



A collection of "13 word love stories" by students.

ENTERTAINMENT | 14



Can we separate the art from the artist?

SPORTS | 19



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SPEAK UP FOR CHANGE

Speakers open up, inspire at assembly

BY MathewLuo & SivaSambasivam

Standing in front of a packed gym on Tuesday, Jan. 16, senior Raquel Boales described her experience as a synchronized swimmer overcoming the limitations her paralyzed left arm posed. She was one of seven speakers at the 2018 annual Speak Up for Change assembly.

"I knew what I was saying was something personal," Boales said. "I knew that even if I didn't have my speech up with me, I could have easily gone without it."

She agreed to give the speech during Speak Up For Change special because it allowed her to share her story in a community that connected to her personally.

"To my peers, it was the first time they had heard the story in my four years at high school," Boales said. "Giving the speech to my peers helped me grow as a person, helped me realize that I don't need to hide who I am."

Another student, senior Prashant Malyala, spoke about the different steps he took to accept his African-American step-father, Greg, after his biological parents' divorce.

"I had been pretty silent about what my family was like for 11 years and I want-

ed to get that off my chest," said Malyala. "I wanted to express to other people that I care about them and that I didn't need to hide my life about them anymore."

Later that day, Malyala showed a recording of his speech to his stepfather.

"He said, 'I don't have any words to say, but thank you.' And I was like 'thank you, because you've done so much for me,'" said Malyala. "I've always said thank you for doing a nice deed once in a while, but I've never said thank you for everything, for all that you've done, thank you for being you."

Other speakers that day were senior Solomon Bailey and junior Iman Laique and teachers Daniel Wallace, Hana Chen and Ken Nguyen. The Outreach Commission of the Leadership class selected these speakers from an anonymous poll.

In addition to the assembly, the Outreach Commission also held a cultural fair consisting of different booths and activities right before lunch on Friday, Jan. 19.

"Seeing everyone's light at the end of the tunnel gives everyone a good message," Boales said. "Even if someone didn't have a remarkable change, overcoming their small or personal barrier was enough." ♦



SYNESTHESIA

A CONDITION THAT CAUSES MULTIPLE RESPONSES TO ONE STIMULUS CAN BE BOTH A GIFT, AND A CURSE

BY ElaineSun & PhoebeWang

It's little surprise that sophomore Sidney Hough hears and feels the notes in music she listens to. What is perhaps surprising is that she says she also sees colors when she listens to music.

Though she hasn't been formally diagnosed, Hough could be a synesthete, or someone with synesthesia, a condition in which stimulation of a cognitive pathway or sense leads to an involuntary experience in another sense. More

>> SYNESTHESIA on pg. 17

GRAPHIC BY OLIVIA LU

STUDENT CENTER

800 wing upgrade begins this semester

BY ElaineToh & AnanyaVadlakonda

At the start of the spring semester, the remodeling of the 800 wing into the much anticipated Student Center and Wellness Center has finally begun. Workers have already placed fences around the building, and they are beginning the demolition process.

With the plans for the building still being reviewed by the state for approval, the administration is looking for contractors to bid on the project. Robinson said that once the district officials decide on the construction company, they will be able to start actual construction.

Once work begins in the spring, Robinson anticipates it will be done by the next school year since the work is fairly minor remodeling compared to the brand new construction required for the new music building.

The focus on creating a new student center began after the completion of the new music building in August. Want-

>> RENOVATION on pg. 4

ENROLLMENT TRENDS

Numbers rise at LG, stay steady at SHS

BY AnishiPatel & AnanyaVadlakonda

The Los Gatos-Saratoga Union High School District, renowned for its top schools and high test scores, is a "prime area" for families looking to enroll their children at some of the nation's best public schools, SHS principal Paul Robinson said.

And with the growth of housing developments in that part of the district, Los Gatos High School is seeing much larger class sizes, with just over 2,000 students enrolled in the 2017-18 school year, LGHS principal Kristina Grasty said.

On the other hand, Saratoga High School's enrollment has historically run lower, at around 1,300 to 1,350 students per year.

The number of students currently at Saratoga High includes 320 seniors, 305 juniors, 370 sophomores and 340 freshmen.

Though these class sizes aren't as high as when the school reached over 1,400 students in 2012, Robinson sees some positives in having a smaller school.

"We're not so huge that classes are jam-packed, yet we're still large enough to be able to offer a lot of different

>> CLASS SIZE on pg. 5

>> what'sinside

NEWS

MAP Speaker Series

NBC Bay Area anchor Scott McGrew talks about journalism, achievement. pg. 5

OPINION

Social media

Reporters criticize over-reliance students have on social networking sites. pg. 6

SCHOOL SCOPE

Hobbies

Senior explores his own artistic potential in casual photography. pg. 15

news >> briefs

New dividers installed in some boys' bathrooms

In response to student requests, dividers between urinals were put up in three separate boys' bathrooms by the maintenance staff over winter break.

Since the installation of the new dividers, many male students have reacted positively.

"It gives me more privacy when I'm going," junior Derek Pinaï said. "It's like having your own stall in a urinal."

The idea of dividers was brought up during a Leadership class meeting last year when members were discussing what areas the school can improve, with input from each class. That began the process to have the improvement made.

Administrators and the Leadership class will continue to advance students' requests for refinements on campus, assistant principal Brian Thompson said.

"We want to continue to keep our communication with our students," he said.

— Lina Kim

'Glass Menagerie' wraps up its showings; 'Servant of Two Masters' to show this week

On Jan. 20-22, one of two student productions, "The Glass Menagerie," directed by senior Hannah Julie Yoon, was staged in the ThermoDrama Center.

The production pulled in over \$1,000, even though it only ran for one weekend. The cast included juniors Mateo Morganstern and Shasta Ganti, senior Ania Kranz, and sophomore Liviya Katz.

This week, the second student production, directed by senior Amelia Berardo, will debut. "The Servant of Two Masters" is a story about a goofy servant who takes on two masters in order to earn more money.

"I read 'Servant' as a freshman in Drama 2 as a project regarding different theatrical styles and eras. I really enjoyed the script I read," Berardo said. "I found the characters to be incredibly lovable and intriguing, and I thought the plot was hilarious."

"The Servant of Two Masters" will be showing Feb. 2-4 in the ThermoDrama Center.

In addition to the student productions, auditions for the Spring Musical "Mary Poppins" have taken place, with rehearsals soon to come.

— Colleen Feng and Anishi Patel

Dance team begins competitions at regionals

The SHS Dance Team placed second in jazz, fourth in lyrical, third in hip hop and second in extra small at their first competition at Valley Christian High School on Jan. 20.

According to coach Kaitlyn Landeza, getting feedback from judges has helped the girls substantially.

The team's last minute hip hop choreography led them to a time crunch in preparation for their first competition.

At the next competition on Jan. 27, the team presented two solos, competed by juniors Alexandra Li and Amy Tang, winning second in extra small, second in lyrical, second in jazz and fourth in hip-hop.

"I was excited to perform a solo, but I was also kind of nervous because some of the girls from other schools are insanely good," Li said.

— Francesca Chu and Amy Tang

>> picturethis



Courtesy of DEBORA TROXELL

UNDER THE SEA! >> Junior Michael Linney dives underwater during the Santa Catalina trip on Jan. 12-14. AP Biology and Marine Biology students and teachers observed the diverse marine life and organisms of the island, while being able to participate in hiking, snorkeling and kayaking.

ADMINISTRATION

New administrative assistant joins school's guidance team

BY ElaineToh & RahulVadlakonda

In mid-November, as students were preparing for the final stretch of first semester, new administrative assistant Sarah Christeson joined the Saratoga Guidance Department, taking the place of Bonnie Sheikh, a longtime employee who left the position to pursue another job at Santa Clara University.

In her new role, Christeson helps organize and orchestrate the PSAT and AP testing, publicize scholarship events and assist students that apply for scholarships.

Before joining the school's staff, Christeson worked for the Cupertino Union School District's (CUSD) Student Assignment Department, where she helped register incoming families for upcoming school years, managed student overflow lists and the open enrollment process/list and fulfilled many more roles for the district.

Though she appreciated her previous job, Christeson said she wanted to interact with students as

she had done before because she enjoyed "helping a student progress and accomplish goals."

For Christeson, her love for aiding students stems from her position as an older sister to her siblings and cousins. "I would sit them down, give them paper and crayons and have them practice their letters, numbers, addition and subtraction," she said.

Upon entering her then high school, Christeson continued to practice her teaching skills by instructing children how to swim and play the piano. During these lessons, she fully discovered her love for helping children.

"I loved seeing my students get that 'ah-ha' moment when they finally understood what I was teaching or showing them," Christeson said. "It felt good to positively influence others' lives."

Christeson said she was drawn to work at Saratoga High due to its

welcoming and reverent environment.

"Students are respectful, staff members go above and beyond to help and parents are actively involved," she said.

One of her co-workers, guidance counselor Alinna Satake, expressed praise for Christeson.

"[Christeson] is super organized and jumped right in, handling a variety of different tasks and learning on the fly without turning a hair," Satake said. "She is a details person, which is something we really need in guidance when we turn out so many materials to the community, so I'm grateful for her help, especially with registration stuff."

Ultimately, Christeson is optimistic about her new role. "There's nothing more rewarding than helping someone else and seeing that you changed [their] life, no matter if it is big or small," Christeson said.



Christeson

MOCK TRIAL

Falcons split first two matches of season

BY KatherineZhou

"Someone should KILL idiots like you." You heard the defendant admit to having said those very words to the victim merely four days prior to the murder," junior Khiara Berkowitz-Sklar, Mock Trial prosecution lead attorney, addressed the scoring attorneys at the Santa Clara County Courthouse.

As part of the second round of competition of the Santa Clara County Mock Trial competition on Jan. 25, Berkowitz-Sklar delivered a closing argument asking to condemn the defendant, the fictional character Casey Davidson.

This round of competition against Prospect High School, an accomplished team with four Santa Clara County Championships, turned out to be a decisive 462-360

loss for the Falcons — 56 percent to 44 percent. The defendant was found not guilty by the judge.

Attorney coach Mary McDonnell admitted that the loss was somewhat predictable considering Prospect's high-caliber and aggressive team. Still, she was proud of the Falcons' performance.

"I think our attorneys were simply amazing in their professionalism and they didn't let the other team get to them, and they didn't let it rattle them," McDonnell said.

The Prospect team, which meets biweekly for two hours each, was extremely prepared and well rehearsed.

"I think the number of objections was difficult, and I think that some of the objections they're making weren't correct, so it was hard to respond," McDonnell said.

The Falcons had a different result when their defense team competed on Jan. 23 in a close match against Valley Christian. The Saratoga defense got a not guilty verdict, winning 518-502, or 50.78 percent to 49.22 percent.

"For most trials, you can usually tell which side was more prepared, but it was really hard to tell," said sophomore Christina Xiao, a prosecution attorney who watched the trial. "However, after the closing argument, I felt like we would win."

The prosecution team was scheduled to face BASIS's practice team on Jan. 30, and the defense team was to compete against an unnamed opponent on Feb. 1.

(Due to printing deadlines, the Falcon is unable to cover the results of these matches in its print edition.)

FALCON FOCUS



Courtesy of SELINA YANG

Sophomore Selina Yang paints a mural in Nepal during a 10-day project over winter break organized by IvyMax's Global Philanthropy Leadership Internship Program.

Bringing color into the lives of children in Nepal

BY ConnieLiang & VivienZhang

As she put down her paintbrushes, sophomore Selina Yang watched while the children surrounding her ran circles around the school grounds, their eyes shining with admiration as they watched their once dirty, white-plastered walls turn into beautifully colored murals.

From the summer of 2015, students from all over California have been able to travel to Nepal with an organization called IvyMax with its Global Philanthropy Leadership Internship Program, aiming to provide students with a chance to explore creative ways to impact the society and global environment in the developing world.

This year, Yang decided to participate in a 10-day project, where she would refurbish schools and donate supplies to children in Nepal, figuring she would rather spend her otherwise uneventful winter break by taking part in a meaningful experience.

On Christmas night, Yang met 17 other high school students from all over the country at San Francisco International Airport and boarded a flight to Guangzhou, China. From there, the group met seven other volunteers and flew to Kathmandu, Nepal. They stayed with host families that taught the students all about local cultures and respect for their customs. The cultural difference initially surprised Yang, who said that even the most insignificant aspects to daily life were starkly different.

"Pedestrians like us had to be extremely careful just walking along the road, because sometimes cars or motorcycles would come up so close that they literally brushed you," Yang said.

Every morning, the students began the day at 6 a.m. by taking yoga classes on the roof from a local instructor. They would then leave at 8 a.m. and take an hour-long bus ride to a small village school outside

the city to begin their volunteer work.

Upon arriving, all the school children gathered at the entrance, curious yet eager to welcome the volunteers. The children showered them with garlands made from Kathmandu's native Marigold flowers for them to wear as a symbol of their hospitality. Senior Catherine Zhang, who went on a similar trip over summer, gathered a group of five students to paint their creative visions. While some painted abstract art, Zhang's group combined the different aspects of American and Nepalese culture, showing how they intertwined.

"I've never done anything like this before," Zhang said. "It was a really great experience, especially because we got to form relationships with the students who would come outside during their breaks to paint with us."

The Nepal school children were extremely grateful. On one particular occasion, the group visited a small school on top of a mountain.

"We each personally delivered jackets to each student there, and the thanks we got was overwhelmingly emotional," Yang said. "A few of us teared up."

After seeing an item as simple as a jacket create so much joy, Yang re-evaluated how wasteful America is. During the trip, Yang found it difficult to adjust to third-world living standards — unclean tap water, recurring power outages, spotty wifi and a lack of air conditioning or heating.

"It really made me appreciate the things that we have here that we don't even think about or just take for granted," Yang said.

Even though these children lived and studied in hardscrabble conditions, their bright and light-hearted outlook on life gave Yang a more grateful attitude.

"The energy and enthusiasm of everyone there was nothing I'd experienced before and was incredibly inspiring," Yang said. "I am definitely going back in the summer."

FALCON FOCUS

Bitcoin buyer's advice: Wait until it's cheaper

BY HowardTang & CalliaYuan

Following its steady increase in popularity over the past decade, cryptocurrency caught the attention of investors all over the world, even attracting attention from junior Abhinav Tumu.

Cryptocurrency is a digital currency in which encryption techniques provide security and make it immune to government manipulation and interference.

One of these cryptocurrencies has emerged as the leader: Bitcoin.

In its early days, Bitcoin experienced many minor rises and falls in its price. The price of each Bitcoin, from its creation in January 2009 until May 2017, never surpassed the \$1,500 mark.

However, during the past year, Bitcoin changed from a normal cryptocurrency to hot commodity, increasing its value immensely.

Starting last summer, Tumu began by mining cryptocurrencies on his own. "Mining" allows the idle time of powerful computers to be used to earn a small amount of cryptocurrency by running a certain program for a number of hours.

Tumu said that he has been interested in cryptocurrencies for seven to eight months now. He used to mine a cryptocurrency called Ethereum last summer, which led him into investing into Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies like Litecoin.

Although he was able to make around \$90 through mining, a higher electricity bill to power his computer lowered the actual profit margin. Tumu soon stopped

mining cryptocurrencies since he said he no longer had time to "let my computer run and use all the power to mine," and because mining wasn't very profitable in small amounts.

Be careful because you don't want to waste your money and lose it."



JUNIOR Abhinav Tumu

Relying on experts' predictions that a single Bitcoin would be worth \$1 million by 2020, Tumu decided to start buying.

"I bought Bitcoin in the November and December of 2017 because I thought it would be a good investment to make, since it was very popular at the time," Tumu said. "I could make some quick bucks and cash."

Although his goal was to make profit, Tumu regretted his choice later. The coin soon hit its peak of \$19,000 at the end of 2017 and hit a period of decline.

Now, in the aftermath of the cryptocurrency frenzy, Bitcoin's value has been reduced to around \$11,085, as of Jan. 26.

"I would recommend to people: wait until it goes down even more, and then buy Bitcoin because it is a good investment, but be careful and don't invest recklessly because you don't want to waste your money and lose it," Tumu said.

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Top Story

What does it mean to be a sophomore? on pg. 16

Top Picture

Senior Prashant Malyala talks about barriers within his family and how he overcame them for Speak Up For Change on Jan. 15.

FALCON // FREDERICK KIM

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E-COMMERCE

Amazon continues to expand into student marketplace

BY Elaine Fan

Lined with displays of Kindle Fires and Amazon Echos, Amazon Books is no ordinary bookstore. There isn't a single price tag in sight due to fluctuating online prices; rather, each title is labeled with ratings and customer reviews, and scanners are distributed throughout the one-floor building.

The Amazon Books of Santana Row opened its doors last August, continuing a series of 13 brick-and-mortar stores from the e-commerce giant. With its exploration of creating physical stores and its purchase of Whole Foods in August, the company has faced controversy surrounding its possible threat as a monopoly, but its dominance over the market has not faltered — at least not at Saratoga High.

retailer in the world, standing firm against criticism of the ethics of its business practices. Accusers point to Amazon's anti-competitive or monopolistic behavior, often calling for antitrust action to combat its dominance.

"I can see why people would regard it as being monopolistic in the sense that it's now buying other companies under their name," senior Jishing Yu said. "I think it's part of Amazon's business to branch out to other areas in products, but buying other companies does seem to cross a line."

As Amazon powers through the retail world, major bookstores such as Barnes and Noble continue to see steeper declines in shares and both in-store and online sales, often leading to store closures.

While eight Barnes and Noble stores closed in the year 2017, 10 new Amazon Bookstores sprang into existence across the country. San Jose's 27,700-square foot Eastridge Barnes and Noble closed its doors this January, putting an end to monthly game nights, poetry open mics, author signings and various children's events.

The future of smaller local bookstores, such as Saratoga's Book-Go-Round, appears uncertain.

According to manager Kristin Gragnola, the 35-year-old, non-profit used bookstore in Downtown Saratoga has yet to suffer the effects of Amazon's business strategies or its new bookstores, as it is still selling the same

number of books as in the past and is still getting large donations of books.

"We'll probably have bookstores for at least another 10 years, but even then, it's hard to say because everything is changing so very quickly," Gragnola said. "Everything is kind of a guess on how Amazon is eventually going to affect us all. They could eventually drive us all out of business. Who knows?"

Like other local bookstores, the Saratoga Book-Go-Round also sells a few more valuable books on platforms such as Amazon and Ebay.

"Most people come into store looking for an inexpensive book, and so when we get more valuable books, they just don't have a huge market and they may be more specialized," Gragnola said. "And so for those books, we put them on Ebay so that person who's looking for a very specific book would be able to find it."

The rise of online retail and the high rate of student usage of Amazon services amidst anti-competition and monopolistic controversies is not without reason, according to some.

For junior Joseph Li, online shopping proves to have multiple advantages over traditional stores.

"Physical stores might not have what you're looking for," Li said, "and on Amazon you can find similar stuff without talking to people. So less human contact, yet better product suggestion."

Students can also find particular niche products in online catalogs that are not usually stocked in local stores. For example, as a Christmas present to himself, Li purchased a bar of soap with a dollar bill trapped in the center in order to help himself "practice patience." Likewise, Yu was able to order packages of Lucky Charms from the site, but with only the marshmallows.

After high school, student usage increases even further as students move into college dorms or off-campus apartments. Often lacking a convenient form of transportation or sufficient time to travel to stores, college students can order from Amazon for considerably cheaper and find its familiar cardboard boxes at a secure pickup site within one or two days. A Prime subscription can also provide students with easier access to textbooks.

"In college, there's rarely ever time to go to the store to get basic staple items and small things I constantly need," 2016 alumna Elizabeth Li said. "So why would I ever waste the time or transportation fees to get to a store when I can just order from Amazon Prime?" ♦



GRAPHIC BY AMITH GALIVANCHÉ

["Amazon has] less human contact, yet better product suggestion."



JUNIOR Joseph Li

In a sample of 66 students, 47 percent reported having used the site several times a month, with 15 percent reporting purchasing items from Amazon several times a week.

More than 90 percent of respondents said they have a Prime subscription, which provides customers quick, free deliveries for millions of items on the site. In addition, Prime gives customers access to numerous books, movies and TV shows.

As a result, the 23-year-old company has continued to grow as the largest Internet

RENOVATION

continued from pg. 1

ing to continue campus renovations to fulfill the ultimate goal of meeting the needs of both students and staff alike, the school's leadership came up with the idea to remodel the heart of the school's campus, the 800 wing.

Previously, the 800 wing housed old music rooms and drama supplies. It also held the copy room and a lab for the Media Arts Program (MAP). (The copy room will continue to be in the 800 wing).

Realizing the school could use an area where students can comfortably de-stress and enjoy themselves, Robinson and the other administrators felt that converting this space into the Student Center and Wellness Center was the best use of remaining Measure E bond money.

One of the many uses of the Student Center will be a new meeting space for ASB and other Leadership class students; the class currently meets in the Team Room.

The facility will also house several smaller conference rooms where students can work together, Robinson said.

Additionally, the administration is relocating CASSY to the building and aiming to make it a Wellness Center for all students.

"It will be a nice place for people to go and just chill and be quiet and get some hot tea," Robinson said, "and just have a nice little quiet calming place in the center."

Though CASSY counselor Kaitlin Eastland likes the program's current location in West Wing 2, she believes that being in a more central area in the school will increase accessibility for the students and help students further understand the importance of their mental health and well-being.

"We hope that this new centralized location will promote further destigmatization of mental health and become a regularly accessed resource of support and connection," Eastland said.

In order to fulfill the goal of accessibility, the school plans to extend the building a few

feet closer to the top of the quad steps, creating an entrance that will help students move in and out easily.

"[The administrators and I] wanted it to be kind of an extension of that whole quad area," Robinson said. "So, we're working with the contractors and architects to create a collapsible wall — a wall that we call peel back in some way so there is a free flow between the quad and that building."

The school also decided to put a gender neutral bathroom in the back of the 800 wing. Robinson said that this additional bathroom will both keep the school in accordance with the current laws and "give students a safe space."

MAP Annex moves ahead

In addition to the remodeling of the 800 building, the school is still finishing work on the new MAP Annex, which is located in the previous music building.

The administration is planning on permanently moving a few classes that had previously been held in room 304, such as Digital Photography and Animated Graphics, to the old choir room in the MAP Annex. Robinson believes that the move might happen as soon as early February.

As a result, room 304, where SHSTV and digital photography are now taught, will be opened up to host non-MAP courses. By moving all MAP-related classes to the new annex, Media Arts classes will no longer be scattered throughout campus.

"It's really beneficial for the MAP Program and it's opening up some more opportunities," MAP junior Maddie Stuart said. "I know that MAP Leadership is also working on getting another committee within MAP to provide more opportunities for students who work with costumes and props."

Though the MAP Annex is mainly used by the Media Arts Program, other classes will have the opportunity to use this space.

"When you provide the space, people start changing some things they are doing to be able to take advantage of the space," Robinson said. "I think everyone is really going to utilize it from time to time." ♦

CLUBS

Interfaith allows religions to have voice on campus

BY Vivien Zhang & Jayne Zhou

When senior Adam Fayad founded Interfaith last year, he sought to provide a space on campus where students could come together to discuss religion and its place in society.

"We want to promote tolerance in a society that is very intolerant at the moment," Fayad said. "In the United States, there's a lot of polarization of different beliefs — religious beliefs especially. We want to create an environment where there's free and open discussions so that we can promote understanding among the student body."

The club meets Thursdays in history teacher Jerry Sheehy's room. Before each meeting, club participants vote on one topic to discuss in depth, most of which relate to

current events.

One frequent theme across many of these discussions is whether religion should be judged by its followers' actions or the religious principles themselves.

In the future, Fayad hopes to hold more activities and have more speakers in. So far, the club has hosted two Muslim speakers and one Christian speaker. Fayad wants to expand to more beliefs such as Hinduism, Sikhism and agnosticism.

Fayad takes pride in seeing the club's impact on campus. With around 25 students attending each meeting, discussions have become very widespread.

The fact that he hears students having debates over the topics brought up during club meetings outside of school hours and

meeting times only further inspires him to continue pursuing his goal of welcoming new ideas from all around.

"Just hearing people talk is already a positive, because discussion is something that becomes widespread," Fayad said.



Fayad

Junior Rohan Pandey enjoys attending Interfaith because of its welcoming, open space. Unlike other club meetings that feel like listening to class presentations, Interfaith is more interactive and takes more of a Socratic seminar-like approach to discuss religion, philosophy and politics, Pandey said. The club doesn't focus on

any one religion, but instead takes turns discussing the points of view of different faiths that the students in the meeting follow.

"Quite a few of my opinions have been changed as a result of spending time at Interfaith," Pandey said. "The club also has a mutual understanding that all the participants are friends regardless of what disagreements they have, which is something that I think is important but society as a whole right now is definitely lacking."

As time passes, Fayad hopes that the club can continue exploring more controversial topics such as abortion.

"The most memorable thing about these club meetings is that we often end up having heated discussions, but people don't get angry and nothing turns into disrespect — we have heated conversations in a good way," Fayad said. "People are really proud of what they believe in and when given the chance to express it, I think they should speak their mind." ♦

MAP SPEAKER SERIES



FALCON // ELICIA YE

NBC Bay Area anchor Scott McGrew discusses his experiences working in the journalism and media industries. As an anchor on the night shift, his day starts at 2:15 a.m. on weekdays; he often misses dinner plans with friends and family due to his unusual schedule.

NBC anchor Scott McGrew encourages curiosity

BY Elicia Ye

"Why do some locomotives face backwards as the train moves down the tracks?"

That was one of the questions Scott McGrew, a business/technology anchor and reporter for NBC Bay Area for 20 years, asked as he engaged his audience of 35 during the MAP Speaker Series on Jan. 17 in the MAP Annex (Old Music Building).

Dressed in a white dress shirt and dark tan khakis and his script in one hand, he directed the students' attention toward a published picture of an ordinary locomotive, as if challenging them to unravel the unspoken secrets hidden beneath the steel gray tracks.

"Freight trains often use more than one locomotive to pull the train. I assume it's because of the weight. I have noticed oftentimes the second or third locomotive is pointed backwards and wonder why that is," McGrew later elaborated in a post-presentation email interview. In face of many complicated explanations, he discovered a simple one: It is difficult to turn a locomotive around on the tracks.

"You can't just pick it up like a toy. So when they are hooking trains together, they don't bother to turn it around," he said. "It works just as well running backwards as it does facing forwards, so they just don't bother to fix it."

This example, as McGrew explained, is something that few people notice or give attention to. Journalists, however, are "inherently super, super curious" and seek answers to questions like this, prompting exploration about topics generally overlooked in the world. "If you're a curious reporter, you must find out," he told students. His view of modern media and the need for those in the industry to adapt resonated with students.

"I thought it was all very interesting but also extremely important to hear, especially

from a specialist in that field," said senior Alec Kruka, who helped organize the event.

McGrew, who attended Iowa State University and worked his first job as a cameraman for \$250/week, knew from a young age that journalism was his true calling. Claiming to be "terrible in print journalism for writing short articles," he used this shortcoming to his advantage and turned to TV broadcasting.

Despite the minimalist approach broadcast journalism takes, the job itself entails long-term commitment to an unusual schedule. He also hosts "Press: Here," a weekly round table featuring Silicon Valley CEOs and entrepreneurs, on Sundays at 9 a.m. With a schedule that rarely matches up with that of his friends, McGrew often misses out on outings like dinner plans because he is usually in bed by 5:30 p.m.

McGrew isn't the only one working unusual hours. A 300-person staff is constantly buzzing with ideas and activity, working different shifts in the studio for production of different parts throughout the day.

Most of the staffers studied journalism for skill-based basics and a liberal arts subject, usually English or Political Science, that prepared them for real-world occurrences as journalists.

Although not every experience entailed "good" news, McGrew gained exposure to a variety of perspectives and knowledge.

Since moving to the Bay Area in 1998, he has gained insight into how "media directs the national conversation of STEM." As the Silicon Valley is "small" in that everyone is connected to each other, very few people are changing the world in a huge way, rendering it analogous to the "middle of Florence, Italy, during the Renaissance."

Ultimately, McGrew's attraction to journalism was not motivated by money.

"Make the money, don't let the money make you," he said, quoting MacKlemore & Ryan Lewis. "It's attitude and passion." ♦

CLASS SIZE

continued from pg. 1

things," Robinson said.

However, recent SHS class sizes are larger than anticipated. For example, the current freshman class has 340 students, but their graduating class at Redwood Middle School had around 280 students. Robinson attributes the difference primarily to enrollees from private middle schools and from overseas who are looking for high-quality public school education.

The freshmen coming to SHS from private schools have been a welcome surprise in recent years and "add so much to the culture of our school," Robinson said.

Increasing numbers in the current freshman and sophomore classes,

compared to the smaller junior and senior classes, likely suggest an increased rate of enrollment in years to come.

Similarly, Los Gatos can also expect growth in enrollment in the coming years, but likely at a much faster pace.

Judging by the school's current student body of 2,037, Robinson estimates Los Gatos will reach more than 2,300 students in coming years.

Grasty attributes Los Gatos' high enrollment to a combination of factors, including the district's desirable location and LGHS's extracurricular programs and sports, as well as the inventory and cost of homes available for sale.

"We currently have several teachers who share classrooms and move rooms between periods," Grasty said, "so this added space will be super helpful for our growing student body as we move forward in our planning for the future." ♦

WEATHER

Unusual winter weather keeps students guessing

BY Colleen Feng & Alex Wang

On the first day back from winter break, students were greeted with the pitter patter of a downpour. The rainwater dripping down windows and overflowing gutters signaled the start of a season of windshield wipers, umbrellas and oversized raincoats.

This winter started out as a mystery, as meteorologists questioned whether there would be large amounts of rainfall similar to the previous winter, or if it would be dry and warm like two years before.

Sophomore Oscar Khowong said the weather has caused him difficulties, but he likes it sometimes as well.

"I get to school later because my parents drive more slowly in the rain," Khowong said. "I also have to carry more jackets."

Although he knows the gloomy weather is usually linked to sadness, Khowong said the rainy winter weather has not affected his mood in any negative ways.

Early winter presented weather that was both warmer and much drier than average. December was historically one of the driest Decembers on record. Horrific fires throughout Southern California proved the extent of the dryness.

Just as the new year had begun, the wildfires were replaced by mudslides, plaguing California with more misfortune.

The weather has also been affecting the commute of teachers living in the Santa Cruz area. Last year, many had to call in substitutes when mudslides would not allow them to get to school. English teacher Amy Keys is one of the teachers who experienced the severe traffic jams.

"A lot of our colleagues were stuck on backroads and had to take alternative routes, but we ended up having to come back home," said Keys. "And later that week we made it over the hill, but we couldn't get home. That happened on four occasions for six weeks, so it was rough and always very slow and dangerous."

According to Keys, this year has been comparatively easy. The hills on Highway 17 have been repaired and reinforced in several places to prevent landslides, although no sustained heavy rains similar to last year have occurred yet.

"There haven't been heavy rains yet but just the high volume of traffic means that there are continuously accidents, which slow everything down," Keys said.

To protect against the weather, the city has stand-by-staff do deal with downed trees, mayor Howard Miller said. If a storm breaks loose in the city, they will go out and clear road, and work with PG&E to make sure everything is safe.

In addition, he said, the city provides free self-serve sand bags to all residents at the end of Allendale Ave. in front of the city Public Works Corporation Yard.

The city also has long-term plans to protect against storms, Miller said. They have projects to repair city retaining walls, improve the storm drain system and fix cracks in road. These projects help prevent major issues when weather does hit the city.

Because the number of back-to-back storms has been less than last year, there have not been as many major hardships.

"But there are still three months more of storm season," Miller said. ♦

World's first trillionaire will be an AI entrepreneur - Mark Cuban

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Students should not entirely rely on misleading Naviance statistics

The college and career readiness platform Naviance provides a useful data set for students to determine where their GPAs and standardized test scores lie in relation to others who have gone to Saratoga High.

But no one should see Naviance as an all-seeing oracle that can foresee all the complicated decisions that college admissions officers will make. It's far from a simple numbers game.

Fortunately — or maybe unfortunately — the admissions process takes into account essays, extracurricular activities and recommendations on top of scores into account when deciding whether or not to accept students.

By putting too much faith in Naviance's score scattergram, students may overestimate their chances of getting into elite schools.

For example, a student with SATs and GPAs that score considerably higher than the averages for a college might feel inclined to believe that they are a shoe-in for acceptance only to later receive a rejection letter.

To make matters worse, reporting to Naviance is not mandatory or regulated. Students have the option of saying whether or not they were accepted into a particular college, meaning that those who might have been denied or waitlisted can appear as an accepted student on Naviance's student graph. And accepted students who opt out of Naviance reporting will not appear at all. Last year, a few seniors decided to pretend they were admitted to certain prestigious universities, deliberately

throwing the entire graph off.

For a highly sought after school like Stanford University (with around 77 applicants this year alone from the senior class), which admits only a handful of SHS students in the best of years, an extra acceptance or rejection on the Naviance graph has an amplified magnitude that ultimately skews the average scores of admitted applicants.

Put simply, Naviance, which is primarily useful in telling students their chances of getting into college in terms of their statistics, has serious flaws that undercut its reliability.

Furthermore, Naviance tries to assess students' academic interests and the possible majors they can pursue through just two tests.

One of those tests that they administer strikes a similarity to the Myers-Briggs test, a multiple choice personality test that assigns people into one of 16 different categories; unfortunately, although the test sounds intuitive and useful in theory, it's predicated on pseudo-scientific studies that are often methodically unsound and inconsistent.

Statistically, the Myers-Briggs test fails to accurately provide results too, with test takers having a 50 percent chance of falling into a different category just five weeks after taking the test.

Students should not confidently entrust deciding something as important as their college major and career interests to a faulty personality test that gives them a binary choice — students can only choose one of two answers on Naviance's version of the test.



The further argument that Naviance offers a starting point for students to explore their interests is also invalid. The other test asks students if they like to “build kitchen cabinets” or “guard money in an armored car,” giving students the three choices of like, dislike and unsure. It's equally risky for students to decide what majors and careers they want to pursue in the future with these oddly specific questions that don't really give students the option of submitting a detailed answer.

There are, admittedly, some merits to Naviance. The site offers a list of possible scholarships students can apply for and provide basic information about colleges such as tuition and gradu-

ation rates. But this information can be found elsewhere on the internet; Naviance just compiles all this information onto one webpage that students can easily navigate.

As most seniors eventually learn, they should not rely too much on Naviance when determining what colleges are reaches, targets and safeties. The average GPAs and SAT scores Naviance provides are inaccurate and misleading.

For those who are now receiving their early decision or early action decisions, please remember to accurately submit your results to Naviance so that this tool can become more useful and accurate for future graduating classes. ♦

Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

Editors-in-chief Claire Rhee
Opinion Editor Austin Wang
Reporter Victor Liu

The Falcon staff voted 39-0 in support of this article.

Tutoring programs are a waste of money

By Mathew Luo

Many Saratoga families believe that tutoring is the key to academic success.

The myth of the efficacy and even necessity of overpriced tutoring has penetrated deeply into local academic culture.

According to IBISWorld, the American tutoring industry had a market size of \$11 billion in 2017, over 10 times its size in 2001.

This growth was largely associated to the opinion that private tutoring is necessary to pick up the slack that public education is failing to provide.

In the Bay Area, the desire for good grades and academic achievement has likewise rapidly swelled the prices and availability of local tutoring in the past couple of decades.

The most often attended programs are STEM contest prep and SAT programs, which often charge over \$50 an hour for group lessons.

These programs justify their prices with tales of their students' successes. They make wild boasts, implying that their program was the sole reason for their students' achievements in

both standardized testing and college acceptances. Yet despite this arrogance, their results seem to indicate that their programs are worth the often inordinate amounts they charge.

Their teaching methods indicate otherwise. Students who attend these programs don't receive much instruction — they receive coerced practice.

The “teaching” at these programs is often limited to a couple of tips and tricks or perhaps the narration of a chapter in a textbook.

With such limited instruction, the only great benefit that these programs provide is an incentive and place to practice. The greatest — and, really, the only — beneficiaries are the students who practice better and harder in such intensely controlled environments.

Some programs even drop the facade of instruction entirely. They sell themselves as “test preparation” programs and make it clear that they charge students only for their practice time. In essence, students pay exorbitant tuition fees to take a test which they could just as easily find on the Internet.

To be fair, the coerced prac-

tice works to an extent. It forces the student to learn, creating the illusion that the program is truly making a difference. The reality is that such practice would have had the same effect, with or without the program.

If good instruction was the drawing factor of these programs, they would have been out of business long ago. But the promise of good instruction is a myth that is hard to uphold when offering a 40-person large group class.

The “teaching” at these programs is often limited to a couple of tips and tricks.

Yet, students still attend these programs, despite their questionable instructional value. They are driven by any number of things — a culture prizing academic success, or a desire to learn or even an external force coercing them to attend.

But one thing binds these drives together: the belief in

the necessity of a slave-driver mentality to foster achievement. Families have spun the ridiculousness of these programs into a virtue.

Other benefits that can be gained from these programs fall short and are almost non-considerations when parents choose these programs. Peers to work with and aggregated practice materials, the two greatest secondary benefits, are plentiful and easy to find at little to no cost whatsoever.

The propagation of the belief in the necessity of tutoring programs lies in the myth that children who do not have the drive for academic success must have it driven into them.

The businesses survive only because they provide what parents want: visible results through forced practice, no matter the price.

The truth is that most students who scored well after going through a tutoring program could have scored equally well without it if they had the discipline to study on their own.

In the meantime, parents would have saved thousands of dollars they didn't need to spend. ♦

Rap's drug glorification harmful to listeners

By Jayne Zhou & Connie Liang

On the night of Nov. 15, hundreds of thousands of shocked fans logged onto social media only to be flooded with a wave of horror. Popular rapper Lil Peep had died.

Instagram flooded with posts captioned “R.I.P Lil Peep” as a tribute to the deceased rapper, whose demise came at the hands of a lethal cocktail of drugs including fentanyl, Xanax, marijuana, cocaine, Tramadol, hydrocodone, generic Dilaudid, oxycodone and oxymorphone, the majority of them being prescription drugs.

Despite the clear negative effects of pharmaceutical drug abuse, ABC News reported in 2017 a sixfold increase in drug use in the last two decades. This trend in turn created a dramatic increase in positive portrayals of drug abuse in media — especially in hip-hop.

Popular, influential hip-hop artists continue to promote their own pattern of abuse to their fans through their song lyrics and actions. In recent years, pop culture has introduced a new wave of hip hop artists such as Future, Migos, Lil Uzi Vert, 21 Savage and Lil Xan, several of whom regularly rap about drug culture in their tracks. This glorification has had a huge effect on these artists' primary audience: teenagers and young adults.

A 2006 study conducted by the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation of more than 1,200 students ages 15-25 found that there was a significant correlation between students who reported listening to hip-hop and rap music and aggressive behavior and substance use.

Another survey found that 38.2 percent of drug overdoses were by abuse of prescription drugs. The recent influx of prescription drug references is a worrying trend because,



Rapper Lil Yachty poses for a picture during his “Teenage Emotions” album release tour.

unlike traditional illegal drugs, many abuseable medicinal drugs are relatively easy to obtain.

Today, obtaining drugs can be as easy as having a friend lend you a bottle of their prescription drugs. Drugs are easily accessible to students who seek them.

Listening to music often offers teenagers an escape from the stress of daily life, but when using drugs becomes normalized, who isn't to say a teenager in want of a relaxing break won't decide to follow in their artist's footsteps?

The result of influential rappers talking about popping this pill or sippin' that lean is the validation of drug usage to a platform of easily manipulated and vulnerable listeners.

While some of these artists deny that they promote drug abuse, their songs clearly promote getting high. For example, Lil Xan claims the aim of his music is to influence listeners to stay sober as he was once

addicted to Xanax. His most popular song “Betrayed” details how his reliance on the drug ultimately backfired and “betrayed” a normal and healthy lifestyle.

Although this particular song is a cautionary tale that may sway listeners from making the same mistakes, the culture Lil Xan claims to embody contradicts with the majority of his other songs.

In his song “Slingshot,” he goes on to say, “I don't pop f----- xans, I might pop a norco.” While Lil Xan does say he knows better than to abuse Xanax, he immediately continues to conjure up another viable option for a similar high.

The worst part of it is, not only is he encouraging another drug, but it's a prescription drug. Substituting one drug for another doesn't minimize the overarching theme listeners take from Xan's music, which is that drugs are OK and that even if you don't take Xanax there is always another option. Cer-

tainly, not every rapper should automatically be labelled as a prescription drug addict. Artists like Lil Yachty stay sober, because they recognize the danger of drugs and want to promote staying sober.

Often, listeners actually misinterpret the artists' lyrics. Another artist who condemns drug and alcohol abuse is Kendrick Lamar. In one of his most famous songs, “Swimming Pools (Drank),” he rhymes about finding the inner strength to resist pressure to “get a swimming pool full of liquor, then you dive in it.”

Although he is trying to spread a message of sobriety against alcohol abuse, many listeners misinterpret his lyrics as encouragement to start drinking. These misinterpretations are only indicative of a larger problem: Listeners have become so accustomed to substance abuse due to the sheer prevalence in the culture that they automatically perceive all songs to condone drugs and drinking.

Certainly, not every teen who listens to rap music abuses or is tempted to abuse drugs. Many listen to rap music and have no trouble going about their daily lives without experiencing the temptation of illicit substance abuse. However, even if the teen knows better than to try it, the fact that drug abuse is still accepted and widely prevalent on the music platform is assurance and validation to the entire base of fans that drugs are OK.

This casual encouragement of substances that ought to be shunned needs to stop, and instead of talking about using this drug and that, more artists should take the lead in creating a culture in which drugs are shunned and cautioned against. Lil Peep's tragic passing should serve as a wake-up call. Heartbreak and tales of tragedy are and always will be inherent if the pervasive, drug-infested rap culture of today doesn't change. ♦

Standardized test scores don't define our characters

By Amy Tang

“What did you get on the SAT?”

“I did well.”

“Yeah, but what did you get?”

If I don't tell you my score when you ask, it means that I don't want to. And just because I don't want to tell doesn't necessarily mean that I did badly or that I'm ashamed of what I earned.

After checking my score from the August SAT, I was ecstatic. When I arrived at school, I met one of my friends in the parking lot, and he asked me what I got. Not seeing any reason not to tell, I told him my score and he replied with an enthusiastic “Me too!” We high-fived and went to our respective classes.

But as the day went on and as I ran into classmates and friends who had not done as well as they wanted to, I decided to keep my mouth shut about my score.

I knew how disheartening it was to feel incompetent after hearing how certain other people scored on a test. I knew how badly it hurt to feel stupid, despite knowing that I'm not (not in the educational sense anyway).

I thought little of the issue until recently, when PSAT scores came out. Just the other day, my mom asked me, “How did ___ do on her PSAT?” I asked her why she wanted to know, and she replied nonchalantly, “Oh because she got ___ on her SAT. Isn't she good at standardized test taking?”

I wasn't even surprised that my mom knew my friends' scores.

It has become a competition for some parents to share their kids' scores and boast when their score is high. But we aren't cattle waiting to be branded by our test scores.

Being compared to other students is harmful not only to the person feeling inferior because of a lower score, but also to the person who is being held to an exceptionally high standard. Unfortunately, to many parents, our intelligence is apparently measured by little more than our standardized test scores.

Don't get me wrong, I love my parents. They aren't mean or evil; they just don't see the wrong in classifying students by their test scores, since, according to them, all the parents do it. I'd guess that at least half the school population has had a similar experience either with parents, friends or classmates.

Our standardized test scores are representative of how we scored on one test, how tired or jittery we might have been that one day or how badly we may have had to use the bathroom during a particular portion of the test (writing and language was my downfall).

At the end of the day, our standardized test scores represent four hours of our lives that we spent filling in bubbles. Getting a 1600 on the SAT isn't akin to winning an Olympic gold medal; true, earning a high score is a feat to be celebrated, but it shouldn't be exaggerated to the extent that it is in our school's culture.

Our test scores don't define us. They don't determine whether we can be considered smart or not. They don't determine how far we'll go in life. They don't determine our happiness.

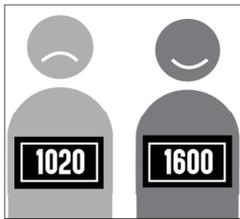
Above all, our test scores don't determine our worth as people.

The expectation that we have to get a perfect SAT or ACT score, gain acceptance to an Ivy League college and make millions in order to be successful or happy is unreasonable.

Our SAT or ACT scores, our grades, what colleges we get into, are infinitesimal portions of who we are.

So why, when I run into other parents, do they immediately converse about how I'm doing in school or what SAT Subject tests I've taken so far? What is it about the social stigma here that causes students to feel disappointment when they see a certain score on their CollegeBoard homepage?

It's not a bad thing if you don't have the same test scores that the person next to you does; one score isn't everything. Do the best that you can do, and be proud of it. ♦



GRAPHIC BY ELICIA YE

Fear of crime keeps Saratoga homes safe

By Anishi Patel & Rahul Vadlakonda

Crime rates have fallen since 2016 in Saratoga, but even as statistics have improved, residents continue to take measures to ensure that they do not fall victim to crimes such as burglary.

While some may say Saratoga citizens are overly paranoid considering the city's relative safety, the fear behind residents' extra precautions is the most effective crime-prevention method available and should continue.

With 69 instances of residential burglary and 70 total instances of ID theft/fraud in 2017, residents have reason to take precautions in order to ensure that their homes and families are well protected.

In response to the high rates of crime, programs such as Neighborhood Watch have been key tools in making sure criminals can't easily roam streets and look for vulnerable homes.

Equally important are security systems or cameras from companies such as ADT or Xfinity. This technology automatically deters criminals looking for an easy score: an unsecured window or an unlocked door.

Aside from residents taking the initiative to install private security systems in their homes, the county offers a public announcement notification system known as the Santa Clara County Emergency Alert System, which notifies anyone living or working in the county of the time and place

of an incident.

According to the Prison Policy Initiative, U.S. prisons held more than 2.3 million people as of 2017, but more and more of those inmates are transferred to communities, since states like California seek to reduce their prison population. Many of these criminals now walk the streets and pose potential risks to vulnerable communities.

Even as crime rates may edge downward, it is essential for some fear to reside in the minds of citizens, and for those citizens to take actions to protect themselves. ♦

CRIME in
— SARATOGA

70
instances of
IDENTITY THEFT

69
instances of
HOUSE BURGLARY

GRAPHIC BY ISABELLE YANG



The future is not as hopeless as it seems

By Kaylene Morrison

In July 2016, a poll conducted by The Breakthrough, a global research center, showed that just 6 percent of Americans believed the world was improving. While most may consider this pessimistic view of the future to be inherently dismal, people do not realize that the pessimism itself could hinder future progress.

After all, if people believe that living conditions will continue to worsen no matter what, then what motivation is there to keep pushing for change?

Two central reasons for the emergence of this despondency have been identified — people are unaware of trends in history, and they are uninformed regarding improvements that address national problems such as environmental protection and human equality.

In the U.S., one growing issue is the alarming concentration of wealth. The richest 1 percent of the population now owns 38.6 percent of the nation's wealth, while the bottom 90 percent owns 22.8 percent, according to CNNMoney.

However, many are unaware of the cyclic ebb and flow of the distribution of wealth. For instance, the Gilded Age, a time period in the late 19th century, saw an income spectrum much like today. Wealthy industrialists and financiers such as John D. Rockefeller, Jay Gould and John Jacob Astor were labeled "robber barons" since their fortunes were made at the

People do not realize that the pessimism itself could hinder future progress.

expense of the working class. Astor, in particular, who became affluent through his New York City-based fur company, was almost as wealthy as Bill Gates. In inflation adjusted dollars, his net worth of \$110.1 billion makes him the fourth-richest person in American history.

Not only were the wealthiest of the time wealthier than any American today, a larger percentage of

the population was unemployed. Nearly half of American citizens owned zero percent of the nation's wealth, according to "The Age of Acquiescence: The Life and Death of American Resistance to Organized Wealth and Power" by Steve Fraser.

Though many would interpret this obvious correlation as a terrible sign, it could also be seen in an entirely different light. After all, the Gilded Age ended with the rise of the Progressive Era. This movement developed as a response to the extreme poverty and class warfare of the Gilded Age, along with the racism and political corruption of the time.

During this time period from the 1890s to 1920s, numerous reforms were put into action, including the introduction of worker compensation, improved child labor laws, minimum wage legislation, limited work hours, graduated income tax and women's suffrage. In the 19th century, the Industrial Revolution was in full force, which led to the climate change and global warming that is having drastic effects on the earth.

With the loss of millions of

square miles of Arctic ice per year, a global temperature rise of 2 degrees Fahrenheit since prior to the Industrial Revolution, and mass bleaching of coral reefs around the globe, people are justified in being apprehensive about the future. However, the fact is that the most newsworthy stories, the ones that are read frequently, report on negative events.

At the beginning of his term, President Trump decided to abandon efforts to enact former President Barack Obama's pledge of curbing greenhouse gas emissions 26 to 28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025 and pull out of the Paris Climate Agreement.

In the meantime, though, many other countries have continued their efforts to create change, leaving the United States behind.

World leaders met in Hamburg, Germany, during July and constructed the G20 Climate and Energy Action Plan for Growth. This document includes reforms such as the target to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees



GRAPHIC BY AUSTIN WANG

Celsius, plans for drafting long-term greenhouse gas emission development strategies by 2020, and plans for working toward affordable, reliable and sustainable energy emission systems as soon as feasible.

Perhaps what can be deduced from these examples is that highs and lows tend to balance each other out. And while the path into the unknown looks as if it gradually slopes down into a never-ending darkness, we can rest assured that humanity is more likely just going through a rough patch — and will emerge better than it was before. ♦



GRAPHIC BY COLLEEN FENG

Social media reliance scrolls to depression

By Sanjana Melkote & Anna Novoselov

As the school bell rings, students pull out their phones to check out the latest on social media sites such as Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook and Twitter. Later in the day, they scroll past more posts, ranging from snapshots of memories to funny memes, in between after school activities and during study breaks.

Those quick instances of looking at a screen can add up. It is easy to get sucked into the virtual world, and a couple minutes of glancing at a phone can turn into hours of scrolling.

Spending significant portions of time on various social media sites should be discouraged among teens themselves and by adults, as it is correlated with negative mental health effects, such as depression, anxiety and loneliness.

It can exacerbate the struggles of adolescence and make one feel dismal about his or her own existence after seeing the polished and glamorized feeds of others. According to a new study from the family technology education non-profit group, Common

Sense Media, teenagers spend on average nine hours per day interacting with media.

However, according to a study published online in "Computers and Human Behavior," these patterns of depression and anxiety seem more directly linked with the usage of different social media platforms rather than the time spent online. The findings



GRAPHIC BY CALLIA YUAN

showed that individuals who use seven to 11 sites had a risk of depression three times greater than those who reported using zero to two sites.

The plethora of media resources available to teens today can lend itself to immense productivity and success, but when teens get sucked into scrolling endlessly on social media web-

sites, they multitask and their attention is divided.

This prolonged multitasking between apps, feeds, stories, posts and videos correlates to deteriorated attention span, cognition and mood. At this point, social media doesn't serve as a platform for people to express oneself and share their experiences but rather as a distraction. Constantly switching between various social media websites divides teens' attention and deters them from working towards tangible goals.

Not only does prioritizing social media distract teens from their personal relationships and undermine their chance at personal success, but the pictures and videos they view online can give them false expectations for their lives offline.

Many people download a semblance of themselves to post online, highlighting the snapshot memories that they want to remember. This can create a fictitious perception of a perfect life on another's screen.

Seeing idealized versions of others fabricates feelings of worthlessness, insecurity, and jealousy in individuals, who be-

lieve that their own lives do not compare. A study done by the University of Pittsburgh Center for Research on Media, Technology, and Health links high social media usage to an increased risk of depression. In a study of 1,787 adults ages 19-32 in 2014, the Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System Depression Scale, an instrument for measuring depression risks, reported a 2.7 times higher chance of despondency for those who checked social media most frequently compared to those who checked it less often.

Social media can also be a direct cause of depression as teenagers who are already struggling with self confidence, can be victim to or even initiate situations of cyberbullying. While teenagers don't see the person behind the screen they are interacting with, the emotions inflicted by cyberbullying are still very real.

Cyberbullies can cyberstalk, encourage mean spirited comments and socially isolate someone with just few clicks. Nevertheless, social media is a valuable tool for connecting individuals and communicating ideas. It can be a platform for teens to show-

case their personality and spread awareness about important issues. But the key here is moderation. Limited time online is beneficial; it is obsessive use that causes negative impacts.

If teenagers have a sense of self outside from their feeds, online friends and posts that guides them through their online conduct and interactions, they can use social media as a tool to further empower themselves and others rather than cause anxiety and depression.

The world today is evolving digitally and being a part of society almost requires a frequent engagement with social media. In order to for teens to reap the advantages that a digital world provides, it is important to moderate their exposure, provide diverse experiences that allow them to be disconnected and establish a healthy balance between a teen's online and offline life.

Awareness about the effects of obsessive online use should be spread, which would encourage individuals to spend more time off the internet. Teens should log out of social media sites, even if just for a while, and "like" their lives in the non-virtual world. ♦

Country music is better than y'all think



By Austin Wang

"Rain makes corn, corn makes whiskey, whiskey makes my baby, feel a lil' frisky."

Many of our friends are quite surprised to hear the catchy and distinctly country chorus of Lucas Bryan's song "Rain is a Good Thing" blasting from my phone. For the most part, Saratoga students aren't very fond of our taste in country music.

But for us, in the age of Lil Pump's "Gucci Gang" and other lyrically uninspiring, drug-glorifying trap songs, country music is a welcome change of pace. Unlike most modern songs, many country songs tell a story from a culture that Saratoga students often don't hear about.

For example, the lyrics of "Rain is a Good Thing" by Lucas Bryan explain how rural farmers react to rain while the lyrics of "Chicken Fried" by Zac Brown Band detail how rural community members in the South or Midwest spend their free time eating chicken fried steak, listening to the radio and drinking cold beer. While our experiences don't allow many of us to truly relate to these songs, the universally nostalgic emotions conveyed by them still resonate with us, and we are able to almost experience the singers' glorified memories of rural American culture.

Another key aspect of country music is the emotion conveyed through the vocals. Country singers don't rely on auto-tune or production effects so their Southern draws and true voices always shine through against the rustic, often slow-paced melodies. This synergy between the songs' vocals and instrumentals results in masterpieces that are able to pull at the listeners' heartstrings and truly make them feel empathy for the singer, whether they're reminiscing over their childhood memories of a "Big Green Tractor" or long-lost love.

The powerful effect of country blues is best exemplified by Johnny Cash's famous hit cover of "Hurt," which he expresses his marital struggles, his wife's failing health (she would die just three months after the song's production), the burning down of his home of 30 years and his flashbacks to his heroin addiction.

As he reflects on his first marriage, torn apart by his heroin addiction, he sings "What have I become? My sweetest friend. Everyone I know / Goes away in the end," in a low, soothing voice against the slow plucking of guitar strings. Listeners can feel the deep struggle and trauma Cash has suffered as he concludes the chorus by softly singing "I will let you down. I will make you hurt." The emotions Cash relays to his audience is something even the catchiest of trap songs from the latest 'Lil' rapper fails to illustrate.

Country music plays a very different role than today's popular hits. Much like a good novel, a good country song will make listeners empathize and feel a story from a distant and long-gone culture, washed away by modern life. ♦

Odd food combinations do not fail to 'dip'-appoint

By Phoebe Wang

"That's disgusting." Generally, I get this reaction from friends when I dip my grapes in cream cheese. However, even if the combination sounds or looks gross, the crisp grapes and smooth cream cheese actually tastes delicious in a unique way, combining sweet and savory flavors.

I enjoy trying new foods and weird food combinations such as cold pizza and soda, chips in ice cream and greek yogurt combined with black pepper and vanilla extract.

Dipping cold pizza slices in Coca-Cola or Sprite gives the pizza a sweet, fizzy taste that mixes perfectly with its savory aspects. The spongy crust soaks up the soda and becomes saturated with the soda's flavor. This combination results in an unforgettable taste that is both sweet and salty.

I also enjoy tossing a few chips in my ice cream. The ice cream complements the chips regardless of the ice cream flavor or type of chip. I usually pair Dreyer's vanilla ice cream with Lays Classic Potato Chip. The crisp, salted chips and sugary ice cream together taste almost like sea salt caramel. Chips also introduce a

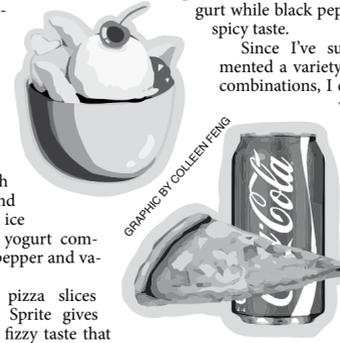
nice crunchy texture to compliment the ice cream.

The last weird combination I like is one of a little different blend — black pepper, vanilla extract and sugar mixed into my greek yogurt, giving the yogurt a very distinct smell. Adding sugar compensates for the sour taste of greek yogurt while black pepper adds a bit of a spicy taste.

Since I've successfully experimented a variety of oddly pleasant combinations, I expected to be OK with banana on pizza. But I was wrong.

The texture of the slimy banana on top of the pizza was interesting, but this combination is not one I'd like to eat a second time. I did not enjoy the addition of this fruit to my pizza because the topping gave it a weird texture that was both chewy and slimy. However, for those who don't mind having fruit on their pizza, I'd say at least try it to see if it's to your liking.

I think that almost any combination of food is worth a taste — be adventurous! Even though it might initially smell funny or look unappetizing, you could potentially find that you like the combination, and it's not so weird after all. ♦



GRAPHIC BY COLLEEN FENG

9 lifestyles

LATE NIGHT SNACKING

By David Koh & Elaine Toh

Whether it is cramming for an upcoming test, finishing up an assignment or staying up watching YouTube videos, your late night will always be improved by the various snacks that overflow your refrigerator and cupboards.

Although munching on crackers and an occasional tub of ice cream helps fire your midnight-fuel, it is generally not recommended by doctors. According to The Washington Post, eating food after a person's dinner or regular sleep cycle causes the body to be "more likely to store those calories as fat and gain weight rather than burn it as energy."

So what should you do? Give up on late night snacking?

Never. You need this fuel to power through all-nighters. For those who simply cannot avoid the tempting call of snacks during occasional all-nighters, here are a few tips on healthier ways to snack during the late hours.

Tip 1: Understand the consequences.

Open up your Google browser and type "late night food snacking." Watch as a majority of the headlines read "Why late night snacking is bad for you" and cry as you skim through the articles that constantly nag you about how you will gain weight. Then look up "healthy late night food snacks" and continue to cry as you see all the articles that force feed you with raw carrot sticks and celery rather than the bowl of your salvaged Halloween chocolate bars that you all know and love.

Tip 2: Choose your side: Healthy or unhealthy?

For the good little children who choose health, keep the following in mind: never eat in large amounts. The fewer calories you eat, the better — that's why The Huffington Post recommends low-calorie foods like kale chips, snacks that will fill your miniature bowls easily (but probably not your stomachs).

Tip 3: This is another piece of advice for healthy snackers. In order to avoid the indigestion and acid reflux that often comes with late night snacking, dietician Despina Hyde recommends to avoid lying down after indulging yourself on what your pantry has to offer. In addition, to get your sugar levels up to help you plow through yet another dreadful hour of studying, fruits are your saviors. Fruits provide natural sugars and avoid processed sweeteners such as the major culprit of obesity in the nation: high fructose corn syrup.

Whether this helps you decide to continue or stop your snacking habit, it is best to know the consequences, whether or not you are eating healthily. You cannot depend solely on food to push through those difficult midnight hours, especially when an excess of carbohydrates and fats could negatively affect our bodies.

When you scrummage through all your kitchen cabinets, remember to monitor yourself. If your stomach is not grumbling for food, then try to stay away. Save those vegetables and fruits for a family dinner; save the sugary and greasy snacks for later when you binge on a TV show or meet with friends.

You can manage just one more night without your favorite snack at your side supporting you! ♦

February 2, 2018

13-word Love Stories

- “Love is like getting the best friend you never thought you would need.” — junior Shannon Rumsey
- “I spent the night before my Trig test Facetimeing you until 3 a.m.” — senior Hannah Julie Yoon
- “Timmy like Sammy, Sammy don't like Timmy, Timmy very very very very sad.” — senior Alan Lu
- “When I slid (into the DMs) and fell, she picked me up. Now here we are.” — sophomore Bryan Chu
- “Seeing other relationships makes being single easy. I like my heart whole, thanks.” — junior Leena Elzeiny
- “Phone buzzes. Eyes light up. But now I'm sad — it was my mom.” — junior Usman Khan
- “Friends first, lovers second. Built off of trust, relationship will last. It must.” — senior Nathan Kang
- “I caught the football and hit another guy that wanted to hit me.” — sophomore George Bian
- “I ran into traffic because I really love Taco Bell — it's my favorite.” — junior Camron Reza
- “A 10-p.m. text. I start typing and don't stop until 2 a.m.” — senior Anya Srivats
- “First, life without you seemed impossible. Turns out it's easier than it seemed.” — senior Marissa Leong
- “Time couldn't pass slower in Statistics. Sitting near her, it couldn't pass faster.” — senior Alex Vaziri
- “After 14 marriages and 12 intense lawsuits, he finally found the perfect match.” — junior AJ Lee
- “Bonnie & Clyde, Jay-Z & Beyonce, Tarzan & Jane, Sandy & Danny, Us.” — anonymous junior

Inspired by the Modern Love feature in The New York Times.

Reporters bake Valentine's treats

BY Jay Kim & Alex Wang

Valentine's Day is a celebration of love. A love of food.

As unqualified chefs — scrambled eggs is the most difficult thing we have ever made — we embarked on quite the adventure when we decided to bake a Valentine's Day dessert.

Looking through a Hello! Magazine article suggested by the Lifestyle editors, we decided on the most visually appealing but also one of the most difficult recipes: apple rose puff pastries.

One of the most challenging steps was slicing apples into nearly transparent thin slices. Trying not to chop off our fingers, we ended up with apple slices of decent thickness but a wasted about a quarter of the apple.

The next few steps were straightforward, as we rolled out one sheet of puff pastry dough, brushed it with butter and sprinkled it with some cinnamon and sugar. We laid down the apple slices along the dough, extending past the dough and delicately overlapping the following slices.

Rolling up the rose was the next great challenge, as we had to make sure not to break the apple slices that represented the petals. As a result, we rolled the rose loosely, but as soon as we set it down, it unrolled itself. Frustrated, we rolled the rose tighter and squashed it a little to make sure it kept its shape.

Finally, it was time to bake it in the oven. Every few minutes, we eagerly checked our pastries, only to be disappointed that they looked the same, still white and flat instead



Courtesy of ALEX WANG

Apple rose pastries fresh out of the oven.

of golden-brown and puffed up. Half an hour later, the tops of the apple started changing color. Scared of burning the deserts, we quickly pulled the roses out of the oven but accidentally burnt our fingers on the side of the metal containers.

However, the puff pastry inside the rolls was not cooked at all; annoyed, we put them back in the oven. We repeated this cycle of checking and increasing cooking times, too eager to not burn the pastries and disappoint our editors.

Eventually, the pastries came fresh out of the oven — after being reheated three or four times — closely resembling roses. They also tasted as sweet as a rose would smell; the apple flavor mingled with the cinnamon and complemented the texture of the puff pastry.

All in all, making the apple roses was a great experience for us inexperienced yet aspiring pastry chefs. The recipe was not as daunting as it had initially seemed, and the pastry ended up receiving compliments from the editors. Most importantly, we ended up satisfying the theme of Valentine's Day, the love for food. ♦

Will You Be My Valentine?

BY Anishi Patel

Valentine's Day comes with a lot of expectations — sometimes you just have to stand up and say, “Mom, quit asking me about my (nonexistent) love life! Please excuse me while I go up to my room and lament my misfortune.”

You lock the door and pick up that cheesy romance novel hidden under your pillow, because there is really nothing like a fictional character's love interest to help you get over the complete lack of interest coming your way.

Let's begin with “The Princess Bride” by William Goldman. You might have seen its movie adaptation, but it is supremely embarrassing to watch Princess Buttercup and Westley's adventures while bawling your eyes out on your very public living room couch.

In the book, an unhappily betrothed Princess Buttercup is kidnapped by bandits. Buttercup's young love, farmhand-turned-pirate Westley, must save her. Possibly one of the oldest yet still relevant love stories of today, “The Princess Bride” is a must read on

this holiday.

Now we get into some of my better recommendations. I believe a good love story needs a little more than romance, and war is an excellent element to add in the mix.

“The Winner's Curse” by Marie Rutkovski has it all. In the book, a handsome slave catches the eye of Kestrel, the wealthy daughter of a respected general. Kestrel must eventually choose between the slave boy and her loyalty to her father, and later, between a fast-growing rebellion and her home country. Full of strategy and engaging characters, “The Winner's Curse” is one of my top Valentine's Day (really, any day) choices.

And who can forget the tragic, beautiful story of Hazel Grace Lancaster and Augustus Waters? In “The Fault in Our Stars” by John Green, two cancer survivors meet and fall in love. If I say anything more, I might just start crying, so spare me the tears and grab a copy.

You see, books don't care about your relationship status. They might make you cry and scream, but at least it won't be over a breakup. Happy reading! ♦

V-day was a lot sweeter when we got free candy

BY Sandhya Sundaram

It's crazy to think about the amount of preparation and anticipation that went into Valentine's Day in elementary school.

Before the big day, you used to spend hours carefully cutting paper and cardboard to create a “mailbox” to store the numerous Valentines you each received from classmates, painstakingly gluing stickers and decorations on it as well.

You undertook the stressful task of bugging your parents to drive you to Target or Safeway to pick out a variety of candies and chocolates, sneaking in a couple on the side for yourself. Then you went down the class roster, meticulously writing the names of everyone in the class on your beautifully crafted cards, triple checking to make sure that you hadn't left anyone out. The rule was that you could only bring Valentines if you brought enough for everyone.

You might have even added a special note or love letter in your best cursive handwriting for those “special” people. On top of the impressive candy that your

mom bought for you, this additional touch would surely grab people's attention. Furthermore, all of that excruciating daily cursive practice would finally pay off.

On the actual day, the agenda on the board read something along the lines of “Distribute Valentines, Valentine's Day Party.” You ran around the classroom giving out your Valentines and then waited patiently at your desk for your own mailbox to be filled.

The rest of the day was the best part — selfishly devouring loads of candy without parental supervision. If you ate all of the candy at school, your parents would never know.

The Valentine's Day ritual back in elementary school made the holiday much more memorable than it is now. While couples might celebrate outside of school, most people don't necessarily enjoy its festivities.

And who wouldn't want to go back to those days, when you could ignore how incredibly single you were and just look forward to a day full of free chocolates from your classmates? ♦

Cheap candy for your cravings

BY Sophia Zivanic

If you are single, sad and lonely on Valentine's Day and have no one to gift creamy caramel-filled chocolates to — or you just have a sweet tooth — make sure to check out your local Safeway, Walgreens or CVS for the best possible deals to fulfill your sugar cravings on Feb. 15 or the days after.

Cheap yet delicious sweets not only saves customers money but also frees them from the stress and loneliness associated with Valentine's Day.

The day after Valentine's Day, all candies go

on sale for 25 percent off at Safeway. Within a week, they go up to 50 percent off, and within two weeks or more, the remaining candies are marked 70-90 percent off.

“We just want to get rid of Valentine's chocolate as soon as possible because Easter comes up really soon behind it,” one Safeway employee told me.

Candy-loving junior Charles Debling buys discount candy annually on Feb. 15 as a tradition.

“The sales are just so good I love to stock up on as much candy as possible. It's my favorite day of the year,” Debling said. ♦

Galentine's: more than just a disaster

BY Michelle Lee & Katherine Zhou

This year, blasting Lady Gaga's “Born This Way” while cruising down Herriman Avenue, the two of us, along with senior Elora Pradhan, were excited for an afternoon of Galentine's activities: baking, bingeing rom-coms on Netflix, trying on different face masks and more.

Galentine's Day, coined by the TV show “Parks and Recreation,” is the day before Valentine's Day dedicated to celebrating the love you share with your closest girlfriends. As Amy Poehler's “Parks and Rec” character Leslie Knope says, “Every February 13th, my lady friends and I leave our husbands and our boyfriends at home, and we just come and kick it, breakfast-style. Ladies celebrating ladies. Plus frittatas.”

Excited to begin baking, we thought of a long list of Instagram and SnapChat-worthy treats. After flipping through pages and pages of vegan cookbooks (our version of trying to cancel out the bags of Hot Cheetos we had eaten a couple hours before), we settled on making fudgy vegan brownies in the shape of hearts, topped off with icing and sprinkles decorations.

After taking out all the materials, we searched wall to wall for cocoa powder, the most important ingredient for making brownies, and were disappointed to come across an empty Hershey Cocoa powder can. We struggled to think of another baked good we could make but were extremely limited by the bare pantry.

Disheartened, we took a break to watch rom-coms on the TV but came to the unfortunate realization that Katherine's family had recently canceled Netflix. So instead, we were forced to watch videos on YouTube as we halfheartedly skipped through throwback Superwoman videos and kept up with our favorite fashion blogger, Jenn Im.

Determined to prevent our Galentine's Day from becoming a complete disaster, we decided to return to baking. This time, we tried making banana ice cream by mashing up frozen bananas, a recipe we'd seen on Tasty. Since we wanted to finish the strong black coffee we had initially made for the brownies, we tossed the aromatic beverage into the banana ice cream mixture, which ended up being a huge mistake. The ice cream mixture turned sour and had an extremely off-putting aftertaste. After reluctantly eating it, we tossed the ice cream into the trash.

Michelle's sweet tooth had yet to be satisfied, so we made a last attempt at creating a Galentine's-worthy treat: a peanut butter mug cookie. One egg, two tablespoons of sugar and three tablespoons of peanut butter made a quicksand-like batter that didn't look appetizing at all. After baking, it resembled a dry sponge and tasted like peanut butter-flavored bread — definitely not Instagram-worthy.

We gave up on baking and moved on to the junk food we had bought at Safeway earlier with the conclusion that Hot Cheetos and honey mustard pretzels are better than gourmet desserts anyway.

Because we couldn't find anything to watch, Michelle decided to torment us with her passion for horror movies, playing Youtube videos titled “Top 10 Scariest Horror Movie Scenes” and “Movies You Shouldn't Watch Alone.”

Even though we almost peed our pants out of terror, we had a good time basking in junk food and good company. We might not have experienced the typical Galentine's Day that Leslie Knope had envisioned, but we still celebrated the spirit of the day of romance by taking time to show appreciation for the stunning gals in our lives. ♦

Singles Celebration Day, not V-Day

BY Anissa Mu & Ananya Vadlakonda

Valentine's Day has traditionally been a holiday where happy, lovey-dovey couples celebrate their relationships. But wait, isn't that what couples should be doing every single day — appreciating and celebrating each other?

Well, we are two little single pringles and have never actually been in a relationship, but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't get to enjoy this special holiday. So why not take this time to celebrate with the most important person in each of our lives — ourselves, obviously.

We have compiled this helpful guide to help you — and us — enjoy this purposeless holiday called “Valentine's Day.”

1. Crash your favorite couple's date, otherwise called “third-wheeling.” Rather than looking at this situation as hindering your friends, we see it as a way to bring some great positive energy to their outing. Remember, you are the head wheel in this tricycle. It is important to understand that the back two wheels are merely there for your support and your support only.

2. Buy yourself some chocolate at your local Safeway. Sure, you're participating in some corporate scheming to rid you of all your hard earned money, but the delicious Belgian chocolate is 50 percent off this week, and we have take advantage of that. (For more information, check out Sophia Zivanic's story).

3. Mail yourself a card to gush about how amazing

you are because let's be real, where would you be... without you? Seriously. Applaud yourself. Maybe even slip a \$5-bill in your self appreciation card and treat yourself to some quality boba.

4. Honor the good Saint Valentine properly by becoming an ordained minister. According to Ancient Roman History, Saint Valentine was killed by the Roman Emperor Claudius II for joining Christian couples in beautiful matrimony. So what better way to honor his deeds than to become ordained and spend the rest of the day letting every couple you know that they are celebrating Valentine's Day incorrectly?

5. Grab a few of your closest single grandma friends and knit yourself a single sock. Yes, one single sock. Because if you are like us, you are sick and tired of society telling you that it needs to be a part of a pair to be whole.

6. Curl up in bed in your softest pajamas, switch the TV on and watch every Valentine's Day movie that you can find on Netflix while stuffing your face with Taco Bell tacos. Throw the empty hot sauce packets at the annoyingly perfect couples on screen, and cheer obnoxiously for the hilarious single side-kicks.

7. Sigh in relief, knowing that you can treat yourself to an upscale outing like every other couple the following day because you are single and don't need Valentine's Day to appreciate yourself. Treat everyday like it is an “I hate Valentine's Day” Day. Celebrate yourself everyday — because the most important relationship in our lives is with ourselves.

#TreatYoself2k18. ♦



- 1. If you had to wear only one brand of clothing for the rest of your life, what would it be?
"Armani"
Vittorio Morini Bianzino (11)
- 2. What is the most uncomfortable sensation you've experienced recently?
"I banged my elbow against the wall and my entire body shook and then I fell because my entire body was shaking."
Nathan Kang (12)
- 3. Describe the weirdest looking backpack you've ever seen.
"The leather ones with giant cloth spikes."
Zoyah Shah (11)
- 4. Did the chicken or the egg come first?
"The egg, because dinosaurs had eggs before chickens existed."
Amazon Alexa (Machine)
- 5. What is one terrible quality you wouldn't mind having?
"Insensitivity"
Mr. Tarbox (MAP Teacher)
- 6. When was the last time you cried?
"Last night when I looked at my math grade."
Isha Garlapati (9)
- 7. What's your favorite breed of dogs?
"I LOVE HUSKIES! They're so great and floofy."
Alexandra Li (11)
- 8. What's your favorite horror movie?
"The Babadook"
Atlas Yuen (12)
- 9. Where is your favorite place to study?
"My room"
Amogh Kankanwadi (11)
- 10. What word would you like to delete from your memory?
"My Crucible Essay"
Annie Xu (11)
- 11. Would you rather feel thirsty or hungry forever?
"Hungry"
Tabitha Hulme (9)
- 12. What's your favorite boba place?
"Teatop"
Kaitlyn Thompson (10)
- 13. If you could redo one event of your life, what would you redo?
"Sixth grade"
Justin Loconzolo (10)
- 14. What is the most awkward interaction you've experienced with a stranger?
"I once accidentally cursed a stranger's baby in Egypt."
Ms. Cochrum (Teacher)
- 15. What's your boba order?
"Passion fruit green tea with pearls and lychee jelly"
Danielle Moon (9)
- 16. If you could be any Disney character, who would you be?
"Pacha from 'The Emperor's New Groove'"
Eric Che (10)

- 17. What language do you wish you could speak?
"English"
Chris Feng (10)
- 18. How would you want to die?
"I want to die a loyal Jake Pauler so that I can buy his merch even in heaven."
Daniel Ning (10)
- 19. Why did the chicken cross the road?
"Refused to respond."
Brandon Wang (10)
- 20. Who do you admire the most?
"Jungkook"
Lily Jiang (10)
- 21. Who is your favorite fictional character?
"Bamu"
Kevin Chang (10)
- 22. If you could have any superpower what would it be?
"The superpower to know everything."
Alex Pan (10)
- 23. If you could be an animal what would you be?
"a Desert Hippo"
Emilie Zhou (10)
- 24. If you had a million dollars, how would you spend it?
"Invest in VeChain"
Henry Weng (9)
- 25. What is your favorite Facebook game?
"Goldenboot, because all my friends are bad and I'm good."
Vishnu Seshadri (10)
- 26. If you could have any car what would it be?
"Blacked out Bugatti"
Will Barthell (10)
- 27. What's your favorite brand of water?
"Fiji because it has the best pH level."
Derek Pinai (11)
- 28. What are your thoughts on tofu?
"I hate tofu, it's like a weird texture and it has no taste"
Nina Hawley (9)

29. What do you plan to pursue in the future?

BY Matthew Luo & Howard Tang

During the opening night performance of "Love and Information," senior Hannah Yoon and her castmates took their positions and struck individual poses which they had spent hours practicing to perfection. The audience erupted into laughter. Yoon was performing in Caryl Churchill's play "Love and Information" in a summer program called the National High School Institute (NHSI). "There was a moment where we all had to suddenly do this pose and act like we were really surprised while looking at the audience," Yoon said. "We never realized how funny it was until opening night of that play. It's so cool when you put something on stage and the audience reacts differently from what you would think." Since the first time she performed in a musical in middle school, Yoon has acted

in many shows, including all the Saratoga High mainstage shows and some shows outside of school. "It's a great way to spend your energy and time," Yoon said. "I can't spend all my energy doing schoolwork. I have to be doing something else." Yoon said she enjoys being in plays because it allows her to learn about others' experiences and expands her view on the world. She said that her favorite theater experience was performing in "Love and Information" because she had never worked on a surrealist play before. "It's really hard to describe surrealist plays, but no one in the cast is a named role," Yoon said. "The script itself has no characters. It's just lines and lines of text and it doesn't give any context, so there aren't any roles. The play is about whatever you want it to be about, since it's up to anyone's interpretation."

These extracurricular experiences have helped Yoon tremendously. They led her to pursue a double major in theater and communication studies at Northwestern University, where NHSI was held. "I want my job to be involved with theater productions in any way shape or form." SENIOR Hannah Yoon

the theater industry. In addition to continuing acting, she has started to explore other aspects of the performing arts, such as lighting designs, stage managing, and working backstage. "Knowing myself as a person, if I didn't have theater in my life, I wouldn't be happy," Yoon said. "If I just watched a play once or twice a month with a desk job, I wouldn't be happy. I know that I want my job to be involved with theater productions in any way, shape, or form." Yoon said that due to her ethnicity, her choice to pursue theater as a major sometimes draws confused looks. "As an Asian, I feel that the Asian-American community, [in Saratoga] especially, could do a better job of encouraging creativity in their kids," Yoon said. "Realize that as an artist, it doesn't mean you're going to be poor, it doesn't mean you're not going to have a successful career, it doesn't mean you're not going to have a successful life." ♦

- 30. If you had your own private island, what would you do on it?
"I would make a huge zoo."
Charles Debling (11)
- 31. What is the strangest thing about you?
"I loved pickled beets as a kid."
Ms. Duffy (Teacher)
- 32. If you could spend a day with any person, who would it be?
"Harriet Tubman because she led so many people out of slavery and I would want to hear her talk about how she had the courage to do it and how she actually executed her plans."
Jaelyn Magner (12)
- 33. What is your greatest achievement to date?
"Making good friends because they're the people who shape your life into what it is."
Julia Yoo (10)
- 34. If you could live in one year forever, what would it be?
"2023, so I could relive my 21st birthday forever."
Jasper Frieberg (10)
- 35. If you weren't in school right now, what would you do?
"I would be in Isla Holbox relaxing and drinking coconut and eating exotic watermelons."
Isabelle Lee (9)
- 36. Describe your junior year in three words.
"many group projects"
Madeline Stuart (11)
- 37. How often do you read the Saratoga Falcon?
"I've read most of the issues since around 2012."
Jinsu Yin (10)
- 38. Would you rather use paper towels as toilet paper or toilet paper as paper towels?
"Toilet paper as paper towels"
Sarah Daoudi (11)
- 39. If you could only eat one thing for the rest of your life, what would it be?
"Ice cream"
Sidney Hough (10)
- 40. What is your one wish?
"I wish I could help everyone, which is why I want to study medicine."
Shannon Rumsey (11)
- 41. What question do you hate being asked?
"Do you like [insert name here]?"
Brian Hwang (9)
- 42. What's your worst habit?
"taking naps"
Roshan Verma (11)
- 43. If you had a secret persona, what would his/her name be?
"Oscasis"
Oscar Khowong (10)
- 44. What's your superpower?
"I'm human, what superpowers?"
Quan Do (10)
- 45. What's the best meme of 2017?
"Sprite Cranberry"
Allen Chen (10)
- 46. What gets you salty?
"Those really sharp and salty tortilla chips.. they cut into your mouth and then you get both salt and spicy salsa in the cut."
Ryan Le (10)
- 47. What is your biggest pet peeve?
"When people use a public bathroom and walk past the sink"
Daniel Robinson (10)
- 48. What's one thing you really regret saying?
"Accidentally dropping the f-bomb in class."
Will Turpin (12)

- 49. What do you like to do in your free time?
BY Amy Tang & Callia Yuan
- For five years, senior Smrithi Balebail has read every story in the Saratoga Falcon's print edition. Balebail has been reading the Falcon since middle school, since her brother Shreyes (Class of 2015) started attending Saratoga High and received monthly newspapers in the mail. "I regularly read professional newspapers and started reading the Falcon out of curiosity," Balebail said. "I liked hearing about some of the issues or events happen-
- ing at SHS and hearing the perspectives of people my own age." Additionally, Balebail is motivated to read the newspaper to support her friends who are a part of the publication staff. "As I got older, it became more exciting to read my friends' stories and bring it up to them; a lot of times, they felt rewarded that someone was reading what they were writing," Balebail said. "Also, reading the Falcon is a great way to spend time that I'd usually be [watching] Netflix. At least this way, I'm supporting my
- friends while gaining entertainment." With her schedule packed from the start of freshman year with Spanish and Orchestra, she wasn't able to join the Falcon staff, but instead enjoys reading all the stories. She doesn't particularly have a favorite section, but said that "it's always interesting to read the opinion articles to gain some new perspectives, as well as the Lifestyles
- section to see what students at school are doing." Balebail encourages non-readers to start. "There's an article for basically everyone to read, and as someone who has been reading it for years, I can attest to the entertainment and quality of the stories," she said. ♦
- 50. What's the dumbest thing a teacher has told you?
"Not much homework tonight"
Joshua Henry (10)
- 51. What's the worst meme of 2017?
"Fidget Spinners"
Alvin Liu (10)
- 52. If all the SHS staff were to duke it out, who would win?
"Orre cause he's jacked"
Rohan Rao (10)
- 53. What's the best way to get in trouble with the law?
"Pirate North Korean propaganda videos"
Enoch Luk (9)
- 54. What set of items would you buy to make the cashier feel most uncomfortable?
"Cake, rat poison, and a 'sorry for your loss' card"
Colina Guan (12)
- 55. What's the opposite of a koala?
"Rowers"
Je-woo Im (10)
- 56. What is the most pleasant sounding accent?
"British"
Hanlin Sun (11)
- 57. What is one country you would like to visit before you turn 30?
"Brazil, because Dorian (my friend) and I are going to open up a nightclub there."
David Berkowitz (11)
- 58. How do you judge a person?
"You go to court"
Alexandra Dicheva (9)
- 59. What are you addicted to?
"My phone"
Katie Chen (9)

49. What do you like to do in your free time?

BY Amy Tang & Callia Yuan

For five years, senior Smrithi Balebail has read every story in the Saratoga Falcon's print edition. Balebail has been reading the Falcon since middle school, since her brother Shreyes (Class of 2015) started attending Saratoga High and received monthly newspapers in the mail. "I regularly read professional newspapers and started reading the Falcon out of curiosity," Balebail said. "I liked hearing about some of the issues or events happen-

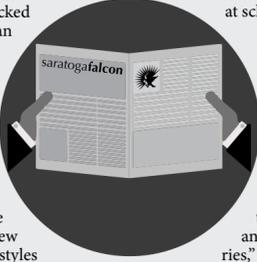
ing at SHS and hearing the perspectives of people my own age." Additionally, Balebail is motivated to read the newspaper to support her friends who are a part of the publication staff. "As I got older, it became more exciting to read my friends' stories and bring it up to them; a lot of times, they felt rewarded that someone was reading what they were writing," Balebail said. "Also, reading the Falcon is a great way to spend time that I'd usually be [watching] Netflix. At least this way, I'm supporting my

friends while gaining entertainment." With her schedule packed from the start of freshman year with Spanish and Orchestra, she wasn't able to join the Falcon staff, but instead enjoys reading all the stories. She doesn't particularly have a favorite section, but said that "it's always interesting to read the opinion articles to gain some new perspectives, as well as the Lifestyles

section to see what students at school are doing." Balebail encourages non-readers to start. "There's an article for basically everyone to read, and as someone who has been reading it for years, I can attest to the entertainment and quality of the stories," she said. ♦



Balebail



REPORTING BY: ASHLEY FENG, MATTHEW LUO, AMY TANG, HOWARD TANG, ELAINE TOH, CALLIA YUAN, SOPHIA ZIVANIC

60. Have you ever made a bold fashion statement?

BY Elaine Toh & Sophia Zivanic

Walking into this year's Winter Formal, senior Kristine Chow, dressed in a traditional cheongsam, a form-fitting knee-length dress with a mandarin collar and slit skirt, stunned many students and staff. To Chow, her fashion was nothing new - she had done the same during her junior prom and enjoys opposing mainstream fashion for proms and formals. "To be really honest, for prom, I didn't really want to buy a new dress, and I wanted to prank people so I decided to wear [a cheongsam]," Chow said. For junior prom, Chow convinced her friends seniors Shania Jafri and JR Im to accompany her in wearing clothing from their cultures - Pakistani and Korean re-

spectively - as well. While wearing a cheongsam for both prom and winter formal of last year, Chow recalls receiving surprised reactions from students and even being told comments such as, "Wow! You look so Asian!" Though she received a vast amount of compliments from teachers and a handful of peers, she also received some criticism; however, Chow accepted this. "I just rocked my own thing," she said. "Of course if they compliment me, I was pleased, but the judgmental reactions I didn't really pay attention to. I liked it myself and I liked wearing my Asian dress." Along with formal school dances, Chow also wears a cheongsam on special occasions if she has a presentation at school or a performance. "[Dressing up this way] is really nice," said Chow. "I feel like I'm special a lot of the time." ♦



(from left to right) JR IM, Kristine Chow and Carolyn Ma pose together at SHS's cultural fair representing Taiwan.

- 61. If you had to rate yourself out of 10, looks and personality all together, what number would you say?
"10, because everywhere I go, I'm the guy."
Ryan Ho (11)
- 62. What's your favorite fast food place?
"McDonald's"
Elaine Sun (11)
- 63. What's the most enjoyable class you've ever taken?
"AP Bio"
Anirudh Rao (12)
- 64. Have you ever asked a stranger for a ride/hitchhiked?
"I have not because I'm too afraid to."
Cameron Reza'i (11)
- 65. Do you believe in ghosts?
"No, I don't believe in supernatural things."
Daniel Kraft (11)
- 66. What is the sketchiest place you've ever been to?
"An alleyway in Midtown NYC"
Christian Ingster (11)
- 67. If you could be any teacher at this school, who would you be?
"Mr. Dwyer"
Jeffery Hsu (10)
- 68. What's the worst assignment you've been assigned?
"DrawHouse in APCS"
Rohan Pandey (11)
- 69. What does your personal heaven look like?
"retired and playing video games"
Bradley Hsu (10)
- 70. What's the most annoying noise?
"Scratching blackboard"
Brandon Yuen (11)
- 71. When is the average time you sleep per day?
"3.5 hrs"
Jason Ting (11)
- 72. What creates happiness?
"Free money"
Vincent Cheng (10)
- 73. What is the worst reason you have sent someone to the office for?
"I don't really send people to the office. If they are being disruptive, I send them outside to take a walk."
Erick Rector (English Teacher) ♦

Can we separate the artist from their art?

BY Victor Liu, Elaine Toh & Kyle Wang

When Woody Allen was accused of sexual assault in 1992, the victim was not an actress or an employee — it was his own 7-year-old adopted daughter, Dylan Farrow.

At the time, Allen had enjoyed considerable commercial and critical success as a director, actor and screenwriter. His films such as “Annie Hall,” “Manhattan” and “The Purple Rose of Cairo” were hailed as instant classics.

Allen has never acknowledged the possibility of any wrongdoing, and he has repeatedly denied Farrow’s accusations. In spite of this, more and more victims of his alleged abuse and harassment have continued to come forward. Actors such as Mira Sorvino and Ella Page publicly expressed their regret for working with Allen in 2017, hoping to lend credence to the accusations.

But even as Allen became the subject of increased public scrutiny over the past several years, his films have continued premiering to critical and commercial acclaim.

The 2017 cases of assault and harassment, which toppled Har-

vey Weinstein and others, should have changed the public’s unwavering reverence for Allen’s movies. As similar auteurs like James Franco faced allegations that have raised new questions about their work, Allen’s own films have remained comparatively untouched.

While critics ultimately shouldn’t change their evaluation of a piece based on the actions of a respective artist, all cinephiles need to strongly reconsider the cultural implications of movies like “Manhattan.”

For starters, should artwork in a vacuum that ignores authorial intent and context be considered desirable? This critical absolutism that reviews artwork while removing the artist from the picture enables the purest of critiques, but it also partly contributed to the harmful power hierarchies that have ruled Hollywood and made monsters like Weinstein possible.

However, Weinstein wasn’t an auteur, or a filmmaker that has so much influence over a film that they essentially become its author, who handpicked every shot and micromanaged the entire filmmaking process.

As a director, however, Allen has had a tremendous influence, which imprints his wildly brilliant

creative vision but also inappropriate, antiquated beliefs onto all of his projects.

For example, the 1979 romantic comedy film “Manhattan” follows a 42-year-old writer who dates a 17-year-old girl. Though conceptually disturbing, the film is considered a modern classic.

Even the recent scandals have done little to reduce Allen’s prestige as a director — though individual actors have expressed regret for working with him, the man continues to produce and direct.

Here, movie distributors must play their part: they are, after all, the ones who provide Allen with the means and funding to continue making movies. Actors and actresses are, unfortunately, replaceable — but a sharp rebuke from a powerful film distributor like Warner Brothers or 20th Century Fox could send a message to the entire cinematic community.

This is not to say that directors such as Allen have not produced artwork — they absolutely have. And that’s the problem.

How can we separate Allen’s disturbing beliefs from his cinematic brilliance when the narratives he creates are premised on these beliefs?

How can we see Allen’s films —



Actresses Reese Witherspoon, Eva Longoria, Salma Hayek, and Ashley Judd wear black dresses at the Golden Globes to support #TimesUp on sexual assault. Despite the show of support, many of the actors who support #TimesUp still work with known abusers.

many of which are romantic comedies — without viewing them in the context of his own inappropriate relationships? The very “artwork” he produces normalizes behaviors which the film industry is trying desperately to correct and erase.

To make matters worse, actors and actresses who have been accused of sexual assault are still awarded for their art. Casey Affleck was awarded an Academy Award for Best Actor in 2017, despite previous allegations of sexual assault against him. Ultimately, our continued blind worship of

these individuals lends credence to the values their films implicitly promote, whether those are ill-informed notions of consent or flagrant sexual inequality. In awarding these individuals for their work — whether they are actors or directors — we offer them positions of power and prestige which they may continue to misuse and abuse.

And, in 2017, that is a standard we can no longer accept — Allen’s time as a cinematic powerhouse should have been up the moment he was accused of sexual assault by his adoptive daughter. ♦

Mumble rap’s beats meet lyrical rap’s bars

BY Connie Liang & Alex Wang

“Gucci gang, Gucci gang.”

That’s really all rapper Lil Pump says in his recent hit song. The words “Gucci Gang” are repeated 53 times in the song.

Lil Pump is one of many artists of the new “mumble rap” generation sweeping the hip hop genre — a generation whose lack of lyricism and often indecipherable pronunciation have prompted critics ranging from old-school rappers and modern listeners to label the trend as inauthentic rap.

Mumble rap’s popularity increased dramatically in 2016 and continued into 2017. Mumble rap mainly differs from more classic rap because of its reliance on hard beats and heavy bass rather than lyricism to create a more catchy and energetic feel, making it popular at parties and clubs.

“Mumble rap” was first coined by rapper Wiz Khalifa while referencing rappers Lil Uzi Vert and Lil Yachty in a 2016 interview with Hot 97 host Ebro Darden, and the term has come to define more than just a subgenre of hip hop; now, it is used regularly as a way to express disapproval about up-and-coming rappers who do not focus as much on their lyrics.

In fact, even old-school rappers such as Eminem have publicly denounced this new wave of rappers. In one 2017 episode of his co-hosted podcast, record producer Rick Rubin said that for Eminem, mumble rap “is a little bit of a culture shock because there’s a new wave of hip-hop that’s not really what he’s about.”

For Eminem, the rhythm and lyrics need to “bounce off of the beat” in a certain way, Rubin said. Mumble rap’s takeover of hip hop, to Eminem, undermines the importance of lyricism.

With all the heat they take from critics,

mumble rappers have responded by defending their music.

In a 2017 interview with the Rolling Stones, 21 Savage said that he felt not everyone who is called a mumble rapper actually mumbles in their music.

“They don’t understand my slang or my accent,” 21 Savage said. “They don’t know how to categorize it, ‘cause it’s art. They’re just trying to bring it down.”

Like most forms of artistic expression, rap has found a way to permeate the lives of students all around the country, including many Saratoga students who follow the trend.

Sophomore Ronak Pai is one such student who began listening to mumble rap after his sister showed him the song “Trap Queen” by Fetty Wap.

“I like mumble rap because the beat and tune are addicting and easy to enjoy,” he said.

Pai agrees with some of mumble rap’s critics as he believes the rappers themselves do not deserve as much fame as, say, the producers who make the beats and do most of the behind-the-scenes work to make the song what it is.

However, he also said that mumble rappers do not deserve all the criticism they get.

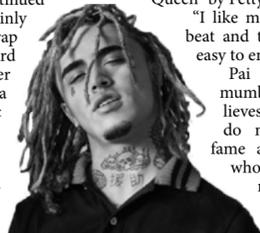
“They’re doing what they enjoy and other people like me enjoy it so I don’t see the reason or need to hate on them,” Pai said.

Senior Sahm Rafati said that the beats of his favorite artists including Nav, Famous Dex and Ski Mask “are hype.”

“I don’t really care about the lyrics because they are all essentially the same,” Rafati said. “Old-school songs have better lyrics; mumble rap has better beats.”

Nevertheless, as the face of rap continues to evolve, the artists and songs on the forefront of the change will undoubtedly receive criticism as well as support.

“I think the genre is going to continue to grow,” Rafati said. “And I’ll continue to listen because of the beats.” ♦



BILLBOARD

Rom-Coms cover a wider demographic than targeted

BY Amith Galivanche & Elicia Ye

Rom-coms, short for “romantic comedies,” include a love story interjected with awkward moments and hilarious punchlines that make the audience laugh.

Their climax often consists of a tear-jerking moment that catalyzes a change in character attitude, which prompts an act of resolution that turns their fate around. Although most rom-coms receive negative ratings from critics, some deserve credit for their hopeful sentiment and unique (though admittedly) sappy truths about love and life.

“Love, Rosie,” a 2014 film based on Cecelia Ahern’s novel “Where Rainbows End,” and the classic 1989 drama “When Harry Met Sally,” both explore the possibility of best friends becoming romantic partners. They encourage viewers to follow their hearts, take chances and live out their dreams (Rosie finally opens her own hotel while Sally becomes a journalist).

Fate draws Harry and Sally together on three separate occasions, whereas love takes a more long-winded route with Rosie and Alex, who stand beside each other at the altar twice before realizing what they are looking for was right under their nose.

While “When Harry Met Sally” adheres to the traditional, slightly misogynistic components of boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy wins girl back with a (grand) gesture, “Love, Rosie” embraces the chaos and uncertainties of life, taking viewers on a rollercoaster that leaves them anticipating the hopeful end.

Rom-coms have come a long way from their predictable elements and perfect endings. As viewer expectations have shifted, the genre has since reconstructed its formulas to more accurately reflect the muddled truths of real love.

When we were younger, love was embodied in a true love’s kiss from Prince Phillip, a silvery light blue ball gown that changed Cinderella’s life, a joking response “why don’t you marry it?” that left Greg Heffley appalled. Over the years, love evolved from its simple early constituents to a multifaceted, complicated jumble of emotions and experiences — a dozen of roses doesn’t necessarily elicit an “I love you,” a confession isn’t always met with empathy and the meaning of “forever and always” is closer to “one year” than to its literal interpretation.

The lines more blurred, our feelings more suppressed, yet our dreams for a happily-ever-after soared higher than ever. So we turned to entertainment in hopes of proof that every messy, convoluted moment is all worth it in the end.

Richard Curtis’s 2013 motion picture “About Time,” starring Rachel McAdams and Domhnall Gleeson (known for his “Harry Potter” role as Bill Weasley), taught us more about life than love.

Even though the film is filled with inconsistencies in the nature of time travel, it inspires us to instead focus on its heartwarming message: as protagonist Tim Lake says in the movie, “I just try to live every day as if I’ve deliberately come back to this one day, to enjoy it, as if it was my extraordinary, ordinary full final day of my extraordinary, ordinary life.”

Illustrating the story of an average man with an exceptional superpower who still faces mundane everyday struggles, this rom-com provokes a visceral conviction to enjoy the present and seek light and beauty even in the most unpleasant of situations.

To quote Alex Steward from “Love, Rosie,” “There are two kinds of people in this world. Hopeless romantics and realists.” Yet rom-coms, when dedicated to bringing hope and a passion for love and life to their audience, can serve as the intersection of both. ♦



LIONSGATE

school scope 15 >>

Four years, four viewpoints:

Reporters reflect on their journey through high school

Freshman Follies

Freshman year was possibly one of the most awkward stages in my school career.

The two-semester year allowed for a period of transitioning and then a period of going with the flow. So, with a frown lined with braces, I, a stereotypical clueless freshman at the time, embarked on the journey to become a high school student.

I braced myself for the absolute worst. I could not trust my two older sisters’ opinions because whatever my sisters said, it was the exact opposite for me. But, looking back now, they were right.

Accustomed to Redwood Middle School’s short periods, ending school at either 2:10 or 3:05, and my long naps during the previous summer, I struggled to adjust to 90-minute mind-numbing periods and finally being being trapped in class every other day until 3:45.

Other than adjusting to new schedules, my worst problem was talking to people. It sounds silly, but for someone whose voice goes up about two octaves when talking to teachers and whose hands shake when attempting to communicate with other students, the act of holding an actual conversation or presenting something in front of a class is highly challenging.

But possibly the worst part of first semester in freshman year was the sleep-depriving combo of dead week and finals week. Unsure of the proper way to prepare, I barely survived through such accumulated stress, even to the extent where I felt extremely nauseous

and threw up after my P.E. final (it also didn’t help that the workout was a harsh 18 minutes long).

So, after two measly weeks of absolute freedom and trying to erase the terrible downward spiral of my first finals week, I created the idea in my head that I would do better in terms of school work and managing my time during second semester.

I undoubtedly lied to myself. My blissful hope for second semester was far from reality; however, parts of this second half of school felt much more relaxing, and thinking back, my second semester as a freshman was much more enjoyable than that of first semester.

With my awkwardness and shyness attempting to fade away, I was able to actually talk to my peers and teachers comfortably.

I know. What an achievement. Second semester felt more natural. I was able to understand when to ask for help from teachers rather than sitting in a corner and moping about knowing nothing. I knew who my classmates were and no longer called out to them with “Hey! You over there!”

But then again, I would never miss my spring semester as a freshman, nor would I miss fall semester. Everything about freshman year clumped into one huge ball of uneventful and publicly embarrassing moments. Perhaps it will be heartwarming when I become much older, but now, I’d rather not reminisce about it.

—Elaine Toh



Junior Pressure Cooker

Despite the two-week long break, I still felt tired after first semester. Maybe it’s because I did too much SAT practice or because I couldn’t stop thinking about that borderline grade that unfortunately dropped to a B+. Either way, second semester of junior year could be the hardest semester of high school.

I’m not ready, and I don’t think I ever will be, to take all those AP tests, the SAT (again) and then stress about applying to summer programs. Before junior year, I expected to suffer, and second semester is living up to its reputation for difficulty so far.

However, hours spent laughing at memes and scrolling through “siliconvalleyprobs” on Instagram keeps me from falling into a downwards spiral. Even though I know I always have something better to do, I still allow myself to take

a break before I have the motivation to continue SAT practice.

I didn’t feel first semester junior year was that much of a jump from sophomore year. I had already expected the higher workload but nothing more than that.

In recent weeks, though, I’ve felt the pressure of actually needing to know what I want to do in life. As more and more of my parents’ friends ask me about what lies ahead for me, the pressure of finding a “dream” college and major makes me want to cry.

My only consolation right now is I only have two more semesters left until I can finally be a second-semester senior.

The countdown begins now.

—Elaine Sun



Sophomore Fools

What does it mean to be a sophomore?

According to Dictionary.com, a sophomore is derived from the roots sophos meaning “wise” and moros meaning “foolish, dull.” Yes, sophomore literally means “wise fool.”

As one myself, I can relate: being a sophomore means I’m suspended in this weird paradox of being a “wise fool.” For example, I feel a certain sense of supremacy because I am no longer the youngest at the school, but I am not cool enough yet to be an upperclassman.

When someone asks me what grade I am in and I respond with “sophomore,” they don’t have any interesting follow-up questions to ask. This is because sophomore year is quite boring: High school is no longer new for me, but I’m still too young to experience the real fun of high school. Sophomore year just feels like a year I need to complete to be one step closer to college.

Perhaps the most exciting part of being a sophomore is that, having passed my 15.5

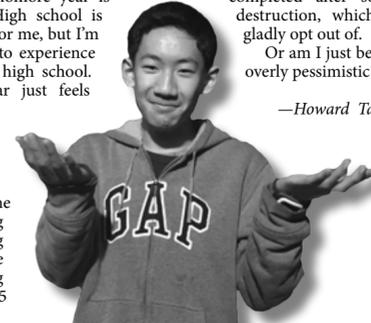
year mark, I can start to learn to drive. Trying to earn that driving permit, and eventually, that driver’s license, acts as a slightly adequate break from the mundane side of life. I can exploit this new freedom in many ways, although it comes with extreme responsibility.

My parents will no longer be required to drive me to school, other classes and events. I will be able go wherever I want whenever I want in a decently short amount of time.

With that being said, there isn’t all that much to look forward to either. From many upperclassmen, I hear about the mysterious force that APUSH-es their GPA to a point that is “unfit” for college acceptance. These tasks seem like they can only be completed after some soul-destruction, which I would gladly opt out of.

Or am I just being lazy or overly pessimistic?

—Howard Tang



Senior Freedom

I am now a free pigeon. Well, sort of.

I’ve often heard that second-semester senior year is liberating. In fact, I’d originally planned on doing lots of crazy, stupid things that my fear of college rejection, among other things, had stopped me from doing — like learning how to belly dance — but I’m still doing the exact same stuff I’ve done for the last four years.

I’m still watching the same terrible TV shows, reading the same Modern Love essays at 1:30 a.m. when I can’t sleep, taking the same BuzzFeed quizzes and laughing at the same stupid memes.

But the other part of me felt a sort of secretive, upwelling rebellion, almost like I was sneaking out of the house.

It was strange. For the first time, I genuinely felt like I was willfully making a bad decision. I felt like a 6-year-old stealing a cookie from the jar for the first time; like a middle schooler about to ask a girl out; like a 70-year-old with serious knee problems about to base jump off a 50-foot cliff.

But I wasn’t. I was instead watching a group of unfairly attractive 15-year-olds chase down a

mysterious serial killer. There were also times first semester when I promised my hobbyist-loving dad that I’d help him more around the house when I was “less busy with apps.” I told him I’d help him as he attached new towel stands in the hallway, built model hovercrafts, fixed cabinets and repainted the bedroom.

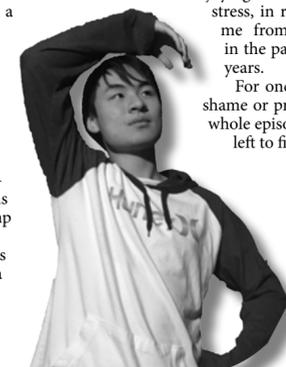
But now, every time he drops by to ask for my help, I decide that it happens to coincide perfectly with my scheduled daily nap or that I’ve sprained my ankle (again) and am really “not feeling all that great.”

Here’s the thing: Second semester senior year is becoming a time for me to unwind. In spite of all the places I had planned to do, my only real priority is pure, complete relaxation.

As much as I’d love to go out and explore the world, I’m perfectly happy enjoying the little things that stress, in retrospect, stopped me from fully embracing in the past three and a half years.

For once, I don’t feel any shame or pressure. I have two whole episodes of “Riverdale” left to finish, anyway.

—Kyle Wang



Senior runs two photography accounts on Instagram

BY Kaylene Morrison & Callia Yuan

Senior Ian Kim was driving up the road to Castle Rock State Park at 5 a.m. last summer when he saw something. Awestruck by the morning light, Kim took out his Fujifilm X-Pro2 and ran into the middle of the road to snap a couple photos — despite the danger of oncoming traffic.

This kind of commitment to taking striking photos is nothing new for Kim. In fact, his passion for photography began in sixth grade after he saw an old camera shop in Switzerland. At the time, he was unable to afford and operate vintage cameras featured in the shop, so instead, he began taking photos of Switzerland's rural villages and mountain ranges with his iPad mini.

"Before, photos were just a thing in picture books and stuff but after developing my skills since being inspired at Switzerland, I finally saw photography as an art form all on its own," Kim said.

As his photography skills continued to develop, Kim needed a place to post and preserve all his photos, so he created a photography account (@ianminkim), where he posts his most aesthetic photos.

"I thought Instagram was more accessible and less exclusive," Kim said. "I could get more live response and interaction rather than VSCO or other platforms."

One particularly photo features the illuminated cityscape of downtown San Diego.

"I had to take it from a hotel room on the 13th floor through a window, and it was just such a pain to position the camera," Kim said. "It also took about 25 minutes to take, because every time I hit the shutter, I had to wait for about 2 minutes for the long exposure. If anything moved unnecessarily, I had to retake the shot."

Kim also runs a separate Instagram account, which he calls his "food account." It features a variety of foods ranging from sandwiches and gourmet burger joints to sweet treats from Korean dessert counters. Kim said his food account used to be his

personal, everyday account, but it naturally developed into a food account due to the frequency of posts about food.

As a high school student, Kim's schedule is packed with academic responsibilities. Oftentimes, his photos come from restaurants in Southern California, which he often visits to participate in a variety of cello camps and competitions.

Before posting, Kim normally edits his photos of food on his phone through the Instagram app, while photos that go on his primary photography account are edited with Adobe Lightroom or Photoshop. Additionally, photos on his photography account are taken with his higher quality camera, a Fujifilm X-Pro2, rather than his Google Pixel.

Prior to owning the Fujifilm camera, Kim used a Canon 80D, but decided to make the switch because of the Fujifilm's compact size and lighter weight. It also allows him to snap photos of a site bustling with people while undetected by those around him.

While owning a high-functioning camera is essential for avid photographers, it can be difficult to obtain one, which Kim said is one of the only negative aspects to photography.

"Gear costs a lot of money, and my parents are not willing to dish out thousands of dollars worth of lenses, tripods and camera bodies," Kim said.

Besides the high cost, however, Kim's family appreciates his hobby.

"My friends and family actually love it, especially because they think they can use me like a personal photographer," Kim said. "They take it as a given now [when I run into the middle of the road to take a photo], but they still always worry a little of course."

Recently, Kim has begun to charge customers for photo shoots. He also prints out enlarged versions of his photographs, which will possibly be for sale in the future.

One of his recent clients was senior Hannah Yoon, who was planning on applying to theater colleges that required headshots to be sent along with applications. During the



Courtesy of IAN KIM

Taken over the summer at Gelato Paradiso's San Diego location, Kim features photos like this on his food account (@ian_minsung). A majority of Kim's photos come from restaurant in Southern California, an area he frequently visits due to a variety of cello competitions.



Courtesy of IAN KIM



Courtesy of IAN KIM

These are photos found on Kim's photography account (@ianminkim): the first photo was taken early morning at Castle Rock State Park in Santa Cruz and the second photo was taken of junior Justin Lee over the New Year's on University Avenue.

hour-long photo shoot at Wildwood Park, Kim ended up taking more than 30 photos.

"The photos he took really shows that he knows how to deliver his clients' specific requests," Yoon said. "Usually, I would have to pay around \$500 to get these types of photos, but [Kim] delivered professional quality

headshots for a fraction of that."

Though Kim does not plan on pursuing a career in photography, he plans to continue doing it for the rest of his life.

"I'll probably have my main job and then have photography maybe even as a side job — but you never know," Kim said. ♦

togatalks

What is the most unique teacher punishment?

"Mrs. Anzalone does public shame. She made someone memorize the Ten Commandments."



junior Joey Li

"Mr. Friend sings his embarrassing birthday song on someone's birthday."



senior Colina Guan

"One of my teachers makes me eat a candy: punishment through bad health."



junior Justin Sun

Davey turns punishment into treats for entire class

BY Alex Wang

Junior Enzo Coglitore was looking at his phone during one of history MAP teacher Mike Davey's lectures when Davey saw him from across the room. Coglitore knew he was instantly in trouble.

At home, instead of working on homework as usual, Coglitore got started on baking 30 cookies for the class. It took him almost two hours, forcing him to push back his school work.

"It's pretty tough staying up late nights mixing flour and sugar and baking cookies, so I definitely learned my lesson not to go on my phone in class," he said.

Instead of administering the typical consequences for using a phone, Davey has his own version of a punishment that serves as a treat for the class. When caught, students have the choice of bringing homemade cookies for the class instead of receiving disciplinary action.

"To be honest, when the state rule came

out that said students get a Saturday school for [using their phone], I thought it was too harsh," Davey said.

Students say Davey's cookie punishment is quite effective, if not better, than the conventional phone confiscation and referral or detention. Sophomore Nakul Nagaraj said that cookies arrive in the classroom around once a week, but repeat offenders are rare.

"I think it's super effective," Coglitore said. "Because you realize you're wasting a lot of time making the cookies and you

think, 'Ugh I don't want to do this again,' so you're less likely go on your phone in class."

According to Davey, the punishment actually makes it easier to catch those who use their phone because the rest of the class alerts him about violators for cookies.

The punishment for bringing cookies has evolved to sort of a class joke. For the class, it is funny, but it is also an effective warning to students who might want to use their phones in class: Get caught and spend a night baking cookies. ♦

Teachers, students use 'finesse' in opposite ways

BY Sandhya Sundaram

During her second-period class, Chemistry Honors teacher Janny Cahatol was explaining Robert Millikan's oil-drop experiment when she used the word "finesse" to describe the skillfulness and brilliance of the experiment.

Suddenly, the class erupted in laughter, with students wondering if Cahatol really used the word "finesse."

Taken aback by the class' response, Cahatol thought she had said something wrong or politically incorrect, not realizing that "finesse" was a slang word used by Saratoga students to mean taking a shortcut or succeeding at something without preparation.

"I wasn't sure if there was like an inside joke that everyone knew about and I didn't," Cahatol said. "There were two classes that tried to explain to me why it was funny, but it did not click."

According to Dictionary.com, the word "finesse" means "extreme delicacy or subtlety in action, performance, skill, discrimination, taste, etc.," explaining Cahatol's use of the word in her lecture.

However, for students, the slang is quite different from its dictionary definition.

According to sophomore Sally Kim, one

common situation that the term would be used for would be if "you didn't do your homework and you BS-ed it, but your teacher didn't check it — you finessed it!"

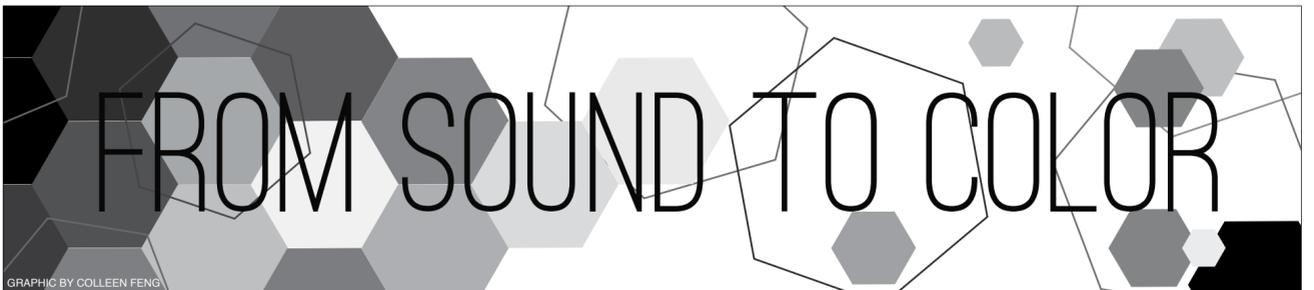
Kim explained that many of her friends and peers have a tendency to finesse things, like homework, tests and class participation.

This lifestyle and culture of constant procrastination and eventually taking the easy way out leads to people using the word a lot.

"In Saratoga especially, a lot of people finesse their life," Kim said. "It's a good way to like, um, I don't know — I'm finessing this right now!" ♦



Kim



SYNESTHESIA

continued from pg. 1

specifically, Hough has chromesthesia, a synesthetic condition in which color mixes with sound.

For example, when Hough hears a B note, she sees green, and when she hears D flat, she sees purple. The same notes in different octaves have the same color, but a different shade, like a paler or darker green.

In addition to chromesthesia, there are other types of synesthesia, such as spatial-sequence synesthesia. Synesthetes with this condition perceive numbers, dates, days of the week and months in terms of physical distance. For example, for some, the number 80 feels farther away than the number 70.

To Hough, sometimes the most visually interesting colors come from the oddest combination of sounds.

Another common type of synesthesia is grapheme-color synesthesia, in which synesthetes associate letters and numbers with certain colors. Less common forms of synesthesia include number form synesthesia, in which synesthetes involuntarily see a unique mental map of numbers when thinking of numbers.

Many synesthetes were unaware of their condition until they realized that their experiences are not typical.

Others felt like they were keeping a secret. Hough said her experiences have been similar — she didn't know synesthesia was an actual condition and didn't realize she had it until recently.

Synesthesia is not commonly reported due to its personal nature, making it difficult for researchers to measure how common it is.

According to Boston University researcher Dr. Veronica Gross, synesthetes make up anywhere from one in 100,000 to one in 5,000 of the population.

Although synesthetes usually report experiencing more than one kind of synesthesia, Hough said she has only experienced chromesthesia.

Hough first learned she might have the condition during her piano class when her teacher recognized her aptitude for perfect pitch.

Her teacher asked how she was able to distinguish among different notes, to which Hough said she associates certain colors with specific notes. Her teacher then proceeded to describe different keys to her and asked what colors they were. Hough gave consistent answers.

She now takes AP Music Theory at the school, and her condition has proven to be an advantage since it is easier for her to identify pitches.

"Individual notes definitely have their own colors," Hough said. "Musical phrases also tend to have colors or even patterns that come to mind. For example, chromatic scales bring up the image of parallel lines and they're a general mashup of colors."

To Hough, sometimes the most visually interesting colors come from the oddest combination of sounds. She also found that the musical phrase's color has no correlation with its structure.

Hough reports that her chromesthesia usually doesn't get in her way. She only experiences the colors when she is listening to or playing music, which sometimes becomes a distraction when outside.

"Sometimes in social situations, it becomes awkward because all I'm trying to do is hear the music playing in the background, like at a restaurant, and seeing those colors is distracting," Hough said.

English teacher Amy Keys' father Bill Keys also had synesthetic experiences. However, his were caused by swelling in his brain due to an expanding aneurysm that was removed in 1980. His first experience in 1974 came while he was teaching English at Madison West High School in Wisconsin,

and he felt a strange sensation in his ear.

"I couldn't feel anything physically, but I had my sense of hearing," he said. "I was waking up from a nap, and the windows were open, and suddenly I could hear traffic from outside and the people moving around the house."

After this first experience, he realized that he could hear sounds from a farther distance at the same volume as sounds close to him. Eventually, he realized that he was hearing objects and shapes and not things that were actually producing sound.

His experiences began to develop further, and it became confusing for him to speak with others because he had to focus carefully on what they were saying. He eventually went to some doctors who reassured him that his brain was fine.

Particularly, Bill said, the paisley print, a design that has a teardrop shaped motif with a curved upper end and intricate designs of jagged lines and flowers inside and outside,

was one he remembers hearing. He described the sound of paisley print as "very similar to water going down a drain." When hearing these voices and shapes, Bill said they would echo.

Typically, the sensations came in intervals, and as the aneurysm swelled, the sensations became more frequent, occurring once every two months then multiple times a month. At first, they occurred for 30 seconds, but they later grew to one or two minutes.

The condition lasted for six years, from 1974 to 1980.

"It never affected my balance and I could function, but it was irritating as hell," Keys said. "I could be in a meeting, I could work in the garden, or school. I didn't happen when I was driving, interestingly."

Now, after treatment for his aneurysm, he said he hasn't heard shapes in years.

"After the surgery, the aneurysm was removed, and I haven't had a single incident since," he said. "Now everything is clear." ♦



Hough

Types of SYNESTHESIA

Grapheme-color synesthesia
Individual letters and numbers are tinged with different colors

S A T I I
34

Chromesthesia
Certain sounds are associated with different colors

Spatial sequence synesthesia
Numerical sequences appear as a point in a place

GRAPHIC BY COLLEEN FENG

Synesthetes IN THE Spotlight

Ramin Djawadi
CHROMESTHESIA

Iranian-German composer best known for his work in "Game of Thrones," "Iron Man," "Pacific Rim" and "Westworld."

Hans Zimmer
CHROMESTHESIA
Composer

Richard Feynman
GRAPHEME-COLOR SYNESTHESIA

1965 Nobel prize winning physicist: "When I see equations, I see the letters in colors."

Franz Liszt
CHROMESTHESIA
Composer

Vincent Van Gogh
CHROMESTHESIA
Artist

Chromesthesia in Modern Pop

Lorde

Charli XCX

Kanye West

Alessia Cara

Brendon Urie

Pharrell Williams

GRAPHIC BY ELAINE FAN

WRESTLING

Freshman Linus Blom a 'future star' in the making

BY MathewLuo & RahulVadlakonda

Pumped up with adrenaline after his quick wins and in excellent condition after the daily double practices during winter break, freshman Linus Blom swept the competition during The Mustang Classic on Dec. 30 at Brick Memorial High School in Brick, N.J.

Blom won gold for his first time during his high school career, achieving a record of 4-0. Not only was this win the manifestation of the thorough practice he had put in but a result of his years of dedication to the sport.

Blom started wrestling in middle school after one of his friends signed up for it. Due to his dedication to wrestling, he has been described as a key addition to the school's wrestling team by head coach Daniel Gamez.

Blom found the intense effort that wrestling required to be a major factor that brought him to liking the sport. He continued a grueling training session throughout off-season, going through rough practices six times a week and constantly running miles and sprints.

At the same time, Blom said that all the work he puts in pays off during his competitions and matches.

"I like how the hard work you put in at

practice always pays off at tournament," he said. "All the [running is not] for nothing."

So far in his high school career, Blom has beaten a CCS-ranked competitor from Belmarine at the Bert Mar Invitational in Gilroy, placing fifth in an 18-wrestler bracket. In addition, he also placed third at the Chris Snowden Memorial on Jan. 21, where he achieved a record of 4-1.

Despite Blom's successes, the wrestling team has still been struggling due to their lack of members. With only seven wrestlers filling unique weight classes, the team continually loses many rounds due to forfeits because they do not have enough wrestlers to fill all weight classes. The team stands 1-3, with a win against Harker and losses to Mountain View, Lynbrook and Homestead.

Though Blom receives high praises for wrestling, he said that at the same time there are downsides — especially, the things that need to be done to stay in a specific weight class. In order to maintain a the required weight for his weight class, 108 lbs, Blom takes measures such as fasting for two days of a week, extreme sweating at his practices and taking hot baths.

"I had to cut about six pounds every week to make my weight class for the tournament I wrestled at," he said. "That just killed me."

Despite the demanding aspects of the sport, Blom believes that the final product



FALCON // SOPHIA ZIVANIC
Freshman Linus Blom takes down an opponent in a match against Homestead on Jan. 25. Even with the addition of Blom, however, the team is 1-3 with its one win over Harker.

of being prepared for and doing well in upcoming tournaments continue to outweigh all the sacrifices he must make.

Junior Isaiah Vivero, a third-year veteran of the Falcon wrestling team, said that Blom, having wrestled before high school, brings strong experience to a team with mostly novice wrestlers.

"Overall, he's a really skilled wrestler who pushes everyone to achieve their best," Vivero said.

Among the experiences that Blom brings to practices, Vivero said that as a result of

Blom having wrestled at the American Wrestling Academy in the past, Blom sees the sport as a competition of skill and not just power.

Vivero said that he has high hopes for Blom's future in the sport.

Blom himself hopes to continue wrestling in college.

"Because this is his first year, when he matures and grows even further as a wrestler he will help the team grow so much," Vivero said. "He will be 100 percent be the future star of the team." ♦

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Falcons end losing skid with OT victory at Lynbrook

BY SivaSambasivam

The Falcons were able to beat the Lynbrook Vikings 77-70 in an overtime thriller on Jan. 26, a game that was crucial to stopping their mid-season four-game losing skid and putting them on track heading into the season's final stretch and CCS.

After starting the preseason strong with a 6-2 record, qualifying for CCS with their sixth win, the Falcons proceeded to lose six of their next eight games, dropping their record to 10-8 overall and 2-4 in conference play going into their away conference showdown against the Vikings.

They lost to Half Moon Bay 74-62 on Dec. 29, Los Gatos 91-70 on Dec. 30, Monta Vista 70-64 on Jan. 3, and against Lynbrook 47-46 on Jan. 5.

The Falcons were able to take their next two games against Fremont and Milpitas, 71-68 and 61-52 respectively; however, they lost their next two to Santa Clara and Gunn, 80-69 and 56-54, heading into their second matchup with Lynbrook.

Senior forward Neal Iyengar attributed their midseason struggles to mainly their scoring difficulties.

Senior guard Michael Xue said many of the losses were "close heartbreakers" and that their losing streak was mainly because of lapses in defensive intensity for small stretches of the game.

"Our chances of winning (the league) are slim, but it's good that we are ending the season and going into CCS strong."

SENIOR Michael Xue

"Most of our losses were so close, so usually we let the other team go on a run at some point," said Xue.

In desperate need of a victory, the Falcons were able to step up as a team on the offensive end, with three of their five starters combining for 64 of their 77 points.

Senior forward Harrison Fong paced the team with 27 points, while junior guard Kyle Yu chipped in another 20, including the game-tying 3-pointer with 12 second

left in regulation, and Iyengar rounded the trio's dominant scoring performance with 17 points.

"After [Kyle's 3-pointer] we felt confident that we were going to win that game, especially with the momentum we had and our mentality throughout the whole game," said Xue. "We were locked in."

The Falcons were able to hold the Vikings to only 9 points in overtime while pouring in 16 themselves, en route to a thrilling overtime victory that that improved the team's confidence to make a deep playoff push.

"It was a good confidence booster," said Xue. "It puts us back on the right track and our chances at winning league aren't eliminated now."

Iyengar added that this win gives the team a ton of confidence going to the back-end of their schedule.

"It was a great win and now we need to keep our mentality where it is and not look back on our losses. If we take it one game at a time, we can make a good push in CCS playoffs," Iyengar said.

The team made it to the Division III CCS finals last year and qualified for the

NorCal Tournament. With their newfound momentum, players think they have a chance at winning CCS this season for the first time in school history.

With a 3-4 league record, the Falcons will have five more league games against Fremont, Milpitas, Santa Clara, Gunn and Monta Vista. They still have a small chance at winning the De Anza league.

"Our chances of winning are slim, but it's good that we are ending the season and going into CCS strong," said Xue. ♦

THE SCOREBOARD

70-64 (L) @ Monta Vista
47-46 (L) @ Lynbrook
71-68 (W) @ Fremont
61-53 (W) @ Milpitas
80-69 (L) @ Santa Clara
56-54 (L) @ Gunn
77-70 (W) @ Lynbrook

BOYS' SOCCER

CCS berth a strong possibility for injury-plagued team

BY JayKim & SandhyaSundaram

Senior forward Tim Kobra knew his season was over as soon as his shin made contact with the opposing player's cleat. He couldn't move and saw his leg was bending in the middle.

"My leg felt numb and wouldn't move with me," Kobra said. "That's when I knew it was broken."

Kobra lay in the grass and covered his face with his hands, knowing that his final soccer season had ended prematurely — He was injured at the game against Cu-

pertino on Jan. 5, only the second league game of the season, which ended in a 1-1 score.

Kobra was making a run through the defense to try to beat the goalkeeper to the ball. The goalkeeper stuck his cleats up in a dangerous tackle that snapped Kobra's tibia (shin bone) in the middle.

"It's sad, especially because it's his senior year," senior defender Chris Auches said. "But we're thinking of it as 'let's win for Tim' and 'let's make CCS for Tim.'"

Besides Kobra, another key injured

player is junior midfielder Jules Ducrot, who ruptured his ACL and tibia and is out for the year.

As of Jan. 29, the team had an El Camino league record of 5-1-1. The Falcons face tough matchups against Gunn on Feb. 2 and league-leading Lynbrook on Feb. 9 during their Senior Night. They need to continue their winning ways in order to qualify for CCS and secure their position in the league as the first or second seed.

Even with the loss of these crucial players, however, the team has excelled

defensively, with a goal differential of 14 — the best in the league. The boys have won four of their six games so far, allowing just one goal while scoring 13.

Team captain Solomon Bailey, a senior forward, said a CCS berth is a strong possibility if they keep playing well.

Regardless of the performance of the team, however, the injury of certain players changed their future in regards to soccer.

"My injury was especially disappointing because I spent the whole summer and fall club season getting prepared to have my best season ever," Kobra said. "I don't want my soccer career to end like this." ♦



Kobra

Eagles will shut Brady down

BY AlexWang

"Defense wins championships." The Philadelphia Eagles, whose defense showed up big in the playoffs, will hoist the Lombardi trophy for the first time in franchise history ever on Sunday.

Super Bowl LII kicks off with the Eagles and Patriots squaring off in front of the biggest audience in professional football. 60 hard-fought minutes of football later, confetti will fall, players will cry and fans will cheer. It will be a night to remember for Eagles fans in Philadelphia, and a night to forget for all bandwagon Patriots fans everywhere.

For the third time in the postseason, the Eagles are listed as underdogs, and for the third time, the Eagles will shatter that expectation. This lack of respect only motivates Eagles players and fans alike, who have embraced the underdog branding.

Despite setbacks, each player still plays his part in helping this team be one of the most well-rounded teams in the NFL.

This Eagles team is built from the ground up, starting with the linemen. They can consistently win both sides of the battle of the trenches. Their offensive line has All-Pro and Pro-Bowl talent who can give quarterback Nick Foles time and create running lanes for the running backs.

Their front seven on defense is also a tough unit that can generate pressure and lay hits on Patriots quarterback Tom Brady. Because of this, the Eagles have a good chance against the Patriots, as Brady's game has suffered in the past when he is pressured a lot by the defense.

The Eagles secondary will also play a major role in stopping the Patriots offense. They only allowed 10 and seven points to the Falcons and Vikings respectively in the playoffs, an impressive feat, considering the Falcons and Vikings both have stellar receivers and capable pass-catching backs.

On the other side of the ball, the Eagles skill position players on offense have shown they can make big plays, but also grind out the necessary yards. Foles, who many wrote off early on, has been improving each week after getting more familiar to the system, highlighted by a 352-yard and three touchdown performance against the stout Vikings secondary in the conference championship.

Redwood P.E. teacher Jen Vandenberg has been an Eagles fan since she was 10

years old and sophomore Chris Feng has been an Eagles fan for four years.

Vandenberg thought the regular season went very well this year. "They had a couple games where I was worried we would lose, but we ended up winning," she said.

Starting quarterback Carson Wentz's injury really scared Eagles fans and left their hopes of winning the Super Bowl hanging.

"I was super bummed when Wentz went down," Vandenberg said. "He was having such a great season. I must admit I was very nervous at first with Foles as the starter."

But, Feng said he had faith in Foles, calling him one of the best backups in the league.

The Eagles being labeled as underdogs does not bother Feng or Vandenberg either. They have been underdogs twice and won both games, and blowing out the Vikings in one of them, so he is not worried.

"I love when the Eagles are underdogs," Vandenberg said. "We tend to show up big for those games."

The road to their first ever Super Bowl will have to pass through the Patriots, but Feng said that they are very beatable. Vandenberg said the Eagles' strong defense must pressure Brady into making mistakes and then they have to capitalize on those mistakes. For offense, they need to take care of the ball and play consistent.

"It would be utterly amazing to win the Super Bowl," Vandenberg said. "The team and fans have been through many rough seasons, so winning would be pretty special."

In fact, she promised her students that they would not have to run any more miles if the Eagles won, converting many of her students to fans.

In the end, the Eagles are set to beat the Patriots in the Super Bowl.

By embracing the underdog mentality and overcoming injuries, they have gone far and will be able to bring their rabid fan base their first ever Lombardi Trophy. ♦

Pats aim to cement legacy

BY SivaSambasivam

After leading a fourth-quarter comeback victory against the Jaguars in the AFC championship, punctuated by the game-winning score to Danny Amendola, Tom Brady will seek his sixth Super Bowl victory, this Sunday.

We have become accustomed to seeing Brady's late-game heroics, and when he was able to put up two late touchdowns against an elite defense with stitched-up thumb and without his two most coveted offensive weapons, it wasn't much of a surprise — it was just vintage Brady.

For the last two decades, Brady has made Boston the football capital of the world, and his Patriots have been favored to win the Super Bowl most years since his arrival.

The odds have transferred to great success for Brady and the Patriots, as they will be entering their eighth Super Bowl in the last 16 years, coming off the heels of the most spectacular performance in NFL History in last year's 25-point overtime comeback against the Falcons. As a 5.5 favorite, they have the highest Vegas spread for any Super Bowl team since 2009.

The Patriots breezed through the regular season and the AFC Divisional Game against the Titans, 35-14, but in the week leading up to the championship game, Brady has injured his thumb in practice.

Brady's thumb needed 10 stitches, but he ended up playing in the game. However, for the first three quarters he looked out of sorts, and the Jaguars were on the verge of pulling off a shocking upset.

Their defense, led by Calais Campbell and Yannick Ngakoue, were able to stifle Brady like no other team during the season, holding him, to only 10 points throughout the first three quarters.

Of course, it didn't last.

Brady exploded in the fourth quarter, with two touchdowns, both to receiver Danny Amendola. The Patriots will face another stellar defense in the Eagles in the big game, however, if there is any QB up to the task of picking apart the league's elite front

sevens, it's Brady. Sophomore Raj Janardhan has been a Patriots fan since he was young. And although there are plenty of doubts surrounding the Patriots, he feels that the Patriots multi-decade run of success will continue this week-end.

Brady, at 40, is in the swan song stage of his career, and although he is still playing at an MVP-caliber level, injuries and years of taking this, could easily derail the rest of his career, so Janardhan believes that this is a must-win year.

The Brady Era in Boston will come to a close soon, and the Patriots will no longer be the favorites to win the Super Bowl every year. After trading away their future franchise quarterback, Jimmy Garoppolo to the 49ers, the Patriots lack depth at the quarterback position to seriously contend after Brady's retirement.

Janardhan still believes that Brady has a couple years left in the tank and he will at least be leading the team going into the 2018 season.

"Brady has been great this season, and no what happens Brady's going to be the No. 1 starter next season," Janardhan said.

Janardhan, for one, thinks that these final few seasons of Brady's career could be instrumental in determining where Brady, and the Patriots organization's legacy and where they rank among the all time greats.

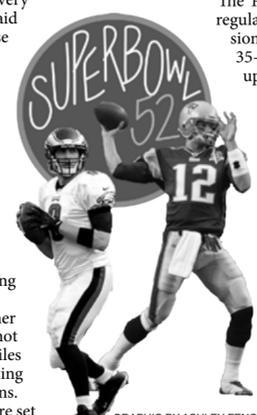
"I think Brady's going after two things from a legacy perspective. The greatest player of all time and the greatest clutch performer of all time," Janardhan said. "This is one of the best and last chances the Patriots and Brady have at cementing their dynasty as one of the great ever in all of sports."

Janardhan is also going to enjoy seeing his favorite football during the ending years of his magnificent ride.

"I have watched Brady ever since I was four years old, and it is going to be really sad to see him go, but for now, I'm going to savor every last throw he makes," said Janardhan.

There are still doubters about Brady's status as the greatest quarterback of all time. After Sunday, Brady should be able to silence those critics and establish his place atop the QB Mount Olympus.

There is a lot on the line this Sunday both for players' personal achievements and for team success, but for Brady and Belichick personally, it will just be another day under the bright lights and another hoisting of the Vince Lombardi Trophy. ♦



GRAPHIC BY ASHLEY FENG

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Falcons share 1st place with win over previously undefeated Vikings

BY AnnaNovoselov

In a defensive struggle, the Falcons came away with a 27-24 victory against previously undefeated Lynbrook last Friday. With a record 6-1, the Falcons moved into a tie with Lynbrook for first place in the El Camino League.

"We knew that we could win because we were so close last time we played them," senior guard Chloe Fung said.

The team was down by four at halftime, but picked up the intensity in the second half, tying the score at the end of the third quarter and pulling ahead with a few valued possessions in the fourth. Fung said that their defense and good communication kept the Viking shooters from scoring.

On Jan. 23, the Falcons defeated Homestead High at home. It was a close game until the third quarter, when the Falcons extended the lead to win 60-43.

"They're a good team," senior post Harshini Ramaswamy said. "It was definitely neck and neck at times"

Coach Danny Wallace said that the girls did a great job pushing the ball up the court and setting up open shots. He believes that they deserved to win due to the effort each player gave.

Senior guard Chloe Fung said that the

players scouted Homestead carefully and developed a game plan that they executed well. The team meticulously structured its defense around Homestead's offense, as it knew many of its plays.

Ramaswamy said that the team played "cohesively," which had been a recurring difficulty, for it has "struggled to reconcile [the players'] individual playing styles with working as a team."

Since the start of league, the girls also beat Monta Vista 56-32, Fremont 57-34, Los Altos 42-36 and Milpitas 49-35. However, they previously lost to Lynbrook 49-44 at home on Jan. 5.

With their current record, the team has a chance to win league if it wins the next six consecutive games. To achieve this goal, Wallace said the girls "need to play hard, rebound, and control the tempo of the game."

Over the winter break, the team traveled to San Francisco and participated in The West Coast Jamboree tournament from December 28-30. Wallace said that it was a "great testament" of how the girls can compete against CCS level teams.

"We exceeded our own expectations," Ramaswamy said. Despite having many missing or sick players, the team battled its way to the championship bracket.

Sophomore post Ella Parr said that



FALCON // PHOEBE WANG

Freshman Jayne Loo drives to the basket against a forward from Homestead. The Falcons, who are tied for first place, won the game 60-43 after pulling ahead in the third quarter.

she enjoyed going into a game without knowing anything about the team's strategy or plays.

The trip created unforgettable memories and strengthened the bonds between the teammates. Ramaswamy said that it improved trust and led the team to play less individually on the court.

Despite the team's success, Wallace said that team dynamics and individual attitudes is the most important aspect of the sport.

"It's not the record that makes me proud of them," Wallace said. "It's how hard they play is every game and how they never quit on each other." ♦

>> snapshots



FALCON // PHOEBE WANG



FALCON // FREDERICK KIM



FALCON // PHOEBE WANG



FALCON // PHOEBE WANG

During the Cultural Fair on Jan. 19, junior Jennah El-Ashmawi quizzes people about Egypt before passing out Baklavas.

Senior Solomon Bailey speaks at the annual Speak Up For Change assembly on Jan. 16 about his experience breaking barriers like racial stereotypes.

Senior point guard Chloe Fung drives to the basket for a scoop layup against Homestead on Jan. 23, winning the game 60-43.

Members of ASB chat with eighth graders at electives night, which took place on Jan. 29.

buzzworthy >> I love Hue: an undying love for ombré

BY Elicia Ye

Settling into our seats for sixth-period AP Statistics, my friend and fellow Lifestyles Editor senior Vivien Zhang started swiping right and left on her phone. Worried that she was illegally present on Tinder (the legal age is 18, but since when has that stopped anybody), I glanced at her screen and instead found a collection of jumbled, colorful tiles.

"It's called 'I Love Hue,'" she explained. "You should try it too!"

Named one of Google Play's Best Games of 2017 in the "Most Innovative" category, the new smartphone puzzle game's popularity recently rose among students, encouraging them to adopt a new perception about color and increasing their knowledge about the transitional colors that go between hues such as light peach and neon pink.

As I launched the app after downloading, the misplaced army green and faded char-

treuse tiles on the starting page taunted me, as if challenging my abilities to place the colors in order so that they transition smoothly between rows and columns. I could no longer resist the temptation. After tapping "start," the tiles faded away and I officially began my week-long journey into a world of colors and patterns.

The first level in the "Beginner" category consisted of long rectangular stripes from golden yellow to scarlet, followed by nine more levels of large — mostly square — tiles of every shade between each color of the rainbow.

Before long, I had earned enough "hearts" to unlock the next category, "Apprentice." Instead of omitting levels to skip ahead, I decided to finish the category I was currently in before moving onto the next degree of skill. With every level I completed, I took several seconds to appreciate the impeccable artistry of the masterpiece before

an empty heart with glowing white borders faded into the puzzle, blessing me with a beacon of success.

The difference is that "I Love Hue" is related to the work I do on Illustrator, more aesthetically pleasing and has the soothing sound of a thumping heart each time a tile is placed. Additionally, I could sneak in a game or two when I am in the In-N-Out Drive-Thru line or before I fall asleep without much hassle or stress. If anything, "I Love Hue" has become a relaxation and stress relief, waiting in the back of my phone for me to collect daily 12-Prism packs.

Having won enough hearts to pass "Mystic," "Prophet," "Guru," and unlock the final category, "Visionary," I have learned to distinguish fuschia from magenta (arguably one of the least appealing shades out there), plum from mulberry, lavender from mauve ... I ran out of my limited vocabulary for "purple," — you get the idea. I have yet to

distinctively identify navy apart from indigo, but believe me — I am getting there.



Just like every other smartphone game/app craze, "I Love Hue" has fans and detractors.

Senior Smrithi Balebail counts herself among those flummoxed by the app, saying, "Although all my friends are obsessed with it, I don't love playing the game because I could never discern which colors are supposed to be adjacent to each other."

"I Love Hue" also counts the number of steps players take to complete one level and shows them the World Record number of moves. While this feature could add to the pressure to perform well, players generally complete the round with fewer steps than the so-called World Record, inspiring them to look up from their phone and exclaim "I Love Hue" to the world. ♦

Even Hogwarts rejected us...

Wang-ardium



Ye-viosa

Austin Wang and Elicia Ye

Dear Muggle,

The selection committee has completed its deliberations, and it is with genuine regret that we inform you that we are unable to offer you admission to the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry Class of 2025. This year's application pool was the strongest in the School's history. You should not feel our decision reflects negatively on you or your potential as a successful Muggle, but unfortunately wizarding may not be the right path for you.

You are either magical or you are not. While there is a possibility that you are a Squib, we highly recommend you to apply to Muggle universities such as Stanford or Harvard as safeties. Moving forward, here are a few notes on your wizarding application.

We factored in the many "magical" endeavors you claimed to have explored in your free time but found it very detrimental in evaluating your application, as some

of your "activities" were quite disturbing. Filling your jeans with frogspawn does not count as performing magic, and breeding pocket frogs is not an extracurricular activity.

Furthermore, we double-checked your Quidditch records — running around with a broomstick between your legs with a bunch of middle-aged men from your Harry Potter Fanclub does not qualify you as being a Division One national athlete. In addition, although you have had a lot of experience in talking to snakes at your previous high school, that unfortunately does not mean you are fluent in Parseltongue.

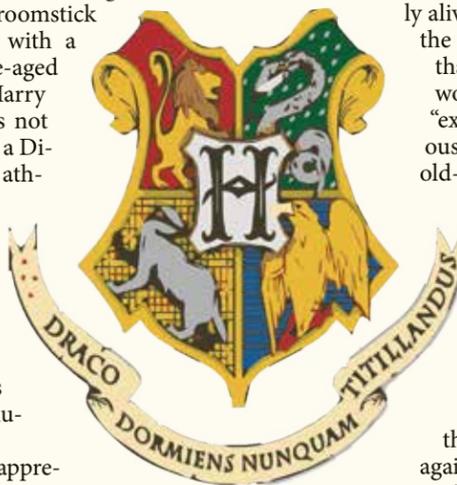
While we truly appreciate your commitment, we kindly request that you follow the college's detailed map and instructions during your visit. Even though we have removed the hidden entrance at platform 9 ¾, we did not remove the security cameras at the station. We discovered the tapes of you running into the column not once or twice, but three times. Although you have showed demonstrated interest,

we simply do not reciprocate.

On a last note, sending your application by delivery of your owl, Edgar, is an outdated and a poor option. Your application was received almost a full month late, and we were disappointed to find your owl emaciated to the bones, barely

alive and sprawled across the snow. We imagine that tying three pounds worth VCR tapes of your "extracurriculars" (seriously, we know we are an old-timey university but even wizards can't make those things work) must have put considerable strain on you.

It is honestly shocking that such a small bird carried so much paper across the Atlantic. Then again, we also noticed that you tried to send the application more than once. We have since buried your last owl, Owlvin, who evidently did not complete the journey. Your living owl is now in rehabilitation and we have reported you for animal abuse.



Very Truly Yours,
Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry Office of Admissions

topten

WAYS FOR A NON-FAN TO SURVIVE SUPER BOWL LII

- 10 **Know which teams are playing in the Super Bowl this year:** No, it's not between the Warriors and Giants.
- 9 **Place your bets:** Oh wait, we can't condone gambling in a school newspaper.
- 8 **This isn't college football:** Keep the "Roll Tides" at home.
- 7 **Fake it till you make it:** Be sure to name drop a couple players' names.
- 6 **Choose a team to back:** Buy both Patriot and Eagles jerseys so you can change at halftime, depending on the score.
- 5 **Drink lots of water:** You don't need to stay hydrated on the field, but you can avoid sports talk when you go to the bathroom for the 15th time.
- 4 **Budget your weekend well:** You'll spend three hours watching the ball be in play for 11 minutes.
- 3 **Shkmuxuftstunch:** Keep your mouth full with guac so you don't have to expose your lack of knowledge.
- 2 **"Unbelievable:"** The phrase works whether your team is winning or losing.
- 1 **Know who's performing at halftime:** Perfect hitting those high-pitched Justin Timberlake notes.

>> Jay Kim and Victor Liu