



Teacher shares his painted scenes from Maine.



Cultural clubs celebrate Lunar New Year.



Girls' basketball keeps rolling in league.



THE saratogafalcon



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Senior Ishana Narayanan dances alongside Tamasha members in the Dil Se show at Irvington High on Jan. 20.

dancing

FOR THE CULTURE

INDIAN CULTURAL AWARENESS CLUB PERFORMS ANNUAL BOMBAY IN THE BAY SHOW

by Anni~~ssa~~ Mu & Anna~~Novoselov~~

Tonight and tomorrow night, community members will immerse themselves in Indian culture for three hours at the McAfee Center, with choreographed dance performances, an acapella singing act, lively music, vibrant costumes, decorations and delicious food.

The performance, Bombay in the Bay (BNB), is the result of more than 300 Indian Cultural Awareness Club (ICAC) members who have poured in hours of time in order to organize the annual event.

The show will start at 6 p.m. on both days. Tonight, tickets will cost >> **BNB** on pg. 5

Courtesy of S.O. Productions

EVENT

Benefit show to be dedicated to former activities director

by Kevin~~Size~~

On March 3 in the Large Gym, audience members will see a myriad of outfits as more than 200 students walk the runway for the school's annual Benefit Fashion Show. This year's show will be held in honor of former activities director Rebeca Marshburn, who was instrumental in the expansion of Benefit during her time at the school. Marshburn lost her daughter Courtney to cancer at the age of 15 more than a decade ago. Proceeds from the show will go to the American Cancer Society.

"Mrs. Marshburn did a lot for Benefit,

and we wanted to show our appreciation for her," head commissioner Kate Bossi said. "She's been through a lot, and she deserves this more than anybody."

Marshburn moved to Texas two years ago. This year's Benefit commission has raised enough money to fly her out and invite her to the show.

Benefit commissioners will talk about Marshburn's and her story in their script for the show. A silent auction will begin at 5:30 p.m. and the show will begin at 8 p.m. Student tickets will cost \$15, general admission will cost \$25 and VIP



Marshburn

tickets will cost \$45. VIP tickets include seating closest to the runway and a gift bag.

With the purpose of the show in mind, commissioners began searching for outfits for 200 students that have signed up to walk.

"It's annoying and stressful this year, because no stores are giving us outfits," said commissioner senior Mervi Tan. "The old stores are not willing to lend clothes, so we have to find places to shop."

According to commissioner senior An-

gela Lee, the number of models has increased to 200 models this year. Luckily, the struggle to put together outfits is beginning to turn around for the commissioners.

Lee said that women's outfits have begun to come together with help from various shops, but men's outfits are still in need as corporate stores such as Macy's are not as disposed to provide clothing. Still, the girls are optimistic they can pull it together.

"We're aiming to have all the outfits in soon because the fittings are in mid-February," Tan said. "Bring all your friends to Benefit because it's really fun and you're doing it for a good cause!" ♦

>> what'sinside

YOUTUBE

Online Videos

Reporter believes Youtube creators are becoming increasingly toxic on the platform. **pg. 9**

PERSPECTIVES

Self-love

Student learns how to appreciate herself more after learning about her immigrant sister's experiences. **pg. 11**

GENEROSITY

Traditions

Art, techniques and psychology of gift giving explored. **pg. 18**

BLOG

Bellarmino boys rated looks of female teachers

by Lina~~Kim~~, Claire~~Rhee~~, Kyle~~Wang~~ & Sophia~~Zivanic~~

Editor's note: Gardner and Taylor are pseudonyms used to protect the anonymity of the teachers from Bellarmine College Preparatory.

Additionally, The Falcon tried to contact the blog's creator, but was unable to find his contact information — the blog was published anonymously.

When senior Gabby Smullen of Presentation High School stumbled upon an anonymous blog called Bellarmine Broads on Dec. 23, she immediately told her friends about it. The blog was public but had not drawn much attention or criticism despite its purpose: rating the attractiveness of the female teachers

at the Catholic all-boys high school Bellarmine College Preparatory.

The blog originated last February and contains explicit descriptions of erotic fantasies about 10 female Bellarmine teachers and staff members submitted and posted by students or alumni of the school.

Before the blog was taken down in late January, The Falcon was able to take screenshots of some posts on the site.

One excerpt read: "It's not something that everyone at Bell openly talks about, but it's certainly there. Whether it's just a normal day in the classroom and Ms. Gardner is walking to her class in a short skirt or it's a dress up day which means Ms. Taylor has a blouse showing

>> **BLOG** on pg. 7

MAP

Seniors showcase skills in final projects

by Andrew~~Lee~~ & Emilee~~Zhou~~

From abuse to murder to other various forms of horror stories, the many senior Media Arts Program projects can be overwhelmingly intense and dark. As a change of pace, senior Kate Bossi and her group wanted to create an emotional project that would leave the audience feeling "nostalgic and happy."

Her group is telling the story of two sisters and the changes in their relationship as they age.

"We hope to create a project that everyone can relate to, even if you don't have any siblings," Bossi said.

Bossi and her group, which includes seniors Eryn Lee, Riley

Carter, Quinn Dozier and Sadhana Vadrevu, have been busy working and are looking to cast the actors and finalize the script. They have also found ways to integrate poems into every act of the film, fellow group member senior Eryn Lee said.

In the upcoming weeks, senior MAP students will be able to show off the different skills that they have learned over their experiences in the program in a year-long project due in late April.

"It's essentially the culminating project of the entire program, and after years of being trained in different skills and having projects that are targeted

>> **MAP** on pg. 5



news >> briefs

Rodriguez's retirement may end trips

Like clockwork, every February break, students enrolled in the school's Spanish program visit Cuernavaca, Mexico, as part of a cultural immersion program.

Students attend school at Bachillerato Internacional Uninter (BIU) during the day for six hours, gaining proficiency in the language and spending the rest of the time sightseeing and attending fun events with their host families.

It's unclear whether the trip will continue in the future since Spanish teacher Arnaldo Rodriguez's plans to retire in June and he has been the organizer of the trip for 44 years.

"If I don't return, someone else will have to do it, and I don't know if there is anybody who is willing to do that," Rodriguez said. "If I'm not here next year, it's possible that I could organize the trip if the school allows me to."

Spanish teacher Sarah Voorhees said that if Rodriguez is unable to organize the trip in retirement, preparations would have to be split among other Spanish teachers.

Students such as senior Ryan Anderson who have visited Cuernavaca as part of the program think it would be a loss if kids in the Spanish program lose the chance to experience going to a Mexican school and interacting with Spanish speakers.

Rodriguez hopes that the trip would continue next year as part of the tradition of the Spanish program.

"My hope is that the program stays," Rodriguez said. "I really don't want to see it dying, because I've been here in the district for 44 years and I started taking students abroad in my very first year."

— Sandhya Sundaram and Phoebe Wang

Strong mock trial ends season with a loss

Having won only one of its four matches, the 16 members of the mock trial team didn't advance past the first round of the annual county competition.

The defense team lost to Willow Glen High School on Feb. 1 54-46.

Sophomores Siva Sambasivam and Kaitlyn Tsai, along with senior Katherine Zhou, served as attorneys. They had the difficult job of proving the defendant innocent. Unfortunately, they did not have much success.

Their well prepared witnesses included senior Stacey Chen, sophomore Anirudh Khemani, sophomore Sanya Kwatra and junior Ines Picard.

On Jan. 31 the prosecution team faced off against BASIS independent school and lost by a few points.

Senior Catherine Zhang, juniors Ashley Feng and Khiana Berkowitz and sophomore Christina Xiao were the prosecution attorneys.

Their well prepared witnesses were junior Hugo Huang, sophomore Shahmun Jafri, senior Michelle Vu and junior Anuj Changavi.

On Jan. 25, the prosecution team went against one of last year's semi-finalists, Prospect High, where the Falcons lost by a wide margin.

On Jan. 23, the defense faced Valley Christian High at the San Jose courthouse for their first round of competition and won by a point.

— Ava Hooman

>> falcononline



Top Story

Reporters interview four teachers to find out what made them decide to pursue their careers in teaching. on pg. 19

Top Picture

Seniors Will Turpin and Robert Scott pose for pictures after Turpin wins Mr. Saratoga on Feb. 9.

FALCON // Frederick Kim

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



>> picturethis



EVERYONE'S A CRITIC >> Teacher judges Bret Yeilding, Carrie Bohls and Ken Nguyen sit at the judging panel and deliberate over the winner of the Mr. Saratoga pageant on Feb. 9.

FALCON // FREDERICK KIM

CLUBS

Commissioners' reforms add structure to clubs

BY Aaron Choi & Esha Lakhotia

In the 2016-17 school year, club members and officers recognized a lack of coordination in their clubs. While members grew impatient from the irregularity of meetings, leadership was under constant stress from keeping track of whether clubs were meeting regularly and getting enough members.

Some clubs did not even bother to hold meetings at all. The 12-member attendance quota put certain clubs in danger of losing their status as official clubs, while other inactive clubs went undetected and consequence-free.

This year's club commissioners, seniors Ishana Narayanan and Elicia Ye, made it their mission to completely redesign the

club system to make it organized, efficient and accountable.

First, they shifted the club minutes from monthly printed forms to online submissions in Google Drive to better organize the influx of minutes.

In addition to using digital minutes, Narayanan and Ye have implemented a new method to improve the quality of clubs. At the end of both semesters, they ask that club advisers fill out a document summarizing what the club did. Clubs this year have been held accountable for the content of their meetings.

This new method has allowed Narayanan and Ye to easily monitor what clubs are doing. Additionally, it keeps the club officers communicating with their advisers who communicate with ASB.

Another rule they implement-

ed was the online club calendar, which has helped spread awareness of smaller clubs.

"We get emails from parents or students requesting club information, and we are able to get back to them by accessing our own database, with all the club contact information," Ye said.

Ye and Narayanan's main goal of "streamlining communication and getting the clubs more involved in the leadership activities" has drawn approval and positive feedback from parents, staff and students alike.

"After merging with the World Health Club, the Hepatitis B Club has gotten more members because of the club commissioners' decisions," said senior Tyler Wu. "Since the changes, I'd say that our club is tighter knit than it was last year." ♦

DRAMA

'Poppins' to fly in McAfee

BY Jessica Wang

For the first time, the drama department will be performing a musical with advanced stage effects and techniques, specifically theatrical flying.

The spring musical is "Mary Poppins," the renowned Broadway musical based on novels of similar title by P. L. Travers.

The story tells of a nanny, Mary Poppins, who is able to fly and takes the children of the wealthy Banks family, Jane and Michael, on fantastical adventures in order to bring the family closer together and restore the children's relationship with their uptight father, George.

Through donations from alumni families, previous show profits and fundraising, the drama department will be able to incorporate theatrical flying using a system of cables, pulleys and counterweights to perform many of the scenes from the Broadway show, including the arrival and departure of Mary Poppins, who flies in and out of the wings across the stage with her umbrella.

"We're doing it through one of the main theatrical flying compa-

nies," drama teacher Sarah Thermond said. "So we decided that if we're going to do it, we just had to go ahead and say we're only doing this if we can raise the money, and so far we've been successful."

Dance and vocal auditions for the spring musical were held from Jan. 24-26, and rehearsals started on Jan. 30. Performances will be on April 27-29 and May 4-5 in the McAfee Center.

Senior Hannah Julie Yoon will play the lead role of Mary Poppins. The other lead role of Bert, the narrator, will be played by senior Mateusz Kranz. The cast has 49 students from all grades. The musical score will be played live by an orchestra comprised of students and a hired pianist.

"Mary Poppins is a magical woman who appears to families with neglected children in order to be their nanny," Yoon said. "And she uses her magic to bring more love and compassion to the families she works for."

The ensemble for the spring musical has twice as many members as the fall play, including 35 students performing on stage. Along with a technical director, a musical production requires vo-

cal and instrumental directors, a choreographer and sound managers.

The songs are well within students' vocal range and the play is character-focused. Throughout the show, there are also magic tricks that happen on stage with each scene as well as raw dance numbers, including the memorable "Step in Time," a large group tap number with a dance break utilizing theatrical flying. Many of these elements present challenges for the cast, such as higher commitment from both technical and performance aspects, compared to previous musicals.

"These are just challenges that only exist with this play because of the story and the fact that the main character has magical powers," Thermond said. "So by choosing any show where the main character has magical abilities, you've automatically just created a difficulty for everyone."

However, Thermond believes that even with these obstacles, students will be able to succeed by bringing in the right energy and attitude.

"Our kids always rise to the occasion," Thermond said. ♦

PAGEANT

Turpin wins annual Mr. Saratoga competition

by Jessica Wang
& Jayne Zhou

The six boys who were brave enough to compete for the title of Mr. Saratoga last Friday night at the McAfee Center showed off everything from their top talent to their bathing suit good looks.

In the end, the 120 people in the audience voted senior Will Turpin as the alpha male in the annual senior class fundraiser. Also participating were juniors David Berkowitz, Justin Chao and Sora Ebrahimi and seniors Nathan Chin and Vishal Narayan.

Turpin decided to enter because he enjoyed being around the other participants and giving comedic performances. Prior to the competition, he spent a lot of time preparing and practicing his dance moves to the song "Canned Heat" from the movie "Napoleon Dynamite."

"It feels unbelievable because I didn't think I was going to win," Turpin said. "You could say I lacked confidence, but I can't thank the crowd enough for voting for me."

The runner-up, Chin, dazzled the crowd during the talent portion with his rendi-

tion of Taylor Swift's "You Belong With Me." He entered the competition in his last year of high school, determined to leave good memories. Before the show, he and senior Alan Xiao had prepared for three to four hours by singing in the choir room.

"Mr. Saratoga was a memorable experience and I am glad I participated," Chin said. "I've always loved Taylor Swift, so that inspired me to sing this song, and the audience loved my performance. Even though I got second place, it was a fun experience."

English teachers Carrie Bohls, Ken Nguyen and Spanish teacher Bret Yeilding sat at the judging table in front of the stage, eager to evaluate the six boys. The three segments of the mock pageant included modeling, a talent portion and a question and answer section.

Between each portion, the judges were given the opportunity to critique and comment on the contestants' overall performance. The winner was decided by the audience who would text in their vote.

The judges comically critiqued each round. "Will, get some sun," one of the judges said, after seeing the contestants' swim-



Senior class president Robert Scott shakes hands with Mr. Saratoga winner Will Turpin in his new crown and sash on Feb. 9.

suit showcase.

Since 2015, Mr. Saratoga has been a fundraiser for the senior class, who raised about \$500 from the this year's ticket sales.

Senior class president Robert Scott said the night was a success even though the boys' soccer team's Senior Night drew away potential audience members. ♦

OLYMPIADS

Students partake in yearly mathematics contest

by Jeffrey Xu
& Michael Zhang

Seventy-four students registered to take the American Mathematics Competition (AMC) 10/12 on Feb. 7 and 15. The AMC, a contest that could eventually give some students the chance to qualify for the USA Mathematics Olympiad, a prestigious contest given only to the top 250 students in the nation, is available for all students to register.

The 75-minute AMC contests consist of 25 multiple-choice questions consisting of topics such as number theory, geometry, algebra and combinatorics.

The school's Math Club adviser, math teacher Andrew Shoemaker, hosted the competition in the library during second period on both testing dates.

According to Math Club president senior Rahul Kumar, approximately the same number of students registered for the contests as last year.

"I think registration for AMC this year has been similar to past years," he said. "But we don't actually know how many people showed up because we didn't take attendance."

The Math Club also charges a \$10 registration fee for the contests, since it costs money for the school to order them from the Mathematical Association of America (MAA), the organization that runs these contests.

In order to qualify for the American Invi-

tational Mathematics Competition (AIME), or the next level of exams after AMC, students taking AMC 10 must score in the top 2.5 percent nationwide and those taking AMC 12 must score in the top 5 percent.

Traditionally, the school, which had 33 AIME qualifiers last year, has performed well in these types of competitions. "Overall, I think the contest was a successful one," Kumar said. "Especially with our new adviser Mr. Shoemaker, things ran a lot more smoothly than last year." ♦

DRAMA

Comedy Sportz to hold staff-student competition

by Daniel Bessonov
& Patrick Li

Comedy Sportz is home to improv games turned into a competition with opposing teams. It is a subset of Drama Club, but many of its members are students who are not part of the club. At the beginning of the school year, they usually put on one show, just to show new people what it is like. Later, they have auditions where the members are judged on their improv skills and teamwork.

"One thing we look for is if they can form a scene with people that they may not be as

comfortable with, and if they are willing to look like an idiot on stage," senior co-president Amelia Berardo said.

This year has not had as many Comedy Sportz shows yet, because there are a lot more new members who comprise nearly half the team.

"Normally, we have several shows each semester, but we only had one last semester so we're planning to have a couple more this semester," Berardo said.

On March 2, the club will host a special competition pitching an all-teacher team against an all-student team.

So far, Spanish teacher Bret Yeilding and principal Paul Robinson have agreed to participate. Crowd participation is crucial in a Comedy Sportz show — two opposing teams perform a scene with characters and a plot, and the audience decides which performance they like the most.

Senior co-president Katherine Sabel said that the turnout for the first show on Sept. 28 was "pretty good." Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves a lot.

The club has not been doing a lot of marketing this year, as most of the participation comes from word of mouth.

They plan to do some more outreach next year, as there was not an increase in attendance from last year.

"A lot of times we've found it difficult to get people to come to the first show, but the people who come realize they find it really exciting and decide to join," Berardo said.

For instance, junior Isaiah Viviero is a MAP student who is not really in to drama, but joined Comedy Sportz after attending a performance last year.

"We have a really wide variety of students who enjoy doing this because it's really fun and a good skill to have," Berardo said. ♦

ENGLISH 10

Nguyen brings George Orwell's '1984' into curriculum

by Pranav Ahuja
& Jackson Green

As the bell rings to signal the end of the period, several sophomores stand up, put their hands to their hearts and say, "Victory to Big Brother!"

It's not a challenge, prank nor fad. It's actually an assignment for their English class.

After years of teaching "All Quiet on the Western Front" with along with other sophomore English teachers, Ken Nguyen decided this year to begin teaching "1984" by George Orwell instead.

"There are a number of reasons as to why we made the switch," Nguyen said. "One was that I personally wanted to change books, as

I've been teaching 'All Quiet on the Western Front' for a number of years and I thought I could use a break from it."

Nguyen said the new book is equally challenging material for sophomores, since both novels include dense text with numerous passages that require close reading for full understanding. Another reason for choosing the book is that the topics depicted in "1984" have echoes of some current events, especially with the increasing development of technology such as drones and video camera observation of citizens.

"You can see parallels between the surveillance system and the media changing their words to reflect a certain political view," sophomore Allen Chen said. "'1984'

serves as a good warning, but I don't think it's exactly aligned with today's political climate."

To accompany the book, Nguyen decided to also run a police state simulation with the whole class to show students what it's like in the novel's fictional world of Oceania.

"Part of the book is about this world that might be hard for someone to wrap their minds around, so I thought it'd be fun to put students in a world sort of like Oceania but not to that extreme," Nguyen said. "Now students know what it feels like to be always on their toes and paranoid about being caught based on whether those accusations are legitimate or not."

The class was given multiple rules to

follow in the simulation, such as wearing red and having to greet each other with the phrase "Good morning, comrade." Every week of the simulation, students were chosen to be informants and tell "Big Brother" (played, of course, by Nguyen) if anyone broke the rules.

Sophomore Arman Rafati said that he feels like he's reading a novel similar in difficulty to "All Quiet on the Western Front" and has found "1984" both enjoyable and enlightening.

"[The simulation] taught us how difficult the characters of the book really had it," Rafati said. "If we just read the book and didn't do the simulation, we wouldn't have realized that it was actually that hard." ♦

FALCON FOCUS

Rally DJ finds ways to enliven crowds

by Chelsea Leung
& Alexandra Li

At the start of his freshman year, current senior Kedar Abhyankar watched the rally commissioners race back and forth between running the audio, speaking to the crowd and doing their skit. When former leadership and Spanish teacher Rebeca Marshburn asked Abhyankar to manage the audio during rallies to lighten the commissioners' workload, he was excited to experiment with music.

In sixth grade, Abhyankar was first exposed to electronic dance music (EDM), and he realized that music did not require actual instruments — it could be made with only a computer. His interest and pleading pushed his parents to buy a turntable for \$2,000 on which he began experimenting and learned to mix music.

"I have such an innate passion for [audio mixing and sound systems]."



SENIOR Kedar Abhyankar

After helping out with the rally audio during his freshman year, Abhyankar progressed to also help run the Homecoming audio during his sophomore and junior year, eventually managing the entire sound system by himself during Homecoming his senior year as the student Audio Visual (AV) technician director. Over the years, Abhyankar has learned to master the process of running the music.

"There's a lot of different things, like audience reaction, to pay attention to," Abhyankar said. "I pay attention to whether the audience wants more pumped up, more somber or more sad music."

For example, during rallies, Abhyankar

starts off with his rally anthem, which is "Soundclash" by Flosstradamus and Troy-Boi. He then chooses songs from a playlist he creates from music he finds on YouTube.

According to leadership teacher Matt Torrens, Abhyankar is always reliable and dedicated, coming to school at odd hours to help with the sound system. Torrens remembered how, while decorating for Homecoming this year on a Sunday morning, the sound system was not working. Although Abhyankar was at a robotics demo, they FaceTimed and were able to fix the problem.

"It's been very helpful because Kedar always comes right when we need him," Torrens said.

After the implementation of a new and portable sound system this school year, Abhyankar worked closely with AV director Gordon Blancett to design and understand the functions of the system. Abhyankar has received recognition from and has gotten to know the staff, especially in the AV office inside the library. During breaks, he often sits in the AV office because the adults share similar interests with Abhyankar.

Because Abhyankar will graduate this spring, the future of the sound system management is unclear. Although he wants to establish a training system where a senior trains at least one junior every year, he has not found any permanent replacements.

"I don't think anyone could really pick up where I left off since I do so much," he said. "I try to get people to help, but they always say, 'I have other things to do,' or 'It's not fun,' or 'I want to have a turntable.'"

For Abhyankar, though, his future is clear. Using the experience gained in high school, he plans to DJ as a side job in college.

"In the future, I'd like to learn new mixing techniques and learn about audio mixing," he said. "Who knows, maybe I'll even do some classes in college for audio mixing now that I have such an innate passion for it." ♦

PARKING LOTS

Tickets help restore order, open up spaces

by Alexandra Li
& Jeffrey Xu

On the Monday back from the winter break, student cars poured into the front parking lot as the first bell rang, all frantically searching for a parking space. None were available.

When administrators arrived in the lot, they discovered that many of the parked cars did not have parking permits. The perpetrators were either students who had driven without purchasing a permit and parents and community members who were walking on the track and chose to park in the student lot due to the rainy weather.

In theory, there should have been spaces available for those with permits. According to activities secretary Anna Ybarra, the school has only sold 337 parking permits so far this year, even though there are approximately 350 spots available for students.

In response to the violations, administrators had about 40 cars ticketed and had individual conversations with the parents and community members reminding them that they had to park in the visitor lot when they come on campus. The next day, there were again plenty of open spaces in the student parking lots, and both students and adults began abiding by the rules again.

To make sure the problem did not reappear, the administration met and decided to open the first two rows of the staff/visitor lot to students. Since then, the administration has observed the parking lots daily. They found there to be an average of 20 spots open, mostly in the lot closest to the Sports Plaza.

The following day, fearing that they had sold too many parking permits, the administration created a waitlist for the further sale of parking permits.

Once they realized that the problem had been resolved, the Activities Office resumed selling parking permits to those on the waitlist; there are still plenty of open

parking spaces.

Junior Mark Guidry was one of the first students to be temporarily placed on the waitlist after attempting to purchase a permit on Jan. 9.

"It surprised me because it always looked like there were open spots that were left over," Guidry said. "It had never happened before in previous years, so I didn't really understand where the problem came from."

While some believed that the sudden lack of available parking spaces was caused by sophomores gaining the ability to purchase parking permits, assistant principal Brian Thompson said sophomores can receive parking permits only on a need basis.

"I didn't really understand where the problem had come from."



JUNIOR Mark Guidry

The issue that remains is that many students still complain about their not being able to get the best parking spots. They then often put the blame on the administration and their policies.

"My answer to that is if you want a priority parking spot, come earlier," Thompson said.

Thompson also reminded students that taking steps toward being more conservation-minded, such as carpooling, biking or walking can also alleviate the parking lot congestion.

"The community members were great once we reminded them that they should park in the visitor lot," Thompson said.

"From the kids, the response was more of embarrassment that they got caught and they chose not to do it again. It really isn't a problem. It's just one day where people broke the rules." ♦

ORGANIZATIONS

Clubs dig into new projects to improve campus

by Chelsea Leung
& Kaitlyn Wang

Though most garden plots around school are filled with flowers or other generic plants, students were surprised to find edible crops growing behind the ceramics room recently.

The Agriculture Club, which started this year, has planted one of four garden plots near the ceramics room. According to junior co-president Kevin Jin, the club is growing peas and carrots during Thursday lunch meetings. The peas are doing the best so far, growing to about one foot high. Although Agriculture Club began planting during first semester, the carrots only recently sprouted, as a result of the cold winter weather.

The maintenance crew, who also do gardening work on campus, maintains the other plots. Agriculture Club borrowed shovels from them and also brought tools from home to work on their plot.

Since the club plans to donate crops to charities such as West Valley Community Services, Jin said that the gardening project is a good start to Agriculture Club's first year of existence and a way for the four active members to learn the basics of agriculture.

"As a first-year club, it is really difficult to attract members, especially since many people in Saratoga are mostly engaged in STEM fields," Jin said. "For now, our goals are to simply to raise awareness of the impact and

complexity within the agricultural field."

Environmental Club, like Agriculture Club, is also striving to increase member involvement through campus projects.

Because some students mistake the gray recycling bins for trash cans, Environmental Club has attached signs that clearly identify the bins as recycling. Members and officers attached laminated signs to garbage cans and recycling bins around campus, illustrating what items can be thrown away or recycled.

"We know that the signs are not an end-all solution, but a goal of the project is to make recycling as easy as possible for everyone," senior Environmental Club co-president Dasha Gousseva said.

The club officers hope to pair every trash can on campus with a recycling bin so that students do not throw away something recyclable for convenience's sake.

In order to help students understand what can be recycled and what can be thrown away, Environmental Club organized a sorting game to further educate students on the recycling process for the Speak Up for Change cultural fair.

After playing the game, many students expressed surprise that individual plastic bags must be thrown away because they slow down the recycling process by getting caught in machines. By contrast, plastic bags gathered into a single plastic bag can be recycled because they are compacted.



FALCON // MUTHU PALANIAPPAN

The garden plot behind the ceramics room teems with new life, thanks to Agriculture Club.

Environmental Club, like Agriculture Club, has also collaborated with maintenance supervisor Brian Moran. After discussing the lack of classroom recycling bins with Moran, Environmental Club officers checked every classroom to note which teachers needed recycling bins and which teachers had extra bins that could be moved

to different rooms.

The officers plan to email teachers about the project and to remind them that the school's recycling is single stream, meaning that all items are mixed together and do not have to be sorted.

Gousseva called the project "a great opportunity for outreach." ♦

JAZZ BAND



Courtesy of HAIYAN HE

Led by associate band director Jason Shiuan, Redwood Middle and Saratoga High students perform an upbeat Latin-style piece called "Blue Bossa" during "For the Love of Jazz" last Saturday in the McAfee Center.

Concert replaces annual Cabaret

by Chelsea Leung

The Jazz Cabaret, renamed this year to "For the Love of Jazz," took place last Saturday in the McAfee Center from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.

In the past, the Cabaret was held in the Large Gym as an event with food, live performances and dancing. However, this year, the event was converted into a stage performance and lobby reception.

Associate band director Jason Shiuan said that the change was due to the gym's often being occupied by sports, and because the music department wants to restore the Jazz Cabaret's previous appeal to the community.

When Shiuan attended the school, many people from the community would attend the Jazz Cabaret, even if they were not involved or related to someone in the music programs at Saratoga High or Redwood Middle School. These last few years, however, the music department has noticed that the Cabaret has become just like another concert, where parents come to watch their child perform

and then leave.

"We're thinking of ways to reverse that and bring the Cabaret back to what it used to be," Shiuan said. "People used to come to have a fun night, rather than just coming to attend another concert."

To spice up the concert this year, concert-goers purchased chocolate kisses for performers and participated in a raffle, with prizes from local businesses.

Though the department is unsure of what Jazz Cabaret will be like in the future, Shiuan said that future Cabarets will be inspired by more informal events like "Jazz on the Plazz," an outdoor summer event in Los Gatos.

Because the Cabaret took place in the McAfee Center this year, there is no available space for an actual Cabaret's signature dancing. Yet parts of the tradition remain: Saratoga High students donned their signature jazz uniforms of all black with colorful ties or scarves.

As always, choir and jazz bands from both Saratoga High and Redwood performed. SHS's repertoire this year included a Latin-style

song, "Blue Bossa," as well as a jazz arrangement of Elton John's "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road." Additionally, junior Matthew Graham, who plays trumpet, arranged "O Tannenbaum" from Vince Guraldi's version in "A Charlie Brown Christmas."

In addition to the major changes, a new aspect this year was that SHS's jazz band now has an electric guitarist, junior Daniel Kraft, who moved from Maryland to Saratoga this year.

"Guitar is a common jazz instrument, so I was surprised there wasn't already one here when I came," Kraft said.

Graham, who has never played with a jazz guitarist before, said that he was happy Kraft's "crazy good" musical skills added new elements to the band's sound and rhythm. Though he understands the need for modification to the overall event, he missed old elements from previous years.

"Performing is always fun, but I missed doing goofy dances with the music teachers as other bands performed," Graham said. ♦

CAFETERIA

Paying by ID card has mixed results

by LeoCao & MichaelZhang

Last March, the cafeteria transitioned from a cash-based system to hybrid system in which students can use their ID cards to pay for meals.

Initially, many students and cafeteria staff members were unfamiliar with the new card system.

"When the cards first came in, it was so much slower because we had to get used to the new system," said sophomore Alex Pan, who works as a volunteer cashier in the cafeteria.

"Sometimes I don't hear them say [the numbers], so people have to wait longer."

SOPHOMORE Alex Pan

Even after students gained more experience using the ID cards, they noticed that the time spent waiting in lines was not always shorter than the previous cash-only system. In some cases, the new cards seemed slower than earlier methods, as students might forget to bring their ID cards and opt to provide their student ID numbers instead to pay.

"When I have to input the numbers, sometimes I don't hear them say it, so people have to wait longer," Pan said.

Food service manager Pam Carlino also finds difficulty dealing with this issue.

"It gets really loud in the lines and sometimes we can't hear and put the wrong number in, then we have to clear it out and put it in again," Carlino said. "Sometimes we have to do that multiple times."

According to Pan, students who don't use the card certainly "break up the flow," but it is not a common occurrence. Each lunch, Pan meets only two or three people, depending on which line he is working, who use their ID numbers. Pan said he sees about 60 said of the people use their ID cards and 40 percent students use cash during lunch.

In an effort to encourage more students to bring their ID cards, cafeteria staff have been reminding them about it over the daily morning announcements.

Despite its drawbacks, the new system provides other benefits for students. While it doesn't necessarily speed up the lines, many students agree that paying with an ID card is more convenient than paying with cash.

The ID card system is easier for parents as well, since they do not have to periodically give students cash for lunch money.

"Parents can simply load money on the card online or just send a check or cash in and we can load it on," Carlino said.

Additionally, students are allowed to carry a little bit of debt, so even if students forget to ask their parents for more money, they will still be able to purchase a meal.

"Overall, I think this is a great system that certainly makes buying lunch a lot easier for both parents and students," Carlino said. ♦

MAP

continued from pg. 1

and very short, generally a few weeks," said Jason Friend, who teaches AP Language and Composition and is also Media Arts teacher. "It's a chance for MAP seniors to use their skills for a project that they're very passionate about in a big scale."

Throughout the first semester, seniors pitched their project ideas and spent most of the time in the pre-production phase. Second se-

mester is used to actually film, edit and complete the projects.

While Bossi and her group are making a fictional film about siblings, senior Alec Lindeman and his group decided to create a mockumentary that follows a high school student on his journey to become a successful comedian.

"I personally like this project because there were very few restrictions on what we could make," Lindeman said.



Lindeman

Originally suggested by former MAP students who continued their media arts career in college, the project is a great platform for students to make their own creations.

"We asked the students early on in the program what they thought was missing and several of them mentioned that they never felt they had a chance to do the thing they really were most passionate about," Friend said. "Students

wanted to use both their academic knowledge and their media knowledge in a more open and big way."

The projects usually require students to learn new skills and acquire knowledge that they had not have before.

"It's a really challenging project and it is a project that is incredibly fun for students, but I think after a while they will run into all these creative roadblocks," Friend said. "By the end of the year, though, when we survey students on what they thought of it, we get overwhelmingly positive responses."

Seniors are eager to have their works compete for awards in "SMASH'N," an annual MAP awards show in May that is their version of the Oscars.

The students will also get the chance to flesh out their successes and failures of the work they have done throughout the year in this one project.

"I'm really excited about this project because I'm passionate about editing and I love my group members," Bossi said. "It's a really rewarding feeling to see a project like this all come together." ♦

BNB

continued from pg. 1

\$12 and on Saturday, they will cost \$20, since a dinner is included.

Profits will go to the ABC project by the Tamil Nadu Foundation, which aims to provide education to impoverished children in India.

Senior ICAC co-president Gaurav Mohan said that he has grown to love dancing, teaching choreography and taking in the excitement of performing for a charitable cause of his choice.

"The best part has to be the thrill, fear, excitement and adrenaline rush of dancing on stage," he said. "But I also enjoy the fun moments and memories I create with my friends and peers at practices and meetings."

The event boasts a variety of Indian dances including classical,

Bollywood, Bhangra and Tamsaha, which are open to students from all grades. Additionally, each grade has a 6-minute performance, which consists of dances such as all-girls, all-boys and pairs.

The highlight of the night is the All-Girls Dance (AGD) and All-Males Dance (AMD), only open to seniors who have participated in BNB all four years of high school. Their performances are preceded by funny video introductions of each of the dancers.

"It feels like a big pay off after four years of hard work and time commitment," Giri said. "Knowing that most of the audience is here to see those two dances makes everyone participating really want to put work into it and perform to their best."

This year, there will also be an act inspired by Penn Masala, an acapella group from the University

of Pennsylvania that mashes English songs with Bollywood.

Although the show focuses on traditional Indian dancing, BNB is a non-cut production and is open to people from all ethnic groups.

"We welcome diversity and have been pleased to have a very diverse group of performers over the past several years," Mohan said.

But putting on a three-hour show for a nearly full house is not easy. Senior co-president Laasya Giri said that organizing the event requires a lot of work and commitment. It is especially challenging trying to communicate with everyone involved in the show.

The planning started as early as summer, when Giri and Mohan created skit ideas, reached out to sponsors and established heads of dances and officers. A month before the show, the workload sky-

rocketed, and the co-presidents had to finalize mixes, costumes and sponsors, write the script, keep track of each group, plan officer meetings and practice dances.

Mohan said that in the month leading up to the show, BNB can take up 20 hours a week.

According to sophomore pairs dance choreographer Krisha Minocha, one dance alone usually takes three hours to choreograph. Then, the routine is taught to the performers, who practice tirelessly to learn every step and movement.

"It's a fun experience," Minocha said. "I've been dancing Bollywood since I was five, so it kind of just made sense to become a choreographer."

Although BNB is mainly a student-run production, parent volunteers and faculty help ensure the event's success.

Psychology and AP Govern-

ment/Econ teacher Hana Chen is the BNB adviser, serving as the "leeway between the students and school, and the parents and the school." Her responsibilities include ticketing, proofreading the officer's skits and making sure the students stay on task.

"It is a lot of work and sometimes a lot of drama, but it's also very rewarding," Chen said. "I learned so much Indian culture that I would like to keep advising in the future."

She hopes that the students have a fulfilling experience in the performance. "I hope the performers get a sense of pride; they run a whole show production which isn't always easy to do," Chen said. "And I hope they also get a sense of balance because it's very hard to be deeply involved in these shows and in other things. I also hope that they just have fun." ♦

BENEFIT FASHION SHOW

Designers experiment with making clothes

by Harshini **Ramaswamy**
& Ashley **Su**

In an unprecedented move for the Benefit Fashion Show, which will be held on March 3, commissioners have chosen to include a new theme exclusively for original designs by students. Among the lineup of student designers is senior Katrina Sung, junior Isabelle Rieken and freshman Carminho Moniz.

The designers will be relying on their limited experience in clothing design. Sung's experience, for example, consists of altering clothes from thrift shops she frequents.

"This is something I've never done before and that really excites me because I love ex-

perimenting with things and seeing how it goes," Sung said. "Plus, I'm glad I can finally actively do something about my interests in fashion."

Sung plans on using unconventional materials like latex in her designs as she tends to "take chances" with her artwork. She finds inspiration among social media accounts that document and follow runway shows, most notably the Instagram account "hypebeaststyle," which showcases punk style clothing.

Like Sung, Rieken draws inspiration from runway shows, admiring the unique colors and silhouettes that can't be found in typical streetwear.

"Runway fashion focuses on odd shapes that hide the human figure, which interests me since fashion is generally thought of as a thing to highlight the human form," Rieken said.



Sung

Rieken has been sewing since elementary school and has recently begun to make clothing for herself. Finding opportunities to showcase her work have been difficult to come by, and the Benefit Fashion Show provides the perfect platform for her to design and also work on her art portfolio for college.

On the other hand, Moniz says she develops most of her design ideas through her own doodles.

"For me, the main challenge of designing your own clothes is thinking about whether you want to follow an existing trend or try to set a new one," Moniz said.

Yet planning the design is just one part of the process. Before creating the clothes, designers need to get measurements from their models as well as contact them for approval of the outfit idea. Limitations in materials also inhibit designers from pursuing more ambitious design ideas.

"I have all my models' measurements and drawings planned out," Sung said. "I just have to buy the material and start making it now. But I think I have available resources to make [the clothes]. You just have to figure out what works along the way." ♦

LEADERSHIP

Group seeks to improve equity on campus

by Chelsea **Leung**
& Emily **Zhou**

Hundreds of phones shone in the dark as students texted their responses to various questions asked by the Leadership class during the Speak Up For Change assembly in early January. These questions were compiled by a mostly unknown equity team to address important issues in the school and hear the students' opinions on them.

The equity team was assembled a few months after members of the Leadership class attended an equity conference.

This group was originally comprised of staff members who were on the Social Emo-

tional Learning team (SEL), guidance counselor Eileen Allen said. The SEL team then later evolved into the equity team, which included students as well.

"The district office had an initiative and goal to address equity at both high schools and felt our group was a great place to start," Allen said.

The team, which has 12 members, has been attending trainings with an organization called Epoch to learn more about equity principles and barriers students are facing.

The equity team creates projects that help analyze school culture. For example, the team organized in-class surveys and the phone survey at the Speak Up For Change

assembly. They also worked with the student-run Facebook page "Humans of Saratoga High," or HOSH, on a Speak Up For Change photo campaign.

Currently, the team is focusing on racial equity and is planning to hold a movie night where they will play movies like "Hidden Figures" that deliver messages about race.

"Our Saratoga bubble is not very representative of the whole world in terms of ethnicity and race," said senior Soumya Nimmu, a member of the equity team. "It's really important that we talk about giving voices to the smaller communities on our campus."

In addition, the team is also working with the rest of the students and staff. They've

held presentations at staff collaboration meetings and are planning a World Cafe for staff and community members. The team is also planning to introduce a program called "Breaking Down the Walls" to students and staff next year. Though the team is still relatively new, members are optimistic about what equity can do for the community.

"The main purpose of the equity team is to create a school community that is more inclusive and encourages discussion on complicated, yet necessary and relevant topics," Nimmu said. "We want to foster a community that's more inclusive and where people feel free to talk about any issues that they have." ♦



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BLOG

continued from pg. 1

just a bit more cleavage than normal, one thing is clear: there's some hot teachers at Bell. This website is dedicated to categorizing and debating all these things into one place. And yes, to the couple guys reading this that are appalled, just close the tab now. Go Bells."

Other posts are much more explicit and degrading. In addition to erotic posts, a chart rates 10 female teachers on campus on a scale of 1 to 10 based on their physical features.

In the comments section of the blog, other students were anonymously encouraging sexual fantasies about their female teachers.

Kristina Luscher, Bellarmine's principal, expressed her sadness and disappointment about the blog in an interview with The Falcon.

"I've been here 18 years — three years as principal — and I have not faced anything like this before," Luscher said.

Not an isolated problem

The blog reflects growing local and national trends: A similar incident occurred at Lynbrook in 2015 and 2016, when male students at Lynbrook started creating secret Facebook groups to rate the appearances of female classmates.

The incident inspired three female seniors from Lynbrook's class of 2016 to initiate the #NotANumber social media campaign, an empowering movement targeted toward promoting awareness and equality.

Before these three Lynbrook students spoke out, however, few came forward about the issue despite considerable student awareness about the groups and their ratings.

In late 2017 — two years after the incident at Lynbrook — the #MeToo movement thrust issues such as sexual assault and harassment into the national spotlight.

The revelations came nearly one year af-

ter now-President Donald Trump publicly dismissed an "Access Hollywood" recording in which he condoned his own sexual harassment and assault of women as "locker room talk."

And to some, the comments on Bellarmine Broads have resembled just that: a series of vulgar, lewd comments that circulated throughout many male-dominated environments — locker rooms included — for years, mostly hidden from public view. In this sense, the blog is essentially harmless.

"I was deeply saddened. And I think many of our students feel the same way."

BELLARMINE'S PRINCIPAL

Kristina Luscher

But even as the national discussion about sexual harassment grew this fall, the Bellarmine blog remained online.

The school's administration was only notified of the blog's existence in late November — nearly one month after The New York Times ran its first story detailing producer Harvey Weinstein's history of sexual abuse.

Although some Bellarmine students seemed to be aware of the blog and previously expressed distaste for it, none reported it to the Bellarmine administration.

Smullen, the Presentation student who founded the blog, thinks it was taken down only after she and other students began to spread word about it.

Another student, SHS junior Casey Hayden, previously attended Bellarmine and said he understands what may have contributed to the blog's creation.

"One of the things about Bellarmine is that it's good because you can focus on school," he said. "But at the same time a lot of events like this happen because [it's an all boys school] and no one is going to say anything [to the administration]."

The fallout

Since the Bellarmine administration became aware of the blog in late November, they worked to shut it down. There was an initial delay in notifying staff and students about it, Luscher explained, as specific search queries on Google could direct users to the blog's content even after the page was disabled. Now, all that remains is a page with the blog's name and Bellarmine's logo.

Teachers, staff and students have since been notified of the blog's contents. Luscher said the incident has caused much embarrassment and discomfort for the female staff members written about in the blog.

Many students that Luscher has spoken to agree that this blog was the work of only a few and is not representative of the school's overall culture. Luscher recently met with a group of seniors in hopes of sparking a schoolwide discussion.

Asked whether Bellarmine's all-male culture was a contributing factor in the creation of the blog, Luscher said the school makes numerous efforts to round out the education of the 1,638 boys who go there, offering classes such as Feminist Studies and Gender Studies in Literature.

"I wouldn't work here if that were the dominant culture of this place," Luscher said. "I've always felt very comfortable here and respected as a woman, and I know my colleagues feel the same."

Moving forward

In the meantime, the Bellarmine administration has made a concerted effort to facilitate discussion both inside and outside of the classroom: Students have been encouraged to speak out when they witness incidents of harassment or assault. Teachers have also held additional discussions about these controversial topics in their classes, Luscher said.

Most Bellarmine students have reacted positively to the administration's efforts, but Hayden — the former Bellarmine student who now attends SHS — remains skeptical.

He admits that the administration has

tried each year to expose the all-male student body to alternative perspectives on women's rights and social justice with its Summit on Human Dignity, but doubts that some of the boys there will listen.

"I don't know how it is right now," Hayden said. "People don't care. That's partially just how it is today: People don't care that much."

Nevertheless, Luscher still believes that the sentiments expressed in the blog do not reflect the attitudes of the vast majority of Bellarmine's student body. And later on, multiple students at Bellarmine did eventually approach The Falcon, hoping to find information that would expedite the administration's investigations into the blog.

For now, Bellarmine continues to plan to address topics related to gender and sensitivity.

During the 2013-14 school year, its annual Summit on Human Dignity addressed the theme: "Masculinity: Who is the Man God Has Called Me to Be?" For the upcoming school year, Luscher and the administration plan to explore and revisit the theme.

"I was deeply saddened," Luscher said. "And I think many of our students feel the same way." ♦

>> thebigidea

Bellarmine Broads Blog

What did the blog post about
The blog contained explicit descriptions of erotic fantasies about female Bellarmine teachers and staff members posted by students or alumni of the school. In addition to erotic posts, a chart rates 10 female teachers on campus on a scale of 1 to 10 based on their physical features.

When was it created, when was it shut down
The blog originated last February, and was taken down in late January.

What does the school plans to do
Bellarmine continues to plan to address topics related to gender and sensitivity.



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Stereotype debunked: No, I do not eat curry every day

by Harshini Ramaswamy

Turning 18 has its perks, the most unexpected one being the ability to join the popular dating app Tinder.

I chose my profile pictures and waited for people to message me, sharing the silliest texts with friends.

We cackled over the corny pick up lines and cringe-worthy come-ons that frequented my inbox.

Yet one day, I received the question "what race are you?" Unsure how to respond, I deflected by responding with "avatar," immediately uncomfortable with the situation and blocking the person on Tinder.

Never having been asked the question and afraid of becoming "micro-aggressive" I wondered if I was justified in feeling offended and angry.

So, as with any other teenager of this century, I looked up the answer to my conundrum on Google.

All search results justified my indignant response and the thought "this would not have happened if I was Caucasian" crossed my mind.

After receiving that question multiple times, I scrutinized my profile pictures, revisiting them whenever I opened the app. They included pictures of me at junior prom, playing basketball, winter formal and

attending a concert.

It seemed as if this person was expecting me to clearly define my ethnicity by posting pictures of myself studying math, eating some kind of curry or even wearing a brightly colored sari.

Of course, the offense is the question itself. Asking about race implies that the answer will color their future interactions with the ethnically ambiguous person in question. In addition, the question — intended or not — emphasizes and reminds the person expected to answer of their "foreignness."

I had not felt such personal discomfort and resentment of my culture since elementary school.

Having struggled with the culture clash and my ethnic background, it feels like the internal battle I have waged since birth counts for nothing. I had not felt such personal discomfort and resentment of my culture since elementary school, where my friends had shifted away from me and plugged their noses as I pulled out my roti

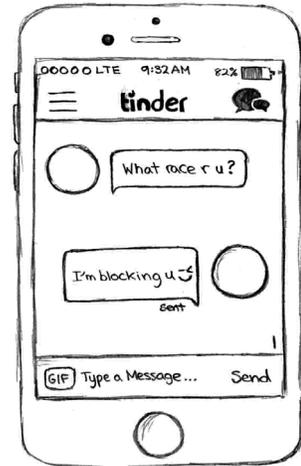
wraps during lunch time.

From that day forward, I would become unreasonable angry whenever my father would pack me Indian food for lunch. I also used to be grateful whenever I was met with confusion and disbelief at the revelation of my birthplace, which is Bangalore, the capital of Karnataka, a state in India.

In these recurring moments, I can almost see people's minds whirring in confusion, the statement "does not compute" flashing in their minds, as they stare at my American brand clothing, hear my Californian accent and experience my loud personality.

I have striven from a young age to not be defined by the stereotypes associated with my nationality, yet hearing this question makes my efforts to be open and honestly interact with others quite worthless. Now, this isn't a request to for people to not "see color" or regard me as Indian.

I am fine answering questions about my heritage and background, and I am extremely proud to belong to my culture. Although we certainly have a diverse school, exposure to different cultures does not always solve ignorance and intolerance, just as education does not equate to intelligence. That being said, I, along with many other



SARAH AUCHES

groups in America affected by prejudices, should be afforded the respect to be considered as an individual, not as a stereotype. I should be able to go on Tinder, or any other form of social media, and not have to state the color of my skin.

I am a really proud American citizen, and for the record, I only eat Indian curry on certain special occasions. ♦

Perception of feminism hurts real feminists

by Michael Zhang

For centuries, women have crusaded for equal rights. In many ways, they have succeeded — just in the history of our country alone, women have acquired the ability to own property, the right to an equal education and the right to vote.

But inequality between genders, such as the infamous wealth gap, still exist today.

Originally, modern feminism arose to address these inequalities and help women fight for the same status in society as men.

It empowered many and helped give activists a platform to speak up on.

However, as the feminist movement progressed through the past few years especially, it has become increasingly clear that the movement has become toxic and disparaging to the actual ideals of feminism.

This can be mostly attributed to the many fake feminists who have been joining the movement.

Just five years ago, feminists were able to voice their opinion seriously without being harassed by an onslaught of social media backlash.

But recently, the feminist movement has become a joke in many ways because of some of the actions of supposed "feminists."

The public perception of feminism has greatly changed — this can be seen through the plethora of videos titled "Funny Feminist Fails" across YouTube and other media platforms.

This can be mostly attributed to the many fake, self-proclaimed feminists who have been joining the movement.

While many still present solid and concise arguments for gender equality, the oth-

er fake feminists often use the movement as an excuse for their actions.

For instance, they often say things like "I'm a feminist so I think you should do (insert task here) for me," even when it may be unreasonable.

Furthermore, the negative connotation of feminism has also been built up by thousands of videos of these fake feminists acting entitled or unreasonable.

Other videos show fake feminists taking the movement too far and demanding too much from the rest of the population.

By providing a visual for the public, such videos are more memorable than the scholarly articles the real feminists are writing, gradually changing the attitude toward the movement over time.

These actions also downplay the courage of women in societies where their natural rights are prohibited.

While women in the Middle East and other countries around the world risk their lives in the feminist movement, many others continued to use the platform inappropriately. Now, it's almost impossible to say "I'm a feminist" without being laughed at, especially online.

Instances like the Aziz Ansari scandal, where he was wrongfully accused of sexual assault, highlighted the detrimental trend of demonizing man rather than promoting the rights and autonomy of women.

In certain instances, the word "feminist" has even become synonymous with adjectives like dumb, senseless and foolish, even though real feminists are none of these.

All this greatly damages the movement by giving the public an excuse to silence those who rightly wish to voice their opinion and oppose inequality between men and women.

These social justice warriors disguised as feminists need to stop using feminism as a justification for their actions.

Not only are they looked down upon for this, they are also damaging the reputation of those who truly wish to better society for women. ♦

Commercialization of Valentine's Day demotes meaningful gift giving

by Angela Lee

As a regular customer at CVS, I've become accustomed to seeing the holiday displays as I enter the store — stacks of Halloween candy in October, glittering ornaments through December and an array of heart chocolate boxes from January through February. Yet walking past Valentine's candy labeled with neon yellow price tags, I have mixed feelings.

As a romantic, I love the concept of Valentine's Day: a holiday dedicated to the celebration of love. I remember passing out Sweethearts to classmates in elementary school and receiving cute notes from my friends. Yet now, the warmth I used to feel from this love-filled day has been sucked out by the commercialization of the holiday.

As soon as February approaches, common V-Day gifts' prices skyrocket; Dove chocolates cost \$2 more for their red wrapping instead of their usual silver wrapping.

As I browse the flower section, I notice the prices are higher than usual, and I can only imagine corporations like Safeway preying on consumers pressured by society to buy gifts for their significant others on this day.

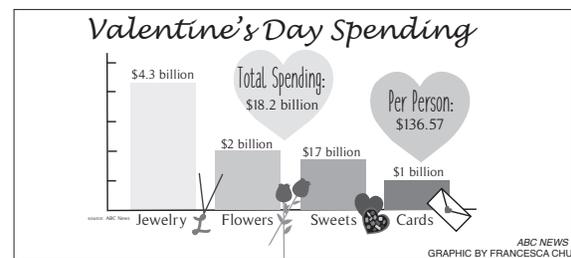
Although Valentine's Day is supposed to

be a day for me to make a romantic gesture for someone I love, I can't help but feel it is heavily advertised for the wrong reasons. People shouldn't wait until Feb. 14 each year to do something nice or make a grand romantic gesture for their significant other. Instead, every day should be like Valentine's Day: a celebration and a reminder of how much a couple, family or even friends love one another.

Not only that, the commercialization of Valentine's Day has grafted it to another noxious idea — namely, that gifts should be store-bought and expensive. Instead of having to buy the person you love a gift, there should be more emphasis on homemade gifts. Although they may not be as professional as store-bought gifts, homemade gifts are often as equally if not more thoughtful.

This Valentine's Day, I'm not sure how I'm going to celebrate it. Valentine's Day is wonderful, but I want to celebrate it in my own way. Valentine's Day shouldn't become the pinnacle of someone's love life as it is set by societal standards.

From now on, people should be able to choose for themselves how to show their love to another person, whether that be through buying them Godiva chocolates or drawing them a portrait. ♦



FOURTH PERIOD
STAFF POLICY

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Mental health patients need more

Without a doubt, mental health awareness has been on the rise recently. In fact, according to a study done by the Willis Tower Watson group, nine out of every 10 employers believes that mental health is a major issue that needs to be addressed.

Despite the seemingly positive trends, it is clear that awareness in itself is not enough. With one in every five Americans suffering from mental health problems, this becomes highly problematic in the workplace, where symptoms can manifest themselves in the form of severe procrastination, irritability and exhaustion.

Worst yet, mental illnesses can dramatically impact the physical health of a person. A recent study done by MQ Mental Health showed that mental illnesses such as bipolar disease and depression are linked with cardiovascular disease, diabetes, osteoporosis and increased risk of dying from cancer.

This is highly alarming information, given that 66 percent of people who have mental health conditions have never even attempted to seek help. Employers need to introduce to their employees diverse methods of treatment that are now available, so that each and every individual can find what works for them.

According to Mental Health America, available forms of

mental health treatment include psychotherapy, peer support, medication, support group, art therapy and more. Given the myriad of options that mental health patients can choose from, along with the supportive medical community, individuals should be more encouraged to seek help.

In turn, this would not only benefit the individual, but also the productivity of a company or organization as a whole. An individual who can work at their highest level of efficiency can do much better work than if they are burdened by mental health issues, and the accumulation of all the employees who can be a better version of themselves has a magnanimous impact on the company in the long run.

Another issue that society needs to address is the stigma associated with people with mental conditions. Many look down on those with mental health issues as lesser humans, which really isn't the case. Everybody has their own issues; many factors of mental health are completely out of a person's control.

In a study done by the American Psychological Association, only one in four mental health patients believed that people are kind and caring toward people with mental health conditions.

It is important for people to pay attention to what kind of lan-



KAITLYN WANG

guage they use regarding mental health, since it can be a big deal for the patient.

The school has recently taken steps to combat mental health issues – among others, in its Speak Up for Change week speeches and activities.

While this is good progress, there is still a lot more we can do in terms of reaching out to those in need of mental health services. The school should implement

more events aimed at addressing the issue and letting those with mental health problems know that there are always people on campus, like the trained medical professionals in the CASSY center, who are more than willing to help.

After all, the worst feeling for a mental health patient is to think that they're alone, which, as the numbers show, is totally not the case. ♦

Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

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The Falcon staff voted 30-1 in support of this article.

YouTube must rein in renegade creators

By Andrew Lee

During a visit to Japan, YouTube Tuber Logan Paul, currently with 16 million subscribers, filmed a dead body hanging from a tree in a forest. Only censoring the body's head, Paul disrespectfully laughed at the body, using it as a prop in his video. Paul also released a video where he was disrespecting Japan's people and its culture for views by harassing citizens and disturbing religious temples.

Initially, YouTube did absolutely nothing to Paul after he uploaded these videos even though the suicide video directly violated YouTube's community guidelines.

This is just one example of YouTube's increasingly harmful content. YouTube should take steps to further regulate its channels to avoid situations like these.

Only after receiving a severe backlash from other content creators did Paul take the video down. By then, the video had already garnered over half a million likes. YouTube did not take any actions against Paul or his videos and released a public statement and apology almost a week later.

With 1.5 billion monthly active users, YouTube is one of the most popular free entertainment platforms available on the internet. As YouTube has become a possi-

ble source for income with the use of ads, some successful channels have become full-time jobs for the creators behind them.

However, YouTube does not do enough to monitor its content creators and users for producing hateful videos and comments. Although it may seem almost impossible to monitor every single one of the thousands of videos uploaded on a daily basis, one approach YouTube could take is monitoring major channels like Logan Paul's. It would be easy to keep track of content that reaches a large audience and influences other YouTube channels.

Currently, YouTube operates a system where viewers and YouTube employees are able to flag videos for issues ranging from copyright infringement to inappropriate content. However, this system has proven faulty and has resulted in countless false strikes and accusations.

Taking immediate action against videos like Paul's would help demonstrate that similar videos and other hateful content should not be tolerated. The increasing amount of negativity and

inappropriateness in content must be regulated and content creators should be held more accountable for the videos they produce.

With channels growing and competition for more subscribers increasing, some content creators have been recently turning to "YouTube drama," where certain YouTubers release hateful comments on another in order to draw attention. This has especially become a serious problem when large channels, such as RiceGum and idubbbz, plot against each other and sometimes even take measures to harm another person's reputation and channel.

While most mature viewers would pass over these ludicrous videos, younger children are unable to separate what is on screen versus reality.

Knowing that most of their audience are children, many big channels still produce inappropriate and harmful videos for the sake of drawing attention and popularity.

One example of these types of videos is called "diss tracks," where people insult another person with a catchy beat in the back-

ground. Diss tracks have become so popular now that they have become common for large channels to make them, as it draws attention and creates negativity around the person the video was against.

With so many successful channels engaging in such negative and profane types of entertainment, it has almost become necessary for smaller channels to follow in hopes of staying relevant.

Because of situations like this, a lot of unfavorable stigma has surrounded YouTube's platform which in turn has caused many viewers to turn away from the site. What was once a balanced website for people to upload creative videos of their own has now become a pedestal for hatred and insults.

Although this may not have a great effect on more mature audiences, YouTube should better monitor content creators with what is deemed as inappropriate. Especially with younger kids having the ability to find almost any video they please, the negative atmosphere that is slowly growing on the site can have a negative influence on what children perceive as acceptable and appropriate.

YouTube should take steps to make the site a more friendly space, even if it means redefining the creative freedoms content creators sometimes abuse. ♦

Children are unable to separate what is on screen versus reality.

togotalks

Has the YouTube community turned toxic recently?

"YouTube hasn't turned toxic, but the main issue is their obsession with money."



junior Rohan Pandey

"A little bit. It seems YouTubers are running out of ideas but desperate to hold their audience."



sophomore Andrew Katchour

Vibrant lights attract visitors to Sonic Runway

by Karen Chow

Around 50 people crowded the new Sonic Runway art exhibition in front of San Jose City Hall at 7 p.m. on New Year's Day, taking dozens of Instagram-worthy pictures and dancing to music.

A segment of the Burning Man Project by artists Rob Jensen and Warren Trezevant, the Sonic Runway is the first temporary installation in San Jose that ties light and sound together until March 9. The project is a free public installation aiming to inspire local artists to showcase their work in the city and recreate art that was in the actual Burning Man, an annual art festival.

After seeing dozens of pictures taken at Sonic Runway on social media, I decided to check it out with friends. As I arrived, I was pleasantly surprised to find parking in a matter of seconds and see people of all ages and ethnicities walking through the runway and enjoying the bright colors. The Runway was like an interactive light show, as it lit up the rotunda dome of City Hall. Not only could you walk through it and see the colors close up, you could pick a song for it to play.

The Runway is 432 feet long and consists of 24 arches that stretch from the corner of Fourth Street to the crosswalk of Fifth Street.

Each arch is lined with 554 LED lights of different colors like dark blue, orange and pink. There are several speakers placed along the runway which can be connected by Bluetooth to your phone so you can pick the song you want to play. The audio signals are then converted into colorful projections of light that travel down the rings and down the street.

The runway created a lively and cheerful atmosphere; I could not help but smile at the dancing and how the installation brought so many people together that night. I also felt safe because there were multiple police officers on duty watching the runway.

As an artist, I was extremely inspired by how the artists, Jensen and Trezevant, were able to use their art to beautify the city and attract lots of attention. After the visit, it really opened my eyes to how influential art can be and reminded me that art is all around us and not just on paper.

I thoroughly enjoyed visiting the Sonic Runway and want to check out what other exhibitions the Burning Man Project offers for San Jose. The Sonic Runway most notably provides a free backdrop for beautiful Instagram photos, but it's also a fun way to get out and immerse yourself in the colorful art of the Bay Area with loved ones. ♦



Courtesy of KAREN CHOW

Karen Chow poses in front of the Sonic Runway, part of the Burning Man Project, on Jan. 12.



GRAPHIC BY ASHLEY SU

piece of kai-ke



Kaitlyn Wang

Content to be the third wheel (as long as I had food), I listened to my sister, who is 11 years my senior, and her friend chat as we shared too much ice cream far too late into the night. Laughing, they discussed school, jobs and eventually relationships.

"Have you been seeing anyone lately?" my sister asked.

Her friend admitted that she had a white back: someone who was insecure about "everything," including his weight and voice.

"Maybe he used to be fat before losing weight and he's still self-conscious about his weight," my sister said. "Maybe he's insecure about his voice because his parents wanted a girl."

Surprised, I assumed that their conversation would morph into a gossip session. But my sister started down a different fork in the

road — toward empathy.

I realized that my sister could consider his possible experiences almost immediately because she knows what it's like to feel insecure. She knows that unpleasant memories can shape how people view themselves, and she understands that sometimes people strive for change but cannot shake off the past.

When I think of self-love, I think of my sister. She stands up for herself. She refuses to allow other people to tell her what to do or how to act, and most importantly, she does not let others' opinions affect her own view of herself.

This wasn't always the case. Not many people fall in self-love at first sight.

When she was 8, my sister only spoke Mandarin and moved from Hefei, China, to join my parents in Chicago. There she was the only Asian American student in her elementary school. She faced ridicule for not being able to speak English and for coming from a poor immigrant family.

I remember her describing the humiliation of not knowing that she couldn't write in a library book and getting yelled at in front of the class, even though she could

not understand what the teacher was shouting. She struggled to communicate and fit in, grappling with loneliness, homesickness and assimilation.

But gradually, she developed confidence in speaking, particularly from her participation in her high school's speech and debate team. My sister, who could not say a single English word when she first immigrated, learned to crush opponents in state tournaments. She remembers not using her full voice before when she spoke to people, but speech and debate forced her to jump into her fear of public speaking.

Of course, her nervousness did not completely fade away. But by stepping under the spotlight over and over and speaking up even when her body screamed at her not to, by devoting herself to a passion, she learned to be assertive. Years later, she says that speech and debate still helps her interact with other people.

Now, she is an aspiring surgeon at UCSF. Although people tell her that surgery is a difficult, tiring profession that is prone to lawsuits, she finds it rewarding. She wants to directly help patients instead of merely hoping that treatments will be effective. She

wants to provide opportunities to heal to people who have no other alternative. After struggling with doubt from herself and from others, she is working toward her goals without hesitation.

I want to do the same. I want to be a little selfish and commit to my own dreams. Most importantly, I want to let go of the memories that evoke shame or embarrassment or doubt — to accept what happened and to forge ahead toward what is yet to come.

To overcome my tendency to silence myself, I hope to practice expressing myself through slam poetry while connecting with writers, performers and artists. Taking small strides at a time like my sister, I strive to follow her advice, tackling the aspects of myself that I want to change by pursuing what I love.

As Valentine's Day comes and goes, I hope you'll take a moment to ask yourself: How deep is your self-love? If it is shallow, translucent and barely there, know that it will take time and patience and plenty of forgiveness to develop. When people try to push you around, push back. Stand up. Speak up. And as my sister says, know that you are enough. ♦

Local NUMU museum offers contemporary art pieces

by Allen Chen

As I walked in, the New Museum art museum in Los Gatos felt eerily quiet. I was excited to visit the museum, as I am interested in art and live fairly close, but the lack of people at the exhibit made me start questioning my choice.

An attendant sat at the front, waiting to handle entrance fees. The general admission fee is \$10, but people under 18 can get in for free. There are discounts for the elderly, students and military.

The current exhibitions feature pieces ranging from traditional oil paintings to contemporary reductionist pieces. They are split up

into main groups in the different rooms, one being "Waterlines," an exhibition focusing on the artist's view of water.

Since there were no signs indicating which way to go, I started walking around the museum in a clockwise direction. Scattered around the museum were pictures, paintings and prints of the waterlines around the Bay Area.

The museum contracts local artists around the Bay Area, as well as collectors of older art pieces. NUMU is also part of the contemporary art movement, which has a focus on mixed media.

I had done some art in the past, but it was entirely traditional art,

sticking to paints, inks and pencil. The museum was something new to me since it features other forms of art, such as photography and sculpting.

One exhibit I liked features 16 photos arranged into a square. The photos are all aerial shots of various spots around the Bay Area. Contrasting colors and swirling shapes make the piece look surreal.

Especially if you have an interest in art, I would recommend going to NUMU. If nothing else, the museum is a nice isolated place to get away from outside noise. The exhibits change often, making it a new experience every time. ♦



... trust your friend to give you a haircut?

xu-t! size
hair

Kevin Sze and Jeffrey Xu

Jeffrey: As Kevin combed through my luscious, jet-black locks and prepared to make the first cuts, my heart pounded. My hair, my prized possession — would this be the end of it all?

I remembered all the mornings I sacrificed precious sleep just to style my hair and the compliments I received from peers and even teachers, like Mr. Yim.

All those memories faded to nothing when I looked in the mirror. I imagined a hideous bowl cut and realized my image and self-esteem were on the line.

I began questioning myself. Was it right for me to doubt my best friend's styling ability? I thought about the good old days of playing

football during lunch in seventh grade. What was I thinking? The least I could do was trust Kevin to give me a clean cut.

Lucky for me, I was quite right. As it was happening, I noticed that the cut was going a lot smoother than I thought. Not only did Kevin work with precision and concentration, I could tell he really cared about the end result, almost as if it was his own hair.

After he toweled off the top and we were done. Besides a few uneven strands of hair in the front and a couple of semi-bald spots on the back, it was a decent cut. I felt relieved, knowing that I wouldn't have to wear a hoodie for the next two months.

Thanks, Kevin.

Kevin: "Cut a little off the sides, a little off the top, and then we're done," said Jeffrey, who clearly doubted my barber skills.

To be honest, I didn't have those skills. The only reason Jeffrey agreed to do this was because I

told him that I had cut hair before, which was a complete lie.

This was the first time I had acted as the barber instead of the customer, and anything that I had "learned" about cutting hair was from carefully watching my barber cut mine.

Needless to say, as I stood there holding a pair of scissors and a comb, I had no idea what to do. My cluelessness tempted me to cut off all of Jeffrey's hair and leave him bald for the next week or so.

But noticing Jeffrey's expression of worry and thinking about how none of my friends believed I could give a decent haircut, I was motivated to prove my haters wrong and give my best friend a fresh look.

Although I still had no idea how to cut hair properly, I trimmed a little bit of hair off the top of Jeffrey's head.

At first, I faltered.

The scissors were obviously worn out, and the clump of hair I had tried to cut simply bent

and then returned to its original position. Old equipment was my newest adversary, and perhaps the most intimidating one.

This challenge heightened my focus and resolution, and as Jeffrey watched in the mirror, I carefully cut his hair to his satisfaction, his facial expression changing from concern to a smile of happiness.

I still struggled a bit with the scissors, and the clippers jammed repeatedly resulting in a few semi-bald spots.

My inexperience as a barber showed, and Jeffrey's hair was more of a block than a smooth cut, but overall, it had been an incredible success.

More importantly, I learned trust is the key ingredient in a successful friendship. Having Jeffrey trust me with something as permanent as a haircut made me feel more responsible as a friend. When I was able to give him something acceptable, our friendship strengthened.

You're welcome, Jeffrey. ♦

... let your parents dress you for a week?

lee-ve me
alone

Andrew Lee

As people become more self-conscious about their appearance as high school progresses, it's safe to say that most high school students would not let their parents dress them up for school. But that's exactly what I asked my parents to do for a week.

Initially, I thought I had made a big mistake. I'm extremely picky with clothing, so I was not ready to give that responsibility to my parents, who might not be as in touch with the latest trends.

Before high school, I was fine with my parents choosing my daily outfits. In fact, I enjoyed getting out of bed and slipping into clothes my mom would neatly fold and leave on my dresser. But looking back, I cringe at the daily clothing my parents made me wear: stiff button-up shirts, tight cotton

vests and even fully color-coordinated Nike outfits with neon accents all over.

Traumatized by the thought of having to wear similar outfits to high school, I nervously asked my mom to pick out outfits for me before school. She replied, "You're old enough, can't you find your own clothes yourself?" But she helped me pick outfits every morning for a couple of days.

To my surprise, my mom was aware of my pickiness when it came to clothing. Each day, she took different pieces of clothing out of the drawers and laid them out on my bed, mixing and matching until she was satisfied.

Most of the clothes my mom ended up picking were shirts and jackets I had not worn for months because I never really liked them. She picked out thick and heavy jackets, insisting that I should wear them because it would be cold. Reluctantly, I agreed and went to school with a fresh and slightly different outfit.

At first, nobody really seemed to notice the difference in my style. The large jackets were actually comfortable, and the clothes that my mom had picked out suited the cold weather. Though I usually disregard the

weather while picking outfits, I enjoyed my mom's comfortable approach to fashion.

Occasionally I would get questions like, "is that a new jacket?" or "cool new shirt," but little did others know that it was actually clothes I kept but never wore since the beginning of eighth grade.

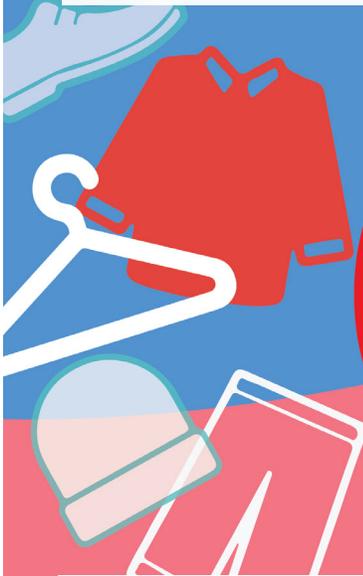
But especially to my closest friends, the change in outfits was a radical one. They were able to point out exactly what was new and different, and even questioned why I was wearing clothes that were out of my habitual norm.

After about a week, I stopped minding how my clothes looked and became accustomed to the soft warmth of the jackets my mom had picked out for me. It was refreshing after wearing tight skinny slacks and thin hoodies for the past couple years.

Especially with the cold upcoming weather, I might consider asking my parents to pick out my clothing for just a couple more days.

Even though I found it entertaining for my parents to choose my outfits for me, I wouldn't say that I'm ready to sacrifice comfort for appearance. ♦

CAN YOU
reporters t



... try partner yoga with your friend?

best
bros



Francesca Chu and Alexandra Li

Francesca: When we were challenged to do partner's yoga, we didn't think it would be that hard. We had seen other people do a lot of these poses, and we hoped that our dance background would help make moves like handstands and backbends more manageable. So we planned to meet for a couple hours over the weekend at Alexandra's house, got our matching outfits, and set our minds to it.

But as we got ready, I became nervous. This was the first time I was really going to try to do yoga and not joke around, and I realized that I really had no idea what to expect. Also, there wasn't enough space to feel fully comfortable — we were in the corner of the living room next to a lamp, desk, sofa and Christmas tree — and the probability of falling over and breaking

something was very high. Thankfully, we were smart enough to ask our friend junior Amy Tang to help us out.

Alexandra: My first test of trust really came with the rectangle pose. Not only did I have to trust myself to have enough back strength to maintain the pose, but I also had to trust Amy to place Francesca's legs into my hands, and trust Francesca to shift her weight away from me. Without Amy's help, we managed to hold the pose for a millisecond. Giving up, I dropped my arms and laid down, forgetting momentarily that I had a person on my back as Francesca went hurtling for the wall. Thankfully, nobody got hurt. Sure, Francesca's hands may not have been in the right place, but close enough, right?

Francesca: By the time we got to the upside-down flyer pose, I felt like I was pretty experienced in the world of yoga. We had gotten this far without getting hurt or dying so I figured we would be fine. I was wrong. At first it was straightforward; I'd already done several handstands and this one was no different.

All I had to do now was lift myself off the floor and pray that Alexandra could

lean back far enough to counterbalance my weight so I wouldn't fall on my head and lose all my brain cells. Amy had been supporting my upper body, and I had a moment of faith right before she let go and my head was on the ground. Seven tries later, my head was still on the ground. I had been upside down for too long and my head was starting to hurt.

Alexandra: The rest of the poses weren't too eventful. The first few were fairly easy, and then it became difficult, because they required too much counterbalance and strength. Exhausted and not feeling relaxed, we decided that the eight poses we had attempted were all we could manage for the day.

Maybe yoga is not our strongest talent. But looking back, some of the poses probably could have been improved if I had only trusted Francesca enough to believe that she had the ability to her complete her side of the pose. From now on, I think she's earned most of my trust.

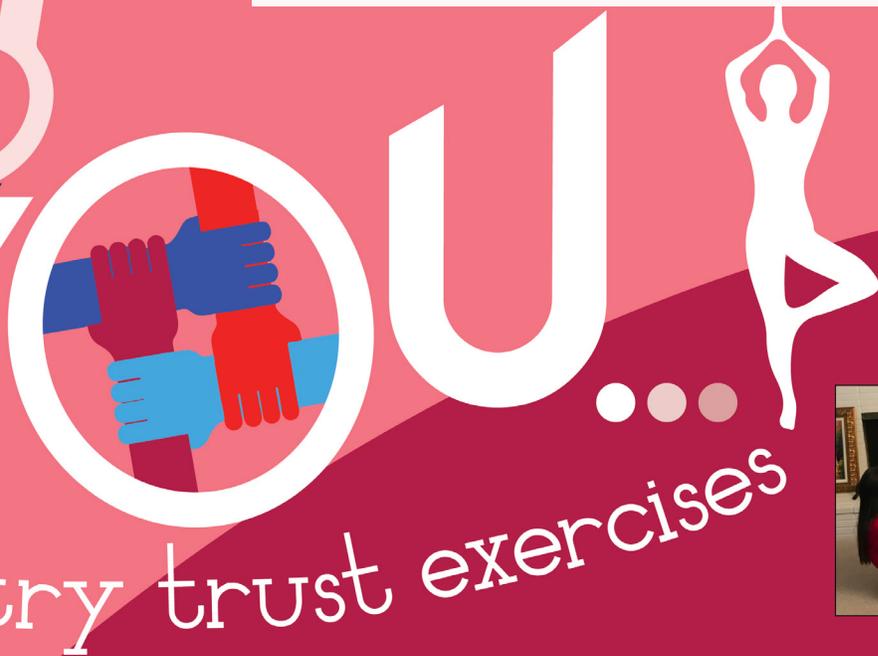
Even though we should have had a sense of balance and flexibility from our years of dancing, we developed a newfound respect for yoga masters. ♦



Alexandra Li and Francesca Chu attempt the Downward Dog with handstand, pictured above, and the Buddy Boat pose, pictured below.



Courtesy of ALEXANDRA LI & FRANCESCA CHU



... trust your friend to do your makeup?

sel-liu-lar
data



Selena Liu

As a person who's terrible at using her hands, I hardly ever wear makeup to school. The most I can attempt is a chunky layer of mascara, before I unintentionally rub my eyes and smear the black stuff all over my face.

So, that's why I asked my friend Lily Jiang to do my makeup for a day.

During tutorial on a Monday, Lily put eyeliner, mascara, eyeshadow and lipstick on my face.

Before she did my makeup, I was

worried that the makeup would look too thick. As someone who only wears makeup for performances and formal occasions, I'm used to over-lyed lipstick, layers of foundation, and thick eyeliner, but as soon as I saw myself in the mirror, I actually really liked the way the makeup accentuated my features. Instead of looking cakey, it seemed natural, not like the dramatic makeup you see on television or movie posters.

Unfortunately, having so much product on my face took some getting used to. I tried not to touch the makeup, but at times, it was really inconvenient. When I had an itch in my eye, I had to fan my eyes instead of rubbing them, and during lunchtime, I had to make sure that my lipstick didn't come off while eating.

At first, I was worried that my friends would find my makeup weird, but as the day went on, I gradually began to feel more confident. I realized that not only can makeup transform your face, but it can also provide an extra boost of self-esteem, which I found was the greatest benefit of wearing makeup.

Throughout the day, a lot of my friends gave me compliments, and some people were surprised that I could look so different with just a little eyeliner and lipstick. Even I was in awe that some color on my face could change my look so much.

Nevertheless, having Lily do my makeup has been a great experience, and I might even wear more makeup to school in the future—with some more practice, of course. ♦

Media Arts teacher finds joy in oil painting

by Kaitlyn Wang

During his annual summer trips to Maine, media arts teacher Joel Tarbox takes photos of inspiring scenes with his phone — using it almost like a sketchbook, he said. Later, he flips through the photos to see which ones stand out to him and fuel his ideas for paintings he will create later.

Tarbox, who holds a Master of Fine Arts degree in painting from Northwestern University, enjoys oil painting in his free time, although he says it can be difficult to find time for it outside of teaching and spending time with his wife and kids. He draws inspiration for his artwork from his upbringing in Maine.

“There were these moments and experiences living in Maine, coming of age and developing and finding who I was, so whenever I go back there, I’m very motivated by it,” Tarbox said. “It’s interesting — there’s a certain light quality in Maine that’s different from California. It’s a brighter, higher contrast of light, and it’s hard to describe unless you go there.”

Although he appreciates the beauty of California beaches, they are undeniably different from those in Maine. He said that the West Coast “tends not to be an inspiration” for his paintings.

“My friends are always saying, ‘Oh, you should paint this, you should paint that,’ and there are a couple of paintings where I’ve had ideas from the West Coast,” Tarbox said. “But it’s odd. It just tends not to interest me the way the coast in Maine does.”

Because painting alone rarely

pays the bills for artists, Tarbox long ago learned to use his artistic talents in practical ways. Before teaching, he became an expert in digital arts and also worked as a freelance graphic designer. He began teaching at Pacific Collegiate School in Santa Cruz 11 years ago because of his experience with traditional and digital art and is in his third year at SHS.

In the media classes he teaches, Tarbox said he wants to help students recognize that all forms of art share certain techniques.

“Being an artist is actually informative to teaching in the arts,” Tarbox said. “I’m doing digital media now, which may seem disconnected, but a lot of the basic concepts, like visual composition and color, go across media. They’re not disconnected. There are differences, but there are connections and I think I can help students see them.”

To do so, Tarbox often begins first semester for his Media Arts 2 classes by showing students famous paintings and asking them what an artist is conveying.

“I want students to understand artistic intent,” Tarbox said. “It’s not just something that happens, and whether that be making video, designing a poster, writing a poem, the idea is that there is some intent with what the artist is doing, some thought. It’s not haphazard.”

At home, Tarbox has a studio where he works on his paintings. Tarbox mostly paints landscapes, although he often includes an architectural element.

Galleries in San Francisco and in Maine have exhibited his paintings, and he has also had showings

and has sold artwork.

Although people may recognize similarities between the subjects in Tarbox’s paintings and certain places in Maine, bits and pieces of different photos inspire his paintings and there is no specific area that his paintings are based on. His paintings are like fiction — they are not replicas.

Besides his photos, Tarbox also draws inspiration from traditional painters. His favorite artist is Johannes Vermeer, a Dutch painter from the 17th century most famous for “Girl with a Pearl Earring.” Tarbox said that he likes most paintings from the Italian Renaissance, but there are great pieces throughout history that he hopes to see someday.

Over the years, Tarbox has recognized that the most difficult thing to do as an artist is to simply begin a painting. He also stresses the importance of having a painting going at all times because it can feel daunting to not know what to work on next.

“I never feel good if there isn’t a painting on the easel in my studio,” Tarbox said. “The worst thing I find as an artist is to have nothing. Some of the worst paintings I’ve made are from when I had nothing to do and I just jumped in. It’s like they say for writers the scariest thing is the blank page. For a painter, it’s the blank canvas.”

To help students explore their own ideas and passions, Tarbox encourages those who are interested in the arts to ask him questions.

“I enjoy it, and I enjoy having people look at the work and ask questions,” Tarbox said. “I don’t have a lot of opportunity anymore to, so I’m open to it when it does happen.” ♦



Tarbox



“Descent” is titled for its white flight of stairs leading down to a beach in Maine, where a single man sits atop looking out at the ocean. To Tarbox, Maine possesses “a sort of quiet beauty, and there is a sense of isolation.”



This painting is named “Vigilant,” a term meaning to keep careful watch for danger or difficulties. Tarbox described his home state as a place with “a sort of strange mystery, like it’s not fully connected to the modern world.”



Joel Tarbox painted “Facade,” inspired by Biddeford Pool, Maine. He “draws from [his] own experiences” at home to fictionalize landscapes.

togatalks

Do you have any secret passions?

“I have played piano since I was 8 and I have an Instagram account dedicated to it.”



senior Keon Roohparvar

“I don’t know how secret these are, but snorkeling and Cards Against Humanity.”



teacher Natasha Ritchie

“I love singing pop from artists like Ed Sheeran and Sam Smith at home by myself.”



junior Hannah Chang

SHS students and teachers share their hidden knacks

THE RADAR

GRAPHIC BY KAREN GIMOW AND CHARIN PARK

Music enthusiast masters seven instruments

BY Muthu Palaniappan

While many students enjoy playing and listening to music, senior John Norlahi takes his passion one step further.

Norlahi knows how to play seven instruments: the piano; electric, acoustic and classical guitar; the drums; ukulele and "tombak," a Persian drum.

Norlahi discovered his interest in music in elementary school. He learned how to play piano at a young age by ear, testing out the different notes until he could make out a tune.

Throughout his middle and high school years, he started developing skills on other instruments, learning them all by ear.

Norlahi says he cannot choose a favorite instrument.

"I love guitar and piano both equally, they let me express how I feel either by strumming the strings or pounding on the keys," Norlahi said. "You can't compare the two in my opinion."

Norlahi enjoys accompanying his instruments with his own voice, singing and playing covers of '80s songs, classic rock and Spanish style guitar.

He specifically chooses to sing mostly '70s and '80s songs, be-

cause he believes the music from those decades is more meaningful than today's music.

Much like other young musical talents, Norlahi at one point posted his covers to an Instagram account dedicated for music. There, he would record videos of himself playing guitar and piano to his favorite songs. But after some time, he stopped focusing on social media, and started focusing more on the music itself.

"I realized how much this power meant to me, and I didn't have to prove that I could play this or play that online," Norlahi said. "I just had to feel."

In the process of making music, Norlahi finds inspiration by listening to music.

His favorite band is Journey, which he was introduced to by his mother.

"Their songs have so many different feels," Norlahi said. "It's like riding an emotional roller coaster after each one ends."

While listening to music, Norlahi takes time to understand the melodies and lyrics through which the artists work so hard to send a message. He even admits to crying while listening to certain songs.

Though he has considered it

many times, Norlahi does not want pursue music as a career.

"With every chance of success, there is a chance of failure, so I don't think I can put something I care about at such a risk," Norlahi said. "For now, I don't keep it as a hobby; it's more of a lifestyle."

Nevertheless, Norlahi continues to practice and enjoy music.

Every day after school, he spends 20 minutes playing the piano, then another hour on the guitar.

"Whether I have a good day or bad day, I always have music to come home to, and it will never leave no matter what happens in this world," Norlahi said.

Norlahi is currently composing an instrumental soundtrack for a film he is working on for Media Arts.

This will be the first time he creates a soundtrack for a video.

Norlahi realizes he may not be the best musician at school, but believes it is his dedication and passion that makes him stand out. He plays for his own joy and the joy his music brings others.

"Music brings people together," Norlahi said. "It unites us as one."

That's why I play music. I want to be part of that, and I want to contribute to it." ♦



Courtesy of JOHN NORLAHI

Senior John Norlahi strums his acoustic guitar under the trees at Big Basin Redwoods State Park on Nov. 24. To Norlahi, music is always a place "to come home to, and will never leave no matter what happens..."

Senior attracts nearly 82k followers on her Harry Potter fan Instagram account

BY Stephen Ding

Two years ago, senior Stephanie Ren opened up her phone and tapped on the Instagram icon. She went straight to her profile and checked her follower count; it had risen by 10,000 in a week.

It was only the beginning for what was to come for her account.

As a middle schooler with lots of spare time, Ren was infatuated with the world of wizard Harry Potter, the world-renowned series by author J.K. Rowling.

The idea of an intriguing world of wizardry and the complex cast of characters it contained drew her in.

One of her close friends introduced her to the online fandoms dedicated to Harry Potter and the various Harry Potter-related content.

Ren was inspired to start an account of her own on Instagram in 2015.

Ren's account, @potterscar, is one that revolves solely around Harry Potter. She maintains her account by posting one to two posts per day that include images from the books and movies, pictures of the cast members from the hit films and activities visitors of Harry Potter World at Universal Studios participate in, such as going on themed rides and drinking Potter's favorite drink, butterbeer.

She has posted more than 440 pictures, videos on her account.

Since Ren opened her account as a sophomore, her following has grown

by around 2,000 to 3,000 people a week during her peak of popularity and around 800 to 1,500 during less busy times.

Initially, Ren opened the account to foster her love for the novels, and never expected to get the kind of attention @potterscar was received by its followers.

"When I started, I thought it would be a cool outlet for creativity," Ren said. "I only expected to

obtain up to 10,000 followers max."

Ren gained a whopping 90,000 followers in a short span of three months.

"I would host games and giveaways," Ren said. "And when my account grew, I got more exposure from places like the explore page and from being the 'top posts' on hashtags."

She continued to maintain the account, making regular posts until the start of her junior year. In the past couple of years as school work and her commitment to tennis have increased, she didn't have time to actively run the account, which resulted in a loss of followers.

After finishing up her college applications and gaining admission to University of Washington in St. Louis where she will play tennis, Ren returned to her Instagram roots.

"As a result of her inactivity her junior and senior year, Ren lost around 7,000 followers, resulting in a now 81,800 follower count. In order to prevent any further loss of followers, Ren posted an apology stating the reasons for her absence. Now that Ren is finished with her college apps, she now has more time to dedicate to her Instagram.

"I'm planning to become more active soon, but I still have to balance my account with tennis, school and other activities," Ren said. ♦

Sophomore films 'vlogs,' uploads to YouTube channel

BY Shreya Kulkere

Most people simply live their lives neglecting to document every memorable moment. Sophomore Chase Satterfield does quite the opposite — he makes "vlogs," or "video blogs," on the popular video-sharing website, YouTube.

Satterfield has been creating YouTube videos for about a year, gaining over 430 followers and counting combined on both his gaming channel and his vlog channel. Originally, Satterfield's first channel revolved around gaming, focusing on him and his friends playing various online video games like Call of Duty and Clash of Clans.

Recently, Satterfield has gotten into vlogging, whipping out his camera anytime he feels he wants to catch a moment on film. He started vlogging because he wanted to share more about himself to his viewers than he had previously with his gaming channel. Satterfield has always been a huge fan of vlogging even before it became popular, and aspires to create content similar to that of YouTuber Marcus Butler, who currently has over 4.5 million subscribers.

"Butler is especially my favorite because his vlogs are extremely funny and they are mainly geared toward his daily life," Satterfield said. "His vlogs are where I got the inspiration to start my own channel."

Satterfield's vlog channel currently has 30 subscribers since he just created it a couple of months ago. Over the next few months, he is hoping to garner a bigger

follower count.

As a vlogger, Satterfield addresses viewers to make them feel like they are there with him as he is experiencing his life. At first, he said vlogging in public was a little awkward because he was stared at and given weird looks by people. However, after doing it many times, he does not feel embarrassed anymore.

"I wanted to start vlogging because filming is a passion of mine and I wanted to show off my work and personality to the world," Satterfield said.

Satterfield chose to gear his vlogs toward his lifestyle because he feels like he has more of a connection with his viewers when he shares things that have happened in his own life.

"My vlog is mainly about interesting things that happen in my life such as traveling to different places, participating in fun activities with my friends, and trying new and exciting things," Satterfield said. "I make videos based on what my viewers request in the comments section."

Satterfield is still unsure if he wants to pursue vlogging as a career like many internet influencers attempt to achieve, but he thinks he will continue to take part in it as a passion whenever he has time after school and on the weekends to spend the hours necessary to film, edit and upload videos consistently on his channel.

"I enjoy my new vlogging channel because I get to express myself as a person and incorporate more of my personality into my videos," Satterfield said. ♦



GRAPHIC BY KAREN CHOW

Winter percussion: Intensive group serves as small, strong community

BY SelenaLiu & ShreyaKatkere

When freshman Winston Liu finished marching band at the end of first semester, he was hesitant to join winter percussion, a sport exclusively for percussionists seeking to improve their music capabilities.

Because of its three hours of practice on Tuesday and Thursday, eight hours on Saturday and extra practices on Monday and Friday, Liu was intimidated by the activity's demanding schedule; nonetheless, his friends eventually convinced him to join the ensemble. Founded five years ago, winter percussion has more than 30 members this year, consisting mostly of freshmen and sophomores from fall marching band.

Practices have been preparing the ensemble for their first competition on Feb. 24 at Cesar Chavez High School, where they will play the first two movements of this year's piece, "Stand Out," written by winter percussion's six instructors: Chavadith Tantai, Kunal Kathuria, Sarah Culbertson, Adam Tsukamoto, Jared Baltazar and Ally Thylin.

Percussionists are split into two groups: one for drummers, called the Battery, and one for mallet and auxiliary players, called the Front Ensemble. Compared to sports like soccer or basketball, winter percussion seems fairly static; however, it can be just as physically demanding as other sports, participants say. Percussionists practice for a

minimum of 14 hours a week and often even more based on their respective sections.

"A lot of endurance is needed to last the rehearsal," said Liu, a member of the Front Ensemble. "The long hours require you to stand for most of it while using your hands to play the instruments, which can be very difficult."

While most of the exercise comes from standing for long periods, percussionists also need to run laps at the beginning of practice and carry heavy equipment.

"There's a lot of mallet instruments, drumsets and electronics; it's a huge mess," said sophomore Priscilla Widjaja, who joined the program last year.

Despite the long hours, Liu and Widjaja have both found winter percussion to be a meaningful experience, sometimes even better than marching band. Liu especially likes that winter percussion is such a bonded community. Winter percussion also incorporates artistry with exercise, so members of both ensembles can boost their musical ability while getting fit at the same time. Compared to a larger group like marching band's percussion section, winter percussion has allowed for percussionists to perform in a smaller, more advanced group, Widjaja said.

Rehearsals are also more individualized and each member of the ensemble gets more attention from instructors. She also said that marching band music is easier than winter percussion music because, in march-



FALCON // SELENA LIU

Front Ensemble member freshman Winston Liu prepares for the Feb. 24 competition.

ing band, there are so many people that the audience and judges cannot focus on every person individually.

"With winter percussion, there's a smaller community and we perform in the gym versus the football field, which is much smaller and more up close and personal with the audience," she said.

As the season progresses, Widjaja looks

forward to spending time with ensemble members and learning harder pieces.

"I love the culture, the people and the instrument," Widjaja said. "Winter percussion is a break from normal academics and gives me a community where I can forget about school and focus on something I can happily put my energy in and be proud of!" ♦

A story about Shiv Gupta's dad, owner of more than 40 Jack-in-the-Boxes, can be found on saratogafalcon.org.

TECH GIANT

PARENTS

Elizabeth Kardach

Her dad invented Bluetooth

BY DanielBessonov & MuthuPalaniappan

When junior Elizabeth Kardach turns on her phone and plays Spotify on her car's speakers, she has a special connection to this miraculous technology: Her father invented it. Bluetooth, which allows for wireless connections between devices, is used in most everyday devices, including iPhones, laptops and headphones.

The technology works by sending short-range communications back and forth from the device on which it is being used to the device it is connected to, creating a "personal channel."

Working for Intel, Kardach's father, Jim, initially came up with the concept of Bluetooth a few years before Kardach was born in the mid-'90s. He even coined the term based on a book he was reading at the time.

Her family is traveling to Sweden this summer to celebrate the 20th an-

niversary of her dad's invention. Kardach recognizes that she uses products with Bluetooth products daily, but she doesn't think too much about it.

"I'll remember every once in a while and think to myself 'oh yeah, my dad made this,'" Kardach said.

Though both of Kardach's parents work in the tech industry, she has never felt pressured to work in the field in her future.

"Though my parents strongly recommended a job in the field, they ultimately want my siblings and me to follow our own paths," Kardach said.

Kardach admits that hearing about the tech world from her parents minimized her interest in the field, but now that she is older, she is reconsidering it as a potential career. Her life at school is mostly unaffected by her dad's fame.

"My friends know about it; they think it's cool and they realize they use Bluetooth every day," Kardach said. "But after a few minutes they forget about it." ♦



Enzo Coglitore

His dad is CEO of startup

BY EmilieZhou

Junior Enzo Coglitore stood in shock after meeting the famous founder of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg.

It may seem crazy for most people to be able to meet such an icon, but Coglitore's father worked with Zuckerberg.

Coglitore's father, Giovanni, used to work at Facebook as the senior director of hardware engineering. Today he is the current CEO of the promising network and storage startup, RStor. Previously, Giovanni also worked with other well-known companies, like Google and Yahoo, when they were all first starting up.

His father had to put in many long hours of hard work before reaching his position today, Coglitore said. Due to his father's long work hours and frequent business trips, Coglitore didn't really see his dad that much when he was a kid.

"It's gotten better now. As he's getting older, he's kind of made his suc-

RStor

cess," Coglitore said. "But especially when he first started off, there were a lot of long hours that I didn't really see him."

At the time, Coglitore felt sad that he couldn't see his dad often but now "feels blessed" at his dad's success and understands the sacrifices he made.

With such a successful parent, Coglitore has been offered various opportunities and privileges that aren't necessarily available for everyone. For instance, private school was an option for Coglitore, but his parents valued the experience and overall environment offered by public schools and decided to have him attend public schools instead. Overall, Coglitore believes that his experiences at school and his daily life haven't really been affected by his father's success.

"No one treats me differently," Coglitore said. "No one judges me because of my dad." ♦

Culture clubs host Lunar New Year Festival event

BY Ava Hooman & Chelsea Leung

For the second year in a row, two of the school's most prominent cultural clubs will be bringing a taste of Lunar New Year to the quad. Once again, the Chinese and Korean Culture Clubs will be hosting the Lunar New Year celebration today. The two clubs will line up tables in the quad so that students walking onto campus will have the chance to experience the celebration.

"We're hoping to show the school what the holiday is about and set up an event that anyone who wants can come and celebrate with others," said senior Nicholas Di, an officer in the Chinese Club.

Although food cannot be served during the event due to the school's cafeteria contract, in which only the cafeteria is allowed to serve food during school hours, both clubs will be doing cultural displays during lunch.

Korean Club will be showing traditional Korean clothes and games such as Tuho, a javelin-throwing game. These games were also played at the Cultural Fair during Speak Up For Change on Jan. 15 and were successful in attracting students check out the cultural booths, Uenaka said. Additionally, members will be performing popular Korean pop, or K-pop, dances, which they are learning from YouTube videos.

Because K-pop music and performances have heavily spread the Korean Wave worldwide, club members saw the performance as a perfect way to introduce non-members to a more modern aspect of Korean culture. Juniors Miya Uenaka and Ferennie Liu are leading the performance, teaching dances to songs like "Black Suit" by Super Junior, "All



Courtesy of IAN KIM

During last year's event, senior Jessica Wang created her own paper square to flip others'.

I Wanna Do" by Jay Park and "Heartshaker" by Twice.

Practices occur during every lunch or tutorial in the orchestra room, which is especially useful for its large space and mirror. Uenaka said that overall, practices have been going well, with around 10 members coming each day.

"Because of the daily practices, it's hard for people to show up every day," Uenaka said. "But when they do, the practices are great."

One loyal Korean club member who shows up to practices every day is junior Mira Park. A K-pop fan, she said that she is most excited for the dance performance.

"I love the dance element of K-pop mu-

sic and have also participated in the K-pop performances during Homecoming for the past three years," Park said. "I'm excited to take part in this event and also share it with my friends."

Members from both clubs said that the celebration is not geared only toward the ethnicities that the clubs are centered around.

Both clubs have members of all ethnicities, including Indian and Vietnamese, and they hope to spread fun Chinese and Korean cultural elements to other people.

"While our school does have a large percentage of Asian students, we are still a diverse school," Park said. "This event emphasizes appreciation for all of our cultures." ♦

Friends remember former hangout

BY Karen Chow & Andrew Lee

For seniors Ishan Dutta, Ryan Kim, Navin Tiwary and Alan Xiao, the large redwood tree located in the corner of the quad near to the library has become a special place on campus during the past four years. It was where he and his friends had their first lunches at high school.

"It was a good place to hang out because nobody was initially occupying that area to begin with," said Dutta. "With tables near the tree area, it was a nice place for my friends and me to hang out during lunch."

Over time, the group of friends that occupied that area began to call themselves the "Tree Crew," and the name has stuck ever since.

Although Dutta has hung out near the tree for all of his four years, he noticed that he and his friends gradually stopped eating there as they got older. He believes that the new responsibilities his friends have as seniors, such as college applications and lunch meetings in classrooms, are the reasons for the increasing vacancy.

"As a senior, I do, in fact, find myself going to the tree area less often," Dutta said. "With the choice of going off campus being a more appealing option and more of my friends having a driver's license, I tend to go off campus more."

Ever since the start of second semester, the "Tree Crew" hasn't returned to that area of the quad. The table they used to sit at now sits empty under the nearby great spruce trees.

Members of the friend group such as Tiwary believe that because he and his friends are now second semester seniors, they have a lot more time and always go to a friend's house or a restaurant rather than staying on campus.

But even though Tiwary and his friends find themselves returning less to the area, they still appreciate the hangout spot for its impact on the group's friendship. Currently, there is no friend group sitting there, so the table is open to new groups to claim and get closer together.

"Some of my closest friends come from that area, and I think it's cool how we formed a group by being the people that didn't want to go off campus all the time," Tiwary said.

After being provided with refreshing shade and a cluster of lunch tables over what seems like countless lunch periods, Dutta, Tiwary and their friends hope that the hangout area opens up for other students to enjoy in the future.

"I hope other students come to appreciate the area as much as I have," Dutta said. "My friends and I had great times near the tree, and the area is a generally good spot to hang out and meet new people." ♦



Dutta



Tiwary

Club officers' advice: Join only if you will be truly committed

BY Jeffrey Xu

During Club Fair earlier this year, junior Ethan Ko was thrilled when 45 students signed up to be in RISE, a club that aims to raise interest in science and engineering through competitions and speaker events. As the year went on, though, Ko, a vice president for RISE, began to feel a sense of disillusionment. Too often only 10 or so students would attend meetings, barely enough to maintain official club status.

Many club officers at the school, like Ko, find it difficult to encourage participation within their clubs, especially when there is a lack of interest in the subject itself.

Moreover, with lunches being only 35 minutes long, students often find it hard to do anything meaningful during the short club meetings, having to both eat lunch and navigate the school. This impels them to simply enjoy a free lunch period in their usual hangout spot with friends, rather than participating in clubs.

Often, officers try to solve this problem by incentivizing participation, using rewards like free food and possible officership. This creates another problem, which is that of choosing officers.

With only a few positions available each year, it's often hard to decide who to choose as leaders. Toward the end of the school year, most clubs will have an application process to determine the officers for the following school year.

This causes students pour a lot of effort into their club officer applications and makes it hard for the officers to assign positions without hurting anyone's feelings. However, according to senior Tiffany

Huang, a leader in Math Club and the Computer Science Club, the actual application usually carries little weight.

"Officer selection is really a year-long process, with current officers observing which members are most dedicated and have brought the most to the club's culture," Huang said. "In the end, it's months-worth of actions that determine who officers are, with the actually application form at the end being a 'seal-the-deal' kind of formality."

The decisions are not always so straightforward — there are many factors at play when choosing officers, such as attendance, dedication, performance and connections.

Sometimes, seniority also plays a role, and all of these factors combined can sometimes cause students to question the merit of these decisions. Although this certainly isn't the case for all clubs, there have been instances where younger siblings or friends were chosen just based on connections.

This same trend of students questioning officership decisions can also be seen in other schools in the area. According to Monta Vista High sophomore Brandon Guo, one of the main incentives of club participation on campus is club officership, which is supposed to be based on attendance and dedication. In actuality, however, Guo has noticed that officership is not always given to the right people. Instead, he believes that many decisions are based on other factors, often with nothing to do with the dedication of club members.

"Sometimes, it's literally just connections, which really isn't fair for a lot of the club members," Guo said.

Similarly, sophomore Stephen Yang from Lynbrook High has also seen a trend

of "nepotism" being practiced in the selection of club officers. Even with additional application procedures such as interviews and essays, positions are still often passed from friend to friend or even from sibling to sibling.

Yang believes that the selection process is more of a combination of many factors, including commitment, passion, attendance and performance, but just like in the corporate world, connections also play a role.

Although students at Lynbrook, Monta Vista and Saratoga alike may feel that poor officership decisions are a huge problem, Ko said that the root of this problem is not the selection process itself, but the fact that students care too much just for a title or another line on their resume.

Rather than joining clubs as a boost for the college applications, Ko hopes students can use clubs to further develop their passions and talents. Even with all of the ethical ambiguities that surround the operation of clubs, there are still many students like Ko who pursue clubs out of true interest.

For example, Ko sticks to his passion when he attends his regular club meetings, which include Math Club, Science Club and RISE Club. Reflecting on his own past, Ko also hopes to share his experiences and inspire those who are not as familiar with clubs to give it a thought.

"Clubs are a really great resource, and freshmen should really take advantage of their freedom during lunch and invest their time in their interests," Ko said. "Participating in clubs has also helped me make new friends who are passionate for the same topics as me, which really make clubs a rewarding experience overall." ♦

Two gender-neutral bathrooms opened

by Andrew Lee
& Chelsea Leung

Students walking past the engineering room or math quad may have noticed their peers entering what were once staff-only restrooms. These bathrooms, which opened this school year, are newly designated gender-neutral bathrooms on campus, remodeled to be inclusive to those uncomfortable using gender-segregated restrooms.

The two gender-neutral bathrooms on campus are located next to the engineering room and the 200 building between the ceramics and math classrooms. Administrators plan to install another gender-neutral bathroom in the 800 wing when the building undergoes remodeling later in the year. The bathrooms can be used by both staff and students, principal Paul Robinson said.

Over the past years, global controversy surrounding gender identity has also become relevant in politics, making its way into debates over transgender rights. As a result, earlier in 2017, many states including California established anti-discrimination protections for gay, lesbian, transgender and bisexual people. Movements made by California to be more inclusive of gender rights date back to 2011, when gender identity was added to the state's anti-discrimination laws, and also to 2013 when Gov. Jerry Brown signed a law allowing students to use any

bathroom they identify with.

More recently, as of March 1, 2017, California requires all businesses and schools to put non-specific gender signs on single-stall restrooms. Thus, many schools including Saratoga High converted single stall restrooms into gender-neutral bathrooms.

“Students have learned about the bathrooms out of necessity, and that’s kind of the way it was meant to be.”

PRINCIPAL Paul Robinson

“Schools needed gender-neutral bathrooms on their campuses not only because of the law, but because students needed to have gender-neutral bathrooms that were available to them,” Robinson said.

Administrators opened what were once staff-exclusive and lockable single-stall restrooms to all students and campus users.

Robinson said that so far, only former staff restrooms can be remodeled into gender-neutral ones since all other bathrooms are multi-use. Unless the school completely tears the multi-use bathrooms apart and refashions them, converting them to be gen-

der neutral would be very difficult.

Math teacher Meghan Pickett said that though she is happy that gender-neutral bathrooms were installed, teachers often need to wait in line to use now staff-and-student restrooms. Having short and few breaks while working, all teachers are limited to the two restrooms. Due to the lack of staff-only restrooms, she and other teachers now find that many single-person bathrooms on campus are now being overused.

“We need gender-neutral bathrooms on our campus, so I’m stoked about that,” Pickett said. “We just need more bathrooms so everyone can get their needs met.”

However, many students are not aware that these restrooms are available.

“Many students do not know that they are allowed to use these bathrooms, and they are often mistaken as staff-exclusive bathrooms,” sophomore vice president Emma Hsu said.

Senior Roy Ong also said that while he had heard that they were being installed, he, along with many of his friends, did not even know where they were going to be. To raise awareness, Ong suggested that the administration mention the bathrooms’ existence and locations in an announcement or in one of Robinson’s weekly emails, but according to Robinson, this was exactly how the bathrooms were supposed to be designed — for those who are not comfortable using the

gender-segregated restrooms, but also to anyone who requires them.

“Some students have learned about the bathrooms out of necessity, and that’s the way it was meant to be,” Robinson said. “For students who do not feel that comfortable in a boys’ or a girls’ bathroom, they may have already talked to an adult or knew where these bathrooms were. That way, it has worked out the way it’s supposed to.”

However, there is the possibility of inappropriate activity occurring inside the bathrooms. Being lockable and single-stalled, the bathrooms are a potential place for trouble, though Robinson said he knows of no major issues so far.

“From what we have been able to see, our students have been appropriate in there,” Robinson said. “My hope is that we can trust that everyone will use them appropriately and not have there be a problem.”

Even though the bathrooms are relatively new and unknown on campus, many believe that their presence creates a safer environment for students. Junior Sora Ebrahimi said that the bathrooms can help with privacy issues, people with social anxiety and non-binary and transgender students.

“Non-binaries aren’t put in an uncomfortable situation of choosing any more,” he said. “It’s easier for trans students because there aren’t weird looks and you don’t have to explain why you’re in that bathroom.” ♦



The gender revolution has much to teach

Piece of
kaike.



Kaitlyn Wang

Brush it off, I thought. Slip around the corner and out of sight.

Although I hurried past, the question still echoed: “Why is that guy walking into the girls’ bathroom?”

It wasn’t the first — or second or even third — time someone has mistaken me for a guy. Apparently, I don’t seem like a girl because of my short hair. And I always regretted remaining silent while others defined my gender based on stereotypes.

As a result, I want to share my experiences and explore how they have shaped my perspective on gender. I am not blaming anyone or wallowing in bitterness — I just want people to recognize that it is harmful for gender to dictate the way people view others and, more importantly, themselves.

Since childhood, people have told me that I should wear “girly” clothes and grow my hair out, that I have to make my gender obvious because it’s strange for people to not immediately know.

My reaction has always been: So what? Does looking like how a girl is “supposed” to look really matter to me?

But while I act like it doesn’t, I can’t help but doubt whether people staring is just self-consciousness, or if they are appalled by my nonexistent fashion sense (likely) or if they are trying to discern my gender. I can’t help but feel guilty when I see how my refusal

to wear certain clothes frustrates my mom. And I can’t help but feign agreement with friends who find it hilarious that I’ve been called “sir” and “young man.”

But other times, I’m reminded that there is no reason why appearances or characteristics should be fixed into two categories and two categories only.

Oftentimes, when the divide between “male” and “female” appears blurred, people feel uncomfortable. But it is necessary to grow past discomfort, to not only accept the expected and to overcome the way media, tradition and bias shape what people associate with “male” or “female.”

For me, appearance seemed to define my gender because that’s what people first saw.

After I cut my hair, someone told me that she liked it and always wanted short hair but never had the courage. I thanked her, but I was a bit surprised. Her words reminded me that fear can prevent people from making changes as simple as a haircut.

Being a girl meant growing up under the shadow of the knowledge that my relatives value boys more than girls. They believe that boys must carry on the family name and are more likely to become successful.

Being a girl meant listening to my mom

say I have to get into a “good college” to prove to doubtful family members that I am capable despite my gender.

Being a person meant questioning why gender constructs expectations that may manipulate someone’s future.

Molded by history and perpetuated as current stereotypes, gender roles, including “male breadwinner model,” are still ingrained.

According to a 2013 study published by Oxford University, countries with a history of plough agriculture are more likely to retain traditional gender roles and express less support for gender equality. Because the plough, unlike the hoe and other handheld tools, requires considerable upper-body strength, men often farmed while women worked in the home. This separation of labor carried over to other occupations.

Statistics suggest that the belief that women should stay at home and men should work remains pervasive: In a 2013 Pew Research poll, 51 percent of surveyees thought that children are “better off” with their mothers staying home, while 7 percent thought the same for fathers — even though the proportion of families with fathers as breadwinners and mothers as homemakers decreased from 70 percent in 1960 to 31 percent in 2011.



Students explore the rewards of gift-giving

by Karen Chow & Francesca Chu

Junior Simran Mallik, then 11 years old, broke out into a huge smile as she walked into her family room and saw a squeaky new electric scooter waiting for her. Mallik jumped for joy and was overcome by gratitude.

"I would take it around the block and ride it every day," Mallik said. "It was one of the most memorable gifts I've gotten because my parents knew exactly what I wanted and I loved that feeling."

According to Curious History, gift-giving dates back thousands of years and may go back to the early days of humanity. During primitive cavemen culture, gifts were used to express love or symbolize status. Over time, the act of gift-giving has changed from representing wealth in the afterlife to good luck tokens and favors from the king. Today, they are most often used to communicate a certain message, like a show of appreciation or a celebration of an achievement.

Psychologically, gift-giving is rewarding because it creates connections between people. For the gift-giver, items are sent along with hope that the receiver will appreciate the efforts. For the receiver of the gift, the thought put into the gift is conveyed and a connection is made. These connections provide purpose and satisfaction as well as a

better state of mind.

Mallik agrees that gifts bring people together as she recalls a time when her choir class exchanged gifts.

"Gift-giving is a good way to bond with people as well as promote spirit for the holidays," Mallik said. "In choir's Secret Santa gift exchange, it was really nice to receive something from other people and to give to others."

On the other hand, sophomore Jeffery Ma believes that common gifts like money or food don't have much meaning and only personal gifts create deep connections.

"I think that gifts should be personal," Ma said. "Anybody can give a gift card or cash, but when you know someone well, you should be able to give a gift that is special or unique, like an inside joke."

Ralph Waldo Emerson, an American writer during the mid-19th century, said that "the only gift is a portion of myself. This is right and pleasing, for it restores society in so far as its primary basis, when a man's biography is conveyed in his gift, and every man's wealth is an index of his merit." Emerson essentially says that personal gifts have more value than those of pure monetary value.

According to physiatrist Neel Burton, experiences are more memorable than material objects; however, objects can represent experiences if they are carefully chosen, no

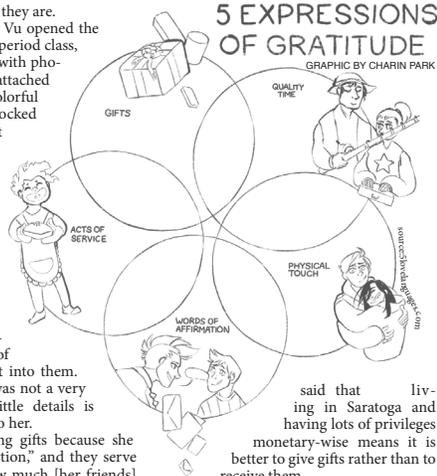
matter how expensive they are.

As junior Michelle Vu opened the door into her second-period class, she saw a cork board with photos and messages attached all resting under colorful balloons. Vu was shocked to see what her best friends had done for her 17th birthday and her smile uncontrollable. She jumped up and down for joy right in front of her teacher.

Vu views thoughtful gifts like the cork board and balloons as her favorites because a lot of consideration was put into them. Although the board was not a very expensive gift, the little details is what made it special to her.

Vu also likes giving gifts because she "loves seeing the reaction," and they serve as a reminder of "how much [her friends] mean to" her. For both parties, gift-giving serves as a symbol of appreciation that their relationship.

Despite having different viewpoints on receiving gifts, the students interviewed



said that living in Saratoga and having lots of privileges monetary-wise means it is better to give gifts rather than to receive them. "I don't really need anything and if I want something I can usually just get it myself," Mallik said. "So, it's more satisfying and it feels better to give rather than receive." ♦

Why they teach: Four educators and their careers



SARAH THERMOND
Drama/English

EVEN AS THE 3:45 BELL rings to signal the end of Sarah Thermond's seventh-period class, her school day is long from over. Instead, after answering all of her students' questions about homework, she rushes to the Thermond Drama Center to oversee the rehearsal of two shows and auditions for a third.

Though her daily workload may seem overwhelming to onlookers, to Thermond, her job is the perfect way for her to balance her two favorite passions: teaching and theater.

Although in a community like Saratoga, parents often try to deter their children from pursuing a teaching career because they perceive it to be low paying compared fields such as engineering, medicine, computer science and law.

As an alumnus of Saratoga High School herself, Thermond said that she was lucky to have both of her parents be supportive of all her career decisions.

However, one of Thermond's undergraduate professors was not the same way.

"One of my college professors very actively dissuaded from going straight after undergrad to get my credentials in teaching," Thermond said. "She felt strongly that I should be trying to make a career for myself as an actor, which was a really nice vote of confidence, but caused me a lot of stress."

Following college at USC, she worked as a professional actor for a year for a children's theater company, and one of her favorite parts of the job was working with children.

"So I was like, I tried, all roads lead to Rome, I'm going to go get that credential now," Thermond said.

In the meantime, she has also managed

to continue acting in local shows when she can find the time.

In being able to balance both drama and teaching, Thermond thinks she has chosen the perfect career option for herself.

"I'm the kind of person who, if I'm going to do something, I want to be doing it with all of my effort and heart," Thermond said, "and one of the only things that can motivate me to that level of energy is working with students. To me, that balances out an awful lot of money."



ERICK RECTOR
English

AS AN ASIAN-AMERICAN STUDENT who attended Saratoga High School years ago, Erick Rector admits a career in education was the last thing on his mind while in high school.

Rather, Rector's parents wanted him to find a high-paying job. Following his graduation from UC Irvine with a degree in English, Rector got a job in finance.

"I was at my financial job for five months, making a very good salary," Rector said. "But I hated it every day. And that's why I quit."

Shortly afterwards, Rector got his substitute teaching credential, and began working as a substitute teacher. Within the first two weeks of substitute teaching, he realized the career he wanted to pursue.

However, not everyone was supportive of Rector's decision to become a teacher.

"I was warned [by my parents] about the poverty that comes with being a teacher," Rector said. "They told me how limiting a teacher's salary is."

In the end, despite entering a lower-paying field, Rector believes he made the right career decision.

"When it comes to considering any career, it really does benefit you to find some-

thing that you really enjoy doing and that is going to be personally rewarding for you," Rector said. "Have that be your primary motivation in terms of finding a career. What is going to make you happiest? If you have a job that you hate, then what's the point?"



KATHY NAKAMATSU
Chemistry

KATHY NAKAMATSU DECIDED she wanted to be a teacher in her sophomore year of high school. She attributes this desire to her favorite teacher in high school, a Chemistry teacher named Mrs. Hardy.

"She really made Chemistry a lot of fun," Nakamatsu said. "I can't say I immediately knew at that time that I wanted to be a teacher, but I was pretty certain."

Her desire to teach solidified when Nakamatsu started doing office jobs while in college. Although her parents, especially her father, tried to dissuade her from a career in teaching, Nakamatsu stuck to her gut in the end.

"I hated doing the same thing every day," Nakamatsu said. "My father wanted me to be a chemical engineer, and his primary reason was money. I told him that wasn't what I wanted to do. Teaching fits my personality. I get bored really easily, and teaching can never be boring."

Nakamatsu urges students to think about why they want to pursue their career.

"I understand there's a need to make money, especially in Silicon Valley, but you really have to enjoy what you're doing," Nakamatsu said. "If you don't enjoy what you're doing, you will hate going to work. And at the end of the day, I love my job."

Ten years ago, Nakamatsu tracked down Mrs. Hardy, and thanked her.

"She was really happy I became a teacher, and so if there's a teacher that was influential

in your life, you should thank them, because it really means a lot to us teachers," Nakamatsu said.



MATTHEW WELANDER
Engineering/Physics

MATTHEW WELANDER, WHILE updating his resume in order to apply for summer jobs and internships during his junior year at Washington University in St. Louis, realized that all of his work experience in the previous three years had come from some form of tutoring or mentoring.

At this point, Welander was pursuing a major in physics, "without really knowing what I wanted to do with that degree."

But even as just a teenager, Welander had a natural aptitude for teaching.

"Back in high school I remember getting together with friends to study for tests or complete the calculus homework, but I spent most of the time explaining how to do problems that I already knew how to do," Welander said.

It finally clicked for him that day, and he started considering going into teaching as a career.

As a STEM major, Welander had career options other than teaching, and he could have easily gone into a much higher-paying mechanical engineering job at a big company.

Even so, he knows teaching has been the right choice for him.

"The job never feels monotonous, and I feel like there is always room to grow and improve," Welander said. "There are definitely higher-paying positions for people with a physics degree, but I can't think of another job I'd rather be doing." ♦

— Jackson Green & Jeffrey Xu

togatalks

What do you think about people pursuing a career in teaching?

"It's really important to think of what you're passionate about when choosing a career."



sophomore Elodie Torres

"I respect teachers because it is an important role in educating future generations."



junior Nicholas Zhang

"I think people should go into teaching because good teachers are life-changing."



sophomore Claire Smerdon

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Players rebound from injuries to win

BY Shreya **Katkere**

The girls' basketball team is finishing its season strong with a record of 9-1 in league as of Feb. 9 and is beginning to gear up for CCS later in the month.

"Our game has improved so much since the summer, when we were still figuring out how to play with each other. I think our team has a good chance of making it far in CCS," senior point guard Chloe Fung said.

Throughout the season, though, the team has sustained some injuries to key players. Sophomore center Ella Parr tore her ACL, ending her playing this year; junior power forward Kirstin Kruka suffered a concussion, leaving her off the court for a week; and senior center Harshini Ramaswamy is playing through injuries to her lower back and hips.

"Our team is not exactly the healthiest, but we are resilient," Fung said.

Despite these injuries, the team is on an 8-game winning streak and only needs to win its next two games to be at the top of the El Camino League. The Falcons are tied with Lynbrook and each team's only loss is to the other.

Starting freshman guard Jane Loo has been a big part of this success. In the Fremont game she scored 16 points; in the Milpitas game she scored 11 points; and in the Los Altos game she scored 15. Also, stepping up big have been Fung with a total of 31 points in the three games and sophomore guard Anika Prasad with 33.

The girls beat Los Altos High 54-25 in a home game on Feb. 7. The Falcons upped the intensity of their defense and had the game well in hand by the end of the third

quarter.

The team destroyed Milpitas High 61-28 in an away game on Feb. 3. Their aggressive defense and rebounding took over the game, leading to the lopsided final score.

"I feel like all of us played our best during this game and we really worked well together as a team," Prasad said. "We had really good ball movement but in the end it was our defense, rebounding and hustle that won us the games."

On Jan. 31, the girls beat Fremont High 52-40 at home. The girls struggled to find their footing in the first half, but came back in the third quarter to put their opponents away. ♦

Due to printing deadlines, the Falcon was unable to cover the game against Homestead on Feb. 13 and the team's Senior Night against Monta Vista tonight (Feb. 16).



Courtesy of the TALISMAN

Sophomore shooting guard Anika Prasad passes a defender and drives to the basket for a layup in the home game against Del Mar on Dec. 13.

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Falcons accumulate wins at end of season

BY Leo **Cao** & Patrick **Li**

After a disappointing 3-4 start in league, the players on the varsity boys' basketball team have found their rhythm and improved at closing out tight games.

The Falcons won a squeaker against Milpitas on Feb. 2 65-64.

Earlier they destroyed Fremont 70-48 on Jan. 31, improving their record to 5-4 in the regular season.

"Our goal is to win all the league games we have left," senior center Neal Iyengar said

"There is a slim chance we'll win league."

After losing to Gunn 56-54 on Jan. 24 and missing 14 free throws in the game, coach Patrick Judge had them redouble their efforts in practice on this key aspect of the sport.

Judge has also put in a couple of new plays that have been effective. These plays improved the Falcons' ball movement and help them get better shots. More players have also become involved in the team's rotation.

"If you look at the box score, you'll see that we're getting more contributions from

everyone in terms of scoring," Iyengar said. "Everyone, from the starters to the end of bench, has been playing better."

Senior guard Harrison Fong has been the primary source of offense for most of the season, but recently he has had great all around games as well. Not only does he lead the league in points, averaging 21 points per game, but he is also averaging five assists a game and playing solid defense.

In addition to their goals for the league season, players are also looking toward the post-season. After losing in the championship game last year, the Falcons have their

eyes set on winning CCS division 3 this year.

"We got some big wins these past few weeks," senior guard Michael Xue said. "It's great to get out of our slump and get back on track for CCS."

Some potential CCS opponents that the players are looking forward to playing against are Aptos and Jefferson. The Falcons beat Aptos last year, but lost to them this year 70-65.

"Both Jefferson and Aptos are solid teams," Iyengar said. "So if we get a chance to play them in CCS, those will definitely be a couple of good games." ♦

WRESTLING

Liddle wins league title in Heavyweight Division

BY Sean **Oh**

After a successful season with two gold and silver medals, senior Alexander Liddle continued the trend, winning the 285-lb weight class at the Santa Clara Valley Athletics League (SCVAL) league tournament on Feb. 9 and 10 at Los Gatos High.

Additionally, freshman Linus Blom placed second in the 106-lb weight class, senior William Sabato placed fifth in the 113-lb weight class and junior Victor Chen placed seventh in the 126-lb weight class.

In the semi-finals round, Liddle faced senior Miguel Maes from Wilcox High, pinning him in 28 seconds. The final round against Coble Feliciano from Fremont High was more difficult, but concluded with a 5-3 victory for him.

In other action, Blom made the second fastest pin of just 16 seconds in his first round. Liddle is seeded fourth for the boys CCS championship in the 285 lb weight class and will compete on Feb. 23 and 24 at Independence High School.

Despite these strong performances,

the Falcons placed ninth overall out of 15 schools. Fremont finished first and Los Gatos took second. The Falcons have half the number of wrestlers as these squads.

"We just don't have enough people to wrestle in certain weight classes while other teams do," junior Isaiah Vivero said.

As the team closes out its season, injuries hurt them, from minor sprains to debilitating impairments. Among the injured were freshman Hunter Hawley, who injured his thumb but healed before missing any meets, and freshman Nora Sherman, who dislocated

her kneecap and chipped her femur and was unable to continue competing.

Injuries are common in wrestling due to the sport's violent nature, but Sherman's injury is more severe than usual, said Vivero.

Injuries of this magnitude can result in the team missing out on tournament points if a wrestler is absent. Unlike other sports, coach Daniel Gamez said he cannot simply substitute in a new wrestler.

Although SHS won four out of the five matches actually wrestled, forfeits led to an overall loss. ♦

GIRLS' SOCCER

Season's end dooms team's CCS playoff chances

BY Alexandra **Li** & Aaron **Choi**

The Falcons were unable to sustain their early momentum and didn't accumulate enough wins to qualify for CCS. With a current conference record of 3-4-2, the girls will be ending their season with their game today at home vs. Palo Alto.

The team lost 5-0 at Mountain View on Feb. 9, tied 1-1 against Los Gatos on Feb. 7, lost 2-0 at Homestead on Feb. 5 and tied 0-0 against Santa Clara on Jan. 31.

When the Falcons faced Mountain View,

two important players were missing from their starting lineup: senior center midfielder Daphne Liu and sophomore center back Ellie Pickard.

The pair were unable to play due to injuries and illnesses, contributing to the lopsided loss.

In the game against Los Gatos, the goal was scored by sophomore forward Ananya Krishnan, who received the ball from junior forward Isabella Taylor, while the goal from Los Gatos was a penalty kick.

According to senior right midfielder and defender Allison Borch, the team had trou-

ble finding the rhythm in passing the ball in the first half, but improved to come together in the second half. Because the game was the Falcons' Senior Night, the team played with a lot of energy.

"Everyone was super hyped and aggressive and played good defense," Borch said.

Pickard said the Homestead game, which had been rescheduled, was especially disappointing.

"The heat affected us, and we weren't communicating well," Sasha said.

Liu didn't view the game against Santa Clara as the team's best possible perfor-

mance, either.

"We weren't in rhythm with each other, which caused us to lose the ball a lot more than we should have," Liu said.

Even so, Pickard views the team's progress in the season positively.

"We've played a lot better than we ever dreamed of at the start of the season," she said. "The difference between our first few preseason games compared to now is astounding." ♦

Due to printing deadlines, the Falcon was unable to cover the team's game against Palo Alto on Feb. 16.

BOYS' SOCCER

Falcons defeat Vikings to clinch first in division

by Jackson Green & Jeffrey Xu

As the final whistle blew at the end of last Friday's Senior Night game vs. Lynbrook, fans erupted in celebration of a 1-0 win on a goal of the foot of junior Charles Debling and shutout goalkeeping from senior Neil Rao.

This was the key game they needed to secure first place in the El Camino division with a record of 7-2-1 and qualify for CCS.

"I'm really happy because we were supposed to make CCS last year (but didn't)," senior captain Solomon Bailey said. "So this year, we were finally able to prove that Saratoga has a good team that's capable of making CCS."

The team had already lost 4-3 to the Vikings, a result Bailey called an upset.

"I think the thing that helped us win was the fact that it was Seniors' Night," Bailey said. "Myself and all the other seniors wanted to make CCS and end our high school years on a good note."

The season was made difficult with the loss of senior forward Tim Kobara to a leg injury and junior defensive center midfielder Jules Ducrot to a torn ACL and MCL.

Instead of relying on stars, the players improved their movement and coordination.

"This year, we don't have one specific player that we're relying on; it's a team effort," Bailey said.

"Relying on one player is not really fun. Instead, we're playing more strategically and passing to the players that are in the best positions to score."

Outside back sophomore Brian Wu said this win was a milestone for the team and also reflective of the team's season-long hard work.

"I'm really happy that the team was able to do so well this season, especially since it's not easy to consistently stay at the top of the division," Wu said. "I think this was just a really anticipated game, so everyone was very focused and determined to win."

While there is still a division game vs. Milpitas on Feb. 16, the Falcons have essentially secured first place in the division. The team



FALCON // MUTHU PALANIAPPAN

Junior Charles Debling makes a steal during the team's Senior Night game against Lynbrook on Feb. 9.

is now preparing for CCS next week, where they will face tougher teams than those in their division. "I've been part of the team for all four years of high school," Bai-

ley said. "Each year we came as friends and played the beautiful game, and we play because we love the game and wanted to have fun together." ♦

New Year's resolution: Working out is working out for golfer



e-size money

Kevin Size

When Tiger Woods made his professional golf debut in 1996 and won tournaments by 15 strokes, viewers attributed this to an obvious difference between Woods and his competitors: Woods was in top shape while some of his opponents smoked cigars and ate hamburgers.

Since then, the necessity of staying in shape and developing muscle mass to gain an advantage for golf has definitely heightened.

According to PGATour.com, a professional golfer works out for an hour three to four times a week.

So what does any of this have to do with my New Year's resolutions?

I am a golfer myself, and my 5-foot-9-inch frame matched with a mere 130 pounds often means I lack the distance off the tee other stronger players have.

Height clearly has no correlation with distance, as professional golfer Rory McIlroy is only 5-foot-8-inches and can consistently hit it over 300 yards. The only thing that Rory has that I do not is muscle.

So it seemed like the right New Year's resolution for me to begin working out, under the watchful eye of my trainer, Jessica Bramlett, whom I met through a mentor of mine.

We began on Jan. 5 at NorCal Functional Fitness, where Bramlett led me through various workouts that were targeted at strengthening my legs and upper body. After an hour of squats, lunges, arm rows and bench presses, I was ready to keel over in exhaustion.

Although I did not complain much during the workout, I thought I was going to vomit midway through and I swore I saw Jesus calling me to the heavens after I had finished my lunges.

The four days after were an absolute disaster. My legs were so sore I could not walk properly, and my friends got annoyed as I waddled through the hallways, struggling to keep up with them.

Even worse, my next workout was only a week later, and after the experience I had just had from the first workout, I really did not want to go back.

After some self-contemplation and a couple of Shia LaBeouf "just do it" videos, I finally convinced myself to go. The four-day cycle of soreness would start over again and again for the following few weeks. The workouts were only separated by four to six days of rest which

did not seem enough to completely assuage the pain.

After a couple more sessions, I did not notice any change in my body, except for maybe some extra acne on my face, which, unfortunately, did not help me hit tee shots any further.

I began wondering if working out was really the right decision for me and if my New Year's resolution was truly a good one.

Luckily, my swing coach had access to the coveted new golf technology known as TrackMan, which uses a dual radar to assess various important aspects of your golf swing, including swing speed and distance.

My coach and I had done work previously with it in mid-December, and we made a document with all sorts of numbers that indicated my abilities.

My coach and I figured we should fire up the machine again and determine if working out was actually helping improve my game.

So in late January, I began to hit balls with the machine and record those numbers.

After a month of working out, my swing speed improved by 3 miles per hour.

A seemingly marginal difference, 3 miles per hour equates to an extra 15 yards off the tee, and it improved my game drastically.

After playing some practice rounds with friends, I noticed that hitting the ball farther meant shorter distances into greens, effectively increasing my margin of safety.

But the real test came in a two-day tournament in mid January, which was hosted by the Del Monte and Poppy Hills Golf Courses in Monterey.

The extra 15 yards were a huge help at Del Monte and I was able to tear the course up firing a 71. The score put me in a tie for fourth in a field of 70.

Sadly, I played rather poorly at Poppy Hills, hitting the ball erratically due to a few swing changes and ended the tournament in a tie for thirteenth.

Despite my performance to close the tournament, I realized that hitting it longer off the tee gave me a chance to win after round one, whereas before, if I played well, I was only middle of the pack.

The tournament was an encouraging sign that working out was truly helping my game.

Although I still cannot hit it as far as Rory McIlroy and I still have yet to win a tournament in 2018, working out has seemed to have boosted my game to the next level.

Seeing improvement in my game has made me more committed to working out, and my New Year's resolution does not seem so hard to keep now. ♦

Students gain valuable experiences coaching

by Francesca Chu & Alexandra Li

The day before the championship meet in July last year, junior Nicholas Bray watched as a young swimmer practiced diving into the Brookside pool over and over again, only to belly flop every single time. Though his shift as a lifeguard was over, Bray decided to stay longer to help the child perfect his dive.

The sense of happiness that filled Bray at the child's success motivated him to start coaching students in swimming. At the age of 13, Bray entered the junior coaching program at the Brookside Club, where he had been a part of the swim team for 12 years. The program allows older swimmers to watch during younger kids' practices and giving advice on how the swimmers can improve.

"I learned how to verbally influence people through positive and negative reinforcement."

SENIOR Neal Iyengar

When he turned 15, Bray received his lifeguard certification and began spending more time at the club. Bray joined the coaching program because he remembered looking up to the older swimmers who helped him when he was younger.

Bray also teaches paid private lessons with some of the younger swimmers.

Sometimes, if he gives useful advice to a

student during a group practice, the parent will approach him and ask if he would be willing to continue working with the child privately.

Bray has found that coaching has helped his own skills in swimming as well, since it reinforces concepts in which he also has room for improvement.

"To be able to teach something is to be able to do it better," Bray said. "I've focused more on my form since I started coaching."

Similarly, senior varsity player Neal Iyengar coaches younger children as part of the National Junior Basketball (NJB) league. For the past two years, he has coached seventh and eighth graders at West Valley College with Nihal Mahajani, a senior from Lynbrook, holding two practices and a game each week.

Like Bray, Iyengar remembers being coached by other high school students when he was younger.

Additionally, Iyengar feels that coaching students has helped him empathize with other people and changed how he approaches the game.

"I learned how to verbally influence people through positive and negative reinforcement, and to not get frustrated as easily," Iyengar said. "It's enticing because coaching and playing show me two different perspectives to the game."

Overall, Bray and Iyengar have found their coaching experiences to be rewarding. In particular, Bray enjoys the added authority of instructing others.

"Coaching comes with a bigger responsibility and I feel like I'm moving," Bray said. "I see all the parents are watching me and all the kids are looking up to a good influence and it feels good to be that person." ♦

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GRAPHIC CREDITS: KAREN CHOW

GIRLS' LACROSSE

Head Coaches: Megan Abcede and Emilie Noyola

Recap of 2016/2017 season: The team finished sixth in Santa Clara Valley Athletic League, with a league record of 4-10.

League: El Camino Division

Key Matchups: Los Gatos, Gunn

Star Players: Senior midfielder Milan Nguyen, senior midfielder Katrina Sung and se-

nior offensive player Laura Bhurji, junior goalie Leena Elzeiny

Key Additions (2017 alumni): Midfielders Julia Vita and Emma Kovac

Prognosis: After a disappointing season with a record of 4-10, the girls ended up placing sixth out of the nine teams in the El Camino division last year. The team has

experienced major key losses through its graduating seniors, and there are currently only three seniors on the team. Consequently, many underclassmen and juniors have had to step up to play on varsity to make up for the loss.

"This year is definitely going to be a rebuilding year," said sophomore midfielder Julia Yoo. "But I think if we work hard, we

have to potential to do well in our league." Additionally, Bhurji believes the individual talent and the strong chemistry of the returning players of the team will contribute to their success. She hopes to place high in the lower league and subsequently qualify for CCS. ♦

— Jeffrey Xu

SOFTBALL

Head Coach: Mike Davey and Greg Spirakis

2016-2017 record: 19-6

2016-2017 recap: The team made it to the semifinals in CCS where they lost 3-1 to Hillsdale.

Key Additions: Freshman outfielder Bela Chauhan

Key Matchups: Los Gatos, Milpitas, Prospect

Star Players: Senior pitcher Chancee Gaskin, sophomore shortstop Hannah Beine

Key losses (2017 alumni): Rachel Davey, Natasha Ramakrishnan

League: El Camino Division

Prognosis: The team anticipates difficulty

in their attempt to compensate for the large number of seniors lost to graduation, which includes star pitcher Rachel Davey.

Although the team does have various hurdles to overcome, they are optimistic.

In addition, senior infielder Kate Bossi has opted out of playing this year and soph-

omore outfielder Ella Parr is out with a torn ACL suffered during basketball.

Still, the girls expect to be competitive in their division, making up for the holes with their strong work ethic.

"I think if we carry on the work ethic from last year we should go very far this season," senior catcher Eryn Lee said. "We have some spots to fill up from last year so we definitely have our work cut out for us, but we're up for the challenge."

Senior pitcher Chancee Gaskin will step up in Davey's place.

"Chancee is a really good pitcher who puts in a lot of work when nobody is watching," Lee said.

The team must overcome another obstacle that results from their losses: chemistry. "Last year the team really bonded," sophomore infielder Natalie Tarbox said. "I hope that's how it is again this year but it'll take some time for us to get accustomed with each other."

Freshman Bela Chauhan will be joining the team during tryouts, and her abilities have given the struggling team hope for success.

"She is a catcher, outfielder and great hitter," Parr said. "I might be out this season, but she'll help for sure." ♦

— Kevin Sze

BADMINTON

Head Coach: Charlie Situ

2016-2017 record: 1-11

2016-2017 recap: No. 1 Singles Senior Stephen Ding and No. 1 boys' doubles player senior Josh Li qualified for CCS and placed second.

Key Additions: Freshman Ryan Hsiao, sophomore Cameron Chow

Key Matchups: Monta Vista, Wilcox

Star Players: Senior boys' No. 1 singles player Stephen Ding, senior girls' No. 1 singles Mana Shimokawa

Key losses (2017 alumni): No. 1 boys' doubles Josh Li, No. 1 mixed Jason Zhao, No. 2 boys' doubles Mason Tian, No. 1 mixed Spring Ma

League: El Camino Division

Prognosis: After a disappointing season

with a record of 1-11, the Falcons dropped to the El Camino Division, where they expect to finish at the top of league and rise back up into the De Anza Division next season. Although the team has experienced some key losses through graduating seniors, there is an incoming flow of talent from underclassmen. Key additions include sophomore Cameron Chow and freshman

Ryan Hsiao, who is nationally ranked.

"We're pretty optimistic this year, especially with the talented incoming freshman boys and girls," senior captain Catherine Zhang said. "There's a solid chance we'll finish first in the division and move up a league next year." ♦

— Jeffrey Xu and Isabelle Yang

BOYS' TENNIS

Head Coach: Florin Marica

2016-2017 record: 10-2

2016-2017 recap: lost to Bellarmine in CCS Division I quarter finals

Key Additions: Freshman Stefan Meier, sophomore Ronit Pattanayak

Key Matchups: Los Gatos, Monta Vista

Star Players: Seniors Dean Stratakos and Tristan Xiao, junior Derek Pinai

Key losses (2017 alumni): Andre Xiao, Matthew Kermin, Kailas Shekar

League: Santa Clara Valley Athletics League, De Anza division

Prognosis: Following an incredibly strong season last year, in which they finished with a 10-2 record and competed in the CCS Division I quarter finals against Bellarmine,

the Falcons are seeking to rebuild after losing star players Andre Xiao and Kailas Shekar. Despite this setback, the team is optimistic for the future.

This is largely due to their strong freshman foundation. Five new members joined Varsity this year, with 3 of those new players being freshmen. Additionally, many experienced team members including senior Dean Stratakos and junior Derek Pinai are striving to fill the legacies of their lost stars.

"Even though we lost many key players, we have good incoming freshmen, and we have a solid base to build a strong future team," senior Tristan Xiao said. ♦

— Andrew Lee and Roland Shen



Courtesy of THE TALISMAN

Senior doubles player Varun Meduri awaits a serve from Palo Alto on March 14, 2017.

BOYS' GOLF

Head Coach: David Gragnola

2016-2017 record: 5-6-1

2016-2017 recap: The team struggled early on but consistently improved. They found their groove to close the season on a three-game winning streak, which included an upset against Palo Alto, breaking the Vikings' five-year league winning streak.

Key Additions: Freshman Michael Burry, freshman twins Geoffrey and Albert Jing

Key Matchups: Los Gatos, Palo Alto, Cupertino

Star Players: Sophomore Kevin Sze, junior William Liu

Key losses (2017 alumni): Trevor Leung, Nathan Shang

League: Santa Clara Valley Athletics League

Prognosis: After an up-and-down season last year that ended with a few excellent wins, members of the team think they can

build on their success.

"I believe that this year we will make leagues and have a run at CCS," said senior James Parden, who has played golf his entire high school career.

During practice, the team wants to stress the importance of focus in order to improve general play. The starting six have yet to be determined. According to Parden, the team is working hard and optimistic for the

upcoming season, namely due to the spur of young talent coming to the team.

"Golf is a tough sport," Parden said. "But I think we will have a great season because we are adding key freshmen and the other players will have more experience playing in matches and will thus handle pressure situations more effectively." ♦

— Leo Cao

>> snapshots



FALCON // AVA HOOMAN



FALCON // SELENA LIU



FALCON // AVA HOOMAN



FALCON // MUTHU PALANIAPPAN

Junior David Berkowitz-Sklar sings and plays guitar at Mr. Saratoga on Feb. 9.

Freshman Cornel Georgiou practices drums with winter percussion on Feb. 8.

Freshman Enoch Luk readies his racket to hit during JV tryouts on Feb. 9.

Boys' soccer coaches Chris Stott and Alex James Booth congratulate the seniors on Senior Night on Feb. 9.

buzzworthy >> **Urinal dividers: We want more**

BY Austin Wang & Alex Yang

While many hailed the new multimillion dollar music building as the greatest addition to the campus in decades, we are thrilled about a renovation that improves the lives of half the school.

Finally, after many complaints and requests, the administration ordered the installation of single urinal dividers in three boys' bathrooms at the start of second semester.

Yes, a urinal divider. One each in three bathrooms. Is this a taunt? A joke? Or a legitimate extension of an olive branch, signaling a willingness for compromise and real change?

It's hard to see this as more than a cruel joke when one of the added dividers, the one near the math quad, was placed right next to a hand dryer.

What was the meaning of this? Does the school expect two students to share a divid-

er, one doing his business and one drying his hands?

Furthermore, instead of placing a divider, in one of the bathrooms, some sort of handle bar was installed instead.

A singular divider between the farthest left urinal and the one next to it helps but does not solve the problem.

We can understand the importance of keeping your balance, but a urinal divider would provide the same effect if one just held the top of it.

There is no logical reason for the lack of dividers in boys' bathrooms, and we are determined to let that be known.

The battle for urinal dividers is not a new

phenomenon, and every male student is a weary soldier.

Since the inception of the school over 60 years ago, angry, awkward teenage boys have been forced to go to the bathroom right next to each other without the privacy of dividers.

At times, the efficiency of the bathroom is negated by a student's unwillingness to use urinals next to each other. Five urinals becomes three, four urinals becomes two, three urinals becomes one; finally, one student with a full bladder breaks through the heavy tension and chooses to use a urinal between two other students.

The awkwardness mounts to a peak as other students look on in shock. Sadly, these small, awkward moments take place every day.

So why do we not have urinal dividers? After all, the average urinal divider costs around \$100 to install.

For a fraction of the price of the new music building, you could buy enough urinal

dividers to eliminate the problem.

A singular divider between the farthest left urinal and the one next to it helps but does not solve the problem. The math of the problem is that even if the leftmost urinal is isolated, the remaining urinals will still suffer from awkward tension — only half can be used with appropriate spacing in between. So, in the end, the number of used urinals effectively stays the same.

Opinion writers at The Falcon have been leading the charge for urinal dividers for years.

Since 2015, when our first pro-divider article came out, we have been pleading for students' basic right to privacy and comfort. In fact, when you Google search "lack of urinal dividers," a Saratoga Falcon article appears as a front page search result.

We hope that these single dividers are but the start of a glorious revolution. ♦



The life of a YouTuber just isn't for us

AVID VLOG FANS TRY THEIR HAND AT VLOGGING FOR A DAY



emu

Esha Lakhota and Muthu Palaniappan

After spending hours each week scavenging on YouTube and watching "vlogs" about people's daily lives, we decided we had to try vlogging for ourselves.

Vlogging, or video blogging, has gained a cult-like following in the past few years.

Many of our favorite YouTubers are daily vloggers. In watching their vlogs, we can see how much work it is to put out daily content, a job that involves nearly constant filming, editing and more.

For example, vlogger Casey Neistat uses GoPros, DSLRs and drones to get most of his shots. On the other hand, the vlogs from Caspar Lee are more casual. He simply uses his iPhone to film, as well as Jobi tripods or add-on lenses to enhance his videography.

For our vlogging experience, we chose a recent weekend. Right after school ended, we met up to discuss what our vlog would be about and what kinds of camera techniques and equipment to use.

We used an iPhones to film, because it was the most convenient, and many of our favorite YouTubers also do the same.

The first place we went to was Los Gatos Cafe to have brunch. As soon as the food came, we took out our phones and started recording different angles of our meal, much like we see in our favorite vlogs. In addition, we filmed our server getting us the food and our reactions to serve as a transition to the montage.

Since the restaurant was loud and busy, few people noticed or paid attention to us talking to our phone cameras. The couple seated next to our table glanced over, but they did not think much of it.

For us, talking to our phones in public felt uncomfortable and embarrassing. To our relief, we soon realized that people only took a glance out of curiosity and immediately went back to their activities.

Although we may have felt self-conscious, we were too distracted in getting the perfect shot or take to care what other people thought.

On second thought, many people probably assumed that we were on FaceTime or were taking a Snapchat. These days, with social media and technology so prevalent, people aren't as surprised to see two friends talking to a camera in a public environment.

We took a break from vlogging for the rest of the day since we didn't do anything that exciting. At around 6 p.m., we decided to go to Valley Fair mall and Santana Row to vlog our spontaneous shopping experience.

First, we went to Gucci, something we

watch YouTubers do all the time, to see the most expensive belts and bags. When we walked in, the sales associate greeted us with a happy smile.

However, when we pulled out the iPhone 7 and started vlogging, she proceeded to kick us out, saying not to touch the displays and that filming in the store was not allowed.

Even though this sudden shock of disapproval from the Gucci employees brought our morale down, we did want to make the video at least five minutes, so we proceeded to stores like Forever 21 and Urban Outfitters and vlogged some cute clothes and recorded us trying different random pieces on.

Unlike uptight Gucci, they allowed filming.

At the mall, people looked and judged us, especially at Urban Outfitters, which didn't have many customers.

By now we were somewhat used to the stares, but we still don't understand how daily vloggers get past the weird looks and stares they get from recording themselves in public.

Though vlogging was a fun experience, we feel like our daily lives aren't quite entertaining enough for the big time. After all, our lives consist of going to school, playing sports and doing homework: Nobody would find our vlogs entertaining. The vlog life just isn't cut out for us. ♦

topten

SKI WEEK ACTIVITIES

- 10 **Go to the zoo to see a REAL black panther.** No need to watch it in theaters.
- 9 **Apply for summer programs.** And get inevitably rejected. Can't wait to impress those college admissions officers.
- 8 **Go outside.** It's basically summer here anyway.
- 7 **Eat all your leftover Valentines chocolates.** We all know you had no Valentine to give them to.
- 6 **Stalk a celebrity's Instagram.** You can probably get through Kylie Jenner's 5,000 posts in an hour.
- 5 **Fill out your Falcon Wheel for classes next year.** Gotta get the required 8 hours of sleep!
- 4 **Go to Tahoe.** Snow in 72 degree California weather is a yes.
- 3 **Visit a college.** What's more fun than walking around a school you only have a 6 percent chance of getting into.
- 2 **Watch the NBA All-Star game.** KD and Westbrook on the same team?!
- 1 **Watch the Winter Olympics.** At least it's winter somewhere.

>> Muthu Palaniappan