to play smart even though it's shorter than other courses we play at," Leung said. "It requires players to know it well."

The Falcons fell to Los Altos at the Shoreline Golf Club on March 9 by the score of 212-209. Against Cupertino at the Santa Clara Golf and Tennis Club, a par-36 course, the team also lost, this time by the score of 220-202.

According to Leung, the golf team has to be top six finishers in order to make the league tournament. Leung has noticed that the league is more difficult this year than last year.

"I think we have more potential to play better than we have so far, we just have to be more consistent in the rest of our season if we want to make leagues," Leung said. ♦

# DAVEY

continued from pg. 1

school age, Davey decided he needed "to settle it down for them and give them some continuity." So he made the transition to coaching the varsity girls in 2008. During each regular season, Davey spent about 20 hours a week on film and scouting. In addition, he created scouting guides, filled with plays and key players of the opposing team, for the Falcons to study before each game. This was in addition to his full-time duties as a history teacher.

"I don't think people saw how much he cared about the team and all the extra time he put in," said senior Rachel Davey, his younger daughter who played for him for three years as a point guard. "Not many people would spend their winter break carting around groups of teenagers through LA or spend hours scouting and writing scout reports."

During his 25 years of coaching at the school, Davey's teams have reached CCS numerous times: 12 times with the boys' varsity team and nine times with the girls' varsity team.

"It's tough to say which team I enjoyed coaching more, but the girls are more fun," Davey said. "The boys sometimes took winning and losing more seriously, but the girls lived the experience, so I re-

ally liked both aspects."

Athletic director Tim Lugo praised Davey's efforts to make sure "female athletes have the same experience that the boys have," and for helping ensure that "the girls sports get the same recognition on campus as our boys' teams."

One of Davey's favorite memories was leading last year's varsity team to a win at the Division III CCS championships. The win was especially meaningful to him since the victory took place at Santa Clara University, where his father, Dick Davey, had coached for 30 years, including as head coach from 1992-2007.

But the victories aren't what Davey has valued most about coaching, and his players say it's not what they remember about playing basketball, either.

"I can gladly call him my mentor and friend. I know I can come to him whenever I am in need of help," said senior Natasha Ramakrishnan, who played for him as guard for two years. "He ends all of his emails with a John Wooden quote that reads, 'You can't live a perfect day without doing something for someone who will never be able to repay you,' and I believe that having him as coach was perfect."

Not only has Davey been an integral part of his players' lives while they're in high school, but he has stayed in contact with many of his former players over the years as basketball coach.



Davey

SOFTBALL

# Girls begin to answer pitching questions

BY STEPHEN DING & NEIL RAO

Pitching was the biggest unknown for the Falcons this year coming into the season after the graduation of Eleni Spirakis last spring. Filling her shoes this year is senior Rachel Davey.

"Last year, Eleni and I were the pitchers, which was nice because we could substitute each other out," Davey said. "With her gone, it has been difficult to pitch five games a week."

To help Davey, junior second base Chancee Gaskin occasionally fills in.

Despite the pitching challenges, the team has adjusted and has a league record of 2-1 as of March 27.

On March 22, the Falcons' season got a big boost with an 8-1 win against Palo

Alto. Senior center fielder Natasha Ramakrishnan led the team with a strong outfield performance while Davey kept the Vikings in check with her pitching.

On March 17, the girls lost 6-5 against Milpitas in a close game, but they made up for it in their first league game by beating Fremont 11-1 at home on March 15.

Davey attributed these early wins to a strong pre-season schedule in which the girls beat Westmont in a strong 10-0 performance and lost 4-3 in a close game against Prospect.

"These early games allowed us to get to know each other better and really form as a team," junior outfielder Kate Bossi said.

"We learned our weaknesses and how we can improve in these through specific trainings that have helped us this season."

Despite the loss of 2016 alumni like Spi-

rakis and first baseman Savannah Green, Ramakrishnan is hoping new freshman additions, including first baseman Ella Parr, right fielder Morgan Woolley and shortstop Hannah Beine, can substitute in their place. These freshmen have already integrated themselves into the team.

"We all know the ins and outs of the game and our skill level is exactly where it needs to be," Ramakrishnan said. "We have already bonded as a team and our chemistry is really clicking."

According to Davey, the Falcons are on working on their base running and communication on the field.

"One thing we can work on is making sure we can stay focused through the really tough parts of our schedule because we have so many games in a week," Ramakrishnan said. ♦

BADMINTON

# Win against Palo Alto ends five-game losing streak

BY Jason Zhao

Cheers echoed through the gym on March 23 as the Falcons rushed onto the court to congratulate No. 2 girls' doubles players Ellicia Chiu and Alisha Luo, who won both their sets 21-19. Their win secured the overall win against Palo Alto, the first win for the Falcons this season after a five-game losing streak.

Strong performances by all of girls' singles and girls' doubles teams contributed to the Falcons' 18-12 victory over Palo Alto. The No. 1 girls' doubles pair of Megan Fung and Catherine Zhang scored a crucial win after a tight match.

"They comfortably won their first set 21-

was decent," Zhang said. "I think the biggest difference between this match and the ones we lost before was that we didn't get frustrated today and just focused on playing each point."

On March 21, the Falcons suffered a technical loss to Lynbrook: the score was tied 15-15, but the Lynbrook Vikings won eight of the 15 matches while the Falcons only won seven.

With the injury of No. 2 mixed doubles player Austin Wang, there were some major revisions to the lineup. No. 1 boys' doubles Stephen Ding and Josh Li and No. 2 boys' doubles Mason Tian and Nicholas Zhang were split up to accommodate for the loss of Wang.

Ding went to play No. 1 boys' singles while Tian took Wang's spot. Li and Nicholas paired up as No. 1 boys' doubles. Although this revision was hasty, it turned out in the Falcon's favor as the new teams won all their matches: Ding won 21-11, 21-2; Tian won 21-17, 21-15; and Li and Nicholas won 21-16, 21-17.

**"The lineup change has been pretty effective in helping us obtain that slight advantage we need over equally strong teams in the league."**

SENIOR Mason Tian

12, but had a difficult time after the other team started clearing to the far corners. The Vikings managed to win the second set 21-16.

As the third set started, Fung and Zhang exploited their opponent's slow footwork and rotation by dropping to the front and moving more aggressively, winning the third set 21-16.

"I'm really happy at our performance today not only because we won, but it was also the first time all-season that our rotation



FALCON // VIVIEN ZHANG  
Junior Stephen Ding steps forward to hit a drop in a match against Palo Alto on March 23.

point, the Falcons are looking to improve by reflecting on their earlier losses. With no games until April 18th, Li plans to use the time effectively and pick up the pace at practices to prepare the players for the second half.

"We will try to apply the footwork we drilled on from previous practices and to practice rotations for doubles and mixed pairs," Li said. "Hopefully in the future we can get revenge on the teams we originally lost to."

Due to printing deadlines, the Falcon is unable to cover the games against Gunn on March 28 and Cupertino on March 30 in this issue.

As the season comes to the halfway

mark, the Falcons are looking to improve by reflecting on their earlier losses. With no games until April 18th, Li plans to use the time effectively and pick up the pace at practices to prepare the players for the second half.

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TRACK

# Though promising, young team has room for growth

BY Caitlin Ju & Amni Nachiappan

At the home meet against Monta Vista on March 16, both junior sprinter Jajit Singh and senior sprinter Celine Bellegarda came in first in the boys' and girls' 200-meter dash and 400-meter dash.

With wins by the boys' varsity, boys' JV and girls' JV, the Falcons beat the Matadors, a much different story from their earlier home loss to Wilcox on March 9.

Against Monta Vista, freshman distance runner Julia Hoffman and junior distance runner Amit Nag both won the 1600-meter race. Also taking home wins were senior thrower Tristan Bush and junior thrower Paige Hansen. Both secured victories in the shot put and discus events.

Although the members of the boys' distance team are considered among the strongest athletes on the team, the boys' sprints have also claimed key wins. The Falcon boys' 4x100 meter dash, which consists of Singh, junior Will Turpin, sophomore Dylan Madani and freshman Jinghao Wang beat Monta Vista by 1.16 seconds.

According to Madani, the boys' 4x100 meter relay team has a shot at breaking the school record in the event. As a second-year veteran now running varsity in hurdling and sprinting, Madani is slowly getting used to the fast pace of hurdling, perfecting his sprinting form and improving his technique.

"Now that I'm pulled up to varsity, I'm running with much faster people which pushes me harder," Madani said. "Once I get my form down, I understand hurdling better and get used to the fact that though I can potentially fall, I try my best not to."

Because the team is so young, with the majority underclassmen, there is room for growth and potential for the young athletes. As a result, experienced upperclassmen, such as Bellegarda, are taking the lead in pushing athletes to perform at their best.

"So far the strength of the team comes from the boys' and girls' distance teams, who contribute to a majority of the team's overall score."

Promising freshmen such as Hoffman, who is currently leading the girls' distance team, have consistently won their respective events.

Because Hoffman has placed first in both her events in early-season meets, distance coach Ian Tippett has her practicing with the boys' distance team, which forces her to do more strenuous and longer workouts.

"Coach Tippett is definitely pushing me harder during practices," Hoffman said. "Since I'm practicing with the guys, it's nice that they're all very welcoming."

New to the high school track experience, Hoffman looks to improve for the remainder of the season while getting to know the rest of the athletes better.

"What I like most about high school sports is the social aspect," Hoffman said. "Being a freshman this year, it's nice to see more familiar faces in the hallways."

While the Falcons still have room for growth, Madani points to the team's accomplishments so far are just a glimpse of what is to come in future meets.

"Even though our first track meet was a bit rattling, I definitely think we're shaping into a more well-rounded team," Madani said.

The Falcon was unable to obtain final scores for the first two meets.



Madani

SWIMMING

# Key underclassmen step up to the challenge

BY Daniel Bessonov & Charin Park

During their daily practices, Falcon swimmers separate into their varsity and JV groups.

To outsiders, however, these placements might seem a bit odd: underclassmen dominate the varsity lanes, taking over the conventionally upperclassmen-held region of the roster.

These swimmers include freshmen Oscar Khowong and Jinsu Yim, as well as sophomores Daniel Bessonov, Nicholas Burry, Andrew Gao, Ashley Feng, Derek Fung and Lei Otsuka.

These underclassmen were able to advance to the upper divisions due to the opportunities that opened up after the departure of numerous alumni last spring, including now UC Berkeley freshman swimmer Jack Xie.

According to senior breaststroker Nathan Ching, the rebuilding of the roster led to a slow start in their season.

"The upperclassmen were really worried

for the new swimmers coming in because this season is really freshmen and sophomore dependent, especially for the guys," Ching said. "But as the season progresses, we are beginning to feel closer as teammates, which in turn is producing much faster times for all of us."

This slow start included losses to Gundersen, Palo Alto and Gunn High Schools. During the Gunderson meet on March 16, the Falcons saw strong showings from the girls' varsity team, but dropped a relatively close match 322-272.

On March 10, the Falcons were walloped by Palo Alto 419-280.

The meet, however, did have its positive moments: Yim placed first in the 500m freestyle with a time of 5:24.52 and Burry stormed through the 100m backstroke with a time of 56.44 seconds. Both times allowed the swimmers to qualify for the CCS Championships.

Feng, who swims freestyle for the team, hopes that swimmers will continue to work on their technique and endurance.

"I feel like we have really improved as a



FALCON // CHARIN PARK  
Junior Ryan Ahrari swims the 100m fly in the meet against Gunn on March 16, placing fifth.

team since our first meet against Palo Alto, specifically our endurance," Feng said. "I really seems like our hard work in practice is paying off, so I can't wait to see what we have in store."

Gao added that the coaches' harder sets

have helped the Falcons progress. "I think by making us swim more intensive sets, our endurance as a whole has really improved," Gao said. "I really think the results will show up more prominently at our next meets."

BOYS' TENNIS

# Top-of-league Monta Vista team defeats Falcons twice

BY Ryan Kim & Ethan Ko

Riding a string of four straight victories, the Falcons hoped they could avenge an earlier loss to rival Monta Vista at home on March 22.

But just as they did earlier in the month, the Matadors won the game by a 5-2 score, solidifying their first place position ahead of Saratoga in the De Anza League. The Falcons hold a 5-2 record, while the Matadors are undefeated.

Junior Dean Stratakos, the No. 2 singles player, said beating the Matadors is tough because of the number of high-ranking players on their squad.

"Their team has an abundance of high level players, even into the doubles line-up," Stratakos said. "Even though the loss obviously hurts, we just have to look forward and make sure we take care of business against the rest of the teams in our league."

Until the Monta Vista loss, the Falcons had been taking care of business. They beat

Los Gatos 6-1 at home on March 21 with strong performances by Stratakos and No. 1 singles player senior Andre Xiao. On March 16, the Falcons beat Homestead 5-2 at home, with Stratakos defeating Homestead No. 2 singles Lukas Bandarker 6-3, 4-6 and 7-5.

"I've known Lucas since I first started playing tennis and it was definitely a fun challenge to play him," Stratakos said.

On March 14 during another home game, the team also defeated Palo Alto 6-1.

With their other loss to Monta Vista 4-3 on March 1, the team is almost a sure beat to make CCS but have a lower seed than if they had won their league.

There are five games left in the league season, and none of them is against Monta Vista, meaning the Falcons think they can capture second if they don't stumble.

"Even with our tough loss of leagues to Monta Vista, I'm confident that we can regroup and finish the season on a strong note by doing well at CCS," No. 2 doubles player junior Tristan Xiao said.



Stratakos

GIRLS' LACROSSE

# Consecutive league wins boost Falcons' confidence

BY Lina Kim & Elicia Ye

The lacrosse team this year has been facing one major challenge: It has a roster of just 17 players.

Due to the loss of several skilled players from the Class of 2016 to graduation, the Falcons, 2-4 as of March 27, have been trying to fill positions with younger players such as sophomore goalkeeper Jennah El-Ashmawi and midfielders Natalia Denenberg and Ines Picard.

But because of the small roster, it means there are just five alternates.

Since the numbers are down this season, all junior JV players from last year were pulled up to varsity, with the three sophomores and two freshmen, Kathryn Hamilton and Julia Yoo, who excelled at the sport.

"This year is pretty much a developing year since there are so many underclassmen and our main goal is to help them," said the team's co-captain, senior Julia Vita. "We want everyone to improve and hope that we can get everyone up to skill level."

The other co-captain, senior Emma Kovac, also believes that another goal the team

should aim for is "to become a close family," since they can't succeed if they don't know how to work together as a whole.

"In our second game, we got used to each other on the field," Kovac said. "I think we still have to improve on passing and catching the ball for the rest of the season."

On March 24, the girls played an intense home game against Los Gatos but fell by the score of 17-4. The girls lost 13-1 against Mountain View on March 21, with the only goal scored by Vita.

After winning 13-6 against Pioneer on March 14 and 8-3 against Leland on March 3, the girls were disheartened by the lopsided losses to Mountain View and rival Los Gatos, though they did not lose hope.

In their first league game on February 28, the girls lost 9-6 to Los Altos High.

Kovac said the team had difficulty playing on Los Altos's grass field, since it's more difficult to scoop up ground balls on grass than on turf.

The Falcons will face a key matchup Gunn High School two times during the week after Spring Break, playing the Titans on April 10 and 14, and they play Palo Alto on April 21 at home.

# Juniors find enjoyment in coaching NJB players

BY Roland Shen & Austin Wang

"Third place isn't even worth trying for." These few words spoken by a player hugging to a huddle of 10 sweaty seventh- and eighth-grade boys on a local National Junior Basketball (NJB) team last month. It seemed improbable that they would win, since they were trailing by a double digits and were going into the final quarter of the game.

Junior Neal Iyengar, the coach for the NJB team and a player for the varsity basketball team, broke the silence with words of his own that would overcome the bleak mood: "A trophy is a trophy — it's something worth working for."

Inspired by Iyengar's words, the team got their second wind and outpaced their opponents with superior shooting and handling. With one minute left on the clock, the boys found themselves down by just one point.

Iyengar decided to try a risky maneuver: the fake handoff. Though the players never executed the move successfully

during practice, in the final seconds of the game, they dribbled past the opponent's defense and scored the winning basket.

The thrill of coaching intense games like this and helping younger players has drawn high school students to volunteer as NJB coaches over the past few years.

Upon finding out about the student coaching program last summer, juniors Prashant Malyala, Gaurav Mohan and Iyengar signed up. Having played in NJB as middle schoolers, the three wanted to give back to the program that first taught them how to play basketball.

They each coached their own team of middle school students, most of whom attended Redwood Middle School. The typical practice consisted of short workouts, standard layup and shooting drills and a brief scrimmage at the end. All the drills and exercises were completely administered by the student coaches, and at times, they joined in as well.

Though the NJB players have different skill sets, some completely new to the game and others longtime competitive players, Mohan saw that the league was a good learning environment for everyone.

"Each individual player improved throughout the season," Mohan said. "They learned to work as a team, which was our biggest goal, and because of that we developed a very formidable team."

For Malyala, his role as a coach was not to create the next NBA superstars, but to teach lessons that the students could carry on for the rest of their lives, such as teamwork, determination and selflessness.

"We really emphasized hustling and moving the ball and working as a team," Malyala said. "Whereas people were just hogging the ball to themselves in the beginning, by the end of the season, players were diving on the floor for the ball and taking charges."

But it was not so easy to reach this result.

Malyala and Mohan, who coached the same team, as well as Iyengar, who coached another, recognized that the middle school-age players tended to not treat them as coaches due to the small age gap between them.

The three coaches had to be strict and employ difficult workouts as punishments in order to garner respect.

"In the beginning, it was so hard to get them to listen," Iyengar said. "We had to drill into their minds that we're their coach, not their friend, so treat us with the respect we deserve by making them do a lot of running and push-ups."

In the NJB playoffs, which consisted of dozens of teams from the area, Malyala and Mohan's team placed second.

"I felt very proud by the end of the season, especially in our NJB playoffs," Malyala said. "Despite the loss in the finals, they all showed 100 percent effort and hustled. I want to continue helping the kids develop and accomplish a lot of things I struggled to do, especially as a lot of them transition into high school."

>> snapshots



FALCON // MUTHU PALANIAPPAN



FALCON // MUTHU PALANIAPPAN



FALCON // MUTHU PALANIAPPAN



FALCON // VIVIEN ZHANG

Junior sprinter Jaijit Singh races during the meet against Cupertino on March 23.

During Club Rush on March 17, juniors Connor Reyes and Alan Lu sell pizza for Chinese Club.

Senior pitcher Rachel Davey throws a pitch against Palo Alto on March 22.

The senior Powderpuff boys perform their dance routine during the Spring Fling Rally on March 24.

**buzzworthy** >> Soph hit with appendicitis in Mexico

BY Austin Wang & Alex Yang

Sophomore Jules Ducrot got an even more memorable experience than he could have ever dreamed when he went on the annual February break trip to Cuernavaca, Mexico.

On the Saturday before leaving for home, the students headed to a resort to spend the day relaxing. When they were there ordering lunch, a few ordered a sandwich that caused a few of them to feel sick later that day and throw up.

At first, nobody thought that it was any-

thing more than food poisoning, but after an evening of severe stomach pain, Ducrot and fellow sophomore Julia Deng were taken to a private clinic in Cuernavaca to get checked out. For Deng it was just food poisoning, but for Ducrot, it was far more serious.

Ducrot and Spanish teacher Arnoldo Rodriguex were told that Ducrot had to have an emergency surgery to have his appendicitis removed.

"The surgeon came in, and my parents weren't here: My dad was in China and my mom was in France, so they couldn't give consent for the surgery," Ducrot said. "A second doctor came in and then checked me,

and he verified that it was my appendix."

Ducrot thinks he could not have gone through the surgery without the aid of Rodriguex, who he said acted like "a second father" to him.

"When the doctors told me I had to have surgery, I said it was fine," Ducrot said. "I just asked how it was going to be and why, but I wasn't scared."

Though the hour-long operation caused a lot of pain, he has since recovered almost fully, taking pain medications daily, with only a large bandage across his stomach.

"It's been almost a week now and I can walk normally now, except it hurts a little

sometimes," said Ducrot.

Because of the operation, Ducrot missed the flight back to San Francisco with the rest of the students on the trip and stayed behind with Rodriguex while recovering. The pair finally made it home on Friday, March 3.

"Since I've been back, all of my teachers have been really flexible. Mr. Safine and the office worked a lot with teachers to go easy on me, and excusing as many assignments as they can," Ducrot said. "I'm lucky to be a part of such a caring community." ♦



Student interviews with tech company

FACEBOOK INTERNSHIP INTERVIEW LEADS TO NEW EXPERIENCES



they see me rollin'

Roland Shen

"Hello from Facebook!" I stared at the words blankly for a few moments until I realized that Facebook, a company I had dreamed of working for since my middle school days, was actually giving me the chance to have a phone interview for their college internship program. The company has been known to hire high schoolers for their internship program. Knowing this, I applied a few weeks earlier and was fortunate enough to have my application reviewed.

A week later in February, I toured the company's campus with my family. I was confused the first time I walked through the main entrance. Instead of heading into a traditional skyscraper building with cubicles all over the place, I found myself standing in front of something that resembled more of an amusement park than a corporate workplace.

It was like a miniature city — a single, wide road with yellow divider lines divided Facebook's campus into two sections. The campus included multiple areas for engineers to set up their own places to work, but there were plenty of restaurants, gift shops and even a dentist office on site. Did I mention that all the restaurants were free for employees?

Yep, just walk into whichever restaurant you want, whether they serve orange chicken or burritos, and pick up what you're feeling. After leaving Facebook's jaw-dropping campus and seeing the culture of the com-

pany first hand, I was more committed than ever to try to work there myself.

Once arriving home, I sprinted to my laptop and did something I rarely do: order a book online. I picked "Cracking the Coding Interview," a book commonly referred to as the Bible of coding interviews, something every engineer has bought and studied in preparation for the dreaded coding problem that all tech interviews include.

Aside from simply reading about how certain systems work, I put my knowledge to the test by attempting various coding challenges on a website called HackerRank. The site offers hundreds of challenges based on the same topics taught in the book.

To be honest, I really struggled with some of the easier questions at first. Concepts just weren't clicking in my head.

After working my way through a dozen challenges, I noticed that ideas and nuances from previous challenges built upon themselves in exercises of higher difficulty. I also sought advice regarding certain topics from other Saratoga students who prepared for interviews before, as well as students who have competed in competitive programming competitions such as the U.S. Computing Olympiad (USACO).

Then came the dreaded interview date: March 6. I had only two weeks to study from when I first received the invitation to interview, a timeframe anyone else would completely ridicule. I was competing against college computer science majors who have had over three years to study, and in that comparison, those two weeks of cramming seemed like nothing.

The interview itself was scheduled for 2:45 p.m. that day. I had to rush home from school that day just to get my mind off of Spanish and into computer science mode. I set up my headphones and waited eagerly

for the call to come in — when it did, I took a deep breath and began talking.

I was greeted by an engineer at Facebook who introduced herself with a bit of her own background. She proceeded to ask about my previous computer science projects and programming background as well. After what seemed like just a few seconds, the coding problem was brought up.

Everything froze as the interviewer explained the question — I had no idea what she was talking about. She recognized my confusion instantly and proceeded to give more information about the problem, even throwing in a few hints about the edge cases I had to consider.

Solving the problem my way was easy, but then I was asked to optimize the solution in order to help the program run more smoothly. At that point I froze again, but still had to try really hard to show no signs of panic on the phone. There was one clear pathway to the problem in my head, but I just didn't know how to write out the method in code. With some nudging by the interviewer, I finally found myself finished with the problem by the end of the 45-minute period.

A few days later, I received an email titled "Thanks from Facebook." From the title alone, I knew that I didn't get through. Surprisingly, I wasn't too devastated by the result. I knew I was competing against the top minds in tech, and having gotten an interview and completing it was already a huge accomplishment.

From the whole experience, I gained valuable insights on the tech industry and the real interview process. I also toured a fascinating facility. Based on my quick dive into the Facebook experience, I'm even more excited for the future and the opportunities that lie ahead. ♦

topten

THINGS TO DO DURING SPRING BREAK...

- 10 **Travel.** Take a break to paradise before your dreaded summer internships take up your summer holidays.
  - 9 **Study.** It is better to learn about calculus during the day rather than at 4 a.m. on a school day.
  - 8 **Eat.** Get in those last chips before you begin your summer dieting that we all know will never happen.
  - 7 **Go on an adventure.** Who cares about a senior trip if you can take one every year.
  - 6 **Clean.** You see those dirty clothes in the corner of your room? Maybe it's time to pick them up before you die of influenza.
  - 5 **Sleep.** These are the only free hours you will have before the death that is AP weeks.
  - 4 **Shop.** Throw away those Camp Campbell T-shirts for some Palace and Supreme.
  - 3 **Hit the gym.** Maybe you can finally shop at LuLuLemon for leggings and not Target.
  - 2 **Ball out.** Try not to get your ankles broken by Señor Yielding.
  - 1 **Get ready for junior prom.** It is an experience of a lifetime, so don't miss out.
- >> Neil Rao