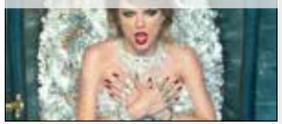


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## dec THE HALLS

**BY MuthuPalaniappan**

As Laura Bhurji glances at the photo of a poster from the '70s, she picks up her pencil and sketches it out onto another blank poster on the lawn of senior Nathon Chin's backyard. Surrounded by various streamers and figurines, Bhurji is just one of the many seniors trying to make the decorations that will soon fill part of the quad during Homecoming week.

This year, the seniors' theme is "Grease," the hit musical from the '70s. In light of this, the class of 2018

>> **SENIORS** on pg. 3

**MEET THE SENIORS: SENIOR JAMES PARDEN PAINTS PLYWOOD WHITE AT THE SENIORS' DECORATION MEETING ON SEPT. 16**

**CLUBS**

## Three-day Club Fair to replace hectic Club Day

**BY AlexandraLi**

Each year, the scene for Club Day is the same: students push their way through the crowds during lunch in an attempt to reach the free food offered by clubs trying to attract new members. With over 60 clubs lined up in the quad on one day, it is nearly impossible for students to explore the rich variety of clubs the school has to offer in a 35-minute lunch.

This year, in an effort to avoid the hectic Club Days of the past, ASB club commissioners Elicia Ye and Ishana Narayanan asked to change the school's traditional one-

day Club Day event to a three-day long "Club Fair," which will be hosted from Oct. 3 to 5.

In addition to spreading the showcase of clubs over three lunch periods, the commissioners plan to group clubs based on similar ethnic or academic interests and assign each club a certain day based on the groups, such as having all academic-directed clubs present on one day.

The exact lineup of clubs on each day has not been finalized yet.

In making the change, Ye and Narayanan took into account their own experiences



**Narayanan**

with previous Club Days. They want to give students the opportunity to view all clubs, especially smaller ones that are overshadowed by larger ones.

"We realized that Club Day doesn't do justice to all clubs on campus and that shifting to a Club Fair model would better fit one of our main goals of increasing awareness of the variety of clubs on campus," Narayanan said.

Yet the similarities between the new Club Fair and the original Club Day allow clubs

to approach the event similarly.

According to Science Club president Chengzi Guo, her group will be using the same poster from the previous year to attract students' attention. Overall, the clubs view the new change in a positive light.

"We'll have more time to talk to people about what we do," Environmental Club president Annie Xu said. "We can get more sophomores and freshmen involved, which is what we struggled with last year."

By making it mandatory for all clubs to participate in the event, the commissioners hope to see an increase in student sign-ups and engagement. ♦

>> **what'sinside**

■ **MATH CLUB**  
New leadership  
Algebra 2 Honors teacher Andrew Shoemaker takes on new role as Math Club adviser. **pg. 6**

■ **CULTURE**  
Complacency  
We must acknowledge the achievements of Asian American artists to break preconceived beliefs. **pg. 9**

■ **HEALTH**  
Dieting  
Senior loses 70 pounds with extreme diet over the course of one summer. **pg. 20**

**FALCON FOCUS**

## Senior takes first place at NASA competition

**BY CaitlynChen**

Standing in front of a crowd of world-class industry professionals from companies such as Nokia and IBM last month in Helsinki, Finland, senior Stacey Chen and five other interns who had spent the summer at NASA Mountain View began pitching their original web application AgroSphere. Up against dozens of teams across the globe in the NASA Europa Challenge, Chen didn't know what results to expect from the international competition.

Yet after a whole summer's work of developing AgroSphere and practicing their pitch, Chen and her team of one other high schooler and four graduate students took home first place and the GODAN Data Challenge prize, given to projects that advance local food production under climate changing conditions.

"With all the other talented university team, we didn't expect to win the competition," Chen said. "It was so exciting!"

While most students were busy getting back to school in the first two weeks of school, Chen was still communicating with her summer intern team at NASA on a daily basis. In just 10 weeks over the summer, the team of six had produced AgroSphere, a web application that displays a user-friendly visualization of the effects of climate change on agriculture. Receiving geospatial data from an open web source,

>> **NASA** on pg. 4

**FINANCES**

## Classes vary in bank account balances

**BY KarenChow & AlexandraLi**

In the first few weeks of the school year, class officers have been looking at the size of the bank accounts and their projected expenses. Over the course of the year, they fundraise to prepare for future events and build for following years.

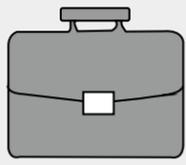
The seniors, with only about \$700 in their account, find themselves as one of the lowest out of all the classes and commissions and in a position to start raising money soon, class president Robert Scott said.

This contrasts to the trends of the past, in which seniors have usually had the most money starting the year because of the longer time they've had to fundraise. Scott, however, reasons that this is due to the large down payment they recently placed for senior prom.

"We dropped a lot of money for prom, which is normal for most classes," Scott said. "Coming into the year, we realized our bank account is low, but it's because nobody else has to pay for senior prom."

To compensate for their low balance, the seniors plan to start fundraising right away through typical pearl milk tea and donut fundraisers helping them pay for Homecoming decorations. They also plan to fundraise from senior apparel later in the year.

>> **FINANCES** on pg. 5



news  
>> briefs

**Record 40 qualify for National Merit**

This year, the class of 2018 has 40 National Merit semifinalists, the largest number in school history, according to assistant principal Brian Safine.

National Merit is a corporation that identifies top scholars based on their PSAT scores from junior year. To be a semifinalist, a student must score in the top 1.5 percent of all test-takers.

All of the following seniors are semifinalists and thus eligible for a scholarship: Ananya Chakravarthy, Caitlyn Chen, Carolyn Chen, Stacey Chen, Amith Galivanche, Eleanor Goh, Colina Guan, Chengzi Guo, Samuel Guo, Kevin Handoko, Vera Hsu, Tiffany Huang, Sohini Kar, Ian Kim, Jaehyun Kim, Ryan Kim, Ania Kranz, Rahul Kumar, Shivaum Kumar, Angela Lee, Michelle Low, Avni Madhani, Elora Pradhan, William Sabato, Joshua Si, Miranda Song, Ashley Su, Mervi Tan, Sadhana Vadrevu, Varun Viswanath, Austin Wang, Kyle Wang, Bryan Wong, Tyler Wu, Michael Xue, Clifford Yin, Atlas Yuen, Lillian Zeng, Catherine Zhang and Andrew Zheng.

— Jackson Green

**SHS soars high in public rankings list**

The school was recently ranked as the No. 20 public high school in California by U.S. News & World Report.

With a 99 percent graduation rate, a 95 percent proficiency in English, a 94 percent proficiency in mathematics and a 91 percent passing rate for AP tests, the school places far above most high schools in the state.

Principal Paul Robinson said he sees these rankings as a recognition of the hard work by both students and staff.

“We do what we can to meet the needs of our students to help them reach their dreams,” Robinson said. “If that gives us good stats, so be it.”

— Selena Liu

**Fall play to be ‘You Can’t Take It with You’**

Family gatherings can be the opposite of a good time, especially when family members have their own “special” qualities, as shown in the play “You Can’t Take it With You,” written by George S. Kaufman. This fall, the drama department will also perform its own rendition of the award-winning play.

Auditions for the play were held on Sept. 7-8. The show will be performed on Nov. 11-12 and Nov. 17-18 in the McAfee Center.

Senior Katie Sabel will play the lead role of Alice Sycamore and junior Mateo Morganstern will be Tony Kirby.

With its premiere in 1936, the three-act Broadway comedy takes place in New York City, focusing on the antics of the three-generation Sycamore family, specifically their interactions with the family of youngest daughter Alice Sycamore’s boyfriend, Tony Kirby.

— Jessica Wang

>> picturethis



FALCON // AVA HOOMAN

**SHOW ME THE MONEY >> Freshman class officers Arnav Mangal and Emily Choi count donations collected from parents at Guidance Night on Sept. 14 in the McAfee Center.**

LEADERSHIP

**District attempts to increase racial sensitivity at schools**

BY LeoCao

Three months ago, Los Gatos High experienced two racially charged prom askings: One student wore blackface to ask a girl to senior prom; the other used a racial slur on a prom poster that referenced lynching.

In response, district officials have refocused efforts to improve community-wide racial sensitivity, hiring Epoch Education, a company that offers consulting and other resources on cultural and racial sensitivity, to facilitate training sessions for Los Gatos and Saratoga High. Leadership students from both schools attended their first joint meeting on Sept. 14.

“It was really great,” said senior Kyle Wang, who attended the first meeting along with six other SHS Leadership class students. “We were able to discuss many of the issues regarding racial and cultural sensitivity that still affect our community today.”

After a larger lecture and discussion session in which participants continued their training in cultural sensitivity, each school’s participants split off into smaller groups to focus on school-specific planning.

For Saratoga High’s representatives, discussion centered around the ongoing racial interpretation of academics and fostering a community of inclusion. Having decided on three major “themes” for the 2017-18 school year, staff members, students and administrators from both schools have made a committee that is now drafting a mission statement.

“Obviously, race and self-separation are still very, very sensitive issues on campus, and the situation has undoubtedly improved over the years,” Wang said. “But even at Saratoga High — one of the more culturally aware campuses — I think there’s always room for further growth.”

Prior to the joint meeting, Epoch hosted workshops at Los

Gatos on Aug. 21 and Saratoga on Aug. 22.

All 60 Leadership students attended the workshop, participating in a series of activities that sought to train them on the tenets of Critical Race Theory, a framework that was introduced in 1995 and is used to examine and challenge the ways racism impact social structures.

“We did many activities that highlighted the racial differences in today’s world,” sophomore Timothy Yoon said. “The teacher demonstrated how race separates us in a high school setting.”

As the district plans on moving forward with fostering a race-sensitive environment at both Los Gatos and Saratoga, Epoch will continue to host workshops with smaller groups of Leadership students, administrators and staff from both schools.

“We’re not expecting a change overnight,” Wang said, “but we genuinely think that we’ll be able to make things better.” ♦

ASB

**ASB forges connections with local businesses in downtown**

BY AndrewLee & MuthuPalaniappan

With the start of a new school year and Leadership class, activities director Matt Torrens and ASB have been experimenting with different ways students can get more involved with Saratoga’s growing business community.

“Especially in smaller communities where local high schools are a big deal, creating a dialogue between businesses and student activity helps unify the community,” Torrens said.

Torrens said this ASB initiative began when someone suggested that the school offer Saratoga Bagels, the local bagel shop, a pennant from the school.

In return, Saratoga Bagels offered SHS discounts on food and was thrilled to sport the school

logo in its shop.

The ASB is planning to contact other businesses in Saratoga to promote friendly relationships between the school and businesses in the city.

**“Students will feel downtown is an extension of Saratoga High.”**

SENIOR Nathon Chin

“It’s a win-win and it helps us reach out to the community, use the community resources and gets the kids spending money at the local businesses,” Torrens said.

During a Leadership training day in August, students went door to door offering residents to clean windows or sweep the sidewalk.

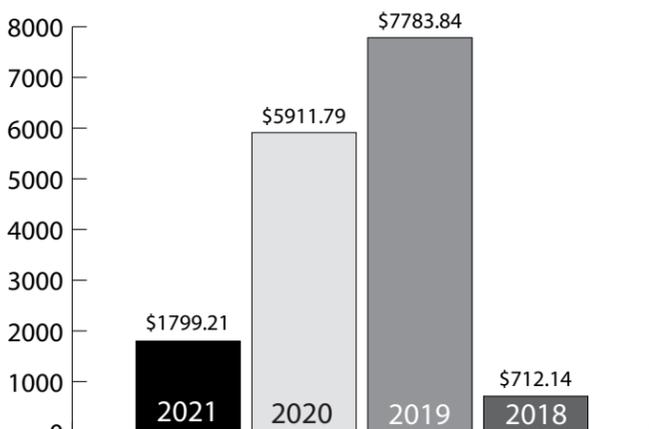
“Sixty kids have done 45 minutes of work in the downtown, and they have done everything from weeding at a museum to rearranging things for businesses,” Torrens said. “That’s a lot of hours students have spent on community service.”

Along with providing services to establishment, the ASB hopes that the stores will display a SHS sticker in their windows.

“Students would feel safer and more connected with their communities, and eventually they could work in those businesses,” ASB president Nathon Chin said. “Students will feel downtown is an extension of Saratoga High.” ♦

>> falconfigures

**Class Bank Account Finances**



Source: Anna Ybarra

— Roland Shen

# Freshmen scramble to organize first Quad Day

BY EshaLakhotia

After the first rally of the school year, with green overpowering the underclassmen side of the gym, the school is excited to see what spirit and talent the freshman class will bring to the table at Quad Day.

Freshman class treasurer Emily Choi and president Lauren Tan have been working hard to make sure their skit and dances are well organized.

**“The rest of the school can expect our Homecoming is going to be decent, nothing terrible.”**

FRESHMAN Lauren Tan

“As class officers, we each are in charge of a dance, the skit, or decorations,” Choi said. “So we are just managing and helping our choreographers, skit writers or decoration team plan and get ready for our first Homecoming.”

Choi admits that because of their late start to the process in mid-August, it has been difficult to get organized into a schedule.

“Our process was kind of unorganized because it’s our first Homecoming so a lot of people were confused,” Choi said. “For

some dances, we didn’t have enough choreographers, and for other dances, we had too many, but things are starting to come together as skit auditions are soon and we have most dances in order.”

Since their theme doesn’t really relate to any of their personal lives, coming up with short and funny jokes and a script around “Footloose” has been difficult. In addition, Tan said, they have been searching for decoration ideas, but nothing “really creative has come up yet.”

Since freshmen have no past experience with Homecoming, many members of the class are unwilling to participate.

Due to the minimal practice time, the freshmen class wants to bring the point across that their Homecoming performance will not be outstanding.

“The rest of the school can expect that our Homecoming is going to be decent, nothing terrible,” Tan said.

Overall, with the experience they get from organizing and preparing their first year of Homecoming, the freshman class has not only learned about the Homecoming process, but made relationships that will last throughout their high school life.

“The most memorable part of preparing for Homecoming is all the friendships I’ve made,” freshman hip hop dance choreographer Tabitha Hulme said. “I’ve gotten to know so much about other people, and it’s really great to see how diverse the campus is even just within the freshman class.” ♦

# Sophomore planning can’t take a day off

BY LeoCao & AndrewLee

As their Quad Day looms closer, times are becoming increasingly stressful for sophomores working on Homecoming preparations.

With many sophomore class officers and students busy with activities during the summer, Homecoming preparations did not start as early as most had hoped.

“We started preparing for Homecoming once school started,” sophomore class vice president Emma Hsu said. “Everything was super rushed, so we are planning to start even earlier next year.”

On a positive note, class president Prosper Chiu said Homecoming participation this year has gone up by around 40 students.

“A lot of people are getting involved this year, especially in our class,” Chiu said. “We’ve also started dance practices a lot earlier than we did freshman year.”

With this increase in participation, the sophomores have been able to add K-pop and co-ed pair dances for the first time to their Quad Day performance.

The all-boys’ dance has also surged in popularity this year. With 20 new participants, choreographer George Bian is optimistic about their performance.

“We don’t have the highest expectations, but I am very excited and believe that we will score very high during our Quad Day,” Bian said.

In the meantime, sophomores running into issues regarding their Homecoming theme: “Ferris Bueller’s Day Off.”

“I think that the sophomore theme isn’t that great this year because nobody really knows about the movie ‘Ferris Bueller’s Day Off,’” Hsu said.

In order to get the class more engaged with the theme, the sophomore class officers held a movie showing on Aug. 26 on the upper athletic field. Hsu called it a great success and helped familiarize the class to the theme.

“Before I watched the movie, I thought the theme was a bit weird because I had never heard of it, but now that I’ve watched it, I think it’s great and interesting,” Hsu said.

In addition, the sophomores have been having some difficulties with making decorations for the entrance to the school.

According to Chiu, it was initially difficult to plan decorations for their theme.

“There aren’t too many iconic locations or objects in the movie,” Chiu said. “Many of us aren’t sure what decorations would fit into the theme.”

Despite the major obstacles and difficulty with the theme, the sophomores are excited to show the school how far they’ve come since they were freshmen.

“I am certain that our Quad Day will be awesome,” Hsu said. “Everyone has been working really hard and I’m sure that it’ll pay off.” ♦



GRAPHIC BY KAREN CHOW AND CHARIN PARK

# Juniors blast headfirst into groundwork for production

BY AvaHooman

The juniors were laughing hysterically while they were holding script tryouts, having people act as a pregnant lady giving birth at an inexperienced doctor’s office.

The juniors, who were given the theme of “Back to the Future” this year, got straight to planning as soon as they received their theme at Food Truck Fest the Friday before school started. To ensure that they were able to have enough time to practice and create decorations, the class began planning even before then.

**“We could definitely compete with the senior class to win.”**



JUNIOR Sasha Pickard

During the summer, the class officers contacted choreographers, collected materials and took measurements for decorations so they could be better prepared.

This year, the juniors are storing decoration supplies and holding meetings at Zoyah Shah’s home. She prepares the meetings with her friends by planning what to do so everyone can be efficient.

“We started having meetings a little later than we would have liked, so we are a

little behind,” Shah said.

Their hopes to be ahead of the other grades did not last. Since many of the juniors are overwhelmed with busy schedules, there has been a lack of participation.

Building decorations and perfecting dances require participation from the majority of the grade and without it, the juniors are having an extremely difficult time trying to finish everything on time for Homecoming. The officers are hoping for more participation once they get closer to their Sept. 28 Quad Day.

“Homecoming is a great way to take a break from studying and relieve stress, so if we had more people coming to the meetings it would help a lot,” Shah said.

Junior Isabella Taylor is one of the juniors who has been present for all the meetings and helps with all the decorations.

“We need more people to come and help so we can make sure everything is finished on time and can compete with the other grades. We should be more experienced after two years, but hopefully everything will go as planned,” Taylor said.

The officers hope to either make or get Delorean, the car from “Back to the Future,” and they are incorporating electronic music for their dances to give an ‘80s vibe.

They have also been looking forward to making sturdier decorations and a main arch since they are allowed to use wood this year.

“If it all goes according to plan, we could definitely compete with the senior class to win,” Pickard said. ♦

# SENIORS

continued from pg. 1

is working hard to incorporate retro themes and music like “Summer Nights” to reflect the hit musical.

“Grease’ has such iconic outfits, so I want to make sure we all have unique and good costumes,” said Kate Bossi, one of the Homecoming commissioners.

Seniors Colina Guan, Elicia Ye and Connor Reyes are in charge of 2018’s skit script.

“We put a lot of focus on making the skit concise but still memorable,” Reyes said. “Because of the additional dances, we are having this year there is less time for skit.”

Senior Riley Carter will play Sandy Olson, Reyes will play Danny Zuko and senior Hannah Julie Yoon will play Rizzo in the skit.

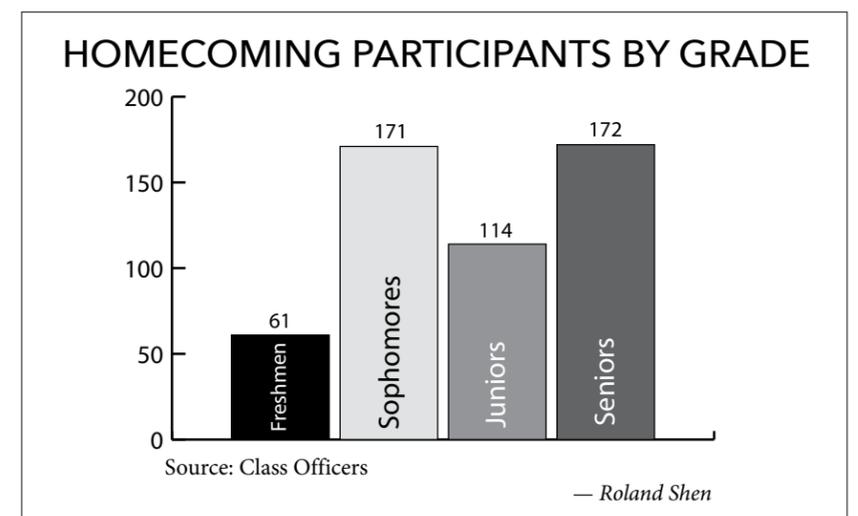
Along with preparations for their dances and skit, the seniors are working hard to

ensure that their decorations are top-notch.

In order to organize all the different elements that go into Quad Day, the seniors have assigned Homecoming heads. They delegated Bhurji, Harshini Ramaswamy and Chin to be section heads for every section of their hallway to help coordinate organization.

In addition to managing decorations, Kim decided to take on the role as a choreographer for the co-ed dance. Other dances include an all-girls’ dance, all-boys’ dance, hip hop, K-pop, Bollywood and the finale. Both the all-girls’ dance and the all-boys’ dance have around 40-50 seniors, and the partners dance has around 75.

“This year is special since it is obviously our last year which has made our whole class more dedicated,” Kim said. “People in our grade have been becoming better friends with all different types of groups and people, which I think will translate in every aspect of Homecoming.” ♦



## UNDERCLASSMEN

## Another large freshman class enrolls

BY EshaLakhotia  
& MichaelZhang

As students poured into the gym for the first rally on Sept. 1, the sheer size of the class of 2021 became apparent. A sea of green filled almost three-quarters of the underclassmen side, as loud "Let's go, freshmen!" chants echoed through the gym, leaving juniors and seniors to wonder whether they would be overwhelmed by underclass numbers.

With 336 new freshmen attending the school, it is no wonder that campus facilities, such as the parking lots and the quad tables during lunch, are becoming more crowded. Though short of last year's 360 freshmen, the class is the second in a row that is unexpectedly bigger than what school officials were expecting.

Because class sizes seem to be stay large, it may seem to follow the Redwood Middle School is also growing in terms of enrollment, but that is not true, said principal Paul Robinson.

Instead, the unexpectedly large classes result from students who come to the high school from other districts or private schools. Many of these students attended private middle schools like St. Andrews or Harker, where they had hoped to get a head start by taking advanced classes.

**The class is the second in a row that is unexpectedly bigger than what the school officials were expecting.**

For instance, freshman Alan Zu attended Argonaut, transferred to BASIS Independent Silicon Valley in San Jose for middle school and decided to return to Saratoga High for his last four years.

Zu said that he decided to return because he thinks Saratoga High has a better

community and curriculum than BASIS. When comparing the two schools, Zu said that Saratoga is "more coordinated" than BASIS in terms of its teachers and school activities.

In addition to resident students like Zu who transferred from private middle schools, many more freshmen transferred from outside the area. According to Robinson, a total of over 90 new families from around the world enrolled one or more students in at the school this year.

Class secretary Arnav Mangal and the rest of class officers see advantages to such a large freshman class. They hope that the large number of freshmen will contribute to greater attendance at events and fundraisers.

So far, the administration has not run into any major challenges concerning the size of the class of 2021.

"It's better to be growing than shrinking in enrollment," Robinson said. "It means more students to serve, which we're excited about." ♦

## NATIONAL COMPETITION

## RISE Club wins big at conference

BY AlexandraLi  
& SherrieShen

More than 50 teams from across the U.S. gathered in a large auditorium for the closing ceremony of the Technology Student Association (TSA) national conference, hosted in Orlando, Fla., from June 20-24, where Saratoga High's Raising Interest in Science and Engineering Club (RISE) placed sixth overall and seventh in the building category.

The team, consisting of seniors Anthony Ding, Sohini Kar and Varun Viswanath and juniors Alexandra Li, Ethan Ko and Bassil Shama, competed in the Tests of Engineering Aptitude, Mathematics and Science (TEAMS), an event under TSA. The competition included a presentation, in which teams created a poster and presented a method of solving arsenic water pollution in poorer areas, as well as a building section that incorporated problem solving.

These six students were the first members of RISE Club to have competed in TEAMS at the national level in recent years.

As a result, the team had little expectations regarding competition format. However, they were pleasantly surprised by their final placing.

"I was really ecstatic, especially for the build award, since that was a huge team effort," Kar said. "The overall award win was amazing as well. I was really proud that our ideas ranked at the top of the nation."

The team qualified for the national competition by placing 13th in the TEAMS regional on March 11, where approximately 20 RISE Club members participated.

On the day of the presentation, the team dressed up in formal wear for their 9 a.m. presentation slot. After late nights of hard work in the days before the competition, the team walked out of the presentation feeling confident in their performance.

For the building portion, the teams were tasked with creating a contraption to filter glitter and sand in an air tunnel along with solving related math problems. By allocating two people, Viswanath and Shama, to build the device, and the rest to work on the problems, the team finished both.

The six members of the team bonded throughout the course of five days and found the experience valuable.

"We went out on a whim and chanced the national competition, but it turned out pretty well," Ko said. "Hopefully, we established the beginning steps of a club tradition." ♦

## SPEECH AND DEBATE

## Team looks to build off historic success

BY PranavAhuja  
& PatrickLi

Two hours before the awards ceremony at the 2017 California State Speech and Debate tournament in Arcadia last June, then-juniors Varun Viswanath, Divya Rallabandi, Kyle Wang and then-sophomore Arian Raje gathered at a nearby mall to await the results at a Panda Express. When their coach, Chris Harris, let them know the results at the award ceremony, they were ecstatic.

"It was a pretty gratifying moment because I hadn't made it the year before," Raje said. "It kind of served to validate all the work I had put in throughout the year."

During the 2016-17 competitive season, the team enjoyed historic success at contests like the State Tournament.

Wang won first place at states in Extemporaneous Speaking, beating more than 200 competitors, the first SHS student to do so well in years.

"To be perfectly honest, I was stunned when they announced the final placing

at states," Wang said. "I tried to contain it, but I think on the video my dad took there's a little moment where I just look like I've been hit with a brick."

In addition, Viswanath and Rallabandi took second and third place respectively in Oratorical Interpretation, and Raje placed fourth in Extemporaneous Speaking. Their debate topic was "The United States ought to replace the Electoral College with a direct national vote."

In debate, seniors Aayush Agarwal and his partner Arun Ramakrishna as well as senior Austin Wang and his partner Siavash Yaghoobi qualified to the prestigious Tournament of Champions hosted at the University of Kentucky.

Wang and Raje reached the quarterfinals in Extemporaneous Speaking at the Tournament of Champions hosted at Northwestern University.

Finally, Wang was yet again successful at the 2017 National Tournament in June, placing fifth out of 256 competitors from around the U.S.

For the 2017-18 season, Raje said, the captains have shifted their focus on build-

ing a legacy of competitive success.

"Coach Harris has made sure that the captains are really accountable this year," Raje said, "so everyone is making sure to do their best to train the new freshmen," Raje said.

Program enrollment nearly doubled this year, with fifty members registered in total. Many enrollees are freshmen with previous experience, including competition at the middle school state and national level.

Most returning speech and debate members — including incoming freshman — have already set their sights on placing at tournaments in their respective events. Nonetheless, Rallabandi and Viswanath also hope to encourage the freshmen to try new events as they, too, branch out in their final year of competition.

Rallabandi, who has competed in Oratorical Interpretation for the past three years, plans to branch out to Original Oratory and Thematic Interpretation — events which she has tried in the past but never pursued fully.

"I'm really looking forward to improving upon myself and helping guide other younger students this year," Rallabandi said. ♦



Wang

## NASA

continued from pg. 1

the team parsed this information, generating various functions to create buttons, grab the data and visualize the data through various means of plots and layers.

After completing the project, the team their project to the NASA Europa Challenge.

Placing among the top six, the team was offered an all-expense paid trip to Helsinki,

**"It felt very special to be one of the only high schoolers there."**



SENIOR Stacey Chen

Finland. Chen flew to Europe to join her team at the competition from Aug. 29 to 31.

During the three days in Helsinki, Chen and her team spent most of their time preparing for their pitch with their project manager from at NASA.

But during this time, they were still able to get to know some of the other talented entrepreneurs at the competition.

In fact, most of the other competitors were either undergraduate or graduate students.

"It felt very special to be one of the only high schoolers there, and even one of the only girls there," Chen said.

Nevertheless, even as a high school intern, Chen contributed just as much to the project as her other team members, making improvements on the web app design, collecting usable data, creating a search bar for all data layers and developing the website for documentation using CSS3, JavaScript, jQuery and jQuery UI.

In creating the application, Chen and her team hoped that the information would reach younger children, educating them on the reality of climate change.

"We have a lesson plan attached to the app because intended to aim it at secondary school students since they determine the future and may be more willing to learn about the negative effects of climate change on agriculture," Chen said.

Reaching out to multiple universities, Chen and her team talked to representatives from the University of Michigan and the University of Pennsylvania over Skype conferences.

She hopes that through the universities, the web application can reach students of



Courtesy of STACEY CHEN

Stacey Chen presents her pitch with fellow teammates at the national NASA competition.

all ages, helping everybody stay informed about the effects of climate change on our world today.

In the future, Chen looks forward to improving the functionality of the application with her team.

Perhaps even taking on new develop-

ment projects to compete at another worldwide competition.

"It was such a great opportunity to really interact with other teams from Germany, Jordan, and more," Chen said. "People are so nice; now, I have friends from all over the world." ♦

CURRENT EVENTS

# Virginia native reflects on Charlottesville

BY Harshini Ramaswamy

In February, the City Council of Charlottesville, Va., successfully passed a motion to remove the Robert E. Lee statue, a monument to a Confederate general, from the town. What had started as an attempt to right the wrongs of the past later culminated into a violent weekend in August, resulting in the death of a 32-year-old woman and injured protesters as white supremacists and anti-racists clashed in front of the statue.

The protest not only shone a public spotlight on hatred and bigotry but also left a negative mark on the small college town.

For senior Evan O'Brien, who lived in Charlottesville from ages 6 to 11, the extensive media cover-

age has overshadowed his memory and connection to the town.

"I'm disappointed and disgusted [with the events]," O'Brien said. "Ever since I was little, there's been a lot of class warfare, so this wasn't exactly a surprise, but I didn't think it would get this bad."

Despite being described by the Guardian as "the happiest town in America," with residents owing it to the town's "liberal values and sense of community," Charlottesville has a long history of racial tension.

In addition to being a focal point for the resurgence of white nationalism, Charlottesville and University of Virginia have also been plagued by charges of police brutality. In 2015, black honors student Martese Johnson was vio-

lently assaulted by white officers after supposedly being caught possessing a fake I.D.

In Charlottesville, Caucasians make up nearly 70 percent of the population while African Ameri-

cans and other minorities are the rest, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Black enrollment to the school also sits under 10 percent.

In the aftermath of the protest, Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe re-

sponded with a statement strongly condemning the white supremacists and Neo-Nazis, yet in a later statement, he took a step back from the conflict by emphasizing that education should be prioritized over spending millions on removing or relocating Confederate monuments.

O'Brien has a different view of these statues.

"The statues are outdated pieces of racist nationalism and deserve to be thrown into a dump," O'Brien said. "I have a lot of ethnically diverse friends in Charlottesville, including African Americans, and they get very nervous about [events like Charlottesville]. Hopefully, it sorts itself out to make sure something like this doesn't happen again." ♦

GRAPHIC BY KYLE WANG

"Ever since I was little there's been a lot of class warfare, but I didn't think it would get this bad."



—Former Charlottesville resident Evan O'Brien (12)

MAP

# Seniors go head-to-head in annual SF race

BY Julia Miller

Running like the wind, 10 teams of Media Arts Program (MAP) seniors raced back to the train station on Sept. 13, checking their clocks every minute. The pace quickened as they sprinted to make each crosswalk, while the recorders of each group glanced at the list of challenges left to complete in their 9-mile race around San Francisco.

At the start of each year, the MAP senior class embarks on the team-building activity known as the "Amazing Race." Similar to the CBS TV show with the same name, teams of three to four students accompanied by a teacher chaperone are assigned more than

40 tasks to complete in under four and a half hours.

Each task is allotted a certain amount of points ranging from five to 20, depending on how difficult the challenge is. The team with most points was awarded 3 percent extra credit.

"Using the 'GooseChase' app, we uploaded pictures and videos of our team completing tasks and kept track of all the team rankings," Jane Lee said. "The app was like a simple notification service (SNS), since our Media Arts teacher, Mr. (Joel) Tarbox, kept sending announcements to our phones posing as the MAP God."

The tasks allowed seniors to explore several aspects of San Francisco including Chinatown, the

Financial District, Nob Hill and North Beach. While students traveled around the city, random tasks such as kissing strangers and buying bubbles were listed for points as well.

At the start of the race, teams were given \$160, a crossword to complete for 50 points and a start and finish time. If students were not back to the train station by their assigned finish time, 10 points was docked for every minute they were late.

Adam Sturge's team was nearly late to the finish line, but luckily made it back in time after running two miles to the train station in 20 minutes.

Sturge appreciated the exposure of going to a big city like San

Francisco, since he was able to see things that are not in Saratoga.

"It's really eye opening to get exposure to not only the environment, but also to the people in it," Sturge said.

Sturge's opinions are similar to those of Gina Hinojosa, who also enjoyed exploring the city without a certain order of tasks to do or landmarks to learn about.

Hinojosa got a true taste for the random challenges students were given when she got a task to give a smooch to one of San Francisco's furry friends.

"The best task was where we had to kiss somebody's dog on the street for 15 points," Hinojosa said. "I love dogs, and watching the other seniors kiss dogs was so cute."

The seniors said they had a challenging yet exciting time on one of their last few MAP field trips. "Amazing Race" was a trip surely filled with life lessons, such as planning ahead, using money wisely and being able to complete goals as a team.

"I learned that you have to move fast to achieve your goals," Hinojosa said. "Even though we got seventh place, I feel like my team and I accomplished a lot together and made it through all the struggles of 'Amazing Race.'"

The winners of "Amazing Race" was Team 1, which included Chris Auches, Nafisa Hussain, Angela Lee, Julia Miller and James Parden and chaperone Physics teacher Matt Welander. ♦

## FINANCES

continued from pg. 1

"We're trying to make some money, and if we don't pay for the things we have to pay for, we're going to be in trouble," Scott said. "It puts on a little pressure, but I'm not worried that we can't do it. It's just going to take some effort."

Although the senior class funds are low, activities director Matt Torrens thinks they will be able to fundraise enough to get them through the year. After ASB was forced to pour money into the account for the class of 2017 last year, Torrens said he is now more careful and understanding of senior class finances.

For the incoming freshmen, a bank account for their class has been created that will be used until they graduate. Although they currently have a couple thousand dollars in it, freshman treasurer Emily Choi said others have told her it's a good spot to be.

To increase their class budget, the freshman class plans to hold multiple fundraisers such as selling pearl milk tea every month and selling food at dances. By the end of the year, Choi hopes to have at least \$3,000 as a class.

Meanwhile, the sophomore class has around \$6,000 in its bank account. Class treasurer George Bian attributes their success to their large class size.

"Thanks to our big class, we

were able to raise over \$1,000 during freshmen parent night and ASB donated \$1,000 to all classes last year," Bian said.

Even in their comfortable position, they are planning on fundraising often so they can spend more on class events and save up for prom during their junior year.

The junior class is also in a strong financial position with \$8,000, earned through successful fundraisers such as the annual food truck fest and several Chipotle fundraisers. Equally impressive, they have already paid a deposit for a junior prom venue.

Class treasurer Samyu Iyer said juniors are prepared to handle expenses such as Homecoming, which costs around \$600.

"We don't spend like crazy, but we are going to spend more this year on Homecoming because we are upperclassmen now and there are higher expectations," Iyer said. "We should be able to spend a good amount, but not go crazy so that we can have quality stuff but still have money left over." ♦

>> THE bigidea

**Class Finances**

**Why is the current senior class balance so low?**  
The class of 2018 has already paid a \$28,500 deposit for senior prom.

## FALCON FOCUS

# Freshman moves to Saratoga in search of 'high-tech' education

BY Chelsea Leung & Ashley Su

Gesturing wildly with his hands, freshman Shreyas Raghunath's eyes lit up as he described his idea for a potential fourth self-built PC for whoever can fund it.

"It's going to be rocking the new i3 7300 core from Intel," Raghunath exclaimed. "It also runs at a whopping 4 GHz."

Unlike many new students who moved here for a parent's new job, Raghunath's parents moved from Bangalore, India, this summer solely in search of a better education for him.

His old private school, a terraced two-story building, lacked structured courses like calculus and physics.

Instead, unlike most other Indian schools, it offered vocational courses like cooking, economics and home science, which educated students on community knowledge like personal hygiene. School lasted only four hours every day, starting at 9 a.m. and ending at 1 p.m.

"It was basically like an open learning center without structured academic classes, but it was

private and you had to pay money," Raghunath said.

Though his private school offered an unusual variety of courses, Raghunath said he prefers the academically focused classes that Saratoga High offers.

According to Raghunath, the only technology-related course at his school in India was a data entry course, which taught only basic skills like how to use Microsoft Word, Excel and Powerpoint. He was not impressed with the class since these are skills he said "even elementary schoolers know nowadays."

As a result, he took to YouTube to learn how to build computers. According to Raghunath, everything he knows about computer hardware is a result of watching hundreds of videos on time-lapses and build guides. Using this knowledge, Raghunath has built three desktop computers in his free time, donating the second one to his older school, which at the time only had older computers that ran Windows XP.

Despite his thorough knowledge and obvious passion for computers, his main obstacle has been a lack of money to buy the

parts for them.

Aside from wanting to build his own computer, Raghunath also has more ambitious goals of starting his own company here in the Silicon Valley, where he feels he has more opportunities to advance his goals.

"Silicon Valley entrepreneurs usually look for young, energetic individuals," Raghunath said. "For example, I could plan on getting some software engineers to [create more] software for Tesla like Autopilot [a driver assist feature] that Tesla can buy."

The owner of Tesla, Elon Musk, is Raghunath's role model. Raghunath draws a lot of inspiration from Musk's "relentless drive and ingenious vision."

"I almost worship [Musk] like he's a god," Raghunath said.

Although Raghunath is not planning to apply for internships in the near future, he can see himself working at a Silicon Valley tech firm in the years ahead.

"There are a lot of startups being formed, and very young and energetic people decide to enter those companies," Raghunath said. "I might be one of those. You never know." ♦

## FALCON FOCUS

## From private to public: A new change

## SOPHOMORE FINDS POSITIVE CHANGES FROM TRANSFERRING SCHOOLS

BY Anni<sup>a</sup>Mu

Sophomore Ava Bender had attended private schools for almost her entire life. For years, she wore the same white collared shirts and blue skirts to school every day.

Having transferred to SHS, Bender has the freedom to choose between any appropriate article of clothing.

To most public school students, dressing differently from their peers is a day-to-day normality, but for Bender it is a constant physical reminder of her new environment.

Bender spent her freshman year at Presentation High School, an all-girls Catholic high school in San Jose.

But after talking with friends who attended public schools, Bender considered transferring.

"I had good friends at my old school, but there were a lot of people who weren't very nice to be around," Bender said. "I'm not

sure why, maybe because there weren't any guys to talk about, but there was this group of girls who would spread rumors about almost everyone and it made so many students miserable."

She said 30 girls in her grade decided to transfer as a result of this issue.

In addition, Bender also said she struggled with Presentation's academic system. Though the academics were not "too challenging," the work required was so overwhelming that Bender said she did not have time for herself.

After talking to her best friend Sarah Tucker, who had been in public school her whole life, and the people she had met through horseback riding who attended public schools, she felt that she would find a public school environment better suited for herself.

By the fifth month of her freshman year, Bender was fully dedicated to switching

schools.

She said the most difficult part of transferring schools was figuring out her schedule.

**"I now have time for my friends, my sports and just enjoying high school in general."**

SOPHOMORE Ava Bender

At private schools, the curriculum tends to move at a faster pace and since Bender had attended private school since kindergarten, she found that her schedule this year has been a lot easier.

Many of Saratoga High's sophomore classes are classes she had already taken as a freshman, so she tried her best to avoid retaking them.

Some classes that overlapped were history and science; since she took World History and Biology last year, she is now currently taking World Geography and Chemistry.

In the end, Bender said the transition from Presentation to SHS has been a positive change both academically and socially.

Another benefit Bender has found was that she no longer has to designate 30 minutes of her morning commuting to school. Since the school is right down her street, her daily trips are shorter and she is able to save a lot of time.

"This school is still academically challenging," said Bender. "But I now have time for my friends, my sports and just enjoying high school in general." ♦

## togatalks

Would you go to a private high school if you could? Why?

"I would go to a private high school because I've always preferred a close-knit community."



senior Nathan Kang

"I probably wouldn't, because it's a lot of money for about the same education."



junior Kaitlyn Lee

"I don't think I would because I like the diversity of a public school like Saratoga High."



junior Carolyn Ma

## TRAFFIC

## Morning congestion increases as drivers adjust to new rules

BY EmilieZhou

The line of cars slowly inch forward through the crowded front parking lots as the clock ticks closer to the 8:15 a.m. tardy bell. Parents and students frantically make their way through the traffic, some cutting lines and driving into oncoming traffic to make it to class on time.

This has been the situation almost every school day as drivers adjust to the back parking lot being closed to drop-offs and new traffic patterns the administration has implemented this year.

According to assistant principal Brian Thompson, the school closed the back parking lot this year for student drop-off and pick-up and added a new route in an effort to improve the flow of traffic and ensure students' safety.



Thompson

With two drop-off areas, cars entering the front parking lot from Herriman Avenue are able to split after driving past the McAfee Center and can turn either right or left at the intersection before the entrance of the school.

By turning left, parents are able to drop off students in front of the gym, drive past the tennis courts and exit back onto Herriman.

The new route added this year allows parents who turn right at the intersection in front of the Thermond Drama Center to drop students off in front of the music building and near the left side of the McAfee Center. Those cars drive through the west wing of the school and exit onto Saratoga Sunnyvale from the back parking lot, Thompson said.

Even so, many students say closing off the back parking lot has caused the front

parking lot and nearby streets to be clogged up and resulted in heavier traffic and unintended consequences.

"It gets really backed up while you're waiting on Herriman and just today I saw someone get really close to hitting a kid while they were turning into the school," sophomore Nikita Pawar said. "There's only one way to actually get into the school and everyone's just waiting on Herriman to turn."

With the heavier traffic, many drivers on these busy streets aren't following the traffic rules, making it especially unsafe for those students who walk or bike to school, Thompson said.

People in the front parking lots are also sometimes driving in the opposite lane, creating additional safety hazards.

By trying to cut in line, drivers are increasing the chances of crashing head on into oncoming cars.

Thompson maintained, however, many of these behaviors and violations aren't new this year.

Pawar has observed that many students are also being dropped off at areas they're not supposed to, such as Lexington, the street across the front of the school, and the side of Herriman.

Some parents are even having their kids get out of cars in the middle of the road to avoid waiting in the parking lot traffic.

As a result, increased safety precautions have been added, including a new crosswalk near the back of the school and new traffic signs on Herriman.

According to Thompson, it's ultimately the sheriff's department and the city traffic unit's job to manage the traffic out on the streets outside of the parking lot and on Herriman Ave.

"We give them a lot of information and feedback on what's happening, but managing the city streets is their responsibility," Thompson said. ♦

## MATH

## New teacher steps into role of Math Club adviser

BY JeffreyXu

On his first day at the school, the new Algebra 2 Honors teacher Andrew Shoemaker was walking to the math quad copy room when he noticed something unique about his new school.

"I couldn't help but notice the giant trophies in the display box in the math quad," Shoemaker said. "I was very impressed."

Later, he was asked if he would be willing to serve as the new math club adviser. Shoemaker agreed, saying he was "stoked to be a part of and support something that students were so dedicated to."

The opening was created when last year's math club adviser, resource aide Michael Silva, decided to return to San Jose State to get his teaching credential this year.

As a new member of the math department and a new teacher at the school, Shoemaker said he was looking for ways he could contribute to the math department and the community as a whole.

Becoming the new math club adviser to was, to him, the perfect role.

Shoemaker has taught at San Lorenzo Valley High School in Felton, and at Waimea High School in Hawaii, both of which are smaller schools.

Some of his previous experiences being a club adviser include being the adviser of a skateboard club and a makeshift chess club, but he says he looks forward to being the adviser of the more official and prestigious SHS Math Club.

Senior Tiffany Huang, president of the Toga Math Club, is glad that Shoemaker has taken the new role.

"I think it's great that we were able to find an adviser that was so willing to help us out and on such a short notice," Huang said. "It's a great relief to know that we have someone behind us so that our club can continue to run smoothly in the future with all the different events we participate in."

According to Shoemaker, being a math club adviser is different from teaching math in the classroom.

"As a teacher of mathematics in my classroom, it is my job to prepare all students to understand the concepts of the math curriculum, where as a math club adviser I am there as support for students who want to do their thing," Shoemaker said.

Some of Shoemaker's goals include increasing the enjoyment level of the students doing math and creating a positive learning environment where students can share their common interest of problem solving.

That is, after all, the point of a club, he said.

**"I wanted to find a way that I could contribute to the department, school, and community as a whole."**

TEACHER Andrew Shoemaker

Shoemaker said he looks forward to advising high-level mathematics and hopes to ensure the growth and success of the program.

"I am excited about the opportunity to work with some brilliant students and to find out what the world of being a competitive mathlete is all about," Shoemaker said.

"I expect the challenges of teaching high level mathematics to the amazing students of Saratoga High School and the challenges of being as helpful and organized as possible to ensure the growth and success of all of the student here, Shoemaker said. "It's a great day to be a Falcon!" ♦

## BAND

## Field show features choir and new props

BY Chelsea Leung

With the start of the fall season, the marching band and Color Guard are perfecting their show, formations and music, with two new additions: professional-level props and the choir as a main element.

The theme of this year's show is "Find Your Voice," which has many different facets, such as standing up for oneself and finding one's identity.

"Find Your Voice" is about self-discovery, growing as a person and gaining confidence," junior trumpet player Matthew Graham said.

The theme is portrayed through players' dancing at the beginning and formations.

A new twist this year is that the band will be using purchased staircase props from the Blue Devils, a world-class marching ensemble based in Concord. In addition, Blue Devils members as well as the group's visual head, Todd Ryan, are helping at rehearsals.

"We're incredibly lucky to have these props, especially with the Blue Devils having just won their 18th world champion-

ship," Graham said. "We're also glad to have Blue Devils members helping us out, as they know these props inside out."

According to associate band director Jason Shiuan, the props are 4- to 5-foot wide staircases with railings that are easily moved and organized into visual configurations, adding to the visual aesthetic of the show.

Also, 55 members from both concert and chamber choirs will be joining the field show, and the props will be put together to create a choir riser, as well as break apart for marchers to pose and travel up and down.

They will be playing the choral music pieces "Fly to Paradise" by Eric Whitacre and "Gloria" by John Rutter, leading to the decision to include choir.

"We want choir to be the epicenter of the show," Shiuan said. "The first time you see them is when they sing the big climax of the second movement, and they become the flow for the rest of the show."

Although the addition of choir to the band show was a surprise for both band and choir members, the singers see this new challenge as an enriching experience.



The choir performs alongside the marching band during a home football game on Sept. 15.

"It's nice that we're doing this after the Europe tour because the choir has had a chance to become friends with a lot of people in band and to see how band works," junior choir member Nirav Adunuthula said.

Choir attends almost every band practice, which takes place during eighth period on Blue Days, Thursday nights and all day on Saturday.

The band will attend four competitions every Saturday in October: the Feste Del Mar at Del Mar High, Cupertino Tournament of Bands at Cupertino High, the Sierra Cup Classic at Fresno State and the Bands of America NorCal Regionals at San Jose State.

"As usual, we want to build community and produce a show that the students are proud of and excited for," Shiuan said. ♦

## FALCON FOCUS

## New sophomore finds welcoming environment

BY Connie Liang

Blonde-haired and bubbly, sophomore Mary Elizabeth Miller laughed with classmates in her sixth-period World History class over teacher Kirk Abe's guidelines.

"And then he said, 'If I take you to the office, you can either join my wrestling team or get a mark,'" said Miller, giggling.

This was a unique rule for Miller, who was born in Louisiana and over the years has moved to Fremont, Burlingame, San Francisco and eventually Saratoga, where

she finds the accepting atmosphere to be a drastic change from previous schools.

Most recently attending The Academy - San Francisco at McAttee, a predominantly Hispanic public high school of about 300 students, Miller felt excluded despite having friends and participating in various sports.

"I am a Christian white girl and a lot of the kids there weren't very kind to me because of how they viewed Christians and white girls," she said.

In one incident, four girls who had been

in her math class for a year suddenly turned on Miller.

"They looked up saying, 'Who are you and what are you doing here? You don't belong at this school. You can't sit next to me and need to move it,'" Miller recalled.

So far, she feels comfortable, especially after a warm welcome.

"On the first day, people walked up to me saying, 'Hey are you new here? Let me help you around,'" Miller said.

At the New Student Barbecue last month, Miller made friends with other new

students, including freshman Aliza Zaman, who bonded with Miller as a fellow new student.

"She came from a different school too, so we didn't know each other," Zaman said.

Later this year, Miller plans to continue pursuing her passion for sports by joining teams such as soccer, swimming or softball.

She can already sense that being herself here won't be an issue.

"I really do feel more welcomed here," Miller said. "The teachers and students are a lot nicer." ♦

## CLASS CHANGES

## Cahatol begins teaching AP Chemistry classes

BY Victor Liu  
& Jayne Zhou

As 32 students filed into room 1010 on the first day of school for Janny Cahatol's sixth-period AP Chemistry, she greeted the class — a majority of whom were juniors she had taught the previous year — with two labs and a 50-minute lecture that covered the first month of Chemistry Honors.

After 12 years of teaching Chemistry Honors here, Cahatol will be teaching one period of AP Chemistry in addition to her four regular sections of Chemistry Honors.

The change happened because the science department expanded the number of AP Chemistry sections from three to four.

Although Chemistry Honors and AP Chemistry have many overlapping topics, students in the AP Chemistry class are gearing up for a college-level test in May, so to ready her students, Cahatol created completely new material.

"I worked all summer — I would be writing my lecture notes, researching, reading from 8 in the morning until 10 or 11 p.m.," Cahatol said. "The great thing about doing all of it is that I loved it. I love learning more and more about stuff I haven't even thought of since I took it in college."

While Cahatol and Nakamatsu ultimately have the same goal of preparing their students for the AP test, Cahatol is taking a different approach by preparing new course material that resembles her

teaching style for Honors Chemistry, instead of giving her students Nakamatsu's lectures, labs and assessments.

As for material beyond the overlap between the two classes, Cahatol is taking a more in-the-moment approach to teach her students the material in class by building on top of topics already covered in Chemistry Honors.

Cahatol's first group of AP Chem students have been appreciative of her efforts. For those who Cahatol taught last year in Honors Chemistry, having the same teacher for two years in a row has provided a sense of familiarity.

"I was really excited when I learned Mrs. Cahatol was my AP Chem teacher this year because she's able to break down very complex subjects into very simple concepts," junior Kyle Yu said. "After already being in her class, I know how her system works, so I could study more effectively for her tests and take better notes."

Cahatol and her students will essentially take the same plunge into AP Chemistry this year. And although Cahatol does not know whether she will be teaching AP Chemistry again next year, she is upbeat about her changed schedule.

"I think it's going to be a pretty intense year in that I will be working long hours throughout the year to make sure that my students get a quality course, but I am really looking forward to the challenge," Cahatol said. "I think they are going to have a lot of fun." ♦



Cahatol

## Head teaches all freshmen, Herzman takes over AP Lit

BY Sanjana Melkote

"Five classes of freshmen. This is either going to be really fun, or I'll go crazy," said English teacher Catherine Head.

Head, who has taught AP Literature for 28 years, has passed the baton to fellow English teacher Suzanne Herzman and taken on a full load of freshman English classes.

Head is now teaching two versions of English 9: MAP and a pilot course called BALANCE, which stands for "Balancing Academics, Life And Navigating Choices in English/Earth Science."

Herzman is excited to teach AP Literature for the first time.

"It is a lovely continuation of English 11 Honors, and since I know that curriculum really well, I get to build off what my students have just done the year before," she said.

She expects to feel the struggle of unfamiliarity as she teaches complicated texts for the first time.

"This will be certainly more work, but it's going to be worth it," she said.

Herzman isn't making major changes to core literature, but she plans on "auditioning" texts in smaller literature circles within the class, with the purpose of possibly adopting them in the future.

"I see a lot of value in project-based learning. I'd like to work in some performance projects and maybe even bring back the 'Motif Fair' I did when I first started teaching English 11 Honors," Herzman said. "These assignments force students to read closely and can appeal to the wide variety of

learners we have in the classroom."

Herzman's class will strive for balance in order to effect insights that both the teacher and students are proud of and create an environment where they feel productive.

Head, who has been helping Herzman through the transition phase, has faith that Herzman will do a "fine job."

"I want her to make the course her own. I don't want her to try to be me because she's not," Head said. "Her strengths lie in a totally different area. So I think probably more than anything, my guidance to her has been to help her make the course her own."

Head and Herzman have previously worked together when piloting the English 9 Media Arts Program, and this year, Head is piloting the BALANCE program in her English 9 class.

Head is reducing the homework load for her BALANCE class to virtually nothing as part of the class.

"I believe, and the research shows, that you can get the same amount of learning, sometimes even more, if you don't have a heavy homework load," she said.

Herzman and Head alike find the best part about teaching to be the students who walk into their classrooms.

"They see the power and importance of stories in our world, and they're up for reading difficult literature — for having an environment where we can help each other out and be OK with the struggle of working through hard texts," Herzman said. "I think for me, teaching has always been super rewarding because I learn a ton, and I'm going to learn a ton this year." ♦

FOURTH PERIOD

STAFF POLICY

The Saratoga Falcon is published 12 times per year by the Advanced Journalism classes of Saratoga High School, 20300 Herriman Ave., Saratoga, CA 95070.

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## Common App prompts expect too much out of high school students

A 650-word essay doesn't seem like a difficult task. But considering that the result is a key part of the college application process, the Common App essay is a much harder hill to climb than it may initially seem.

Common App prompts aren't tailored for most high schoolers. They seem geared toward those who've made scientific breakthroughs or helped save Bolivian villages from starving. The main problem is the intimidating, vague and often contradictory wording of several Common App prompts. The prompts seem to think that all students have had some sort of massively profound experience that has changed their lives.

Unfortunately, not all of us have been lucky enough to have been transformed overnight at the ripe ages of 17 or 18. As high school students, how would we have already experienced something that "sparked a period of personal growth," when most of us are struggling with other "basic" aspects of our applications like the SAT or maintaining high grades?

Even prompts considered

straightforward rarely fail to overwhelm students. One prompt asks about a personal challenge, which seems simple. However, it gives several examples, like "an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma — anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale."

These three categories imply that the topic should show how unrealistically mature the student is. It becomes difficult to write about more personal, yet less academically relevant, experiences. The prompts are worded in a way that dissuades applicants from writing about their original ideas. A student's essay should be a vessel to show off individually significant experiences, traits and qualities, whether they're academically related or not. Giving vague and unrelatable examples for essay topics while also asking for a piece of writing that has unique importance to each writer simply isn't helping anybody.

Admittedly, this year, the Common App acted on this issue with a new "choose your own prompt" essay. Although possibly challenging for students who



work well with explicit guidelines, the new prompt gives ample breathing room to those who wish to write unrestrained by an intimidating prompt.

Still, the Common App needs to make more changes. Reword-

ing the existing prompts to seem less threatening and mixing in more free style prompts would help. There needs to be a balance established between heat-seeking prompts and the ones that allow more autonomy. ♦

### Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

Editors-in-chief

Caitlyn Chen  
Eleanor Goh

Opinion Editor

Isabelle Yang

Reporter

Alex Yang

The Falcon staff voted 24-7 in support of this article.

## Social media helps preserve friendships

BY Shreya Katkere

A typical morning for many teenagers across America is to check social media. This connects people around the globe throughout the day. Simply put, we are given the unique, yet sometimes arduous, opportunity to be constantly connected.

But this also implies that not

maintaining friendships is a choice now, because we have the means of communication to stay close with our friends who have moved away.

Unlike our parents' generation, the excuse that "we lost touch with friends who live far away" is now invalid.

Social media has become an integral part of our lives. Thirty-seven percent of the people in the

world are active social media users, according to TNW X. How could we not contact old friends when we are constantly using smartphones that give us access to people anywhere in the world?

Although having social media may be a burden to those who are too lazy to pursue their friendships with those they don't see every day, it is a blessing to those

who do.

Even if you aren't able to be physically present with your friends, Facetime, Skype and a interminable list of applications allow people to see each other.

It's important to realize that it's this same technology that allows us to be able to maintain friendships with friends across the world, or just down the street. ♦

## Schools should focus on more exercise

BY Elizabeth Lee

Without a doubt, exercising is one of the most important aspects of health. Whether that's taking daily jogs around the neighborhood or a simple gym workout, people should put in effort to maintain a healthy workout lifestyle. Despite the health risks that come with skipping exercise, people of all ages, especially teenagers, refuse to take time to do so. In order to alleviate this ongoing issue, schools should further encourage students to exercise physically.

Currently, our school is helping students mentally with stress

by implementing no-homework policies in certain classes. However, they are forgetting the physical aspect of students' health. While maintaining a healthy level of stress is essential for students' mental health, degrading physical health can be just as harmful towards growing teenagers' bodies.

Fulfilling a P.E. requirement is mandatory but is only necessary for four semesters, and after completing their required credits, students often give up exercise. The school should continue to encourage exercise whether it is by holding events like the Jogathon or upping the required P.E. credits.

There are innumerable benefits that come with exercise and many of them have to do with benefiting one's mental health as well. According to the Anxiety and Depression Society of America, regular physical exercise has been proven to decrease stress levels, improve sleep and stabilize or even elevate one's mood. Highly beneficial to students, especially those preparing to embark to college, would be courses that emphasize proper nutrition and exercise. While adjusting to college life, students may fall victim to the famed "freshman-15," weight gain as the result of poor diet and lack

of physical activity. However, in addition to weight gain, the freshman-15 may be due to the apathy high schools encourage in regards to lifestyle choices. If high schools are trying to prepare their students for college, they are only doing so academically without teaching the students how to lead healthier lifestyles.

The school should put more effort in maintaining students' physical health through diet, physical activity and proper rest. Changes similar to these will also improve a student's ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle throughout and after high school. ♦

### togatalks

What are your exercise habits and why do you exercise?

"I usually lift and run at YMCA once a week. I exercise because I am too fat and I want to be fit."



sophomore Lintao Cui

"I work out at the weight room in SHS twice a week so that I can get better at basketball."



junior Hanlin Sun

# We aren't so diverse

BY RyanKim

Saratoga High is centered in the Bay Area, a hodgepodge of different cultures. But even in the height of its racial diversity and tolerance, the school has only a certain kind of diversity.

According to statistics in US News, even though we have a 72 percent minority enrollment, a vast majority — 59 percent — are Asian. Whether they're Indian, Chinese, Taiwanese, Vietnamese or Korean, most students on campus are Asian. It sometimes feels as if the larger Caucasian "majority," a mere 28 percent, is on the sidelines.

Furthermore, the school is only 5 percent Hispanic, 0.1 percent African American and 0 percent Native American or Pacific Islander. In contrast, a nearby school like Palo Alto High is more diverse, with a student population of 3 percent African American, 50 percent Caucasian, 30 percent Asian, 1 percent American Indian or Alaskan native and 1 percent Hawaiian native or Pacific Islander.

Perhaps a significant factor in this racial diversity depends on economic diversity. Saratoga is generally filled with well-off individuals, so most students come from wealthy families that are directly connected to nearby jobs. The economic disparity between Saratoga residents, who are mostly Caucasian or Asian, and, for example, Pacific Islanders may be a major influence in the diversity in the city.

Comparatively, Palo Alto High has a variety of students from both different racial

and economic backgrounds, including children of tech leaders and East Palo Alto residents, a comparatively poorer area.

What's most interesting is that because of the vast Asian majority on campus, a lot of school culture seems to overemphasize Asian traditions or themes over underrepresented cultures like Native American or Pacific Islander.

Just last year, Korean and Chinese Clubs joined together for a schoolwide Lunar New Year celebration, and Indian Cultural Awareness Club has regular dance performances at the McAfee Center, with dozens of Indian families coming to watch their Bollywood dances.

In language departments, Chinese is the second-largest foreign language behind Spanish, and during Homecoming, cultural dances like Bollywood and K-pop abound.

Although we often think of ourselves as the peak of acceptance and diversity, we have a long way to go before we can truly reap the benefits of the Bay Area's diversity. Step out of the Asian shadow and look around at different cultures we aren't usually exposed to — and the potential economic reasons behind the lack of diversity here.

We shouldn't flaunt our racial diversity over other groups or even schools like Los Gatos High when we only know a narrow kind of diversity. Before we start judging others for their apparent lack of diversity, perhaps we should first consider how truly diverse we are — and how that might affect our judgment. ♦



Courtesy of BILLBOARD.COM

K-pop group BTS wins Top Social Artist award at the 2017 Billboard Music Awards.

# Asian artists are unfairly treated due to our complacency

BY KaitlynWang

Audience members clap slowly, unable to hide their surprise as seven Korean stars whisk past toward the stage. What has the world come to? Powerless, they watch in shock as these Asians seem to swoop down and snatch a shining trophy out of the hands of American singers more deserving of the award.

Against nominees Justin Bieber, Selena Gomez, Ariana Grande and Shawn Mendes, Korean pop group Bangtan Boys (BTS) won Billboard's Top Social Artist award in Las Vegas in May, thanks to over 300 million votes from enthusiastic fans.

Some people weren't enthusiastic about the group's victory, to say the least. Tweets about this apparent injustice soon littered the internet, with one user writing, "How did these Asians wearing makeup beat ACTUAL FAMOUS PEOPLE?"

Of course, having millions of international fans, topping Billboard's Social 50 chart for 46 weeks and appearing in Forbes and Time magazine, among other recognitions, is insufficient for them to be considered "actual famous people."

Although these aggrieved users may have meant that BTS isn't famous in America, it brings to light the assumption that Asians in the entertainment industry aren't and can't be famous.

This is obviously false, but it suggests people are still uncomfortable when they see Asian artists being recognized in America.

If we do not continue speaking up for representation, we risk supporting what remains silently accepted: Asian Americans are never romantic leads, never main characters and never anything more than another one of Hollywood's disregarded groups. They are sidekicks in movies, they serve minor roles or roles fraught with stereotypes and they supposedly rarely rise to national or global fame.

That isn't to say there haven't been major steps forward in just these few years. One success is ABC sitcom "Fresh off the Boat," the first TV show in 20 years to feature a mostly Asian American cast.

The New York Times best selling novel "Crazy Rich Asians," by Kevin Kwan, has also finished filming a movie version that stars a completely Asian cast in June.

More recently, in July, hip hop and R&B artist Jay Park became the first Asian American to sign with Jay-Z's en-

tertainment company "Roc Nation."

These are clearly victories for Asian American artists, but it is important to keep in mind that this is only the beginning.

We cannot be complacent. We cannot feel as if "Fresh off the Boat" and the few Asian American artists covered in the news are "enough." Instead, we must continue pushing forward because only then will it no longer seem a novelty for Asians and Asian American artists to receive awards and be recognized for their achievements.

Silence is dangerous. Accepting that Asian Americans have already made their full mark on music, films and shows will inhibit what is yet to come. Complacency restrains possibilities and encourages people to sit back and relax without considering who is on (or off) screen or who is (not) behind a voice.

**Complacency threatens to perpetuate the belief that Asians have no place in American entertainment.**

Korean-American actor Edward Hong says there is still a long way to go, telling the Los Angeles Times, "The Chinese actors say: 'We are just flower vases. We don't speak; we just stand there and look pretty.'"

It is time to smash flower vase roles. It is time to step up to the microphone and into the spotlight.

Like anyone else, Asian artists dedicate themselves to their work, and their triumphs are worthy of acknowledgment and celebration.

When we stop acknowledging problems and victories alike, we erode the significance of past accomplishments. We solidify opinions about Asians based on the way they are often portrayed, preventing impeding efforts to break free from preconceived beliefs now and in the future.

Complacency threatens to perpetuate the belief that Asians have no place in American entertainment.

We must continue to honor their talents and achievements in order to ensure that one day, people will not find it surprising that Asians artists can be "actual famous people." ♦



# White guilt: only a starting point in healing the divides

BY AllenChen

On Aug. 12, white supremacists and neo-Nazis clashed with counter protesters in the city of Charlottesville, Va. At 1:42 p.m., a car rammed into a crowd of counter protesters, killing 32-year-old Heather Heyer and wounding multiple others.

Within minutes, Lorde, a white pop artist, took to Twitter apologizing for the actions of her race, writing "all white people are responsible for this system's thrive and fall. We have to do better. I'm sorry."

On the surface, this comment seems harmless, but the white guilt it symbolizes takes away the attention from real issues at hand and even presents some of its own.

By definition, "white guilt" is the feeling of guilt felt by white people due to the racism of other whites either in the past or present.

When the words "white guilt" are read, they evoke an image of repentance or atonement.

It's true that the first step to fixing a problem is to recognize its existence.

However, white guilt is not recognition of the problem — it is mostly a defense mechanism used to separate apologists from white supremacists.

By expressing guilt, white apologists put themselves on higher moral ground than

others.

Often, this self-elevating behavior acts as a "cover for a fundamentally poor self-image," according to Emma Lindsay of Medium.com.

Some white people feel the need to express guilt because they fear they are fundamentally racist.

Even though white apologists aren't directly hurting anyone, they are putting up a shield against their own fears of being racist. However, once the shield goes up, it doesn't come down.

By convincing themselves they are not racist without real reflection, many white people are preserving any racism that they might actually have. By acknowledging the problem exists, they ironically reinforce the same problem in themselves.

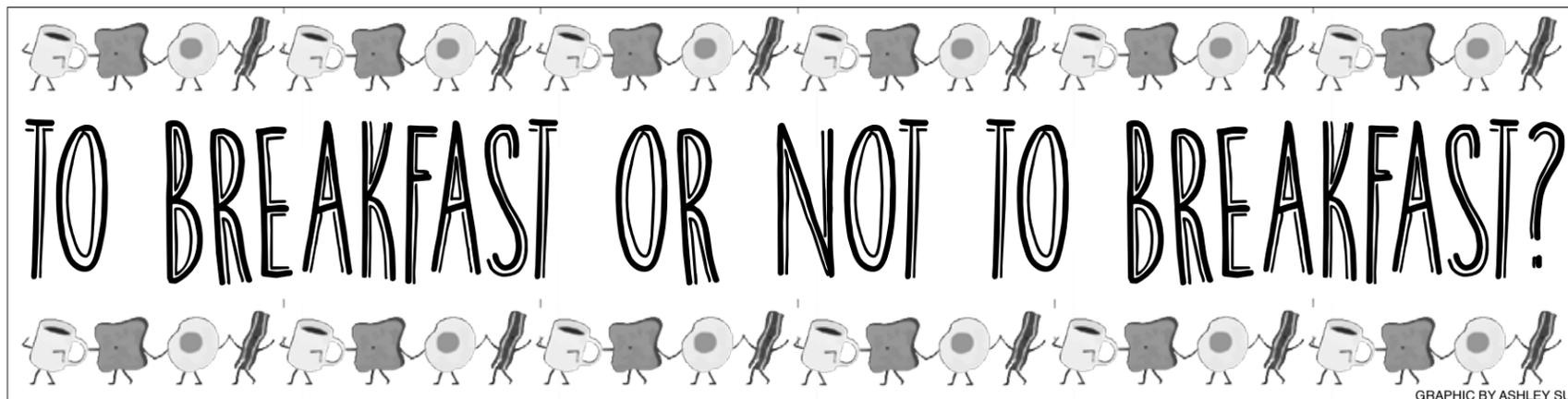
Lorde's tweets seem innocent, but in reality they are a harsh indicator of an increasingly dangerous trend.

But not all is lost. If those who feel guilty carefully reflect on the root of that guilt, they can bring about positive change.

Instead of tweeting about racism and taking responsibility for everything all white people at any time or any place have done, they should think about whether or not the problem exists within themselves.

That way, they can truly acknowledge the problem, and work to fix it. ♦





GRAPHIC BY ASHLEY SU

## Break the fast: Eat breakfast so you can survive class

magic  
mike



Michael Zhang

As I sit in my third-period class, I try to concentrate on the lecture my teacher is giving.

But I can't. My stomach overrides these attempts and lets out a grumble because I haven't eaten breakfast. Fortunately, this experience is rare for me.

I feel miserable when hungry, and it's hard to focus when I'm miserable. Losing focus during class hinders my attempts at learning, and lectures seem to go in one ear and out the other.

Eggs, toast, cereal, cookies, pizza and almost any food is a viable option for breakfast — I just need to eat something before coming to school.

Usually, breakfast doesn't even take that long to make.

If I spend two or three hours a day on homework, then surely I can spare 10 minutes in the morning to treat myself to some well-deserved food.

I typically don't eat much at night, so by the time I wake up in the morning, hours have passed since I have last eaten.

Without eating in the morning, there's no way I could last another four hours until lunch without feeling hungry, especially after enduring the grueling workload of AP classes like Statistics and Physics.

Think of it this way: There are many things I would give up for an extra 10 minutes of sleep, but I've learned that breakfast is not one of them. ♦

## Sorry, breakfast isn't that magical

one in  
emilie-on



Emilie Zhou

Still half asleep, I stagger into the kitchen, searching for something to eat. A glance at the clock reminds me that I have to leave soon. I look around the kitchen, hurriedly finish a glass of water and shove a granola bar into my bag for later, as I rush to leave for school. That way, in case I do start feeling hungry, I would have a snack to eat during tutorial.

Many days, I've woken up not in the mood to eat anything or with no time to eat. Comparing days when I've skipped breakfast to days when I've eaten breakfast, there isn't much of a difference in how I feel throughout the day.

From my experience, breakfast's im-

pact on the body is often exaggerated. The most important thing about breakfast isn't when you eat it, but what you eat. Unfortunately, a wide variety of breakfast foods, such as sweet cereals and pastries, contain unhealthy levels of calories, fat and sugar, which don't benefit or prepare us with a good start to the day.

Making a nutritious breakfast also takes time. For many high schoolers, that time could be better spent either sleeping or finishing last-minute homework.

In addition, if you're naturally not hungry in the morning, then breakfast might just not be essential for you. But, eating something small, like fruit, in the mornings could be better than eating nothing.

The importance of having a big breakfast as the first meal of the day is overstated. Breakfast isn't for everyone. It all depends on one's personal preferences and habits.

In the end, people shouldn't feel bad for skipping breakfast or force themselves to eat something every morning. Breakfast ultimately has no magical power. ♦

## Bubble Tea Time: a quality boba destination

BY Esha Lakhotia

"Let's get boba after school!" Those are the words I always love to hear. As a pearl milk tea addict, I'm always interested in indulging myself at new boba shops.

So when Bubble Tea Time opened up in Saratoga next to Rojoz Wraps and Scoop N Stick on Prospect Road last spring, I decided to try it, hoping to discover a new store to add my ever-growing list of options.

As soon as I walked in, I immediately noticed the store's cute decor. A lot of other boba places I've been to have had extremely long lines and a noisy atmosphere, so Bubble Tea Time's relaxed vibe and soft music was refreshing. Though the shop is a bit small, there wasn't a big crowd so it didn't feel cramped, and the artsy wall in the back made for a perfect photo op.

I tried the "Over the Rainbow" drink, a peach and melon green tea with rainbow and mango star jellies, without sugar or ice level adjustments. Though many teas are overly sweet, Over the Rainbow perfectly balanced sweetness with the tanginess of citrus.

I could actually taste the green tea, since the peach flavoring was infused instead of directly added like a syrup. In addition, the mango jellies, though on the sweeter side, mellowed out the green tea's slightly bitter taste with a fruity pop of flavor. Unlike most boba places, Bubble Tea Time brews tea on the spot for each individual drink, so customers can get their exact preference of tea strength and sweetness.

In addition to their fruity drinks, they also offer a variety of milk teas and shaved ice, which can also be customized.

In terms of price and size, a drink usually costs around \$4.50, which is similar to most boba shops. But for that amount, the customer gets a good value because the drinks are much taller than others. In addition, the shop has a buy five get one free system, whereas at other shops customers need to buy 10 drinks to get one free.

Though the drinks were tasty and worth the price, the service was average; it took more than a few minutes to get my drink since there were only two employees working when I went.

Gong Cha, another boba spot right across the block, serves a more extensive menu to Bubble Tea Time; however, I would rather go to Bubble Tea Time because it tastes less artificial, as many drinks at Gong Cha seem overly sweetened even after adjusting sweetness levels. In addition, Bubble Tea Time's short lines and their option to customize any drink make it a better option.

Although there was nothing in particular that stood out to me, I would recommend Bubble Tea Time as a go-to for relatively high quality boba in Saratoga. ♦

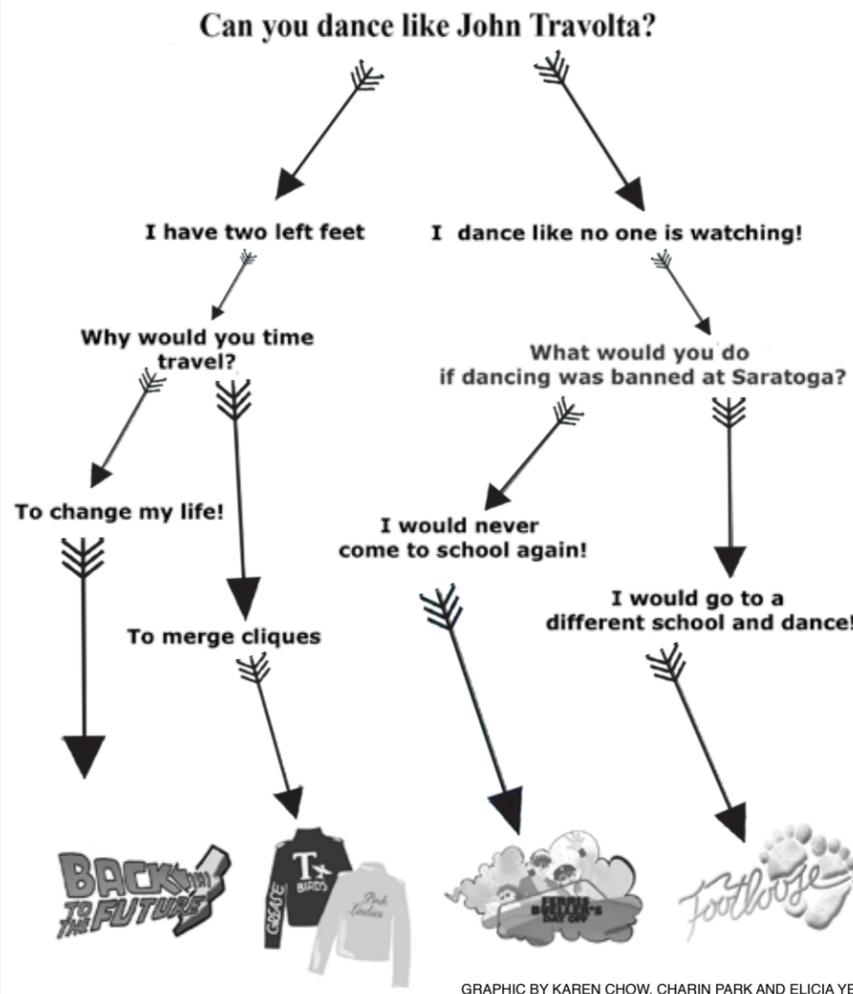
**Bubble Tea Time Ratings**  
(out of 5 Falcons)

**Tea:** ★★★★★

**Toppings:** ★★★★★

**Service:** ★★★☆☆

## Homecoming '17-'18 What movie should you be in?



GRAPHIC BY KAREN CHOW, CHARIN PARK AND ELICIA YE

## Junior tries recipe from decades past

your  
m pal



Muthu Palaniappan

The '80s are a decade notorious for its one-of-a-kind outfits, unique hairstyles, and groovy music. However, the '80s also housed some of the most iconic food trends.

In light of this year's '70s-and-'80s-inspired Homecoming themes, I decided to get a taste of one of the most famous dishes from the '80s: Ambrosia salad.

Ambrosia salad is a sweeter take on fruit salad. Filled with pineapple, mandarin oranges, tiny marshmallows

and coconut shavings, the dish sounded amazing to me.

But as I scrolled down the list of ingredients I needed of a recipe I found online, I was shocked that I had to add 4 ounces of sour cream, and I wondered if I was reading the list wrong.

It turns out that ambrosia salad is well known for containing sour cream, and I realized it was unfair of me to make judgments about ingredients before trying the food.

After picking up all the ingredients, I was still a little bit skeptical. But for the dish to be popular, it had to be good in some way, so I stayed optimistic and continued to follow the recipe.

The preparation took less than half an hour because all I had to do was mix the ingredients.

I did, however, have to wait an

additional two hours while my salad sat in fridge. I wasn't complaining, though — all the extra time allowed me to munch on the extra fruits and marshmallows.

Two hours later, I took the chilled ambrosia salad out and nervously tried it. Surprisingly, I liked it.

The sour cream was not overpowering, but mixed into the sweetness of the rest of the ingredients well.

Also, since the salad was fairly easy to make, it could be a fun snack to have at a party or during a holiday.

As its popularity grew in the '80s, the salad grew from being a traditional Christmas dish in the South to being a staple to have at special events.

Ambrosia salad is the perfect reflection of the '80s: Bizarre ingredients blended together to make something extraordinary. ♦

### >> ambrosia recipe

**Ingredients:**

- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 4 ounces sour cream
- 6 ounces mini marshmallows
- 1 cup clementine orange segments
- 1 cup chopped fresh pineapple
- 1 cup freshly grated coconut
- 1 cup toasted, chopped pecans
- 1/2 cup drained maraschino cherries

Place the cream and sugar into the bowl of a stand mixer with the whisk attachment and whip until stiff peaks are formed. Add the sour cream and whisk to combine. Add the marshmallows, orange, pineapple, coconut, pecans and cherries and stir to combine. Transfer to a glass serving bowl, cover and place in the refrigerator for 2 hours before serving.

RECIPE BY Food Network

### >> Ryan's top 5 songs

**1. "Don't Stop Me Now"**

by Queen  
Year: 1978

**2. "Eye of the Tiger"**

by Survivor  
Year: 1982

**3. "Livin' on a Prayer"**

by Bon Jovi  
Year: 1986

**4. "Everybody"**

by Backstreet Boys  
Year: 1997

**5. "It's My Life"**

by Bon Jovi  
Year: 2000

## Oldies music still fresh for senior

not tryan  
anymore



Ryan Kim

"Sing it, Piano Man!" I yell as I fall back in the car seat, my eyes tearing in laughter. Next to me, my dad chuckles, driving toward the ultimate karaoke bar: my house.

My dad and I have a short history of enjoying oldies. I never got into contemporary pop in general, especially with today's EDM or overt innuendos. Since freshman year, I've

been interested on-and-off in music from the 1970s through the late '90s. With favorite groups like Queen and AC/DC all the way to Backstreet Boys, I'm well versed in older music that's more likely to be on the playlists of someone in their 50s or 60s.

My dad and I don't always sing together as we listen to these classic hits. But sometimes, "Backstreet's back, all right!" blares out of the car stereo and we tap along, my dad's fingers drumming into the shifter and my foot tapping on the carpet floor of the car as we relish the lyrics "I would always Want It That Way": a tacit acknowledgement of our common interests.

I've used my interest in older music to inspire me as well. Although this may sound laughable in comparison

to the average upperclassman's struggles, I was actually pretty stressed in sophomore year. While prepping for the SAT and an increased school workload, I didn't have much time to hang out with my friends.

I found solace in an unexpected substitute: the song "Eye of the Tiger" by Survivor. When overburdened with school work and extracurricular activities, I wouldn't go to my friends to complain; I'd play it and motivate myself back into action.

Now that I'm a senior, surviving first semester is proving to be the toughest challenge yet. So, when I'm overwhelmed with completing college apps or learning Homecoming dances, I'll just remind myself that "I'm Halfway There — on a Highway to Hell." ♦

## Time machine: decades ago versus now

By Kaitlyn Wang

Interested in time travel?

Instead of hunting Dr. Brown and his DeLorean down, take a look around at the walking, talking collections of stories that surround you: older people who lived through previous eras.

The perfect time machines.

I spoke to an older teacher who experienced music from the 1970s and 1980s with an expert's ear: AP Music Theory teacher Dr. John Felder.

Felder characterized '80s music as largely stale and not creative. But, he said, "there was a mushrooming of creativity in the early '70s, with wonderful bands and artists and movies that dealt with serious issues."

Felder recalled that people, particularly youth, believed they could be more assertive in pursuing their goals.

"For the first time, people started to break out of acting like adults and wanted to speak up for themselves," Felder said. "There was a sense of civic engagement. People cared more about social issues; they cared about being fair to the poor, about having a good government."

Now, Felder thinks many Americans seem more concerned with material wealth, a mindset that began in the '80s and hasn't yet receded.

However, after disturbing events like last month's white supremacist march in Charlottesville, Va., a feeling of civic responsibility may be beginning to return, he said. Felder describes it as a cycle going up and down, from less to more involved.

Unlike civic responsibility, population levels won't return to former levels, and highways, parks and neighbor-

hoods will continue to feel more and more crowded.

"There was a sense of spaciousness," Felder said. "On a motorcycle I could go out on the road and there would be no traffic. Now, you're always aware of the presence of other people."

People also addressed each other by title and last name, as "first names weren't used until you were close, until you gave them permission," Felder said. "There was still that kind of politeness."

The '70s and '80s were defined by far more than the styles Homecoming will showcase. For a deeper understanding, consider engaging in a simple conversation with someone who lived in those decades — you don't need a DeLorean to travel back to the past. ♦

### >> '70s, '80s and now

**1970s:**

U.S. Population: 203 million  
Average Wage: \$6,186.24  
Average Lifespan: 70.8 years

**1980s:**

U.S. Population: 226 million  
Average Wage: \$12,513.46  
Average Lifespan: 73.7 years

**2017:**

U.S. Population: 326 million  
Average Wage: \$30,240 (2015 Census)  
Average Lifespan: 78.7 years (2010 Census)

STATISTICS from Infoplease

## Saratoga kids deserve their own day off

shredded  
shreya



Shreya Katkere

“Where are you going? Who are you going with? When are you going to be back?” My parents drill me with a million questions whenever I ask to go out. They keep forgetting that I’m a high schooler and not a little kid anymore.

Unlike me, Ferris Bueller from “Ferris

Bueller’s Day Off” has as much freedom as he wants. Within one day, he pretends to be sick, skips school, drives his friend’s dad’s high-end Tesla around town, lies to the school principal to get his girlfriend out of school and pretends to be a famous man to get a free lunch from an expensive restaurant.

By contrast, most students at our school don’t bother trying to skip school because we don’t want to get in trouble with our parents or school administrators — or miss a day of school that might hurt their GPA.

The only time most of us ditch school is on Senior Ditch Day, and even then students force their parents to call them in sick be-

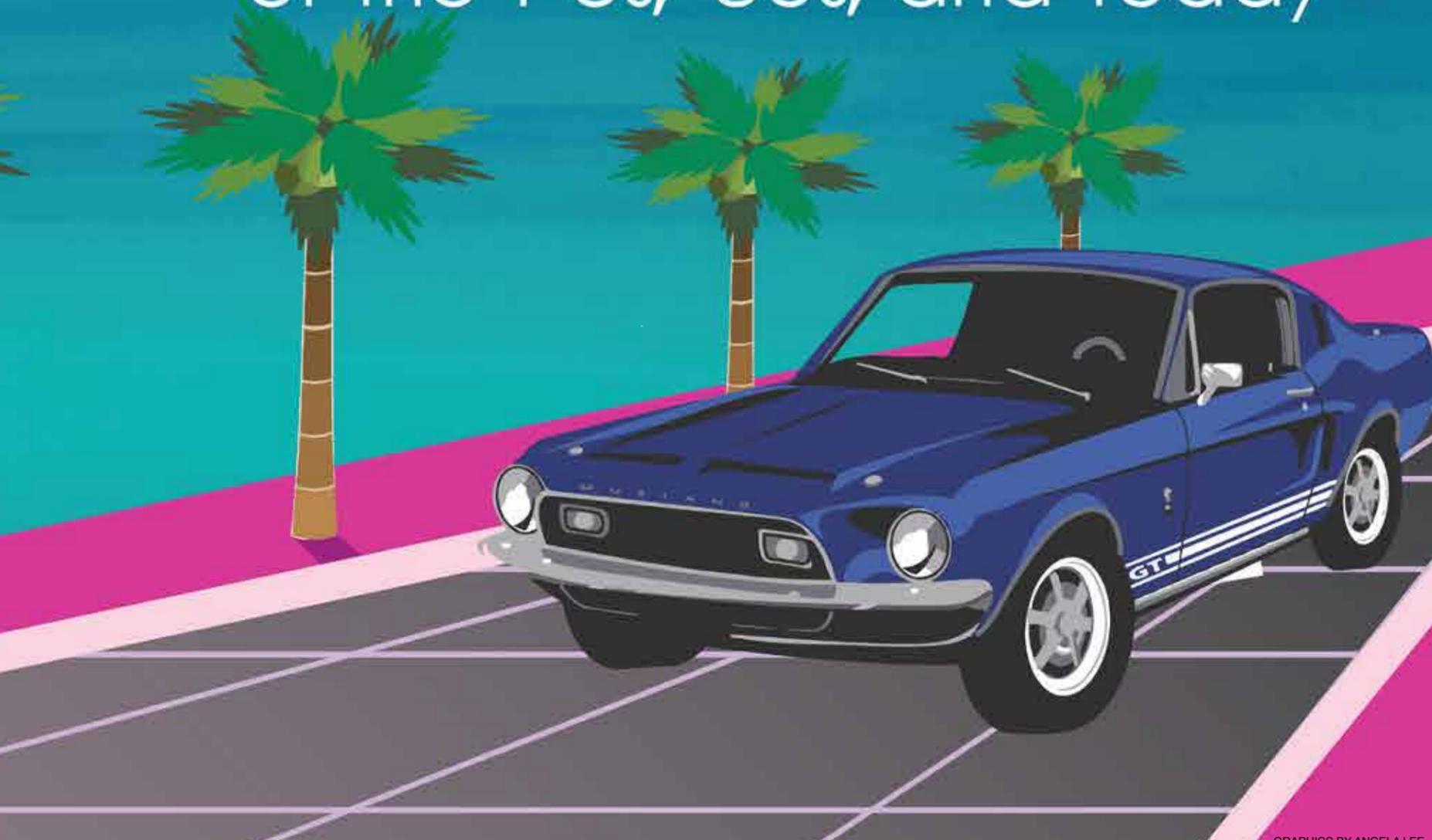
cause they don’t want to have a cut on their record.

This is so different from Ferris Bueller and his classmates, who hardly care about school and only care about having fun. Here, where there is so much competition and stress, the pressure to succeed in academics is almost always present in the back of our minds.

Ferris has inspired me to have fun despite the strict rules we have in this society. Unfortunately, skipping school is not an option for me and probably many of you, but there are countless other ways to have a good time. Stop stressing, go out and do something that you really enjoy! ♦

# BLAST to the PAST

Reporters explore trends of the '70s, '80s, and today



## 'TVD' finale bites the dust with disappointing ending

BY Francesca **Chu**

There are two brothers and a girl. One brother dies to save her, while the other gets his happy ending. This cliché storyline is what the audience watched on March 10 when "The Vampire Diaries" aired its eighth and final season finale. I loved the first few seasons, but the finale and Season 8 were pretty disappointing.

Simply put, the show is about the Salvatore brothers, Stefan and Damon, and their struggles being vampires and loving the same human girl, Elena Gilbert. These three characters were each unique yet complemented each other perfectly, and that chemistry was what I, and the rest of the fans, fell in love with in the beginning.

However, as the show went on, the dynamic among them slowly unraveled. Nina Dobrev, who played Gilbert, left the show after the sixth season, and with her departure, the love triangle was officially over.

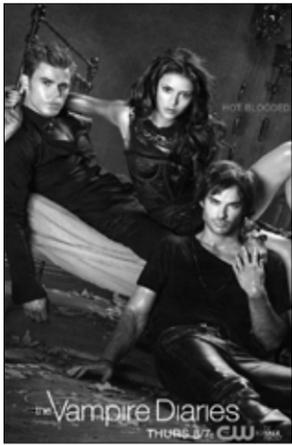
Then all of a sudden, for the last episode, Damon was reunited with Elena, and Stefan saved everyone by sacrificing himself. It was nice to see the three of them together again, but the ending was very predictable.

There was no shock factor, since Stefan was always the one who would do anything to save people, and it was obvious Damon was going to get the girl. It was disappointing for such an enthralling show to end in an unsurprising way.

Also, the writers tried to stretch out the love triangle between Damon, Stefan, and Elena for far too long, and by Season 6, it felt like they were holding on to a relationship that was no longer there. It would have been interesting to see Elena be able to live without Damon and Stefan, since their characters were always so intertwined.

In an ideal ending, I could picture Elena imagining her life with each brother and envisioning how different it would be. With Damon, it would be dangerous, but exhilarating at the same time. On the other hand, being with Stefan would be less action-packed, but full of love and trust. Unfortunately, Dobrev did leave the show, and the characters' fates were sealed. Although the ending was not ideal, there is nothing else to do except remember and reflect on the best moments from the past eight years.

And by "reflect," I mean binge-watching the whole show again on Netflix. ♦



## 'Gilmore Girls' Netflix miniseries ruins original

BY Shreya **Katkere**

I had never felt more shocked in my life. As a huge fan of "Gilmore Girls," I waited nine years for the final season, titled "Gilmore Girls Revival: A Year in the Life." Unfortunately, the final season left me terribly disappointed and let down.

"Gilmore Girls" focuses on the relationship between single-mother Lorelai Gilmore and her daughter Rory Gilmore. It follows Rory's journey through high school and college and the challenges she faces.

For me, the worst part occurs when Rory reveals that she's pregnant in the last few seconds of the show. Rory is supposed to have her life together by this point. Fans don't want to see her make the same mistakes that Lorelai made.

Rory becomes a single, pregnant 32-year-old, who lives in her mom's house and has no stable job. Even at the end of the show, she is a mess, having no clue what she is doing with her life.

In the final season, she keeps letting go of all the good things in her life, like her boyfriend Logan. They had been together for a solid two seasons and he was finally

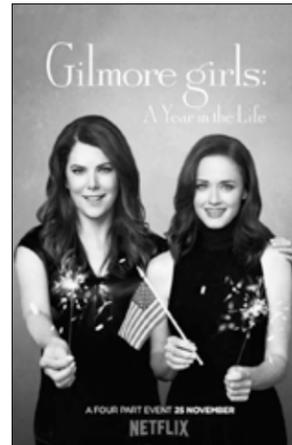
ready to commit to a long-term relationship. Instead, she rejects his sweet proposal, and then when she understands the stupidity of her decision, it is too late to get him back.

The fact that she is pregnant with (almost certainly) Logan's baby reveals their affair, which they tried to keep a secret. Logan getting together with Rory even though he had a fiancée. If people found out, it would ruin their reputations.

How would I rewrite the ending? For one, I would want Rory to be a successful journalist at a top publication because she has been working toward this goal her whole life. She worked so hard to get into Harvard so she could pursue a career in journalism but threw everything away for Logan.

I want her to quit being so indecisive and make up her mind on which guy she wants to be with. She has constantly gone back and forth between boys throughout the show. She went from Dean (her high school sweetheart) to Jess and then Logan.

I understand that the writers wanted to shock the audience with a creative end to the show. Still, fans have waited years upon years for closure. We deserved better. ♦



GRAPHIC BY KAREN CHOW

## 'HIMYM': I wish I hadn't ever met the mother at all

BY Pranav **Ahuja**

"We got divorced," said lead "How I Met Your Mother" character Robin Scherbatsky. With those three words, my world came crashing down.

The whole point of character Barney Stinson's story arc is that he would transform from a man who feared love and hoped to always be single to a loyal husband. His divorce from Robin completely destroys the two-season build-up to their marriage, not to mention that they get divorced a mere two episodes after they get married.

This scene left fans such as myself disappointed. It contradicted all the changes the characters had gone through in past seasons.

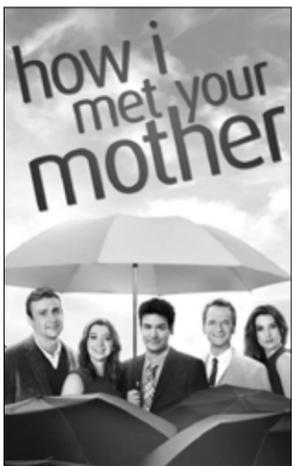
To be fair, the reveal of the mother wasn't that bad. Still, the mother's quick and unexplained death and Ted Mosby's return to Robin are where the tears started rolling.

It's already bad enough that Ted breaks the beloved "Bro Code" from the show by dating someone that a friend has already been with (in this case, married), but he also returns to Robin as if he never got over her from the first episode, making it seem

as if he never truly loved his wife. Making it worse, the person he ends up marrying only joined the show in the final season. The writers didn't have time to flesh out her backstory and character.

If it were up to me, there would be a much different ending. Instead of getting divorced, Barney and Robin would remain married. Furthermore, instead of having his child with a random lady at the end of his "perfect month," Barney would have a child with his wife Robin instead. This would end both of their character arcs nicely, showing that Barney has changed from a selfish individual to a man who loves and cares for his wife and kid, and that Robin has finally overcome her hatred for children.

Additionally, Tracy, Ted's wife, would still be alive, with their relationship better than ever. To prove that Ted has finally overcome his feelings for Robin, I would end the show with a scene of Ted holding the blue French horn in front of his own apartment, calling for his wife to come out. Unfortunately, this did not happen. Although I loved the vast majority of the show, I can't help but feel more betrayed than when Stella left Ted at the altar. ♦



## It was not a pretty little finale for fan-favorite 'PLL'

BY Ava **Hooman**

For seven years, I followed the insane, endless mystery of "Pretty Little Liars." Unfortunately, I was left feeling unsatisfied when the final episode aired on June 27.

The show follows four girls, Spencer, Aria, Hanna and Emily, and their tormentor "A." After their friend Alison disappeared 10 years before, they started receiving threats that endangered them and their loved-ones. In the show's finale, their last tormentor was revealed as none other than Spencer's twin sister, which was quite disappointing, and I felt I deserved more as a loyal fan for seven seasons.

Although I had a theory that Spencer had a twin, I expected her twin to be Bethany Young, a character that we knew about but never saw. Making Bethany her twin would make more sense with the plot rather than adding a new character, Avery Drake.

The finale also spent a large amount of time resolving any issues the couples of the show had. The show had so much time in the last season to incorporate the final struggles of PLL relationships, yet chose to hold it off until the last episode.

It's no secret that the plot has holes in it. However, I was expecting a sense of closure — which I didn't get in the finale. Throughout the show, there were misleading clues that have never been explained. For example, when a nurse at a mental institution

recognized Aria, fans were quick to say that Aria must have been a mental patient. But alas, Aria was never revealed to be mentally ill. There were little clues throughout the show that would support this theory of mine and many other PLL fans.

We were also misled when we saw many different characters torture the girls, yet none of them turned out to be "A." It's safe to say that I was more confused than satisfied at the end of the episode.

If I were to redo the finale, I would definitely make Bethany Young Spencer's twin. Bethany would have a reason to hurt the girls, unlike Avery. Avery didn't have any real motive and her reason for all of this was so different from the original "A" revealed in Season 2, Mona.

A show that has been viewed for so long and has so much devotion from fans should understand its responsibility to satisfy its viewers after seven years of mystery. ♦



# Senior starts business to be featured on TV

BY Alexandra Li

Sitting in front of the directors of the ABC TV show "Shark Tank" this past summer, senior Lillian Zeng and the three other members of her team, high school seniors from all over the world, casually responded to questions about their pitch, proud of how far they had brought their business in just a few weeks.

Their startup business began at MIT Launch, a four-week program that brings together high schoolers from all over the world and provides them with basic resources and a mock board of advisers. In this short period of time, the teams are expected to start a company from scratch.

Zeng's team founded a company called Spare. Inspired by college friends struggling to find cheap storage after their term ends, they created a peer-to-peer platform for self-storage. They market themselves as the Uber for storage space, connecting providers who have extra space in their homes with users who are looking for cheap options.

MIT Launch was not just a program that ended with them writing a business plan. Instead, the goal was for each team to actually set up a user base and be able to perform transactions.

"Every time we went out, we would talk to our Uber drivers about this," Zeng said. "We would also go on AirBNB and message people to add them as users since they were already in the peer-to-peer space."

About three-fourths of the way through the program, Zeng and her team realized that there would be no harm in reaching out to TV shows. After emailing "Shark Tank" about their product, representatives of the show responded that they were interested.

The team was invited to a live casting call

in Boston, a part of the preliminary audition before actually being featured on "Shark Tank."

Zeng described the interview as a "really casual process." Rather than focusing on their actual company, the producers were more interested in how well team members would come across on TV.

"The live casting call was more detailing on who we are as people, our backgrounds and why we want to pursue this company," Zeng said. "They don't have you detail a lot about your numbers. At that stage, it's just your product and you and your personality."

Following the live casting call, the team sent another email to "Shark Tank" representatives with a more detailed description of their company, including the transactions they've completed, the amount of money they've made

and how much they would be asking for from the investors on the show.

Currently, the team is unsure of whether they will have the chance to appear on the "Shark Tank." If they succeed throughout the entire process, they could be featured in Season 9. Zeng would not have been the first Saratoga High student to be featured on "Shark Tank"; Alumnus Jason Li appeared on the show in 2014 with his company, iReTron, that buys old electronics, refurbishes them, and donates or resells them to the general public.

Zeng isn't sure about her actual chances to appear on the popular show because its producers are looking for businesses with great human interest stories behind them.

Even if "Shark Tank" doesn't pan out, they did manage to attract the attention of a smaller TV show called "Boston Startup TV."

During their final pitch day of MIT



Zeng



Courtesy of LILLIAN ZENG

Senior Lillian Zeng and teammate Shaolin Zhang pitch their team's project at MIT Launch's summer program to a board of advisers at the weekly mock presentation.

Launch, many people were there to witness all the different companies, and the manager who runs the show said he enjoyed their product and later reached out to them.

On Sept. 9, Zeng flew back to Boston to be interviewed on the show. The episode, which will be aired multiple times, allowed the team to land one investor that they now hold a contract with. In the future, Zeng and her team plan to focus on the security aspect of their company and offer optional insurance for users. As a small company, the funding from venture capitalists provides the marketing push that is crucial to the early stages.

Zeng thoroughly enjoyed the program and the opportunities it offered. Aside from improving her confidence and speaking skills, Zeng also learned a lot about busi-

ness, a subject she plans to pursue as an undergraduate in combination with design.

"I learned to be resilient and deal with rejections, because there were lots of times when we had so many issues with everything, and we would fix an issue only to find another issue," Zeng said. "It was just nonstop work and a really crazy four weeks."

She has also found her team's cohesive strength to be especially valuable throughout this entire process. Despite having one member in Hong Kong, one in Shanghai, and one in Toronto, they are still working together on the company.

"All of us had different things to bring to the table, so we worked together really well," Zeng said. "We kind of have to keep working on the company, but all of us are really into the idea and really into working on it." ♦

# Fans disappointed by new 'Death Note' remake

BY Selena Liu

Anime watchers around the world highly praised the Japanese hit series "Death Note" when it was released in 2007, so when Netflix announced it would be releasing a new Hollywood adaptation of the anime, fans were thrilled.

Unfortunately, that excitement didn't last very long. As soon as the first trailer for the movie released in March 2017, film critics took to Metacritic and Rotten Tomatoes to complain about the whitewashed interpretation of the anime classic.

The film centers around Light Turner (Nat Wolff), a high school student who discovers the Death Note, a black notebook

that kills anyone whose name is written into it.

However, when Light, under the alias "Kira," starts to kill tons of criminals using the Death Note, the police and Light's father (Shea Whigham), an investigator, begin searching for him. With a cast of nearly all white actors, a rushed plot and a clichéd love interest, Netflix's "Death Note" adaptation has received the butt end of complaints from many entertainment critics.

"There's very little that's original in this Netflix original," Chris Nashawaty wrote in his review of the film for Entertainment Weekly. "The whole thing feels like the pilot episode of a third-rate comic-book vigilante TV show."

On the YouTube trailer alone, over 53,000 viewers disliked the video, compared to 46,000 likes, and the film received a 4.6/10 rating on IMDb.

Despite countless 1-star ratings from these fans, some critics acknowledged that although the film's status as an adaptation is questionable, its ability to stand on its own might still be decent.

"Netflix's film adaptation of popular anime series 'Death Note' is very, very far removed from the source material, but manages to rework the story into something reasonably entertaining," Dani Di Placido from Forbes Magazine wrote. "Many people will watch this without any prior conceptions of how 'Death Note' is 'supposed' to be,

and on that level, the film succeeds."

The original creators of "Death Note," Tsugumi Ohba and Takeshi Obata, also enjoyed the movie.

Producer Masi Oka even recalled, "[Ohba and Obata] came out and said, 'Thank you,' and 'We love the film,' it really just brought a tear to my eye."

It's quite common that Hollywood adaptations of foreign entertainment lose some of their cultural brilliance.

Therefore, it's no surprise that fans of "Death Note" were disappointed in the new movie, mainly because of the heavy liberties taken in adapting the source material and an indifference toward whitewashing a cast. ♦

# Taylor Swift stuns media with new look and music style

BY Muthu Palaniappan

After a 3-year hiatus from making new songs, Taylor Swift launched her comeback on Aug. 25 with the release of her single "Look What You Made Me Do" and "... Ready for it" on Sept. 3. Swift premiered the music video for the song at the MTV Video Music Awards. Peppered with subliminal messages linked to famous feuds in her past, the music video left fans speechless and excited.

Ever since the release of her album "1989," Swift has tried her best to stay out of the media.

Nevertheless, her efforts have been largely unsuccessful, as her disputes with various artists in her industry often became public.

For instance, when rapper Kanye West mentioned Swift in a derogatory comment on one of his tracks, she insisted that she had no idea of her approving of his lyric and played innocent to the media.

Swift was even more upset because the lyric West included essentially said that West was responsible for Swift's fame.

However, West's wife Kim Kardashian released footage of West and Swift having a conversation about the lyric. This exposed Swift for her deliberate lying.

After that incident, social media began to label Swift as a fake and two-faced, calling her a "snake."

Now, in "Look What You Made Me Do," Swift shows her fans a whole new side of her — an unrestrained and unforgiving person.

Along with the change in style of music, from happy and upbeat hits to darker music with more dialogue, Swift also incorporates lyrics that take shots at people Swift has dealt with in the past. For instance, Swift sings, "I don't like your little games / I don't like your tilted stage." The "tilted stage" fans speculate she is referring to has to do with West. During West's Saint Pablo World Tour, the rapper performed on a suspended, tilted stage.

Another example of Swift's subtle digs

include one of her lines, "You asked me for a place to sleep / locked me up / and threw a feast." Here, Swift alludes to Katy Perry's single "Bon Appétit," which involved a music video depicting a feast.

**She is, quite literally, rewriting her goody-goody country girl turned two-faced faced snake reputation.**

In the music video, Swift portrays multiple versions of herself, all at different points in her career.

Each of the characters is seen climbing to the top of a tower where the "new Taylor" stands, referencing an acceptance speech where Swift mentioned that the only person that helped her get to the top is herself.

At the end of her video, Swift pokes fun at all of the labels people have called her by showing her fans that her reputation is no longer a concern of hers, and that she has moved on. One of the most symbolic moments in the video occurs during the last 40 seconds: Swift spray-paints the word "reputation" onto a plane.

She is, quite literally, rewriting her goody-goody country girl turned two-faced snake reputation, which is what fans are expecting in her upcoming album.

So far, Swift's single has received a lot of backlash and hate. On YouTube, it has over 700,000 dislikes. Many claim that the video is too petty, and resembles Beyoncé's "Formation" video. But, as countless fans have pointed out, hatred of Swift seems inevitable, and many people would dislike anything she released no matter how good it is due to a blind hatred.

I love the new music Swift has released, and the two singles released so far have been on repeat for hours straight. ♦

## Homecoming spirit changes, still thrives

BY Francesca **Chu**  
& Muthu **Palaniappan**

Ever since the school's beginnings almost six decades ago, Homecoming has been an annual tradition. Originally intended to welcome alumni back and keep them a part of the community, the event has shifted throughout the years to focus more on celebrating school spirit and competition among classes.

According to Spanish teacher Arnaldo Rodriguex, who has been teaching here for more than 40 years, specific traditions have sometimes faded away. For instance, when he started in the '70s, each class built floats and paraded them around downtown Saratoga while accompanied by the band and cheer team.

Then a few years later, the float parade was moved to the Los Gatos High football field, since SHS did not have a field with lights for night football games.

Rodriguex specifically recalled the school's Homecoming in 1989, the year of the Loma Prieta earthquake. It was the one year the floats were paraded in Saratoga because the earthquake prevented students from driving their floats to Los Gatos.

School officials eventually decided that the floats were too time-consuming to make and inconvenient, since they had to be transported to Los Gatos.

"One year the junior class built a gin-

gerbread house for their float, and when they were driving it to Los Gatos, it fell off the truck and blocked the entire road," Rodriguex said. "The school thought they should tone things down and have one less thing for the students to worry about."

With the floats gone, students became more involved in the quad decorations. When she started teaching here 35 years ago, AP US History teacher Kim Anzalone recalls that "early in the morning it got absolutely crazy with everybody putting up their decorations. They would be here all night setting up their part of the quad, so that it was a big surprise for everybody the next day."

In addition, there used to be more activities during each the quad days for each class — not just skits and dances. Students organized competitive games between the classes during the day in the quad like Tug of War and The Floor is Lava.

Starting in the early 2000s, however, the dances became the main focus of Homecoming. For years now, quad days have more closely resembled big-stage musicals rather than the carnival atmosphere that characterized the first several decades of the event.

Anzalone has also noticed an increase in student participation and time spent in Homecoming.

"I just feel like some of the classes put in so much time and effort that I worry about



FALCON // AVA HOOMAN

Seniors Bradley Oh and Aayush Gupta practice their Boys' Dance after school on Sept. 13.

them getting sick or something because they put more time into it than they used to," Anzalone said.

In addition to becoming more time-consuming, the dances and skits have also strayed from the Homecoming themes.

"The students used to have dances, but they had to relate directly to the theme," Rodriguex said. "Now it seems like they decorate to the theme but can do whatever they want for the dances, and in my opinion that

slightly defeats the purpose."

But no matter how the specifics of Homecoming have changed, the overall effect is still the same, and it continues to be a time for students to show school spirit and have fun.

"I like how competitive and involved everyone is," Spanish teacher Bret Yeilding said, "and it's a real treat to see students enjoying themselves and engaging in something besides studying." ♦



GRAPHIC BY KAREN CHOW

## Gunn's Homecoming sticks to old traditions

BY Alexandra **Li**

A thousand students gather around an intricate obstacle course in the middle of Gunn High, leaving lunches forgotten to watch and cheer for their fellow classmates. As representatives from each grade race through the ups and downs of the course, students chant the names of classmates, encouraging them in the competition.

This is just one of the typical games hosted during Gunn High's Homecoming week, with lunches filled with competitions between grades, a dress-up theme for every day of the week, a Night Rally Thursday night and a football game on Friday. Compared to Saratoga, Gunn's spirit week focuses more on student unity through varied activity rather than the elaborate dances and skits that occur here.

The school's original Homecoming traditions nearly match Gunn's current celebrations, but Homecoming week has changed drastically at Saratoga High in the past two decades, while Gunn's has stayed mostly the same over the years. Gunn senior Jac-

lyn Liang said dressing up is a large part of Homecoming, with themes for each day that correspond to the themes of the year.

"I think that around 99 percent of the school participates," said Liang, a member of the dance team. "It's weirder to not dress up than to dress up."

Rather than having each class perform skits based on a certain theme, Gunn Homecoming lunches host games such as whole-class tug-of-war and "stuff a bench," where the class tries to fit as many people on one bench as possible, and smaller competitions between representatives from each class, such as licking chocolate off plastic. The winning class receives points, which add up over the course of the week to result in an overall winner.

Gunn's Night Rally is an event that used to occur here, but eventually faded away due to lack of student participation. It essentially combines the dancing contained in Saratoga High's skits into one night.

Each class performs a routine called an "airband" based on their theme for the year, with around 70 people participating

per class, including junior Stephanie Liu. Although Liu does not participate in a lot of other events during the week, she enjoys the opportunity that it gives her to show her spirit.

**"Night Rally is the one night all school year long where the majority of the school is together."**

JUNIOR Stephanie Liu

"It's fun performing for all the gathered classes at night," Liu said. "The atmosphere in the room is really special and everybody feels united."

The Night Rally can easily be called the most elaborate event of Homecoming, often incorporating manipulation with the lights in the room and loud cheering.

"Night Rally is my favorite part of Home-

coming because I get to perform with my class and the dance team, and it's also the one night all school year long where the majority of the school is together," Liang said.

Gunn students also have a unique tradition in which, following the Night Rally, each grade goes to a specific location to further bond together. Liang recalls that the sophomores typically go to Happy Donuts, the juniors go to McDonald's and the seniors go to In-N-Out.

Continuing the excitement of Night Rally, the football game on Friday features floats from each class being driven around the football field, a tradition that actually took place here until the late '90s. These floats, built on top of trucks, are designed by groups who also build the wooden base of the float. Thursday before the Night Rally, the classes gather on the football field and stuff the floats, working together for another part of the Homecoming week spirit.

"Overall, I think our Homecoming is more spirited than a lot of other schools," Liang said. "It's a fun experience for everyone and it's my favorite week of the year." ♦

# Drum major excels as young leader

BY Caitlyn Chen  
& Eleanor Goh

While the rest of the band scattered to go on a lunch break on a hot Saturday afternoon, junior and drum major AJ Lee stayed behind when he noticed the drum major scaffold on the field.

The scaffold had to be moved to the quad before practice resumed after lunch, so Lee, without question, began pushing the huge scaffold to the quad by himself.

When band director Michael Boitz saw Lee pushing the structure alone, he came to help him out, but said he knew that Lee would have gladly pushed it to the quad by himself.

"He's not a complainer, he just does," Boitz said of Lee. "He's the most organic leader: He does what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, and whether he wants to do it or not."

Drum majors who aren't already seniors are rare. Every year, a couple of juniors apply for the position, but are usually not chosen as one of the three or four drum majors — Lee was the exception.

"AJ stands out almost every day; he is one of the hardest working students we have," Boitz said. "He is a rare combination of really exceptional talent that is outdone only by his work ethic."

Boitz added that he could think of multiple times when Lee went out of his way to help others in the band or make the program better.

## The audition process

To be chosen as drum major is a complicated process — after filling out an application and turning in recommendations from one teacher, one band student and one past drum major, Lee was interviewed by all



Drum major junior AJ Lee leads his section during band rehearsal on the lower field.

three music directors (Boitz, Andrew Ford and Jason Shiuan).

The interview was followed by an audition, where Lee conducted and gave feedback as applicants of other leadership positions played their instruments.

Lee said that he decided to apply after being inspired by drum majors in the past, like 2014 alumna Lauren Casey-Clyde and his own brother, 2017 alumnus Jaewoo Lee.

"Lauren was a great leader who really motivated me to pursue the music program," Lee said. "Also, because everyone told me I look like my brother, I pretty much wanted to do everything he did. When he got drum major, I thought, 'Well, now I have to try out.'"

## It all began with MESH

Lee's musical journey began in fifth grade, when he participated in MESH (Music Education with Saratoga High), a

program in which students from Saratoga High help elementary students play one of the four base instruments — flute, clarinet, trumpet or baritone.

He started with the trumpet, but switched to the French horn in sixth grade and has been playing it ever since.

Though Lee had not been a section leader prior to becoming a drum major, he gained experience as the drum major of Redwood Middle School's band in eighth grade.

But he said the amount of leadership compared to his current job was miniscule.

Now, Lee conducts the band and organizes the band's leadership team with the other two drum majors, seniors Austin Shi and Alexander Tran.

The three meet with the directors for half an hour before and after rehearsals from 6 to 9 p.m. on Thursdays.

"I take what the directors tell us and relay it to the band," Lee said. "We get together

and we talk about what we have to go over and what mistakes there are."

For Lee, the job has not been easy, especially as a junior.

With a heavy class load as well as standardized testing preparations, he has struggled to balance academics with his commitment to band.

He sees his main responsibility as drum major is to set a positive example by being completely devoted to band.

"I can't miss rehearsals for anything, even if it's the SAT," Lee said. "I also have to know the music better than the regular band does, because I cannot lead others if I don't know my music."

With many interests and academic goals as a junior, Lee is thankful for his parents' constant support during his transition from sophomore to junior year.

He said that his parents have helped him out a lot with time management, which has been his biggest struggle.

Moreover, Boitz considers Lee a "Renaissance man," excelling as a musician, as an academic student and also as an athlete who plays soccer and badminton, and handling it all in a "kind, calm disposition."

"He's already been exceptional [as drum major]," Boitz said. "He does more behind the scenes that people don't realize than just about anyone I know."

Though Lee does not plan on majoring in music in college, he sees himself continuing to play French horn and applying his experience in band to other future careers.

"Band has shown me what is necessary for a team to accomplish a goal," Lee said. "The patience required for working with younger students as well as thinking about the entire group rather than just myself is a skill that will be useful, no matter what I decide to do." ♦

# Junior finds study spot in boys' locker room

BY Andrew Lee  
& Jeffrey Xu

Shunning traditional places to study such as the library and classrooms, junior Kevin Jin has found a spot that few would associate with academic intensity: the boys' locker room.

A mostly gray space with endless rows of blue lockers and red benches, it offers little cause for distraction.

Also located nearby are restrooms and a drinking fountain — both convenient features.

Jin, who played No. 3 doubles on the tennis team last year, also likes to keep his tennis gear in the lockers.

"During the season, it's really convenient just to finish my homework, grab my gear, get a sip of water and go to practice," he said.

Not surprisingly, during lunch, tutorial

and after school, most people who enter only stay a minute or two.

This leaves Jin with a lot of peace and quiet during which he can productively work on homework.

**"I would recommend this spot for someone who wants a quiet place to study."**

JUNIOR Kevin Jin

Jin said he once tried to bring his friends in to study along with him, but they were warded off by the sweat-tinged odors.

He doesn't have this problem.

"Honestly, I can't even tell if there is a smell," Jin said. "I guess the air is a bit stuffy but I can live with that. Also, it's surprisingly cool in here, so I like that a lot too."

He also mentioned that while some people may enjoy working at a desk and chair, he is comfortable squatting and using the benches to do schoolwork, in order to exercise his thighs.

The one downside occurs any time a occasional large group enters the locker room, creating a large echo that bounces off the lockers and walls.

That's why, he said, the space only works well for studying when there are few people in the room.

"The more people to use this place to study, the less effective it becomes," Jin said. "I would recommend this spot for someone who wants a quiet place to study, but only after I graduate." ♦



FALCON // FREDERICK KIM

Junior Kevin Jin quietly studies in the empty boys' locker room, a perfect location for him to study in. Because it's such an unorthodox location, Jin gets the spot mostly for himself.

# Sophomores hang out in new music practice room

BY Andrew Lee  
& Jeffrey Xu

Unbeknownst to many outside of the music program, the second story of the new music building contains hallways filled with individual soundproof practice rooms. Most rooms have a piano.

The largest of these rooms is Practice Room 1, which is roughly half the size of a normal classroom.

Containing two pianos — a black Suzuki and a wooden Yamaha — it is an ideal room to practice duets.

A window on the side of the room gives musicians a view of the front office and the traffic of walking people down below.

Like some of the other bigger practice

rooms, Practice Room 1 also has automatic doors, allowing musicians with large instruments to push a button to open the door rather than having to use their occupied hands.

Also, since the music department is still moving into the new building, there are boxes and storage cabinets scattered throughout the room.

There is also a stack of chairs in the corner of the room.

The chairs allow non-pianists to practice their instruments and friends to sit together and hang out.

One of these sophomores is Alex Mah, a baritone saxophone player for the Symphonic Wind Ensemble.

According to Mah, the new practice

room is much bigger and nicer than the previous rooms they had in the old music building.

Also, the new practice rooms have built-in metronomes and tuners that are attached to the walls — a huge convenience.

Mah said he uses the practice rooms whenever he is assigned a new piece of music.

He also sees it as a good spot to hang out with his other band friends as they both play music and socialize.

Among these friends is sophomore Joshua Yoon, a piano player and a member of the trumpet section in the Symphonic Wind Ensemble.

Yoon said he enjoys the soundproof

nature of the room because it allows him and his friends to have conversations in privacy without the interruption of other noises.

Also, it allows them to be noisy without disturbing others.

Besides practicing, the musicians snack, chat, and play mobile phone games, all of which usually results in a chaotic and lively environment.

"Imagine one person playing the piano and three others crowding around him, trying to mess him up," Yoon said. "Two others are blasting rap music through their phones, and everyone else is telling them to shut up. That's what a typical tutorial would be like. Thank goodness these rooms are soundproof." ♦

# Family escaped from North Korea in 1950s

BY Chelsea Leung

*Editor's note: All quotes from Yi Jin Ha have been translated from Korean by Jarod Kim. All names except Jarod, Jerame and S. Kim are pseudonyms to protect the sources' identities.*

North Korean native Yi Jin Ha remembers the worst moment of her difficult childhood: watching her youngest brother die during the hardships her family faced during and after the Korean War.

"His eyelashes and fingernails fell out," she said. "His empty stomach became round and extended, opposite of what you would expect from a starving child."

Yi, senior Jarod Kim's maternal grandmother, hails from Cheorwon, a town now absorbed into the 38th parallel that splits North Korea from South Korea. She escaped North Korea soon after the Korean Demilitarized Zone was created in 1953.

Yi now lives in Atlanta with one of her sons, but her family says her heart remains in a town that does not exist anymore in a place she cannot return to.

She has led a life marked by hardships. Her father, a leading civil engineer for the then-united Korea, had designed bridges, roads and railroads during Japan's WWII occupation of Korea. But even her father's high position could not prevent her family from suffering from malnourishment during the conflict. When she was 7, she awoke in the arms of a Russian nurse after fainting.

The role of her father led to both their survival and downfall. According to Jerame Kim, Jarod's older brother and a 2016 alumnus, Yi's father believed that modernization would benefit the Korean people, even though the public was skeptical of his working with the Japanese.

He refused an order to accept an engineering position for the communist North Korean government, which he saw as oppressive toward the Korean people. Feign-

ing tuberculosis using a friend's x-ray, he left North Korea when Yi was 10 years old. He told his remaining family, Yi's mother, Yi and Yi's four siblings, to meet him at a South Korean railroad he designed if they also managed to escape in the future.

After seeing military practice drills and Americans evacuating North Koreans onto boats, Yi's family left for South Korea, but her father never made it to the railroad station. To this day, his fate is unknown, although other North Korean refugees claimed that they saw him standing before a firing squad.

Alone in South Korea with no money, food or a place to live, Jarod and Jerame's great-grandmother, Kim Eun Chae, decided to place Yi, then 11 and the oldest of four, and her two younger brothers into an orphanage. The younger sister stayed with Yi's mother.

**"North Korea's regime is synonymous to suffering. Not just one generation. It's everyone under the regime."**

NORTH KOREAN NATIVE Yi Jin Ha

This plan did not last. Suffering from starvation, the youngest boy in the family died in front of Yi's eyes on the street before the orphanage. He was given no funeral.

Yi did not cry while witnessing this horror, nor when her mother left. She recalled lacking emotions throughout all her ordeals.

"My teachers at the orphanage called me Beethoven because I was stoic," Yi said. "I did not know how to smile or laugh like other children. I did not know how to cry, either."

Just once, the orphanage received care



packages from the U.S. containing personal care items like combs, toothbrushes, soaps, handkerchiefs and letters of hope from American children. When it was her turn to pick an item, she chose the toothbrush.

Eventually, Yi's mother was remarried to a South Korean widower. By then, however, it was time for then 17-year-old Yi to make her own way in the world.

She began working long hours as a seamstress with four other refugee girls. They lived in a small, claustrophobic room in Seoul. "Sleeping like sardines," they had to huddle even closer when Yi's remaining brother joined them after leaving the orphanage.

Yi remembered how one night, she awoke with an itch burning her leg. She scratched and scratched.

"When I awoke, the girl next to me was wondering why her leg was scratched up and bloodied," she said. "We were so tired."

Later, Yi and her best friend, also a refugee, opened up their own tailoring shop, where Yi worked as the pattern maker while her best friend designed the clothes. Through her business, Yi helped other

North Korean refugees. She hired them as seamstresses, and during this process, she also met and later married Jarod and Jerame's grandfather, B. Yi.

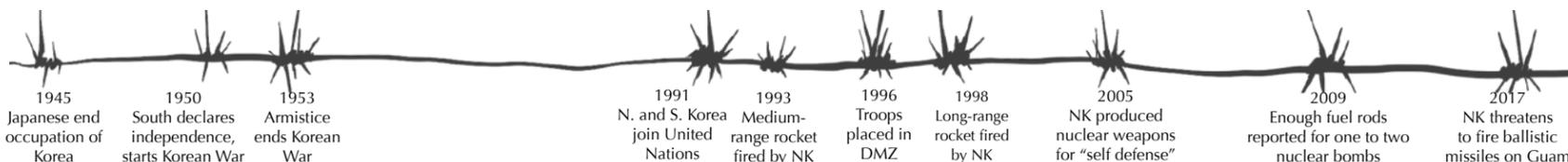
In 1978, she started a new life by immigrating to the U.S., moving from Baltimore to Los Angeles and then finally to Atlanta in 2008. All the while, her old memories and nightmares remained with her.

When Jarod and Jerame's mother and Yi's daughter, S. Kim, was a child, she heard her mother screaming in the middle of the night multiple times a month. This occurred regularly into Yi's late 60s.

"My father would say, 'You're safe. Wake up. Wake up. You are safe,'" S. Kim said. "We never asked her about it because the screams were so desperate and heartbreaking. We cannot bring it up."

Although she lived in changing post-war times and not the totalitarian personality cult dominated by Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un for the past 60 years, Yi still despises North Korea's government.

"North Korea's regime is synonymous to suffering," Yi said. "Not just one generation. It's everyone living under the regime." ♦



# Juniors start tutoring program in East Palo Alto

BY Patrick Li  
& Kaitlyn Wang

Junior Annie Xu placed a pencil inside a glass of water, and with a middle school student, observed how the water's surface appeared to slice the pencil in two.

This was Xu's hands-on approach for explaining refraction, the phenomenon in which light or other waves bend when passing through a medium of different density.

In hopes of providing kids from an underprivileged area with an extra resource, Xu and junior Julia Deng have founded a tutoring program in partnership with East Palo Alto YMCA.

Starting Sept. 5, Deng, Xu and other volunteer tutors are spending around an hour and a half once a week helping these middle school students with homework.

The pair decided to create this program after a school trip to Mexico.

"After we came back, we realized it would be nice to connect with a Hispanic community that lives near us and use that opportunity to practice our Spanish," Xu said.

Because many East Palo Alto families do not speak English and cannot afford classes for their children, parents can have a hard time helping their kids.

The chance to reach out and offer academic help fueled their desire to create the program.

"Tutoring these kids is important to us because we want to help those who did not necessarily have access to all the opportunities that we had," Deng said. "There are kids out there who don't have access to paid tutoring but want the extra help. And we are able to provide it free, so it feels right that we should."

Math teacher P.J. Yim recommended they volunteer in East Palo Alto to them because of the area's large Hispanic population.

But because the commute to East Palo Alto can be long, Deng said it was difficult to recruit tutors for the first meeting. Moreover, the meeting was right after Labor Day and word about the event was not spread quickly enough, so their first session fell short of expectations — only two students came. In the future, they expect more students to join.

On the other hand, there were many highlights in tutoring the students. Both kids were extremely bright, Deng said, and the tutors enjoyed the interactions.

Leena Elzeiny, a junior who now attends Middle College and is volunteering with their program, was surprised by the students' similarity with her.

"My initial assumption was ignorant because I walked in with the expectation that these students would need a lot of help," Elzeiny said. "But after only one exchange, I quickly came to realize that these students were actually just like us in middle school."

They originally had planned to focus on

math, but they decided to open their tutoring help to any subject.

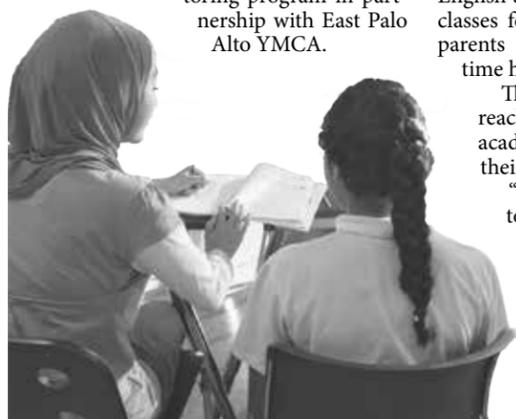
When it comes to practicing Spanish, they plan on having short conversations with the kids, although according to Xu, the kids are "very much fluent with English and don't need our Spanish abilities." As a result, they plan on postponing Spanish conversations until after they have built closer relationships with the students.

"We were thinking that if we bring our own Spanish homework, they can help us with Spanish as we help them with science and math," Deng said. "But we don't want to do that yet — we want to get to know them more first."

Another goal is to converse with the parents of the students when they come in and drop off their kids, so that they can know what their kid is learning and how they have been doing in school, Xu said. Because some parents do not speak English, they may not understand all of the homework their kids are doing.

Xu hopes she and other tutors will help the kids recognize that with patience and a little bit of help, they are able to learn any subject, no matter how difficult it may seem at first.

Xu said, "Together with other initiatives, hopefully we can propel students in East Palo Alto forward." ♦



Courtesy of JULIA DENG



## Sophomore flourishes despite divorced parents

BY SelenaLiu  
& KevinSze

Sophomore Kyle Petkovic clicks on his skis and glides down the snowy mountains at Kirkwood Resort in Lake Tahoe, wind rushing past his face. His mother and stepfather follow up behind him, leaving behind a trail in the powder-like snow.

For Petkovic, his winter holidays in Tahoe are the perfect way to spend quality time with his mother and his stepfather.

But back in the Bay Area, Petkovic often spends time with the other side of his family — his father and stepmother — by walking down Santana Row and taking part in a weekend shopping trips.

Petkovic's parents are currently remarried and living in two separate houses in the area. But unlike the stereotypical divorced family, Petkovic's parents are still on good terms.

**“The divorce hasn’t influenced my perspective on life or high school. My parents support me a lot.”**

SOPHOMORE Kyle Petkovic

Petkovic's parents were born in Croatia and Serbia, and after meeting in college, they immigrated to the U.S. around 1995. After six years of marriage and after having three children, Petkovic being the youngest, they decided to file for a divorce.

Although divorces often lead to tense disagreements in the family, Petkovic's parents have shared custody of him, and he visits both on a daily basis. After school, Petkovic goes to his father's house, and at 4:30, his mother picks him up.

Because of this, Petkovic said he feels supported, and despite often switching

between houses, Petkovic still does well in school and hangs out with friends on a daily basis.

“The divorce hasn’t influenced my perspective on life or high school,” Petkovic said. “My parents support me how I feel undivorced parents would, and when I ask for help, they provide it.”

Since the 1900s, America's standard for a “perfect” family has been two parents, providing care and stability to their children. However, this perception has changed since divorce became common in the 1970s and 1980s.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 44.2 percent of children in the U.S. have divorced parents. Yet, Petkovic believes that he has benefits from his parent's divorce.

“They can make more money since they're remarried,” Petkovic said.

“More birthday gifts too,” he added jokingly.

Switching between households every day can be tough, and it can force a child's maturity to develop from an early age. But for Petkovic, he has not felt any added pressures or responsibilities to take care of himself because of the divorce. He attributes this to his close relationship his parents.

“I haven't really been forced to grow up in any way,” he said. “I think I've always looked at myself similarly to how any sophomore would view themselves.”

Even Petkovic's step-parents have played a big role in Petkovic's life.

“My step-dad is good with writing so he usually proofreads any essays. He's also good with math,” Petkovic said. “My stepmom also drives me around if I need to go somewhere.”

So even though Petkovic goes skiing with one side of his family and shopping with the other, he bonds with both of his parents and his step-parents, receiving support from them no matter what.

“Even if I didn't ask for my parents' help I'd still be close to them,” Petkovic said. “So, after high school, I definitely plan to keep a good relationship with them.” ♦

## Kids learn independence with a parent overseas

BY KarenChow  
& MichaelZhang

Junior Angie Yang remembers the day she arrived in Saratoga three years ago.

Staring at their new house, she and her mother and young sister peered over the gloomy fireplace, checking for cracks. Her father was not there. He was still in China as a sales manager in Huashan.

Yang's family decided to be live on two different continents because her parents wanted Yang and her sister to have a better education.

“My school in China was not very good; they didn't teach anything,” Yang said.

With her father out of her life

for most of the year, Yang has had to grow up faster and learn to be handy. She finds herself needing to complete chores like fixing toilets and changing light bulbs more than she would if her father were around.

Her father's absence is hard on her mother and little sister. Yang often finds herself comforting her mother and helping her sister, who is now in eighth grade, with homework.

“I try to help out as much as I can because my mom feels alone all the time,” Yang said. “We call my dad often, but with the time difference, it is extremely difficult for us to even have a conversation.”

Yang also recalls times when a language barrier has affected her and her mother. Her mother speaks English, “but not really well.” One time when an electrician came, Yang's mother argued with him for hours because there was confusion as to what she was saying.

“Sometimes I have to help translate because my mom's English is broken,” said Yang. “For example, speaking to someone in English would take her 30 minutes, but would only take me 5 minutes.”

Junior Nicholas Zhang is in a similar situation. His family moved to Saratoga from China in 2012, but his father remained there for work. Now, Zhang sees his father twice a year — once in the summer when his family visits China, and once in the winter when his father comes to the U.S.

Like Yang's family, Zhang's family moved to America for educational purposes. However, when his father is around, Zhang views his household as much more of a traditional family.

“When my dad spends more time with us, we are more lively,” Zhang said. “He takes us to places to play, and we feel more like a family rather than room-

mates.”

Additionally, Zhang's mother isn't home often either; she spends much of her time working as a home loan agent at Bank of America.

Since it is usual for neither parent to be home, Zhang and his older sister, senior Catherine Zhang, have learned to lead independent lifestyles.

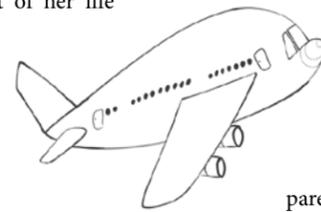
This means that they have more freedom than other teens their age, but their day-to-day lives also include more chores than most children.

“My mom just buys the groceries we need, and we need to cook them,” Catherine said. “We also perform basic chores by ourselves, since we basically have the whole house the whole day.”

Being home alone also made transportation challenging. Although Catherine now has a driver's license, this was not always true of the past. Before, they relied on biking and public transportation to get to activities and classes.

After living this way for five years, Zhang is accustomed to this lifestyle.

“I don't feel much anymore. I don't remember what I had felt when I was small, but now I am used to staying in my room and doing stuff alone.” ♦



## All hands on deck: Living with a family of eight

BY StephenDing  
& AndrewLee

After a long and stressful day of school, many students enjoy returning to a peaceful home and a fridge full of food. But being the third child of six, sophomore Daniel Burgos considers himself lucky to have something to eat, let alone be in a quiet room.

“There are five to six kids in the house at all times, so it's pretty hectic,” he said. “We usually have a nanny to clean up for everyone, and when she leaves, no one bothers to clean up.”

Even though they live in a large home by many standards, Burgos feels that the size of his family makes it feel small.

Aside from maintaining a clean house, transportation is usually a problem for the Burgos family. Even with a Honda minivan and a Cadillac, the family still finds it difficult to fit everyone in their cars.

It often feels like a mini circus whenever the family travels: both parents, six kids, a nanny and sometimes a friend, he said.

Besides 15-year-old Daniel, the kids include Siobhan, 17; Gabriel, 19; Julia, 13; Elena, 11; and Bridget, 11.

According to the Census Bureau, only

2 percent of U.S. households have four or more children, and only 1 percent of households hold more than seven people.

As a member of a rare American household, Daniel has experienced unusual situations with his siblings.

One of these memorable moments occurred when the family left Julia at a gas station on a road trip to Los Angeles.

Daniel said the family had the habit of taking a head count after each stop to make sure everyone was accounted for. But this time, it wasn't until 10 minutes after they had left a gas station that someone finally noticed someone was missing in the car.

As scary as it sounds, this has always been an issue for the Burgos family, especially for the younger children.

Despite the challenges of having a large family, Daniel still appreciates the company of his siblings. Even with their own separate interests, the family members find time to enjoy with each other.

“We don't have too many common interests, so we just chill,” Daniel said. “We all go to a pool or something like that and have a barbecue, but that's as far as it goes.”

Daniel also finds his siblings to be an efficient team when working together.



Courtesy of DANIEL BURGOS

**The 6 Burgos siblings pose for a family picture in Solvang, Calif., during February break.**

“There are a lot of hands to do all the work,” Daniel said. “It's for chores mostly, but we can [get a lot done]. Whether it's yard work or tasks around the house, we can finish it really quickly. It's like having a little workforce.”

Daniel also feels that sharing with his siblings is a big part of his life. Especially when it comes to shopping for new clothing, budgets have to accommodate everyone.

He said one of the biggest examples of sharing in his family occurs during Christ-

mas. There are always lots of presents under the Christmas tree, but they all eventually get distributed among all six children.

“Sharing helps our parents financially,” Daniel said. “Bulk shopping at Costco and purchasing off-brand clothing are also some compromises that our family has to make.”

After years of living in a family of six children, Daniel has a firm opinion on whether couples should have big lots of children.

“Don't do it,” he said. “Two siblings, two kids. That's it.” ♦

# Senior loses significant weight from extreme diet

BY Karen Chow

Taking a bite of his bland chicken, senior Ankit Padwekar watched enviously as his family members delighted in more colorful, tastier food, wistfully reminiscing about the once calorie-rich diet he stopped in favor of losing weight.



Padwekar

Padwekar, who began a "military" diet in mid June, has lost a little over 70 pounds since then in an intensive effort to become healthier before heading to college.

"I wasn't happy with what my body looked like before," said Padwekar. "My metabolism is pretty high, so it's easier for me to lose weight now rather than later."

Padwekar was on the internet searching for ways to lose weight fast and accidentally came across the military diet, a "scheduled three-day set meal plan and four days of eating under 1,500 calories."

With its minimum calorie intake, the military diet reaps immediate weight loss — but only at the expense of numerous risks. According to Healthy Eating, the average teenage boy between 14 and 18 requires about 2,400 to 2,800 calories a day.

By eating about half of the required calories, Padwekar has essentially been starving his body.

Although the diet has been extremely effective, manageable, and inexpensive for Padwekar, it may cause serious health issues in the future as rapid weight loss causes more loss of water and lean tissue rather than fat.

"Throughout this diet I was always hun-

gry, my energy levels were low and it was hard to focus," Padwekar said.

Padwekar's family was initially surprised at his decision to proceed with the diet and did not like how he was eating so little.

Even so, his family helped him through the beginning of his diet, which he recalls as the toughest part since he had never been on a diet or a strict meal schedule.

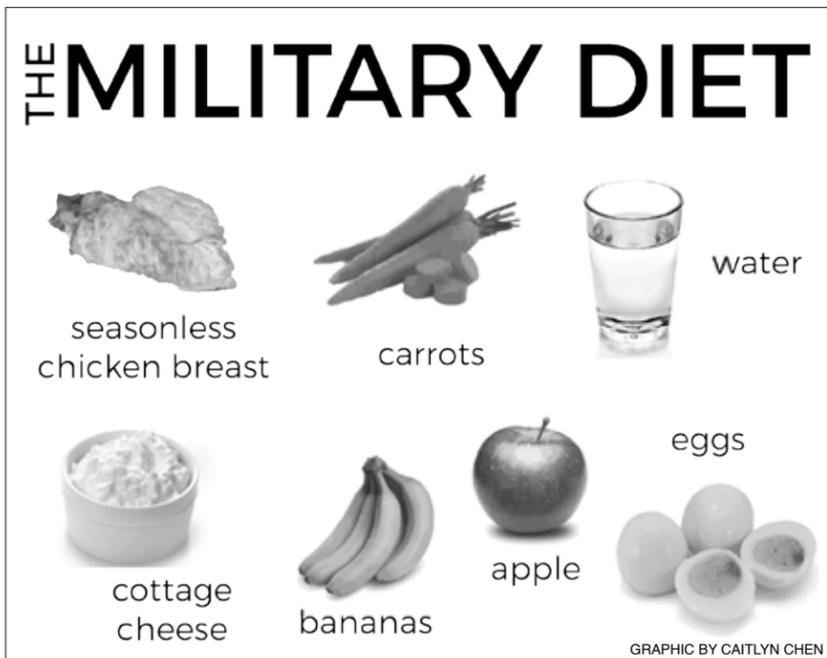
Padwekar's family eventually approved of his diet because they knew it is what Padwekar wanted to do.

After a few months of eating under 1,500 calories daily, Padwekar learned to modify the diet to suit his personal needs.

Padwekar's diet now includes eating a lot of protein, fruits and vegetables instead of calorie-free foods such as carrots and seasonless chicken.

Nevertheless, Padwekar still counts his calories and tries to keep it under 2,000 calories in addition to trying to work out for two hours a day.

"The military diet was a great way to start off my diet; however, it was only effective for a short amount of time," said Padwekar. "Because of this, I created my own diet with similar aspects to the military diet and I am going to continue that for a couple more months." ♦



GRAPHIC BY CAITLYN CHEN

## BOYS' WATER POLO

# Coach competes professionally, believes in 'feet in' instruction strategy

BY Chelsea Leung & Alexandra Li

When varsity boys' water polo coach Jacob Young jumped into the pool for the first time after he started coaching last year, senior wing Nathon Chin, not used to such interactive coaching, was shocked.

"I was like, 'Whoa, this guy is a beast,'" Chin said. "I want to be like him."

Young, who grew up in Saratoga and went to Valley Christian High in San Jose, began coaching the team last year.

"I love the atmosphere," Young said. "It's a great pool; it's like my home."

Chin is a fan of Young's coaching style in which players are allowed to have fun at practices, and the atmosphere is not restrictive or harsh.

"He knows a lot about the game and how to run drills," Chin said. "He knows how we can get stronger. He teaches one-on-one to show us how to play."

Chin added that Young often scrimmages against their team, allowing the players to follow his example and "motivating them to play smart."

"Usually, when I see other teams, they have older coaches who just yell from the side of the pool," Chin said. "But with Jacob, since he's younger and we can connect

with him more, he's just a cooler coach to have. The fact that he's so young makes it so much easier for us to relate to him, and makes practices and games in general way more fun."

**"I love the atmosphere. It's a great pool; it's like my home."**



COACH Jake Young

For Young, water polo has been a long-time passion. He started playing during his freshman year at Valley Christian and continued throughout college at Pepperdine University. He then started his coaching career in 2008 at the Terry Schroeder Olympic Camps in Malibu.

Young even started playing professionally in 2011, when he spent one year as a member of the Brisbane Barracudas in Australia.

Later, he played all around the world and coached in every country that he has played

for as a side job. Coaching children around ages 10 to 16 is a requirement for most professional clubs, so Young was able to develop his style.

These days, however, Young no longer plays professionally, but he is on amateur teams. For example, this summer he attended the 2017 World Championships, hosted by aquatic sports authority FINA (Fédération Internationale de Natation, or International Swimming Federation in English), in Budapest, Hungary.

At the championships, Young played with the Los Gatos based team Bay Area Masters. Traveling around the world to play, Young played teams from countries, such as Serbia, Croatia, Russia, China and Brazil.

"It was the coolest thing I've ever been to and the best atmosphere to play water polo," Young said. "It didn't really mean anything; it's just for bragging rights."

According to junior deep wing Andrew Gao, professional experience has helped Young improve the team's individual aspects, like shooting, passing and swimming speed. "Now we're working on working together as a team," Gao said. "We're coming together really well."

With Young as their coach, the team currently holds a record of 1-3. They play Fremont in an away game on Sept. 19. ♦

## FIELD HOCKEY

0-3 (L) Archbishop Mitty

0-9 (L) Los Gatos

0-2 (L) Los Altos

Although the team played cohesively, they suffered heavy losses against Mitty on Sept. 7 and against Los Gatos on Sept. 13. Senior player Siobhan Burgos recognizes that they have a strong team, but also have much room for improvement for future games.

"We have a strong defense and we have a strong offense, but these last few games we haven't been able to connect the two," Burgos said. "We have been working on the middle so the flow of the game is smoother."

## GIRLS' WATERPOLO

6-2 (W) Half Moon Bay

3-18 (L) Los Gatos

3-14 (L) @ Gunn

4-7 (L) @ Woodside

2-10 (L) @ Wilcox

2-16 (L) @ Sobrato

5-9 (L) @ Santa Theresa

"We have a completely new skill level of opponents, and it means we have to step up our own techniques to account for more difficult games," junior Maddie Stuart said. "So far we are making dramatic improvements in both offense and defense. I feel that we can totally win upcoming games if we keep training hard at practice and put in a full effort."

## BOYS' WATERPOLO

8-11 (L) Santa Clara

12-5 (W) @ Milpitas

5-14 (L) @ Cupertino

"One thing we hope to improve this season is our teamwork," senior hole set Ryan Ahrari said. "There are moments where we really need to learn how to communicate as a team so that we can be more effective in transitions from offense to defense."

## CROSS COUNTRY

Freshman Boys (4th) @ Lynbrook

Sophomore Boys (1st) @ Lynbrook

Junior Boys (3rd) @ Lynbrook

Senior Boys (3rd) @ Lynbrook

Sophomore Girls (3rd) @ Lynbrook

Junior Girls (2nd) @ Lynbrook

Senior Girls (2nd) @ Lynbrook

Members of the cross country team have seen more intense practices than ever before. These practices are intended to drive them out of their comfort zone and make full use of their every step, pushing both the girls and the boys to their limits.

"Even though we lost some fast runners this year, I think that with the longer and harder runs the coach is giving us, we will prove ourselves during the Lynbrook meet," sophomore Justin Wu said.

# Grad now playing for Dodgers minor league team

BY Pranav Ahuja

All 8-year-old Steve Berman wanted to do was be like his brother. When his older brother, Andy, started playing baseball, he knew this was the sport he wanted to play. Now, a decade later, Berman is playing minor league baseball for the Great Lake Loons of the Los Angeles Dodgers farm system, one of the few SHS players to ever play professionally.

Before graduating from SHS in 2013, Berman played catcher, pitcher and shortstop for the Falcons. He received numerous awards, including Athlete of the Year, League MVP, Second Team All-State and All-Mercury News honors in baseball.

After graduating, he went to Santa Clara University, where he starred as a catcher for three years, and was then drafted in the 31st round by the Dodgers in 2016. Berman is now toiling in the lower levels of professional baseball, taking long bus rides and playing catcher for a Class A team. In his short career, he is batting .230 to go with 34 RBIs in 306 at-bats.

Having been drafted in a late round, he is a long shot to ever play on field like Dodger Stadium or AT&T Park.

The transition to professional baseball, Berman found, has been challenging. In high school, Berman played two to three games a week. As a pro, he plays six to seven games a week. "You play around 140 games in 160 days, so there isn't a lot of time off. You always need to bounce back and play your best every day."

Furthermore, Berman said he travels a lot, often missing the ability to see his family. Although his family members are allowed to visit him, he cannot go home until the 4-month offseason.

"It gets pretty hard, especially if you are going through a tough time," Berman said. "It was always easy back in high school to just go to my family, but professional baseball is a little different in that aspect." Berman said climbing the ranks of the minor leagues is an extended process.

Regardless of how far he climbs, Berman enjoys the sport and wouldn't want to give it up for anything.

"I think one of the biggest things I like about professional baseball is that you get to play baseball every day," Berman said. "Baseball has been my dream ever since I was a young kid, so being able to do that for a living is definitely pretty cool." ♦



Courtesy of STEVE BERMAN  
Steve Berman poses with Dodgers coach Joe Vizacaino at an Arizona Springs training facility. Berman, who graduated in 2013, earned both league MVP as well as Second Team All-State honors in high school. After playing for Santa Clara University for three years, Berman now plays catcher for a Class A minor league subsidiary of the Dodgers.

## Alumna earns spot on Greek Olympic softball team



Courtesy of ELENI SPIRAKIS

2016 alumna Eleni Spirakis with the Greek National Softball Team in Bollate, Italy in July. "It was such a unique experience that I wasn't going to let myself stress about how I was going to play," Spirakis said. "All I felt was excitement."

Harshini Ramaswamy

When news came that softball would be becoming an Olympic event for the 2020 Olympics in Japan, Greg Spirakis joked to his daughter, 2016 alumna Eleni Spirakis, that should she reach out to the Greek coach. Thanks to budget cuts for softball in Greece, the coach was recruiting American D1 collegiate athletes of Greek heritage.

Spirakis, who plays D1 as an infielder and pitcher on the Santa Clara University softball team, took her father's idea seriously and sent an email to the coach — with no serious expectations.

To her surprise, six months later, Spirakis received a reply and began the arduous task of becoming a Greek citizen — a task not as easy as it seems.

After attaining citizenship status, she was able to play in the 2017 Women's Softball European Championships in Bollate, Italy, held from the end of June to the beginning of July.

"I was absolutely thrilled to hear I was selected and relieved because the citizenship process was super long and complicated, so it was great to know it wasn't all for nothing," Spirakis said.

Spirakis started her journey with a one-week training camp in Italy, where she met her coaches and teammates. With no familiar faces, Spirakis was initially startled by expectations to become a "highly competitive international" team in one week. She eventually adjusted to the team's fast pace, attending two practices a day.

Along with practices, Spirakis and her

teammates also held training camps for kids living in the communities who were lending the fields and equipment to the team.

"This was one of the best parts of the trip because it showed me that sports are universal," Spirakis said. "None of us knew Italian, and the kids didn't know Greek or English, but we were still able to coach them and help them improve."

Spirakis and her teammates faced off against the Netherlands international team in the first of 11 games the team would eventually play.

"In my first college game, I was super nervous, but all I felt in my first international game was excitement," Spirakis said. "It was such a unique experience that I wasn't going to let myself stress about how well I was going to play."

The team finished sixth out of 23 teams at the European Championships, qualifying them for the European Cup in 2018. Although Spirakis and her teammates had hoped to secure a spot among the top three, which would have enabled them to compete in the 2018 World Championship, they have not lost sight of the bigger picture: to play in the 2020 Olympics.

Spirakis will continue to train and play with her collegiate team, but will also attend occasional training camps around the U.S. and in Greece for the Greek national team.

"This year was more of a trial run," Spirakis said. "We will be playing other international competitions to prepare. The Olympics would be a dream come true." ♦

## GIRLS' TENNIS

# Team gains wins but struggles with lineup

BY Elizabeth Lee

With an overall record of 2-1 as of Sept. 14 and a fifth-place finish in a recent regional tournament, the girls on the tennis team are trying to find their strengths and weaknesses early in the season.

Since the Falcons lost six players to graduation from last year's squad, they have been working hard to figure out the most effective lineup.

One early setback happened when the Falcons fell short to the Matadors at Monta Vista 4-3 on Sept. 12. Due to No. 3 doubles player sophomore Vivian Lin's sudden knee injury, the doubles lineup had to be changed last minute, which forced the doubles players to change their original lineup and work even harder to make up for the loss. In addition, the No. 1 singles player, sophomore Monica Stratakos, withdrew after sickness.

**"It's disheartening to lose a match we all put so much effort into."**



SENIOR Stephanie Ren

"It's a little disheartening to lose a match that we all put in so much effort in after the setbacks, but we know that we can come back even stronger during our next match against Monta Vista and hopefully beat them," No. 2 singles player senior Stephanie Ren said.

Since the team has been working well together and practicing hard to uphold their consecutive streak of league champions, Ren said the girls make sure to be really supportive of each other to give each other confidence going into matches.

Especially during the upcoming match against rival Los Gatos on Sept. 19, the team is ready to work on their strategies in order to defeat the Wildcats.

On Sept. 8 and 9, the Falcons participated in the third annual Golden State Tennis Classic at Stanford University, competing against 15 other top teams from California and Hawaii.

Unlike the traditional format where

each school plays four singles and three doubles and the school with the majority of the wins obtains the victory, the tournament changed the scoring format so that each school only played three singles and three doubles for each team.

If there was a 3-3 tie between the schools, the school with the greater total number of sets within each match would take the victory. If the number of sets one between each team were equal, the school with the greater total number of games won would win.

Removing the fourth singles match ensured that there would be enough time for all 16 schools to finish their matches on time for their next round.

"Since we were forced to remove the No. 4 singles, this allowed each team to move a player down one spot in the lineup, which strengthened the doubles teams," Ren said. Since it was the first tournament of the season before leagues, the team was still trying to figure out the best lineup that would allow for each singles and doubles to be the strongest it could be.

The girls started off strong with a 5-1 victory against Menlo-Atherton, giving them hope to do well during the rest of the tournament.

The Falcons then fell short to Punahou High by 46-52 games after a 3-3 tie in the quarterfinals.

"The match against Menlo-Atherton gave us confidence going into our next round against Punahou, but we underestimated the skills that Punahou had," No. 2 doubles player sophomore Vivian Lin said. "Since they are a team from Hawaii, we were unfamiliar with how they played and were not mentally prepared for how strong they were."

In the next match against Saint Francis, the Falcons won 5-1, determined to come back after their previous loss. The girls then played Menlo in a close match that determined the 5th and sixth place winners where the girls won 7-5 sets after another 3-3 tie.

"Since we had already played Menlo once before in the season in a practice match, we were familiar with their players, which gave us an advantage," No. 3 doubles player junior Divya Aggarwal said. "We made sure to cheer each other on and remain supportive no matter how tired we were, which really helped a lot of us in our tough and long matches." ♦

# Three-sport athletes struggle to manage time

BY EmilieZhou

To say that senior Alex Metz is busy is an understatement.

As a member of the rally commission and a three-sport athlete, he has to figure out a way to manage his time. He has a daily battle to fit in sports and rally practices, at least two hours for homework, 30 minutes of dinner, college apps and other interests — and still get eight hours of sleep. For many high schoolers, it's hard enough to maintain good grades in school while trying to cram in extracurriculars and school activities. Time feels even more limited for those who participate in three sports, despite breaks between seasons.

Senior Harrison Fong, who plays football, basketball and volleyball, said that playing these sports often forces him to focus on what matters most to him.

"My first priorities are school and sports, which often leads to missing social activities, but I really enjoy playing sports so it's worthwhile," he said. "Most of the sports I play also include many friends that I really enjoy to hang out with, so it's a win-win."

In addition, Metz, who plays football, track and basketball, has also experienced such conflicts, but said that planning ahead allows him to survive.

"There are many times where school and sports overlap, but fortunately I've had great teachers that understand my situation and allow me to take tests at a

different time or day in order to help me with my crazy schedule," Metz said.

Another conflict that can arise with playing three sports is the overlap between seasons.

Sophomore Julia Hoffman, who participates in cross country, soccer and track, has been affected by this issue.

"There are a few conflicts because soccer pre-season starts while cross country is still going on, so I am kind of forced to join the team later after people have already begun bonding," Hoffman said. "But this year, [since it is my second year participating], I already know most of the girls so the transition will be easier."

Although Hoffman said that the overlapping seasons don't cause her too many inconveniences, the conflict still takes away from her homework time and forces her to readjust her schedule.

For Metz, playing sports in all seasons can prevent him from specializing in one particular sport, as there sometimes isn't enough time to practice two overlapping sports. For example, there were instances where he had to miss open gyms for basketball until the football season ended, Metz said.

In addition, according to Fong, having to move from one sport immediately to another can be hard. But with the help of great teammates that are willing to help him out when he needs it, that transition has been eased, Fong said.

Despite all the problems with schedules and missing practices, Metz, Hoffman and



Courtesy of HARRISON FONG

**Tri-sport athlete senior Harrison Fong makes a catch in a football game. "My first priorities are school and sports," he said, "which often leads to missing social activities with so many sports lined up in my schedule."**

Fong all said they gain overlapping skills from their differing sports, giving them a slight edge over other athletes.

"It's really helpful because you can take a certain skill like jumping to spike for volleyball and translate it to highpointing a football or grabbing a rebound for basketball," Fong said.

For Hoffman, participating in cross country has also helped build her endurance for soccer. As for Metz, constantly working out and weightlifting helps to

keep him ready and fit for all sports.

Metz also sees side benefits in the discipline needed to play multiple sports. He is in three AP classes and is able to handle them.

"I feel like parents and students should know that being a three-sport athlete doesn't take away from being able to still have a rigorous academic schedule or social life," he said. "As a three-sport athlete, I've learned the importance of teamwork, organization and time management." ♦

## FOOTBALL

# Falcons look to regain edge after losing all four preseason games

BY SivaSambasivam  
& AlexWang

After qualifying for CCS last season, the Falcons looked to get off to a strong start in their four preseason games. But after one blowout loss and three close losses in the past month, they are limping into their first league matchup in an away against a talented-loaded Milpitas team tonight.

The Falcons were routed by the Half Moon Bay Cougars and lost close games to the Silver Creek Raiders, the Santa Teresa Saints and the Leigh Longhorns.

They lost a 28-20 heartbreaker to the Leigh Longhorns last Friday at home. The Longhorns came into the game undefeated.

Early on, however, the Longhorns seemed like a beatable opponent. Besides allowing a touchdown on their first drive, the Falcons' defense held the Longhorns at bay, and the score was tied at 7-7 at the end of the first quarter after a touchdown pass by quarterback Niko Rositano to senior wide receiver Will Turpin. The score remained tied until halftime.

The Falcons' offense came out strong in the third quarter, with Rositano throwing two touchdowns, both to senior wide receiver Harrison Fong. Their defense also held the Longhorns to no points, getting a fourth down stop and an interception.

The Falcons led by 13 going into the fourth quarter, but then they started to stumble. The Longhorns completed a 47-yard touchdown pass to cut the deficit to 6, and then the Longhorns intercepted Rositano and returned it for a touchdown, giving them a 1-point lead with 9 minutes left.

The Falcons' offense could not capitalize on multiple opportunities, including one that came off an interception.

On one such opportunity, Rositano wasn't able to convert on a fourth and 10 on their own 19-yard line, giving the Longhorns excellent field position. Leigh scored on a 10-yard rushing touchdown, and extended its lead to 8 with about a minute to go. On the final drive, the Falcons were un-

able to score as time ran out

In the Falcons' third game against the Santa Teresa Saints on Sept. 8, they looked much sharper on both defense and special teams, their weakest links in their previous games. The teams went head to head, with the Saints ultimately winning 21-14.

The Falcons turned their defensive woes around in their second game against Silver Creek on Sept. 1, as they came out strong and quickly put points on the board.

Their defense also came through as they held the Raiders to only one touchdown throughout the entire first half. Going into the break, the Falcons held a 21-7 lead.

**"Once we get that first win, I think everybody will relax."**



COACH Tim Lugo

The offensive line also did their part blocking for Rositano, allowing him to throw two touchdowns in the first quarter, something he wasn't able to do much in the first game.

"We knew they were going to come out and blitz us based on the film they watched, but we worked with our offensive line and were ready," head coach Tim Lugo said.

In the third quarter, the Falcons' defense started faltering as it gave up two touchdowns; however, their offense made up for it, going head to head with the Raiders to keep their lead at 14 going into the fourth quarter.

But in the fourth quarter, the Falcons stalled. Their offense was only able to put up a single field goal while their defense gave the Raiders multiple scoring opportunities that allowed the opposing team to score 20 points in the fourth quarter,

including a game-tying touchdown off of a muffed kick reception with about four minutes to go in the game.

Rositano and the offense got the ball back with enough time to try to score. However, on the second play of the drive, a Raiders linebacker made adjustments to a Falcons' offensive play and came underneath the pass to intercept it.

With great field position, the Raiders scored a field goal, making it 41-38, with only 19 seconds left on the clock. Rositano attempted a few Hail Mary passes as time expired, but none of them were completed.

"There were some controversial calls, but in the end, we lost because of self-inflicted mistakes," Lugo said. "We gave up three fourth quarter turnovers which allowed the Raiders three more possessions to get back into the game."

Lugo noted that the Falcons played a solid game both offensively and defensively, but it was really their special teams gaffes, on kick and punt returns that hurt them.

In their season opener, the team lost 63-7 to the Half Moon Bay Cougars at home on Aug. 25. Although the Falcons fought until the end, it was not enough to beat the two-time defending CCS champions. However, the Falcons say they haven't given up hope.

"We're working a lot harder changing things around during practice," said senior captain and linebacker Alec Lindeman. "We're trying to put the preseason past us. Our motto right now is that we're '0-0' and that the preseason doesn't matter anymore, it's all about league now."

Lugo still has confidence in his team's ability to win games heading into the regular season, attributing their early struggles to both their team chemistry and injuries along with the amount of time needed for new players to get adjusted to varsity competition.

"Once we get that first win under our belt, I think that everybody will relax," Lugo said. ♦

## VOLLEYBALL

# JV coach moves up

BY SeanOh

Having previously coached club volleyball for six years, as well as having coached JV boys' volleyball and assisting boys' and girls' varsity for four years, coach Steve Chiou stepped up to lead the girls' varsity team this year.

The position had been vacant after longtime varsity coach Brad Frederickson decided to leave the coaching position due to personal reasons.

"It was a really hard decision for him, but we understand and support his decision," senior outside hitter and captain Riley Carter said.

Chiou was a clear choice with his experience in coaching volleyball from years prior.

Chiou's coaching career in club volleyball began when his children, 2015 alumna Nicole Chiou and junior Derek Chiou started playing volleyball in middle school. For the players, club volleyball is a greater investment, adding an extra 6 to 8 months on the regular season, according to Chiou.

"I started coaching, because I wanted to be more than a fan on the bleachers," Chiou said. "I felt that I could be a better supporter if I was 'hands-on.'"

Chiou enjoys running drills that focus on improving passing and serving skills. Though he is reserved in manner, Chiou speaks with impact and intent when giving feedback to the players, according to Carter.

Chiou hopes the players can improve themselves to reach CCS. Junior outside hitter Katie Hulme says that the more focused practices are better for the team.

"Even though we don't play music or mess around, playing volleyball is still fun with Coach Chiou," Hulme said.

The team went 5-3 during the preseason against some highly competitive teams, which helped them prepare for the league season, according to Carter. At the most recent tournament at Westmoor High School, they placed third out of 12 teams. Their first league game against Los Altos High School on Sept. 14 ended in a 3-1 loss. ♦

# Alumnus wins Player of the Year and joins Irvine team

BY Jeffrey Xu

After seven years of hard work and training, 2017 alumnus Joel Schneidmiller won a national award from the Volleyballmag.com: the Boys High School Player of the Year for 2016-17.

"I was really honored and kind of surprised," Schneidmiller said. "I wasn't expecting to get it but it was an awesome feeling when I did."

Having put down 1,202 kills in 198 total matches for the school, Schneidmiller's stats were off the charts for an athlete his age.

Schneidmiller now plays as the outside hitter for UC Irvine, a DI volleyball school with multiple NCAA titles. He has noticed that a higher level of performance is demanded from the players.

"It is a lot more competitive and intense than any volleyball I've ever played," Schneidmiller said.

Schneidmiller has also played with the USA Youth National Team for the past five years, competing this summer in Bahrain and last summer in Cuba. Schneidmiller plans to continue playing for the USA volleyball Junior National Team, which is for 17- and 18-year-olds.

Because he has been used to being the dominant figure on the court, the 6-foot-5-inch Schneidmiller now has to get used to working with players at or above his level.

"It's going to be hard and a lot of work compared to high school," he said. "But I think I am pretty prepared to make the transition and I'm really excited to do so."

Schneidmiller said he plans to continue with competitive volleyball beyond college, even planning on traveling overseas, where he could play in various professional leagues.

"I just have way more fun playing volleyball than I do anything else," Schneidmiller said. "I've always liked volleyball from a really young age and nothing's ever changed." ♦



Courtesy of THIS IS VOLLEYBALL

2017 grad Joel Schneidmiller (far right) with his teammates at the World Championships.

## NBA offseason intrigues fans for '17-'18 season

dancing queen



Julia Miller

As the countdown to the basketball 2017-2018 season begins, let's take a moment to review all of the shocking and downright sassy events that have taken place during the NBA offseason.

Let's start with the trade of all trades this offseason. Former Cleveland Cavaliers point guard Kyrie Irving shook up the basketball world when he declared his desire to be traded to another team so he did not have to share the spotlight with LeBron James.

Soon after these comments were made, Irving was shipped to Boston in exchange for star point guard Isaiah Thomas. The former Cavaliers triple threat of James, Irving, and power forward Kevin Love could not defeat the dominating Warriors with the addition of Durant last season. Could the replacement of Irving with Thomas finally be enough to crush the Dubs this year?

Another worrisome trade was the new Rocket that landed in Houston. Point guard Chris Paul, after a long career with the Los Angeles Clippers, left his long-time pals in L.A. to play with James Harden and the Houston Rockets.

Now onto our beloved Warriors. The front office made additions to their reigning championship team that, simply put, made the best team in the league even better.

Though the Warriors' legendary start-

ing lineup was set in \$254 million stone with Durant and Curry's new contracts, their group of reserve players was altered. Since the team did not have Durant's Bird rights, they could lower the luxury tax on the team and could not add any additional cap space. Unfortunately, former guard Ian Clark signed with the New Orleans Pelicans on Aug. 3, leaving a backup spot open for free agent guard Nick Young of the Los Angeles Lakers.

Durant's pay cut, although pushing Clark out of Oakland, opened the doors for the return of one of the Warriors' most beloved players, small forward Andre Iguodala. He declined all other offers when Durant lowered his salary to keep Iguodala on the team on a three-year, \$48 million deal.

The Warriors also acquired free agents forward Omri Casspi from the Minnesota Timberwolves, forward Georges Niang from the Indiana Pacers and guard Antonius Cleveland from the Portland Trailblazers.

The rest of the Warriors agents on the roster sat through this offseason drama-free, with one slight exception. On July 27, Warriors center Javale McGee finally made his decision to stay with the championship team, after several meetings with other teams including the rival Clippers. Members of Dub Nation, including myself, were relieved to hear that the fan-favorite center decided to stay for another season.

Now that I have caught you up with what's going in the world's second most popular sport behind soccer (ew), you're prepared to watch the Warriors. Mark Oct. 20 on your calendar, because I am predicting this will be a season you will not want to miss. ♦

### GIRLS' VOLLEYBALL

## Carter, Hulme lead Falcons into league

BY Karen Chow

Racing across the court, senior setter Dasha Gousseva maneuvered around her teammates as she tried to set up a play during a tough match against Los Altos on Sept. 15. She dived for the ball and set it perfectly to senior outside Riley Carter, who smashed the ball down for the game winning point, finishing the second set with a 25-17 victory.

Such highlights didn't happen enough in the Sept. 14 match vs. Los Altos, which the Falcons lost 3-1. The Eagles took the first set 25-14, but the Falcons were able to grab the second set. With the match 1-1, the Falcons fought hard, but lost 25-20 in the third set and 25-23 in the fourth.

The team was led by Carter with 13 kills and junior outside Katie Hulme with 10 kills.

"I think we played really amazing as a team this game," Carter said. "We fought hard the whole way through and I think it was one of our best games so far."

The away game against Leigh High school on Sept. 11 ended in a 3-0 win for the Falcons. The first set, which the girls won 25-16, was led by Carter's quick hits and strong blocks. The Falcons kept their momentum, winning the second set 25-21 and the third set 25-22, successfully ending their 2017 preseason.

On Sept. 9, the Falcons headed to Notre Dame High in Salinas for their first tournament. The girls were able to win second in the bronze division.

During pool play — a no-elimination

bracket — the girls lost to Catalina 2-0 and Carmel 2-0. After pool play, the Falcons played in the bronze bracket — the lowest bracket competing for either eighth, ninth or 10th place — in which they lost the first match to Notre Dame 2-1. The girls beat Pioneer 2-0.

Earlier, on Sept. 7, the Falcons lost 3-1 during an away game against Branham High.

Junior libero Michelle Vu led the defense, diving on the floor for difficult passes, allowing the Falcons to win 25-22 in the first set.

However, the girls had trouble returning Branham's quick hits, and the Bruins took the second set 26-24. The girls fell short in the third and fourth games, losing 25-23 and 25-14.

"We started off really strong and everyone was hyped to win," Vu said. "But I think our defense was shaky in the last three sets because we were not able to pick up a lot of their hits."

On Sept. 6, the team dominated against Del Mar in an away game, winning 3-0. The girls won the first set 25-17, the second set 26-24 and finally the third set 25-14.

A home game against Harker on Sept. 5, ended in a 3-0 loss for the Falcons. The girls lost the first set 25-13 but continued to put up a fight in the second and third sets, despite losing 25-20 and 25-22.

Due to printing deadlines, the Falcon could not cover the tournament at Westmoor High School on Sept. 19 and the game against Palo Alto High School on Sept. 21. ♦

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Senior Akhil Marimuthu practices for the band's halftime show on Sept. 15.

Junior Khiara Berkowitz-Sklar makes decorations for Homecoming.

Senior Will Turpin blocks an opponent in the Sept. 1 game against Silver Creek.

Junior Nicholas Bray rushes to stop a counterattack during the game against Cupertino on Sept. 14.

**buzzworthy** >> The Emoji Movie more like EWMOJI?

BY Austin Wang & Alex Yang

For the last 10 years, it's quite unbelievable how far animation and CGI technology has advanced in the film industry.

Unfortunately, the newly released "The Emoji Movie" is quite an example of exactly why this advancement cannot be considered complete.

In fact, the main character's name says it all. The movie is about a "meh" emoji named "Gene," which sounds pretty similar to "generic." Honestly, just saying this much is all this travesty of a film deserves, but for the sake of completeness, we'll go into more detail on just exactly what made this movie stink more than a poop emoji.

The film revolves around a teenage boy trying to choose an emoji to send to a girl he has a crush on.

While that riveting plot point doesn't

seem too revolutionary, there may be more to this movie than meets the eye.

It's possible that the film also tries to explore the deep philosophical ideas of predestination and free will through its characterization of the "meh" emoji, who ends up accepting his fate as a "meh" emoji despite his conflicting personality. Or, it's just a poorly thought out plot attempting to trick viewers into thinking they will be watching a bold and unique movie, before pulling the old bait and switch, and giving them the beaten-to-death classic plotline of "character accepts himself/herself."

Quite frankly, "The Emoji Movie" has the same role in Hollywood as Patrick Stewart has in the movie itself: a pile of poop that attempts to make us laugh.

It comes as a surprise to many, but "The Emoji Movie" actually has turned a very respectable profit. Making \$171 million on a \$50 million budget, distribution company

Columbia Pictures should be very happy with the financials, at the very least.

Now, how could this possibly happen? Many good films like "Children of Men" and "Scott Pilgrim vs. The World" don't even turn a profit, and yet this abomination of animation earns over \$120 million. The answer to this can be found in the viral marketing campaign done by Columbia.

One of the more notorious examples of this is found on veteran popular YouTube Jackfilms, who after making many videos making fun of "The Emoji Movie," was cordially invited by Sony Pictures Animation to the premier of the film.

His string of videos chronicling the experience from getting the letter to attending the event to giving a satirical review have given "The Emoji Movie" immense amounts of free marketing.

Other than that, the film has established its own cult reputation online. Similar to the

notoriously bad Tommy Wiseau film "The Room" from 2003, the film has managed to be so bad that some find it funny enough to watch and mock. Although by no means is it critically passable as even a decent film, the numerous blatant product placement deals, the most obvious being for "Just Dance 2017," have had many in-the-know internet users rolling in laughter. Not to mention the basically absurd amount of mentions of Dropbox and the insane notion of uploading emojis to the cloud.

Really, "The Emoji Movie" isn't good. In fact, it's probably not even debatable that it's objectively terrible. That's right, shockingly, dozens of poop jokes and somewhat unexpected force innuendos in a kid's movie doesn't make it good. However, that doesn't mean it doesn't leave us all as "Smilers" (the main antagonist of the film). ♦



School bathrooms: A real horror story



Isabelle Yang

In the middle of a quiet camping ground, a single flashlight illuminates my face. Aside from the soft crooning of crickets, it's quiet as the campfire circle leans in to hear a scary story. I clear my throat and start, "It was after third-period English when I stepped into Saratoga High's bathrooms..."

I wish with every cell in my body that I didn't have to call any experience in the school's dilapidated bathrooms a terror-filled one, yet that's exactly what I'm doing.

Using most of the school's student bathrooms is one horror after another.

Starting with opening the door, it's mandatory to hold your breath lest you want to be greeted by the staunch smell of death — that is, if death even smells like urine and feces fermenting into sewage in an unventilated prison.

In case you've desperately tried to erase the images of the putrid conditions (like I have) and succeeded (which I have not), let me traumatize you once again: stalls with locks that don't work (why even have stalls if someone can and has barged into your stall because you picked

the one without a lock?), meter-wide gaps between stalls that give for a perfect opportunity for awkward eye contact with some other tortured soul passing by while you're half naked, and rusting sinks and soap dispensers that don't work.

No doubt Saratoga High is a distinguished school. Need I remind you that it is the very school that has consistently ranked top 200 nationally according to usnews.com.

Students are solely asking for a school where they don't have to specifically scout out "acceptable" bathrooms.

It continuously boasts a multi-award winning music department and plenty of alumni who are attending and have attended prestigious schools. Yet it is also this school whose bathrooms often border on the unusable for students.

The disconnect between our state-of-the-art Media Arts building and the new music building and our bathrooms — which assumably every student and staff member uses — is alarming and discouraging.

It's a rather rude awakening every time a student has to struggle to dry their

hands on the dying hand dryer's sputtering breaths of moist air after being educated in classrooms stocked with the newest technology — smart boards, Chromebooks and all.

If the school district can so confidently budget million dollars for new facilities, it can be assumed that these new structures are necessary. Yet even after two major bond measures in the past two decades, the district has failed to successfully update an important facility that students have no choice but to use.

No one is asking for powder rooms tiled with Italian marble and bidets. Students are solely asking for a school where they don't have to specifically scout out "acceptable" bathrooms.

Students are asking for a school where they don't have to wait to go home to simply use the bathroom.

Students are asking for bathrooms where they don't get stuck in the stall due to faulty doors.

Students are asking for bathrooms where they can practice being hygienic instead of giving up washing their hands because of clogged, overflowing sinks. Students are begging for bathroom renovations that are long overdue.

As the school pays to build a new "student wellness center," we're also hoping that they are considering the "wellness" of students' most basic needs and also work to improve the existing bathrooms on campus. ♦

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- 10 Gain weight as a senior. Freshman 15 is a thing of the past!
- 9 Join a Homecoming dance. You finally have an extracurricular to put on your college app.
- 8 Pick up a new language. Liki and Dumi are easy lingos to learn.
- 7 Learn to graph through Naviance's scatter plot. You can study for Statistics ahead of time.
- 6 Who needs college? Use your college funds to buy the iPhone X.
- 5 Or look up some Hypebeast streetwear. A shirt will cost just as much.
- 4 Spy on your crush. (Thanks Snap map!)
- 3 Write your own parent statement. No one knows you better than you do.
- 2 Start purchasing your dream school merch. You'll need it for firewood when you get rejected.
- 1 Dress as College Board for Halloween. It's the scariest thing out there.

>> Pranav Ahuja and Stephen Ding