



288 students dress to the nines for Junior Prom.



"Fate of the Furious" lacks substance, but still entertains.



Freshmen bring talents to varsity softball team.



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Saratoga High School >> Saratoga, CA

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## Legally BLONDE

ADAPTATION OF HIT BROADWAY SHOW DRAWS PRAISE

BY EliciaYe  
& KatherineZhou

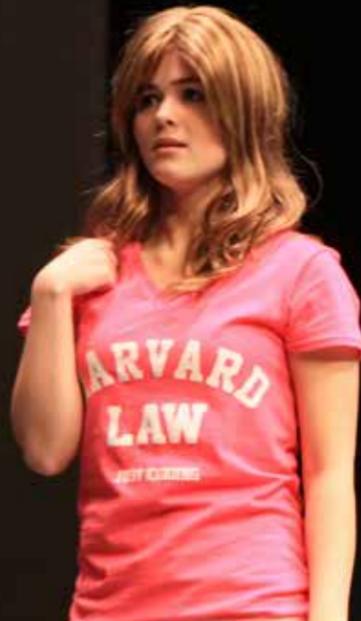
"Omigod you guys!" A group of sorority girls, dressed in UCLA cheer uniforms and bathrobes, sang as the audience burst out into laughter.

With the stage decorated as the fictional Delta Nu Sorority, the highly anticipated spring musical, "Legally Blonde," debuted in the McAfee Center on April 21. Pink

doors and bedazzled signs lined the stage as UCLA Fashion Merchandising major and Delta Nu president Elle Woods, played by senior Samantha Sherman, followed her ex-boyfriend Warner Huntington III, played by senior Will Liddle, to Harvard Law school.

"Elle is very quirky and she lives a very simple life; she doesn't have much to worry about," Sherman

>> **DRAMA** on pg. 5



Seniors Samantha Sherman and JT Hulme interact during a dress rehearsal on March 25.

TALISMAN // ALLYSON CHANG

### TECHNOLOGY

## SHS transitioning to Google for students and staff

BY MichaelZhang

Joining thousands of organizations and businesses, the school is implementing Google accounts for both students and staff.

According to assistant principal Brian Safine, staff transitioned to these accounts May 2, and students will receive them next August. Staff members are transitioning away from the Outlook email system they have had for many years, but their email addresses will remain the same.

At this point, the format of the email usernames has not been determined for students, but it will not contain their full

name or entire ID number in an effort to protect privacy, according to IT manager Julie Grenier.

Grenier foresees many benefits to this transition for students. For one thing, managing school-related accounts will be easier since there will only be only one account to keep track of for each person.

"Students will have one account, their G-Suite email account, to access the school WiFi, Aeries, Canvas and other school-assigned accounts," Grenier said.

It can also help students keep their work organized, since they'll have access to apps such as Drive and Calendar.



Grenier

also all be under the same domain, allowing teachers to easily contact their students, Grenier said.

"We wanted to be mindful of giving stu-

The district's technology team is trying to create an online portal where students will be able to reset their WiFi passwords. Under the current system, students are required to go to the library or ask one of the technology staff members to reset or change passwords.

These new accounts will

dents the freedom and responsibility of having personal accounts, but we also realized the need for the district to have a unified way of reaching students," Grenier said.

One major struggle the team has faced so far is integrating different systems together with the Google accounts, including Aeries and Canvas, because there are no centralized username and password systems.

During summer break, every student's current WiFi account will be deleted, and the new ones will be made, Grenier said.

"Sometimes switching directions takes time, and the entire migration process is a challenge in itself," she said. ♦

### >> what'sinside

#### ■ SCHOOL SPIRIT

##### Mandatory attendance

School should not implement mandatory policies for attendance at events including rallies. **pg. 6**

#### ■ GROWING UP

##### Maturing tastes

Reporters examine how they have since outgrown some of their favorites from their childhoods. **pg. 10-11**

#### ■ CITY COUNCIL

##### Job shadowing

Reporter spends a day shadowing Saratoga's vice mayor. **pg. 16**

### ATHLETICS

## Decline in donations jeopardizes sports teams

BY AshleyFeng

Walking through campus, visitors see the brightly colored football field, well-maintained baseball and softball fields and shiny barbells in a weight room that looks brand new.

The school appears to be flush with money to support athletics, but athletics director Tim Lugo said the department is having financial struggles. This is because of an alarming lack of sports donations from parents this year that has put the program \$60,000 in the red, perhaps jeopardizing some sports teams for next year.

He said that if cuts are needed to make up for the deficit, they would be equitable and across the board.

Among the first to be cut would

be assistant coaches and transportation. Another possibility would be to schedule fewer preseason games or to play more games at home, which may affect sports that have conflicting practice schedules and use the same facilities.

The yearly total sports budget is roughly \$275,000, a round number that is rarely met or exceeded in yearly spending. The athletics department asks for a \$250 donation from parents when they sign their children up for each sport.

Even though athletics does not receive funding from the district other than for stipends to pay head coaches, the department is still legally prohibited from marketing for donations or charging students

>> **DONATIONS** on pg. 3

### FALCON FOCUS

## Freshman bonds with Syrian refugee children

BY MichelleLee

Last summer, freshman George Polychronopoulos and his family planned a vacation to visit Greece to spend time with family. At the time, Polychronopoulos expected that the week-long vacation would be nothing more than a time to finally break away from the stresses of school.

Little did he know his trip to Greece would spark a new-found interest to provide humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees.

When Polychronopoulos and his family landed in Greece, the news was filled with updates on the influx of thousands of Syrian refugees fleeing the civil war in Syria and moving into countries like Greece, Germany and

Turkey. Like many others in the West, he was disturbed by the stories and gruesome images of many innocent women and children drowning in the Mediterranean Sea on a daily basis while trying to make the journey.

"Seeing the news every day made me wonder if there was something I could do," Polychronopoulos said. "Coming back from the trip, I continued to follow the news."

Inspired by his experience, he decided to spend this year's spring break volunteering at a Syrian refugee camp.

Delving more into his interest in the refugee cause, Polychronopoulos started research-

>> **REFUGEE** on pg. 17



Robotics team attends competition in Las Vegas

Team 649 M-SET Fish traveled to Las Vegas for a FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) tournament on April 5. There, Saratoga faced top-tier teams and aggressive competition, and managed to place second, a game away from qualifying for the world competition.

On April 7, the team played the qualification matches, a series of games meant to rank the robot and demonstrate its ability to shoo and maneuver. By the end, the team won eight games and was ranked seventh out of 47 teams.

"We were doing most of the heavy lifting in the matches, and I am really proud of our robot because of that," sophomore Akhilesh Bellathur said.

M-SET's high rank allowed the team to continue to the finals as the captain of an alliance, a group of three teams that choose to be on the same side.

However, a set of well-known and highly skilled teams, 118 from Houston and 148 from Greenville, Texas, also advanced to the Las Vegas Regional's final rounds.

"We were nervous, but we just had to take it one step at a time and not psych ourselves out," senior Samay Garg said about the tough competition.

In the finals, the alliance with 118 and 148 won the first game out of three, but in the second game, the M-SET alliance made a comeback and won by 120 points, tying the overall match 1-1.

In the final game, Saratoga's alliance lost by 60 points and placed second behind the schools from Texas.

Though they didn't manage to qualify for the world tournament, they relished the competition in Vegas.

"We weren't expecting to come through," Garg said. "But we were expecting a great tournament, and that's what we got." ♦

— Leena Elzeiny

Junior places first at speech and debate states

At the 2017 California speech and debate state tournament last weekend, junior Kyle Wang placed first in National Extemporaneous speaking.

Juniors Varun Viswanath and Divya Rallabandi placed second and third in Oratorical Interpretation, respectively, and sophomore Arian Rajee took fourth place in International Extemp.

Despite having only four competitors, the team ranked 12th overall in tournament sweepstakes, one of the best finishes in school history.

For the other team members who did not go to the state tournament, the season ended on April 2 with Santa Clara University's 31st Annual Spring Philaletic Invitational. In speech, freshman Ronak Pai placed first in Novice Extemporaneous; sophomore Ishan Lakhani placed second in Open Extemporaneous; freshman Connie Liang placed third in Novice Original Oratory and freshman Anishi Patel placed sixth in novice Oratorical Interpretation.

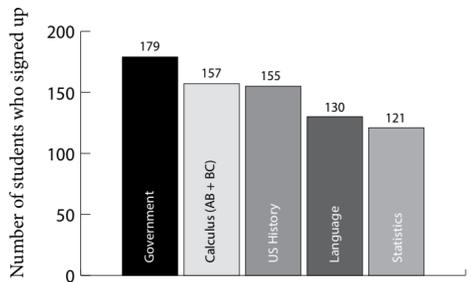
In debate, juniors Sathvik Koneru and Karthik Ramachandran placed first in Open Public Forum debate with Ramchandran achieving second place speaker.

Shortly after the conclusion of the Santa Clara tournament, the team celebrated another victory as senior Siavash Yaghoobi was selected for the Coast District World Schools Debate Team, a team of three students from all over the Bay Area that are chosen to compete against teams internationally. ♦

— Pranav Ahuja and David Koh

>> falconfigures

Most popular AP exams



Source: Guidance — Roland Shen

>> picturethis



FALCON // MUTHU PALANIAPPAN

SWEET SOUND OF MUSIC >> Parent volunteers help serve breakfast to musicians and family members at Pancake Breakfast on May 1 while Saratoga High's string orchestra performs in the middle of the quad.

SCHOOL DANCES

Junior Prom draws big turnout

by Jay Kim & Michelle Lee

As pairs of boys and girls walked into the GlassHouse in Downtown San Jose on April 15, they were welcomed by the famed red carpet of the Oscars, a plethora of drinks and the bling of the neon-lit venue.

According to junior class secretary Nicholas Di, 288 students attended the school's Oscar-themed Junior Prom at the GlassHouse with tickets ending at the price of \$150.

"The max attendance was 275 and we actually broke that," Di said. "We thought it was really successful and everything went as we planned."

Class officers were satisfied with the choices they had made.

"One thing about the GlassHouse that struck us was that it was a fairly close location and was within our price range," junior class treasurer Vishal Narayan said. "Other places were either

outside of the price range or outside the vicinity and had some sort of nuance that prohibited us from choosing that event."

Additionally, the GlassHouse offered lighting, tables and a food buffet that appealed to the class officers, Narayan said. The venue also provided the flexibility to let the officers decide to choose the color for the stairs' lighting.

Junior class officers originally thought the GlassHouse was ideal, yet the main complaint they got had to do with its size.

"I couldn't really dance at prom because of the small dance floor," junior Justin Kuo said. "Also, the food ran out really quick, and a lot of people couldn't get their food."

Junior Prom was an event with large attendance from both the junior class as well as many seniors, but Narayan believes there are still some areas to improve upon.

"For next year's Senior Prom, spacing will definitely be something we want to improve," Narayan said. "Also, we're going to make

sure the DJ plays songs that people know. I don't think many people knew the songs and we're gonna try to involve songs that people actually know."

Class officers thanked the teachers and administrators who enabled the junior class to hold the event, especially the teacher chaperones who added to the atmosphere. Teachers such as English teachers Natasha Ritchie and Amy Keys were there and brought meaning to it because they know so many of the juniors. Although the junior class officers think they executed the organization of the event well, they still owed much of their success to unseen contributors, Narayan said.

"We have to give a lot of credit to our class adviser Señor Rodrigo, Narayan said. "There wasn't much communication between teachers and students, but he managed a lot of things like busing, paying the location and handling funds, and I don't think many people know about that." ♦

CLUBS

WiSTEM gains insights at Google

by Sherrie Shen

Amidst the tall glass buildings of Google Headquarters in Mountain View, approximately 40 girls from Lynbrook, Monta Vista and Saratoga High School attended the Bay Area Research Exposition (BARE) on April 2.

An annual event for the past four years, BARE features a joint high school conference, where STEM professionals are invited to lead workshops, participate in panel discussions and give keynote presentations.

"The purpose of BARE is to be a place where girls who are interested in the STEM network meet others who are similarly interested, learn about possible career paths and even compete by using STEM to solve a real-world problem," said junior Susan Zhao, one of Lynbrook's coordinators.

The annual conference started with two keynote speakers presenting their research, career path and perspectives on their lives as

scientists and women in STEM. Non-contestants participated in a gallery walk to take a closer look at the boards and ask the competitors questions.

"From BARE, we hope to show young women the multitude of opportunities available to them in the STEM fields," said junior Sohini Kar, one of Saratoga's WiSTEM officers. "Women still make up a startling minority in such fields, and we hope to encourage girls to pursue these fields by showing them and giving them the opportunity to network and speak to female industry professionals."

12 girls from Saratoga ended up attending, with freshman Ananya Vadlakonda competing.

Vadlakonda identified a lack of focus in students with ADHD as her prompt, then proposed finding a possible underlying cause for the students being unfocused and a potential treatment. She cited unstable dopamine levels as a potential cause and found that ascorbic acid, also known as Vitamin

C, was able to stabilize dopamine levels and would thereby help students focus.

"Presenting at BARE gave me an opportunity to share my research with not only other students, but some very successful female scientists, which was very rewarding," Vadlakonda said.

She also had the opportunity to listen to several accomplished female scientists and their specific research.

For instance, one speaker invented a better version of the technology used in gel electrophoresis, which Vadlakonda found extremely interesting as it was a technique she had used in past science projects.

"From chemistry, to science ethics, to cancer research, to working at Apple, BARE demonstrates to participants the range of STEM options they can pursue and succeed in," Kar said. "From this event, we hope participants are more open to these fields and eager to find more opportunities." ♦

DONATIONS

continued from pg. 1

for playing a sport.

So far, the drop in donations has not led to cuts, but at this rate, the department will have to eventually reduce expenses that pay for necessities such as equipment and tournaments.

Although the school cannot mandate parental donations, Lugo said that the Sports Boosters is trying to publicize the problem athletics is having and reach out to families to help close the deficit.

The sports department's hope is that all parents will get the word and begin paying the \$250 when they sign their children up for a sport.

"The only way to prevent this is to continue to get the word out that those donations cover our entire budget for sports," Lugo said. "If we have to eliminate teams, cut back on transportation, play less games to reduce our referee costs or hire fewer assistant coaches, no one will be happy. But if we don't have the money to pay for these things — something has to give." ♦

ASB

Leadership class evolving for next school year

by Ashley Feng

Last year, when the idea of a Leadership class was first proposed, students responded with mixed feelings.

Initially, widespread uncertainty prevailed about the logistics. However, once the year started, the different commissions were able to work more closely and cohesively together under the guidance of activities director Matt Torrens.

"Leadership has become a huge family and our work has improved because we are able to build off each other's ideas," ASB head commissioner senior Eileen Toh said.

The administration has decided that the class will "stay relatively the same, with a few changes," according to ASB vice president senior Spring Ma.

The rally commission will not be part of the Leadership class next year, and the

outreach commission will expand with a new head commissioner, technology head commissioner and the rally head commissioner.

Coming into the class will be a group of newly elected ASB officers. Junior Nathon Chin was elected as the ASB president for the 2017-2018; junior Roland Shen was elected as vice president, sophomore Cameron Lin was elected as ASB treasurer and sophomore Roshan Verma was elected as ASB secretary.

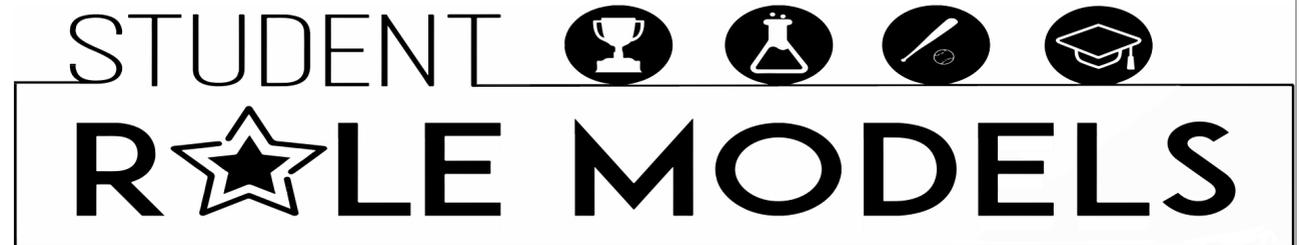
As for class office elections, for the class of 2018, Robert Scott was elected as president, Colina Guan as vice president, Amith Galivanche as treasurer, Neil Rao as secretary and Lillian Zeng and Jacqueline Schwartz as class representatives.

In the Class of 2019, Ashley Feng was elected as president, Nevin Prasad as vice president, Samyu Iyer as treasurer, Enzo Coglitore as secretary and Hanlin Sun

and Usman Khan as class representatives. For the Class of 2020 Prosper Chiu was elected as president, Emma Hsu as vice president, George Bian as treasurer, Katie Lam as secretary and Tyler Ouchida and Alex Lee as class representatives.

Another change is that instead of class officers being able to appoint as many class representatives as they see fit as in the previous years, each grade will be limited to two elected representatives and two representatives nominated by the class president.

The incoming Class of 2021 class office, except class representatives who will be nominated at the beginning of freshman year, will vote at Redwood Middle at the end of their eighth grade year. In a new decision, freshman class officers will rotate through each of the commissions after Homecoming to experience Leadership as a whole. ♦



GRAPHIC BY KITTY HUANG

Soccer enthusiasts help younger players develop

by Francesca Chu & Amy Tang

As she watched the 9-year-old girl pass the ball to her teammate, junior Ketki Palande quickly checked the offside line to see if it was a legal play. The player had passed the line of the second to last defender, Palande raised her flag straight up, and the center referee called an offside. Parents and coaches on the sidelines yelled and disagreed with her call, but Palande knew she was right, due to the hours of training she had endured before she became a youth soccer referee.

Palande decided to switch from playing soccer to refereeing when she was 12 after seeing her father referee games.

"It was something I had always wanted to try, and once I began, I knew it was what I wanted to pursue," she said.

After volunteering as a referee at the American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) for a year, Palande also started working and earning \$25 to \$35 per game as a referee at the California North Referee Association (CNRA). She usually spends two hours a week refereeing for each organization.

According to Palande, being a referee demands strong leadership skills and the ability to make decisions quickly. Her experiences have taught her to be confident in her choices.

"Even when you know you made the right call, you have to get used to uneducated parents screaming at you and making passive aggressive comments behind your back," she said.

Once, at a tournament semifinal game for U-12 girls, Palande made a tentative foul call when one of the girls was running at the goal.

"The parents were being rowdy and rude, but I stuck to my instinct," she said. "It was hard at first, but I've learned to assert myself, and I feel like I can keep a han-

dle on the game very well now." Nevertheless, Palande remains grateful for the people she has met through her time learning to referee.

"Saratoga AYSO is such a tight-knit group of people, and I'm so glad that I've gotten to know all the referees, coaches, players and families really well," Palande said.

Another member of the AYSO community is senior Naman Sajwan, who coaches at AYSO for under-10 boys on Wednesdays and Fridays.

He has been coaching for eight seasons, approximately four years. Sajwan began coaching as a freshman when he found out that his younger brother's team needed help, and has continued his passion ever since.

"I jumped up at the opportunity, and after a while I wanted to do it regularly because I loved it a lot," Sajwan said.

Sajwan teaches his players the drills that he has deemed most effective in his years of playing club soccer.

His goal at practices is to make things as fun as possible by adding a competitive atmosphere to the drills so the kids have another incentive to work harder.

As the team's coach, he feels immense pride when his team perseveres and shows improvement. The team lost their first game of the season 5-1 against a tough team, but came back later in the season to defeat the same team 6-1.

"I like seeing kids carry out what they learn in practice into games, because it not only shows me they're developing as players, but that I'm teaching them the right things," Sajwan said.

Being a coach for years has taught him leadership and has helped him become a more patient and open-minded person.

"Working with young children offers a unique mindset that I'm not usually used to," Sajwan said. ♦

Debaters gain new perspective through volunteering as coaches

by Francesca Chu

Just two years ago, one of junior Divya Rallabandi's students was a timid sixth-grade boy who struggled with a lisp and found it difficult to speak publicly. As of now, the student can comfortably talk and participate in class because of the countless practices Rallabandi has helped him in as a volunteer at the Young Genius Debate Academy.

Having been an avid speech and debate competitor since her freshman year, she decided to start volunteering, working with students at the Young Genius Debate Academy in Saratoga two years ago. She hoped to pass on the knowledge she gained from the school's speech and debate program.

"Looking back, I've realized that I've learned so many skills like how to express my opinions, formally create an academic discussion and accept that others will disagree," she said. "So I decided that I wanted to help other kids gain those same benefits."

Another volunteer, freshman Brian Zhu, started volunteering last year in order to "expand and refine [his] skills."

Both Zhu and Rallabandi spend about four hours a week volunteering there.

Zhu finds the experience enjoyable because he built relationships with several of the students he has worked with. "I have become friends with many of these kids," he said. "They give amazing speeches, and I really like hearing what they have to say."

Rallabandi finds volunteering rewarding because her students are going through experiences that she had gone through when she was younger. In this way, she can offer advice to them and help lead them in the right direction.

"A majority of the kids I teach are in middle school or elementary school, which means they are really busy trying to figure things out and who they really are, as they usually do," she said. "It's really interesting to help them channel their perspectives and energy verbally."

Another student Rallabandi worked

with during her freshman year had been struggling in school socially.

"I remember his mother came to me on the first day and told me that she hoped that learning public speaking and attending speech workshops would help him make friends at school and also stand up for himself," Rallabandi said.

At Young Genius, it is common for students to come with specific goals, like getting rid of their lisp or learning how to communicate easily with others, and this particular student had both of those goals.

Rallabandi had him practice various

"It's really interesting to help them channel their perspectives and energy verbally."



JUNIOR Divya Rallabandi

speech exercises like repeating words or tongue twisters.

She also tried to help him overcome his fear of public speaking by performing his speeches to others, thereby delving to the root of his anxiety.

After taking a few weeks off from volunteering at the beginning of junior year, Rallabandi returned to Young Genius and found this student in one of her classes.

"I was in utter shock when I saw him because not only had his lisp improved tremendously, he was also an active participant in the class," she said.

Through volunteering, Rallabandi has been able to learn more about speech and debate herself.

"I used to think it was just a process of arguing or trying to prove a point," she said. "But I realized that it's more about exploring different ethical issues in the world and forming an opinion about them." ♦



**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 is 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

**Please make your tax deductible donation today!**

Checks can be made out and sent to:  
SHS Sports Boosters, 20300 Herriman Ave, Saratoga, CA 95070

Join Sports Boosters or donate directly using PayPal at:  
<http://www.falconsportsboosters.com/membership/>

*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



**DRAMA**

*continued from pg. 1*

said. "Her whole life is turned around when she realizes that there's more to her than just her looks or her fashion sense."

The musical, directed by drama teacher Sarah Thermond, is based on the novel by Amanda Brown and the 2001 motion picture, using the original screenplay of the musical with music and lyrics by Laurence O'Keefe and Nell Benjamin.

Thermond enjoyed the Broadway version of the musical, and decided to stage "Legally Blonde" this year after many drama students requested it.

"I knew that there was a lot of student enthusiasm for 'Legally Blonde,' and I knew that it was a show that I like," Thermond said. "When the students think of something and I think of something, it's usually

a good sign."

"Legally Blonde" is tonally different from musicals in years past, like the more serious "Les Miserables" in 2014 and the unique "Mystery of Edwin Drood" in 2016.

"It's a much more contemporary musical," Thermond said. "Even the musicals written in the modern era we've done in the past weren't set in the modern era. 'Legally Blonde' has a pop sound to it, which I think makes it catchy and makes the cast and the audience sing it all the time."

The cast has been preparing for this musical since late January, holding three-hour practices nearly every day.

Despite tough scheduling that resulted in only about two full practices of each scene before the run-throughs in the McAfee, the cast persevered.

"We have a lot of really strong, wonderful girls who can sing and act and dance and are very funny," Thermond said. "As far as

shows we've done, I'd say that this probably is the one that has the most named female characters with solos; I knew it would be a good chance to show off how much talent is in our department."

In the musical, Sherman's character immediately develops a bond with fan-favorite Paulette Bonafonte, played by senior Lea Moustakas, who runs a manicure salon and acts as Woods's confidante. Junior Hannah Yoon's character, Vivienne Kensington, serves as a foil to Woods and fits the "serious" label suited for Harvard Law.

"Not too surprisingly, I identify with the character I play in this show," Yoon said. "Vivienne is a girl who likes to put up a front of being a terrifying and sharp lawyer, but deep down she does have a human heart."

Despite facing obstacles, Woods eventually embraces her blonde, genuine and fashion-loving self as she pursues her love for law — instead of pursuing Warner.

The cast also welcomed Anders Rosenquist, a Los Gatos High School junior, to play the guitar along with the pit orchestra for the show. The tech crew, on the other hand, faced unusual challenges, because there are many costume changes written into the musical.

In addition, the cast had to work with two dogs, juniors Ania and Mateusz Kranz's dog, who plays Elle's dog Bruiser, a terrier, and junior Raquel Boales' dog, an English bulldog, who plays Paulette's dog.

Thermond said she is pleased with the result of the musical, and the turnout of the audience was higher than in recent years.

"So far, a little halfway through the performances, the cast and the crew have been a lot more consistent than past years," Thermond said. "They really have been vigilant about making sure they're putting in their all every night, and I think that really shows in the audience experience." ♦

**COLLEGE BOUND**

**Senior commits to NY performing arts school to pursue acting**

by Francesca Chu & Julia Miller

Senior Corey Traina is one of several visionaries who will be able to fulfill her middle school dreams of being an actress. Recently, she shared on Facebook that she has officially committed to Fordham University in the Bronx, N.Y., to pursue a bachelor's degree in Theater Performance.

After careful consideration and a plane ride to New York, Traina chose Fordham over four other schools. She ultimately chose Fordham "since the campus was intriguing and the program seemed to be a perfect fit." Traina's determination to go to a performing arts school sprouted somewhere between middle school and her freshman year.

"It's what I am most [interested in] by far," Traina said. "I think it's really important to pursue something you're insanely pas-

sionate about."

Throughout high school, Traina has participated in nine productions, including "Much Ado About Nothing," "Up: The Man in the Flying Chair," "Les Miserables," "Matchmaker," "A Streetcar Named Desire," "The Mystery of Edwin Drood," "Good Morning Karina" and "Guys and Dolls." One of her favorite roles she has played was Stella Kowalski in the iconic play "A Streetcar Named Desire."

"Stella is a character with so many levels to be played," she said. "It was fun and challenging diving that deep into a character's past, present, motives, mentality and emotions."

For almost every school she applied to, Traina had to endure an auditioning process. She usually had to recite one or two

monologues depending on the college and participate in an interview afterwards. The auditions helped both the performer and the staff see how well they collaborated together and also allowed them to get a general impression of each other.

Not only was Fordham her favorite audition, but Traina also could not think of a better place to be than "in the heart of New York City" for a theater performance major with an emphasis on acting.

"I truly do want to be far away from home in order to get a vastly different experience," Traina said. "Independence is the number one thing I'm looking forward to since I know it's going to help me grow as a person."

Although Traina will be able to explore her creativity in performing arts and expand her knowledge in New York, she will

reminisce on the friends and teachers that she has come to know at SHS. One of these teachers is her drama teacher, Sarah Thermond, who first met Traina at a summer program seven years ago.

"Corey is not someone who's content to be good at one thing; she's always looking to challenge herself and push herself further," Thermond said. "It is obvious how important theater is to her, and it makes perfect sense to me that she'll be studying and working towards a career in it."

Having known her for several years, Thermond has been able to see how Traina has grown and improved.

"She's always been super focused and really proactive, and I think that translates into how many opportunities she has found," she said. "She is less goofy and much more grounded, but the goofiness can still come out during rehearsal, which I think is terrific." ♦



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MISSION STATEMENT

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

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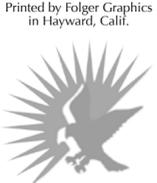
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Spirit events should not be mandatory

At the junior-senior Powder-Puff game on March 31, it was clear that many students decided not to attend. Some had not even considered going and just stayed in the quad for lunch. A large portion of the bleachers was empty at the event and the mood was unenergetic, even with principal Paul Robinson and assistant principal Brian Safine offering commentary over the PA system. Sometimes Saratoga High is clearly lacking in school spirit. For example, during rallies, some students hang out in classrooms, believing the rally to be a waste of time.

One suggestion that people sometimes make is to make these spirit events mandatory, but the truth is that mandatory participation would only make things worse. Simply put, while some students are enthusiastic about school spirit, many others would rather do other things such as study or go off campus during this time.

These same students see spirit events as a waste of time and will not actively participate, no matter.

If spirit events were made mandatory, many students would find them to be nuisances, especially if these students need to study for an important test

or complete homework for an upcoming period. Forcing unwilling students to go to rallies would only serve to build resentment toward spirit events.

In addition, a mandatory school spirit policy would be near impossible to enforce.

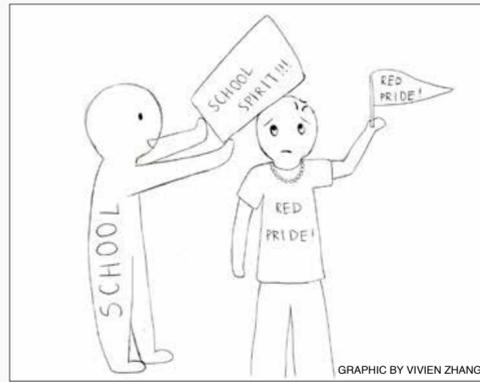
For instance, at rallies, it would not be practical to take attendance, and as a result, students will have no incentive to show up.

Instead of coercing students to join rallies or other events, the staff and leadership students should find ways to encourage students to willingly attend these events. For example, teachers could adjust their due dates, close their classrooms or avoid putting tests on spirit days so students don't feel obligated to study during spirit events.

One way of encouraging attendance would be creating a reward system for those who show up. A straightforward and inexpensive implementation of this would just be holding raffles and giveaways at random events, so students who find spirit events unappealing would have a reason to attend.

Social media or other forms of promotion could also be used to notify students about an upcoming event.

Previews for larger events would also be effective. For in-



GRAPHIC BY VIVIEN ZHANG

stance, if the spirit week is "Superhero Week," the leadership team could dress up as superheroes on the Friday before. Done right, these previews could spread awareness about a spirit event and capture the interest of some students who otherwise may not have participated.

In contrast, some other schools, such as Lynbrook, seem to have much more school spirit. According to Lynbrook sophomore Austin Lei, nearly all students attend events, including rallies, largely due to peer pressure and encouragement.

"I'm not sure if it's a good or bad thing, but everyone tells me to go [these events], so I feel bad if I decide not to attend," he said.

Encouraging students to go to spirit events rather than coercing them would help create a more positive atmosphere during these events — a vital step in making our school a more spirited one. ♦

Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

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The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 26-2 in support of the editorial.



GRAPHIC BY ISABELLE YANG

BY David Koh

On March 5, Deep Rai, a Sikh, was cleaning his car outside of his home in Seattle when he was approached by a masked man who told him to "go back to his own country" before shooting Rai in the arm.

This incident follows a growing trend of hate crimes in the U.S. Though no comprehensive national records exist, because hate crimes are largely self-reported, cities such as New York saw a 31 percent increase in hate crimes the week after the November election from the same time in 2015. If this upwards trend in hate crimes continues, it becomes more important than ever

to speak out against this kind of hatred and seek strength through community.

While we haven't seen many hate crimes in Saratoga, they can occur almost anywhere and without warning. With the growing rates of hate crimes in the U.S., bigotry is becoming more and more prevalent across communities. Just 14 miles away from Saratoga, a hate crime was recorded at San Jose University on Nov. 11 as a man attempted to tear a hijab off the head of 19-year-old Esra Altun.

In the wake of the Rai incident, many civil rights groups as well as religious organizations have urged the police to investigate it as a hate crime. The National

Sikh Campaign has launched an ad campaign to spread awareness about the group's religion and reduce hate-motivated crimes. Our community should do the same. We shouldn't treat these kinds of incidents as neutral or unbiased. The first step to ending hateful behavior is the recognition of these acts as more than everyday crimes.

Then it's time for action. On Dec. 22, a video surfaced of a shopper berating a Hispanic lady in a department store in Kentucky, using the unfortunately commonplace slur of "go back to where you came from." But instead of intervening, bystanders just stood there.

This is problematic for a few

reasons. First, it sends the victim the message that she is alone and that no one else will stand up for her. Second, it shows bigots that they can launch their verbal tirades and assaults against people without facing any consequences.

The inaction of onlookers only serves to spur bigots to spew even more hate, like the aggressor did when he began to tell people in line behind her that the victim was on welfare and that their tax money was paying for her existence. Allowing this proliferation of false information and criminalization of minority groups leads to more people adopting these incredibly harmful viewpoints against minorities.

The issue with hate-motivated

crimes is that they are often the result of wrong-headed ideologies and the only way to combat them is to expose how bankrupt they are. Many of these ideologies stem from the demonization of certain populations such as immigrants or members of the LGBTQ population.

As the hate crimes against minorities continue to make headlines, we should not consider ourselves "safe" just because of the community we live in feels that way. Instead, we should do things such as join activist movements, attend protests and ensure that bigotry doesn't enter our community. In the end, the best way to deal with bigoted ideologies is by proving them false. ♦

togatalks

How do you think Saratogans should respond to hate crimes?

"I would try to first figure out why someone would do such a thing."



junior Tristan Xiao

"Hate is due to ignorance, and awareness is needed at a young age."



sophomore Tanuj Vasudeva

"Educate people so that they aren't afraid of those who are different from themselves."



senior Iris Lu

Junioritis: a real form of learned helplessness

BY Elizabeth Lee

Staring blankly at the pile of Calculus and U.S. History textbooks and standardized testing prep books at my desk in my room after school, I sighed as the list of things I had to do seemed never-ending.

Lacking the motivation to begin anything, I opened Facebook, looking to my friends for encouragement to start studying, only to end up ranting together about all the things we had to do.

In contrast to senioritis, a result of not having work to do, junioritis is a consequence of being overworked to a point where the student has no motivation to study despite knowing the number of tasks that have to be done.

In fact, psychologists have dubbed this condition "learned

helplessness," in which a person "suffers from a sense of powerlessness, arising from persistent failure to succeed. It is thought to be a cause of depression," according to Britannica.com.

In addition to the immense amount of homework and studying required from classes such as AP U.S. History and AP Chemistry, "failing" on tests and quizzes can lead students into a state of learned helplessness: "If I can't do well by studying as much as I am right now, what else can I do?"

As a second-semester junior in the midst of studying for AP Tests, the ACT, SAT Subject Tests and upcoming finals that are given prior to AP Tests, the amount of studying appears endless. Finishing homework doesn't clear my slate. It simply means I have more

studying to do for APs, and pausing AP studying only commences studying for SAT Subject tests.

I would need 36 hours in a day in order to complete everything.

Despite the endless stacks of assignments and obligations, I often spend more time at my desk thinking about the work I have to do rather than actually doing it.

Knowing that finishing one thing means having to start studying for something else causes a lack of motivation.

Instead of attempting to tackle all the homework and studying, juniors often end up complaining with friends or constantly stress-eating while watching Netflix. Sleep-deprived from the heavy workload, we lose the motivation to achieve our goals.

In order to alleviate this feeling of helplessness, students should make a reasonable list of things to do each day or break up their studying so they don't cram at the last minute.

Also, juniors can reward themselves after finishing a certain

amount of work, such as going out for food or hanging out with friends for a few hours.

According to teachhub.com, students should find motivation through peers for support to get through "learned helplessness."

Also, teachers should encourage and praise their students more often with feedback so that the student begins to gain a more positive attitude about themselves.

Junior year is a tough year no matter what measures are taken to reduce stress. There are times when we must sacrifice time studying for one test to study for another assessment.

Maybe we won't do as well as we want on one APUSH test or an AP Chemistry midterm, but in the end, mental and physical health should always be prioritized over schoolwork.

Sometimes it's better to take a break, take a deep breath and then begin tackling the tasks to do one at a time — only then will the symptoms lessen and the feeling of accomplishment increase. ♦

Legalizing weed: social and economic benefits

BY Harshini Ramaswamy

Pot, Marijuana, Dope, Grass, Cannabis, Ganja, Hash — all of these will be legalized for recreation in California in January 2018 after the results of November's election, more than half of the country is in support of the legalization of the drug, according to the Drug Policy Alliance.

Prop 64 made California the fifth state to legalize recreational pot, following Colorado, Washington, Oregon and Alaska. The legalization of weed has had a positive impact on all four states, lowering crime rates while increasing tax revenues.

States with legal marijuana have reported increased tax revenues, money which has positively impacted their social welfare programs. These revenues are also funding substance abuse prevention and treatment programs, youth and adult drug education, community health care services and academic research and evaluation on the effects of marijuana legalization in the state, according to the DPA.

If all states legalized and taxed marijuana, states could expect to raise between \$5 billion and \$18 billion per year.

Legalized recreational marijuana is also associated with lower crime rates, especially citations for marijuana possession. In Washington, filings for low-level marijuana offenses are down 98 percent for adults 21 and older. All categories of marijuana law violations marijuana-related convictions are down more than 50 percent, according to the DPA. Police resources can then be allocated to other areas of enforcement instead of marijuana-

related crimes, as police arrest citizens for marijuana use more than for all violent crimes combined, according to the Washington Post.

Despite the benefits the legalization of recreational pot can bring, critics of the policies argue that the increased accessibility of weed may increase teenage consumption and DUIs.

However, according to the 2015 Monitoring the Future Survey, a nationwide study, found that since 2010, the annual prevalence of youth marijuana use has leveled out. Despite the fact that marijuana is widely available, data has shown that it has had "little to no impact on the overall rate of youth use of marijuana."

Contrary to public belief that DUIs would increase, a 2016 study by Columbia University researchers observed that states with marijuana legalization had fewer opioid-related car accidents. The number of traffic fatalities also remained stable in the first year that adult possession was legalized in Washington, according to the DPA.

Writing in JAMA Internal Medicine, Marcus Bachhuber of the Philadelphia Veterans Affairs Medical Center and his colleagues found that "medical cannabis laws are associated with significantly lower state-level opioid overdose mortality rates" as marijuana is far less addictive and dangerous than drugs derived from the opium poppy, according to the WP.

The positive impact on the four states that had legalized recreational marijuana before is reassuring for California post-Prop 64. ♦

togatalks

Do you think that junioritis exists, and if so, why?

"Yes, you get caught up in so much stuff that you eventually decide to give up for short periods of time."



junior Ayush Aggarwal

"Sometimes people just give up because of stress — but it's definitely not the same as what seniors go through."



junior Arun Ramakrishna

BCP Academy advertisement featuring a table of 2017 SAT, ACT Summer Boot Camp schedules, a list of tutoring services, and a table of 2016 BCP Students' ACT Official Scores.

# Complaints regarding arts credits unjustified

BY FrancescaChu

Students often complain about wasting time in an art class when they could be studying for a "more useful course." If asked to cut classes, many people here would first look at the visual and performing art classes they consider unnecessary.

This mentality is wrong. The point of an art class is not for teens to become artists; it is to teach teens to express themselves beyond written and spoken language. Participating in visual or performing arts is a way to express opinions, feelings and emotions.

Art is important not only because it is a major part of daily life, but also because it is a universal form of communication that connects us to others across the globe and from earlier times. Many argue that high schoolers should be able to focus on courses geared at improving their future job prospects instead of art, which few will ever pursue a career in.

But by this same logic, a student who doesn't want to be a scientist should not have to take a science class. In art, as with science, the skills a student learns extend far beyond a single painting, sketch or song. For example, theater teaches collaboration through group productions and music teaches creativity through composition. These skills can be translated to any profession, whether it be engineering or science.

Art can also help someone stand out among the thousands of their peers who are equally as smart, but may lack the creativity learned in an art class.

For example, Steve Jobs credited some of his success to a college calligraphy class where he mastered the art of typography, which according to him was "beautiful, historical and artistically subtle in a way that science can't capture."

Ten years later, he used the artistic taste he had developed through that class to design the first Macintosh computer, and his artistry set him apart from other computer geniuses. In addition, not enough students realize that they can gain valuable learning from art because the benefits are rarely mentioned.

For many students, it would also help to place applied arts in the same category as visual and performing arts.

With all art courses under one category, students would not have to fulfill two separate art credits; instead, they could spend more time on one topic. It may not be everyone's dream to perform on stage or paint a portrait, but high schoolers should be required to take an art course because the skills taught in art classes have a major influence on our daily lives, fostering students' growth in creativity, design and collaboration. ♦

# Arts too important to view as credit-only

BY AmyTang

As I searched through numerous websites, I clicked on a few courses that would satisfy the visual and performing arts credits that I have not yet fulfilled.

Since I don't have enough space for art classes in my junior-year schedule, I planned to take care of the requirement over the summer.

Sighing, I glanced at my options: six weeks watching films and writing papers, a stick figure animation course or a photography course.

I like art, but I dislike the idea of taking courses that require a deadline or a grade.

For many students who are creative in other forms of art such as dance, having to spend time in a History in Film class or a year-long ceramics course isn't an ideal way to fulfill this requirement. Simply put, students don't need to take a class to appreciate art.

The idea of visual and performing arts credits is somewhat self-defeating, since most students end up viewing art as something to do for credit, not for its inherent value.

Art has a very broad description, and shouldn't be confined to drawing, painting, sculpting or watching films.

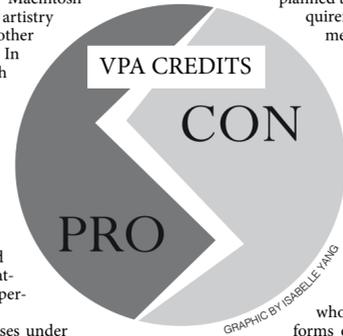
My form of art takes place in a dance studio three to four times a week as I, along with 10 other students, aim to improve our

## Most students end up viewing art as something to do for credit, not for its inherent value.

skills and learn from each other's movements.

But because of the narrow definition of art, people like me have to search for a way to fulfill "visual and performing arts" credits even though we're engaged in a truly artistic endeavor all the time. This leads to an unfortunate mindset among much of the student body. Art credits are joked about, since most students don't take classes they are interested in; rather, they take classes for the sole purpose of fulfilling credits.

Instead of serving the purpose of making sure all students gain a true appreciation of the arts, visual and performing arts credits should not be mandatory, as his merely diminishes their worth and turns a subject that is inherently personal and meaningful into merely another hoop to jump through on the way to a diploma. ♦



# Explicit consent: a flawed organ donation system

BY SherrieShen

In the summer of 2004, a local family named the Bedards endured a devastating tragedy: the loss of their then 8-year-old son, Andrew Bedard.

Despite having no history of medical issues, it turned out that Andrew had a deformed blood vessel.

This resulted in a cerebral aneurysm, in which a vessel in the brain ruptures due to high arterial pressure, leading to his death.

Seeking to have some good come from his tragic death, Andrew's family decided to donate his organs.

Ultimately, his liver went to an attorney in Fresno, his small intestine to a 7-year-old girl, a kidney to a man, another to a woman and a cornea each to two women.

Andrew's organs saved the attorney, who was on his deathbed and even said his final goodbyes before news of an available liver transplant arrived.

His small intestine helped a young girl eat for the first time and his corneas allowed two women regain the ability of sight once more.

This story, which the Falcon wrote about in 2012, is one of hundreds, if not thousands of inspiring gifts that result when individuals and families have the courage to allow for organ donation.

The problem is that in the U.S., individuals must opt-in by checking a box on their driver's license to confirm that they are a willing donor.

This means that those who neglect to respond do not have their organs donated.

Instead, the United States should implement a system of presumed consent in which individuals are to donate their organs unless they explicitly state otherwise.

In other words, the U.S. should take organs from those who do not write anything

on their organ donation form at all.

According to the Organ Procurement and Transplant Network (OPTN), more than 118,000 U.S. residents are currently on the national transplant waiting list, in need of a life-saving organ. Every year, the number of people on the list grows by roughly 10 percent.

With the U.S.'s current opt-in program, the number of actual donors in 2017 totals to approximately 2,500, barely covering 2 percent of the population in need of an organ transplant.

Furthermore, this percentage disregards whether patient and recipient are a match, or how compatible the organ donor is with the recipient.

One reason some individuals choose not to donate their organs is due to the mistaken belief that doctors will not try as hard to save a patient's life if they are a registered organ donor.

In point of fact, the first priority of a medical professional is to save lives.

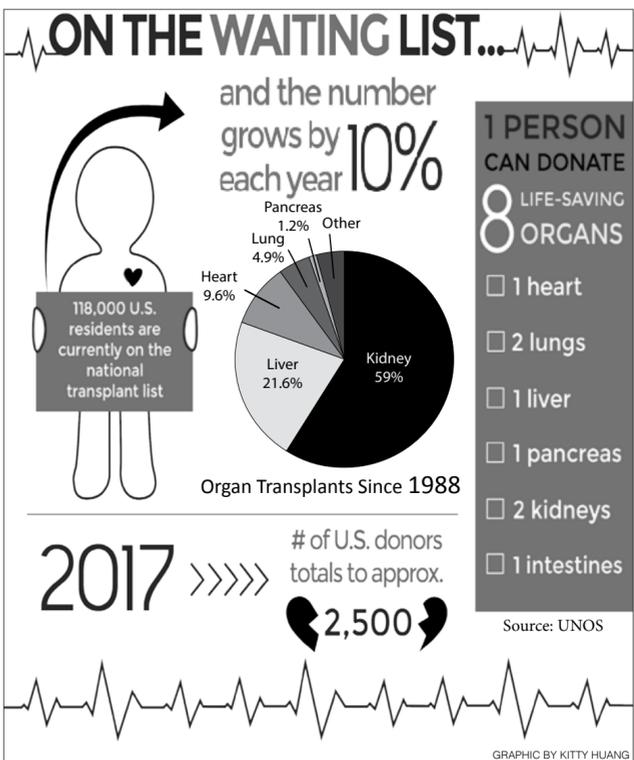
In addition, the doctors involved in a person's care are rarely ever involved with the recovery or transplant of organs.

If a patient is still hesitant about the use of their organs, under a presumed consent system, they would still be allowed to opt-out of donation.

In addition, a joint research study conducted by three universities in the United Kingdom analyzed organ donation systems in 48 countries for 13 years, before concluding that opt-out systems are associated with higher organ donation rates, thus leading to shorter transplant waiting lists and more lives saved.

In Italy, France, Spain and other European countries with a policy of presumed consent, more than 90 percent of people donate their organs upon death.

Meanwhile, an analysis from Stanford



SPARQ shows that in countries like the U.S. and Germany, organ donation rates can fall below 15 percent.

Individuals who donate their organs can extend up to eight lives beyond their original expiration and grant those people the opportunity to grow old.

None of us knows how long we will live

or what legacy we will leave in life, but we should all be willing to extend and enrich the lives of others as shown by the inspiring story of Andrew Bedard.

To encourage life after death, let us assume the best of people and make this crucial change in the policy of organ donation decisions. ♦

# MONTHLY horoscopes



TAURUS

Sun's out, buns out! Go out there and find a bakery where you can eat away your AP exams stress with artisanal bread. The weather isn't getting hot for nothing, so while you're out there enjoying the foodie life, take some time to relax in a nice, cold pool with lots of floaties to carry the burden of looming finals off your shoulders.

Life Hack: If you layer two pizza slices on top of each other, your body perceives it as one slice, and you can tell yourself you're getting closer to a summer bod even though you're eating more.



GEMINI

It's no coincidence that school ends during your zodiac month. However, don't take it as a sign to procrastinate your way through AP exams and finals — that GPA isn't going to raise itself! Keep hydrated with the blood and sweat of intense studying as we all labor through home stretch of this school year.

Life Hack: Laminate your study guides, homework, notecards, tests and quizzes so the tears can roll right off.



CANCER

Find your inner peace, and take the time to explore nature. Leaves need you for carbon dioxide, and you need leaves for oxygen. As Troy Bolton put it best, we're all in this together. Our Earth needs YOU to care for it and treat it like the precious baby it deserves to be treated like. Besides, driving to get boba all the time is expensive — have you SEEN those gas prices?!

Life Hack: Ice cream too frozen to eat? Microwave your spoon so the heat melts the ice cream right as you scoop it out of the gallon.

GRAPHIC BY ASHLEY FENG

# lifestyles

## Spring allergies take toll

i am a Hul-igan



Rahul Vadlakonda

The constant sniffles are followed by weirdly pitched sneezes and annoying ear pressure. The spring allergy season has always been a crucible for me.

Allergies, which afflict 50 million Americans, according to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, seem to rise in the spring, as plants start to develop flowers and pollen starts flowing through the air.

The resulting runny nose and constant sniffles have often made me ache for the chilly but allergy-free days of winter.

Don't let springtime's romantic reputation fool you — during this supposedly uplifting period of time, I am constantly blowing my nose to release the pressure in my ears, depleting plethoras of tissue boxes to clear up my everlasting blocked nose and swallowing antihistamines to suppress my symptoms.

With my long history of allergies, I have documented the way I deal with my symptoms in hopes of finding a better way to

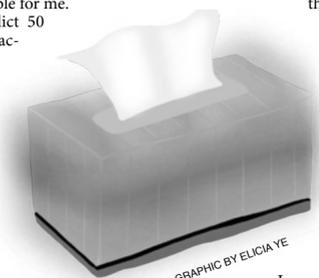
manage them. Rather than improving as I age, my allergies have instead worsened each year. As I write this story, I have already sneezed and sniffled at least 10 times.

As something I have had to deal with throughout my childhood, allergies continue to deprive me of happiness while spending time with friends, with conversations cut off by my loud sneezes and constant search for tissues. On long-awaited vacation trips during spring breaks, I often find myself focusing not on the beautiful scenery but rather on my dreaded allergies, robbing me of the opportunity to relax before finals preparation.

Not only do they bother me, but my allergies affect my nearby friends and classmates as well. For weeks, I repeatedly receive their scornful glances along with donations of tissues from considerate classmates or advice to take more medicine to stop my sniffing (it does not work that way).

Even though I am ranting about something beyond my control, I would like to end this story on a more positive note. Though my complaints may be against the spring spirit, I hope my fellow allergy sufferers can relate to my annual battle, and I wish them good luck in taking care of themselves.

Now, please excuse me as I go take some Claritin. ♦



GRAPHIC BY ELICIA VE

**EGGcellent EGGhunting**

In celebration of Easter, the editors set up an egg hunt in the quad for 4 staff members.

GRAPHIC BY VIVIAN ZHANG

**WINNERS**

**Team Framy**  
Francesca Chu and Amy Tang

As we hatched our plan for the egg hunt, we glanced over the playing field, or the quad. We anticipated an intense competition against Leena Elzeiny and Elaine Fan, but we were confident that we would win.

As soon as the timer started, Francesca scrambled to tables, searched under benches and looked behind trash cans.

With her past experience hiding Easter eggs for her 13-year-old brother Bryan to find, she looked in places she considered good hiding spots, like in the branches of trees or underneath a pile of leaves.

Amy, although lacking the experience Francesca had, realized the strategy the

Lifestyles editors used while hiding the eggs: they had camouflaged the eggs in same-color surroundings.

After this revelation, we quickly gained a lead as we spotted white eggs in white flowers, magenta eggs in purple flowers and green eggs in bushes.

Within a few minutes, Francesca had collected about 15 eggs peeking from bushes or underneath lunch tables.

We kept constant tabs on each other and the other team by meeting often to update our egg count and location of the eggs we found to avoid looking in the same places. Thanks to Francesca's egg-hunting expertise, she ended up with 21 eggs. Although incomparable to Francesca's count, Amy managed to find 11 eggs, a feat she is proud of.

After returning to the Journalism Room for a final count, we won with a total of 32 eggs, an enormous number compared to Leena and Elaine's paltry 12. Not to eggs-aggregate, but we all know who the real master egg hunters are now. ♦

**LOSERS**

**Team Eleene**  
Leena Elzeiny and Elaine Fan

When the Lifestyles editors presented us with an opportunity to compete in an egg hunt race, we couldn't refuse the chance to relive one of our favorite childhood activities.

With 20 minutes to hunt, we frantically ran around the quad. The eggs were harder to find than we anticipated, and we soon realized that the competition wasn't about speed, but rather about skill.

Circling trees and glancing under bushes, Elaine had little success at first. After spotting an egg on top of the billboard in front of the cafeteria, she remembered the editors' hint that several eggs were hidden at tall heights.

Leena found a few eggs immediately, giving her hope, but scanned over what she would later realize was an egg gold mine, having eggs-pected easy-to-spot eggs in open space.

Near the halfway mark, we regrouped briefly and counted six eggs in Elaine's bag and five in Leena's, regretting that we didn't cover enough area in the crucial first minutes of the hunt.

Despite our odds, we continued to search. For the last 10 minutes, however, Elaine only found one more, and Leena found none.

In the end, the results were grim: 32-12 in favor of Team Framy, the egg-straordinary egg-hunting queens.

Although we endured a staggering loss, we felt that it was still a rare, eggs-quisite eggs-perience that will definitely remain a memorable part of our time as Falcon staffers. Even so, we have an entire year to hone our eggs-tremely applicable egg hunting skills, so Team Framy should watch their backs for our rematch. ♦

May 5, 2017

# things i loved as a child but hate now

## The fashion in-'Justice' of my childhood

dancing queen

Julia Miller



When reminiscing about their childhood, people usually recall scoring their first soccer goal or climbing the playground monkey bars with their best friends. But I remember being a kid a bit differently — my most prominent memories involve shopping at the mall with my mom.

I regret to inform you, however, that the clothes I chose to wear were not at all chic; they were fashion nightmares.

During my elementary school days, I spent most of my time at the mall inside the almighty girls' clothing store, Justice. As I glanced up at the pink, bubbly letters of the Justice sign, I felt some sort of spiritual connection to the store that I cannot understand to this day.

For those of you reading who are not experts in girls' fashion, Justice, operated by Tween Brands, sells apparel and acces-

sories products aimed at children ages 5-15. Though it's losing popularity with today's generation, Justice was the trendiest store in my entire school 10 years ago, and if you were not wearing Justice, it was a fashion faux pas.

Shirts with glitter hearts, tank tops with printed cartoon fruit that smelled like smoothies and dresses adorned with vibrant green and pink belts scattered the floor of the store. Racing across the flowery purple carpets, I gravitated toward anything covered in sparkles.

Not only did Justice house attire, girls could also splurge on "jewelry," ranging from cheap matching friendship necklaces featuring googly-eyed food items to fuzzy zebra-printed diaries, perfect for detailing fifth-grade melodramatics.

My mom, of course, fully supported my Justice craze, and willingly sat upon the bench in front of the dressing rooms, ready to see if she was just as obsessed with an outfit as I was.

As my mother pushed me in a stroller across the tile floors of Westfield Oakridge shopping center, I used to wonder why the bustling shoppers were dashing in and out

of brightly lit boutiques. As I grew older, I began to relate to these shoppers frantically racing to buy the newest clothing lines at their favorite stores. Soon enough, I transformed into them at the young age of eight and developed my own sense of fashion that carried throughout elementary school.

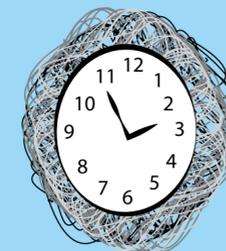
Every time I entered Justice, I felt euphoric, but if I browsed the racks today, I would laugh.

Looking back at old pictures, it's hard to think that I used to believe Justice was cute. Before, sporting a bedazzled hat with a plastic pink pearl necklace was the look of my dreams.

I wish I could go back in time and tell my younger self that I looked ridiculous.

Yet, like every trend, Justice came and went. Though I despise its style now, I once prided myself on the way I dressed, and I'm glad my clothing fostered confidence at such a young age.

And hey, the clothes I like now could be considered ugly in 10 years. Maybe someday, I'll be thinking the exact thoughts about my current favorite stores that I'm having about Justice. I guess the Falcon's going to have to check back in and find out. ♦



## Adolescence is stealing my sweet tooth

adina-saur

Adina Bidel



A vanilla frosting-covered birthday cake stares at me. "Happy 15th birthday, Adina!" it says. With a lick of my lips, I grab my fork and dig in, eager to gorge myself on the trophy that represents my survival of another year.

Oh, wow, that's sweet. Really sugary. My chewing slows — the taste lingers in my mouth for too long now, intense and unappealing. Do I really want this?

It has been a month since my 16th birthday, and for the first time in my life, I didn't eat a birthday cake.

As a kid, my profound appreciation for sweet foods was a huge part of my identity — it was one of the things my friends knew me by.

Any time my mom allowed me to, I would order the biggest, sweetest thing on the menu at whichever restaurant we went to. "Can you really eat that?" she would ask in disbelief, and I would always reply an excited "Yes!"

For my 14th birthday, I went to SnoCrave and ordered two giant honey toasts, which are box-shaped stacks of bread covered in various toppings such as ice cream, macarons and chocolate. For my 16th birthday this year, however, having become somewhat less fond of sugar, I shared a palm-sized glass of creme brulee with five friends.

I can feel age slowing down my sweet tooth. I still order cakes and pies from the school cafeteria, but they always end up

half-finished, leftovers given to a friend. Sweets are becoming better in theory than in practice.

As people age, their taste buds stop regenerating, and the sense of smell dulls. Maybe that's why there's a common trend of growing to like bitter food and drink as one gets older. Children, in comparison, start out with much stronger taste buds that are sensitive to bitterness, which is nature's sign of "toxins — do not eat."

My cognition of sugar has changed, and the saccharine sucrose that I used to love now overwhelms me. Losing my love for sweets feels like losing an inner child; am I going to start enjoying the bitterness of coffee and dark chocolate, like the mature adults that surround me? As my endurance for sugar fades, I am reminded of my growth and changed self from a kid who constantly

craved sugar to a bitter teenager. ♦

## Love or Hate: 'Rainbow Magic' books

tang-erine

Amy Tang



My 8-year-old self obsessed over the adventures of Jack Frost, Rachel and Kirsty from the "Rainbow Magic" fairy books. I would devour an entire series of seven books in a day, and as soon as I'd finish, my mom would sigh, knowing that a tantrum was coming if we didn't return to the bookstore or library for more.

Now, six years later, my reading level has progressed beyond 80-page fairy books, and Daisy Meadows, a collective pseudonym of four authors, has shriveled to me in literary status.

I recently reread "Amy the Amethyst Fairy," which was my favorite book since its main character and I share the same name. (My 8-year-old self was quite conceited).

Skimming over the illustration-filled pages as a high schooler made me cringe numerous times. The plot was horrendously predictable, the dialogue felt repetitive and the main characters came off as bland. I expected that my taste in books would change after another eight years of education, but I wasn't anticipating such a huge difference between now and then.

As I flipped through the pages of the book, I laughed at the illustrations and remembered the long hours my now 20-year-old sister Joy and I had spent trying to draw the covers of our favorite fairy books (we still have notebooks filled with drawings of monstrous and distorted fairies).

The happiest moments of my childhood were the days that the special edition of fairy books was released. My sister and I would celebrate by going to the library for the newest book, pages still crisp from the printer. The book "Joy the Summer Vacation Fairy," which followed the adventures of a character with the same name as my sister, included three adventures featuring the same fairy.

I remember how jealous I was of her 200-page book, while "Amy the Amethyst Fairy" was merely part of a series. If only I could go back to the times when that was my biggest worry.

"Joy the Summer Vacation Fairy" and "Amy the Amethyst Fairy" are now resting with the plethora of other fairy books on an old, dusty bookshelf in my house. Each series costs roughly \$40, and I owned about seven different series along with some random special edition books.

Mom and Dad, I'm so sorry for bankrupting you with my demands of purchasing every single fairy book, which I realize now were not the best pieces of literature we could have purchased.

Looking back on it, I probably single-handedly prevented my favorite bookstore, Barnes and Noble, from going out of business from 2009-2011.

After realizing that money doesn't appear out of thin air, I started selling the fairy books on eBay, so if anybody is interested in reading about the adventures of two girls and a fairy, message me! ♦



## Trading playing cards for video games

ace trainer

Michael Zhang



"Mom, can you buy me some Pokémon cards?"

Every weekend, 6-year-old me would beg my mom for new additions to my Pokémon card collection, and although her answer was almost always "no" or "maybe next week," I remained hopeful until the following weekend.

My obsession with trading cards began when my younger sister and I received 100 Pokémon cards for Christmas nine years ago. I quickly found my passion, and as the theme song goes, "tried to be the very best!"

The first step I made toward achieving this goal was stealing all the rare and powerful cards from my sister, like any ambitious

but morally conflicted Pokémon trainer would.

Shortly after I joined the craze, Pokémon cards became a big deal at the after-school program I attended in first grade. Seeing the better cards, particularly the ones with high health points, that many of my peers owned, I immediately began bugging my parents to buy me some more.

Though initially refusing to buy me any, they eventually promised me card packs as rewards for completing chores or scoring well on the weekly behavior chart in school. I took advantage of this offer while it lasted and amassed a large collection of rare cards that I could show my friends.

Even when the Pokémon epidemic faded in second grade, I continued collecting cards, sometimes even behind my parents' backs by paying older students to purchase them for me. I also received more cards every Christmas, adding to my already huge collection.

When I began middle school, however, my passion for trading cards started to de-

teriorate, as I had found a new obsession — video games.

After this, collecting and trading these cards seemed pointless. So in sixth grade, I retired my collection of cards to the top of my bookshelf and haven't played with them since.

When I did decide to revisit my elementary school hobby recently, I felt rather uninterested. Unlike action-packed video games, the slow, strategic pace of card games just didn't appeal to me anymore.

Because the rules in trading card games are sometimes unclear, different players' interpretations often lead to a lot of arguing, leading to intense and sometimes uncomfortable matches. While there are glitches in video games, the rules are coded into the game itself, leaving no room for interpretation and offering a fairer, more enjoyable experience.

At this point, I'm still not sure what I will do with my thousands of trading cards. I've sold a few valuable ones, but frankly, I'm just too lazy to deal with the rest. ♦





GRAPHICS BY CHARIN PARK

## Anxiety and depression documentary challenges sophomores

by Ashley Feng

In the last few weeks of second semester, the Media Arts Program's sophomores have been concentrating on one project — a lengthy documentary tackling local or global issues outside the Saratoga bubble. “The point of the project is to look into a local or international issue,” Media Arts and Digital Photography teacher Alex Hemmerich said. “It’s our way of trying to get students to go a step beyond a research paper and really get out there and investigate the world.”

Students focus on creating a 4- to 5-minute film, combining journalistic reporting with creative cinematography.

Terms such as B-roll, archival footage and voice-overs echo through the lab even though many students are still adjusting to their new project. However, some sophomores like sophomore Ali Lichtenberg have had experience with the genre.

“When I was first introduced to the project, I was very glad to hear that it would be a documentary,” Lichtenberg said. “Documentaries had always been one of my favorite styles of film as they are able to utilize the principles of filmmaking to bring light to topics that may not be covered by other media sources.”

Lichtenberg’s group members have all been delegated specific roles in the filming process: Devin Mather as director, Srisha Vinukutla as researcher, Megan Jin as editor and Lichtenberg himself as director of photography. They plan to coordinate well with each other to fill in for the one empty position in their lineup — a crew member.

Lichtenberg’s group is focusing on a documentary centered around anxiety and depression at the school. Although their project is still in its preliminary stages, his group members have had little trouble so far finding reliable sources for interviews and researching basic information about the topic.

Because of their promptness in reaching out to potential interviewees, the group’s pre-production stage is moving along rapidly.

“I expect that this project will rely on not just scoring interviews, but good interviews the audience will find reputable,” Lichtenberg said. He also feels that a group’s research into a topic and ability to convey what the issue is to the audience will hold much value for this project.

As an introduction to the project, the students watched several model documentaries, one of them the Satellite Award-winning “Blackfish,” a 2013 documentary about the mistreatment of killer whales at sea world.

Hemmerich chose to show the documentary not only because of its cinematic prowess, but also because of the real world effect it caused, creating significant backlash for Seaworld which “legitimately suffered from that documentary coming out.” He also sees documentaries as another form of cinematographic art.

“It’s a really powerful way of connecting with the world and challenging something,” Hemmerich said. “That’s the main reason we want the students to do it.” ♦

## Juniors produce biographical film looking at JFK assassin, Oswald

by Kitty Huang

Warm orange light glows through the window, illuminating the silhouette of Lee Harvey Oswald, played by junior Alex Metz, as Oswald gets drunk and fires his rifle aimlessly into the bushes during the U.S. Marine Corps Birthday Ball. A camera captures his every perilous movement.

To create this scene, Metz played Oswald while his team members stood inside and outside of the house to capture the moment in the perfect angles.

The group was working on the American Story Project, a 5-minute fictional film that junior Media Arts students work on for most of second semester. The juniors are expected to create a visual representation of an event in U.S. history with topics varying from the Vietnam War to the gay rights movements.

The group’s film revolves around Oswald, the man who was blamed for the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963. Their interpretation showed Oswald’s troubled childhood and explained possible motives that led to his decision to kill the president of the United States.

“Most groups relate to a theme or event from their chosen era but this group chose more of a biographical approach to his life,” Ritchie said.

Metz’s group has three other members: Kelly Long, Laura Chaland and John Noralahi.

Chaland, a talented artist, helped with some specific scenes to create a more artistic approach, such as a scene of blood in a bathtub. Using a full tub of bathwater, the group dropped red food coloring and got footage of the faux blood spreading through the clear water, in order to signify Oswald’s suicide attempt.

“I just had a vision of what I wanted the effect to be,” Chaland said. “It was a very experimental process until we found something that seemed to fit and sometimes ex-



All Photos Courtesy of ALEX METZ

**Junior Alex Metz, acting as Lee Harvey Oswald, pretends to aim his rifle at President of the United States John F. Kennedy, right before pulling the trigger for the very last scene of the America Story film, “Oswald.”**

ceeded our expectations.”

The group filmed both on and off campus, shooting most of their scenes at school but also some at their own houses. The members also created a set and found props that matched the time period.

“We wanted to have one of our scenes to look like a warehouse because we knew Oswald had been in one when he assassinated Kennedy,” Metz said.

The group ran into a problem when they couldn’t bring a prop gun to school, so they solved this by using one of the two house settings in the MAP lab. The group hung a green screen behind the fake window, and with Adobe Premiere Pro, the once-green backdrop transformed into the same Dallas city street where Kennedy was shot and killed.

The crew also had to find actors for their film. They needed a Russian woman for one of their scenes, so Chaland reached out to



**Top: Oswald scrawls his final words down before attempting to commit suicide in the film.**

**Bottom: Oswald’s silhouette drinks heavily while clenching a loaded rifle during the U.S. Marine Corps Birthday Ball scene.**

the community and asked her friend’s dad’s colleague to meet the team at where they were filming that scene.

There were plenty of challenges and mistakes, but they finished the film in six weeks.

“I think this is the most productive group I’ve worked with in high school,” Metz said. “All of us are actually so much different from each other that we all work on improving each other’s negative qualities.”

For Chaland, the most satisfying part of the entire project was being able to present the end result to fellow classmates and teachers on screen during the final revision viewings of each project.

“It was rewarding to see the final product after many hours of editing and revising,” Chaland said. “The amount of work and energy we put in really paid off at the end when everything came together.” ♦

## Seniors introduce first MAP film with both live action and animation

by David Koh

Ever since late September, seniors in the Media Arts Program have been spending time planning, filming and editing films as part of their culminating capstone projects. Of course, in the weeks leading up to the deadline on April 20, the seniors were busier than ever putting the finishing touches on them.

These projects are a pinnacle of their three years in the program and are opened in nature. They function as a forum through which seniors can showcase the skills and techniques that they have acquired and follow a long and complex process.

A group of six seniors, Austin Cai, Aryana Goodarzi, Grace Rothschild, Nolan Chao, Aidan Peck and Thomas Li, have chosen to create an animation and live-action hybrid film based on an in-game and real-life love interest.

The group’s final product, viewable on the Saratoga MAP YouTube channel, features the struggles of a gamer, played by senior Zach Grob-Lipkis, as he falls in love with a female gamer, played by senior Kavya Sadras. The film also focused on Grob-

Lipkis’ officious gamer friend, played by senior Seena Ghafouri, who strives to provide him with the necessary advice to land a relationship with Sadras. However, as the film comes to an end, Grob-Lipkis learns to trust his own judgment.

The team resulted from a week-long process in September that grouped classmates based on what kind of film each person wanted to pursue.

The goal, according to Rothschild, was to create a group that would include students with strong skill sets in areas such as editing, filming and animating.

After many sessions of brainstorming and mapping out several layouts of different camera shot angles on storyboards, the group thought of the idea to create a live-action and animation hybrid after Peck had suggested the idea of having their film revolve around an online love interest and it clicked with the entire group.

“Before Aidan strung it together nicely, we knew we wanted to combine animation and live action film because we loved how different it was, so the idea of a video game was something that stuck with us throughout the whole process,” Rothschild said.

The group relied entirely on the school



Courtesy of SEENA GHAFOURI

**Senior Seena Ghafouri, acting as the main character’s gamer friend, plays the fictitious videogame the group animated for the Senior Capstone Project.**

library for staging, with a majority of their film occurring in the building.

Although the group’s aim was to get nominated for SMASH’N, Rothschild said that there are many other projects that deserve to win.

However, with the excitement of getting to use all of their skills comes a certain sadness, as the seniors prepare to leave MAP next year to move onto college.

“In MAP, we’re a family, and we’ve made friendships with people we probably would have never talked to,” Goodarzi said. ♦

## YouTube criticized after new LGBTQ restrictions

by Francesca Chu

#Youtubeisoverparty has been trending on Twitter since September 2016, but starting on March 19, it refocused on a newly discovered LGBTQ restriction, which has been censoring LGBTQ-related videos.

The hashtag was originally started by Philip DeFranco, who has over 5 million subscribers and is mainly known for “The Philip DeFranco Show” in which he voices his opinions about current news, politics and pop culture.

Last fall, he posted a video and tweeted using the hashtag about YouTube demonetizing his videos and censoring them because of “excessive strong language.” Although no one is certain exactly when the censoring of LGBTQ-related videos started, he company has been targeted with protests and complaints from the YouTube community.

YouTube created the Restricted Mode

feature so that parents, schools or other institutions could censor videos for users under 18 that depict violence, contain profanity or discuss other mature topics. The filter has only recently placed LGBTQ videos in the same category, greatly upsetting many creators and users.

In an emailed statement, YouTube said that “videos that cover subjects like health, politics and sexuality may not appear for users and institutions that use the [restriction] feature.” However, all LGBTQ videos are by definition related to health, politics and sexuality. The problem is that it is unclear exactly what YouTube considers “mature content.”

On March 19, Hank Green, who with his brother John shares a channel of almost 3 million subscribers, tweeted at YouTube, “‘YouTube Restricted’ is supposed to give a way for parents to block potentially offensive content. Apparently that includes the existence of gay people?”

With the restriction, videos with tags like “gay,” “coming out” or “sexuality” are being censored even though they are not explicitly showing sexual, violent or inappropriate content. These may contain more serious or mature topics, but the videos, especially coming out videos, are actually often helpful to younger audiences.

Gigi Gorgeous, a transgender YouTuber with over 2.5 million subscribers, recently posted a video speaking out about this issue. With the Restricted Mode on, less than half of her channel’s 400 videos show up.

“It’s sad given that you can now turn on one button and the entire LGBTQ community is taken away from you,” she said.

In response to the controversy, YouTube has posted an apology to its audience and specifically the LGBTQ community promising to fix the system. It recognized that some videos have been incorrectly labeled and assured users that they are working hard to correct that. Still, these changes have

yet to be made, causing dissent among many of the YouTube community.

Freshman Nicole Wong, an avid YouTube viewer, sees this as yet another mistake the company has made recently.

“I know that YouTube has been in the news many times lately and mostly about negative changes,” she said. “Hopefully the company will change this mistake as soon as possible.”

For another fan of YouTube, sophomore Sanya Salehi, it is frustrating to see her favorite YouTubers being censored and not having the experience they want on YouTube.

“In light of recent events, some of my favorite YouTubers are starting to question the platform that they are posting on, and a few are even thinking about quitting or at least taking a break for a while,” Salehi said. “It’s upsetting because YouTube is supposed to be the place where I can always look forward to new and entertaining videos.” ♦

## ‘Fate of the Furious’ incites laughter but lacks strong plotline



Amy Tang

As I sat in the movie theater during the 7 p.m. Thursday night premiere of “The Fate of the Furious” with my friend and fellow Falcon reporter sophomore Francesca Chu, I couldn’t help but notice that the theater was barely half full.

Maybe it was because it was a school night, or because not many people knew the movie was in theaters, but I couldn’t help but wonder if the absence of a substantial crowd was related to the absence of Paul Walker, a former member of the cast who passed away in a off-set car accident in 2013.

“The Fate of the Furious,” the eighth installment of “The Fast and Furious” series, stars Vin Diesel as Dominic, an elite street racer, Dwayne Johnson as Luke Hobbs, a former government agent, and Michelle Rodriguez as Letty, Dominic’s newly wed wife.

The main problem with the movie, however, was that the plot has many gaps and the main antagonist’s motives are unclear. On the bright side, the stunts are as thrilling as they’ve always been and the comedy is spot on.

In the eighth and final installment of the Fast and Furious franchise, Dom is blackmailed to turn against his team and work with a mysterious blonde woman named Cipher. Eventually, the movie reveals why Dom has to go rogue; his ex-lover Elena Neves and his baby son are locked in a glass enclosure, held captive by Cipher.

The family element in the movie is strong, and the entire plot revolves around Dom following orders in hopes of saving his loved ones. But after defying Cipher’s orders once, she shoots Elena to show her dominance over him. Alas, the only thing Dom has left to race for is his son, whom he does not name until the very end of the movie.

The storyline started to become confusing and unclear to me when Cipher wanted to blow up the world from Russia with no apparent reason for doing so. The main antagonist Cipher is severely underdeveloped, which made the movie confusing due to her lack of backstory.

By the end of the movie, Dom saves the day even though Cipher escapes. Dom ends up naming his baby son Brian, after Brian O’Conner, who retired from the team. This touching tribute to Paul Walker, who played Brian in the first seven films, is one of the most heart-wrenching moments of the movie.

Even though the film has bits of comedy

sprinkled throughout, “The Fate of the Furious” ends up being more of a science fiction film than an action movie, since the stunts are too unrealistic — there is no way somebody could crash a car that’s on fire, then walk away completely unscathed.

As the series of movies has progressed, the stunt scenes have gotten more and more ridiculously over the top. I’m not an avid fan of the series (I haven’t even watched all the movies), but I understood most of the movie, since there weren’t many references to past movies besides the naming of the child. Somebody who is still familiar with Dominic Toretto can still watch the movie and have a similar level of understanding of the plot as a person who has seen the entire series.

The movie’s rating on Rotten Tomatoes is 67 percent, which is pretty accurate, because the cinematography and plot line are mediocre. However, die-hard fans of the series may disagree because “Fate of the Furious” is fun to watch, and if movies were rated based on the sheer number of car stunts, fire and superhuman fighting, “Fate of the Furious” would be hard to beat. ♦



UNIVERSAL

## Anime isn’t the childish, quirky culture you thought



Adina Bidel & Leena Elzeiny

“Anime’s weird.”  
“Their eyes are too big.”  
“Anime is for kids.”

People often make these judgments about anime. However, we realize ignorance is to blame for these presumptions, so allow us to educate you.

Anime is, of course, a Japanese style of motion-picture animation, characterized by colorful art, futuristic settings, violence and sexuality, but more broadly, it includes any kind of animation made by Japanese people.

Anime appeals to a wide range of ages and interests. Common genres include fantasy, romance and slice of life (peaceful series showcasing normal people’s daily life). It has its own unique recurring genres as well, including robot shows like “Transformers,” idol anime about young performing groups, isekai, where the main character gets transferred to another world — you name it, it probably exists.

The show we watched was “Showa and Genroku Era Lover’s Suicide Through Rakugo,” a historical drama set in the 1940s to the 1970s about the Japanese art

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# Oops: Answer key to test is given to a student

by Leena Elzeiny

It was a hot August day in 2002 when current Algebra 2 Honors teacher Meghan Pickett was administering her first test of her teaching career at Shoreline Middle School in Santa Cruz, where Pickett taught Algebra 1.

She was nervous, but reasoned that things would run smoothly.

She completed what would become her permanent system to make a test: she made

it, printed it out, edited it and timed herself completing the test to ensure a smooth test for the students.

But she had forgotten to remove the answer key to the test from the top of the stack before she handed it out.

"I passed out the key to the very first person, and by the time I got to the second row, the sweet girl pointed it out," Pickett said.

Pickett quickly retrieved the key and gave her a new copy, this time a copy of the actual unit test.

However, Pickett couldn't help but dwell on her mistake.

"I was new to teaching, and I wanted to look like I knew what I was doing," Pickett said.

Since then, she has gained a lot of confidence and despite having taught at three schools in the last 15 years, Pickett has adapted to each of them quickly.

These days, she keeps her answer keys in a different binder.

"[The incident] made me realize that I

need to be thoughtful on how to create these systems so that I don't make too many mistakes," Pickett said.

Regardless of how much time has passed since this mistake, Pickett is grateful for the honest student who gave her the test back promptly.

"That is one of the great things about teaching: you [get to] work with such nice people," Pickett said. "It doesn't seem that embarrassing, but it is something I will never forget." ♦

# Oops: Student DJs play explicit songs in class

by Sanjana Melkote

"All of a sudden I could hear profanities being shot across the room through my computer's speakers."

Media arts and Photography teacher Alex Hemmerich remembers a painful lesson he learned during his first year of teaching at Acalanes High School in Lafayette, a city in the East Bay: Don't trust students to choose the music they play in the classroom. Hemmerich brings with him his fair share of experience from his past five years on the job.

Wanting to generate a creative vibe in his classroom at Acalanes, Hemmerich let students act as class DJs on a rotating basis. Hemmerich thought that the DJ rotations would benefit the students because Media Arts and Photography are more project-based classes and students have a lot of individual class time.

Even though the music seemed to be fun, one misjudged song selection ruined it for all. As Hemmerich heard numerous swear words making an unwanted appearance, he muted the music for good.

These days, Hemmerich lets students listen to music on their earbuds as they work, as long as he can't hear it.

Another rookie mistake in his first year was letting them sit where they want each day and move around as needed.

"The extreme lack of structure with students sitting anywhere and moving every minute distracted me from teaching as I was so busy trying to find them in the classroom," Hemmerich said.

Once Hemmerich finally figured out how to tame the music and the movement in his room, the "new school year" time to go over rules and the syllabus had run out, and it was time to dive into the real coursework of the class.

But Hemmerich soon realized that what he had planned to teach in a day would take a week or more.

When Hemmerich first started teaching, he underestimated how much planning went into each day's agenda.

"When I assigned the first project of the year but didn't have a rubric, demos, means of feedback or time allotted to work on the product set up, I realized that it took a lot more than an idea to get an assignment from my vision to the task board," he said.

Hemmerich said that the area he has most improved in as a teacher is his way of giving feedback to students.

Hemmerich critiqued his first students the way he had been in college, speaking bluntly and holding them to a very high standard.

But, he soon realized that criticism as well as appreciation was necessary to keep the beginning media students motivated.

"I had to remind myself that I was working with high schoolers who were learning a tough skill that would take time and effort to master," Hemmerich said. "If they were put down by their teacher from the start, what would make them want to continue trying?"

Hemmerich is glad he has learned a lot from his first years as a teacher and tries to put his experience to work in his classes, creating a fun yet creative classroom. ♦



Hemmerich

# Oops: Student gets left outside in the rain

by Michael Zhang

In his 18-year career, teacher PJ Yim has taught nearly every math class, including Algebra 1 and 2, Geometry, Precalculus Honors, Calculus BC and AP Statistics.

During this time, he has gained a reputation for being a talented and dedicated teacher. But this skill has been hard won.

Early in his career, Yim taught math at Leland High School in San Jose, where he made one of his most embarrassing mistakes.

As part of his teaching repertoire, Yim often sends students outside if they are being particularly disruptive during class.

"I try not to send students to the office whenever possible, so I will send them out of class and then I'll step out and talk to them when there's a break," Yim said.

During one of his classes at Leland, Yim made the decision to send a student outside on a cold, rainy day for being loud.

However, Yim got so engrossed in teaching the lesson that he forgot to call him back inside.

"I think I enjoyed the quiet so much that I completely forgot about him," Yim said.

But when the bell rang at the end of class, the student walked in shivering and wet, and all Yim could do was apologize by trying to make it clear that having him stand outside for the rest of class was unintentional.

"I didn't mean to do that at all, but he and I were pretty cool about it afterwards, so it was OK," Yim said. "But he was stand-

ing outside for half an hour, and I felt really bad."

Now, Yim still does send kids outside occasionally, but tells the class to remind him to call students back in.

Another mistake Yim made was on his first day of teaching at Saratoga High.

Before the beginning of the school year, he had heard about how academically competitive Saratoga High was and reasoned that the students would be able to absorb more challenging material immediately.

But there was one problem — it was the first day of school and none of the students expected a lesson. As soon as class began, Yim waited for the students to fill their seats, simply said "Good morning class," took attendance, and started teaching the Algebra 2 Honors material.

Needless to say, some of his students didn't even have their materials ready, caught off-guard by Yim's lightning fast dive into the material. The entire class was expecting their year with Yim to start with a syllabus and a class introduction, but Yim did not give either of those.

After that day, Yim realized that he should have done things differently.

"I should have started off a little slower, introduced myself and asked how the kids were doing," Yim said.

But after these experiences, Yim has tried his best to avoid a repeat of similar events in his teaching career.

"I've tried to not make any more mistakes like these," he said. "I think I'm doing pretty well so far." ♦



Yim

# AP Computer Science students benefit from flexible schedule through optional attendance

by Kitty Huang

Each Red Day morning, sophomore Rachel Bakke has a choice: whether to do her work for AP Computer Science at home on her own time or attend the first-period class.

Students in APCS have these options because of the class's optional attendance policy, which states that students with a grade average 85 percent or higher don't have to attend class on the days that are marked optional on the calendar posted on Canvas, even though they are marked present for their attendance.

"The purpose of this policy is for student flexibility and stress relief," AP Computer Science teacher Debra Troxell said. "If a student feels confident in the material, and wants to stay home to finish the assignment, then they have the option to do that."

Troxell feels confident in having this computer science class being optional attendance mostly because all the materials are available online and students can access them any time.

Troxell used her own website long before the school began using the learning management system Canvas. She then took

the next step to make optional attendance in APCS formal four years ago during the 2013-2014 school year when she worked with the then-assistant principal Kevin Mount to develop the course. This year is Troxell's third year with a blended environment: one that combines online aspects with in-class attendance.

**"The purpose of the policy is for student flexibility and stress relief."**



TEACHER Debra Troxell

The other APCS teacher Judi Heher also uses the same policy as Troxell. The optional attendance policy seems particularly effective in APCS because many students already have at least some of the computer science knowledge covered in class.

"Computer Science is an AP class, meaning a lot of people already know most

of the topics, so going to every class is not really necessary," sophomore Roshan Verma said.

At the beginning of the year, students were given an introductory packet containing the prerequisites of computer science that students had to know.

At that point, a lot of students who realized that they didn't have enough experience dropped out of the class, and the students left in the class were those who had experience with CS before, sophomore Ruchi Maheshwari said.

Despite the optional attendance policy, many students still choose to go to class daily.

"What I have found really surprising is that some of my top students choose to come every single day," Troxell said. "I have never had a day where there were no students, and I have always been surprised how many students come when they don't have to come."

Maheshwari still chooses to go to class on optional days and has only used the optional attendance three times in the whole semester.

According to Maheshwari, Troxell often gives tips on the labs for the students who still go to class, such as how to structure a particular programming method.

"We do a lot of worksheets and activities in class so I think you get a better understanding of the topics if you go," said Maheshwari. "I also enjoy going to class and getting that class environment, but the few times I used [the optional attendance] have been extremely helpful."

Even though the policy works for Troxell's APCS class, she said she would never do it for her Algebra 2 Honors classes.

"I don't think it fits many classes because all my materials were online years ago, and that's not necessarily true for another class," Troxell explained.

But many of her Comp Sci students see the advantages of blended learning and see other potential applications of it on campus.

"It works really well and I think other classes should be able to do it," Bakke said. "The more online materials we get, the easier it is for us to study, and not having to go to class is really nice." ♦



Heher

# Daily rollercoaster ride for the Torrens family

by Elaine Fan & Sherrie Shen

Junior Tyler Torrens couldn't simply sit and watch as his father and MAP U.S. History teacher Matt Torrens fabricated stories about his childhood in front of his classmates.

In Torrens' supposed story, Tyler ate worms and dirt when he was little which Tyler denies.

"I didn't eat anything like that," Tyler said. "Maybe I tried like an ant or something when I was 5 and I did not realize, but I didn't eat any of that stuff because it's really gross."

Having been both a student and teaching assistant in his dad's classes, Tyler has learned how to handle having a parent at his school.

But for his younger brother, freshman Drew Torrens, attending SHS has been a mix of pushing away from his father but also getting closer, as he often hangs out in his dad's room with his friends.

Drew recalled a time when one of his friends put on Torrens' Forrest Gump boots and walked around in them.

"It's fun; I mean not fun to see your dad when you're walking down the hallway, but it's fun to have a place to go with your friends and to hang out sometimes," Drew said.

Tyler also recounts similar experiences with his dad pointing him out around school.

"If he sees you from across the hall, he'll come yelling 'Tyler, Tyler, Tyler' and he's done that before," he said.

For Tyler, it was more difficult in freshman year to walk around and see his dad.

"I think the hardest thing for me is, what do I call him? Do I call him Mr. Torrens, Dad, Padre? Anything I call him is really weird," he said.

The family starts their long day together at 6:30 a.m., which is when they try to leave their home in San Jose.

After a church class, they arrive at school around 7:45.

The Torrens family has varying schedules after school and depends on the sport season.

This makes it difficult sometimes to fit everyone's schedule together.

Sydney Torrens, the eldest of the four Torrens siblings, graduated in 2015.

She was originally drawn to Saratoga High for its Media Arts Program, and Tyler and Drew followed suit.

Torrens is currently unsure if Landon, his youngest child who is currently in fifth grade, will attend the school as well.

According to Torrens, having his children at the school has changed his outlook on student life here.

"I'm a better teacher now that my kids have gone through school here, knowing what goes on outside of my class," Torrens said. "I've realized the challenge of group projects, and what it means for kids to be under peer pressure, and I also see the frustration they sometimes feel."

He has also gotten more involved and knowledgeable about school activities due to his children's influence.

Torrens sometimes adjusts assignments and test schedules based on activities such as Bombay in the Bay and sports games.

In one case, Tyler informed Torrens of a test conflicting with one of English 11 teacher Natasha Ritchie's tests, which would affect many of the juniors in Torrens' class.

**"It's fun; I mean not fun to see your dad when you're walking down the hallway, but it's fun to have a place to go with your friends and to hang out sometimes."**

FRESHMAN Drew Torrens

After consulting with Ritchie, Torrens decided to postpone his test.

"I was so excited when I found out he had changed it, because I thought 'Wow, I could do anything now! I could postpone any test; I could postpone the final!'" Tyler joked. "No, I felt very accomplished — and it was nice."

Classmates, stressed about the prospective of taking multiple tests on one day, thanked Tyler over Snapchat, who said

it felt "nice to help some people."

In addition to fact-checking his dad's personal stories and notifying him of test conflicts, Tyler has also gained a perspective on the lives of teachers outside of school by experiencing it first hand.

"I never really knew what teachers had to go through — all the grading and the homework — until I started seeing him stay up until 1 in the morning getting our presentation ready for the next day," Tyler said. ♦

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# Going behind City Hall doors as vice mayor

By Alexandra Li

I read over the email that vice mayor Mary-Lynne Bernald had sent, debating what was considered “nice but not formal looking.” But when I realized it was barely 10 minutes to 11 a.m., I bolted out the door and drove to City Hall, a set of buildings I had never entered before.

At a first glance, the buildings next to the senior center on Fruitvale Avenue next to the Redwood parking lot were nothing special. They were brown and circled a courtyard. As I walked through the pillar-lined opening, the Japanese maple trees sheltered the few benches in the enclosed area.

When I arrived, barely 3 minutes before the 11 a.m. meeting on April 5, Bernald walked out of the building and greeted me, shaking my hand and speaking as if we were on-time acquaintances. I was struck by her charismatic spirit, but I guess that kind of personality comes with her career choice, so she is always meeting new people.

After spending 20 minutes in the office of city manager James Lindsay, reviewing all the events that they were to cover that night including affirming Phase I of the Village Policy Update Process, Bernald asked me how I felt about downtown. Her curiosity surprised me, but she later told me that seeing in touch with the community was what drew her into local politics.

“What I love about my job is getting to meet so many people and see what’s important to them, what they value,” Bernald said. It’s so wonderful that I have a job where I can try and make things better.”

Following the meeting, Bernald took me on a tour of City Hall’s departments, such as the Planning Commission, Finances and Information Technology. She addressed each member by name and held a genuine conversation with each of them, discussing

their projects because she, as vice mayor, had to be aware of all of them. Every meeting maintained a formal, yet familiar and respectful environment.

Bernald has experienced many of the different areas as she first worked for the Planning Commission after majoring in political science and spending a few years in advocacy work, teaching people how to campaign for their causes. She then decided to continue her journey by running for one of the three open council spots in 2014, along with one of the incumbents, Emily Lo. Because Lo and Bernald were the top two candidates vote-wise, they were eligible to become mayor or vice mayor. Lo became vice mayor under Manny Cappello, and in December, took the position of mayor with Bernald as her vice mayor. On the council, each person is allowed to serve two 4-year terms.

The pay for this position is almost nonexistent. Both the vice mayor and mayor have a salary of \$3000 a year for around 25 hours a week. The job comes with other benefits, including reimbursements for travelling, training seminars and dinners at meetings, but I learned that Bernald didn’t go into politics for the high pay, instead acting out of “love and dedication to the community.”

When I arrived at 6 p.m. for the meeting with the sheriff’s department, the formal room setup was intimidating, complete with a long oval table and deputies in full uniform. However, as Bernald shook hands with everyone she met, she introduced me as her shadow for the day, and not one person made me feel out of place.

When mayor Lo gathered everyone’s attention and called them to eat, the conversation in the room quieted. At the start of the meeting, the deputies presented their experience from previous uses of body cameras and its future use.

As we moved on to the City Council Pub-



Vice mayor Mary-Lynne Bernald and other members of city council watch as city clerk Crystal Bothelio swears in new planning commissioners Sunil Ahuja and Joyce Hlava.

lic Hearing, I opted to sit in the audience as the two present council members, the vice mayor, mayor, city manager, city attorney and city clerk sat on stage, each behind their respective nameplate.

The first topic of the night was the schedule for the annual Tree Lighting ceremony. Traditionally, it had been held the Friday after Thanksgiving, but since the date excluded certain religions, the council had moved it to Saturday a couple years back in hopes of creating a more inclusive event. However, downtown merchants had relied on the usual date to bring business, and as a result, they saw a decrease in customers, so the council decided to restore the festival to its original Friday date.

Each member knew an immense amount about the history of the event and could quickly build up an argument for what they wanted to see happen.

“While you’re a council member, you get to learn about all sorts of things, and each year, you learn that there’s more to learn,” Bernald said. “It can be the exciting part, but also can be overwhelming.”

During long discussions, it was apparent that most of the time the council members talked down the line they sat in, taking turns in an attempt to keep the meeting moving.

When I finally returned home at 11 p.m. and reflected over my 12-hour day shadowing a city council member, I realized that the greatest thing that had struck me was the way that all the departments worked together and how crucial each part was.

“All the parts of the building and all the people play into what we do,” Bernald said. “Saratoga is the way that Saratoga is, and it has such wonderful values for the community and ideas for what it wants to maintain to keep the community special.” ♦

## TWO STUDENTS GAINS INSIGHTS THROUGH SHADOWING JOBS

# Dancing is difficult, but teaching dance is harder

By Sanjana Melkote

In my 10 years of being a dancer, I have heard (and often disregarded) my teacher’s commands such as: “put more energy!” smile” and “pay attention to technique” countless times, but I’ve never thought about the work a teacher puts every day into pushing their students to be their best.

Suganda Kalakendra, a dance school in the Bay Area, has been teaching Bharathanatyam, an Indian classical dance form for 25 years.

She teaches her students with a clear vision concerning the correct technique in Bharathanatyam, but doesn’t expect us to achieve it on our own. Whenever we don’t understand a step, she will make us repeat it until we master it, and when we struggle with facial expressions, she tells us stories that explain the meaning of the dance.

I attend dance class twice a week: once in solo class and another in a group setting. Even when I am placed in the back because I’m taller than most of the other dancers, he can point out every little mistake I make.

I don’t know if her extreme attention to detail has been developed over time, but in

an effort to improve this skill in myself, I signed up to be a teacher’s assistant last fall and take on a class of 10-year-olds, who are still grasping the initial nuances of dance.

I met my first challenge when I walked into the classroom. I wasn’t simply dealing with my peers; I needed to take control of the room. I introduced myself very nervously and directed the class to start stretching and warming up.

I discovered that the first step in becoming a good teacher is gaining your students’ trust. So, while they were stretching, I asked them about their school and family. Even though these few personal questions initiated a trivial connection compared to years of watching these students grow, it was the start of our relationship.

As the class went on and the children grew tired from dancing, I could see their

effort slipping, and even though I didn’t want to appear harsh, I itched to call out their glaring mistakes.

Once I felt more comfortable with my students after a couple of weeks, I corrected them more and pushed them a little harder each class.

I also learned that it is very important to encourage young students, especially with dance because it takes a lot of hard work to master and can be unrewarding despite persistent efforts.

I was slowly pushing the intensity in class while trying to be not strict like our teacher, but one day all the students came to class without practicing and none of them could show me the new combination properly.

I became frightened because these students had started to slack off, and it was all because of my relaxed approach of teaching.

I felt angry that just because I was nicer, they didn’t feel the personal drive to work hard. I told them that if they didn’t have enough respect to practice what had been taught from our teacher Mrs. Iyer, who puts her life into making them a better dancer, they didn’t deserve to dance.

I felt harsh, but they started working harder and will hopefully make my teacher and me proud again.

I am slowly understanding the balance between tough love and encouragement, and I realized that both come from a place of care in a teacher after having to deliver both myself.

Teachers have an incredible responsibility, and the task of helping a person grow and change in almost any endeavor is never easy. Shadowing my teacher in her dance school helped me improve new qualities in myself and made me realize that she will always teach me meaningful lessons.

Rising from dancer to teacher also pushed me in many ways. I constantly correct myself in the mirror because I’m not just dancing for myself anymore, but sharing my knowledge with others. I now strive to teach this art form with the same care for quality that Mrs. Iyer taught me. ♦



GRAPHIC BY ALEXANDRA LI

## REFUGEE

continued from pg. 1

ing their plight. He found a refugee camp located in the city of Kyllini near the city of Patras, where Polychronopoulos and his family had stayed during their trip to Greece the past summer.

“What was very unusual about Kyllini was not the establishment of a Syrian refugee camp there, but that the mayor of Kyllini is a Syrian himself,” Polychronopoulos said. “He is the first non-Greek-born mayor in Greece.”

Polychronopoulos contacted the mayor, Nampil Morant, who was thrilled with Polychronopoulos’ interest, and asked to meet with him and his mother during the week they spend there.

Morant is not only the mayor of Kyllini, but he is also the founder of the refugee camp located there. He dedicates his time and effort to helping the hundreds of refugees there because he felt that it was the least he could do for them. The camp allows temporary refuge for the campers there until they can find a more permanent area to move to.

“Every day we saw the poor living conditions in the makeshift camps, the rain, mud and the cold,” Morant said in an interview with international news agency AFP. “I could not remain impartial, not when there is this facility that had been closed for the past six years and be used to offer temporary shelter.”

When Polychronopoulos arrived in Kyllini, Greece, on Feb. 18, Morant personally introduced Polychronopoulos and his mother to the camp and the resident refugees. It was there that Polychronopoulos said his “life changed in the matter of just one week.”

For Polychronopoulos, there were many emotional moments as he listened to the refugees’ stories of losing their homes, belongings and families to the war that has killed roughly 400,000 Syrians.

“It was tough listening to all the kids and what they have been through and about the brothers, sisters, parents or other relatives they had lost,” Polychronopoulos said. “It was very emotional to leave the kids I met, knowing that their futures were uncertain and that I will probably never see them again.”

Yet in these dark times, Polychronopoulos shared brief moments of happiness with the families at the camp.

Time and time again, the children there were able to prove to Polychronopoulos that staying optimistic during periods of extreme despair was possible. This unwavering hope and joy was the greatest lesson Polychronopoulos walked away with.

“The kids proved it to me through their smiles, their positivity and their willingness to accept me and befriend me, even though I never experienced any major adversity, let alone war and loss,” Polychronopoulos said.

Polychronopoulos, a talented

basketball player, was able to bond with the children at the camp by playing the sport with them; this connection allowed the children to open up to him. Even though Polychronopoulos was at the camp for only a couple hours each day, he was only able to provide some supplies and moral support.

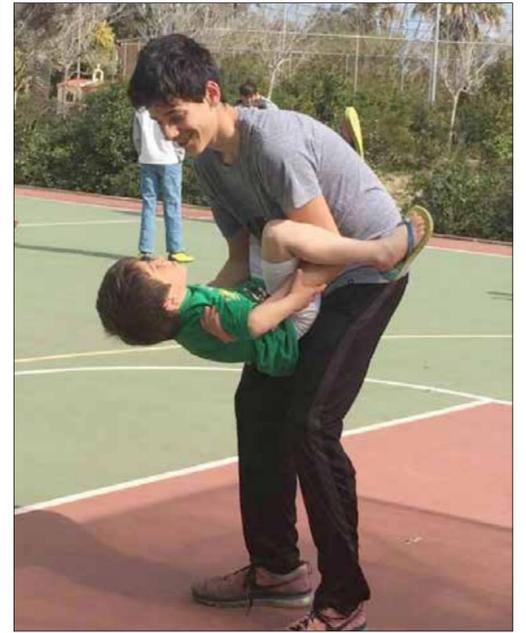
“The first day I bought them lots of food, which is the natural thing you think of when your mind goes to a refugee camp,” Polychronopoulos said. “Though after a couple hours of speaking and playing with them I noticed that balls were the main activity that kept them busy. So I bought them some balls because I noticed that that’s what they really wanted and needed as the camp was well equipped with other supplies.”

For Polychronopoulos, it was fascinating to see how a sport could bring people from different backgrounds together.

“Of all the great moments I had, the best had to be when the kids invited me to different places,” he said. “This really made me feel welcome and accepted, knowing that despite all they’ve been through, these kids trusted me.”

Seeing how carefully the refugees use all their resources, Polychronopoulos gained an even greater appreciation for his privileged life in the U.S. All of Polychronopoulos’ problems are trivial compared to theirs.

Although he spent only spend a week there, Polychronopoulos made friends and learned the life stories of people he would never



Courtesy of GEORGE POLYCHRONOPOULOS

Freshman George Polychronopoulos plays with a child at the Syrian refugee camp in Kyllini, Greece, during February break.

forget. In fact, Polychronopoulos still keeps in contact with many of the children from the camp through social media or email.

“They call me their friend and

have said things such as ‘I will never forget you,’ which moved me,” Polychronopoulos said. “I feel like I have touched their lives in a positive way.” ♦

# Charter school provides different education style

By Rahul Vadlakonda

Then second-grader Alex Ruemmler was grouped into the “lower class” of immigrants as she and her class went through a migrant simulation to learn the struggles of immigration over 60 years. Most of the class sat down in the cramped spaces after getting onto the “ship” to Ellis Island. They watched discontented, as the “first class” got space and food in their “cabin.”

Throughout the year, Ruemmler’s class did more simulations as part of the Charter School of Morgan Hill’s unique curriculum.

Charter schools are publicly funded schools run by a teacher-parent board that operates on an independent curriculum. In order to get started, these schools must have a charter stating their goals for their students and has the freedom to “adjust [the] curriculum to meet the students’ needs,” according to National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. Many of them focus on a particular field such as science, engineering, math or performing arts.

In order to attend many charter schools, students apply for admission and are chosen in a lottery, which is difficult.

The probability of being waitlisted as a kindergartener is high, and getting into a charter school as a first grader or older is only possible if a student attending the school drops his or her spot.

She was admitted into the K-8 Charter School of Morgan Hill only after a student dropped out in the

beginning of the school year.

Ruemmler said that the project-based, independent research activities during the school year helped her retain information more than the textbook-based approach, as the few weeks allotted for each project allowed time to understand the material.

“We had a lot more freedom in what we wanted to learn because the projects were really open ended,” Ruemmler said.

Ruemmler, now a sophomore, transferred from her charter school to Foothill Elementary School in fifth grade when her dad took a new job in Mountain View.

Joining a public school was a huge change, as the curriculum is formed to meet state and local standards and more often involves the use of textbooks and tests. Entering the public school curriculum required academic adjustments on Ruemmler’s part.

In addition, moving away from her old charter school meant leaving the childhood friends she had grew up with.

“We were a lot closer because there were fewer [students], and we were always working together,” she said.

She contrasted the environment of the with what she too often sees here.

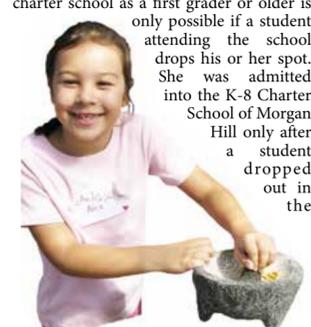
“I don’t like how people in Saratoga always compare themselves and stay up until midnight,” she said. “[Grades] shouldn’t come at the cost of your health.”

Having experienced two drastically different school systems, Ruemmler concludes that the hands-on, cooperative teaching style at the Morgan Hill Charter school helped her understand concepts more thoroughly than in Saratoga.

In addition, she said she had more opportunities to explore interests such as agriculture at her charter school.

Despite the benefits of her old school, she thrives here academically and found a passion for Color Guard and Winter Guard.

“Things are different, but just because everything is standardized does not mean you do not have the ability to explore what you want,” Ruemmler said. ♦



Courtesy of ALEX RUEMMLER

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TRACK AND FIELD

# Father coaches son to personal record

By David Koh & Rahul Vadlakonda

Sunday mornings mean that freshman Kole Tippetts and his father Ian will be spending time together. In their case, it is for one of their typical 5-mile runs.

The pair's routine Sunday runs have been a part of their lives for about a year, and they often undertake even more grueling courses ranging up to 10 miles.

Ever since Kole started doing cross-country in fourth grade, his father has taken the role of his coach. However, as Kole entered high school, his father joined him as he moved from his job as the Piedmont High School cross country coach and became the long-distance trainer for the Saratoga track and field team.

"It's been great having my dad coach," Kole said. "I feel like he's become more involved and understands me more."

Kole said that having his father coach the

team has added a new dynamic, as he sees his father constantly pushing the team with an increased number of harder and more intense workouts. His father often couples these workouts with various runs and exercises outside of practice to create an extensive training regimen.

**"It's been great having my dad coach. I feel like he's become more involved and understands me more."**

FRESHMAN Kole Tippetts

Kole, who mainly focuses on cross-country, currently boasts a 4:59 mile time, an improvement from 5:20 earlier this year and

still hopes to improve his time in the next few years.

Freshman Julia Hoffman, who made states in cross country, said that coach Tippetts has been making a difference in her track performance as well.

"[Tippetts] pushes me to get better and points out specific things I need to work on," Hoffman said.

Hoffman recounted a specific workout where runners had to run 1,200 meters at their mile time pace and then 400 meters at an 800 meter pace. This workout helped build endurance to help the runners finish strong during races.

As the track season comes to an end, Tippetts remembers one of his earliest memories running with his dad.

"When I was younger my dad took me on donut runs," Tippetts said. "We would run 13 miles to a donut shop, my dad would buy me a donut and say that we burned zero calories that day." ♦



Freshman Kole Tippetts and father Ian Tippetts run together on the Saratoga High track.

BADMINTON

# Falcons disappointed with end of season

By Sherrie Shen & Michael Zhang

After many key players graduated last year, the members of the badminton team found themselves unable to win many matches and finished the season 1-11. Their last-place finish in the De Anza division means that they will mostly likely drop to the less competitive El Camino division next season.

As the season ended, many Falcon players are arguing against this drop, most notably because of a game against Palo Alto High School's badminton team on April 20.

In this match, Palo Alto's team moved the players who normally played the No. 3 position to No. 1, and changed its No. 1 and 2 players to No. 2 and 3 in order to win more games. This strategy, known as stacking, is often considered cheating.

Sophomore Hannah Chang felt unhappy after the match, saying, "There is really no point in playing badminton if you are just going to cheat your way through."

Had the Falcons won this match instead of losing 16-14, the Vikings would have been the ones to be relegated to the El Camino division.

Badminton coach Charley Situ planned

to argue against the Vikings' unfair stacking strategy during a meeting with the coaches from other schools in both leagues on May 1 in an attempt to change the result, but due to printing deadlines, the decision made could not be covered in this issue.

After the game against Palo Alto, the Falcons closed out the season with two more losses, one to Monta Vista by the score of 24-6 on April 27 and the other to Gunn by the score of 19-11 on April 25.

Although the Falcons' 18-12 win over Palo Alto on March 23 boosted the confidence of newer players, they lost the next two matches against Gunn 24-6 on March

28 and Cupertino 22-8 on March 30. These results weren't entirely unexpected, however.

"With the loss of around 20 seniors last season, I expected our results wouldn't be as good as last year's, but the underclassmen and the newer members were able to gain a lot of valuable experience," junior Catherine Zhang said.

The Falcons plan on rebuilding their team and coming back stronger next year.

"I hope we can make an even stronger team next year by using our practice time wisely and playing in positions according to our strengths," Chang said. ♦

BOYS' GOLF

# Team beats longtime league champions

By Jay Kim

Eyeing the ball and the flag, No. 1 player freshman Kevin Sze swung his 7-iron and knocked the ball onto the green just few yards away from the hole during a match against Palo Alto on April 24 at the Saratoga Country Club. Shots like this helped Sze to score a two over-par 36, while No. 2 player sophomore William Liu played an even par 34.

As a result, the boys' golf team defeated Palo Alto 201-200, ending the Vikings' 5-year league winning streak totaling 60 straight wins. The seventh-place Falcons ended with three wins in a row, finishing the season 5-6-1.

"We always have the advantage when we play at home because our home course is shorter than other courses," No. 3 player senior Trevor Leung said. "But it's still difficult so it requires you to know the course well in order to succeed, which contributed in our victory against Palo."

The second win in their winning streak came against Homestead on April 19 when they bested the Mustangs 195-214 at Sunnyvale Municipal Golf Course (par 35).

In the match against Los Altos at Saratoga

Country Club on April 17, the boys beat the Eagles 218-238 with Sze shooting a 40 and No. 4 player junior Chris Lee shooting 41. In a three-way match on April 10, the boys played against Gunn and Los Gatos at Saratoga Country Club.

Sze's, Liu's, Leung's and Lee's scores counted for both matches, while No. 5 player junior James Parden's and No. 6 player sophomore Ryan Huesby's scores counted for the match against Gunn, and No. 9 player senior Nathan Shang and No. 10 player senior Wyatt Schulman played against Los Gatos.

The boys tied with Gunn 207-207 but lost by one stroke against Los Gatos 218-219. Sze and Leung led the way in both matches with a 40 from each.

The boys also lost 223-235 to Gunn High School at the Golf Club at Moffett Field on March 30.

"Some of us, myself included, didn't play well on the first three holes at Moffett field, so that really hurt our team's score," Leung said.

With the regular season finished, three players, Sze, Liu and Leung will compete at league finals on May 2. The Falcons missed placing in the top six, which would have allowed them to play as a group. ♦

BASEBALL

# Peng still gets best coaching at home

By Olivia Lu & Isabelle Yang

Baseball has not only helped junior Nathan Peng stay in shape but it has also fostered close-knit relationships, especially with his teammates and with his father, the person who introduced him to the game at age 8.

At first, the two would simply play catch in their front yard. Soon after, Peng began to play Little League ball and went on from there.

"The first practice, I just remember catching my first ball with my dad and loving the game ever since," said Peng, who mostly plays catcher for the Falcons and usually bats third.

Peng's passion for baseball paid off when he landed a spot on the varsity team as a sophomore. This year, he is one of the team's key players. So far, he is hitting .471, had scored 14 runs and had driven in six RBIs.

He mostly plays catcher and bats third in the lineup. Peng hopes to play in college and has begun his searching for recruiting opportunities.

"Professional baseball would be a plus, but

for now I'm just focusing on college," Peng said.

If he doesn't receive any offers, his backup plan is to apply through the regular college application process. Peng's family is supportive of any of his decisions about college in years to come.

Even today, Peng see his father as his best coach, and he is able to translate his father's advice onto the field as well as apply it to life. Peng takes his work ethic from the field to other activities outside of baseball.

"I get work done in the classroom and on the field," Peng said, "and I take pride in getting better every day," adding, "One thing I learned from [my dad] was that nothing happens by accident," said Peng. "Everything wrong that happens has a cause and in order to fix that problem, the cause has to be found."

Peng's talent for baseball is noticeable to his teammates and friends.

Senior pitcher Tony Ramirez describes Peng as "a kid at heart" while being "undoubtedly the best player at Saratoga High."

Regardless of whether Peng is able to play



Junior Nathan Peng readies his bat against Lincoln High's pitcher at a home game on March 4.

in college, baseball has provided the basis for the personal philosophy he will carry far beyond the playing field.

"It's not about the work that everyone sees," Peng said. "What separates a good play-

er from a great player is the work that no one sees." ♦

*Editor's note: Due to printing deadlines, the Falcon was unable to cover the SCVAL playoffs in this edition.*

BOYS' TENNIS

# Team finishes second, prepares for CCS games

By Jay Kim & Elizabeth Lee

The match against Homestead on March 30 was tied at 3-3 as the final, game-deciding match began between the No. 1 singles players. Senior Kailas Shekar won that match and gave the Falcons a 4-3 win over the Mustangs, helping them preserve their second-place position in the De Anza League.

As the regular season ended, the boys still clung to second in league behind Monta Vista, earning a qualifying spot for CCS.

To finish off the league season, the boys defeated the Wildcats at Los Gatos High 5-2 on April 18, finishing with a league record of 10-2. Their only two losses were to the highly talented Matadors.

The boys were scheduled to compete in CCS on May 3 and then continue on with matches on May 5, May 8, May 10 and May 12 if they advance.

The team expects to play tough

matches including St. Ignatius, Monta Vista, Bellarmine and Menlo High. They are seeking to avenge two earlier losses.

"We are practicing new strategies and partner pairings and are also working on volleys and serves since those are two big parts of doubles," said the No. 2 doubles player, Tristan Xiao. "By improving these aspects in the doubles games, I think we will have a much stronger team going into CCS."



Shekar

The Falcons are expecting to play Monta Vista for the third time in the semifinals and are looking forward to another chance to beat them after their strong improvements in doubles.

"I think we definitely have a good chance to win CCS," Xiao said. "We have a lot of great players at singles and guys with good potential at doubles so if we all step up, we definitely have a shot of winning it all. The guys have improved tremendously throughout the season, especially our doubles. Their volleys have improved and they have been implementing new strategies." ♦

BOYS' LACROSSE

# Senior captain balances sports, theater and music

By Michelle Lee & Kyle Wang

Three days before the student production "Good Morning Karina" was set to open on February 25, the drama department contacted varsity lacrosse captain Orion Milazzo. After some last-minute changes, the show needed an audio technician, and cast members were hoping that Milazzo, a senior, could fill in.

"Basically, I learned the whole show in three days," Milazzo said. "That was my first show, and I've done every show since then."

Having played football and lacrosse since he transferred to Saratoga High during his sophomore year, Milazzo also works as a theater technician and plays in three ensembles for the school orchestra.

Milazzo also joined lacrosse as a sophomore. Back then, he didn't have any plans to play lacrosse long term, but quickly fell in love with the sport. He currently has several offers to play Division II and Division III lacrosse, but remains unsure about playing lacrosse after high school.

With orchestra, theatre and lacrosse, Milazzo's calendar is stacked — he has orchestra during the day, with an additional "eighth-period" symphony orchestra practice from either 2:30 to 3:45 on Blue Days or 6:30 to 8:30 on others. Because lacrosse practice takes place from 7 to 9 p.m., he occasionally has to miss either orchestra or lacrosse practice.

"It's a real challenge to balance," Milazzo said. "If you look at my calendar on my phone, it's ridiculous."

Milazzo, nonetheless, tries his best to manage.

Senior midfielder Kylash Krishnamurthy, who has played lacrosse alongside Milazzo since sophomore year, said that his teammate's passion for the sport shows in every practice. "He pushes everyone to go their hardest," Krishnamurthy said. "But he's also pretty laid back off the field."

While Milazzo hasn't decided whether he will continue to play in college, the sport has been a mainstay of his high school experience.

Season Update: The varsity team did not make the CCS playoffs. ♦

SOFTBALL

# Varsity welcomes younger additions with open arms

By Leena Elzeiny & Elaine Fan

Facing each other on the softball field, freshman shortstop Hannah Beine and freshman first baseman Ella Parr deftly throw a ball back and forth, warming up for practice. When Parr makes a mistake, the team laughs it off, and Parr good-naturedly joins in.

"They are all goofballs," softball assistant coach Mike Davey said. "We take it upon ourselves to make fun of Ella as much as we can, but she is really good natured about it. Hannah laughs at Ella too, so that is fun."

The girls' varsity softball team has adjusted to the elevation of Rachel Davey as the team's main pitcher and multiple freshman additions and have maintained a streak of wins after a strong start to the season, with a league record of 8-1 as of April 27.

This year, three freshmen are on the varsity team: Parr, Beine and outfielder Morgan Wooley. They have been members of the South Bay Quakes, a year-round competitive

club softball team, since seventh grade. Parr and Beine's relationship goes back to when they both started playing with Magic, the 8-year-old-and-under softball club that feeds into Quakes.

According to Beine, playing softball on the school team has been a different experience because she sees her teammates on campus every day instead of only on the weekends. As a result, Beine has grown a lot closer with the upperclassmen on the team.

For Parr, entering varsity meant that she had older, more experienced members to look up to, in contrast to club softball where she normally plays with people in the same age range.

"I'm a freshman, so that's a three-year difference," Parr said. "They know more, and so that's always nice to have a different aspect, a different field of view."

Wooley has also grown to love playing on varsity.

"With varsity, we are getting really close, so it's going to be hard to say goodbye to all of the seniors," Wooley said.

The Falcons began to close their league season on April 28 with another win against Gunn High, 5-1. Saratoga only needs to win two more games in order to make it to CCS, which begin May 17.

The girls have continued their winning streak with five consecutive wins at league games, scoring 15-4 against Gunn on April 15, 6-2 against Milpitas on April 19, 6-4 against Palo Alto on April 21 and 16-1 against Lynbrook on April 26. With only one loss against Milpitas in their 8-1 record, the girls came out as the victors in their second game against Milpitas, breaking the Trojans' perfect record, and tying them for first in the league.

Going into spring break, the girls had two league wins in a row, scoring 11-1 against Lynbrook on March 29 and 5-4 against Cupertino

on March 31.

In a tense game at Cupertino, the team was down three players due to injuries and absences, and was left with only one substitute. Players had to step up in hitting spots and different field positions.

"We talked about mental toughness. We could have used our situation as an excuse, but that doesn't do anything," Mike Davey said. "You have to play with what you got and tough it out."

In the end, the girls eventually won a 5-4 victory over Cupertino.

"It was a really good learning experience for us to know that we could work without our main players or only have one sub," Parr said.

The girls attributed their success to strong team chemistry, good communication and trust among the players.

"We are a very close knit group and have girls from all the different grades," Rachel Davey said. "Everyone on the team contributes a role, so it's nice that everyone plays an important part to winning games." ♦



Reyes

With the end of the season approaching, the team is anticipating the upcoming CCS tournament. Currently, the team has a record of 7-6, ranking third in the De Anza League.

Compared to last year when the team won CCS and NorCals, junior middle Connor Reyes said this year's record "isn't as good," but the boys are still practicing and improving.

"We had a rough start by losing starters due to graduation, so the team had to adjust to one another at a quicker pace than normal," Reyes said.

Despite several losses earlier in the season, the team has improved its play, leading to wins against Los Gatos 3-0 on April 28, Harker 3-0 on April 26 and Westmont 3-1 on April 24.

"Our recent success is attributed to our team chemistry and picking up one another's tendencies," Reyes said. "I believe we've hit our prime this season and we're hoping to keep our hot streak going at CCS."

Reyes said the team's chemistry improved at the Bellarmine tournament on April 22, in which the Falcons placed fifth out of over 30 teams, winning four out of five matches.

The boys won against Los Altos 3-0 on

April 19, rebounding from their 2-3 loss against Bellarmine on April 17.

"I thought we played really well against Bellarmine, it was one of our best games," said senior outside hitter Joel Schneidmiller. "It was really close at the end, it could have gone either way. We played pretty much like we did against Bellarmine [against Los Altos] because I think we saw our potential and kept that going, killing them in three sets."

The Falcons had 3-0 wins against Prospect on April 13 and Los Gatos on April 12.

Senior Derek Chiou credits much of the success during the season to Schneidmiller, who led the nation in kills (770) and hitting percentage (62.8) last season, according to the Mercury News, and led Saratoga to the CCS and NorCal Division 3 championships.

"Joel is pretty much carrying the team," said Chiou. "We have a new setter this year, freshman Mohan Duvvuri, so it's hard for them to connect so he's not getting as many sets as he was last year but he's still doing pretty well."

Schneidmiller hopes to lead the team once more to CCS and NorCal championships, as some of the more competitive teams are in a different division and the Falcons are likely to land a spot as a top seed in their division. ♦

>> snapshots



FALCON // MUTHU PALANIAPPAN



FALCON // FREDERICK KIM



FALCON // MUTHU PALANIAPPAN



FALCON // MUTHU PALANIAPPAN

Sophomore Usman Khan hugs a pomeranian on Therapeutic Dogs Day on April 28.

As part of Earth Day events, resource specialist Julie Andersen presents about safe passing zones for animals.

The swimming team honors senior Nathan Ching on Senior Day on April 21.

On April 30, the Music Booster program hosts the annual Pancake Breakfast fundraiser.

**buzzworthy** >> Unicorn drink should stay a fairytale

BY Pranav Ahuja

"Dude, we needa try it pleaseee. All my friends say it's amazing... OK, well, my Dad said it was pretty yummy," junior Akhil Marimuthu told me recently about the craze of the new Unicorn Frappuccino drink at Starbucks.

That's why Akhil and I went there with uniors Neil Rao and Varun Meduri after surviving what was possibly the hardest week of our lives, one filled with tests, girl issues and more tests.

The interesting colors, seemingly positive reviews from Akhil's dad and the man-

go syrup immediately got us hyped up.

I mean as Indians, it would only be natural that we would be excited to try a mango drink.

Unfortunately, it turned out that either Mr. Marimuthu lacked taste buds or the stress from the Week from Hell just made everything 20 times worse than what it should have tasted like.

To be honest, our

first few seconds with the drink weren't bad.

As we all took our first sips, Varun immediately backed out, running straight for the barista and asking for a large glass of water. That meant there was just more to share between Neil, Akhil and me.

If only we had all made Varun's decision.

As we continued sipping on the drink, the slight mango taste slowly diminished and as we reached the blue syrup, it started tasting like sour candy, or,

more accurately, sour candy in milk.

Basically, if you want to make the Unicorn drink at home, just find a sour patch or ring pop, pour milk or yogurt all over it and then toss in a slice of mango.

Does that sound good? If so, I think you have bigger issues facing you than just AP tests.

The drink was at Starbucks for only a few days between April 19-23, making it one of Starbucks' most limited drinks yet. Let's hope it never returns. ♦



GRAPHIC BY OLIVIA LU



Deflated and discouraged by a flat tire

SOPHOMORES STRANDED WHILE RIDING IN LIMO IN SAN FRANCISCO

avsterz and mpalz

Ava Hooman and Muthu Palaniappan



One of the most memorable moments of our recent spring break was touring around San Francisco in a limo. But that's not where the story ends; the car also got a flat tire in the middle of the Golden Gate Bridge, amidst all of the cars and tourists on the bridge.

The limo was for our friend's 16th birthday party, and she had decided to take a few of her friends to spend the day visiting tourist attractions in the city.

As we were halfway across the Golden Gate Bridge, we suddenly heard a thudding sound on the right side of the car.

The limo was going considerably slower than normal, but we attributed that to the traffic on the bridge. We also noticed a lot of tourists were walking across the bridge while staring at us, but we thought it was probably just because we were in a limo.

Little did we know, they were also staring

at the front right wheel of the car, which had developed a giant gash. After moments of confusion, the driver finally rolled down the divider between him and us and informed us that we were going to take a stop at the next parking lot because we had a flat tire.

Upon hearing this news, we panicked, thinking we would be stranded without transportation. Fortunately, all we had to do

**The limo was going slower than normal, but we just credited that to the traffic on the bridge.**

was wait 20 minutes for the driver to fix the tire.

We aren't entirely sure how he managed to fix the tire because we weren't watching him, but we assume he had a spare.

Although the driver fixed the tire, our bad luck continued. Later in the day, we made our way to the Sutro Baths, a saltwater swimming pool complex next to the beach

at Lands End, only to find that the entrance was at least two blocks away from where our driver had dropped us off.

After aimlessly walking around for five minutes, we realized that instead of walking around the street to get to the formal entrance to the Baths, we could go down a steep dirt hill.

Eager to get down to the beach to take pictures, we took the shortcut through the dirt path, deciding against the safer entrance two blocks away.

Soon, we found ourselves stumbling down a vague trail made on a dirt hill that we could have gone head first down if we weren't going as slow as snails. It's safe to say that we both lost our balance several times and almost fell down on the rocky ground, where cement was waiting for us down below.

Although we eventually made it to the Baths, the trek down left us anxious every step of the way.

That day in San Francisco was a memorable one. Whether it was because we got a flat tire in the middle of one of the most famous landmarks in California or because we almost fell down a steep dangerous cliff, our trip was one we won't soon forget. ♦



GRAPHIC BY OLIVIA LU

topten

THINGS TO DO DURING AP TESTING

- 10 Cry yourself to sleep every night. Your eyes will be so clear in the morning.
- 9 Burn all your test prep books. A toasty fire will keep you warm during these cold times.
- 8 Complain to everyone about your busy studying schedule. But don't actually study.
- 7 Wear your lucky underwear all week. Washing them will destroy their lucky properties.
- 6 Don't stress out. Who needs to get into UC Berkeley when you can just join the "UC Berkeley memes for Edgy Teens" group on FB?
- 5 Diamonds are made under pressure. Wait until the very last minute to maximize pressure.
- 4 Relax. Take a break from having an existential crisis to do some meditation or yoga.
- 3 Eat some healthy food. The bitterness of the kale will distract you from your sad, bitter life.
- 2 Wing it. Remember that you still have a 20-25 percent chance of getting a multiple choice question right just by guessing; plus, you can get a score of 1 even when you only write your name!
- 1 Accept your fate. You can't study for something after it's done.

>> Jay Kim and Katherine Zhou