



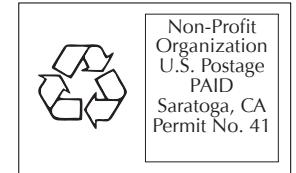
Freshman wins  
Saratoga Idol  
Competition



Movie paints  
sympathetic  
portrait of  
serial killer



Girls'  
basketball  
edges rival  
LG



# THE saratogafalcon



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

[saratogafalcon.org](http://saratogafalcon.org)

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## Community college students given more options

BY Daniel Bessonov  
& Michael Zhang

2015 SHS alumna Bianca Oliveri is one of the approximately 15 percent of the school's graduates who has chosen to attend community colleges.

Like others who have taken this path, she sees it as the right decision for her.

"Going into community college was very difficult at first, because I felt like a lot of my friends were leaving me behind as they went off to college," Oliveri said. "However, by putting myself out there, I made many new friends and became so much happier."

Most students choose the community colleges for financial reasons, guidance counselor Alinna Satake said.

In fact, Oliveri cited this as her primary reason to attend De Anza College. Having finished her coursework there, she now attends UCLA.

>> COLLEGE on pg. 16

### >> what's inside

#### ■ RIGHTS

##### Net neutrality

Fundamental right to free internet access is under attack by FCC. pg. 7

#### ■ LIFESTYLES

##### Holiday stories

Reporters recount childhood Christmas experiences. pg. 12-13

#### ■ STRUGGLES

##### Newfound passion

Senior uses art as a means to fight against cancer. pg. 16

#### ■ ACADEMICS

##### Extra advisement

Are tutors and additional counselors worth the price? pg. 19



it's  
GIVING  
SEASON  
COMMUNITY GETS INVOLVED  
IN ANNUAL GIVING TREE

BY Muthu Palaniappan  
& Jeffrey Xu

Hanging from the large Christmas tree in the main office in recent weeks have been various wish cards with specific gift requests as well as dozens of wrapped presents beneath.

This is no ordinary tree. In fact, the tree's purpose is to allow students to drop off gifts for underprivileged children as a part of the Family Giving Tree drive, which took place from Nov. 20 to Dec. 8.

It was run by the freshman class officers in conjunction with the organization Family Giving Tree.

The class officers marketed the event by taking advantage of the post-

er printer in the activities office. They put these posters up as advertisements around campus. In addition, they created a graphic that was published on Facebook.

According to freshman class vice president Katie Chen, the costs for gift requests ranged from about \$10 to \$30.

Chen participated in the drive by fulfilling the wish of a 3-year-old girl who wanted a winter coat.

"I wanted to donate because I wanted to help kids who are less fortunate than us and help make a child's Christmas a little better," Chen said.

According to familygivingtree.org, one in every four children in the Bay

>> SERVICE on pg. 5

FALCON // AVA HOOMAN

### TRENDS

## More students enrolling in two science courses

BY Daniel Bessonov  
& Alexandra Li

This year, 32 juniors enrolled in two AP science courses.

Each year since 2013, the number of students making this choice has grown by 2 or 3 percent a year, according to registrar Robert Wise.

The workload of taking multiple AP science courses can be overwhelming, but many juniors and seniors are choosing this path in an effort to show they've taken the most challenging possible classes as well as delve into all the fields that interest them.

One such student is junior Thomas Lim, who is taking AP Chemistry and AP Biology this

year. Lim said the trend may be caused by the increasing competitiveness of elite high schools.

"I think that especially with Saratoga's location in the Silicon Valley, academic-related competition has always been there," Lim said. "However, as more and more time goes by and competitive colleges accept less and less people, I think that students just feel more pressure to demonstrate their academic interests through piling up on AP classes."

Lim added that although he is generally good at managing his time, the significant course load that comes with doubling up on sci-

>> SCIENCE on pg. 5

### DANCE

## Winter Formal goes over budget

BY Aaron Choi  
& Stephen Ding

Students who went to Winter Formal at the Hyatt Hotel in Santa Clara said they were impressed by the decorations and atmosphere.

The ballroom was transformed into a Christmas wonderland with red and green lights, artificial snow, mistletoe and giant snowflakes.

All of these decorations came with a price,

and after paying this and other expenses, the dance commission reported going over its budget for the dance by \$4,000.

Dance commissioner Connor Reyes said this kind of deficit may make it harder to have winter formal off campus for the next year.

Money issues aren't the only obstacle for next year's Winter formal.

With a relatively high

>> DANCE on pg. 5

### 2017 FINALS SCHEDULE

#### Monday

Period 2

Period 3

#### Wednesday

Period 6

Period 7

#### Tuesday

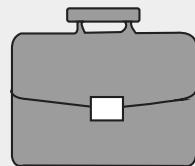
Period 4

Period 5

#### Thursday

Period 1

Winter Break!



## news >> briefs

### Tamasha gears up for competition season

Members of the school's Bollywood dance team, Toga Tamasha, are preparing for their first show on Feb. 10. The dancers, 15 seniors and three sophomores, have been practicing twice a week for two hours each and sending audition videos to various competitions hosted at schools like Lynbrook, Monta Vista, Presentation, Bellarmine, Homestead, Cupertino and some college teams like UCLA.

On Nov. 2, the team traveled to Irvington High in Fremont to audition for a spot in the school's Feb. 10 show.

There were 50 teams at the competition and Toga Tamasha was one of 22 teams to secure a spot.

"I'm so grateful that the team was able to pull together and enthusiastically attend long practices to improve the dance," senior choreographer Ishana Narayanan said.

The competition at Irvington High will take place the week before the school's annual Bombay in the Bay show.

— Karen Chow and Shreya Katkere

### Outreach plans Speak Up For Change week

The outreach commission is currently planning Speak Up for Change Week, which will take place in January. This year's theme is Breaking Barriers.

According to outreach commissioner senior Stacey Chen, Breaking Barriers is a universal theme that can be discussed by and relates to a wide range of students with different perspectives on topics like mental health, parent relationships, sexuality and bullying. Members are hoping students will take advantage of the event and participate with the theme.

The outreach commission is currently recruiting student speakers through social media and email. Speakers will present during the annual Speak Up For Change assembly, and speakers will be interviewed by Humans of Saratoga High, where they will then be featured on Facebook and Instagram, Chen said.

— Chelsea Leung

### ASB to increase transparency with students

Leadership class held its first class meeting open to available students during 5th period on Dec. 4 in the team room. Students discussed topics such as Winter Formal, Move-ember and ASB expenditures.

In addition to soliciting feedback from the class on how to improve these events, ASB also set a goal at the meeting to become more transparent. ASB also took suggestions from the general student body through Facebook class groups.

"Many Saratoga students aren't really aware of what work that goes on in Leadership and ASB," Chin said. "Leadership has taken note of this, and we are trying our best to help students understand what we actually do."

The Leadership class is planning to post occasional summaries and videos of the work that they do on the Saratoga High Facebook page and shsasb.org to discuss how the classes can improve in making the school a better place.

"Next semester we are hoping to hold one of these meetings every six weeks," Chin said. "We'll better engage with the school's opinions and improve with our future events."

— Andrew Lee and Muthu Palaniappan

### >> falcononline



#### Top Story

Seniors take a dive into Shark Tank to experience entrepreneurship firsthand. pg. 5

#### Top Picture

Juniors Elan Caviani and Max Zhuk pose for the camera during Winter Formal on Dec. 2.  
FALCON // Sophia Zivanic

To use: cover the QR codes except for the one you would like to scan, then use a QR scanning app (i.e., Snapchat).



### >> picturethis



**ROOTED IN SUPPORT** >> English teacher Amy Keys talks with students about her interests at the Common Roots student-teacher forum. The lunch activity was held in the Small Gym on Dec. 8.

### EMERGENCY

## School canceled due to kiln fire

BY KrithiSankar  
& SivaSambasivam

Just after the noon lunch bell rang Thursday, Nov. 30, a fire alarm began blaring across campus. Most students assumed it was a false alarm or a drill. It was neither.

Instead, a small portion of the roof above the ceramics room had caught on fire after a third period activity, causing all students and staff to head to their evacuation spots located on the upper and lower fields. The fire began in the area directly above the room's kiln.

The fire has been officially confirmed as a flue fire. The administration claims that over the last 20 years, the ceramics room has accumulated dust and other particles in the exhaust shaft.

When the kiln was turned on during third period, the dust from the shaft and exhaust pipe leading up to the roof may have ignited, causing the roof's frame to catch on fire, according to principal Paul Robinson.

The fire affected the power and gas lines near the ceramics room, causing the administration to shut down power to both lines in the ceramics room and all nearby buildings on campus.

Though this incident caused

concern among students and staff alike, the fire was controlled quickly, with minimal damage to school property and no injuries, Robinson said.

In the meantime, teachers with fifth or seventh-period classes had to rearrange their lesson plans and figure out how to help classes catch up.

Math teacher PJ Yim had to postpone tests for his Trigonometry Precalculus Honors and Geometry classes, because of the prolonged evacuation.

"I opted to postpone my period six test to balance the two classes," Yim said. "The following week, I postponed a Geometry test. There was a small inconvenience, but everything is fine now."

In the days since the fire, workers have been trying to fix the problems that led to the fire.

"We will be rebuilding the area and making sure the supports all meet current fire codes," Robinson said. "Fire codes today are tougher than they were 20 years ago [when the building was first constructed] so we feel the roof will be safer once we've finished."

A temporary wall was constructed in the ceramics room to keep students away from the kiln while repairs are being made.

According to school mainte-

nance head Brian Moran, the fire department did a great job of attending to the situation.

"They were here in four or five minutes and took a chainsaw to the top of the roof above the point where the origin of the fire was at," Moran said.

Senior Evelyn Ha was in the third-period ceramics class during which the fire occurred and suspected something wasn't right.

"During class it was really warm and it was smelling smoky," she told SHSTV. "We didn't think anything was wrong at the time."

Ha additionally said that she was already off-campus when the fire alarm went off. She was surprised to see fire trucks and firemen when she got back to school.

The administration credits the cooperation of students in keeping everyone safe and minimizing the potential damage from the fire.

Returning students who left early enough to go off campus for lunch were ushered to the lower field by school secretary Mandy Armes and campus manager Mark Hernandez.

"We create procedures for accidents like this and we practice," Robinson said. "It all works when everyone does what they're supposed to, and last Thursday was great evidence of that." ♦

### SPIRIT

## Holiday Rally spreads Christmas cheer

BY LeoCao  
& AndrewLee

Dressed as reindeer, seven rally commissioners crowded around a small table at the end of the Large Gym. Eating as many hot dogs as possible in 2 minutes, eight students struggled as hundreds of students cheered for their class representatives.

With the holiday season in full swing and the semester coming to an end, the rally commission worked hard on their annual holiday rally with new ideas and approaches. The rally commissioners were proud of their grand opening in which rally commissioner Allison Borch, dressed as Santa, was pushed around in a sleigh by the other commissions.

"We decided to go holiday themed for this rally so we made Santa's sleigh," rally commissioner sophomore Risa Carter said.

The rally continued with many fun games that helped spread the holiday cheer. The commission tried to incorporate some new ideas such as a teachers versus students four-on-four basketball game.

"We didn't want to do the activities that we have done multiple times at other rallies," Carter said. "So we decided on those games to make it more fun and interesting."

In addition to the new games, they also attempted to include a glow-in-the-dark aspect, which was not as successful.

"The glow-in-the-dark element was tough because we struggled to put glow sticks on as the bands were too small," Carter said.

After experimenting with the point system at the last rally, the commission made a few changes. Among other things, new advis-

ers worked the point system and students no longer had to stay behind a certain line.

This holiday rally also introduced the new boys' dance team. With little time to prepare beforehand, the 14 boys collaborated with the girls' dance team and danced to "dopant beasts," a Christmas trap song, alongside the girls.

"All we had was a quick one-hour rehearsal on the night before the rally," dance team captain Nicholas Di said. "But most people had performed in front of the school during Homecoming week so it wasn't too difficult."

Di said working with the girls was fun and interesting. He believes that in the future, the team can do even better by choreographing their own dances.

"This was a decent debut, but I expect the team to put in more work in the future," Di said. ♦

## SARATOGA IDOL

# Freshman's singing performance wins first place

by Pranav Ahuja  
& Patrick Li

The winner of Saratoga Idol this year was freshman Mithil Chakraborty, who delivered a brilliant singing performance of the song "Love Runs Out" by One Republic.

"I was very happy and definitely surprised, especially since I'm only a freshman and there were a lot of great acts as well," Chakraborty said.

There were 12 acts this year and 80 people attended. The junior class earned \$800, \$10 per ticket. The judges this year were choir teacher Andrew Ford, English teacher Erick Rector and social

studies teacher Kim Anzalone.

Chakraborty has had a passion for singing from an early age.

Although he was nervous at first, Chakraborty said his "nerves went away" as soon as he started singing.

"It was a great experience and I'd love to do it again next year," Chakraborty said.

Seniors Laasya Giri, Ketki Palande and Maya Tirumurti came in second with "Ex's and Oh's" by Elle King. Seniors Pranav Ahuja, Shivaum Kumar, Akhil Marimuthu, Varun Meduri, Gaurav Mohan, Vishal Narayan, Neil Rao and Tyler Wu got third for singing a mix of "Your Man" by Josh Turner, "Thinkin' Bout You" by Frank

Ocean, "Feeling Good" by Michael Buble and "Love Me Again" by John Newman.

After the performance, audience members were able to cast their votes by placing a slip into the respective jar of each performer. The slips in each jar were then counted up by the junior class, and the winners were announced on stage by the end of the event.

A lot of work went into setting up Saratoga Idol. Junior class officer Nevin Prasad said the hardest part was marketing.

"I felt the turnout was pretty good, and ultimately I think Saratoga Idol this year was a success as we profited a good amount," Prasad said. ♦



FALCON // MUTHU PALANIAPPAN

Freshman Mithil Chakraborty sings pop song "Love Runs Out" on Dec. 5.

## FALCON FOCUS

# Swedish student quickly becomes fluent in English

by Alexandra Li  
& Jeffrey Xu

Sophomore Albin Wallin recently raised his hand in English class, ready to explain the use of symbolism in "Lord of the Flies."

When called on by English teacher Sarah Thermond, he answered in perfect English.

That may not seem like a big deal, but Wallin moved to the U.S. from Sweden at the start of freshman year. He spoke almost no English. Now, more than a year later, he is fluent.

In August of last year, Wallin learned his family was planning to move to the U.S. He had a month to pack his belongings, say his goodbyes and prepare for the intercontinental flight. The family moved because of his dad's job working for Volvo.

Back in Sweden, Wallin received only a rudimentary education in English.

"It was really minimal exposure," Wallin said. "We learned really basic words and phrases, like learning how to say closet, but nothing really helpful."

Once Wallin arrived in here, however, it took him a mere month and a half to largely

pick up the language.

While he was a part of the ESL program during his first semester at the school, he dropped out the following semester after feeling like he did not need it anymore.

"I just listened to people speak and I took after them," Wallin said. "It wasn't that hard."

Thermond, who has been Wallin's English 10 teacher for almost a semester now, believes that she has seen more of the effects of how quickly Wallin has picked up English rather than the process.

"It seems like he learned a lot throughout last year," Thermond said. "I also think Albin does a good job of identifying the main idea or topic in a reading or a discussion, and that he then is able to figure out word meanings based on those context clues."

Thermond added that in writing, Wallin uses words and phrases that are "really well-selected and not always common 10th grade vocabulary."

"He's got a knack for picking up both everyday language usage and the more com-

plex terms," Thermond said.

In the year that Wallin has spent in America, he has found noticeable differences between the American and Swedish education systems. Rather than focusing on homework and grades, the Swedish system teaches students to collaborate effectively.

"Grades don't really matter as much, and school is just a smaller part of the day," Wallin said. "We start at around 9:30 and get out at 3, so there's just less school."

The biggest difference for Wallin has been the level of academic intensity of his peers here.

"I was surprised by the fact that people spend so much time studying and doing their homework," Wallin said. "But I prefer Sweden just because I'm a little bit lazy."

Besides academics, Wallin has observed many cultural differences.

For example, in Sweden, there is a tradition called Fika, which is the daily practice of having coffee and pastries and socializing. Also, most people travel by public transportation, resulting in a more social

environment overall.

Next year, Wallin plans to return to Sweden to attend the equivalent of college, which starts at the end of sophomore year in Sweden.

Because of how rigorous the classes are at SHS compared to Sweden, Wallin believes that he will have a significant advantage over his Swedish peers in college.

"I've learned a lot of things that are going to be beneficial," Wallin said. "In English and math, I'm way ahead of everyone."

With his end-of-year move back to Sweden and at least another four years of school looming before him, Wallin has still not decided on his long-term life plans.

He does know he won't rule out someday returning to the U.S. following college.

Despite the relatively short stay, Wallin believes that he has learned many valuable lessons that he plans to take with him back to Sweden.

"I've learned how culturally different two countries can be, despite seeming pretty similar," Wallin said. "But more importantly, I've learned how to adapt to new environments, which will help me later on in life." ♦

## TRADITION

# Teachers and faculty dress up on 'Hawaiian Thursdays'

by Andrew Lee  
& Jeffrey Xu

As registrar Robert Wise strolled into the office on a recent warm Thursday morning, eyes turned toward his colorfully flowered Hawaiian button up. Onlooking students might assume he was just feeling "Hawaiian" that day, but unbeknownst to many, Thursdays are Hawaiian days for teachers and staff.

The tradition was started on campus a few years ago by principal Paul Robinson.

According to Wise, Hawaiian Thursdays are events that he has fun participating in; he has been wearing Hawaiian-themed clothing every Thursday since the start of the school year.

"I've got a closet of Hawaiian shirts that have been given to me over a lifetime," Wise said. "On Hawaiian Thursdays, I get a chance to wear them. I get a chance to have fun and dust them off, and that's the main reason I participate."

Wise has seen teachers such as precalculus honors teacher PJ Yim and AP Spanish teacher Arnaldo Rodriguez wearing luau shirts, necklaces and flowers.

"I've seen people go all out," Wise said.

"For me, it's just for fun, and I think it was a great idea."

Most students and staff do not know that Hawaiian Thursdays actually have a much deeper significance than first meets the eye.

Robinson credits the idea of wearing Hawaiian shirts to his friend and fellow faculty member Tony Goffredo back when Robinson was a teacher in San Diego in the 1980s.

"We didn't like the idea of always wearing ties," Robinson said. "Given the weather in San Diego, we thought, 'Why don't we just wear Hawaiian shirts on Thursdays?'"

Sadly, about 15 years ago, Goffredo was diagnosed with cancer and later passed away from it. In his honor, Goffredo's colleagues began to wear Hawaiian shirts at different school events and activities.

He went "through the struggle of his life and was a champion the whole time," Robinson said.

As winter approaches, the Hawaiian shirt tradition goes on hiatus because of the cooler weather, but returns in March.

"I look forward to the spring so I can show off my large collection of Hawaiian shirts," Wise said. ♦

## SCIENCE

# Student-created publication to help raise interest in STEM

by Michael Zhang

After taking inspiration from a science journal produced by students at The Harker School, sophomores Devin Shah and Jeffrey Xu and junior Ethan Ko have decided to found a similar publication.

By the time they came up with the idea, however, it was already too late to start the journal as a club, so Shah pitched the idea to principal Paul Robinson, who granted his approval.

As a result, the journal will be an independent entity, but not formally a club. However, it will be working closely with Science Club as a way to help raise interest.

According to a description on its website, Saratoga Science Journal is a student-run organization that aims to raise interest in science by publishing student articles about issues in the scientific community.

Following the journal's launch, students will be able to contact the three via email or Facebook messages.

They hope the platform will allow students to read and write articles covering scientific news around the world, opinions about the ethics of a particular sector of science, student research, science research

opportunities such as internship programs and difficult concepts in a particular science subject.

The three are already in the process of designing the website, figuring out logistics and deadlines, raising interest and finding writers and editors.

According to Ko, they hope to have the website up and running by the start of the spring semester. Although they want the journal to advance as quickly as possible, they also recognize the importance of working slowly.

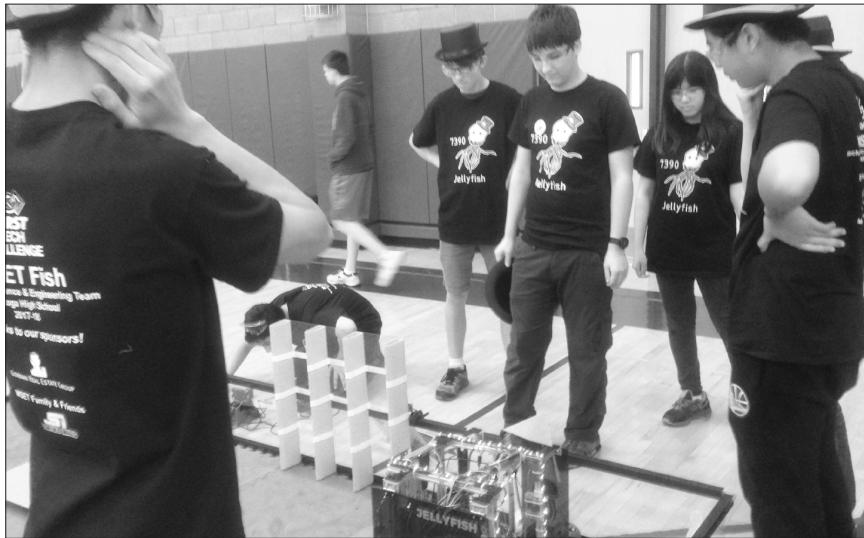
The journal will also be a useful way for students to present their own projects or ideas from the scientific community, giving students a chance to share their research or comment on another scientist's research and allowing them to expose themselves to the scientific community, Shah said.

The three creators feel that a science journal is appropriate for such a STEM-focused school.

"Our journal can provide an extracurricular way for helping students learn about different aspects of science not taught in traditional classes," Shah said. ♦

The URL for the publication is [toga-science-journal.wordpress.com](http://toga-science-journal.wordpress.com).

## ROBOTICS



The Jellyfish team scrambles to fix part of their robot's code at Sequoia High on Nov. 4.

## FTC team redesigns robot

BY Allen Chen  
& Patrick Li

The M-SET Jellyfish FTC team began its competition season on Nov. 4 at Sequoia High in Redwood City.

The team won first place, in addition to five other awards: second place Control Award, second place Connect Award, third place Innovate Award, third place Motivate Award, first place Inspire Award.

This year's FTC challenge is "Relic Recovery," in which teams' robots race to stack a pile of six-inch cubes along a shelf. There were 12 teams present, including one other team (Cuttlefish) from Saratoga High.

"It feels really good to win," junior Derek Chiou. "Having this first one under our belt is a really rewarding."

The team scored 300 points, setting a record in California. But this was not a surprise, as the team put in an extraordinary amount of time to accomplish this feat.

The team's ultimate goal is to qualify for regionals (56 competing teams) and super-

nationals (in Oregon).

They have already qualified for regionals, and if they place within the top 10 there, they will qualify for super-regionals.

Jellyfish members feel confident in their ability to do well at regionals because of the strong bonds between team members.

"We're pretty close with each other, and it really helps with our team chemistry. We work very efficiently together, and that way we get a lot done each meeting," Sun said.

For now, the team is adding better characteristics. For instance, they are currently adding a conveyor belt to the back of the machine to pick up objects faster.

"We currently just tore down our current robot, and we're confident this will help us pick up the relics quicker and score more points," sophomore Shivam Mani said.

Most of the work is done on the team members' own times. However, to most, robotics is more than just an extracurricular.

"I can see how all my hard work pays off into building this robot. It makes you feel like you're part of a family," Chiou said. ♦

## MUSIC

## Band plays with RMS at Holiday Parade

BY Chelsea Leung

In the '90s, years before teacher Jonathan Jow presided over the Redwood Middle music department, he was marching down Santa Cruz Avenue while playing saxophone in the SHS marching bands.

Having marched in the Los Gatos Holiday Parade for years as a student at Redwood and SHS, Jow said that the Holiday Parade has been a "highlight ending to the marching season" for him as well as past and current band students.

This year, the entire SHS band combined with Redwood's in the tradition of marching at the Holiday Parade together on Dec. 2. While Redwood attends the parade every December, the high school joins Redwood every other year as an opportunity for the middle schoolers to build relationships and look up to the high schoolers.

Although the Holiday Parade is actually a competition, only all-middle and all-high school bands can compete. Jow decided to combine the Redwood and SHS bands to march noncompetitively a few years ago, and even when Redwood marches alone they do not compete.

Even though the combined band cannot receive a trophy or prize money, Jow thinks it is worth it because it builds community and is so much fun.

Following the Redwood-Saratoga tradition, both bands played Redwood's annual holiday music medley of "Deck the Halls," "Come All Ye Faithful" and "Angels We Have Heard on High." The percussion also played a cadence in between each run, said junior trumpet Matthew Graham, who has now marched in the parade four times.

Freshman flutist Wilson Fung said that he remembered marching with the high schoolers his seventh grade year. Although he doesn't consider himself to be particu-

larly looked up to since he is a freshman, Fung said he helped out the middle schoolers when they were lost during the combined practice at SHS.

Many band members, including Graham, said that a highlight of the combined marching was that they were able to see Jow again.

"Jow is an incredible teacher who really sparked a love for music in a lot of people's lives, including mine," Graham said.

Jow said that seeing past students is one of his favorite parts of being a teacher.

"Seeing how they have grown and improved as musicians, but also seeing them doing a common activity with friends and doing something they enjoy that reaches beyond the traditional academics of school, make me particularly proud," Jow said.

**"I get incredibly excited and nostalgic seeing seven years worth of students of ours all performing together."**

TEACHER Jonathan Jow

Although the event was much smaller when he was a student, Jow said that he likes how the Holiday Parade has always been a good performance opportunity for the local community.

"When we get to join with the high school, I get incredibly excited and nostalgic seeing seven years worth of students of ours all performing together and representing the best that the community has to offer our youth," he said. "As a teacher, you can't be more proud in moments like those." ♦

## CUERNAVACA EXCHANGE

## Mexican student enjoys American football and culture

BY Pranav Ahuja  
& Michael Zhang

After Emilio Cortes, an exchange student from Mexico, arrived at San Jose International Airport on Nov. 18, he was greeted by senior Vishal Narayan's family. Cortes stayed with Narayan until Dec. 3 to experience American culture.

Two other exchange students, Natalie Christian Gomez de Leon, who stayed with junior Gaia Kakkar and Julieta Albavera Ocampo, who stayed with junior Raiyah Shah, also visited Saratoga during this time.

Most years, students from Cuernavaca, Mexico, arrive at the school in November as

part of an exchange program conducted by Spanish teacher Arnaldo Rodriguez. However, this trip didn't occur last November due to a change in the value of the peso, so it was rescheduled to and occurred in March.

This two-way program also sends SHS students to Cuernavaca during February break to take Spanish classes and learn about Mexican culture for a week. Students who choose to take part in this program are taken care of by volunteer host families, such as Narayan's family. Cortes and Narayan got along especially well.

"I introduced Cortes to a lot of my friends, and they hit it off really well," Narayan said. "We started joking and it was real-

ly great to experience how my friends were so interested in Mexican culture, and how Emilio was so interested in U.S. culture."

Additionally, Narayan made sure to satisfy Cortes's interest in American culture. During his stay, the two had Thanksgiving dinner and went Black Friday shopping, where Cortes bought a pair of joggers.

The pair also attended the NFL game between the San Francisco 49ers and Seattle Seahawks on Nov. 26 at Levi's Stadium. According to Narayan, Cortes was the one who purchased their tickets.

"I don't know how he did it — we were just talking in my house, and the next thing you know, he got us tickets," Narayan said.

"I'm really happy we went, because even though it was on a whim, Cortes told me on the day he came here that one of his dreams was to watch an NFL game."

However, the two also faced a bit of conflict with their diets. Cortes, who eats meat every day, had found himself in a vegetarian household. To resolve this issue, Narayan drove Cortes to various fast-food restaurants, such as Taco Bell, In-N-Out and Five Guys, where he could order meat.

Narayan said Cortes thoroughly enjoyed living in the U.S. with him for two weeks.

"He loves the American food and culture here and I'm sure he'll come to visit again," Narayan said. ♦

## FALCON FOCUS

## Polyglot Passion: Senior familiar with 11 languages

BY Ashley Su

At Saratoga High, it's not uncommon for students to know three languages: English, a home language like Korean or Mandarin Chinese and a language like Spanish taken as an elective at school.

Senior Kristine Chow, however, is familiar with a whopping 11 languages: English, Spanish, Chinese, French, Korean, Mutsun, Obispeño Chumash, Rumsen, Chochenyo, Irish Gaeilge and Iwaidja.

"A lot of times, I feel like people forget about the first language that was in a country, and it fascinates me how their culture and language have suffered through so

much oppression but still persevere," Chow said. "So I take my time to learn these languages because it helps me get to know a culture that many people think are extinct or nonexistent."

Chow admits that she is not completely fluent in all 11 languages, but she says that this is a result of the lack of native speakers in these languages in the area. Because the native speakers of these indigenous languages have all either passed away or live too far away, Chow can only study the languages instead of fully learning them through immersion.

Due to her limited resources, studying each language takes a lot of effort. Chow

searches online for documents and recordings by linguists and speakers from the 20th century. Then, using these documents, she creates her own dictionary or grammar book, picking up the language along the way.

Considering the diverse variety of languages Chow has to choose from, she says that she would like to focus on the Native American languages of California first, such as Chimariko and Inezéño Chumash, since they are "oftentimes overshadowed and left behind by many when the rest of society moves forward."

Going off to college next year, Chow is set on majoring in linguistics. Although she

is certain about her chosen field of study, Chow says she tries not to mention it in front of other people.

"I know people will be like 'what's that?' so I just try to explain to people that I feel would understand," Chow said. "I knew I wanted to pursue linguistics because everything else just felt bland."

Although her parents have accepted her interest in pursuing new languages, Chow says she knows that "deep down they wanted me to do some kind of doctor, lawyer or engineer thing. No offense to STEM or anything, but I can't do that for life," Chow said. "Linguistics is my passion, and I just want to do it forever." ♦

**SERVICE***continued from pg. 1*

Area lives below the poverty line, which at the federal level is defined as having an income of \$30,750 for a family of four.

Schools in the Saratoga Union School District also joined Saratoga High in the Giving Tree program.

This year, every elementary school in Saratoga along with Redwood Middle School joined in on the effort.

They each took 100 tags from Saratoga High and distributed them from their own Christmas trees.

"We were happy to include our local elementary schools and Redwood [Middle School] because it increases the amount of gifts we get and it also improves our com-

munity engagement," ASB president Nathon Chin said.

Freshman class treasurer Emily Choi said the most common gifts were usually toys and clothing, with toothbrushes required with every gift.

**"Even a gift as simple as a toy could really help kids in need."**



FRESHMAN Emily Choi

"Even a gift as simple as a toy could really help kids in need," Choi said. "As fortu-

nate students, we can all spare something to help make others' Christmases special and memorable."

The school's on-site learning service coordinator Tim Gallaher believes that the Giving Tree is a great opportunity for the community to be charitable at an important time of the year.

In the end, the drive proved to be one of the most successful in its history, in part due to the joint community effort.

A total of 250 gifts were donated and dropped off to the Family Giving Tree Warehouse in Sunnyvale on Dec. 11.

"This drive gives our school the opportunity to help families in need," Gallaher said. "Our school can make a huge impact with just one gift, especially since there are so many families in need in the Santa Clara County." ♦

# Drama majors face unique college application process

BY Aaron Choi  
& Ava Hooman

As the first semester comes to a close and most seniors finish their college applications, a handful of seniors pursuing theater arts will have another challenge ahead during second semester: auditions at the schools where they're trying to get in.

Seniors Hannah Yoon and Mateusz Kranz plan to spend time during second semester traveling to different colleges.

The application process for prospective actors and actresses is tedious and requires much more initiative than the average application.

Yoon is applying for a double major in theater and humanities at Northwestern, Wesleyan, Amherst, UCLA, Marymount Manhattan, Fordham, USC and UC Irvine, and applying for theater only at NYU and Carnegie Mellon (which don't have bachelor's programs for acting majors).

Kranz plans to double major in computer science for all of his college choices.

Although it is generally understood that it is hard to double major with a bachelor

of fine arts major, Kranz said he is ready to take on the challenge. He is applying to an extensive list of colleges, including Carnegie Mellon, USC, NYU, Princeton, Harvard, Chapman and Georgetown.

"There are several schools where as soon as you apply you have to schedule an audition slot which are in second semester, but at some schools you have to film a pre-screen and send that into schools," Kranz said.

For colleges that ask for a pre-screen, only the students with qualifying prerequisites are invited for an audition.

Yoon has already scheduled two auditions at Unifeds, which is where several theater colleges gather at one event to run their auditions. The mass auditions are a social gathering for aspiring actors around the nation as well as a significant opportunity to forge relations with college representatives. She will be heading to Los Angeles in February for the auditions.

dedicate more time to AP Physics — often seen as the hardest class on campus — so he chose it as his only science class for junior year.

"Due to the nature and difficulty associated with AP Physics, I wanted to ensure that I do well in that class only, rather than splitting my attention between it and another science like AP Chemistry or AP Biology," Gupta said. "Overall, I'm pleased with my decision, as I am now getting to take chemistry and biology without the stress that physics entails."

On the other hand, junior Meera Ravichandran elected to forego the double-science courseload route, enrolling in five classes, with AP Chemistry as her only science, citing manageability as her primary reason.

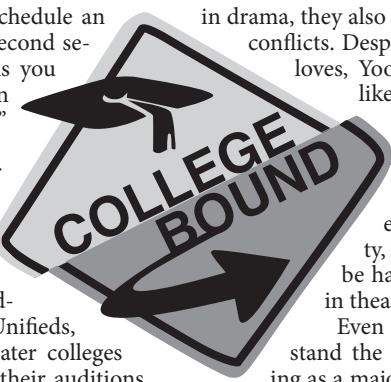
She chose such a schedule to make her junior year as reasonable as possible, and has already seen some benefits from her decision.

"I have a lot of free time, which means I can study more for the tests that I have," Ravichandran said. "So I get better grades than people who are taking a bunch of other AP classes."

AP Chemistry teacher Kathy Nakamatsu thinks the decision of whether to take two science classes varies greatly among different students who, naturally, have different interests and priorities.

Each student must decide whether they are ready to take multiple difficult AP science courses and also consider their underlying reasons for choosing such courses.

"If it's just to beef up a resume, then I think this is the wrong reason," Nakamatsu said. "Some students truly love science and therefore, it is an easy subject for them and perhaps the right choice." ♦



Preparation for these conventions is meticulous and nerve-racking.

"I did a lot of prep for the auditions," Kranz said. "I practice my monologue a lot, as I'm applying for drama everywhere."

As these students go to their auditions in drama, they also struggle with internal conflicts. Despite pursuing what she loves, Yoon can't help but feel like she is trading wealth for her passion.

"Even though choosing theatre as my major jeopardizes my financial security, I know that I wouldn't be happy unless I majored in theater," Yoon said.

Even though they understand the risk of choosing acting as a major, Kranz's parents are supportive of his choice, as long as Kranz applies to competitive programs that have historically produced successful actors.

"I chose theater as my major because I felt like I'd rather do what I love than focus on making money," Kranz said. ♦

**SCIENCE***continued from pg. 1*

-ences sometimes keeps late into the evening.

"Even if I start my homework right after I get home from school, the combination of extracurriculars and other homework mixed in with assignments and tests for my science classes sometimes keeps me up till 2 or even 3 a.m.," Lim said.

Another such student is Catherine Hulme, who chose to take AP Chemistry along with AP Environmental Science this year because of her deep interest in science. She said she hopes to take all of the possible science courses by the time she graduates.

Hulme, one of the top players on the girls' varsity volleyball team, has found balancing the workloads of these two AP sciences along with her other courses and her sport to be a challenge.

"It's been super stressful and a ton of work because they're both AP classes, but they're both really fun and interesting classes, so it is worth the work," Hulme said.

With her heavy workload, Hulme has since learned to manage her time more efficiently. Without her improved time-management skills, she would be unable to finish the assigned work for all her academic classes.

Although juniors have traditionally been the main class to double up on science courses, seniors also participate in the trend. Ayush Gupta, who is currently enrolled in both AP Chemistry and AP Biology, is one such senior.

According to Gupta, his decision stemmed out of the fact that he wanted to

**FALCON FOCUS**

## Sophomore explores poetry through his blog

BY Francesca Chu

About three weeks ago, sophomore Michael Tang was inspired by a random phrase he heard his P.E. teacher say about "a sprinting feeling." For some reason, those words stuck out to him, and he decided to write a poem with the same title.

**"I find inspiration from what is going on around me, and I just follow where it goes."**

SOPHOMORE Michael Tang

"I like poetry because it's easier for me to express my thoughts since the structure isn't very established or organized," Tang said. "I also like that each poem is not a huge time commitment so I can experiment with many different styles."

In order to push himself to write more frequently, he decided to create a poetry blog called "Pleonasm in Poetry," where he has posted over 30 poems so far.

The process of coming up with an idea is

**DANCE***continued from pg. 1*

attendance of 520 students this year, next year's dance could be even more popular. That means that dance commission has to find yet another venue that can accommodate at least 500 students, which won't be easy.

"Our primary goal is to still have an off campus venue; however, if we are unable to find a venue that can hold 500 students, then Formal next year might be in the gym," Reyes said.

Reyes said at the Hyatt, the commission spent \$3,000 on mediocre hotel food. Ideal venues would let outside food be catered in. Despite the pricey bids of \$40 per ticket, most attendees said they enjoyed the dance.

The Christmas theme fully immersed them in the winter mood; from the biting cold on the outside to the dimmed lights on the inside, the scene seemed to be straight from a Christmas song.

Winter Formal started at 7 p.m. when the 11 school buses docked in front of the hotel, until 11 p.m. when the buses departed. Students had four hours to enjoy dinner, the Flipbook booth, the dance and time away from the cold.

The Flipbook booth let friends and dates decorate each other with props like hats and glasses before taking a seven-second video which was then printed into a flipbook. DJ Delicious spiced up the dance floor with Tyga's and XXXTentacion's latest hits and oldies like "Party Rock Anthem."

"I thought the DJ played each song for way too long, but his song selections definitely weren't the worst I've heard," senior Nicholas Di said.

The DJ did not play songs students especially liked, and the ASB and dance commission are looking to improve the music at future dances. Still, most students enjoyed their time at the dance.

"Overall, I think the dance was really awesome this year," sophomore Daniel Ning said. "The dance floor was so big, and I hope we can still go to a venue off campus next year." ♦

quite random, he said, and the subject of his poems can be pretty much anything.

"I find inspiration from what is going on around me, and when I find something I just follow where it goes," he said. "Usually it'll be a random epiphany that connects two things together in an interesting way."

For example, in a "A Sprinting Feeling," he uses several metaphors and imagery clusters that describes the feeling he gets while sprinting. In one line, he expresses the loud sound of thunder to represent how painful sprinting is.

Tang wishes that poetry and creative writing in general were a bigger part of the English curriculum, but he realizes that the education system is mostly centered around literary analysis and would be difficult to change due to students' lack of interest.

The English Department offered a creative writing classes in the past two years, but not enough students signed up for it this year.

Although there is a poetry club at school, it is not very well-known and few students are actually involved in it. While Tang is a member, he said he would rather focus on his individual growth as a poet.

"I've never really written poetry with other people," he said. "Poetry is something I like to do by myself when I'm alone with my thoughts." ♦

## FIELD TRIPS

# Classes tour dead body exhibit at museum

BY Julia Miller

Many teens can never say that they have seen a dead body, but some students had the chance to view dozens of artistically rendered corpses during a recent field trip.

The Anatomy/Physiology class taught by Kristofer Orre embarked on its first field trip ever. On Dec. 1, students in both Orre's class and Amy Obenour's Sports Medicine class took a 20-minute trip to downtown San Jose where the exhibit "Body Worlds" was featured at the Tech Museum.

Having debuted in 1995, Body Worlds is a traveling exhibition that has visited more than 115 cities throughout America, Africa, Asia and Europe. The exhibit's German creators, Dr. Angelina Whalley and Dr. Gunther von Hagens, thought of the idea to convert donated, human specimens to works of art because they wanted audiences to "become aware of the fragility of their bodies and to recognize the anatomical individual beauty inside each of us."

The exhibit includes both preserved entire bodies and individual organs, organ systems and transparent body slices. To preserve the cadavers, the bodies go through a process called plastination, so that bodies can be positioned and manipulated.

Senior Christina Walb wasn't sure what



Courtesy of DAPHNE LIU

A body is displayed in a batting position at the "Body Worlds" exhibit at the Tech Museum.

to expect before she arrived at the museum, but described her reaction as "a shock."

"I've never seen a human with no skin on it, let alone a real dead body," Walb said.

"But it was really cool to be able to see how the internal body is structured and to really get a look at all the parts that hold us together."

Junior Hugo Huang admitted there is "nothing Mr. Orre could do or say that could get rid of the shock factor." But according to Huang, it only took a few minutes to get accustomed to the cadavers.

Both Huang and Walb agreed that the most interesting body was "The Male Ballet Dancer," which featured a man jumping in mid-air, held up by his spinal cord and brain that are peeled back to the floor.

Along with labels and descriptions of each piece, students were able to interact with the museum exhibits. Tablets were distributed to experience an augmented reality feature of Body Worlds, where 3-D digital body parts would appear on the camera screen as if they were really there. Upon clicking on each structure, more information and pictures would be available for students to read into.

By the end of the exhibit, Walb said she learned "that there's more to the body than what's in our textbook's diagrams."

Body Worlds is scheduled to be at the Tech Museum for the next 10 years, and Walb expressed her hope that this becomes an annual field trip for the class until the exhibit leaves Silicon Valley.

"This is an amazing learning experience," Walb said. "It's taking what we're taught to a completely new level." ♦

## CLUBS

# Common Roots improves student-teacher relationships

BY Leo Cao  
& Andrew Lee

Whether it's grades or relationships with friends, many students experience stress and pressure every day, especially nearing the end of this semester.

On Dec. 8, Common Roots held a student-teacher forum at lunch in the Small Gym, where many students got to enjoy talking to some of their favorite teachers and enjoy bagels and donuts.

Common Roots, a student-led club that provides peer-to-peer counseling, is a resource there to help students struggling with personal issues.

Currently, the club is also working on developing stronger relationships between teachers and students.

**The club aims to make students more comfortable with confiding in adults on campus.**

"Teachers are great resources not only for academic support but are also great people that students can talk to about almost

anything imaginable," said senior Andrew Zheng, the club's treasurer.

The officers of Common Roots believe that fostering strong student-teacher relationships will lower stress by helping students find trusted adults through common interests and build better relationships.

According to Zheng, the club aims to better support the students by making students more comfortable with confiding in adults on campus.

"We feel that a lot of people forget that teachers are great people to talk about life with, which prompted us to do this activity," Zheng said.

According to club president Smriti

Balebail, Common Roots contacted different administrators and teachers for advice on how to successfully execute this activity.

"Common Roots is really trying to make this experience comfortable for everyone," Balebail said. "We talked to a few teachers and assistant principal [Kerry Mohnike] to gain their insight on how to do this as well."

Members of the club are hoping their three-part activity will be beneficial for both students and teachers alike. Their next event is planned to take place on Dec. 15.

"This is the first year we are doing this, so I don't know how successful it will be," Zheng said. "But I hope it will give us insight about what we can do in the future." ♦

## PROJECTS

# Seniors experience entrepreneurship in Shark Tank

BY Patrick Li  
& Muthu Palaniappan

After alumnus Jason Li got a chance to present his startup idea, iReTron, to a panel of entrepreneurs on ABC's "Shark Tank," in 2014, AP Gov/Econ teachers Kirk Abe and Mike Davey decided to create an assignment inspired by Li's experience.

AP Gov/Econ teachers Margarita Morelle and Hanna Chen started assigning the project this year.

Seniors pitch an original product or ser-

vice to a panel of business people or those with a business background. Throughout first semester, students got class time to create an idea to present to a panel of real-life sharks.

The sharks, who came to class to listen to the pitches on Dec. 7 and 8, were Andrew Krcik, who has worked for 35 years in the marketing industry; Amanda Brophy, a project manager at Google; Mike Chen, a senior manager at Apple; and Erik Frieberg, a senior vice president at VMWare.

"I think it is one of the most reward-

ing projects of the class," Abe said. "Some students have had their interest sparked in fields like marketing or economics."

Chen added that in the past, she has gotten feedback to have more group work in her curriculum. This prompted her to incorporate the Shark Tank project in her AP Gov/Econ class.

This year, the sharks made deals with more than half of the groups.

"In the past we've had some sharks say that if the company was real, they would have invested," Abe said.

The Shark Tank project allows students to learn about entrepreneurship and business, subjects not typically taught in typical high school classes.

For instance, 2017 alumnus Jonathan Yun, currently studying computer science at the University of Michigan, designed a laptop case that doubled as a laptop stand.

"It helped me establish an interest in business because I wanted to be involved in the technical aspect of projects but also I enjoy presenting my findings," Yun said. "Now I'm trying to minor in business." ♦

## CULTURE

# Senior demonstrates his passion for Chinese Club

BY Shreya Katkare  
& Kaitlyn Wang

Senior Connor Reyes smiled as he stood before the audience in a red changshan, a traditional Chinese outfit often worn by kung fu athletes on Nov. 4.

As part of a cultural event hosted by the Saratoga Library, Reyes and other Chinese Club members described their club and told people about the traditional clothing they

were wearing.

He is has been an active member since last year, though he has never taken the school's Chinese class.

"I decided to join Chinese Club because my closest friend Nicholas Di started it and wanted people to come for attendance," Reyes said. "I ended up sticking around and enjoying it a lot."

Reyes attends every meeting and contributes to cultural events that the club hosts.

"I enjoy the fun culture in the club and we always learn new things about China, like history," Reyes said. "The activities we do are fun and very interactive."

These activities include tasting Chinese food, watching documentaries and dramas, listening to Chinese music and playing mahjong, a tile-based board game.

Chinese Club also partners with Korean Club to host an annual Lunar New Year Celebration in the quad, where students can

play games and take part in traditions, such as stuffing and sending red envelopes, containing thank you notes instead of money.

Some people find it odd that Reyes is such an active member of the Chinese club even though he is not Chinese, but has grown to embrace it.

"I can see why people think it is weird that I am a non-Chinese person in Chinese Club, but I sort of embraced it and used it to help the club with diversity," Reyes said. ♦

FOURTH PERIOD

STAFF POLICY

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Views expressed in The Saratoga Falcon are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the administration, faculty or school district.

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

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## Consent curriculum needs to be extended beyond freshman course

In a typical Hollywood movie, the protagonists lock eyes across the room, slowly move near each other and form an intimate connection within the first few strands of conversation. Their subsequent physical interaction is wordless and magnetizing, drawing sighs from a jealous audience as they witness the sparks of a new relationship.

Unfortunately, reality is much less romantic.

Take the infamous "Notebook" scene, where Noah and Allie confess their love for each other and passionately kiss.

But what if Noah just wanted to kiss? What if Allie wanted to go further? How did they know whether the other felt OK with each progression in intimacy?

Of course, communicating their desires beforehand would have been awkward for moviegoers to watch. The heat of the moment would be lost if the actors initiated conversations about their boundaries or comfort.

Equally, the line between sexual harassment and "pursuing" an individual can be a difficult one to decipher in real life. An easy solution would be to talk about any issues before moments of intimacy, but culturally, those conversations rarely happen.

With recent events uncovering celebrity sexual assaults and harassment, it is more vital than ever to change the culture and start having these conversations, and the groundwork should begin in high school or earlier.

Although the school does cover consent in the required freshman health elective, health

teacher Liz Alves believes there is "more room and education" in higher grades. In addition, she has observed some freshmen are not mature enough for a meaningful discussion about sex.

"Some of the freshmen aren't equipped to handle this conversation," Alves said. "Their eyes glaze over when we say the word 'sex.' Extending the curriculum is definitely something to look into especially as they get older and start to encounter more issues where consent is involved."

Clarifying the definition of consent is extremely relevant right now, since many rape cases center around its conflicting interpretations. In California, the legal definition requires individuals to affirmatively and voluntarily engage in the sexual act.

It also emphasizes that a lack of resistance, in cases of unconscious or incoherent victims, does not translate as consent. Although most rape cases aren't the result of unclear communication, rape convictions can often rely on defining new or pre-existing definitions of consent.

Addressing the language surrounding sexual harassment and rape cases is equally pertinent. The carelessness taken with language and actions contribute to a "rape culture," one that normalizes sexual violence and protects abusers rather than victims.

While clarity of language and increasing understanding about consent are extremely vital, the curriculum must also address misconceptions and issues surrounding sex, like alcohol consumption. Adolescents and



adults alike can become confused in a setting where alcohol is involved, as impaired judgment can result in messy lines between implied and given consent.

We can address the effects of rape culture, starting here in our school.

Spreading awareness through platforms such as Speak Up for Change week and individual assemblies throughout high school are all imperative steps to extending consent curriculum and

preparing students for their lives beyond high school.

At its core, consent is how we communicate our interests and set our boundaries; learning this self-autonomy is applicable in all communities. Understanding how to give and receive consent helps both adolescents and adults protect their bodily rights, giving them the confidence to speak up for themselves and discouraging them from violating others' rights. ♦

### Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

Editors-in-chief	Opinion Editor	Reporter
Caitlyn Chen Eleanor Goh	Isabelle Yang	Harshini Ramaswamy

*The Falcon staff voted 31-4 in support of this article.*

## Net neutrality: A fundamental right

by Ryan Kim & Roland Shen

In 2014, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) made its first attempt to remove the nationally accepted freedom known as net neutrality. Now, net neutrality, which gives all internet users full freedom to browse the entirety of the web, is under attack once again — the fate of net neutrality will be determined on Dec. 14.

Net neutrality is a fundamental tenet of our modern democracy. In our everyday lives, we expect to be able to access whatever we want online, and to have no limits in what we want to view online.

In fact, the removal of net neutrality allows internet service providers (ISPs) such as Comcast and AT&T to manage internet service speeds and fluctuate costs for any website they want.

That means ISPs technically would have the freedom to slow down internet speeds for online news networks like CNN to the point that it's not viable for the average consumer to access the website, effectively censoring the press. This goes against the First Amendment, which ensures freedom of press and speech.

Removing net neutrality has more than just domestic implications. Since U.S. internet services

have such command over internet services all over the world, the removal of net neutrality in the U.S. can allow large providers like Comcast to raise prices on accessing services like Netflix, thereby raising prices for Netflix users across the globe.

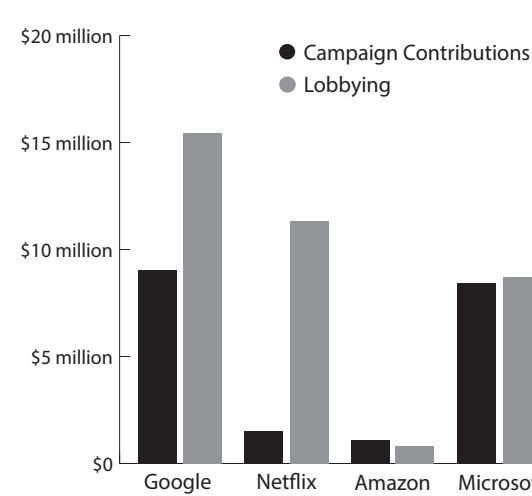
### We're in an indisputably difficult spot right now.

Net neutrality is essentially an implicit extension of the First Amendment that offers freedom to ideas and information necessary for progress in the Information Era.

It is not in the average consumer's best interests — nor that of the average business — if net neutrality is removed, no matter what the FCC claims.

The current FCC chairman, Ajit V. Pai, is an ex-Verizon lawyer, and the current plan to repeal net neutrality would heavily benefit ISPs like Verizon. Although it may be a stretch to conclude conflict of interest without explicit evidence, it should be noted how much the FCC disregards the common American in exchange for "competition" among ISPs.

### Corporate Supporters of Net Neutrality



SOURCE: NUTT LABS

GRAPHIC BY FRANCESCA CHU

to voice our opinion.

We can't allow corporate interests to trump those of our democracy, and we certainly cannot sit idly by, hoping that someone else will fix our problems for us. These are our rights being threatened, and it is our way of life that is in jeopardy; this is our time to fight for net neutrality. ♦

# Thousands die by guns as politicians do nothing

by Alex Yang

You can almost set your calendar by it. Once or twice a month, headlines will scream about the latest mass shooting in some part of the U.S.

Fifty eight people were killed in a mass shooting in Las Vegas on Oct. 1.

On Nov. 5, 26 died in a church shooting in Sutherland Springs, Texas.

In Rancho Tehama Reserve in Northern California, a gunman went on a shooting spree that killed five, left 18 injured, and led to the lockdown of an elementary school on Nov. 13.

There have been 316 people across America injured or killed from mass shootings this year alone; the number goes to over 40,000 when all shooting incidents are factored in. It's easy to look at these numbers and feel sorry for the victims, but it is vastly harder to solve the problem. Unfortunately,

the federal government and other national firearm organizations seem committed to the status quo.

In fact, just days after the deadly Las Vegas shooting, the NRA moved out to Congress to lobby against bump stock regulations.

Bump stocks are a type of weapon attachment which uses the recoil of the gun to pull the trigger in a cycle, increasing the fire-rate.

"We oppose the gun-control legislation being offered by Senator Feinstein and Representatives Curbelo and Moulton," NRA spokeswoman Jennifer Baker said on the topic of new gun control legislation proposed after the Las Vegas shooting. "These bills are intentionally overreaching and would ban commonly owned firearm accessories."

However, in a poll conducted by the Morning Consult after the shooting, 72 per-

cent of responders stated their support on a bump stock ban in America. In a moment of cross-party agreement, the Republicans voiced 68 percent support to the Democrats' 79 percent.

**This year alone, there have been 316 people across America injured or killed from mass shootings.**

Not even talking about guns as a whole, it seems absurd for the NRA to be supporting the continued distribution of bump stocks to the public — there is not safe enough regulation of the firearm industry for there not to be a high chance of someone misusing their weapons. Indeed, there's no reason

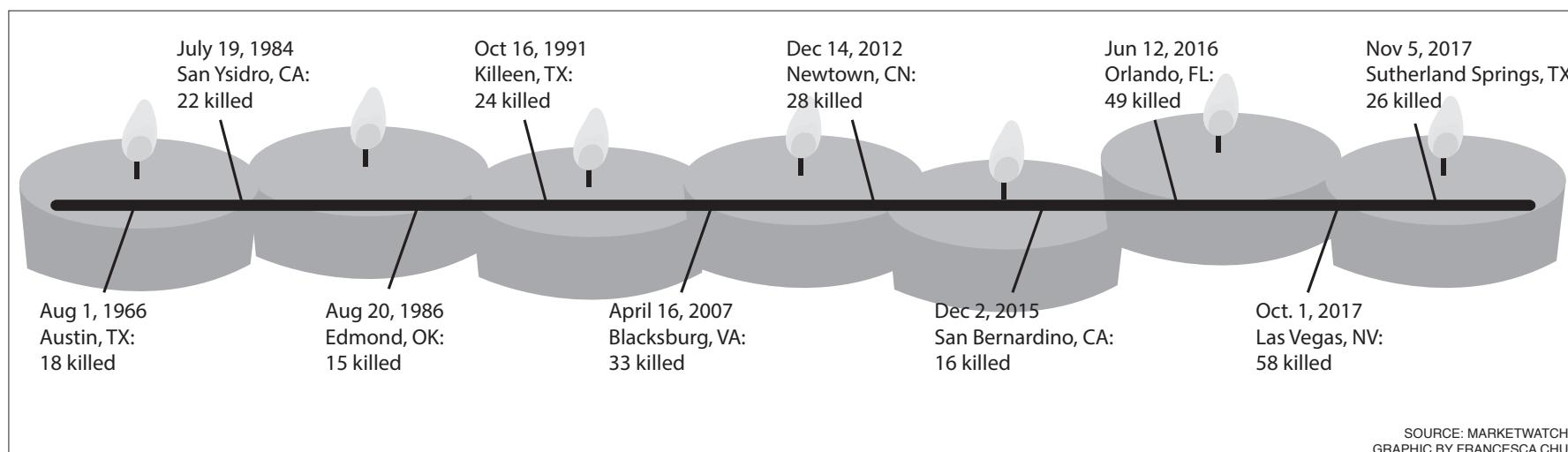
for people to buy bump stocks unless they're planning on gunning something or someone down.

Gun control has always been a hot-button issue in American politics, but the recent mass shootings should make it clear to all politicians, both Democrat and Republican, that it's idiotic to continue shoving the gun control discussion under the rug.

Quite literally, the longer government sits on its hands waiting for the other side to give in, the more people die.

In fact, on Nov. 12 alone, three mass shootings in Indiana, California and Georgia left 14 people injured and two dead. If the recent past is any indication, the epidemic of gun deaths will continue into the foreseeable future.

What's needed are courageous leaders who will figure out a way to better regulate firearms and dangerous accessories that threaten the safety of every American. ♦



## The Black Friday race is no longer worth running

by Patrick Li

Black Friday has lost its luster.

Once the largest shopping day of the year, it no longer holds the title as the Goliath of shopping days. RetailNext, a company that tracks retail shopping numbers, predicts that Dec. 23 will be the biggest shopping day of the year.

Last year, Black Friday sales fell 12 percent compared to the \$10.2 billion in sales the year before.

So why does it seem like people simply no longer want to shop on this holiest of shopping days?

The first reason is that more stores are opening their Black Friday sales days or weeks in advance. Amazon, for instance, began offering deals through its "Countdown to Black Friday" on Nov. 1.

Other large retailers also followed suit, including Target, Walmart and Best Buy.

Ted Potrikus, president and CEO of the Retail Council of New York State, said to Business Insider that "if stores aren't on board, they run the risk of being left behind. People love shopping, but they love saving money even more."

Getting people to shop earlier also reduces risks of injury and even death for Black Friday shoppers.

With so many early deals on popular products, there isn't the need to line up early or fight massive crowds to get the best deals.

In addition to these recent shifts in marketing by retail giants, there are still a number of other reasons that Black Friday simply isn't worth it anymore.

The deals stores offer are not that great. In fact, Kyle James, founder of Rather-BE-Shopping.com, said some popular deals on Black Friday can actually be found cheaper during other times of the year.

Toys, for instance, are generally less expensive 10 days before Christmas, and winter apparel prices drop significantly as soon as spring rolls around.

The other reason for the decline of Black Friday is the rise of Cyber Monday.

Amazon, for instance, offers better deals in tech and apparel on Cyber Monday than most other brick and mortar stores. Why risk getting trampled in a crowd when you can get even better deals from the comfort of your own home? ♦

## Social media shouldn't affect college decisions

by Alex Wang  
& Vivien Zhang

This fall, tens of thousands of high school seniors are working meticulously on their college applications, writing personal essays and struggling to find the best words to describe who they are to admissions officers. In the meantime, they often forget about the one factor that may affect their admission more than anything: their social media profiles.

According to The New York Times, a survey taken in 2013 showed that 31 percent of 381 officers admitted to either Googling or looking at the applicant's social media pages, particularly Facebook.

Over the summer, 10 seniors who had been admitted into Harvard were rescinded for sending obscene, racially charged memes and messages found in a private group chat. Many of the students argued that Harvard's decision to revoke their admission was unfair and that they should not be subjected to such scrutiny.

While memes and messages like these are not appropriate in any context, these posts were made in a private group chat, raising questions about how far admission officers will go into what students think is a private sphere. These messages were meant for the eyes of friends, not those of the general public. If colleges can rescind students based on comments made privately, young people may get the message that it's unsafe to voice anything remotely controversial on social media.

In addition, students often act differently on social media than in real life. They tag their friends in memes and other posts because such memes are relatable or because they refer to some inside joke. Because no additional context is provided to the colleges, many of these posts can be misunderstood and the comments are seen as more negative than they really are.

In addition, some students have had social media accounts beginning in middle school or earlier. They may have posted misleading statuses and immature comments that they may regret now as more understanding, older individuals.

It is extremely difficult to go back and meticulously delete every post or comment made since beginning on social media, considering that by the time they realize it will truly affect applications, there may already be hundreds of comments that are no longer accessible or hard to find. To evaluate a student based on posts due to spontaneity or a moment of bad judgment in eighth grade is unreasonable at best.

In an attempt to hide their digital footprints, many students will change their names and profiles on social media. This means social media simply becomes another tool to impress colleges. Admittedly, checking social media has offered colleges some minimal benefits. Many top tier colleges offer this option, but they are often quickly filled within a few days while other colleges do not offer them at all. Interviews raise no concerns about privacy, and students can prepare for them, allowing them to make a better first impression and decreasing the chance that some comment they made in middle school will ruin their chances of admission.

Interacting with a student face-to-face also provides a better assessment of the student's personality rather than relying on a few pictures and posts. Although interviews may be less efficient than quick social media searches, the knowledge they provide far outweighs the time they take up.

Social media checkups by college admissions officers have raised concerns about privacy issues and can easily be seen as unnecessary, added distress for applicants. The one-third of officers who do check social media should follow the footsteps of the two-thirds who do not. ♦





GRAPHIC BY ISABELLE YANG

## High school emphasizes teaching crucial life skills

BY Jeffrey Xu

Although college freshmen often feel that they are traversing unfamiliar territory completely unprepared when they walk into their first class, this is not the case.

Most college freshmen already have the skills needed to tackle college life.

These skills, including time management and maintaining peer and teacher connections, are built during the crucial four years a student spends in high school. Because of the learning experiences that high schools give students, they prepare students for college well.

One crucial skill that students learn from high school is time management. As classes become more and more challenging and students become involved in many extracurriculars, high school life forces students to manage their time and not fall behind.

This skill becomes very useful in college, where students are away from their parents and must learn to independently budget their time to study for exams, lead healthy lifestyles and maintain friendships.

Another skill that students gain from attending high school is building peer relationships. In an environment with hundreds of peers, students develop social skills necessary to start and maintain good friendships.

This becomes useful in college, where

**PRO**

students are often thrown into a completely different environment with little to no friends.

On top of helping students develop friendship skills, with the many group projects assigned in high school, students learn to collaborate with one another. This is a necessity in college classrooms, where group work will continue to be assigned, and in research laboratories, where breakthroughs can only be achieved through good communication between fellow labmates.

Furthermore, high school drives students to build better relationships with their teachers. Students learn to communicate with teachers — a skill that is necessary for students planning to stand out to professors.

Some may argue that academically, the high school curricula are not rigorous enough to prepare students for their college freshman courses, but this knowledge gap can be easily mended using the soft skills built by high schools. Moreover, high schools across the U.S. offer a variety of AP courses, which are already college level and count for college credit.

Even with the possibility of minor knowledge gaps, through the implementation of the skills nurtured in high school — time management, social skills and communication with faculty — a student can be truly prepared for college. ♦

**CON**

BY Ryan Kim

A common complaint among students about high school is that it doesn't help at all.

Whether it's because students would rather engage in other activities, like basketball or video games, or because they can't seriously learn or pursue their academic passions in such an institution, students constantly grumble about high school.

It is not cynical to say that high school doesn't prepare students for college and real life. The argument has been made over and over: "All high school does is teach you how to write essays that reflect the prompt but not the writer, or how to hate studying."

In a sense, that is true; high school is inadequate in preparing the student for college — but that's not the fault of many schools. It depends on how the student uses resources available. The ability to do so is a fundamental skill required of students as they mature, but it is accomplished by the person rather than the institution.

The key question in the discussion of the efficacy of high school teaching concerns, of course, what education really is. Education, especially that in high school, is the process of learning not only to improve one's understanding of the world but also how to learn at all.

All learning requires an exchange: the institution must provide the support for such education, and the student must be willing and active in searching for this knowledge in order to better understand the world around himself or herself.

The point of college is to provide an opportunity for students to specialize in their interests and find new ones.

Therefore, it makes no sense for high school to be a good stepping stone to a stage that is essentially the beginning of true learning in what each student is interested in.

High school can provide resources in preparation for this higher-tier learning, but don't expect it to preview information for specific dreams. That task depends on student's usage of the tools provided.

Just being physically present at a school doesn't always prepare students for higher learning and the real world.

Rather, it's the journey to knowledge and the definitive effort to learn and improve one's understanding that prepare students for the real world.

School teaches us how to study, or at least, how to barely write and submit an essay after procrastinating for a whole week. It provides resources and useful tools, but it is up to the student, not the educational system, that set his or her foundation for success later in life. ♦

## School in the afternoon is beneficial for productivity

BY Muthu Palaniappan

According to a video made by the BBC, students at the Hampton Court School start school at 1:30 p.m. and end around 7 p.m.

At first, I thought that this schedule must be horrible, since ending school after sunset seems so long and wasteful.

But when I really started to think about my own school life, I realized that I only start to be productive with my work after I eat dinner.

The hours I spend after school till I eat dinner around 7 p.m. are always filled with snacking, watching random YouTube videos, napping and simply procrastinating. No matter how much I tell myself to be productive, it never works that way.

Personally, crunch time is from after dinner until midnight, or whenever I sleep.

Knowing that there is a deadline to meet the next day is motivation to work harder at night.

Teens would benefit from this late-start system. It achieves a way to balance studies with getting a healthy amount of sleep, something I find impossible to deal with as of now.

Starting school in the afternoon would allow students who might have stayed up later in the night to get eight hours of sleep.

Even if you were to go to sleep around 1 a.m. (the norm for many students), you could wake up feeling much more refreshed.

On contrast, with our current schedule, students may sleep late to wake up drowsy between 7 and 8 a.m.

If school started in the afternoon, I could get much more sleep and still manage to get all the work and studying done that I had before.

Since major alterations of the schedule would alter the place of extracurriculars in a student's schedule, extracurriculars and sports could simply be moved to the morning instead of evening.

Since school would end around 7 p.m., it would make sense to keep sports practices and other out-of-school activities in the morning around 10 a.m.

This would also energize students before they enter school later in the day.

The BBC story said that as a result of adolescence, teenagers' body clocks shift a few hours later.

This means that while adults may feel awake and ready for the day at 8 a.m., a teenager will have the equivalent feeling around 10 a.m.

According to a Wall Street Journal article, the onset of puberty brings a median 1.5-hour delay in the body's release of the sleep-inducing hormone melatonin.

Again, this means that students naturally perform better when they stay up later and sleep in the next day.

Students at the Hampton Court School have praised the late-start schedule, saying they're happier and more productive.

To be sure, school from the afternoon to the nighttime may seem a little irrational at first.

But this radical solution to constant teen sleep deprivation would be beneficial for the typical high school student. ♦

## Strong familial ties are necessary for teenagers

BY Leo Cao

There is a stereotype that teenagers scream, slam doors and are addicted to social media. Although this stereotype is not universally true, many of us tend to distance ourselves from our families in high school as we seek to establish our independence and identity. This also means familial relationships change in significant ways through adolescence.

Family members are the people expect-

**Teens might seem less communicative, but they should make an active effort to remain connected.**

ed to nurture and guide children when they are young. But this one-way power relationship slowly becomes more equal as the years go by.

This is not to say family becomes unimportant to teens. Most teenagers want to spend time with their parents and siblings, share ideas and have fun.

They might seem less communicative and unwilling to cooperate, but teenagers and parents should make an active effort to remain connected.

During the teen years, families provide psychological security. Peer influences and other relationships often cause stress. No

matter what else is happening in their lives, good familial relationships contribute to self-confidence, optimism and identity.

Even though many young adults will not admit it, mature family members' life experiences and knowledge are valuable.

Without a strong relationship, it is difficult to pass on this wisdom.

According to a family relationships project by Penn State, supportive family members can vastly reduce a teen's risk of alcohol and drug use as well as problems like depression.

When youth reported that they believed that their parents knew about their whereabouts and activities, they engaged in fewer risky behaviors. Close relationships also encourage their desires to do well academically.

There are numerous ways to build positive family relationships. Regular family meals are a great way for members to share their thoughts and events that are occurring in their lives.

This also means that the entire family should interact together without the interruption of smartphones. Families should also aim to set aside time for outings. Both these activities can continue to build a strong familial bond that are integral to both students' and families' well-being.

Throughout high school, many teenagers break apart from their families, but most do not lock themselves inside their rooms every day.

By continuing to work together, family members can better understand each other and maintain strong relationships. ♦

# Borrowing cultural styles shouldn't be offensive

BY Jeffrey Xu

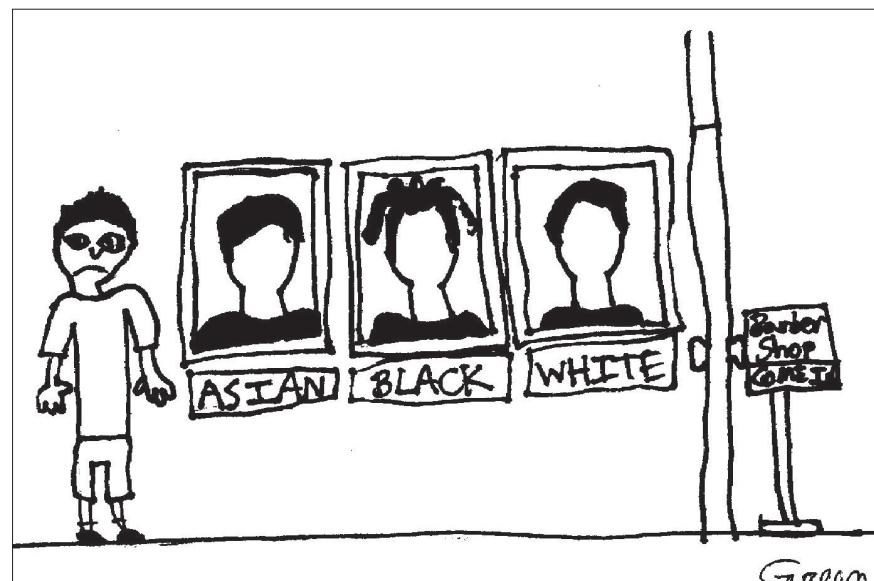
NBA star and Brooklyn Nets point guard Jeremy Lin recently got dreads, a traditional African hairstyle that is still common in the African American community. His hairstyle instantaneously garnered hate, most notably from African American former Nets player Kenyon Martin.

Martin even went as far as to post a series of videos on Twitter in which he bashed Lin's new hairstyle, saying "You wanna be black. Like, we get it. But your last name is Lin."

From Martin's perspective, Lin getting dreads is an example of cultural appropriation. Cultural appropriation is when elements often associated with a certain culture, such as dreadlocks for African Americans, are adopted by members of another culture, causing distaste from the original culture.

In response, Lin wrote an entire article explaining his dilemma and decision on getting dreads. He talked about how being an Asian-American subjected him to cultural appropriation, such as Hollywood's depictions of Asians as token sidekicks and stereotypes about Bruce Lee and "shrimp fried rice."

He also said that he never even made the



connection between his hairstyle and cultural appropriation.

Many people were impressed by the fact that Lin chose to take the high road, and instead of being provoked into striking back, he was the bigger person and apologized sincerely.

In general, however, viewing any sort of borrowing of a cultural aspect by another culture as cultural appropriation is a distorted perspective to take. Style and grooming all boil down to personal preference — it isn't up to any culture to decide that they "own" a style.

Hence, even though Jeremy's dreads might not look particularly fashionable, it is his personal decision, and he is entitled to his own desired hairstyle.

The issue of cultural appropriation also pertains to religious tradition, as can be seen in 2012 when Victoria's Secret model Karlie Kloss wore a native American headdress that symbolized leadership and honor, triggering outrage among many.

In the end, Victoria's Secret issued an apology to anyone who had been offended.

Another example is the bindi, a traditional mark as a dot on the forehead, to be used only on special occasions in Hinduism. In recent years, more and more women are casually using the bindi mark to add to their look, in the process deeply offending devout Hindus.

However, even from a religious viewpoint, if people are adopting aspects of another culture meaning only to enhance style as personal preference, it should be tolerated. Since it's hard to judge people's intent by the way they dress, they should be given the benefit of the doubt.

Ultimately, people should still have a complete freedom of how they choose to dress and look, regardless of how much another culture may think they are "infringing" on their traditions.

## togatalks

Is Jeremy Lin's hairstyle offensive?

"It's his hair and he can do whatever he wants with it. Therefore, I don't find it offensive."



senior Solomon Bailey

"No, there's no such thing as a 'black haircut.' Or Asian or white haircut for that matter."



sophomore Christopher Feng

"Your hairstyle doesn't determine who you are as a person. He's still being respectful."



sophomore Bryan Chu

## Juvenoia threatens generational progress

BY Selena Liu

As a young child, you may have noticed your older relatives glaring at you while you spent the weekend watching Disney Channel, obsessing over the latest Nintendo game or spending 30 minutes FaceTiming with a friend.

"Back in my day, we played outside, not on the internet," they'd say, "Kids these days..."

The professional term for this feeling of superiority and distrust for new trends among older generations is juvenoia.

But as much as this hostility directed at millennials may serve to inspire us to work harder, it is usually counterproductive. Think about it: When your parents or grandparents tell you to "actually do something with your life," do you really feel inspired, or do you feel unnecessarily scolded?

**Despite what older generations say, the world is progressing, even if it's not how they envisioned it.**

Chris Ferguson from Time Magazine identifies the "Goldilocks Effect" as the primary cause of juvenoia, in which every generation feels that previous generations are too old-fashioned, and future generations are too unrestrained.

"Each generation thinks it gets culture 'just right,'" Ferguson wrote in a recent issue. Because of the Goldilocks Effect, every generation feels the need to criticize the next.

However, this supposed superiority

complex isn't accomplishing anything. Instead, it only bemoans the current generation for not following outdated methods and discourages the development of fresh perspectives.

As Forbes writer Adam Thierer puts it, "[Older generations] will react with extreme vigor against forces that counteract such an important part of their life program. This fear, in many cases, leads to overreaction, which in turn could give rise to greater problems as young people take detours around the roadblocks we erect."

The only solution to repel these "roadblocks" would be for older generations to realize how fast modern society is developing.

Nowadays, people find new ways to communicate, share ideas and create. In the 20th century and earlier, people would spend more than eight hours a day inside factories. Now, people can make new products through the push of a single button.

Despite what older generations say, the world is progressing, even if it's not how they envisioned it. Millennials have the chance to learn so much more about science and technology compared to past generations. Different generations must work together instead of patronizing one another; older generations need to be more accommodating of our evolving society.

What we millennials can do, though, to stop this cycle is to accept the different social culture that comes with each generation.

When we grow old, we might feel the same things our parents or grandparents feel now, but at that point, we need to recall the time when we too were condescendingly lectured about our generation's ways. Instead of speaking out against change, we can adapt to it.

Who knows, maybe we'll even like it. u

## Crazy 'stans' invade celebrities' privacy

BY Esha Lakhotia &amp; Muthu Palaniappan

As social media has become more and more pervasive, celebrities find themselves being stalked and constantly followed by crazy fan accounts.

The most invasive incidents celebrities experience are not caused by the paparazzi as in the past. Instead it has spawned from the crazy fan culture developed from social media — celebrities' private lives have become public.

The immense number of fan accounts also increases hate on the internet.

Celebrities' new girlfriends or boyfriends are always a target of this negativity. Crazy fans fill the comments sections with hundreds of hateful comments, all because they are "protecting" the celebrity they idolize.

For instance, in late 2016, singer Justin Bieber decided to quit using the app Instagram because of this trend. After he had posted a picture with his now ex-girlfriend Sofia Richie, Richie started to receive thousands of hate comments from aggressive and crazy Bieber fans on her Instagram and Twitter.

Bieber took notice and threatened to quit using the social media app if the hate continued. In a couple of days, fans noticed his account was taken down.

In addition to hurtful comments, "fan" accounts of the singer started to make designated posts bashing Richie, although she had done nothing wrong.

Crazy fans who do not consider the happiness and privacy of the celebrity they idolize are extremely problematic.

However, while some fans may be aggressive and hateful, most of celebrities' fan-bases consist of good-hearted people. On the other hand, "stans" that are ex-

tremely invasive give a bad name to the whole base.

The word "stan" was coined by Eminem in one of his songs as a descriptor of a stalker fan. Since then, many celebrities have been experiencing negativity from stans, especially those like former band One Direction or Shawn Mendes who have an audience of younger girls.

**There is a fine line between admiring an idol and turning into a stalker, whose "love" is really nothing but hate.**

Recently, Shawn Mendes has reportedly been seen with model Hailey Baldwin at parties and outings, and Mendes fan accounts have taken it upon themselves to determine whether Baldwin is the right fit for him. Thousands of comments on her Instagram tell her to "back off" or to "better not break his heart."

Some of these fans have even told Baldwin her to kill herself. The trend of fan accounts gives a platform for obsessive fans to become cyber bullies and allows them to team up to attack a celebrity.

While some may argue that dealing with the public is part of a celebrity's job, it doesn't justify what stalkers do. Private lives are private for a reason, and it's in nobody's job description to give that up.

These invasive fans that promote hate are a danger that demands attention. Although the people behind these accounts consider themselves "fans," there is fine line between admiring an idol and turning into a stalker, whose "love" is really nothing but hate. u

# New T4 store in Cupertino disappoints

BY Francesca Chu  
& Alexandra Li

When we heard that another tea store, T4, had been added to the countless options scattered throughout the Bay Area, we were not surprised. They had recently opened a new store in Cupertino, so we decided to try it out.

As we walked in, we noticed an overarching teal theme. Everything looked well put together. The background music and overall spaciousness of the room created a fairly welcoming environment.



(OUT OF 5)

**Located:** Stevens Creek Boulevard  
**Reporter's drinks:** Passion fruit green tea and avocado milkshake

We first settled on our go-to drink: passion fruit green tea. Having ordered the same drink at other tea places, we figured it would give us something to compare to.

Then, just for fun, we ordered an avocado milkshake for \$4.50. We briefly glanced over the food menu and were slightly overwhelmed by options such as lobster balls. Instead, we ended up settling on their popular coffee-flavored egg puffs for \$5.75.

While waiting for our order, we glanced around and found a counter full of games, like Jenga and Connect 4, directly across from the cash register. Nevertheless, most of the customers were instead silently studying or doing work. T4 has wide tables and a quiet environment — a perfect location for someone to focus.

We had barely sat down when our first drink was ready. Picking up the passion fruit green tea, we realized that we had forgotten to

order boba, but we just laughed it off and gave it a try anyway.

Getting 30 percent sweetness turned out to be a good decision, because we couldn't even imagine how sweet 100 percent sugar would have been. Compared to other places, the passion fruit green tea was pretty average. Though the sweetness didn't ruin the drink, it was still on the pricey side at \$3.75.

Because we both ordered the exact same flavor from TeaTop before, we couldn't help comparing the two. As a whole, T4's passion fruit green tea was less flavored and tasted more strongly of tea than TeaTop's version. However, this may be due to the pearls and lychee jelly that usually comes with the tea at TeaTop.

Having no idea what to expect for our avocado drink, we tasted practically nothing on our first sip. After rigorously mixing the drink, at one point the flavor seemed to have a good balance of avocado



Customers at T4 play board games or silently study while sipping boba.

and sweetness. But as we drank more, the taste of avocados became stronger until it tasted essentially like blended avocados.

The egg puffs were soon ready, and we picked them up hoping to get rid of the less-than-pleasant avocado taste in our mouths. Surprisingly, the coffee-flavored egg

puffs were crunchy and well flavored, and they ended up being the highlight of our visit.

Our experience at T4 was less than satisfactory and certainly not worth the hype. Perhaps we simply hadn't ordered the right drinks, but in our opinion, it was not worth the drive or money. ♦

# Amazon opens up new bookstore in Santana Row

BY Andrew Lee

As students increasingly rely on the internet as a resource, it has become much easier for the average person to buy items like books through online shops or applications. As a result of sites like Amazon, many local bookstore locations have disappeared in recent years.

In order to appeal to those who prefer offline shopping and reading, Amazon decided to open brick-and-mortar bookstores. One nearby location is situated between

Free People and Scotch and Soda in Santana Row. I decided to visit.

With a contemporary exterior, the store was an inviting location on the crowded street, drawing special appeal because of the bookstore exhaustion in the area.

As I walked in, I was surprised at how large the bookstore actually was. The dark teal walls and the hardwood floors gave the room a cordial aura. Judging from the low-profile exterior of the building, I half expected the bookstore to be very minimal. The overwhelming sea of books hit me with

nostalgia, reminding me of the days my mother took me to Barnes & Noble to buy toys and colorful children's books.

From autobiographies to backpacks, Amazon Books offers a wide variety of merchandise that seemed to satisfy book enthusiasts and casual shoppers alike.

Aside from a large selection of books, one thing that I enjoyed about the bookstore was that a portion of it was dedicated to technology.

With Amazon-exclusive devices such as the "Kindle" and "Alexa" in store, many tech

enthusiasts like myself found themselves lost in the abundance of electronics.

With something for everyone, Amazon Books is a place to visit and shop this holiday season. Although this may not be the Barnes & Noble or Borders books that we remember from our childhood, Amazon Books is keeping the tradition of actual books stores alive.

Of course, it helps if you're able to overlook the irony that the company that killed physical bookstores is now the only company rich enough to bring them back. ♦

# Exploring hidden shops in downtown Saratoga

BY Karen Chow  
& Chelsea Leung

During late fall and early winter in downtown Saratoga, Christmas lights glisten around vibrant trees while baskets of fresh flowers hang near branches of orange and red. Although many people stroll through the streets, most stop only at Starbucks, ignoring the small shops that have lined Saratoga streets for years.

Excited to explore the hidden potential of these shops, we started our Christmas shopping early. Walking up Big Basin Way, the first place we entered was the Barn Owl, finding ourselves the only customers there.

Already heavily decorated for Christmas in the middle of November, the gift shop radiated Christmas spirit. The shop was filled with little home decor items and holiday-themed knick knacks, like Christmas tree-shaped mini snow globes.

Prices were reasonable for a gift shop, with a set of silver heart-shaped measuring spoons going for \$20. We also saw Christmas cards and small food items like jars of jelly. Although the selection was OK, we didn't see any items that would excite our teenage friends on Christmas morning.

Crossing the street, we then entered Skin Prophecy Boutique, which crowns the top of Wildwood Park's street.

It didn't take long to figure out that the boutique prices were way out of our range. Because we couldn't find attractive choices among the expensive adult women clothes

or purses, we looked at the jewelry rack only to find rhinestone bracelets selling for \$99.

Even when the owner, who was adding white Christmas trim to the windows, pointed us to the clearance rack, we weren't willing to pay \$16 for a cheap-looking bangle, even though that price was with a 45 percent discount. The only items around our price range were the organic beauty products, such as handmade soap for \$8.50. Since we didn't need soap, we awkwardly exited the tiny room, cramped with clothes racks and tables, and walked to Kool Kids Kouture, once again finding ourselves alone in the store with the cashier.

Because Kool Kids Kouture targets young children and we weren't looking for gifts for small children, the cashier gave us weird looks as we entered the empty shop. We also side-eyed the creepy life-size little girl doll that greeted us as we entered, and at the exorbitant prices of the tiny clothes and shoes. One boy's vest for a 3-year-old was \$50, and a gold skirt was \$60. Even though we couldn't afford anything there, they were good quality and would make great gifts for grandchildren.

Walking out empty-handed, we still hadn't found any worthwhile gifts from our exploration of downtown Saratoga.

What did we discover on our outing? Saratoga downtown has some hidden gems for those with lots of money. But if you're broke students like us, we wouldn't recommend wasting time in any of the shops we visited. There are better deals elsewhere. ♦

## HONEST RESPONSES TO COLLEGE PROMPTS

(What one anonymous senior wishes he could write)

**Two adjectives your friends would use to describe you.**

(Princeton University)

Meticulous and neat

**What is your favorite fiction or nonfiction work? Why?**

(Emory University)

"Hamlet": it is a play on the futility of avoiding the painful death we must all face in our destiny. Kind of like how I feel every Monday morning.

**You are teaching a Yale course. What is it called? (Yale University)**

101 Steps on How to Get a Life. Granted, the course would be in a flipped-classroom setting — in that it is the students who would teach me.

**How did you spend your last two summers? Response required in about 50 words. (Stanford University)**

I slept.

GRAPHIC BY ASHLEY SU

# HOLIDAY

## Reporters share

### Toy train disaster ruins my Christmas miracle

they see  
me roland

Roland Shen

Excitedly running through the dining room, I inhaled the mouthwatering aromas of ham and crab and bolted straight for the Christmas tree.

I was 7 years old at the time, and we had just purchased a new battery-powered train, complete with a circular track.

A few days prior, I had spotted the train set at a Toys "R" Us while looking for gifts to get my cousins.

The display train was gorgeous — its red and green lining sparkled at all angles, and the wheels rolled so smoothly on the tracks that it was nearly silent.

Best of all, it was on sale — \$10 off its original price of \$29.99. My dad saw the train and was enticed by it before I even had the chance to begin my usual begging. We left the store with a gargantuan box and a huge smile on my face.

Now we were going to install it right beneath our tree. It took just an hour to assemble, and my eyes gleamed as I turned the train on. It began whirling around the tree — the train was alive. I proceeded to stare at our household's newest attraction for the next 15 minutes, until I heard the doorbell ring.

"I'M HERE, ROLAND!!!"

I instantly recognized the shrill voice: it was Henry. Our first guest was here for Christmas dinner.

Henry rushed into the living room, where I was still gaping at the train as it took its 30th lap around the tree. Henry was always a nice kid and a good friend, but his defining characteristic was always his craziness, a seemingly infinite pool of energy.

"WHAT'S THAT?" he said.

Promptly answering him, I explained how it was a new train and my Christmas present. Suddenly, out of impulse, he belly-flopped right onto the track, which split in two. I gaped in pure horror.

"How is the train moving?" Henry said.

Henry then grabbed the train and began to swing it around like a

rope. It was quite a long train, one with multiple compartments each connected by a thin piece of plastic. The train snapped and its wheels slowed to a stop.

Thanks to Henry, I was able to spend only 15 minutes with my favorite toy. Soon after, my parents, along with Henry's parents, walked in, seeing my puddle of tears and a genuinely confused Henry sitting on the hardwood floor.

I hoped my parents would scold Henry for what he had done, but they simply laughed. A few days later, we returned to Toys "R" Us and saw the same train set, now even cheaper because of the store's post-Christmas sale. The same beaming expression appeared on my face, and my dad quickly noticed it.

"No," Dad said. ♦

### Crystmas: tears for unwanted gift

oh  
xu-t

Jeffrey Xu

On Christmas morning, I woke up to the smell of gingerbread cookies and the sound of cheerful laughter. Bursting with excitement, 8-year-old me dashed downstairs into the living room with my 5-year-old little brother.

Had my dreams come true? Did my parents finally get me the gift of my dreams — the new DS Lite with the hottest games, Pokemon HeartGold and SoulSilver?

I daydreamed that getting the DS Lite would mean the end of those endless family get-togethers where I could only watch drearily as all my friends absorbed themselves into the virtual world of Pokemon. They would trade each other Pokemon in-game using the DS-link function and embark together on the journey to "Catch 'em all."

But when I saw the size the package, my dreams were shattered. It was way too big to be a DS. My vision blurred with tears as I tore open the gift wrapping. It was a remote-control spy car with a camera and a mic.

Under normal circumstances, I would have been ecstatic, but because of how long I had wanted a DS, I broke into the tears I had been choking

back. My younger brother, following my lead, did the same. As both kids cried on the living room floor, my dad awkwardly stood there with his droopy Santa hat and my mom, unaware of the emotional magnitude of the situation, continued rapidly snapping photos.

Eventually, my brother and I calmed down after realizing that crying would not alleviate the situation, and in trying to make the best out of Christmas, our parents took us out to lunch and convinced the other kids at the family get-together to include us as well.

I ended up getting the game I had wanted a couple months after Christmas, and looking back, I realize I was pretty childish for being so uncommunicative and expecting my parents to read my mind. ♦



er 15, 2017

# DAY HELLS

## their Christmas mishaps

### I was attacked by a Christmas tree

capri's  
SON

Aaron Choi

On Christmas Eve, children around the world stay up past their bedtime, anticipating Santa Claus's arrival and gifts for the holiday to come. Those who are bold enough to take it a step further will set up camp besides the Christmas tree, ready to greet the fat red man at the chimney.

I was one of those children. Overcome by my desire to meet Santa, I snuck down to the living room and

set my blankets and pillow behind the Christmas tree.

Before retiring to my makeshift bed, I checked on the five cookies that I had made with my mother and made sure that no one had eaten them. Upon smelling their sweet scent, however, I realized that Santa had probably eaten thousands of cookies from the other children he visited and was probably sick of cookies. Eating one cookie wouldn't hurt.

Actually, eating all of them wouldn't hurt. With a tummy full of milk and cookies, I went back to my cozy sleeping spot behind the Christmas tree.

But on this fateful night, my days of spending Christmas Eve behind the tree came to an end. While I dreamt

of eggnog, my feet must have tipped the tree just enough to send it crashing down. Its thin, prickly pines stabbed my beautiful, 8-year-old baby face. Ornaments pressing on my eyelids, I couldn't even open my eyes.

After hearing my incessant screaming, my father came down from the master bedroom to rescue me. I came out of the calamity looking like I was mauled by a green, shedding dog.

I went back to my bed — the tree had left my body unscathed, but my heart was pierced by its pine needles.

The moral of the story? I learned that Santa Claus is a hoax. The fat red man is a myth, which was designed by child murderers to trick them into sleeping behind the Christmas tree and being inevitably crushed. ♦

### ACHOO-sing the tree goes wrong

cait the  
great

Caitlyn Chen

After three hours of wandering around, I finally found the one — the perfect Christmas tree that we would bring home. It was Thanksgiving break 2010, and my family was on our annual Christmas hunt. Once I chose our tree, my dad sawed it down, loaded it on top of our van and drove it home.

We all helped unload the tree and relocate it to our living room,

which soon became littered with pine needles and filled with a fresh pine scent. Blasting Mariah Carey's "All I want for Christmas" over the speakers, my sister and I danced and sang while hanging ornaments on our tree.

Suddenly, my older sister Sabrina interrupted the joyous tunes with a huge "ACHOO!" Startled, I jumped at the sound of the sneeze, and she smiled back at me, sniffling and rubbing her red eyes.

"ACHOO!" There she went again. At the first signs of her allergies, she ran to take antihistamines from the medicine cabinet, but unfortunately, Claritin Clear didn't help much.

She had always been allergic to trees and grass, but maybe it was the type of fir tree that we picked that year that made her allergies so bad. For

the next few days, Sabrina's eyes were permanently red, her nose was always sniffling and her sneezes echoed throughout the house.

On the fifth day of having our tree, my mom, seeing her miserable battle with the pine scent, decided we had to move the tree out. My sister and I watched my mom and dad pick the tree up from its base, shuffle it out the door and set it in our front courtyard.

And there the tree stayed, fully decorated and surrounded by Christmas lights, for all the neighbors and passersby to admire. In the end, sniffles and sneezes couldn't dim my family's holiday spirit; in fact, we probably made Santa's job a whole lot easier. After all, he didn't have to climb down the chimney to place our presents under the tree. ♦

# entertainment >>

THE  
saratoga falcon

December 15, 2017

## Kendrick Lamar's album 'DAMN.' becomes classic

BY Esha Lakhota

With all 14 of the songs on 'DAMN.' reaching the Billboard Top 100, rapper Kendrick Lamar became the fifth artist to chart as many as 14 concurrent titles on the Hot 100.

The last artists to have done this was The Beatles 50 years ago.

As 2017 reaches an end, hundreds of talented artists have released new songs and albums that have blown away the music industry. Still, one of the most viral albums of all time, Lamar's "DAMN." proves to be the best album of 2017.

Lamar explains what it's like to be an African American man in a relationship with God.

He uses his platform to speak out for the black community and to bring God into the question of struggle and pain.

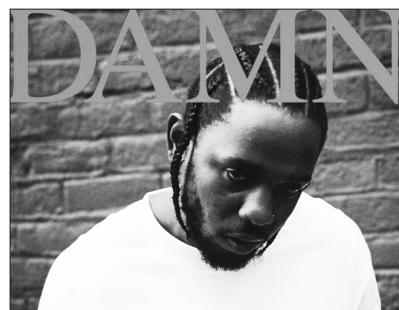
Compared to his 2015 album "To Pimp A Butterfly," Lamar uses a slower, more meaningful flow that highlights his internal struggles.

His most popular single, "HUMBLE.," secured the No. 1 spot on the Billboard Hot 100 for 12 weeks in a row.

What makes the album so amazing is not the number of streams or its rank on the charts, but its overall message and tone.

Instead of emphasizing how much money he has or rapping about his struggles with past relationships like many other contemporary rappers, Lamar delves into his own flawed nature.

In his song "DNA," Lamar raps, "I got dark, I got evil, that rot inside my DNA." In these lyrics, Lamar admits that he has "evil" in his heart and that he is not some perfect



HIPHOPDX

celebrity to be put on a pedestal.

In this album, he has another less-known song called "FEAR," in which Lamar talks about being cursed by God and having hardships in life. In the hook, he samples vocalist Charles Edward Sydney Isom Jr., who sings, "Why God, why do I have to suffer?"

Through these lines, Lamar confronts his inner struggles with his rise to fame and directly addresses his religious beliefs and faith in God.

With its wordplay and inspirational messages, it is clear why "DAMN." is the best album of 2017. ♦



## iPhone X: a 10/10 for Apple creators

BY Alex Yang

I've never been a fanatic for new technology, but if there's one thing I know, it's phones.

For the current young generation, phones have become both the most useful and most time-wasting devices in existence. Everyone's always looking for a better phone, but with so many complicated options, it's become difficult for us to know what we should upgrade to next.

Then I watched the replay of the Apple presentation unveiling the iPhone X. I knew immediately I had to upgrade after several years of waiting with an iPhone 5S.

Of course, one large aspect of the phone was the hype even before its release. Because of the whopping price tag of \$1,000 and radical design shift from previous phones, the iPhone X took center stage in mainstream technology media. In fact, it's become hyped as potentially one of the best new tech items from multiple tech news sources, such as The Verge. Still, I wanted to find this out on my own.

I've now used it for about three weeks, and have learned a lot about it through daily usage. The elephant in the room everyone's been arguing about is the implementation of Face ID as a replacement for Touch ID. I have to say: I prefer Face ID wholeheartedly. While Touch ID is often disrupted by factors like moisture on the button and pressure applied, Face ID works slightly slower but is far more accurate and reliable.

Another complication is speed. Although I've found out from other reviewers and other tech spec analysis articles that the A11 Bionic processor is the best ever created for a smartphone, I don't really notice

the insane speed. Honestly, it just feels like any other smartphone.

With a dual self-stabilizing 8 megapixel back camera and another single 8 megapixel front-facing camera, the iPhone X has stunning image quality. The new portrait mode, which is powered by the A11 processor, also works surprisingly well. Lighting is adjusted expertly and hardly any effort is needed to take beautiful images.

Finally, the exterior of the phone impresses. Build quality, like on most iPhones, is solid. The new stainless steel band frame feels extremely smooth to hold. In addition, the tiny bezel allows the phone to be only barely larger than an iPhone 8 while retaining a far larger screen size.

The screen is just as good as the ones on previous iPhones, if not better. Although the notch on the top edge of the phone is a little obnoxious, the high color accuracy and edge-to-edge display makes up for it. Apple's first venture into building OLED-screened devices has been a success. Unlike Google's new Pixel 2 XL, Apple sourced its screens from Samsung rather than LG, preventing issues like screen burn-in, which Google is struggling to fix.

Other miscellaneous features, like notifications on the lock screen being hidden until Face ID recognizes that you've looked at your phone, are nice quality-of-life improvements.

Apple really won with this upgrade — the company held nothing back. The price tag, though unprecedently high, is likely not enough to stop Apple fans from buying this phone. It might not fit into everyone's budgets, but for those who can afford it, the iPhone X is one of the best options for a new smartphone this year. ♦

## 'Stranger Things 2' deserves all the hype

BY Aaron Choi

The first season of "Stranger Things" enthralled Netflix fans across the nation last year.

The debut of the second season of the series was so anticipated that fans bought everything from T-shirts, and posters to coffee mugs.

Did the Oct. 27 premiere of "Stranger Things 2" live up to the hype? The Duffer Brothers certainly haven't forgotten or overlooked what made the first season so great, and the second season's opening episode certainly has its moments. Scenes of the looming mind flayer consuming Will and Eleven stumbling through the Upside Down are perfectly portrayed.

Like the first season, not everything works perfectly. Some parts are slow where character development is overtly forced, but its cumulative effect is one that is again joyous and emotional. Most of all, the show makes us care deeply about the fates of these outsiders who band together as heroes.

Yet, something feels off about the

show's second season. The eerie ambience of the small town of Hawkins, Indiana, which made Season 1 so enthralling and beautiful just doesn't feel the same.

All "Stranger Things" fans remember the scene from the first season, when Will's mom communicates with Will through Christmas lights as the show's theme song drowns out her sobbing. The creators attempt the same effect in the second season when Will's mom and stepdad put together the map of Hawkins that Will drew, but it seems forced.

The show's novelty, its '80s vibe, the old-school keyboard soundtrack, and three friends playing a fictional game of Dungeons and Dragons and then the game coming to life all remind the viewer of how it felt to imagine fighting off monsters and being the hero of the school.

When Will develops a crush on Eleven, it was more than just great acting that conveyed his feelings: it was also that we have all felt that at some point in our childhood. However, this all was glaringly artificial in the second season.

Why is this? It can be attributed to the show trying to change its course. The story of a simple town with a not-so-simple crisis is replaced by a story of a bunch of child laboratory experiments with super powers saving the day.

Don't get me wrong — the show has massive potential, which we all saw in the first season, and hopefully we will see in future episodes.

I myself have contributed to the hype, and you can see me rocking my Hawkins High School sweatpants in my house and at the supermarket. ♦

## 'Wonder Woman' wows with unity, compassion

BY Ryan Kim

When it comes to "great movie years," 2017 is no exception: "Spiderman: Homecoming," "Get Out," "Logan" and "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2," among others, have flooded cinema with fun, new content. However, even among these great hits and worthy mentions, there is one movie that for me clearly fits the role of best movie of 2017: "Wonder Woman."

It probably isn't on the top five of the lists for many people, but "Wonder Woman" is a much more in-depth return to the emotional turmoil and inspirational messages of the classics. With a perfect blend between the superhero journey and the recent female empowerment movement in cinema, "Wonder Woman" demonstrates a strong shift of recent interests as well as a return to older fans' tastes.

"Wonder Woman" also conveys a powerful message of unity and compassion that is needed more in Hollywood, especially given the current cultural and political gap among Americans. The movie follows Wonder Woman's journey as she learns that there is a balance of good and evil in each individual and that we should work together in friendship to solve common problems.

Almost as impactful as the Darth Vader scene from "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story" from 2016, the No-Man's Land scene in "Wonder Woman" is the most iconic scene of the movie, if not of the whole of this year's cinema. The inspirational soundtrack



and epic slow-motion captured the awe of the scene, and the theme of defending those who cannot defend themselves tied in nicely with the setting of World War I.

Just as Wonder Woman took a leap of faith to a tower in order to obtain her weaponry, so too did the movie itself take risks in defying the cliche of superhero invulnerability. It isn't often that a superhero movie has one of the main characters die, much less sacrifice himself for the greater cause despite loving and wanting to be with the protagonist. "Wonder Woman" took that

risk and it paid off handsomely as fans were enthralled by the drastic change "Wonder Woman" took from the recent movie trend of "plot armor," in which main characters survive against all odds purely because of their importance to the plotline.

A good movie is defined by its soundtrack, plot or characters, but to be distinguished as the best movie requires balance of themes. "Wonder Woman" didn't alienate some viewers by overplaying the feminist card, nor did it underplay the significance of a female protagonist in Hollywood. There was something for everyone.

Of course, "Wonder Woman" isn't perfect; no movie is. The ending was cheesy and anticlimactic, but it still conveyed a powerful message on the necessity of empathy. In a divided community like ours, "Wonder Woman" teaches us in an inspirational way how important it is to be connected with one another. The message and balance of "Wonder Woman" are what makes it the best movie of 2017. ♦

GRAPHICS BY OLIVIA LU AND JACKSON GREEN

# Sexual harassment in Hollywood exposed

BY Michael Zhang

In October, The New York Times and other news organizations reported that dozens of women had accused film producer Harvey Weinstein of sexual assault or misconduct. Subsequently, more than 80 total women revealed that they had been subject to such acts from Weinstein as well.

Despite mounting evidence and an alleged 30-year history of sexual assault, including when singer Courtney Love warned others about Weinstein in 2005, Weinstein has never been charged with a crime.

As has become clear in recent weeks, Harvey Weinstein is hardly the only celebrity to face such accusations. Since then, numerous Hollywood stars and others, including Kevin Spacey, Dustin Hoffman, Roy Moore, Louis C.K., Matt Lauer and Garrison Keillor, have been accused of sexual harassment or assault as well.

Hoffman was accused of sexual harassment of Anna Graham Hunter, a 17-year-

old intern who worked with Hoffman on the set of the 1985 movie "Death of a Salesman," while C.K. admitted to the sexual misconduct allegations made by five different women against him.

But many of these cases aren't simply the "typical" man-on-woman assault either. More than a dozen men, including Anthony Rapp, an actor on "Star Trek: Discovery," and Roberto Cavazos, a Mexican actor who posted about an assault in Spanish, have accused Spacey of sexual misconduct.

Many of the victims have reportedly felt intimidated or forced to comply with those who seemingly held more power.

Despite all of this evidence, many of the accused celebrities continue to work in the film industry, even though their non-celebrity peers would appear on trial and be sentenced to jail time for similar actions.

The controversy surrounding these sexual assault cases has exposed a hole in our criminal justice system. It seems that when a person is important, powerful, wealthy or

famous, he or she can seemingly get away with anything.

For instance, Weinstein is currently in Europe avoiding persecution from American law and attending a rehabilitation center.

Obviously, sexual assault isn't just an American issue, so Weinstein should face repercussions even if he is residing in Europe for the trauma he has inflicted upon his victims.

Perhaps more disturbing is that some of these celebrities will continue to remain prominent in their respective industries. In fact, Weinstein has even expressed interests of making it back in time for and attending the next Oscars event, despite these incriminating allegations.

Fortunately, this is not always the case. Although criminal charges have not been pressed, some, including Lauer and Keillor, have been fired or pressured to resigning due to their alleged misconduct.

Sexual harassment allegations have been

surfacing among current politicians as well. In November, one woman accused Minnesota senator Al Franken of forcibly kissing her back in 2006. Another also claimed that Franken had inappropriately touched her in 2010, at which time he was already a senator. However, he has since issued public apologies and has announced his resignation.

Even so, he hasn't admitted to being guilty, claiming that he's only resigning to remove this burden from the Democratic Party.

Of course, Donald Trump is the best example of all when it comes to getting off without consequences.

Since becoming a candidate for the presidency, alleged cases of Trump's sexually harassing behavior have been in a public spotlight. Yet he was still elected to one of the most powerful positions in the world, the president, and faces no criminal charges.

As he bragged in the infamous "Access Hollywood" tape, "When you're a star, they let you do it. You can do anything." ♦

## REVIEW

## A serial problem is spotlighted in film 'My Friend Dahmer'

BY Isabelle Yang

Of the most hyped true-crime movies of 2017, "My Friend Dahmer," starring former Disney TV star Ross Lynch, spotlights society's hidden perversion with serial killers.

"My Friend Dahmer," debuting in American theatres on Nov. 13, explores the childhood of one of America's most notorious serial killers, Jeffrey Dahmer. Convicted of the rape, murder and dismemberment of 17 young men and boys in 1992, Dahmer and his future crimes were treated sympathetically in "My Friend Dahmer."

By showing the young Dahmer as a neglected and abused child, the movie tries to humanize him. As viewers watch him tormented by bullies at school only to return to a broken family with a mentally unstable

mother, the glaring red flags for psychopathic tendencies become more understandable — and more forgivable. Audience members become unknowingly sympathetic when in one of the movie's most heart-wrenching scenes, Dahmer's confides in his friends, "I'm just like anyone else."

Arguably, Dahmer is a neglected and tormented soul; however, he isn't deserving of sympathy. Above all, Dahmer isn't someone deserving of the romanticization "My Friend Dahmer" grants him.

The movie continuously suggests that if it were for a different upbringing, a nurturing family, friends who didn't take advantage of his sociopathic behavior and therapists who recognized his pain, Dahmer could have and would have been "just like you." Although the movie ends in an eerie shot as Dahmer

lays with his first attempted victim, there is still the lingering message that Dahmer isn't the perpetrator of disturbing crimes; he is the unfortunate result of many factors.

"My Friend Dahmer" is based off of the graphic novel done by one of Dahmer's real friends, John Backderf. Because of this, the movie also adopts the similar partial sympathy that Backderf has been noted for granting Dahmer in his graphic biographical novel of Dahmer.

Social media platforms like Tumblr have become a hub for so-called "true crime fans" who, in reality, are simply glamorizing serial killers like Dahmer and other morbid crime perpetrators. Most disturbing, there exists fan communities celebrating notorious serial killers like Ted Bundy and Eric Harris like they would with boy groups.



THE BC HEIGHTS  
Ross Lynch portrays a young Jeffrey Dahmer.

Given the rising popularity of the true crime genre in entertainment, it's imperative that the story makers and producers aren't creating a culture of empathy toward crime perpetrators. ♦

## Addictive online mobile game a powerful time-wasting tool

BY Pranav Ahuja

For the last few weeks in newspaper, fellow staff members have found me lying on the couches and blindly staring at a phone for up to half of the period. No, I'm not messing around, I've been doing "research" for this article by playing Guns of Boom.

The recently released app for Android and iOS provides users with countless hours of fun and also officially marks my step back into the world of video games,

That was probably both the best and worst decision of my year so far. On the bright side, the game turned out to be fantastic. On the other hand, it also proved to be very distracting and has further worsened my already problematic time management skills. Worst of all, it uses up all my screentime. (My mom has installed an app that limits my daily time on the phone to two hours.) In fact, one day I spent my allotted amount of my screentime on "Guns of Boom," leaving me unable to use the GPS app to get home.

The game features an online shooter experience different from any other due to its consistently solid frame rate and easy controls. Unlike most mobile online FPS's, "Guns of Boom" manages to run at a smooth frame rate even when connected to a poor source of internet. Furthermore, the controls are easy to master and are intuitive, which is nice considering most other mobile FPS's have my fingers darting all across the screen in positions I never knew were possible.

The game also offers numerous weapons, maps, modes and lots of customizability for your personal soldier. It also has stunning graphics, possibly the best I've seen on a mobile game. It's not very bloody or gory either, making it OK for most younger players.

Without doubt, my time with "Guns of Boom" has been fantastic, but I recently decided to delete the app until first semester is over. Fortunately, I'll be back online in a month or so and am hoping to see more SHS students online as well. ♦

which I haven't played since sophomore year.

Some people have asked me how I found this game.

I was scrolling through the App Store in search of a fast-paced, multiplayer online first-person shooter; the first thing that popped up when I searched for this was "Guns of Boom."

At first, I was skeptical. The images seemed cartoony, and, usually, first-person shooters on phones don't end up being too great. However, its 4.5/5 star rating on the Google Play Store prompted me to hit the download button.

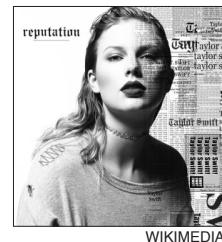
## REVIEW

## 'Reputation' shows new side of Swift

BY Muthu Palaniappan

On 8:29 p.m. Nov. 9, I eagerly waited with my eyes glued to the iTunes app on my laptop. In one minute, Taylor Swift would release "Reputation," her much anticipated sixth studio album.

"Reputation" takes listeners on a musical journey different from all of Swift's previous musical triumphs: The singer embraces a darker side of her personality, writing about her damaged portrayal in the media and her newfound happiness with her boyfriend, actor Joe Alwyn, while living out of the public eye.



WIKIMEDIA

"Reputation" features 15 tracks: half about heartbreak and feuds in her past, and the other half referencing her personal stories of finding true love.

Many add that with the release of this album, Swift is taking the largest leap from her country roots.

Although Swift claims that "the old Taylor is dead," her music still portrays the same poppy and catchy sound that the singer developed in her previous albums. Overall, the style of music still has maintained its character, while Swift's lyrics have gotten more sincere and expose more about her true feelings about the people in her life.

For example, in her 13th track, "This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things," Swift describes her icy relationship with rapper Kanye West. She sings, "Friends don't try to trick you // Get you on the phone and

mind-twist you," a reference to a time when West secretly recorded a phone conversation between the two in 2016. Throughout the song, Swift takes digs at West, and fans immediately recognize the relationship she is portraying.

While many of her tracks express her bitterness with her ex-boyfriends or problematic relationships, Swift also features tracks about her euphoria from the past year. Ever since the West and Swift drama unfolded in 2016, Swift fell out of the view of the media and public; the public didn't know where she was or what she was doing.

In "Reputation," fans finally find out what Swift was up to, and also what Swift really thought of the hateful media coverage she received after the drama with West.

Swift responds to the twisted perception of her reputation in the media in her fifth track, "Delicate." Swift starts the song with "My reputation's never been worse, so // You must like me for me," telling her listeners and her new boyfriend that she has disregarded the media's words, but now it's time for the rest of the world to accept her.

Additionally, fans learn that Swift is very happy with her life in "Call It What You Want," as she describes the revitalizing experience of falling in love with Alwyn and a life out of the spotlight.

Swift also features singer Ed Sheeran and rapper Future on "End Game," the second track of the album. Fans were especially ecstatic about the pairing with Sheeran. ♦

## For Ritchie, all roads led to teaching

BY Alexandra Li

When English teacher Natasha Ritchie announced to her family that she planned to pursue a teaching career during her senior year in college, they clearly had been expecting it. Looking back, even Ritchie is surprised that she did not recognize her love for teaching earlier.

Growing up, she found the greatest enjoyment in reading. She recalls reading under an umbrella in the rain and overall acting like a "book nerd." At the same time, she loved animals, idolizing Jane Goodall, an animal activist, and had read all of Goodall's books by the age of 13.

With a mother who supported all of her different interests, Ritchie contemplated becoming an animal rights activist and writing books to bring awareness to the subject.

When she graduated from Saint Helena High in Napa County, her main interests were reading and animal care. But after the death of her first pet, she realized that she most likely was not emotionally resilient enough to become a veterinarian.

Her loose idea of her future did not hold her back in any way, and she proceeded to attend UC Santa Cruz without much pressure to choose a major.

With its small school environment and proximity to the ocean, she said UCSC was the ideal choice for her and allowed her to explore different fields.

"I was lucky that I got to play around and didn't have as much pressure to figure out what I wanted to be," Ritchie said. "I started reading novels that were political science-focused or in other fields, making me realize

that there were whole rooms of disciplines that I hadn't ever explored."

During her junior year, Ritchie was asked to become a teacher's assistant in a class called Political Freedom.

Ritchie recalls attending dinners at her professor's house where the assistants would collaborate with each other and the professor, discussing the text and leading discussions.

"It was a tremendous experience," Ritchie said. "Nothing had excited me more than being in charge of my own group of students for the first time for that particular job."

After completing her undergraduate degree by doubling majoring in intensive legal studies and literature, she took a gap year to continue to be a paid teaching assistant, which she called the "best job ever" because it allowed her to retake her favorite courses while working with professors.

As a TA for a dozen classes, Ritchie graded all student papers and also wrote evaluations for students, which she said partially prepared her for writing many seniors' recommendation letters.

Her time at UCSC also allowed her to realize that being a professor was not the best fit for her because of the disconnect between student and instructor.

While she debated on attending law school to teach in subjects such as political theory, she eventually recognized that she most enjoyed the one-on-one interactions between teachers and students, which would be greatest in a high school environment.

Once she earned her teaching credential, Ritchie took her first teaching job at Scotts



FALCON // MUTHU PALANIAPPAN

English teacher Natasha Ritchie discusses the "Hamlet" essay in her English 11 Honors class.

Valley High School in 2004.

This was a challenging assignment since the school was a relatively new and was in a financially challenged district that didn't pay teachers well and had constant turnover. Ritchie taught there for two years but began looking for a better job and situation.

From her experience there, she recognized the importance of a school district that "practiced mutual respect among all staff." In 2006, she was hired at Saratoga High.

At the start of her teaching career, Ritchie found the shift to planning her own curriculum to be drastically different from forming lesson plans to complement a professor.

"It falls to the teacher to create material

that has real value and to create a classroom environment that fosters engagement and support," Ritchie said. "I learned early on that students are more likely to get more out of a class if they can relate to or at least respect the teacher."

Throughout her 14 years as a high school teacher, Ritchie has strived to provide an ideal learning environment for every student. In 2016, she was named teacher of the year by the SHS staff.

"I always try to find the balance of helping students learn skills but also having learning not be a chore," Ritchie said. "I work to provide a balance where learning is done for the student and for learning's sake, and not just because you're supposed to." ♦

### COLLEGE

*continued from pg. 1*

While community college students pay about \$1,500 to \$2,000 a year in tuition and fees, tuition and fees totaled \$12,630 for UC schools and \$33,480 for private universities on average during the 2016-2017 school year, according to collegedata.com.

Some private schools can be \$60,000 a year or more, and some out-of-state public universities can run \$35,000 a year or more.

Those costs are beyond what many families are willing or able to pay.

Additionally, Satake said that community college also makes sense for some students because they may not have decided on a major or are not quite ready to leave home.

The main challenge prospective transfer

students face is taking the correct classes at community colleges, since universities are selective about which credits they accept.

**"Your college experience is what you make of it, so I definitely don't feel like I really missed out."**

2015 ALUMNA Bianca Oliveri

"Students have to take 60 semester units or 90 quarterly units of the right classes in order to be able to transfer," Satake said. "60 credits of bowling and spin class or other fun classes won't allow students to transfer."

When selecting a community college to attend, students will often choose one that increases their chances of transferring to their target university.

Some students take advantage of special transfer agreements, such as the one between UCLA and the honors program at West Valley College.

Meanwhile, other students may decide to attend community colleges near a favorite four-year university.

They can go to Cuesta College in San Luis Obispo and then transfer to UC Santa Barbara, Satake said.

Additionally, in 2014, UC officials put in place a new policy that makes it easier to transfer to UC schools from community colleges.

Notable changes included streamlining course requirements and reaching out to a

wider range of community colleges.

Some students may feel like attending community college forces them to skip two years of the college experience.

Nevertheless, Oliveri said this was not the case for her.

"Your college experience is what you make of it, so I definitely don't feel like I really missed out on anything," she said.

Oliveri said that going to community college allowed her freedom and job opportunities.

"There's just so much good to say about it," Oliveri said. "Not only was I able to stay home and eat my parents' food, but I was also able to work at a software company during the school year. It just gave me so much more freedom to do what I want, and now I can figure out what I want to do with my remaining couple years." ♦

### VOICES around CAMPUS

*Editor's note: The Falcon sought out freelance writing for this issue. Non-Falcon staff member senior Belle Strawn recounts her fight against cancer through art.*

Red, green, orange. Passion, calm, happiness. When blended together, these colors create brown. Muddy, murky, lonely brown. How could something so rich and vivid create something so sad and lonely?

Glancing around the Stanford University Medical Center waiting room, all I saw was brown. It was in the chairs filled with patients; I saw it in the pitying glances we gave each other; and I recognized it in the worn, bitter, lined faces of the oldest patients. Naively, I did not see myself as one of "them." These gray people surrounded me, and I was still pink with naivety, the youthful blush of fear rushing to my cheeks.

At the age of 14, I was diagnosed with a rare form of parotid gland cancer. I re-

member how cold and gray the doctor's office was in comparison to the vivid autumn hues of the leaves outside.

The leaves started to fall, unaware that this was their last dance in the warm sunlight, their last chance to play in the brisk air. They tumbled down with elegance, but all too soon they were lost in a sea of red, orange and yellow that carpeted the ground below. I wanted to find them, pick them up and toss them high so perhaps they would have a second chance. I wished them another chance to be evergreen.

After receiving my diagnosis, I spent a lot of time at home, feeling overwhelmed, hopeless and lost. I decided to take my doctor's advice to paint something: a face. At first, I questioned whether I was truly an artist and whether I had the necessary passion. With each stroke of my brush that did not correctly interpret my intent, each color that did not reflect my mind's image, I felt defeated. Yet soon, I realized

that during those singular moments with brush in hand, I began to forget about my cancer.

Painting took me to another place, one where brown reflects the healthy soil that nurtures our plants and flowers; it is no longer dull mud. I realized that the myriad shades of green excite me.

Red no longer reminded me of blood, but rather strength, power and life; it is full of hope and opportunity. My newfound love for art pushed me to bear witness to a more authentic world as it is and as it should be. I found hope in red, green and orange. Yes, I even found hope in brown.

When I complete a painting, it feels as though the face peering back at me is no longer simply colors layered upon each other, but rather a life force that snuck onto my canvas and exposed itself through the subtle expressions and reflections of light. When I recall the challenges of the creative process — times when I struggled

to continue with a painting — I realize that being able to overcome these challenges defines me as a person. Now, even when I am saturated with self-doubt and fear, I have learned not to give up.

The sense of power I feel when I persevere is not loud like others; it is unobtrusive. But to feel it is to feel alive. I recognize it every time I figure out a twisted calculus problem, or when I have another successful checkup at the oncology center: I recognize the feeling of triumph over my fears and weaknesses.

I don't worry about the authenticity of my passion anymore. I have come to realize life is about loving every second enough to persevere despite the frustration and fear, because, inevitably, I now understand it is the struggle that makes the destination worth the arduous journey.

And my passion is my insatiable thirst to overcome whatever challenges life brings my way. ♦

# Seniors offer tips on writing college essays

BY Julia Miller

The first semester of senior year is so different from its portrayal in "High School Musical." Rather than dancing on tabletops or writing a play based on all of our shared senior bliss, most of my classmates and I have been stressing about college applications for months, specifically on the almighty college essays.

Not only is there one large college essay on the Common Application for most private institutions, but there are also a myriad of supplemental applications, additional information sections and more, depending on institution and major.

Though college essays scream perfectionism, it's easy to forget the prompts allow us to write about what we want and have fun with it. Senior Shania Jafri described the story of finding a cat on the streets of San Jose as her essay topic, explaining that her

reasoning behind the choice was more than meets the eye.

**It's important to realize there is no formula to write the perfect essay other than perhaps authenticity.**

"I wanted my application reviewers to connect to a personal side of me, rather than tell a shallow story about volunteering somewhere," Jafri said. "So, I wrote about accidentally stealing a cat since it was a unique story about a time in my life that I connected to a deeper message."

Jafri is undecided on her major for college, but that won't hold her back from telling a hard-hitting and uncommon tale. Sim-

ilarly, senior Smrithi Balebail experienced the same feeling of indecision during her application process, but revealed that writing her college essay for the Common Application actually helped her recognize her self-transformation through the personal situations she has undergone.

"Personally, this self-reflection helped me realize that a big part of my life revolves around helping others the best I can," Balebail said. "My essay helped me appreciate the growth I have had and the person I am today more."

At the same time, however, Balebail could not help but criticize the college essay process and "how much emphasis is put on how everyone's lives are extremely impacted by random circumstances." In other words, writing a college essay sometimes pressures seniors to somehow describe a single experience that defines their entire focus on the future. The other important advice from se-

niors is fairly obvious: Start early.

Jafri stresses that by brainstorming ideas in the summer and coming back to school with a few drafts, seniors will not have to juggle as much pressure during their first semesters.

"Start as early as possible, so you have enough time to find a unique story that fits you and enough reflection upon the story to know why you chose it," Jafri said.

Both Jafri and Balebail have finished their essays before their deadlines, and agree that procrastination is not the best approach to the college essay writing process. Finally, the seniors said it's important to realize there is no formula to write the perfect essay other than perhaps authenticity. As long as an essay topic represents who you are, what you stand for and what kind of a person you aspire to be, then college admissions officers are more likely to see you as more than just a name on an application. ♦

# Hunting for the perfect senior quote is hard

treasure  
hunter



Pranav Ahuja

For the past few weeks, I have been moonlighting as Indiana Jones.

My quest: the hunt for the perfect yearbook senior quote.

I'm not alone.

How do you encapsulate your last four years in high school, much less your whole

life in one single sentence?

And, even if you do find one, there is a chance that it will be deemed inappropriate and not allowed in the yearbook.

Despite all this, I entered my hunt for a senior quote with my head held high. I was determined to find that perfectly flavorful quote to describe me.

I originally thought I would write one about my punctuality, or lack thereof, and would have just put "better late than never" as my senior quote.

But after seeing my friends' quotes and memes online come up with so many other interesting ideas, I immediately wanted to

make mine more "legendary."

First, I tried doing a partner quote with fellow senior Akhil Marimuthu.

My quote would've said, "Surely you can't be serious," and his quote would've said, "Yes, I am serious. And don't call me Shirley," a famous set of lines from our favorite movie: "Airplane."

Unfortunately, we soon realized that since my last name starts with "A" and his with "M," it would make no sense.

After that, I moved on to quotes from my new favorite rapper: Big Shaq.

Unfortunately, I soon found out that one of my friends was already using the ones I

had in mind.

Finally, after hours and hours of research, I came across the perfect quote from my favorite TV show: "Archer."

But once again, a certain individual who I shall keep anonymous decided to submit this quote at the same exact time I did, so I quickly retracted my submission and went back to the drawing board.

After another day of thinking, the senior quote deadline was 20 minutes away.

I had drained my brain of all of my ideas, and I couldn't think of anything else. What did I choose?

You'll have to find out in May. ♦



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## Organic foods: Are they worth the extra price?

BY Andrew Lee  
& Sean Oh

Every Saturday, Saratogans line up to buy fresh produce from local farmers at the West Valley College Farmers Market. Over 60 farmers maintain stands in the campus lot, selling apples for \$1.59 per pound, lemons for \$2.48 per pound, broccoli for \$2.44 per pound.

Without much thought about the benefits or extra price of organic foods, customers line up to pay at least 20 percent more money for locally grown organic food. At a discount supermarket like Smart and Final, nonorganic apples, lemons and broccoli can be purchased for 99 cents per pound.

Sophomore Oscar Khowong, a Farmers Market regular, questions whether higher organic costs are justified when cheaper, non-organic alternatives are readily available in stores like Safeway.

"[My family and I] visit the local farmers market often, but I don't think that organic foods are worth the premium price," Khowong said. "I'm not really sure what the differences between inorganic and organic foods are, but you always have inorganic foods available for a reasonable price."

According to Elijah Ray, a farmer who sells organic fruits at the market for Prevedelli Organic Farms in Watsonville, one positive of organic foods is that they provide many health benefits.

"There are a lot of organic foods that can help with asthma, blood pressure, blood flow, hernias and just about anything that can go on in the body," Ray said. "You can also use [organic foods] to help detox your immune system and make it stronger."

Organic foods aren't toyed with genetically, so years of natural immunities can evolve with the plant, Ray said. Because of this, organic foods help induce acquired immunities to different pathogens by introducing less harmful bacteria into people's bodies. Many of these health benefits, according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), come from the extra work that farmers put in to maintain the certified organic seal — the extra labor, time and land required to fit the standards of organic farming are responsible for the steep price tag.

The tedious process of sustaining an organic farm certification includes sending applications to the USDA annually and undergoing regular inspections from USDA certified agents. According to sfgate.com, pesticides and chemicals used in agriculture have been shown to be correlated to cases of brain cancer and lung disease.

Farmers like Ray believe that being a successful organic farmer is more about the knowledge than meeting the requirements.

"Normally what it takes to sell an organic product is to really know your produce: where it originates, how you grow it, and whether it's annual or seasonal," Ray said. "It all correlates with how it is grown and what type of soil is used."

Additionally, he said organic farming has a positive impact on the environment as the regulations of the certification inhibits the use of toxic chemicals. The USDA gives no specific claim that organic foods are more healthy than inorganic foods.

One reason that Ray especially finds compelling for eating organic foods is their variability. Comparing inorganic foods to



FALCON // MUTHU PALANIAPPAN

A customer picks out produce at the weekly Saratoga Downtown Farmers Market on Dec 6.

store-bought pies, he said they taste decent, but unlike their more variable homemade pies, they always have the same flavor.

For some local families, like junior Chloe Peng's, purchasing and supporting organic products has become a routine. But Peng said the higher prices for organic foods are sometimes hard to contend with.

"You get the same product as non-organic foods, so I would just save the money," Peng said.

Unlike the massive difference in price, the difference in quality is not as noticeable, Peng said. Aware of the extra care and work that goes into the production of organic foods, Peng said the lack of chemicals used in the growth of these foods isn't enough to warrant a premium price.

Sophomore Sally Kim, who doesn't attend the farmers markets or buy organic produce, has also found the high prices to be unjustified.

"I've never really been able to tell the difference between inorganic and organic foods," Kim said. "I feel that organic foods only reach a small percentage of the community and even then many people aren't aware of any benefits organic foods provide."

But even with all the uncertainty over the true value of organic goods, local farmers see a strong niche for their products.

"I think people should go organic, considering that we are organic beings made of organic substances," Ray said. "As an organic farmer, you really want to be able to present what you're growing with pride." ♦

## How administration deals with cyberbullying

BY Allen Chen  
& Chelsea Leung

A recent online incident involving two sophomores is a reminder of how common cyberbullying is at SHS. (Because of privacy rules, the administration was not able to provide details other than to confirm that it occurred, and the students involved declined to comment.) Because cyberbullying has increased nationwide over recent years with social media, the Falcon talked to assistant principal Brian Thompson to learn more about the extent of problems on campus and what the administration is doing to combat it.

### What is the administration doing to raise awareness about cyberbullying?

The administration goes into classrooms at the beginning of the year to give presentations. We have our health units in freshman year that are embedded in the curriculum, and our resource officer, Deputy Russell Davis, comes in and talks to the students. In the spring, he will be holding an event in which he invites parents and students to look at cyberbullying.

### Is cyberbullying more prevalent among certain grades or demographics?

Cyberbullying comes across all grade levels and genders. We've experienced incidents with all sorts of students throughout the years.

### What methods do students use to hurt others online?

Social media as a whole is used. It's not too often that people directly message others. People have made second accounts



**Thompson**

### Do you feel that students are comfortable reporting incidents to the administration?

I don't think any student is comfortable when they're faced with that situation. But the more we talk about it and understand that it's a serious thing, the more students will feel encouraged to talk to us and know that their privacy will be respected.

### What are the consequences for someone who is caught harassing another student online?

A student can receive up to five days of suspension. Depending on the situation, the student could face expulsion. Police can also get involved, especially if you're taking on fake identities. Bullies can get themselves into a lot of trouble, legally and with the school. ♦

## Students disagree on effects of napping

BY Francesca Chu  
& Jessica Wang

### How effective are naps?

That's a question that seems to split student opinion. Some swear by the practice as a way of surviving their extremely busy schedules, while others deem naps to be something akin to a curse, claiming napping leaves them feeling more tired than before and wastes time.

Sophomore Daniel Ning has experimented with different sleep schedules in the past. During his freshman year, he would stay up all night watching videos, and then sleep during class. Afterwards, still feeling tired, he would nap at home and push starting his homework until 8 p.m.

"That terrible cycle continued all year," he said. "Then I finally realized that my bad schedule was affecting my grades."

According to the National Sleep Foundation, napping for prolonged periods actually reduces the quality of normal nighttime sleep and interferes with a person's sleep cycle. Because the mind starts to hit the deeper stages of sleep after about 30 minutes, the ideal length of a nap is between 20 and 25 minutes.

This year, Ning has attempted to start doing his work earlier and not stay up so late. He is also avoiding naps.

"I started to take school more seriously and also had the energy to do so," he said. "It was a pretty drastic change compared to how I went about last year, and it's been working out a lot better."

With the increased workload of sophomore year, Ning has found that he needs all the sleep he can get.

For others, however, regular napping can be a source of relaxation that results in a higher quality of work.

"Napping re-energizes me after the tir-

ing school day and helps me have more focus when I do my homework," junior Kaitlyn Lee said.

While it is true that napping can result in grogginess for some people, research by Dr. Sara Mednick from UC Riverside indicates that naps can also increase concentration and focus, alleviate stress and improve overall performance.

"If I have time and only light homework, I take naps because it allows me to rest and take a break from my life for a while," sophomore Adrienne Chan said.

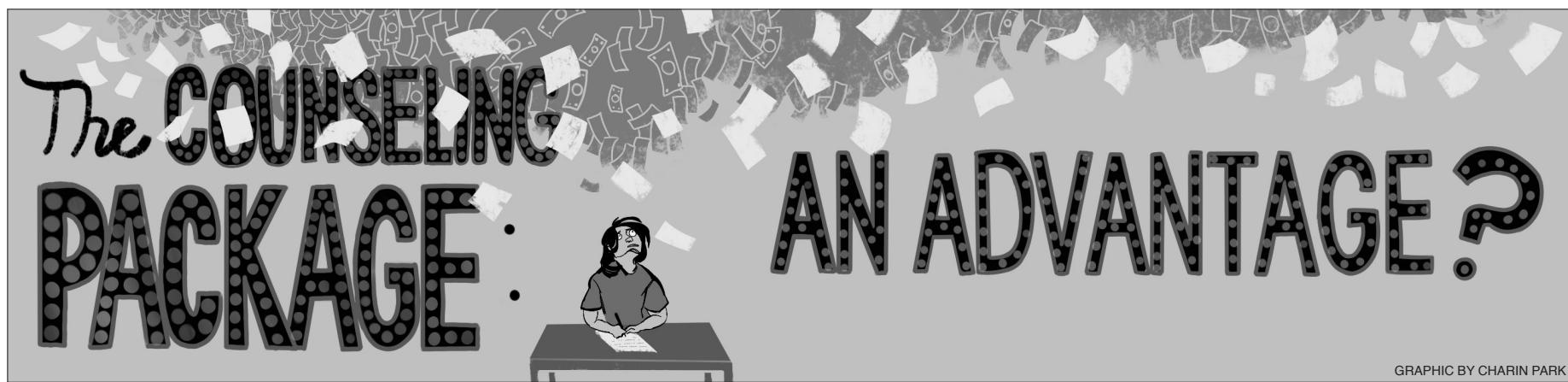
Nappers are also in good company — John F. Kennedy, Winston Churchill and Albert Einstein are all known to have appreciated an afternoon nap.

With all these contradicting studies and experiences with napping, it can be confusing whether or not naps are really helpful. In a TIME magazine article, experts explain that any benefits from napping first depends on the person getting a good night's sleep. According to the article, napping should be used to re-energize during the day and not to replace a person's nightly sleep.

In addition, naps are simply not for everyone: Scientists speculate that there may be genetic reasons behind the different effects they have on people. It could also have to do with habit, since people who always take naps during the day seem to benefit from them.

Ultimately, for many students who have large loads of work to do after school, the choice of napping depends on individual needs and preferences.

"Without naps after school I end up doing my homework at a much slower pace because I'm too tired to be efficient," Lee said. "The only other way I can get through the day is with coffee, but naps are probably a healthier alternative." ♦



GRAPHIC BY CHARIN PARK

BY Jeffrey Xu

As the 3:45 bell rang on a recent school day, sophomore Jewoo Im rushed home to catch his online medical school counseling meeting at 4, meet with his English tutor at 5:30 and attend his U.S. Biology Olympiad preparation class later that night.

To an outsider, Im's commitments beyond the usual school day might look highly unusual, but this is the reality for many students today at a wealthy suburban school like Saratoga High: Life is a constant time-crunch, filled with both academic work and extracurricular activities as students strive to bolster their academic profiles.

For students like Im, academic achievement often involves online courses, private tutors and college counselors, resulting in their parents spending thousands of extra dollars each year on education.

#### Costs of Counseling

According to CNBC, college counseling in the U.S. costs about \$4,000 on average from the beginning of junior year until the end of the college applications process in senior year. In contrast, the price of counseling for many SHS students costs a lot more, averaging about \$15,000 to \$20,000 for those two years, according to a recent survey on Facebook.

For private tutoring, the cost of a high-end tutor averages \$80 an hour, according to care.com. For students with multiple tutors, this amounts to about \$16,000 in two years, assuming an hour a week each for two tutors. SAT and other subject prep classes such as The Ivy Advisor cost around \$2,000 per course, and most summer programs will range from \$3,000 to \$5,000.

Adding up all the costs, some parents are spending \$50,000 or more for their children's academics in just their latter two years of high school.

**"I think it boils down to discipline. Just because ... tutoring is available doesn't mean people will work."**

SENIOR Ania Kranz

#### College App Trends

Guidance counselor Alinna Satake said the reason for all of this spending is rooted in parents' most basic instincts.

"Parents love their children fiercely and want to be as proactive as possible for their children's future successes," Satake said. "Whether or not it is the right call, I believe parents feel like putting money into supporting academic success is a practical way to help their children gain an edge in the college race."

Satake, a 1997 graduate of Saratoga High, also said that nowadays, it is much more competitive to get into college than it was 20 years ago. Although students still took as

many APs as they could and took SAT prep classes, kids weren't applying to nearly as many colleges as today.

"When I applied to colleges, kids applied to maybe five or six colleges, and 10 was considered a lot," Satake said. "Now I seldom see kids applying to less than 15."

Satake attributes this trend to what she calls the "terrible cycle" in the college applications process.

Students worry about their college acceptance chances and apply to more schools. In turn, this causes colleges to be able to boast that they've received record number of applications and are able to artificially drive down their admission rate.

The record number of applicants makes them seem more attractive, making even more students worry and apply to them in the years ahead.

Satake believes this trend leads to students losing the ability to apply pragmatically, since applying to so many colleges "in no way increases your chances of getting into any of those schools."

Additionally, such aggressive applying also comes with many application fees, which many parents are more than willing to cover before even looking at the tuition costs, which averaged \$50,000 in the U.S. for in-state private colleges in the 2016-2017 school year, according to the College Board.

Despite all of these costs, senior Prashant Malyala argues that academic spending provides a significant advantage for students.

"People who have the financial support to make expenditures on outside classes and college counselors tend to have a major advantage," Malyala said. "This advantage usually comes in the form of more inside knowledge on the college app process and better access to educational resources, resulting in a flashier resume."

#### Success Without Counseling

Senior Ania Kranz argues that spending money in this way is not necessary for academic achievement.

"I know that tutoring and outside classes do help a lot of people with that 'academic edge' by getting extra practice in certain areas," Kranz said. "However, I think it boils down to personal discipline — just because access to tutoring is available doesn't mean people will work proactively to achieve."

Kranz also thinks that what sets apart an excellent student from the average student is their dedication toward academics.

"People spend a lot to be the best here, but money can only get you so far," Kranz said. "What really makes a student stand out isn't the amount of money they spend on their academics but rather their devotion to set out and do what they want to do."

Not all parents are willing to spend thousands on their children's extracurricular education.

Sophomore Ronak Pai's parents are one such example. As a self-taught student who recently qualified for the USA Computing Olympiad Gold level and is a prominent member of the school's speech and debate and robotics teams, Pai said his parents have

spent little money on his extracurriculars, a decision that he says hasn't hurt him.

"Money doesn't buy you happiness, and it sure doesn't buy you a good work ethic either," Pai said. "I just work hard, and that amounts to more than any private tutor or paid class."

Pai's father, Raj Pai, sees some spending on education as necessary and other spending as something that actually disadvantages kids in the long run.

"I don't like to spend huge amounts of money on my kids' education because I believe they should learn how to work hard without relying on their parents' money," Raj said. "However, I am willing to cover the basic costs of college and school materials."

Senior Michelle Vu echoed this sentiment, pointing to free resources that "often do just as much, if not more than the more expensive alternatives."

Vu has used resources such as CASSY, the school's mental health center, and the school's guidance counselors and believes that they have greatly benefited her.

"I personally think that the amount of money spent doesn't always guarantee any sort of achievement," Vu said. "For

me, CASSY and guidance counselors have helped me just as much with counseling as a college counselor or a hired psychologist might. I think people should try the cheaper option first instead of relying on something that seems good just because of its cost."

Satake said that outside private college counseling is not only expensive, but can be unregulated as well.

"There is no governing board or quality control," Satake said. "Any yahoo can start a practice. Families don't need to drop thousands of dollars on outside support when they have trained credentialed counselors they can access for free!"

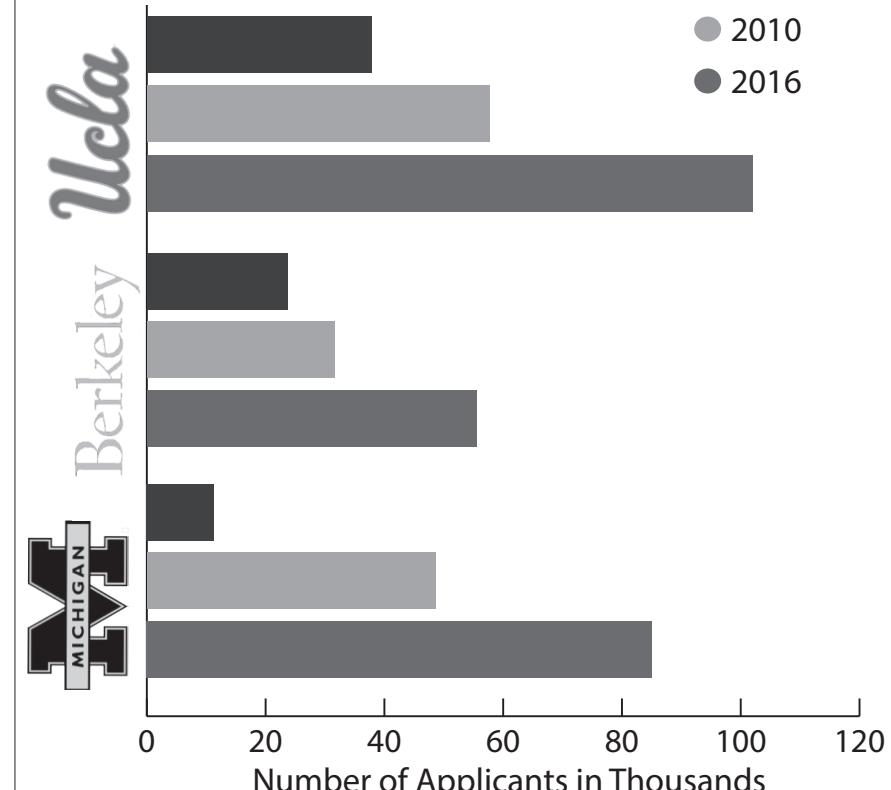
Satake is also concerned with some of the ethics of outside college counseling. Although this does not necessarily apply to all services, she has seen consulting services that "package kids in slick ways that are not entirely truthful."

In the end, Satake thinks such services are unnecessary.

"Kids are great," Satake said. "They don't need to be shined up. You are who you are and you should be proud of that and present that to colleges. Many wonderful colleges will be thrilled to have you." ♦

## COLLEGE COMPETITIVENESS BY THE NUMBERS

- 2000
- 2010
- 2016



Source: UCLA, UC Berkeley, U of Michigan Admissions

GRAPHIC BY FRANCESCA CHU

## togatalks

What do colleges look for in students applying?

"For colleges, they try to choose the students that they think will fit the school the most."



senior Chengzi Guo

"Colleges look for students who are more specialized and excel at one or two things."



sophomore Shivam Verma

"They look for well rounded students with academics and extra curricular activities."



junior Enzo Coglitore

**GIRLS' BASKETBALL**

## Girls defeat LG in pre-season opener

BY Shreya Katkere

Sophomore shooting guard Anika Prasad screamed in frustration as a referee called her for a fifth foul during the last five seconds of the girls' varsity basketball team's home game against Los Gatos on Dec. 2. As the girls lined up for free-throws, new varsity coach Daniel Wallace paced in front of the bench, glancing nervously at his team's 44-42 lead on the scoreboard.

Fans of the Los Gatos team roared in triumph as senior point-guard Alexa Wong sunk the first free-throw, and the gym grew silent as she lined up to take a second shot with the score at 44-43. As the ball bounced off the rim, a mad rush for the rebound commenced and senior center Harshini Ramaswamy grabbed and held the ball until the buzzer sounded, resulting in the team's first victory against Los Gatos in five years.

Critical to the victory was freshman shooting guard Jane Loo, who scored 18 points. Loo joined the starting lineup this year and has become a key player for the varsity team, which started its pre-season with a 2-2 record.

"Jane is a great addition to the team; she's got good knowledge and is a great passer," senior point guard Chloe Fung said.

The Falcons also took home a win on Dec. 9, dominating Leland High 59-47. Ramaswamy attributed the win to the team's improved ball movement, which gave them more open shots and allowed more players to score.

Earlier, with starting power forward Kirstin Kruka too sick to play, the Falcons were apprehensive about hosting Carlmont, a team with a tall front line, on Dec. 7. The Falcons played a hard second quarter but ended up losing 49-39.

"The Carlmont game showed great growth as a team and moving in the right direction despite the loss," Wallace said.

On Dec. 5, the team fell at home to Cupertino High 57-32. The girls struggled to move the ball up the court against Cupertino's press and as a result, were unable to execute their offense sets.

The Falcons are in the lower El Camino League this season and anticipate having ups and downs as they try to rebuild a team that saw seven players graduate last spring.



Courtesy of TIM ROTH

Freshman Jane Loo drives through the defense during the Los Gatos game on Dec. 2. Loo was instrumental in the 44-43 win, Saratoga's first victory over rival Los Gatos in five years.

The bright spot so far are the three freshmen, Loo, Kaitlyn Yu and Iris Lee, all guards who are looking to fill the gaps left by alumnus," Loo said. "Everyone on this team wants to get another CCS banner, and we are willing to do whatever it takes." ♦

*Due to printing deadlines, the Falcon was unable to cover the team's games against Del Mar on Dec. 12 and against Half Moon Bay on Dec. 14.*

**BOYS' SOCCER**

## Team takes on challenging pre-season

BY Jackson Green  
& Jeffrey Xu

As the boys' varsity soccer team captain senior Solomon Bailey jogged onto the field for the first practice of the year last month, he was reminded that many of the familiar faces from last year were gone, with most having graduated last spring.

In the absence of the players he used to look up to, Bailey knew he would have to step up and shoulder more responsibility.

Among the graduates was forward Kevin Yu, who now plays on the team at Carnegie Mellon as a freshman. According to Bailey, he was the team's "main target every time we got the ball. We passed it to him, and he scored."

This year, without Yu, each of the boys will have to step up, Bailey said.

The team looks forward to playing upper league teams in pre-season such as Independence on Dec. 13 and Valley Christian on Dec. 19. If they do well, these games will give them the credits they need to qualify

for CCS as well as hone their soccer skills. Instead of playing five pre-season games as they did last year, the boys are playing 11.

A major reason they fell short of CCS last year was that they played so few pre-season games.

"Playing teams that are at a much higher level than us will get us extra credit," Bailey said. "If anything goes wrong throughout the season, then we'll have the pre-season credits to boost our chances of making CCS."

Sophomore Brian Wu was one of the only two sophomores to make the varsity team and will play

defender.

"I feel extremely excited to play on varsity this year," Wu said. "However, I am a little nervous and I feel like I need to prove that I belong in varsity through playing well in games."



Bailey

The team is anticipating a winning season this year because it's returning 16 seniors, assistant coach Alex Booth noted.

"Having so many seniors in the squad is quite rare and helps because there are so many returning players who understand the formations we want to play," Booth said. "It gives us an advantage over some schools."

**"Having so many seniors in the squad is quite rare and helps because [they all know the plays]."**

COACH Alex Booth

These older and more experienced players are also able to help integrate some of the newer, younger players, Booth said. With this contrast in the players' ages, he and head coach Chris Scott plan to implement

strategic changes in order for the team to be successful.

During practice, coaches are drilling players to maintain possession of the ball, rather than getting rid of it quickly by passing or shooting.

Even without the star factor of Yu, Booth believes that the team is more well rounded this year and may even be stronger.

"Last year we came close to CCS and had some good results, but we lacked a little depth in the team, sometimes relying on one area of our team too much," Booth said. "This year, we have a group with lots of potential. With the correct attitude and setup, we can finish with a good record."

The soccer team is 0-2-1, losing 0-3 to Harker on Dec. 7, losing 0-1 to Mountain View on Nov. 29, and tying Santa Teresa 2-2 on Dec. 1. They will start league play in the Lower El Camino Division in January. ♦

*Due to printing deadlines, the Falcon was unable to cover the team's games against Los Gatos on Dec. 11 and Independence on Dec. 13.*

**BOYS' BASKETBALL**

## Falcons aim to repeat CCS run of previous season

BY Leo Cao  
& Patrick Li

For the first time in coach Patrick Judge's 17-year coaching career, he has two freshmen on his team.

Adding shooting guards Tyler Chu and Cameron King to the roster was risky, considering how little experience these two players have playing at the high-school level. The two don't start but they are expected to play key roles off the bench.

In recent games, the Falcons beat Santa Teresa 66-61 on Dec. 6, but fell to San Mateo 59-49 on Dec. 7.

On Dec. 1, the Falcons beat Silver Creek 61-48 at home.

They held a 20-point lead throughout the game, dominating their opponents with fluid ball movement that created many opportunities to score.

"Everyone got a chance to play in that game, which was really good," senior cen-

ter Neal Iyengar said. "I think the season has a really good start so far and hopefully the momentum carries throughout the rest of the year."

In the first game of the year, the Falcons had a miraculous comeback at home to beat Branham 70-64 in overtime. After a slow start in the first half, the Falcons found themselves down by nine with only a couple of minutes left in the fourth quarter. However, the team came back to tie the score at 62 before winning in the extra period. Small forward Harrison Fong led the way with eight points in overtime.

"We went on a huge run, and took the game to overtime," Iyengar said. "This win definitely felt great and it boosted our team's overall confidence."

The Falcons are set to play Los Gatos on Dec. 15 at home.

During a successful season last year, the Falcons lost the Division III CCS championships to Monterey by 72-56. This year, they

have set the same goal of winning CCS.

To reach that goal, the team will be focusing more on improving their defense to supplement their strong offense.

"Everyone on our team has the ability to get to the basket whenever they want and knock down shots from almost anywhere," Iyengar said. "Defensively, we are in the mindset that the other team should not be scoring on us."

Part of the reason for the Falcon's early success is due to the strong energy from the bench.

Sixth man Alex Metz is one of the smaller players at 5'10, but his hustle and grit motivate his teammates.

"Every single time he comes onto the floor, you already know he is going to dive for every ball," senior shooting guard Michael Xue said. "He gets a lot of steals, and makes everyone around him play at a higher level."

Freshmen Chu and King also come off

the bench, and both are strong 3-point shooters. Although young, these two are getting valuable experience playing at the highest level.

"Personally I think having two freshmen makes practices more fun because they are pretty laid-back and provide that loosened up nature to practice," Xue said.

Regarding areas of improvement, one drastic change the team has to make this year is decreasing isolation plays, where an offensive player has chance to beat a defender one on one.

"This year, since we are not as dependent on certain guys, we are moving the ball more on offense," Xue said. "We play well when we do that, but when we resort to isolation plays, that's when our offense slows down and we aren't able to get great shots." ♦

*Due to printing deadlines, the Falcon was unable to cover the team's games against James Lick on Dec. 12 and Los Gatos on Dec. 15.*

# Warriors start slow, look to bounce back

BY Julia Miller

The Bay Area's super team may have faltered in its first seven games, but that does not mean the Golden State Warriors are fated to lose their crown.

With a record of 4-3 out of the gate, the Golden State Warriors were ranked seventh in the league after their 115-107 loss to the Detroit Pistons on Oct. 29, and I'll even admit the reigning champions did not look like winners that night. During the last few minutes of an intense game, Dub Nation can usually count on point guard Stephen Curry or small forward Kevin Durant to hit a crucial 3-point shot. That night, neither Curry nor Durant could find the net in their usual way, silencing the roaring Oracle Arena.

Later on, the Warriors looked unrecognizable in an ugly 92-88 loss to the Boston Celtics, who hold the first place spot in the Eastern Conference, with Curry scoring only nine points for the whole game and the Warriors squandering a large lead.

Though the 2016-17 team is all back, with the exception of reserve point guard Ian Clark, who left as a free agent to the New Orleans Pelicans during the offseason, the question is: why are the Warriors struggling at all this season?

According to head coach Steve Kerr, the answer is in the lack of mental focus among the players.

"The physical conditioning will come as we play these games in the next week or two," Kerr said in his interview with The Mercury News. "But what we can do is really lock in mentally when we're watching film, understanding what our focus is and game plan ... That's where we can make the most improvement right now is just being sharp mentally."

Another factor could be the integration

of new and old players. With the additions of rookie Jordan Bell, NBA veteran Omri Casspi and the G-league two-way contract with Santa Cruz Warrior Quinn Cook, the Warriors have been having to make adjustments in both the playbook and player positions to incorporate the newbies into the team's rotations.

Sure, we can try to pinpoint the problems of new players and lack of mental focus, but the success of a team boils down to the player chemistry and individual mentalities during games.

It does not mean the Warriors are losing their chance at a championship, or that their dominance has expired. Since Kerr made his decision to dedicate more time during practice to analyze past games with the players, the Warriors have been improved to a 16-3 record, and are only steamrolling ahead to another successful season.

However, Stephen Curry's recent ankle sprain during the Dec. 4 game against the Pelicans threatened the Warriors' offense and the team will need to find production elsewhere.

Nevertheless, the Dubs have been on a 5-0 winning streak on their seven-game road trip, powered by Durant and shooting guard Klay Thompson's combined average 57 PPG (points per game) and 55.3 percent field goal percentage in the last couple of games since Curry's injury.

With challenges like rough patches in a long season and key player injuries, I know that the Warriors are focused and still on a mission to repeat. With two thirds of the season ahead, the Warriors still have plenty of time to get back in shape, recover from player injuries, and get back to their championship-winning caliber levels. ♦



# Boston Celtics off to a sizzling start

BY Patrick Li  
& Roland Shen

With an unexpected 16-game win streak earlier in the year and a 22-4 record as of this writing, the Boston Celtics have now shown themselves to be NBA title contenders.

Even without key player Gordon Hayward, who broke his left ankle in the first few minutes of the very first game and will be sidelined for the entire year, the Celts are beating everyone in sight, including the Warriors in a recent

matchup

Celtics

So, why are the

doing so well?

First, their

starting five is

severely un-

derrated.

The Celtics picked up superstar point guard Kyrie Irving from the Cleveland Cavaliers in the offseason and still have under-rated veteran center Al Horford. Irving is averaging 20.6 points a game on 44 percent shooting and is coming up clutch in close games.

In addition, young stars like rookie small forward Jayson Tatum and second-year shooting guard Jaylen Brown have emerged. Standing above 6'7, both guards have the ability to play tough defense, take the ball into the paint and finish. They are also strong 3-point shooters: Tatum at 49.3 percent and Brown at 41 percent.

The Celtics also have a deeper bench than many originally projected. Backup point guards Marcus Smart and center Aron Baynes have been key components. Smart has shown that he can perform well under pressure.

Despite all their success so far, the Celts will still have to contend with one

Eastern Conference powerhouse — the Cavaliers and LeBron James — in order to secure a spot in the NBA Finals. The Cavaliers started are still a formidable opponent, especially considering that they've been playing without two key injured players: Isaiah Thomas and Derrick Rose.

Thomas averaged 29 points and six assists a game last year, leading the Celts to having the best record in the East. Unfortunately, he was injured in the playoffs and was traded to the Cavaliers for Irving.

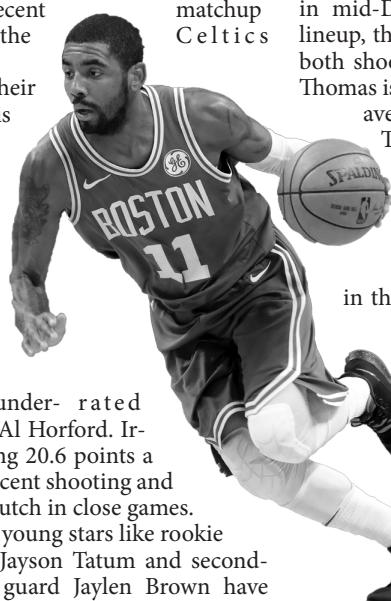
Thomas is expected to make his return in mid-December. With Thomas in the lineup, the Cavaliers will likely improve in both shooting and playmaking. Although Thomas is often overlooked due to his sub-

average height, the Cavaliers' coach Tyronn Lue was cited as saying that "Isaiah is an invaluable asset to our team due to his all-star caliber passing and playmaking skills."

Cavaliers toppled the Celts in their first matchup 102-99 on Oct. 17. The final question is whether the Celts' strong chemistry will pull through and give them the edge over LeBron and the Cavaliers, or if the superstars LeBron and Thomas will control the East.

If they make it through the Cavs, they might just be the toughest of all possible matchups for the Golden State Warriors, Houston Rockets or whichever team emerges from the West. The Celts are coached by Brad Stevens, who has shown himself throughout his four years there to be among the top in the league.

Let's not forget that they have also won three of the past four games against the Warriors, and their solid shooting from beyond the arc and deep team composition can prove to be a challenge for even the star-studded Warriors to defeat. ♦



## NBA UPDATES

FALCON REPORTERS TAKE IN-DEPTH LOOK AT PROFESSIONAL TEAMS

ALL GRAPHICS BY ASHLEY FENG

# Lakers look bright amidst rebuilding process

BY Siva Sambasivam

Besides the Boston Celtics, the Los Angeles Lakers are probably the most iconic franchise in basketball history. They have 16 championships, the most NBA finals appearances with 31, and the most postseason wins with upwards of 400.

But the Lakers haven't seen the playoffs the last four years, leaving many fans bolting for the bandwagons. To put it in perspective, in their previous 70-year history, the Lakers missed the playoffs only four times.

Lakers brass was under immense pressure to restore the winning culture, but with continuous mistakes in contract negotiation and drafting, the Lakers have stayed at the bottom of an ultra competitive Western Conference and never made moves that could possibly turn them into a contender for playoffs.

Then, finally, this past summer the Lak-

ers hired Magic Johnson as their general manager. Johnson, already a part-owner of the franchise and widely respected within the organization, led the Lakers to five championships during his tenure as a player.

He vowed to return the Lakers back into the NBA elite and immediately got to work.

Johnson revamped the entire roster in one summer, getting rid of erroneous contracts from the previous front office and moving around assets to prepare for the future.

At the 2017 draft, Johnson made two decisions that put the franchise back on track. With the second pick, he chose UCLA standout Lonzo Ball, considered to be an immediate impact player at point guard. The second move was to trade up for forward Kyle Kuzma, a bona fide scorer, whose talents would mesh well with the Lakers' system.

These two players were put front and

center at the Las Vegas Summer League. They led the Lakers to the Summer League title, with Ball taking honors as the Summer League MVP.

The Lakers started the regular season with a 5-5 record, and although it doesn't figure to mean much in the big picture, for a team that has won 27, 21, 17 and 26 games over the last four seasons — a 5-5 start is significant improvement.

Despite their current 8-13 record, the Lakers are three games out of the playoffs and their aspirations are far from dead. The silver lining in their rough stretch is that they have seen great development in many of their young players, most noticeably second-year forward Brandon Ingram.

A year removed after being drafted second overall, Ingram has broken out this year, averaging close to 18 points and six rebounds per game after struggling through his rookie year.

However, the success of the Lakers truly depends on Ball.

Ball has had numerous struggles early on, shooting a historically bad percentage, with a lack of aggression needed to be a good point guard. Despite his flashes of excellence, his overall play has even led to him being benched during the fourth quarter of two close games.

Yet Ball has collected wide praise from current and former NBA stars, calling him a once-in-a-generation passer. He has shown flashes of great play in games, and his consistency will come along with experience.

The Lakers now have a solid young core to build around with talent at every position and a widely respected head coach, Luke Walton, at the helm. Thanks to the ingenious moves of Magic Johnson and the new Lakers front office, one thing is for certain: The Lakers won't be tanking again anytime soon. ♦

## WRESTLING

# Team looks to start on a strong note with new members

BY Sean Oh

In their first tournament on Dec. 9 in the annual Webber Lawson Memorial Wrestling Tournament at Fremont, the wrestling team placed 20th out of 30 teams. Senior Alexander Liddle went undefeated 4-0, making it to the finals and winning first place in the 285 lb weight class.

"I feel individually I did very well but I'd like to see some of my teammates getting medals as well," Liddle said.

Each of the athletes, junior Victor Chen, sophomore Vladimir Kataev, freshman Linus Blom and senior William Sabato, had at least one win before being eliminated.

"The team did really well on their feet and got some good takedowns, but they struggled being on the bottom," coach Daniel Gamez said.

Last year, the team struggled with filling weight classes and ended the year with only seven wrestlers. With more grapplers this year, the team won't have to forfeit as many dual matches.

"In the past, other schools have had larger teams, but I'm excited for this year because we have a more competent team size-wise," junior Isaiah Vivero said.

Key wrestlers like seniors Jack Ryan and Ajay Brar weren't able to participate this year due to injuries. Brar accumulated a number of injuries throughout his two-year wrestling career and thought it best to discontinue.

"It was hard to walk away from wrestling," Brar said. "But I had to do it because it was taking a toll on my body."

New wrestlers like Blom, sophomore Saman Mokhberi and Liddle have helped fill in the places left by veterans. With the addition of assistant coach Taylor Wilson this year, individual athletes are also able to get more one-on-one help.

"My goal is to continue to teach them techniques to add to their arsenal and get more wins," Gamez said.

The team's next tournament will be Saturday for varsity boys at Abraham Lincoln High. ♦



FALCON // MUTHU PALANIAPPAN

Two wrestlers practice their moves in the wrestling room during a practice on Dec. 7.

# First freshman female football player joins wrestling team

BY Kaylene Morrison  
& Sandhya Sundaram

After being the first female football player at the school and playing center for the JV team, freshman Nora Sherman is once again a minority in her next sport: wrestling.

Sherman joined wrestling knowing that it would condition her better for football since both sports are very physical and strenuous. Although there have been girls on the wrestling team previously, of the 16 wrestlers this year, Sherman is the only female.

Prior to joining the team, Sherman had wanted to try wrestling for years, but her main focus had always been on other sports.

"I just haven't really had a chance to get involved in it, but now I'm here so why not?"



Sherman

Sherman said.

Sherman was inspired by her grandfather, Gary Stensland, a former wrestler whose Olympic dreams were dashed by a cartilage tear in his knee. Stensland wrestled for the USA team and was a USA heavyweigh national champion several times in the 1960s. After, he began coaching at high schools and the University of Oregon.

Although Sherman was inspired by her grandfather, he and Nora's grandmother, Ardith Stensland, both insisted that it was Sherman's own decision to pursue wrestling.

"I think we both tried to not encourage her, so it was kind of exciting when she came upon it and didn't get pushed into it," Mrs. Stensland said.

Gary Stensland is also enjoying witnessing Sherman's wrestling skills improve day by day.

"It's kind of interesting that she did get involved with it and I'm having fun watching what's happening," he said.

Wrestling coach Daniel Gamez said he is enjoying having a girl on the team again since it gives them a more diverse look.

"It helps the men become gentlemen, and I like to see that," Gamez said.

Freshman JV wrestler Trevor Green said that the team has adjusted well to Sherman's participation. Having also played JV football with Sherman, Green said that he is used to playing sports with a female teammate.

According to Gamez, girls' wrestling has become one of the fastest growing sports in the nation.

"It's always nice to get girls to try out and see the sport, see what it's like and if it's for them," Gamez said.

The rising popularity of the sport for girls has made breaking barriers easier. In the past, girls' tournaments would often be held

in distant locations and often on the same day as boys' tournaments. The few girls on the team would then often have to compete in tournaments aided by the coaches of specifically all female teams. Nowadays, many JV tournaments in the area provide both girls' and boys' competitions.

Though the season has just begun, Gamez has already noticed traits in Sherman that will make her a successful wrestler and allow her to possibly win matches at some of these tournaments.

"She's very mentally tough and she doesn't give up," Gamez said. "Those are two of the best qualities a coach could look for."

Other than her long hair, Sherman blends into the team. She is treated no differently and must compete with the boys like anyone else.

"We're all one team. We're all one family. There's no boys' wrestling or girls' wrestling. It's just wrestling," Gamez said. ♦

## GIRLS' SOCCER

# Falcons start off their pre-season with 7-0 home victory

BY Aaron Choi  
& Alexandra Li

As the Falcons walked off the field on Dec. 1 in their home game against Half Moon Bay, the scoreboard showed an impressive 7-0 win.

With scores from junior forward Isabella Taylor, junior left wing Jennah El-Ashmawi, senior right midfielder and defender Allison Borch and senior center midfielder Daphne Liu and strong play from senior Christina Walb as goalie, everything clicked for the Falcons.

"We've been doing a lot of conditioning and training before the games and it was so fun to see all the efforts come together," Liu said.

The team didn't fare as well at Fremont on Dec. 7, losing 2-1, and falling to Hillsdale 2-0 on Dec. 2 in an away game.

The game against Hillsdale on Dec. 2 was part of a the Freebird Tournament, which the team participated in to get more games into their preseason. According to Pickard, the team played at the same level as in their win against Half Moon Bay, but faced a more challenging team.

"Although we had a lot more chances to score than the other team, they were able to actually score with their chances," Pickard said. "So we're working on attacking offensively as a team and being able to carry through every chance we get."

Pickard attributes their success in their first game of the season to the increased communication between players as well as using certain plays, which they focused on during practices.

"We did a really good job of staying in our shape while we were playing," Pickard said. "We moved forward, back, and side to

side as a team and stayed in the right positions, which worked out really well because they weren't able to score on us because of it."

Compared to the past year, the team has taken on a stricter and more focused attitude to make a more successful year.

"We have a new dynamic warm up and this year we're really focusing on reading the other team's style of play and adapting our game to it," Pickard said.

The Falcons have a total of five non-conference games before beginning their regular season on Jan. 3. ♦

# Persistence and consistency, not protein, is key to fitness regime

BY Leo Cao  
& Jeffrey Xu

While we were at Chipotle after our Saturday physics class, we noticed a huge, muscular body that belonged to a man with luscious blond hair. Interestingly enough, he was holding a Gatorade protein shake in his veiny hand, and it seemed as if he could crush the bottle at any moment.

A popular trend amongst bodybuilders is consuming protein bars, drinks or powders before working out, and apparently, such consumption is linked to more muscle building. According to bodybuilding.com, 30 to 40 grams of protein each day is optimal to recover in between workouts.

Recently, the question has arisen of how important protein is in muscle building, sparking much debate in the bodybuilding community. Common protein supplements include whey powder, protein shakes like Muscle Milk and protein bars such as Protein Cookie by MuscleTech.

So, being two pretty skinny Asian teenagers, we decided to put this debate to rest — deciding to start consuming protein supplements for a week and work out for once to see what would happen.

Since we didn't have access to a gym, we worked out at Leo's house using Freeletics, an app that gives users a workout each day and teaches them how to do certain exercises.

But first, we went to Safeway and picked up a Muscle Milk Knockout Chocolate Pro series drink with 40 grams of protein and some Gatorade Recover Whey protein bars.

Upon returning home from Safeway, we consumed a couple bars and drank a bit of the Muscle Milk before starting the workout.

The workout, primarily aimed for building abs, consisted of three rounds of 20 push-ups, five pull-ups, 40 cross-legged crunches, a one-minute plank, 20 heel touches, 30 bicycle crunches and 10 leg raises.

In the middle, we took out the Gatorade protein shakes, downed them and felt totally refreshed within seconds. With our new-

found energy, we continued through our workout, powering through those crunches, although it was probably from placebo, since the effects of the drink weren't supposed to occur that quickly.

In the end, we felt that although the protein didn't seem to improve our abs, the act of consuming protein improved our morale and made us feel more energized.

Then again, bodybuilding requires persistence and consistency; just consuming protein for one afternoon and working really shouldn't amount to much in any case. If we really wanted to build those pecs and six-pack abs, we would have to do this every day — and more.

But we're just not that type of people. ♦

# Racial double standards distort athletes' images

BY Kaitlyn Wang

Beginning September 2016, former 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick kneeled during the national anthem to stand against racial inequality and police brutality, including the Charlotte shooting in N.C. and the shootings of Philando Castile and Alton Sterling.

Kaepernick's actions have inspired protests among hundreds of athletes nationwide, regardless of sport, race or gender.

White athletes have also kneeled, with soccer player Megan Rapinoe the first to do so. The U.S. Soccer Federation responded by requiring players to stand during the anthem, Sports Illustrated reported.

In general, however, protesting white athletes have received more positive responses than protesting black athletes.

One example is the first white NFL player to kneel: Seth DeValve of the Cleveland Browns. Recognition compelled DeValve's wife, who is black, to write an article urging people to focus on why DeValve kneeled, rather than consider him a white athlete "legitimizing" the cause. It is crucial to "[listen] to the experiences and the voices of the black people who are using their platforms to continue to bring the issue of racism in the U.S. to the forefront," Erica writes.

Differing responses based on race suggest that racism skews perspectives on athletes.

For example, Floyd Mayweather Jr., a black boxer, and Conor McGregor, a white mixed martial artist, competed in a boxing match in Las Vegas on Aug. 25.

According to the New York Times, Mayweather said people described him as "arrogant" and "unappreciative," but McGregor received praise for similar behavior.

"Conor is very charismatic," former professional boxer Mike Tyson said, according to Fox Sports. "He walks into the room and everybody stands up. He sucks the air out of the room."

USC professor Todd Boyd, who studies

race and pop culture pointed out a contrast, telling New York Times, "McGregor is being celebrated for the same things that Floyd has been denigrated for."

Double standards demonstrate that race affects the way people view similar actions — an issue especially important to acknowledge in sports, which have an immense influence over public opinion.

The belief that some races excel more than others at certain sports supports double standards. People expect "naturally talented" athletes to perform well and possibly better than athletes of other races because the sport is "easier" for them. Thus, these opinions set higher standards for some athletes because of their race.

Some people believe the stereotype that black people are more naturally athletic because of their race. While natural size and athleticism plays a huge role in success, the most skilled players clearly develop skills through practice, not just birthright. Attributing success to inherent ability disregards the time and effort athletes pour into their sport.

Athletes might also feel confined to certain positions on the field because of varying standards shaped by preconceived beliefs about their performance.

For example, speed is crucial for cornerbacks in football. There have been no white cornerbacks in the NFL for the past 14 years, Sports Illustrated states.

White athletes who played cornerback prior to joining the NFL are often moved to safety, or choose to change positions because they do not want to feel like they do not belong.

The last white NFL cornerback, the New York Giants Jason Sehorn, believes that this is not connected to racism but is a "cultural issue and a confidence issue."

Conversely, fewer black athletes than white athletes hold other positions, including starting quarterback. Out of 32 starting quarterbacks this year, four are black and three are biracial.

Since people are accustomed to seeing either black and white athletes in certain positions, athletes experience pressure to undertake positions expected of them, limiting career choices and forcing different standards and paths toward the future on athletes based on their race.

In an article on "The Undefeated," sociologist Harry Edwards argues that tradition is hard to break, saying, "You can't just come in and show somebody that a black center is as good as a white center ... You've got to come in and show that he is better."

Pressure to outperform teammates deters athletes from positions they might otherwise want to pursue such as quarterback and center, which may lead to coaching opportunities.

According to a 2013 study by SB Nation, 62 percent of black athletes who played

quarterback in high school changed positions in college, in contrast to 16 percent of white athletes.

Differences in representation among coaches is especially apparent in college sports.

According to ESPN, 84 percent of basketball, 92 percent of football and 95 percent of baseball head coaches were white in combined divisions in 2016.

Seeing few black coaches, young black athletes may feel discouraged from considering and pursuing coaching jobs — and discouraging protest reinforces the expectation for athletes to accept their positions without questioning.

Opposition to protests not only impacts professional athletes, but high school athletes as well.

According to New York Times, a coach in Texas kicked two black high school football players off a team because one student kneeled and the other student raised his fist in the air during the national anthem.

But in other schools, coaches support their students' decision to kneel. Last year the entire football team of Mission High in San Francisco took a knee before a game, with black, white, Hispanic and Asian students united in protest.

Adults are not the only ones protesting — students our age are speaking up for their beliefs.

Open discussion is crucial to address double standards, not only in sports, but also in other aspects of life, since issues that exist in sports reflect larger issues in society. Instead of silencing individuals, progress requires that we approach these issues knowing that although they may be uncomfortable to talk about, it is necessary to do so.

Athletes of varying ages and backgrounds kneel because they want change and because they believe even small shows of support contribute to a shift in mindset, challenging us to examine what shapes our perspectives and how we can progress toward a level playing field for all. ♦

## Sports celebrities are not above punishment

BY Leo Cao  
& Jeffrey Xu

South African paralympian Oscar Pistorius, the so-called blade runner, killed his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp on Valentine's Day 2013. He was subsequently sentenced to five years in prison, 10 years less than the mandatory penalty.

While judges are permitted to deviate from the prescribed minimum sentence if there are compelling reasons in doing so, the Pistorius sentence was no such case.

In 2015, Pistorius was found to be guilty of murder, and his sentence was extended to six years.

Even after 3 years of prison time, the issue is still a controversial one, and prosecutors such as Andrea Johnson still call the sentence "unjust." She also claimed that Pistorius did not feel true remorse for shooting his girlfriend, according to a report by CBS News.

Last month, prosecutors pushed for an sentence of the prescribed 13 years.

This is closer to the punishment he deserves, but it is

still light considering the gravity of his crime.

In general, the tendency for famous athletes to get lighter treatment for crimes they commit is all too common. In some cases, professional athletes can cite something called extra-curial punishment in their defense, meaning they have already experienced penalties that come with being in the spotlight. Because of the fact that they are already suffering as a result of the crime they committed, they are able to get a lighter

**The tendency for famous athletes to get lighter treatment for crimes they commit is all too common.**

sentence for compensation.

Additionally, if convicted, it is common for athletes to be segregated from the general prison population for their safety, usually leading to better prison conditions.

For example, in 2009, New York Giants receiver Plaxico Burress was sentenced to two years in prison on charges of accidentally shooting himself with an unlicensed gun. Upon entering jail, Burress was immediately separated from the regular inmate population and given his own cell. He also received an early release for good behavior.

All in all, it can be said that everyone has an excuse for their crimes, but most are still sentenced. Athletes like Pistorius deserve the same punishment as anyone else. ♦



South African paralympian Oscar Pistorius.



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## &gt;&gt; snapshots



TALISMAN // ALLYSON CHANG



FALCON // MUTHU PALANIAPPAN



FALCON // MUTHU PALANIAPPAN



FALCON // AVA HOOMAN

Junior Chloe Peng dances at the winter rally on Dec. 1.

Spanish teacher Bret Yeilding recognizes junior Maddie Stuart during a world language award ceremony on Dec. 6.

Senior Mervi Tan and her classmates present their company TechTopia for their Shark Tank pitch on Dec. 8.

Sophomore Mihir Bettapur, Risa Carter and Alena Jarrett perform "Sweet Caroline" at Saratoga Idol on Dec. 5.

## buzzworthy >> These prices cannot be fur-real!

BY Ava Hooman

I love to explore high-end retailers' websites. It's both fun and informative.

The most upscale retailers include Neiman Marcus, Nordstrom and Saks Fifth Avenue. These department stores carry a large variety of items for everyone in the family.

They also carry luxury items for the home. If you click the filter on these sites to show "prices high to low," it will give you the most expensive items first. Then get ready to be shocked. Some of the most expensive items these retailers sell are diamonds and jewelry, genuine fur coats and designer ball gowns.

The prices for these items can easily exceed tens of thousands of dollars. An Oscar De La Renta gown is priced at nearly \$13,000 while an emerald ring goes for \$400,000.

There is also a wide variety of "fashion forward" designer items that style and cut may also surprise.

The odd shapes and colors would cause most people to shy away from these items, but some of the richest and most fashionable people obviously love to purchase them.

An example of this is an oversized Gucci plaid shirt with embroidery that costs nearly \$5,000.

A big example of "fashion forward" clothing is asymmetrical tops, dresses and skirts.

They have harsh lines and usually have cutouts in the fabric. Asymmetrical clothing is popular and frequently made by

the most high-end designers.

This type of clothing is creative and expresses individualism for people.

Altuzarra, THE ROW, Diane von Furstenberg and Cinq a sept are some of the designers who commonly release asymmetrical clothing.

On the other hand, there are always people who prefer to dress more casual and comfy.

Some of the most simple items are also sold for the most shocking prices.

A simple black T-shirt is sold for hundreds of dollars solely from the designer logo it has placed on the center of the shirt. Similarly, plain black pants or white sneakers are listed for the same staggering prices. The brand Golden Goose sells distressed shoes



starting at \$500. The shoes are made to look dirty and completely worn out.

The average person would never even consider purchasing dirty shoes, let alone for the outrageous price they are selling it at.

Though I love to gawk at these sites, I would never even think about buying something as ridiculous as those shoes or an overpriced black tee. Nowadays, it seems that the more strange something is, the more people want to buy it for obscene prices.

It is practically impossible to find an item that is inexpensive from one of these many retailers, but there is a clear difference between something that is expensive yet practical compared to something that is just flat-out overpriced and silly. ♦



## Salted cheese topping is actually sweet

### POPULAR ASIAN DRINK ADDITION TOPS THE DRINK CHARTS

isaballer



Isabelle Yang

My name is Isabelle Yang and I am a self-confessed salted cheese tea addict. While I won't go into the details of exactly how much money I've spent on these sweet and salty drinks just this past November, I will attempt to convince you to give this gourmet delicacy a try. Salted cheese drinks have been rapidly rising in popularity — especially in Asian countries like China where it first originated.

Named by CNN.com as one of the top 18 drinks China can't live without, it's clear that the appetite for salted cheese is shared by many.

Despite the widespread love of salted cheese, it's clear that the love for it has not spread evenly. Unfortunately, I'm disappointed to say that many of my closest friends have either not yet been exposed to the glory that is salted cheese drinks or have lamented its popularity.

I'll admit, the first time I heard of salted cheese drinks, my exact words followed, "Ew, who would even drink that?" But these were just the words of someone who had not yet experienced them.

Thankfully, a more adventurous friend had come along on the fateful day in which

I fell into the spiral that is my salted cheese addiction today.

After the prodding of my friend who had ordered a light oolong tea with salted cheese, I reluctantly sipped the top of the drink. In that instance, I was reborn; or perhaps, I had found the drink of 2017.

One common misconception that many skeptics have is that they believe that the salted cheese topping is quite literally made out of a melted cheese concoction.

Given that, it's understandable why some, including myself initially, would potentially think that salted cheese drinks are disgusting.

However, it's quite the contrary. In fact, I've never tried a salted cheese drink that actually included any real dairy cheese. In many tea shops that offer this delicacy, salted cheese topping is a mixture of milk foam and rock salt and is sometimes topped with matcha powder. What is created is a harmony of complementary flavors.

This euphoric experience is quite literally a scientific marvel.

According to foodnavigator.com, studies suggest that salt will increase the tongue's perception of sugar, thus explaining why salted cheese elevates the natural sweet flavor of teas that it is often paired with.

One of the most popular tea shops that offer this delicacy is Happy Lemon Cupertino. As one of the originators of the salted

cheese drink series, Happy Lemon has truly perfected the airy sweet and salty topping in addition to their refined teas.

Not only have they created multiple delicious salted cheese drink combinations, Happy Lemon — a true innovator — also offers another salted cheese variety for a Gordon Ramsay level culinary experience: tiramisu salted cheese.

The versatile tiramisu salted cheese can also be paired with more traditional teas like oolong or green tea and more "American" flavors like chocolate.

Other popular tea drink chains like 85°C and Hecha offer their own varieties of salted cheese drinks, each with another wondrous combination to offer.

The conclusion? Salted cheese is among one of the best drinks to gain popularity in 2017.

Given its success in the Bay Area, a region notable for its expertise and widespread popularity of all types of Asian tea drinks, salted cheese is here to continue draining my debit card.

Although you may be appalled by the thought of putting "cheese" in your beloved pearl milk teas, I'd still urge you to give it a try and expose yourself to the light of next level tea drinking.

(PS — If you do intend to try this drink, I'd urge you to try Happy Lemon's Light Oolong tea with Salted Cheese with 50 percent sweetness.) ♦

ALL GRAPHICS BY KAREN CHOW

### top ten

#### THINGS TO DO IN DECEMBER

**10** Keep telling yourself that you will try harder second semester. And really mean it this time.

**9** Pretend you didn't fail finals. But you can't hide it once your parents see Canvas.

**8** Watch "Home Alone." While you are home alone.

**7** Party on New Year's Eve. Dance off the calories from the cookies that Santa never ate.

**6** Sit on Santa's lap. More stable than any chair at Ikea.

**5** Make "see you next year" jokes. I haven't showered all year.

**4** Go see the new Star Wars movie with a date. No one wants to spend the break Han SOLO.

**3** Finally figure out that doing a pizza won't stop you while skiing. Italian food doesn't taste good anyways

**2** Pray that you get presents. Even though you didn't get any for others.

**1** Bake cookies for Santa. It's never too late to get off the naughty list.

>> Pranav Ahuja and Ava Hooman