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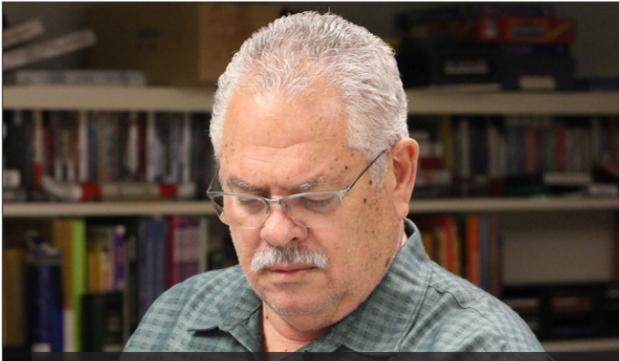
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## THREE VETERAN TEACHERS TO RETIRE



ARNALDO RODRIGUEX: 38 YEARS AT SHS (44 YEARS IN DISTRICT)

BY AnnaNovoselov & SandhyaSundaram

A mong alumni and current students, Room 601 is iconic. It is filled with colorful art, projects and posters. In the back corner, a display of photographs depicting hundreds of beaming faces represents fond memories of countless trips to Mexico and events at Saratoga

>> RODRIGUEX on pg. 3



KIM ANZALONE: 26 YEARS AT SHS (37 YEARS IN DISTRICT)

BY KrithiSankar & SophiaZivanic

Finding comforting couches and a supply of beverages, such as coffee and almond milk, students from all different groups and backgrounds all find a home in room 604: AP U.S. History (APUSH) teacher Kim Anzalone's classroom. Near former students' prom photos and senior portraits, a giant cardboard cutout

>> ANZALONE on pg. 3



DEBRA TROXELL: 17 YEARS AT SHS

BY AlexWang & JayneZhou

A fter 17 years of teaching math and computer science at Saratoga High and another four years prior at Del Mar High School in San Jose, math and computer science teacher Debra Troxell will be retiring in June. Troxell first discovered how fulfilling teaching could be two decades ago. At the time, she had her own

>> TROXELL on pg. 3

FALCON // AMY TANG, KAYLENE MORRISON

## School takes action to combat JUULing culture

### 1 IN 10 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS NATIONWIDE IS NOW VAPING

BY ElaineToh & AnanyaVadlakonda

Editor's note: Carter is a pseudonym to protect the source's identity.

In 2015, PAX Labs, an e-cigarette company, released the JUUL — a small e-cigarette device shaped like a flashdrive with which users inhale and exhale the vapor produced. Since its release,

the device has become a widespread phenomenon, even helping coin a new word: JUULing.

JUULs have also found their way into the school's halls, as several students have been carrying them hidden away inside their backpacks, clothes or other school supplies. Because students were JUULing in the gym foyer bathroom, it is now closed during certain times of the day.

Principal Paul Robinson said that while he is aware of some students JUULing on campus, he is unsure of about the magnitude of the issue here.

"One of the rites of passage for high school students is to push the edge of the envelope — to experiment and to try risky behaviors just because you've been told no all of your life not to do them," Robinson said.

Though distributors market JUULs as healthier alternatives to cigarettes, carcinogens such as formaldehyde, which is also found

in regular cigarettes, and diacetyl still fill the user's lungs after inhaling the vapor, causing health issues.

For instance, a condition called Obliterative Bronchiolitis, or Popcorn Lung, can develop after repeated JUULing, leading to compromised lung function and shortness of breath as a result of the scarred and inflamed bronchioles, according to the National Institutes of Health.

Additionally, a considerable amount of nicotine, a primary ingredient in cigarettes and severely

addictive by nature, is in each JUUL pod, a refillable cartridge that is inserted into the device.

#### Fighting the addiction

Carter, an anonymous student who spoke to The Falcon, admitted to getting "pretty hooked" after trying JUULing at a friend's house last September, after which he bought his own device.

"For me, it was the small high," he said. "Peer pressure is part of it too. [JUULs are] super potent, so

>> DRUGS on pg. 5

### >> what'sinside

#### GREEN TEAM

##### Earth Week

Students organize the annual Earth Week with various environmentally friendly activities. pg. 3

#### LIFESTYLES

##### Ancestry

Junior discovers his diverse ethnicity breakdown through an ancestry.com test. pg. 9

#### SPORTS

##### Boys' Volleyball

Falcons look for second CCS title in last three years. pg. 19

### CLUBS

## Female-focused STEM clubs face obstacles

BY AnishiPatel

The Age of Information has seen significant improvement in the role of women in the workforce, especially in various STEM fields.

Perhaps nowhere has the impact been better felt than here in Silicon Valley. And while the presence of women in STEM both in the workforce and in schools is slowly increasing, evidence suggests that there is a long road ahead to true gender equality in STEM. Following the framework set by their parents and other adults around them, many girls here find themselves gravitating toward a future in STEM.

"My mom grew up in Pakistan," sophomore Kiran Chandrasekher said, "but she had such great opportunities — she went to grad school and became a biologist. She's always encouraged equal treatment for me and my brother, and she's my inspiration."

Having learned the value of education, Chandrasekher's mother, Yasmin Chandrasekher, has instilled in her the belief that she must never let gender affect her schooling.

These lessons and the opportunities she has been afforded have led Chandrasekher down the path to pursue a career in STEM.

Gender gap apparent in APCS Chandrasekher, confident in

>> WISTEM on pg. 13

### STAFF

## District Teacher of the Year awarded to Ellis

BY ColleenFeng

Weights clang against the ground to the beat of blaring music as P.E. students complete workouts under the direction of teacher Richard Ellis.

The hard work his students put into workouts helps them become both faster and stronger. Similarly, the work Ellis has put into his history and P.E. classes in his 17 years of teaching at the school paid off recently when other teachers voted him as the District Teacher of the Year for 2018-19.

Ellis said he became interested

in teaching due to an experience with one of his college professors. Originally, Ellis was waitlisted for her English class because it was already full. Outside her room one day, he heard her yelling at her students about workload and responsibility.

"I was shocked to hear this little old lady snap at a college class like that," Ellis said. "No sooner had she stopped with her rant than about five to six students got up and walked out, dropping the class immediately."

Even though he was nervous,

>> ELLIS on pg. 2



Ellis


**news  
>> briefs**
**Freshman class officers organize first service fair**

Students looking for one-time or ongoing volunteer opportunities had a chance to get information and talk to representatives from 30 local organizations during a first ever service fair on April 26, which was organized by the freshman class office.

Representatives from organizations such as Los Gatos Recreation, YMCA and Our City Forest, set up tables with informational flyers. During tutorial, they answered the students' questions and gave out small gifts such as pencils, candy and stickers.

The idea was suggested by the school's service learning coordinator, Tim Gallagher. He was inspired by Pioneer High and Los Gatos High, which both hold service fairs.

"We thought with all our community service emphasis that it would be successful at SHS," Gallagher said. He contacted more than 70 organizations and assisted the class office in the process of planning the event, a process that started in January.

After Gallagher suggested the idea to AP U.S. History teacher Matthew Torrens in August, the freshman class office volunteered to lead the planning.

Although some organizations canceled last minute, the freshman class office believes that the fair was a success. It provided information and encouraged students to volunteer.

Gallagher said he hopes it will become an annual activity. "The best part was seeing students signing up for volunteering and being interested in helping out the community," freshman class office president Lauren Tan said.

— Lina Kim

**Freshmen start percussion instruction project**

In order to help other students either learn mallet instruments or further improve mallet percussion skills, freshman Fiona Lee and sophomore Priscilla Widjaja, who were both winter percussion and band marimba players, have created a service project named A.muse.

As a part of their band section leader applications, Lee, who came up with the idea, and Widjaja presented a service project based on teaching mallet instruments, primarily marimba, to students of any musical experience. Widjaja said she wants to raise awareness about the percussion department and encourage more students to join marching band or winter percussion next year.

"When I first joined band in high school, it made me realize how many opportunities for music I missed," Widjaja said. "I don't want people to lie in the dark like I did."

So far, after announcing their project in the school's Facebook group, three interested students have contacted them.

One of these students was junior Cathleen Hsieh, a violin and clarinet player, who tried A.muse out of curiosity and found the experience enjoyable.

Her first lesson consisted of basic technique like learning proper mallet grip and playing scales. Lee and Widjaja monitored her closely to correct her mistakes.

To schedule an A.muse appointment, Lee said, interested students should message either herself or Widjaja on Facebook so they can schedule a meeting during tutorial.

"For all the non-percussionists, even if it's a new thing for you, don't be afraid to give it a go," Lee said. "And for those already in percussion, it doesn't take a lot of time, so come and practice with us anyway."

— Annissa Mu

**>> falcononline****Top Story**

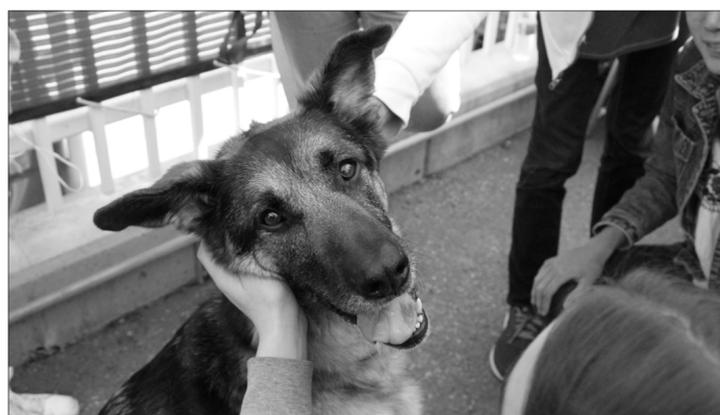
School to fully comply with College Board AP exam rules, on pg. 16

**Top Picture**

Junior Akhilesh Bellathur poses next to one of the M-SET robots being prepared for an upcoming competition.

Courtesy of M-SET

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

**>> picturethis**

FALCON // IVA HOOMAN

**FURRY FRIENDS >> Students relieve stress before AP testing by playing with dogs during tutorial on May 4 between Hyde park and the pool. The activity was organized by the Outreach Commission.**

**ELLIS**

continued from pg. 1

Ellis went ahead and joined the class. The professor turned out to be one of the most caring and compassionate teachers he ever had, which inspired him to start teaching himself.

During his time at the school, Ellis started as a full-time social studies teacher, mainly teaching World History and World Geography.

He later added P.E. classes to his teaching load and, along with retired educator Peter Jordan and fellow teacher Yuko Aoki, has done groundbreaking work establishing CrossFit as the dominant curriculum in physical education. The school's P.E. program has become a model for other schools to copy.

Ellis said he likes making his curriculum relevant and meaning-

ful to students' lives.

In his P.E. class, Ellis's students do a workout every year in honor of a deceased soldier. In his past U.S. History classes, Ellis has assigned his students to write reports on current events throughout the semester. In his World Geography classes, he likes to talk about events that are interesting to the students as well as events that relate to what they are learning with the goal for students to pay attention to what is happening globally.

In his P.E. class, Ellis has worked with the other P.E. teachers to create a rigorous curriculum. His students do daily weightlifting and workouts from different CrossFit locations. The CrossFit emphasis, which began in 2009-2010, marked a change from the old curriculum, which had been team sports based and included flag football unit, a basketball unit and a volleyball unit — each being around six weeks long.

"We totally re-wrote our P.E. curriculum in order to create a class that is focused on giving students the tools to stay fit after high school," Ellis said. "The vast majority of our students were not playing [sports from the old curriculum like] flag football, volleyball or pickleball after school."

One of his current P.E. students, freshman Bryan Chu, said Ellis motivates his classes by telling them what to work on and how to improve their workouts.

"The daily workouts are really good and intensive," Chu said. "Ellis is really laid back; he's not super strict, but he demands respect and gets stuff done."

Overall, Ellis said he feels humbled winning the award.

"There are a ton of teachers on our campus that do a variety of wonderful things who could have won the award," Ellis said. "The fact that many of my colleagues voted for me is an honor." ♦

**ASB**

# Elections introduce four underclassmen into office

BY Alex Wang

The sophomore class, the largest on campus, now has the most representation on the school's ASB.

The sole junior elected to the school's leadership body was Roshan Verma as president.

Sweeping the renaming of the ASB positions for the Class of 2020 were George Bian as vice president, Timothy Yoon as treasurer, Jolyn Tran as secretary and Prosper Chiu as board representative.

As newly elected officers, both Bian and Verma want to focus on transparency between the Leadership class and students.

"I feel like this past year, there was a lot of miscommunication and the rest of the school wasn't as aware as to what Leadership was doing," Verma said.

For example, not many students know that ASB undertook a school beautification project at the front of the school to make it a more attractive place for students to spend time.

To fix this communication problem, Bian plans on making

sure that students know what is going on in Leadership, and that all student input regarding activities and events, such as dances, is heard and considered.

With the newly elected stu-

**"The officers know what they signed up for. I'm confident that we'll be able to deliver on our goals."**

JUNIOR Roshan Verma

dents taking office soon, it may seem unusual that four of the five elected students are current sophomores. In contrast, in past years there have been more juniors, with two or three elected sophomores.

Verma, the only elected officer with prior experience serving on ASB, acknowledges that with more underclassmen transitioning to ASB, it will take longer for them to get acclimated to their new roles.

At the same time, Verma said

that he does not expect any issues working with them because of the help of the "great support system" comprising the leadership class, activities director Matt Torrens and administrators.

"I know they are extremely hard-working people," Verma said. "They know what they signed up for and I'm confident we'll be able to deliver on our goals for next year."

Torrens said that he expects the new officers to perform just as well even though they may have less experience because ASB officers must have one year in class office before running.

"Even though they're sophomores, they're still prepared because of the Leadership class model," he said.

In the end, varying degrees of experience are set aside as these students set out to plan school activities throughout the next year.

"I feel that it will be a great year on ASB because all of the elected officers are very responsible people who love our school and will make sure it is the best place it can be," Bian said. ♦

**RODRIGUEX**

continued from pg. 1

High.

Flags of various Hispanic countries line the top wall, papel picados adorn the whiteboards and piñatas hang throughout a classroom that has been the second home to Spanish teacher Arnaldo Rodriguex for the past 38 years.

After considering retirement for many years, Rodriguex finally committed to signing his retirement papers earlier this year.

"It's mixed emotions because it's not that I want to retire, but I feel that maybe it's time to let someone else replace me here and do wonderful things," Rodriguex said.

**Costa Rica roots**

Having grown up in Costa Rica, Rodriguex came to Lakewood High School, near L.A., as a foreign exchange student when he was a senior in high school. Rodriguex decided to continue his education in the United States, later going to San Jose State University.

Although Rodriguex's father originally wanted his son to become a chemist, Rodriguex decided to pursue a career in education after discovering a true passion for teaching at the end of his sophomore year.

A professor was impressed by how Rodriguex presented a presentation on morphology, a branch of biology, to the class, and asked him if he ever considered becoming a teacher.

**"It's mixed emotions because it's not that I want to retire, but I feel that maybe it's time to let someone else replace me here and do wonderful things."**

TEACHER Arnaldo Rodriguex

Soon after, Rodriguex changed his major to Spanish Linguistics and his minor to Spanish. Rodriguex believes he made the right choice, as he has loved almost every moment of teaching for the past four decades.

For Rodriguex, the relationships he builds with his students, some dating back to the 1970s, are what he said he will miss the most.

Joe Dermer is one such alumnus who had Rodriguex in 1978-80 at Los Gatos, where Rodriguex taught from 1974-1981 before accepting a position at Saratoga High.

"Señor Rodriguex, or 'Don Arnaldo,' was my favorite teacher," Dermer said in an email. "His insistence that no English

be spoken in class even at the lower levels like Spanish 2 made it challenging, but you progressed faster in the language."

After forging a friendship as a student, Dermer remained in touch and even attended Rodriguex's wedding years later.

Dermer fondly remembers Rodriguex's "sizable afro along with a big thick moustache" as well as his dedication and witty personality.

"I used to translate jokes into Spanish and tell them to Don Arnaldo," Dermer said. "He would always have a big hearty laugh — not sure if the joke was funny or just my translation of it."

**Cuernavaca connections**

Perhaps one of Rodriguex's greatest legacies at the school is the annual Mexico trip that he started in 1974 for Los Gatos High and in 1981 for Saratoga High.

The program allows students to spend a week in Cuernavaca, Mexico, with a host family, providing students the opportunity to be fully immersed in Mexican culture. Students also have the chance to make friends and hone their Spanish skills at the local school.

2017 alumna Mitali Shanbhag said that the trip allowed her to learn about the culture and lifestyle of Cuernavaca while communicating in Spanish and building lifelong friendships. According to Shanbhag, Rodriguex, who organizes the trip, is sort of a "celebrity back there," as all the kids adore and look up to him.

"He's the kindest and most encouraging teacher, and I feel comfortable going to him with anything," Shanbhag said. "I always think of him more as a mentor or friend rather than an instructor."

Rodriguex said that the trip allows students to break stereotypes and barriers and truly experience the culture beyond the classroom. He hopes to stay connected to the school by continuing to plan these trips as a volunteer.

Spanish 2 and 3 teacher Bret Yeilding said that Rodriguex's retirement will be a huge loss for the school.

"He's such a dynamic character in the department and on campus," Yeilding said.

According to Spanish 2 and Spanish 3 teacher Sarah Voorhees, the Spanish department is about 75 percent of the way through the interview process to find a replacement for Rodriguex.

"I will miss all the work that he does for the world language teachers and the work he does with our students," Voorhees said. "But mostly I will miss his sense of humor and his hugs. He gives the best hugs!"

As the bittersweet moment of his retirement arrives, Rodriguex hopes to always remember his time here in the district.

"There are so, so many memories that I would just like for it all to be one beautiful, wonderful, everlasting memory together," Rodriguex said. ♦

**ANZALONE**

continued from pg. 1

of Elvis Presley smiles next to movie posters of "Gone With the Wind" and "Bourne Identity."

Collected over Anzalone's 37 years as a teacher in the Los Gatos-Saratoga High School district, these items contain memories of her nine years at Los Gatos and 26 at Saratoga. Anzalone has taught a range of subjects, from APUSH and History in Film to P.E. and Dance Fitness. She started History in Film about 18 years ago and Dance Fitness two years ago.

Anzalone received her teaching credential in 1981 from San Jose State University and started teaching at Los Gatos High the same year.

This year, though, she has decided to retire due to her mother-in-law's recent death, which led to her husband's retirement from teaching math at Ida Price Middle School as well.

"The passing of my mother-in-law made me realize that perhaps my husband and I need to do more together," Anzalone said.

Her high-energy and enthusiastic teaching style made her one of the school's most beloved educators.

For senior JR Im, who was a former APUSH student and teacher assistant for History in Film last semester, Anzalone's room has been a perfect place on campus to de-stress during breaks.

"She has this happiness in her that she spreads when she says hello to everyone when we come in to her classroom during tutorial," Im said.

In Dance Fitness, Anzalone can be seen teaching high-intensity dance moves to rows of students lined up and facing two paneled mirrors. Though she is 61, her remarkable youth allows herself to lead 16- and 17-year-old students through choreographed moves as a fun way to get exercise.

Junior Mia Luu recalls her first encounter with Anzalone, when her P.E. class decided to join Anzalone's dance fitness class for the day.

"When I saw her, she was like a ball of energy: very welcoming, and motivating me to dance," Luu said.

**TROXELL**

continued from pg. 1

window treatment business and designed curtains and installed them for people after having previously worked as an engineer, but then she was put in charge of the computer lab at her children's elementary school in San Jose as a parent volunteer.

"It wasn't until that moment that I realized how cool [teaching] is," Troxell said. "It's like, 'Wow, I really like this — I could be good at this.' It sounds really corny, but it is really accurate."

Although she thinks she would not be as good of a K-8 teacher, she loves working with high school kids and will miss them a lot.

**Computer science legacy**

Throughout her years here, Troxell has supported the computer science program and has also been heavily involved in the math department.

As the department chair for five years, she has helped the department navigate through the Common Core changes and introduced several new courses such as College Prep Calculus and Regular Trig/Precalculus.

"It was a good growth experience for the school, and it was a good personal growth for me too," Troxell said.

During this time, she found that navigating through a major change in the school helped her become more organized and knowledgeable as well.

As the computer science program evolved throughout the years, Troxell's teaching style has also changed; she has implemented a "flipped classroom" approach where the students listen to her lectures at home and work on projects or ask questions about the lectures in class.

"Students seemed to become uninterested in [the lecture after] about five minutes," Troxell said. "Part of this was due to a huge range of abilities [in the students] and since there was such a huge variety — more so than in a math class — it was hard to lecture at an appropriate rate."

As a result, she introduced optional attendance days for her AP Computer Science classes where students can learn the material on their own at home instead of going to class.

However, even though high-achieving students are not required to attend class ev-

ery day, it does not mean that they lack the education they need, Troxell said.

She often implements supplementary material into her curriculum that will ultimately benefit students regardless of whether it is tested on the AP exam. She writes her own lessons and worksheets that she believes will help students if they choose to pursue computer science in the future. The skills students learn in her class will help them understand tested ideas on a much deeper level, she said.

Furthermore, Troxell said that because many of her students end up studying computer science in college, the extra material she teaches will ultimately become a starting point for them to bring "all kinds of cool things" to the world in the future.

**Reflecting on Troxell's impact**

An example of one of Troxell's students who has found success in computer science is alumnus Sujay Khandekar, currently a student at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

He was in both Troxell's APCS and Trigonometry Honors classes in his sophomore year and got to know her well. As a sophomore, he had even started the App Development club with the support of Troxell, who agreed to become the club's

adviser. With these experiences, Khandekar later studied Human-Computer Interaction in college and continued to develop web and mobile applications using elements of social computing.

But none of this could have happened without Troxell's help.

"She really cared about my goals and dreams beyond her classroom, and that really meant a lot to me at the time," Khandekar said.

In the end, Troxell's retirement will be bittersweet for her; her students will be the ones that she will miss the most. "I'm in this profession because I love working with the students," she said.

After retiring, Troxell said that she wants to "go out into the world and have fun." In her free time, she likes to camp, backpack, garden and knit. She is also an avid scuba diver.

She also wants to volunteer at multiple places that she could not have while she was working, such as local libraries and an afterschool program that helps kids code.

But no matter what Troxell does, Khandekar said, "I wish her the very, very best. I feel bad for the students who won't get the chance to have her as a teacher or a mentor." ♦



Courtesy of TALISMAN

**Retiring teacher Kim Anzalone leads her students in dance fitness class.**

Her plans for retirement also include completing projects around her house such as building furniture. She also plans to do a lot of traveling with her husband.

Anzalone said that though she doesn't have a specific favorite memory from teaching here, what has meant the most to her are the relationships she's forged with the hundreds of students who have taken her classes.

"They have always been the absolute best part of teaching, and I will miss all of them terribly!" Anzalone said.

Current students and alumni said that they will also miss Anzalone and her contributions to her classes and the school.

"She brought vibrant energy to the classroom," said 2016 alumnus Chester Leung, who had Anzalone for his APUSH class junior year. "Her teaching approach not only helped academic development but also interpersonal and professional growth." ♦

# JV team places fifth in the nation

BY MathewLuo

Sixteen members from the school's History Bowl team traveled to Washington, D.C. under the guidance of history teacher Matt Torrens late last month.

The JV A team included sophomores Grant Chen, Sean Chen, Jason Hong, Sathvik Kaliyur, Jeffrey Ma and Brandon Wang; the JV B team included sophomores Vincent Cheng, Stephanie Ma and Connor Oaklander and freshmen Winston Liu and Nirmik Tambe; the varsity team included senior captain Tiffany Huang, junior captain Kiran Rachamalla and juniors Sarah Meng, Anson Tong and Anuj Changavi.

Segregated by grade, all three teams qualified individually for the national tournament at three earlier regional tournaments.

The varsity team went 3-2 in the preliminary matches and 5-0 in the bracket matches, but lost a tiebreaker to Gilman High School and was eliminated from the tournament. The JV B team went 2-3 in the preliminary matches, 2-3 in the brackets and did not make the playoffs.

"A lot of our matches were really close, where we lost by only 10 to 20 points," Cheng said. "It all came down to nerves and buzzers."

The JV A team went 5-0 in prelims and 5-0 in brackets before a fifth-place finish. Kaliyur said that their worst loss was 460-130 against Adlai Stevenson High School from New York, which was "one-man-carried" to first place.

The national History Bowl tournament was held in conjunction with four other tournaments: the U.S. History Bee, the History Bee, the Geography Olympiad and the Geography Bowl.

Because the tournaments were not held concurrently, many Saratoga students chose to partake in multiple events. Oaklander placed 16th nationally in the Geography Olympiad and Hong placed ninth nationally in the History Bee semifinals.

In addition, Torrens won the national History Bee and Bowl Coach of the Year award.

This year's finish has been the best since 2015, when the Saratoga varsity team won

## HISTORY BOWL

first place at nationals. Rachamalla attributed the strength of this year's finish to the presence of many strong members and the well-rounded composition of the teams.

"We have a person to cover every aspect of history from ancient history to world history to art history to political history," Rachamalla said. "It makes us different from many other top teams, almost 40 percent of which have to rely on a single person."

Rachamalla said that next year, the History Bowl team will work on team cohesion. Additionally, Rachamalla is concerned about the lack of new members on the team. Although the team will only lose one senior to graduation, the lack of new freshmen this year will soon compromise its strength.

Despite their strong collective scores, sophomore Grant Chen said that the History Bowl team runs mostly on individual passion for history. The History Bowl team only practices together for two hours per week. Nevertheless, the team is still tightly bonded. Members share inside jokes in the hallways and play Protobowl, an online

Quiz Bowl client, in the library.

"When someone else might just browse the internet, we play Protobowl and read Wikipedia," Chen said. "When we meet, we don't just practice. We share jokes and memes as well." ♦

## >> thebigidea

### 2018 History Bowl Results

**Varsity**  
Placed first in middle bracket  
Points: 1180 in preliminary, 1320 in playoffs  
Record: 3-2 in preliminary matches, 5-0 in bracket matches

**JV A**  
Placed fifth overall  
Points: 1640 in preliminary, 1560 in playoffs  
Record: 5-0 in preliminary and bracket matches

**JV B**  
Placed 65th overall  
Points: 840 in preliminary, 890 in playoffs  
Record: 2-3 in preliminary and bracket matches

## EARTH WEEK



GRAPHIC BY ASHLEY FENG

# Green Team organizes eco-friendly activities

BY KaitlynWang & JayneZhou

Stationed at school entrances, bike racks and crosswalks, Green Team members waited for students to arrive to school on April 18 for Walk-it-Wednesday, the third of seven Earth Week events. Students who walked, biked or carpoled received a stamp, then filed into the quad for a free doughnut.

According to Green Team president Dasha Gousseva, the school's second annual Earth Week, which took place from April 16-22, helped underscore some environmental challenges confronting the world.

According to Gousseva, Green Team started planning about two months ahead of time, mostly in person during weekly Green Team meetings but also through the use of Google Docs and Spreadsheets, typically for about two hours each week. Co-president Annie Xu, vice president Frederick Kim, media coordinator Isabella Bradley, treasurer Kiran Rachamalla and secretary Bijan Naimi as well as members were involved in the planning. During Earth Week, it took three hours every day to plan the next day.

However, it was all worth the effort, Gousseva said, as the week provided opportunities for students to consider their impact on the environment.

"I think it gave a little more awareness to [different issues] so students were more conscious about their actions," said senior Stephanie Lemire, who is not a Green Team member but participated in many of the Earth Week activities.

### Daily events

Earth Week began with Make-it-Monday: during lunch in the quad, students made bottle cap pins and entered a raffle to win eco-friendly school supplies. By participating in an ecoart activity, students decorated bottle caps that previously would have

been thrown away, recognizing that "trash" can be reused to serve a purpose.

On Trash-it-Tuesday, Green Team displayed projects, made of recycled or reused items, from science teacher Kristen Thomson's AP Environmental Science classes in the quad.

In addition, students could play games on Tuesday to enter a raffle for a Hydroflask. One game challenged students to differentiate between recyclables and trash, while the other was a "trash map of the world" — students guessed locations that matched with certain facts. For example, students tried to pinpoint the Great Pacific Garbage Patch's location on the map.

The projects and games allowed students to see how to properly dispose of waste and how objects that would have gone to recycling facilities or landfills could be used instead.

Extra credit from science teachers, including Thomson and Lisa Cochrum, encouraged students to attend the speaker event on Talk-it-up Thursday. Around 70 students attended.

"I thought it was extremely helpful not only to hear about each speaker's particular issue, but also to hear about how they'd gotten into the job, how a lot of them had transitioned from another place in their lives and how they have seen a direct impact in each of their fields," Cochrum said.

Officers mostly looked for guest speakers through personal and parental connections, including researchers whom students helped over the summer. The speakers included Kathryn Beheshti, a Ph.D. candidate at UCSC who conducts field research on salt marsh systems and seagrass ecosystem services; Stephen Coates, a construction project executive and Constanza Rampini, a SJSU professor of environmental studies who investigated the flooding of the Brahmaputra River in India.

"Having been to India and having seen a lot of the complications and the bureaucracy and the educational system, I can't fathom what it would take to create lasting environmental change," Cochrum said. "Rampini had seen success and I thought that was really encouraging."

Ending the school week, Film-it-Friday featured "The True Cost," a documentary questioning the ethics of the fashion industry regarding human rights and the environment, in the MAP Annex. Around 30 people attended.

**"We're not perfect, but I do see students making an effort to recycle."**



SENIOR Dasha Gousseva

Following up on students' questions after the movie, Green Team also created a map of Bay Area thrift stores and recommended the app Good on You, which provides information about how ethical it is to shop certain brands based on their impact on people, animals and the environment.

On the morning of Stroll-it-Saturday, 12 students participated in a wildflower hike at Long Ridge Open Space Preserve in La Honda.

During the hike, the group came across banana slugs, learned how to differentiate between poison oak and blackberry, tasted Douglas Fir pine needles and miner's lettuce and shared snacks at a summit overlooking a view of the valley.

"The hike was really pretty, so that was a

lot of fun," Lemire said. "Junior Siena Parsons's mom was a chaperone there, and she pointed out a lot of different wildflowers and plants and that was interesting because that's not how I would normally hike."

Finally, on Save-it-Sunday — Earth Day — Green Team and Marine Conservation Club volunteered with Save Our Shores at Davenport beach in Santa Cruz County. Around 14 participants picked up litter and recorded their findings for two hours. They also took a break to examine the mussels clustered along the shore and the sea anemone growing in tide pools.

### Impacting students

A week of events concluding with Earth Day was Green Team's way of inspiring students to incorporate environmentally friendly decisions into their daily routines, including recycling, proving that leading a sustainable lifestyle is simple and easy.

According to Gousseva, recycling at school is improving, but it is still an area needing focus.

"I think we're a relatively environmentally conscious campus compared to other schools," Gousseva said. "We're not perfect, but at the same time I do see students making an effort to recycle."

Green Team looks forward to further progress, as well as a more successful future Earth Week next year by increasing outreach and giving more prizes to participating students, Gousseva said.

Although the events may have seemed like a week of fun and free items for some students, Green Team hopes that student recognition of human impact on the environment will continue beyond a single week.

"The final thought we want students to take away is that we only have one Earth and we want to preserve it for that reason," Gousseva said. ♦

## DRUGS

continued from pg. 1

it's really easy to get addicted to it."

Though JUULs were specifically intended to be used by those at least 21, the product appeals to teens because of the many different flavors it offers, such as crème brûlée, mango and mint.

Additionally, the culture that glorifies JUULing through several social media posts of people blowing rings of smoke have incentivized people to start.

According to the National Youth Tobacco Survey in 2016, over 2 million youth were e-cigarette users. A further breakdown of the statistics shows that 11.3 percent high school students and 4.6 percent middle school JUUL nationwide.

Carter said he and handful of others regularly make their way to boys' bathrooms at

the start of tutorial while hiding a JUUL in their pockets, so they can take several puffs from their devices to blow clouds of vapor into the hoods of their sweatshirts.

Carter, like many of his friends, purchased the product not long after its release. As a result, he was able to buy a JUUL online directly from the official JUUL website, which was created by PAX Labs, because no strict age verification process had been implemented.

Now, sellers either carry out a public records search or ask for an ID to ensure that only those who are at least 21 are able to buy a device.

Soon after purchase, Carter started JUULing at least one pod a day, which equals close to 200 cigarette puffs of nicotine or a pack of cigarettes per day.

After about five months of frequent JUULing, however, Carter said the rapidly increasing expenses prompted his decision

to try to quit the addictive habit.

According to The Boston Globe, for children starting to secretly buy their own JUUL trayer kits on black markets, the starting price is around \$80, considerably more than the usual retail price of \$50. And with each JUUL pod retailing at \$15.99, the expenses can pile up.

Carter also decided to try to stop JUULing because he was seeing its health effects. He said he started coughing often and could not run as well in school sports.

But even with the determination to quit, Carter said he has relapsed around five times. Even now, Carter admits to JUULing recently after quitting for nearly a month.

### The awareness campaign begins

After more students went to the administration with concerns about JUULing in recent months, the school has been looking into ways to better educate both students

and parents in hopes of deterring vaping. On March 27, a parent information night was held by the School Resource Officer Russell Davis and assistant principal Brian Thompson to start a conversation about the vaping and JUULing culture at the school.

Since this issue has only recently been brought to the administration's attention, they used this gathering as a means to not only provide information about the issue but also to gain as much knowledge about vaping and JUULing from the parents as they could.

The district is assembling a committee of parents, teachers and students to inform and stop students from JUULing.

"In all honesty we really want to work with our students, whether that's student leadership or even working with the newspaper, to come up with something we can do so that people really know the truth about the dangers of JUULing," Robinson said. ♦

## SPEECH AND DEBATE

# Rallabandi becomes state champion in OI

BY AnnaNovoselov

As senior Divya Rallabandi stepped on stage during the state speech and debate tournament held last month at Mountain House High School in the Central Valley, she realized it might be the last time she got to do an activity that had meant so much to her during high school. She decided to go out and simply have fun.

Her nothing-to-lose approach worked. She went on to beat 55 other competitors to win first place in Oratorical Interpretation (OI), in which competitors dramatically recite a well-known speech. It is the second year in row that a Saratoga High student has won an event at the state tournament, after Kyle Wang placed first in National Extemporaneous in 2017.

Besides Rallabandi, seniors Ayush Aggarwal, Arun Ramakrishna and Varun Viswanath, and sophomore Siva Sambasivam also participated in the state tournament this year.

In her speech, Rallabandi recited assistant professor of sociology at UC Santa Barbara Victor Rios' TED Talk, which examines the role of teachers in underprivileged neighborhoods. The TED talk detailed Rios' own impoverished background and urged

reforms to the education system, emphasizing that society should label young people "at promise" rather than "at risk."

Motivated by one of his own teachers, Rios ended up graduating from high school in the expected four years, going to college and defying society's expectations of his unfavorable future.

"He was inspired to work with kids in his community to promote setting aside the culture you've been brought up with, and seeing yourself as a survivor and someone who has overcome adversity," Rallabandi said.

Rallabandi said that she gravitates toward speeches that emphasize setbacks that hinder people's educational process.

"I had a really big connection to the topic, and I think the audience felt that," she said. "I really enjoy connecting with judges, so I think that's what took me far — my dedication to the activity."

Rallabandi said that the best part of the tournament was having her friends, the other team members, there, who she described as being "incredibly supportive."

For their part, Aggarwal and Ramakrishna reached octofinals and placed 10th in Public Forum Debate (PF).

Viswanath also competed in OI, and

Sambasivam competed in Congressional Debate.

Out of the 350 teams who went to district qualifiers for PF, 48 teams qualified for the state tournament.

**"I think that's what took me far — my dedication to the activity."**



SENIOR Divya Rallabandi

Aggarwal said that he was "thrilled to qualify" because the Coast Forensics League state qualifiers pits some of the national circuit's best teams against each other for four spots.

At the end of the state tournament, Ramakrishna said that they had trouble coming up with unique refutations to their opponents' claims as the competition grew tougher.

"We were able to break down complicated arguments really simply and effectively

for some of the more traditional judges," Aggarwal said. "But we could have worked on comparing our arguments directly to the opposition to make the ballot more clear."

Aggarwal and Ramakrishna had experience with the April PF topic of whether or not the U.S. should increase its quota for H1-B visas at the King Round Robin tournament in March, where they finished and went 9-1 in ballot count.

Throughout the year, they did extensive research and conducted practice rounds with members of the Saratoga High debate team and debaters from other schools.

"The topic was especially gripping for us as the children of immigrants who came to this country on the visa," Aggarwal said.

Ramakrishna said that he wasn't nervous because both he and Aggarwal have done debate for four years and "it has become second nature" for them.

While debate can be subjective and dependent on a judge's opinions, Rallabandi said that dedication and hard work led to the team's successes this season.

"I just love what I do," Rallabandi said. "Even when I'm sick or at the dentist, I would be reciting my speech just for fun. When you go up on stage and you're having fun, judges can see that." ♦

## STEM

# Students excel in math and physics competitions

BY DavidKoh & HowardTang

In the past two months, multiple students have participated in the prestigious USA Math (USAMO) and Physics (USAPhO) Olympiads. The results, which have not come out yet, will determine whether participants can attend the Mathematical Olympiad Summer Program (MOSP) or the U.S. Physics Team Training Camp, respectively.

On April 18 and 19, seven students took the USAMO and the Junior Olympiad (USAJMO) in the research center. The students sat through nine hours of intense math consisting of six proofs within two days.

Sophomore Brandon Wang and juniors Catherine Wu and Michael Zhang returned to represent Saratoga High in the USAMO, and sophomore Nevin Liang returned to take USAJMO. Sophomore Jeffrey Xu, seventh grader Nilay Mishra and eighth grader Joseph Zhang qualified for USAJMO for the first time.

These students were invited to take the exam after scoring well on the American Mathematics Competition (AMC) 12 or the AMC 10, respectively, as well as the American Invitational Mathematics Examination (AIME), organized by math teacher Andrew Shoemaker and the Mathematics Association of America (MAA).

If students score high on the USAMO/USAJMO, they will be selected to attend the MOSP a camp for the 50 highest scorers out of approximately 400 test takers in the nation.

Those invited will have a chance to represent the United States in the International Mathematics Olympiad (IMO). In past years, Wang and Wu have qualified for this distinguished camp.

According to senior Tiffany Huang, president of the math club, the school had a large number of students taking the test.

"Many states only have two Olympiad qualifiers each year, so we're incredibly fortunate to have seven between Redwood and Saratoga," Huang said. "It has become something we take for granted, but we should take a step back and recognize the difficulty of this achievement."

In addition to success in USAMO, Liang, Wang, Wu and Zhang qualified to compete in the USAPhO test after earning a score of 15 or higher on the Jan. 31 F=ma exam, a preliminary exam.

Six additional students also passed the F=ma: sophomores Allen Chen and Felix Chen, juniors Alexandra Li and Joseph Li and seniors Michael Xue and Andrew Zheng.

Of the 10 total qualifiers, eight chose to take the USAPhO on April 11 in physics teacher Kirk Davis' classroom. If the stu-

dents pass, they can attend the U.S. Physics Team Training Camp, sponsored by the American Association of Physics Teachers (AAPT), which Huang and Wu have previously attended.

According to Wu, as the students wait for MAA and AAPT to release results, which may be posted online at any time before

school ends, they patiently study advanced material in their subjects to prepare for potential acceptance into prestigious camps.

"I work on past problems, I review notes from classes and I look at past MOSP problems," Wu said. "I have a document that has a list of important theorems and things to take note of, and I look at that to prepare." ♦



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# Sexual assault allegations should be respected

by David Koh & Jayne Zhou

Ever since the start of the #MeToo movement began last October, there has been a surge in sexual assault allegations across the U.S., most notably against politicians, celebrities and other powerful figures.

But instead of responding by showing remorse or mediation, the common response has too often been to harshly question the legitimacy of the accusations. Armies of critics swarm comments sections of news articles and Facebook posts, attacking the accuser before the accused. Although it's possible that the accused is innocent, people should deter from the automatic response of digital vigilantism.

This tendency prevents more women from coming forward to share their stories, but it also prioritizes the reputation of the aggressor over women's concerns and safety.

One of the most prominent people who has been accused is president Donald Trump, who has had 19 women come forward to accuse him of sexual harassment and assault, according to USA Today.

A recent case was brought up against Trump in January by Summer Zervos, a former contestant in his show "The Apprentice." In a New York Supreme Court hearing, Zervos claimed that Trump had sexually assaulted her in 2007.

However, instead of acknowledging that Trump may have been guilty, commentators have questioned why Zervos took 10 years to come forward.

Zervos was accused of lying and only accusing Trump for attention or his money. Unfortunately, equally ubiquitous comments can be found on any news story or

post about sexual harassment allegations.

These Facebook comments are spurred, in part, by Trump's response, in which he deemed his accusers "liars," according to Vox News.

High-ranking officials like Trump who blatantly disrespect sexual assault victims make it difficult for the victims' claims to appear legitimate, further instilling the notion that rapists and sexual offenders around the world can get away with assault.

By denying such claims, offenders contribute to the repugnant culture of victim blaming, which is being used, now more than ever, to discredit the statements of rape victims.

This culture of victim-blaming is not a new concept. In a tragic rape case in 2012, in which a 12-year-old girl was raped at gunpoint by three 16-year-old boys, a critic tweeted that the girl should've known what the boy wanted when he invited her over when his parents were out of town, according to Ms. Magazine.

Another said, "[people] should be aware of their surroundings, regardless [of] how drunk you are."

When women who have been sexually assaulted or harassed come forward to share their stories, our automatic response should not be a conde-

scending "be more careful" or "she shouldn't have been drunk." Rather, the people who carried out the assault should be held responsible for their choice to take advantage of the situation.

Victim-blaming isn't just an issue for allegations against popular and high-ranking individuals. It has also become propagated throughout high schools and colleges.

In the notorious 2016 Santa Clara Superior court case against Stanford swimmer Brock Turner, he was sentenced to six months of jail, three years of probation and registry as a sexual offender. In the end, he served only three months of jail.

Three months of jail for intoxicating and sexually assaulting a 22-year-old woman. The evidence against Turner was overwhelming, with DNA tests and two eyewitnesses proving he had assaulted his victim.

However, despite the evidence against Turner, Turner's lawyers attempted to place the blame on the victim.

"When you drink the quantity of you are."



GRAPHICS BY FRANCESCA CHU, AMY TANG, AND CALLIA YUAN

vodka in the red cup, you drank it all down at once, right? And that was a decision you made, right?" said one of the lawyers.

The fact that Turner served three months in jail for assaulting a woman and leaving her with a traumatic experience that will last her entire life is a testament to the prominence of victim-blaming in the U.S. Turner's lenient sentence and the lawyers' attempts to place the blame on the victim sends the message that it is OK to rape or harass and blame it on "party culture."

The denial and dismissal of sexual assault allegations has continued, with the accused citing a lack of hard evidence or blaming women for seeking publicity and money. All of this has contributed to a culture that sends the message that, in the case of sexual assault allegations, it is somehow always the victim's fault.

As long as this suspicion of allegations exists and victims' statements continue to be doubted, sexual harassment and assault will continue to be an epidemic.

Although some court cases do result in fair rulings and punishment of offenders, the trend of questioning the legitimacy of sexual assault claims leads to a society where the offenders receive the benefit of the doubt.

While rape culture won't disappear overnight, it is important for us to recognize that the first step to getting rid of it is to achieve justice for victims and punishment for offenders.

The only way to attain this is to treat accusations as having merit, followed by thorough investigations to ascertain the truth of the situation. Only then can women be empowered to continue coming forward with allegations to achieve justice in courts. ♦

# More high level humanities needed

As home to the children of some of the Valley's top technological minds, it is of little surprise that Saratoga High's full menu of STEM-oriented classes lives up to expectations. The school offers nine of the 12 AP science, computer science and math courses listed on the College Board website.

But of the 11 Social Science and English AP classes listed, SHS offers only five. Of the eight World Language and Cultures AP classes, SHS offers three.

For a student interested in the humanities, options for growth and challenge are lacking. Often, humanities students are told by well-meaning relatives and other adults that their desired career will never make them enough money to live in the Bay Area, that they need STEM degrees and that if they just took AP Computer Science, they'd see that their interests in the humanities are merely hobbies — not viable career paths.

It is hard enough to deviate from Silicon Valley expectations, and the school's lack of adequate humanities classes and limited language options do not make the situation any easier.

Advanced classes for students interested in the humanities include AP European and US history and AP US Government. Elective choices, like journalism and drama, do not have any AP-level classes (though they do have Honors classes in the fourth year).

With the exception of students interested in Media Arts, the school's non-STEM oriented students are clearly at a disadvantage GPA-wise.

This forces students who are interested in the humanities to take AP level STEM classes just to compete with the GPAs of STEM-minded students who have the option of taking AP classes relevant to their desired futures.

And this is not to mention the school's relatively meager offering of only three world language options (Chinese, Spanish and French) when classes such as AP Latin, Japanese, German and Italian are listed as options on the College Board website. While language options are limited by interest and student population, Chinese was added as a result of petitioning by parents.

SHS should follow the example of surrounding schools such as Cupertino High, which offers much more courses, such as AP Psychology and AP Japanese.

Private schools such as Harker offer an even larger selection, complete with semester-long specialized English electives for upperclassmen, due to their larger per-student funding.

These options are unavailable to public schools such as SHS, which require at least 20-25 students to run a class. And since SHS is a smaller public school compared to ones like Los Gatos or Palo Alto, course options are even further limited.

To create more interest in advanced humanities classes, one option is to open them up to freshmen. Currently, freshmen at SHS can take honors and AP level math courses with the proper qualifications, and for sophomores, the door is opened a little



AMY TANG

further to include APs such as European History, Music Theory and Computer Science.

While the school claims that limiting AP options for freshmen relieves pressure, highly motivated students are perfectly capable of deciding if they can handle an AP class.

Other classes that might see a surge in interest are ones like AP Microeconomics and Macroeconomics, which would provide better options for students inter-

ested in business. Currently, AP Government is the only remotely business-related course offered at the school.

After all, even a global tech center such as the Silicon Valley needs talented students with varied areas of interest. SHS must continue seeking to add enough humanities classes to adequately meet the needs of all students — not just those who are going to major in computer science or engineering. ♦

## Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

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The Falcon staff voted 33-3 in support of this article.

## togatalks

Should students have access to more AP humanities courses?

"Students should be able to strengthen their knowledge in the subjects they're interested in."



junior Aaron Yang

"Currently, there are many STEM-gearred APs, so offering the humanities would balance things out."



senior Anthony Ding

# AP classes should exempt seniors from finals

by Selena Liu

For second-semester seniors, the stress of college application season is finally over. But the stress of performing well in their academic classes is not.

Many of them are still obligated to take finals in regular, honors and AP classes, and in some cases, its questionable whether these finals are even necessary.

After all, since second-semester seniors have already submitted their official transcripts to the colleges they are committed to, the schools they will be attending in the fall already know how they are performing in their classes.

While seniors still have to meet minimum GPA requirements to avoid getting rescinded by colleges, finals shouldn't make much

a difference, especially if seniors have shown decent effort and mastery of the subject throughout second semester.

In other words, seniors cannot flat-out fail their classes, but if they are doing reasonably well in them, there should be no additional pressure for them to take a final.

At the very least, classes should stop giving finals to seniors who meet a certain grade requirement, which can be determined by the individual teacher.

Science teacher Jenny Garcia has already implemented a no-finals system for her second-semester Physics students — students who have a 93 or above in the class by the last week of May are exempted from taking the final.

Other teachers, especially those who teach exclusively senior AP and Honors classes, should follow

Garcia's example. The grade cutoff for more challenging classes should be more lenient, but exempting second-semester seniors from taking finals would significantly reduce stress while also rewarding them for not slacking off during second semester.

**At the very least, classes should stop giving finals to seniors who meet a certain grade requirement.**

For one, seniors who are exempt from second semester finals can take the time out of second semester to visit their prospective universities.

These visits may be crucial de-

terminating factors for seniors still contemplating about which universities to attend.

Furthermore, teachers who exempt students above a certain grade cutoff from having to take finals will motivate second semester seniors to work harder before final exam week.

And honestly, seniors deserve a break. After four years of rigorous schoolwork, standardized test preparation and extracurricular activities, seniors should be allowed to enjoy their last few weeks of high school prior to the beginning of an even more intense four years in college.

As long as seniors have demonstrated proper knowledge of the course, as evident from their grades, they should be exempted from taking second-semester finals.

It's the best graduation gift teachers can give. ♦



Garcia

# Real changes, not just PR stunts, needed at Starbucks

by Muthu Palaniappan

On April 12, two black men were arrested in a Philadelphia Starbucks. The men walked in and sat down, waiting for another man to arrive before ordering. A white female manager asked the men to leave. When they told her that they were waiting for someone else, she called the police.

The men had done nothing wrong or illegal, yet they were arrested on the spot.

Since the incident was clearly rooted in racial profiling, it drew widespread national

condemnation on social media, and Starbucks was forced put out a statement outlining its plan to eliminate such blatant acts of racism from occurring in its stores. On May 29, the company will close 8,000 locations to administer racial bias training to over 175,000 employees.

Despite Starbucks' seemingly good intentions, the training is nothing but a temporary fix aimed mainly at restoring the company's reputation. Although the police ultimately arrested the two men, Starbucks' employees called for the emergency services

with no valid reason. Starbucks should be held accountable instead of being praised.

The reasons this afternoon of training will likely fail is that racial bias is often subconscious and ingrained in people's minds.

Instead, Starbucks should establish clear-cut rules that outline what customers can and cannot do while waiting or using the bathroom in a shop. That way, even if employees have racial biases, the company's policies would prevent them from repeating what happened on April 12.

People should stop applauding Starbucks

executives for implementing their racial bias training and instead ask for real change to happen. By creating more standard rules and outlining customer rights in the store, there is less of a chance to act on racial bias.

Since it is impossible to eradicate racism among such a massive workforce, Starbucks should look to more practical ways to create a better environment. If clearer standards are enforced, Starbucks employees would need an actual reason — and not just their racial bias — to call the police on customers they perceive to be a threat. ♦

# Being 'average' does not correspond to being a failure

by Anna Novoselov

"What did you get on the test?"  
"Oh, I failed."

Conversations like these are often heard on campus. Many outsiders would assume that a failing grade would be 59 percent or below, the traditional definition of failing.

But, of course, for many students here, failing is anything less than an A. An "average" and "meets standards" C or even B grade is deemed unacceptable and unworthy of being spoken out loud.

Such a mindset has proliferated in the Bay Area, which is concentrated with highly skilled professionals who have achieved great success. Children often feel pressured by the high expectations of their parents, fearing disappointment.

This mentality has created a toxic environment in many schools, where students force themselves to take endless AP and Honors classes and sign up for extracurriculars and programs that they may not particularly enjoy. They are not satisfied by an "average" B in a college level class because they compare themselves to classmates, who throw themselves into a similar whirlpool.

Many students have fallen into this trap. Constantly comparing themselves with others decreases perceptions of the value of successes and increases doubts and fear of falling behind classmates. As a result, chil-

dren compensate with an increased workload and greater self-criticism, struggling to continue collecting achievements to display on college applications.

As colleges have become increasingly competitive, students feel the need to be perfect to get into their top choice.

Students should realize that graduating from an Ivy League is not the only way to reach success, for there are numerous acceptable schools that can provide an enriching academic experience.

However, the stigma surrounding scoring well has not let up. As AP testing approaches, the stress associated with scoring well skyrockets and students are sucked deeper into the tendency to compare.

According to Greater Good Magazine, 70 percent of students in California high schools say they are often or always stressed by school work, and 56 percent are often or always worrying about grades, tests and college acceptance.

Such an outlook should be discouraged. Instead, students should compare their current selves to their past selves, as improvement is the true measure of success. If education was largely based on learning and obtaining life skills rather than high grades and test scores, more children would feel satisfied with their accomplishments.

Teachers and students should make this distinction by promoting this mentality.

In addition, colleges could admit students by focusing more on essays, extracurricular activities and interviews rather than GPAs or standardized test scores.

By believing that being better than others measures success and results in happiness (or acceptance to an Ivy League School), students drown in an unrelenting competition with each other, sacrificing their well being and free time, which can lead to severe repercussions.

**Students drown in unrelenting competition with each other, sacrificing their well being and free time.**

Stanford University lecturer Dr. Denise Pope links high pressure environments and a "more is better" mindset to intense stress, low self-esteem, anxiety, and an increased risk of mental disorders.

She reports that when asked how one defines success, parents often answered "happiness, health, giving back to society," while children answered "money, grades, test scores." ♦

While past generations evaluated themselves through qualitative experiences and personal emotions, millennials and generation Z see themselves as a reflection of compared quantitative results.

This dependence on quantitatively defined success is a problem. Children are basing their happiness on ranks and percentiles instead of self-improvement. They strive to be at the top of the academic totem pole because being average is not acceptable anymore.

As the school year comes to a close, the dreadful anticipation of AP exams and other standardized tests spreads throughout the student body. These tests will evaluate a child's worth on whether they score better than "average," preferably in the top 1 percent in the nation.

When results are out, most will desperately try to figure out their standing among their peers. A few will gloat while others, even those who did well, will feel ashamed of their scores and of their own abilities.

The only way to prevent the belief that one's success in school is measured by being better than his or her classmates is to establish a mindset that success is based on one's self fulfillment and personal improvement.

A successful life is not determined solely by academic scores. A person can reach happiness without being in the top 1 percent of every subject and activity. ♦

## NEWSTAFF STAFFPOLICY

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# Standardized tests are necessary to provide accurate measurements of student aptitude

BY Mathew Luo

Many of us are acutely aware of the limitations of standardized testing.

The tests are often long and tedious, and in some cases, they might even fail to adequately measure a student's actual abilities if the person suffers from test anxiety or doesn't work well under time constraints.

In some cases, it seems as if scores measure not how much a student knows but rather their propensity to avoid making small mistakes.

The pressing need to receive a top score coupled with the tests' tedious nature has created misplaced feelings of dislike and contempt toward them.

Too often, though, these feelings are misdirected. Although these tests may be imperfect, they are valuable as a metric for colleges and others to measure student

performance.

The presence of a metric is also of great benefit for students as they gauge their own abilities and try to decide on career choices.

Standardized tests remedy the differences in grading policies among districts and states. Standardized test scores also eliminate the subjectiveness of students' GPAs.

Since standardized tests are nationalized, they are the only standard gauge of true aptitude, and this often works in the favor of Bay Area students.

Even with the push toward a more nationalized public school curriculum in the form of the Common Core, private schools will still be exempt from following any new standards.

Research has shown standardized testing scores to strongly correlate with college GPAs, proving that performing well on standardized tests measures academic apti-

tude, at least to some extent.

If national standards were abolished, then disastrous consequences, such as the biasing of college admissions processes, would follow.

A metric to measure absolute performance is necessary to make well informed decisions.

Without standardized tests, policymakers would have to rely on subjective scales such as local GPA and testimonials when creating policies like the allocation of public funds.

To be sure, several valid criticisms have been levied against these standardized tests, the most notable of which is the correlation between affluence and high scores.

It seems egregious for scores to be determined by socio-economic status. Richer students can afford tutors, books and prep classes to bolster their test scores, which could be deemed unfair.

All these criticisms have merit,



and yet the tests still achieve what they were set out to accomplish — to measure a student's aptitude in a particular subject or skill.

Furthermore, as many students have also realized, affluence is not a shortcut to academic success. Being able to afford hours of class-

es does not take away from the hard work a student still has to do to learn the material.

In the end, standardized tests are relatively accurate in measuring student capabilities. Despite their flaws, standardized tests are far more a blessing than a curse. ♦

# Graded participation leads to low-quality discussions

BY Sandhya Sundaram

For many students, few in-class activities are as stressful as a Socratic Seminar, in which the entire class must participate in a student-facilitated discussion, usually to help prepare for an upcoming test or to sum up a unit. This is especially the case when there's limited time on the clock and points on the line.

Scrambling to find anything to say to gain participation credit, students often start reciting the large paragraph they had prepared the night before, regardless of whether it is relevant to the discussion at that moment.

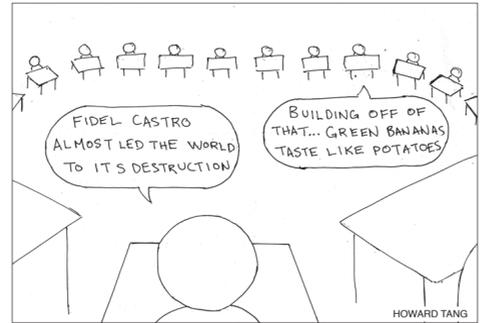
To make their out-of-context paragraph more convincing, students may add something along the lines of "building off of what Susan said" or "relating to what Billy said" and proceed to say their clearly off-topic point.

At this point, the student has successfully "finessed" their participation points by extending the conversation and engaging "enthusiastically" with their peers, and their job is done.

In classes ranging from English to foreign language courses, participation accounts for about 10 percent of the final grade. Whether it's in the form of Socratic in English or timed rounds of practicing the subjunctive construction in Spanish, class participation exercises too often lead to boring, falsified answers and unnatural discussions.

In lower levels of Spanish, knowing that participation can make or break a final grade, people frequently resort to SpanishDict, a Spanish/English dictionary, to create premeditated responses and read these aloud to an unengaged class. Others just repeat the same sentence every day, knowing that they cannot lose participation points as long as their go-to sentence is grammatically correct.

In some higher level language classes, participation is graded on a curve, meaning that only the



top participants can receive an A, making the classroom even more frantic and competitive.

Although students can decide whether they want to participate, in some math classes, they are still urged to participate for the small grade that they will receive at the end of the semester.

Some people decide to skip doing the homework, but still raise their hands to solve the problems on the whiteboard to receive participation credit.

After getting called on, they often steal solutions from someone else who diligently did their homework in desperation to get the participation grade. But because the person who did the homework didn't get called on, the lazy answer-stealer gets the participation credit.

In an ideal world, participation should reinforce material taught in class, encouraging students to actively practice the concepts learned.

Students should understand the purpose of participation and realize that by cheating, they will not understand the material thoroughly and likely do worse on tests. Whether in English, foreign language classes or math, participation exercises almost always help to review the material learned in class and to prepare for upcoming

tests.

The problem is that participation has turned into a checklist item when it should instead be something that comes naturally. A better solution for teachers is to encourage participation without a grade attached to it.

In this low-stakes environment, students will more likely absorb the content of the lesson and give thoughtful, relevant answers, rather than forcing out mediocre attempts just to get the credit. Students who decide to opt-out on participating will learn when they don't score as well on tests.

Instead of making student participation a requirement, teachers should encourage students to participate without the burden of a heavily weighted grade. To prevent forced remarks and off-topic monologues that only serve to contribute to class boredom, all teachers should give students the opportunity to evaluate themselves or their peers during discussions, providing each other with constructive criticism, and combine that input with the teacher's perspective.

Students should understand the intention of participation and teachers should alleviate the stress of the grade to help students gain the benefits of participating, while not forcing it. ♦

# End of SIEMENS is not cause for panic

BY Howard Tang

High schoolers all across the U.S. were astonished when the Siemens Foundation announced in February that the Siemens Competition in Math, Science & Technology would end this summer.

According to the Siemens Foundation, the board members decided to place their investments in other options, including expanding partnerships with other STEM programs that could provide young people with access to STEM education and training.

Ever since Siemens's inauguration in 1998, thousands of hopeful students have submitted their research work to be judged on a national scale.

Over the years, the foundation has awarded over \$10 million worth of scholarships, each ranging from \$1,000 to \$100,000. For students, winning one could be life changing and large part of a college application.

## Winning one could be life-changing and a large part of a college application

To this end, many students have attended summer research programs and worked in university labs for free in hopes of producing and submitting papers to competitions like Siemens.

But even with the end of Siemens, all is not lost for those interested in science for the right reasons.

In truth, many students go through this process just for an advantage in the college admissions process and not because they are truly passionate about their research.

Research offers an exciting opportunity to be creative in exploring diverse issues, strengthening problem-solving abilities and examining possible career options.

But if students are not deeply interested in conducting research at an early age, then they should not force themselves to do it, especially just for the sake of college applications.

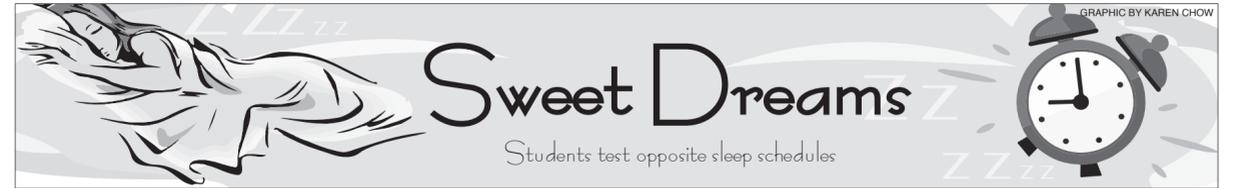
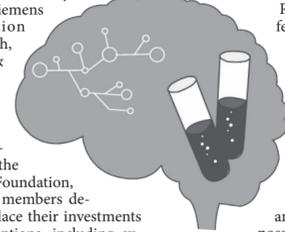
In fact, Siemens's discontinuation helps remove some of the competitiveness that afflicts these programs.

In addition, the end of the Siemens competition is not the end of all science fairs. There are dozens of other prestigious competitions, including but not limited to the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair, the Regeneron Science Talent Search and the Google Science Fair.

As the summer approaches and students begin recalling the disappearance of one of the most prominent research competitions, they should take heart by considering their options.

If they were thinking of submitting a project just to display "Siemens winner" on their college resume, they should instead focus on something else they truly enjoy.

If they weren't, they can still find plenty of research competitions out there that are willing to accept and judge their entries. ♦



# Early riser struggles to stay focused and happy

super nov-a

Anna Novoselov



It was 6:45 on a Saturday morning. While most teenagers were asleep in their beds, I was watching the sunrise from the monkey bars at Saratoga elementary. I had woken up at 4:55 a.m., when the sky was still pitch black.

Despite naturally being an early riser, waking up at 7:30-8 a.m. on weekends, I decided to see how changing my sleep schedule would alter my productivity and mood. Instead of going to bed at 12 a.m. and waking up at 7 a.m., I shifted my sleeping schedule two hours earlier.

Waking early jumpstarts my day and allows me a couple hours of quiet in the morning to relax or get some work done. This has had positive impacts on my well-being and academic and social schedule.

A study of 824 undergraduates by the Texas University found that, on average, students who woke up early had a GPA 1 grade point higher than those who slept in. Being a typical Saratoga student whose life revolves around grades, I was intrigued.

I started my experiment on Thursday night, going to bed at around 10:45 p.m. The next morning when my alarm blared, I hit snooze, but finally forced myself to start the day at 5:05 a.m.

I began the day staring at ellipses, hyperbolas and parabolas, scribbling math solutions onto my graph paper. Ultimately, my math homework took me longer than usual; I had to redo countless problems for careless errors. I took a break by going on the library's database to research a topic for my English research project on social justice issues. My eyes skimmed the articles,

but I only obtained bits of information. For the rest of the day, I didn't feel more tired or energized than usual, leading me to question if trying this experiment was even worthwhile.

The next morning, I resisted pressing the snooze button and abandoned my comforting blankets at 4:50 a.m..

The sky began turning grayish-blue at 6:45, and planning to watch the sunrise, I got dressed and walked to Saratoga Elementary School. It was quiet, empty and strangely peaceful.

But the rest of the day, I felt tired, grumpy, and unproductive, unaccustomed to the early wake up calls and unhappy doing homework while my peers were asleep.

## I didn't feel more tired or energized, leading me to question if trying this experiment was worthwhile.

Ideally, individuals should adapt to a sleep schedule that maximizes their productivity and energy levels. Early risers enjoy more hours of daylight, but that does not always lead to a brighter mood or better productivity. Sleeping early and waking up super early does have its advantages, but I will be sticking to my old sleep schedule.

Perhaps, the results of my experiment would have been different if I had carried it out for an extended period of time rather than two days. It may be that I just had to get used to the different sleep schedule. However, I do not feel the need to wake up before the crack of dawn.

The early bird gets the worm, but there's no point being the super early bird, who flutters about at night when even the worms drowse deep beneath the soil. ♦

# Staying up late takes toll on sophomore's spirit

i-conic genius

Connie Liang



Scribbling away at my math homework, I turn to my wall clock only to be met with the taunting image of an hour-hand ticking ever so quickly to 12 in the morning. This is a situation I often find myself facing.

The wee hours of the morning are when I usually begin working on assignments I've been pushing off, simply because the deadlines of the coming day are even more pressing. This in turn forces me to actually get a grip on my life and get down to business. Great strategy, I know.

As a result, my mom barges into my room at least once a night to remind me that sleeping late will eventually "be the demise of [my] life." However, my mom's reprimands may not be justified to the extent she makes them out to be.

According to an article from the journal "Personality and Social Differences," night owls often find more creative solutions to problems. Spanish artist Salvador Dali used to purposefully deprive himself of sleep in order to get his creative juices flowing. Furthermore, after conducting a study on 1,000 students, researchers from the University of Madrid discovered that those who slept and woke up later tended to score higher on inductive reasoning tests than those who didn't.

So, when I was approached with the idea of staying up late and waking up late for a newspaper story, I was delighted to actually have a reason to defy my mom and fully embrace my inner night-owl.

Expecting the results to support my views, I decided to begin my experiment on the Thursday night before spring break.

Forcing my eyes and brain to concentrate on my glowing phone screen, I played the Facebook Messenger game Words with Friends until 1:15 am, and even then, the only reason I stopped was because my opponent fell asleep during her turn.

The next morning, despite getting about six and a half hours of sleep, it was surprisingly easy to focus during my math class, and it wasn't until about lunch that my attention span began to waver. During chemistry, I worked on the same problem for 20 minutes while the rest of the class forged ahead and completed almost the entire worksheet. The consequences of staying up late had begun to show.

That Friday night, I stayed up once more to 1 a.m. watching "Breaking Bad" and failing to study for my SAT Math 2 Test. Waking up at around noon the next day, I regretted that half the day was gone, yet I felt refreshed as I'd slept for 11 hours.

On the final night of my experiment, I stayed up until 2:30 Facetimeing my best friend. Once more, I woke up around noon and was even pleasantly surprised at the plate of eggs waiting for me on the counter. Here's a tip: If you have proven to your family that you are incapable of cooking for yourself, waking up late almost guarantees that they'll make something for you.

Throughout the duration of this experiment, I arrived to the conclusion that staying up late and waking up late is fine as long as it's not on a school night: Both my mom and I were right in certain aspects. Unless you're trying to arrive at school around lunch time (which I seriously considered on Friday), it's best to sleep earlier.

However, if it's break or you know you have nothing to do the next morning, staying up to watch one more episode to find out what happens to Jesse Pinkman of "Breaking Bad" isn't going to kill you. After all, you may just find a plate of eggs waiting for you on the counter. ♦

# Junior takes ancestry test to discover his roots

BY Chelsea Leung & Alexandrali

When junior Bassil Shama checked ancestry.com in February, he was happily surprised to see that the ethnicity estimate he had been waiting for since December had finally been uploaded.

Shama had become interested in taking the test during his sophomore year PSAT, when the exam asked for demographic information. Shama casually checked random boxes, including African American. This backfired when his father noticed the races Shama had identified himself as.

"He flamed me and said Egyptian was not [the same as] African American," Shama said. "After that I always poked fun at him about how I'm 'black.'"

Curious to find out whether his "claim" to being African American had any validity, Shama purchased a test from ancestry.com around Christmas last year. The test, usually \$99, cost Shama \$50 due to a holiday sale.

The company provided him with a

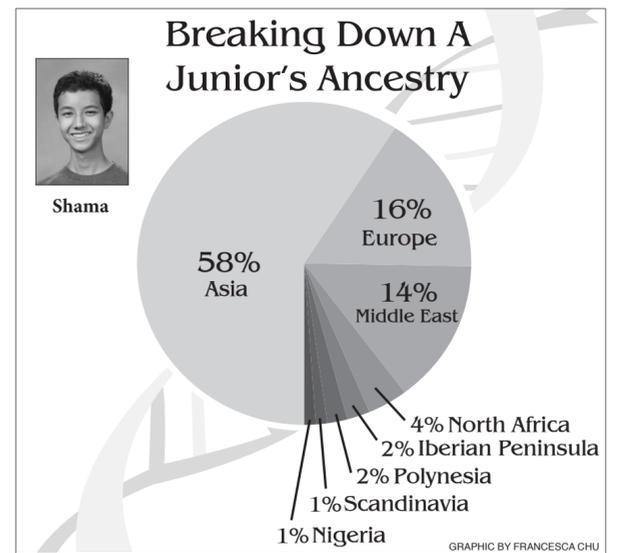
tube to fill with saliva and send back. Two months later, Shama received the results.

Although Shama discovered he wasn't African American, the test revealed that 58 percent of his bloodline originates from Asia, 16 percent from Europe, 14 percent from the Middle East, 4 percent from North Africa, 2 percent from Polynesia, 2 percent from the Iberian Peninsula, 1 percent from Scandinavia and 1 percent from Nigeria.

"The low percentage ones like Nigerian are interesting to see because even though my family mainly came from a few regions, I have other stuff mixed in," Shama said.

Because Shama already knew the large majority of his heritage, he said that the full price test would not have been worth it. However, he said, the test may be useful for those who don't know their birth parents.

"Since I come from a diverse background, it's an interesting conversation point with my parents and grandparents," Shama said. "It opens up questions about my family history or where I came from, which is something that I talk to my family about a lot." ♦



May 11, 2018

# SOMEONE YOU ADMIRE...

Reporters try out the daily lives of others for a day



## I tried to become my editor-in-chief: an impossible task

impos-toh wang

Elaine Toh



"I'm having an existential crisis." I probably said that phrase more than 30 times in one day to friends and classmates alike, but don't worry — it's not me who has an endless stream of life problems. It's my Falcon editor-in-chief senior Kyle Wang.

In the J-room, Kyle graces us with his sassy presence as he distracts his classmates from writing stories with the Facebook game "8 Ball Pool." Yet, even with his top positions and achievements in newspaper, Leadership (ASB head commissioner) and speech and debate (captain of individual events and previous state champion in US Extemporaneous Speaking), he still manages to be the subject of many jokes, his face and name appearing on many of the computers' wallpapers alongside messages such as "the intellectually curious."

So, when given an option to be someone we admire for a day, I chose Kyle not because I look up to him, but rather because of a slight curiosity of how he lives his everyday life and how he managed to live through the stressful years of high school.

With some prodding, spamming of dragon stickers on Facebook Messenger and saying "it's for the good of the newspaper," he revealed to me the basic rundown of how to be Kyle Wang, which I tried to follow for my experiment.

So, with a list of Kyle's routinely activities in tow, I began my best "emulation" or "parrotting" of him for a day.

I had to first wake up earlier by alarm. Opposed to getting out of bed at 7:20 a.m. due to my mother's yelling, I "woke up" at 7 a.m. and forced myself to press the snooze button on my phone's alarm on multiple occasions. I swear I never want to listen to another "Strum" or "Xylophone" alarm again, or else I will actually yank my phone off its power cord and throw it against the wall. Hearing just one second of those alarms has now permanently scarred me.

Here's another thing about Kyle — he eats his breakfast before brushing his teeth. On the other hand, I am accustomed to eating after I brush my teeth, so considering his lifestyle, one question popped up in my mind: Why would someone willingly place food into their mouth along with any germs or plaque he or she had gained while sleeping?

Determined to maintain my Kyle Wang facade, I forced myself to take one bite of my food before spitting it out and walking into the bathroom to clean my teeth.

At school, I did the one thing Kyle put excess on — having various existential crises.

Yet, with barely any problems to qualify as "existential crises," I compromised by fixating on my minor problems.

Every conversation was about how I flunked a supposedly simple math quiz and failed to perfect the perfect "baby pink" color for a titration lab in chemistry. By the time I ran out of things to question about my life and complain about, I ended up making "I'm having an existential crisis" a catchphrase.

By the time school was over, Kyle is said to avoid taking naps, do homework and waste precious time scrolling through Reddit and watching TV shows. So, instead of jumping onto my bed the moment I got home, I opened up my textbooks and pulled out plenty of binder paper, finishing a majority of it.

The time I spent reading people's various issues on Reddit felt extremely wasteful, but, at the same time, I was more relaxed knowing that a majority of my homework was finished.

However, perhaps the most irritating thing that Kyle does is running at night.

So, I ran.

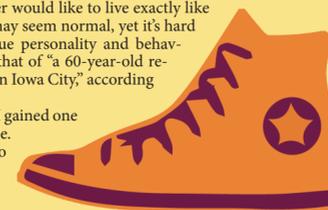
But, instead of outdoors, I ran inside my house, circling around my living room couch as Amazon Alexa set a timer for seven minutes. Luckily, I dodged any potential embarrassment and judgment from my family by waiting for that perfect period of time in which I was home alone.

Attempting to be Kyle Wang for a day, while not a success by all means, was actually quite entertaining. It made me realize a sort of work ethic that I should try to adapt to more if I want to live through high school with more than three hours of sleep per day. Kyle is as successful as he is by probably not taking four hour naps after school and procrastinating another five hours before any school work.

I don't think I ever would like to live exactly like Kyle again. His life may seem normal, yet it's hard to emulate his unique personality and behaviour, which are like that of "a 60-year-old retired man who lives in Iowa City," according to him.

However, I guess I gained one thing from being Kyle.

I now have too many existential crises. ♦



## Attempting to copy Kim Kardashian's routine

jay-z

Jayne Zhou



The Kardashian clan is one of the most publicized families in the country, but how did they achieve this high status? To explore this, I had to determine who the head of the clan is. Of course, it's the talentless daughter Kim Kardashian, with a net worth of \$175 million. What exactly does Kim Kardashian do on a daily basis to maintain her fit body and her amazing empire that has captivated public attention for over a decade?

Following the daily routine reported in Harper's Bazaar, I woke up at 6 a.m., three hours before I would usually start my day, since I don't have a first period. Lacking my usual nine to 10 hours of sleep, my day started off pretty rough; I was tired and had trouble staying awake for a couple hours.

Next, Kim told Harper's Bazaar that she checks up on her 4-year-old daughter North and talks to her. My only question is, what evil mother wakes up a child at 6 a.m.? Since I don't have a child, however, I used the next best thing: a stuffed teddy bear. The article didn't exactly specify what kind of conversation Kardashian and North have in the morning, so I improvised.

"So how's your morning going?" I asked my very creatively named bear, Mr. Bear. Emulating my own exhaustion, the bear offered no response.

At that point, I realized I was having a conversation with a lifeless object, so I moved on to the next portion of Kardashian's daily routine: a morning run.

After debating between taking a run in the freezing cold or staying in the heated house, I chose the latter and sat on the couch to watch television. There was no way I was going to go on a half hour run at 6:30 a.m., so I decided that my practice run with the track and field team the day before would count enough.

Finally, it was time for my first Kardashian meal: breakfast. According to Business Insider, her go-to breakfast is scrambled eggs with tomato, mushroom and onion. She has a personal chef who cooks all her meals for her, but I cooked the

dish myself.

When I finally finished cooking, I was disappointed to discover that the eggs smelled like sweaty feet and tasted mediocre. I would never eat this again, and it definitely wasn't worth the extra effort. Not only was this egg concoction smelly, but it also definitely didn't fill me up enough and I knew I would get hungry later in the day.

I continued to read Kardashian's routine and recognized a huge flaw: She has almost nothing to do. From 9:30 a.m. to 7 p.m., her entire schedule consists of just makeup, hair, blow-outs or texting family. During these hours of her day, she presumably spends time managing her own company and creating good footage for "Keeping Up With the Kardashians." This time gap worked perfectly for me since I had to go to school.

Instead of doing my makeup at 11 a.m., I had to do it before I went to school. I quickly skimmed through her makeup routine on People and wasn't shocked to read that the necessary products would cost a grand total of \$3,000.

I don't have \$3,000 to spend on high-end, overpriced makeup, so I decided to make do with what I do have, which was some concealer, highlighter, foundation and a decent eyeshadow palette.

I decided the one thing I would try from her routine was contouring my makeup. Overall, it turned out looking terrible since I lacked the proper skills to do it. Not only did the excessive amount of makeup cake on my face, but it made my pores feel gross and clogged, and I knew I would break out the next day.

I resumed Kardashian's routine at 7 p.m. by making dinner. She told Bazaar that she eats vegetables and chicken or fish for dinner, though it didn't specify anything beyond that. I ordered a simple salad from The Counter and added chicken to it. I don't usually eat this healthy, but I was pleasantly surprised that it didn't taste like bland leaves.

However, the salad didn't exactly give me any type of energy boost or motivation, despite what Kardashian says.

After dinner I was looking forward to a decadent dessert. I presumed she must eat dessert as a reward to herself for all that exercise and healthy eating. But I was wrong. She claims to rarely eat dessert. At this point, I was over this daily routine. No wonder she's so fit; she eats virtually nothing unhealthy and works out way too much for my liking.

After this tiring day, it was time to unwind. Kardashian told Bazaar that she sits on her bed in a robe and does "some work." I didn't know what kind of work she could

possibly be doing since she doesn't actually have a job and has tons of people to take care of chores for her, so I decided to sit on my bed and write this article.

After about two hours of "working," watching television and checking Ebay auctions, it was finally time to sleep.

I went into this wondering whether Kim Kardashian was the empty airhead many people see her as and I came out thinking that yes, she is. She practically spends her entire day doing her hair and makeup and browsing social media. She really is famous for doing absolutely nothing. Trying this routine made me feel pretty useless, since I spent all this effort for little insight on how to increase my net worth to \$175 million. ♦



## Habits of a Victoria's Secret Model

ice cream sundae-ya

Sandhya Sundaram



After googling the daily routine of a Victoria's Secret model and reading PopSugar's article on their diet, I immediately regretted my decision to attempt to copy their lifestyle. As soon as I saw the words "detox tea" and "green salad," I gave up mentally because I enjoy indulging myself in unhealthy and tasty foods.

I decided to attempt the lifestyle of Swedish model Britt Maren on a Tuesday over spring break. I started off my morning by drinking warm water infused with lemon juice, a health secret for supposedly clearing the digestive system that Gwyneth Paltrow and Miranda Kerr also swear by.

After her morning drink, Maren goes to a Pure Barre workout class, which is a ballet-like workout using your bodyweight to build muscle and flexibility. I was relieved to see that my local YMCA had a barre class, where we did movements involving toe raises, and a lot of calf workouts. Unfortunately, flexibility is really not my strength. I quit gymnastics in fourth grade after trying it for a few months and only winning participation medals because I wasn't good enough to actually place.

The class felt pretty low impact, but in the following days, I could definitely tell that my calves were sore from the toe raises and that I had been stretched beyond my ability.

I made myself a breakfast of avocado toast and fresh fruit — a meal I tend to eat a lot anyway — and then got ready for my photoshoot.

I invited my sister to take photos of me and we went to the Gardener Park to shoot. I really didn't want to model lingerie like the Victoria's Secret Angels so I just went with a casual outfit.

I tried to not look awkward but that was a struggle, so I wound up taking pretty goofy pictures of me hanging on the monkey bars instead.

For lunch, I made myself a Trader Joe's Southwestern salad and I ate a veggie burger patty for protein. This is very similar to a typical meal for me, so there was no problem.

Later on, I took a break from the model life and studied for AP Computer Science. Soon I got hungry and wanted a snack.

Healthy snacking wasn't a problem since my parents rarely buy junk food. I ate some of Trader Joe's Snapea Crisps, which I always enjoy, as well as some goji berry cacao bites, which I was very disappointed

with since they were way too sweet.

Finally I ended my day with a dinner of a Buddha bowl, which contained wild rice, avocado, tofu and mixed veggies. I'm sure it was as healthy as Maren's homemade pizza dinner because whatever my mom makes is healthy anyway. I also hesitantly tried drinking Kombucha after having gagged the previous time I had it.

Kombucha is a detox drink that improves digestion, helps the immune system, prevents arthritis and cancer and helps with weight loss, according to Wide Open Eats.

When I drank it, I kept sneezing, so I stopped after a few sips. Even if it's healthy, it definitely was not worth the periodic nose tickling sensations and uncomfortable sneezes that followed. I then googled my kombucha symptoms and noticed that kombucha can have side effects like sneezing and congestion. I will not drink this stuff again.

Overall, my experience as a model was not too crazy because the diet consisted of meals that I would eat anyway. The problem is that getting myself to go to the gym everyday is impossible. I will always come up with excuses such as, "I have a test tomorrow" or "I'm too sleep deprived" or "I'm too busy eating." Being a model for a day doesn't seem very difficult but it definitely takes a lot of motivation and dedication to live this lifestyle consistently. ♦



# school scope

THE saratogafalcon

May 11, 2018

## Administration explains school protest policies

By David Koh & Siva Sambasivam

In light of the Feb. 14 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., there has been a surge of student civic engagement after millions of students participated in the nationwide walkout on March 14.

However, as student engagement in protests increases, some schools are enforcing disciplinary action in an attempt to deter students from participating in walkouts.

For instance, on March 14 at C.T. English Middle School in Los Gatos, math teacher David Kissner held a pop quiz during the national walkout and flunked any student who chose to participate.



Robinson

Furthermore, in an interview with the East Bay Times regarding the protest on the 19th anniversary of the Columbine shooting, Kissner warned students that if they participated in the walkout, they would be removed from school for the day and assigned Saturday school as well as receive zeros on assignments they missed.

By contrast, the protest at Saratoga High wasn't an academic disruption since it took place during the daily morning tutorial.

According to administration, cuts during fourth period were also not an issue.

To find out how the administration views the role of student protests, The Falcon interviewed principal Paul Robinson about school protest policies and guidelines. ♦

Would teachers be able to individually punish students for missing class due to a protest?

I can't imagine one of our teachers doing something like that. Most of the time we've done a good job with having open communication with our students so things like that don't get in the way.

To what extent can students protest without interfering with school processes?

All they want, as long as it's not a disruption to the normal running of the school. You don't leave your rights at the schoolhouse door. What I love about our students is that they are conscious and civically minded and come up with great ways to protest.

What are your thoughts on the walkout on March 14 to protest gun violence?

It was fantastic. Students went above and beyond what I had expected. I thought that they protested very civilly, yet got their point across. They worked with the administration and teachers to create an appropriate protest. There weren't any profane signs being hung up or anything that made others feel uncomfortable or threatened.

What are your thoughts on the walkout on March 14 to protest gun violence?

It was fantastic; [students] went above and beyond what I had expected. I thought that they [protested] very civilly, yet got their point across. They worked with the administration and teachers to create an appropriate protest. There weren't any profane signs being hung up or anything that made others feel uncomfortable or threatened. As long as there's communication with administration and teachers, we all want the same thing.

In the future, how should students communicate with administration in terms of planning protests?

We just want to be included. All of us were students before and protesting was our way of life too. I grew up in high school in the '60s and '70s when protesting the Vietnam War was what we were supposed to be doing. Allow us to work with you and mentor you in the most effective ways of getting your point across that are safe, but also valuable. We'd be happier working with you than looking like we're on the opposite side. My hope would be that the protest would be civil yet still meaningful. It's hard for me to imagine a situation where myself and our students would come head to head on an issue we can't agree on.

Conversely, what do you feel makes a protest meaningful?

When we did Earth Week, one of changes we've seen is that our maintenance crew isn't cleaning up trash after lunch because the Green Team wanted to pick the trash up and measure how much is being left out at lunch. That's a protest: a visual to make people aware of how much trash is being left out. A protest doesn't necessarily mean doing something that makes people angry. It means making people aware of an issue, and giving real credence to it.

What constitutes a disruptive protest?

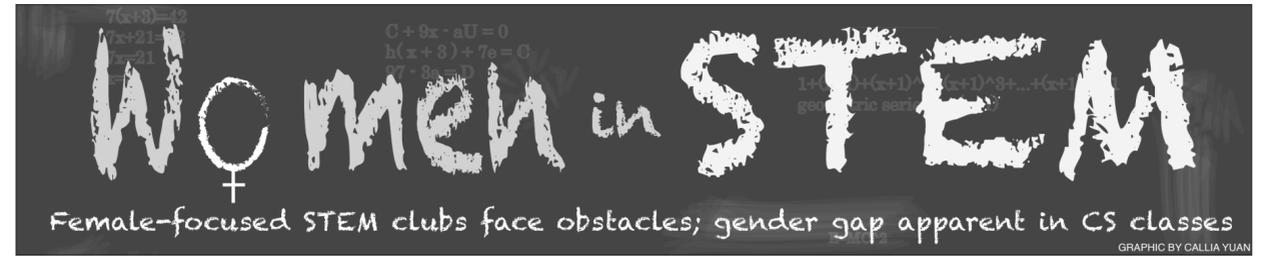
Anything that doesn't allow us to conduct classes as we normally do. If a disruptive protest were to happen, we would ask the students to find a different format or platform. Not only would they annoy teachers, they'd also annoy other students. What kind of message are you sending? It's just being disruptive to class.

What role does the administration play during protests?

I would be standing there and making sure that, whether I agreed with the protest or not, the students were safe — and if someone violated a rule, we would deal with that and there may have to be some consequences.

How do you feel about teacher involvement in political conversations?

As educators, we need to be open to many points of views. But you need to be able to share it in a way that doesn't put down different opinions. I'm sure there are teachers who feel strongly about certain issues, and they can choose to express that or not. What we can't have happening is the squashing of other opinions that are different from ours; that's not the right of educators — or anyone. Just because someone feels differently doesn't mean you're any less of a person or that you're wrong. We need to value all perspectives. If we don't, what are we teaching?



## WISTEM

continued from pg. 1

the support she receives from not only her mother but her father and brother as well, eagerly enrolled in AP Computer Science as a sophomore.

But she soon noticed that the number of boys in her AP Computer Science class far outnumbered the number of girls. Of the 100 students taking APCS this year, 29 are female, according to data provided by registrar Robert Wise.

APCS teacher Debra Troxell said this imbalance may have its roots in students' childhoods.

"I think that boys get interested in CS from a very young age," Troxell explained. "Video games and computer games are geared more toward boys, but if you're interested in something, go for it! [It doesn't] matter if you're the only girl in the class."

Troxell, who graduated in 1981 with a bachelor's degree in engineering, is no stranger to gender discrepancies in STEM courses.

"I was one of two girls in a class of around 45, but I was there because I wanted to be there," she said. "It never bothered me."

Fascinated with programming and the challenge it provided, Troxell became an acoustic engineer in industry and later a CS teacher.

During her time here, Troxell has monitored the number of girls enrolled in APCS and has found that the previously growing curve seems to have stagnated at one girl for every three boys.

While she does not know why female enrollment in CS has plateaued, Troxell routinely puts up flyers for school technology clubs or out-of-school hackathon opportunities to encourage both female and male students to get more involved in STEM activities.

Principal Paul Robinson thinks that in addition to the work the faculty does to encourage students, the fact that many of the school's STEM teachers are female will inspire more girls to participate.

"I wish I could tell you why the tech world seems to be so male dominated, but I don't know," Robinson said. "It certainly isn't aptitude; the young women that I see working in our classes are at a level equal to their male counterparts."

### WiSTEM club faces uncertain future

Courses offered by the school are certainly not the only options for girls interested in STEM. Clubs such as WiSTEM and Girls Who Code were created to boost the presence of women in various STEM fields.

"I joined science club my freshman year and felt so out of place — 80 percent of the members were boys," said Sonal Pai, a 2015 alumna who helped found the school's WiSTEM club. "It continued when I tried to go to study groups with Calc BC students; they were mostly guys and I could never voice my opinion. I decided I needed to make a safe space for girls in STEM who had similar experiences."

While here, Pai helped organize guest

speakers for the club, making sure to include those with careers that differed from the typical engineer and doctor professions that Silicon Valley STEM students are encouraged to pursue, so that club members could see the true array of opportunities available to them.

Pai, along with the 2014 Lynbrook and Monta Vista WiSTEM club leaders, helped host the Bay Area Research Exposition, which was a "STEM extravaganza" complete with project displays and guest speakers from companies such as Google and Netflix.

But in recent years, the club's activities seem to have declined, and as a result, several current WiSTEM members were disappointed with the club's output this year.

Chandrasekher said that there have been only two WiSTEM club meetings this school year, the first being an introductory gathering.

"We could stay up late and make those decisions too."



SOPHOMORE Meghna Gupta  
MEMBER OF M-SET ROBOTICS

"I think it's really disappointing that the club hasn't done much," Chandrasekher said. "Encouraging girls to go into STEM fields is a really important issue and WiSTEM could provide a great atmosphere to do this."

According to senior Caitlyn Chen, one of the co-presidents of the club, WiSTEM has been tough to maintain.

"We've all been really busy, and WiSTEM has not been our first priority," Chen said. "We had a lot of things planned for the year, like the WISTEM BARE event, but it fell through."

The club was unable to find a venue for this year's BARE exhibition after a contact at Google moved to another company.

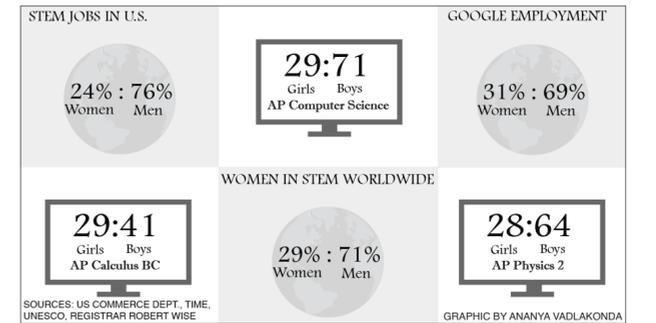
Chen also said that the future of the club is in jeopardy, since most of the officers are seniors. Last year, WiSTEM had difficulty finding members dedicated enough to be officers, and Chen said she is unsure if any of this year's underclassmen are able or willing to step up to a leadership role. The club may not be reinstated.

"That's sad to hear," Pai said in response to the club's predicament. "I hope there are other outlets out there for girls in STEM to venture out and explore careers."

### Gender discrepancies in robotics

M-SET Robotics, another prominent STEM organization, has had its share of obstacles regarding gender as well. Of the 25 students attending the club's trip to the FIRST World Championship in Houston this April, nine were girls.

And while the number of girls on the team has risen substantially since the club's founding days, long-time robotics parent mentor Diane France said the 34 percent ratio of girls in the club has lowered since the



previous year. The historically lower number of girls in the club may be a cause of subconscious bias, according to M-SET Robotics outreach officer sophomore Meghna Gupta, who has been involved in robotics for six years. Gupta finds that boys often dismiss her ideas, albeit unknowingly.

But on the team's trip to Houston, Gupta and her roommates said they experienced a more blatant instance of sexism. "During our tournament, after a long late-night meeting, one of the boys told members of one of the all-girl hotel rooms to 'just go to bed and we'll tell you what we decide in the morning.' The person who said this may not have meant it in a rude way, but it was received really badly," Gupta said. "We weren't fragile little princesses. We didn't need our beauty sleep. We could stay up late and make those decisions too."

Sophomore Nandini Thakur, one of Gupta's roommates in Houston, described other communication issues at the FIRST World championship. When discussing which teams to ally with at the tournament, Thakur and the other girls found themselves on the outskirts of a circle of debating boys, hesitant to enter the conversation despite knowing that they could contribute.

"It's just a confidence gap with girls in general," Thakur said. "We tend to underestimate ourselves while guys tend to overestimate themselves."

Thakur's views are supported by research conducted at various publications. In an article entitled "The Confidence Gap," journalists Katty Kay and Claire Shipman of The Atlantic documented how the difference between the number of men and the number of women in top positions often stems from a lack of confidence. Their research indicated that women often use phrases such as "I got lucky" to describe their successes, while men are consistently more self-assured.

In the robotics team, Thakur and Gupta both said that low confidence manifests when club members are applying for leadership positions; girls often deem themselves underqualified and don't run for the top positions.

"Girls are seen as people to be in charge of the non-technical aspects of the team, such as business, marketing, and outreach," Gupta said. "Unfortunately for us, our club

for these three positions are all girls." Although subconscious bias and gender discrepancies in robotics have been noted, the team is working to improve the situation. Sophomore M-SET Robotics member Krishna Minocha said that club members are planning to help teach a girls-only coding class at a company called TechLab.

"A lot of times girls feel like it's too late, or they lost an opportunity because they didn't start STEM activities in middle school," Minocha said. "We're trying to give an opportunity to more girls so that they can get involved and reduce the gap."

SHS's next steps The administration has also recognized the importance of getting students involved in STEM at an earlier age and has been working with Redwood Middle School to provide more STEM electives for middle schoolers. Through Project Lead the Way, the same engineering program that has been used at SHS, Redwood will soon have a full three-year program of engineering classes, which Robinson said will feed into SHS's engineering courses.

Once the classes have been established, Robinson suggested sending some of SHS's top girls in STEM to Redwood to speak with the middle school students and encourage them to stick with any STEM electives they may be taking. "We need to break down the barriers to the pathways that people want to follow, and we've still got work to do," Robinson said. While the administration and clubs on campus work to close the gender gap, many female SHS alumni have gone on to pursue their desired careers in STEM.

Pai, who graduated from SHS in 2015, is now a junior at Rice University, where she is majoring in Bioengineering and minoring in Neuroscience. At Rice, Pai has had the opportunity to participate in multiple support groups for women engineers, researchers, and scientists alike. Her long-term goal is to eventually run a health-care startup.

"I was really encouraged to go into engineering by some of my teachers, so I hope to see more encouragement in high school and middle school," Pai said. "Encouraging girls from a very early age is the next big leap for us; they shouldn't be learning about engineering for the first time in university." ♦

## Being a Girl Scout goes far beyond selling cookies

By Anishi Patel

The 2018 Girl Scout cookie season reached its peak in February, when multiple Girl Scouts could be seen lugging bags full of Thin Mints, Samoas and countless other cookies around campus.

And while the Girl Scouts organization is perhaps best known for its annual six- to eight-week cookie sale, the sale is only a part of what it means to be a Girl Scout.

"People always associate [Girl Scouts] with the sale of cookies, but we do so much more than that," junior Casey Holt said. "When we were younger and had more free time, we did a lot of community service and earning badges. Now, we are earning our Gold Awards, which take 80 hours of volunteer service."

In pursuing their Gold Awards, Troop 61257 members sophomores Prisha Samdarshi, Sharan Bal, Sanya Kwatra and Armina Mayya have repainted a Saratoga com-

munity preschool mural that had fallen into disrepair.

"Giving back to a community you've grown up in is pretty cool," Kwatra said. "Especially since I get to do it with my [troop] members."

"People always associate [Girl Scouts] with the sale of cookies, but we do so much more than that."

JUNIOR Casey Holt

In addition to her work with the preschool, Samdarshi will be running a financial literacy program for elementary school students at the Sacred Heart School. She is in the process of creating a curriculum and

book about money management.

"One of the main purposes of Girl Scout product sales is to learn about managing money, and since most of what I've learned about financial literacy is through Girl Scouts, I've been able to apply it in my Gold Award," Samdarshi said.

Holt, who has now completed her Gold Award, ran a book drive at two local elementary schools and Redwood Middle School. She used the donations to create a lending library for a community center in San Jose.

Every month, Holt reads to the children at the center and has them do a craft that encourages reading. For the month of April, Holt had the children make a model of the water cycle and weave a rainbow.

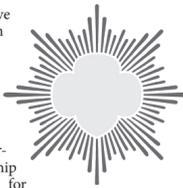
"I remember finding it very difficult to read when I was young, and since these kids' first language is Spanish, it's a little harder for them," Holt said. "By allowing them to check out books from their new library, I'm hoping to get them interested in reading so they'll

be able to improve their literacy in English."

As for the cookie sale itself, Girl Scouts sell cookies to learn the entrepreneurial and leadership skills essential for life, all in an effort to empower young girls.

A part of the money from the cookie sales goes to the Girl Scouts organization, and a part goes to the troops themselves. The troops can use their money for fun and educational activities, such as community projects and camping trips.

"Being a Girl Scout means helping others when they need it," junior Alexandra Propach said. "It's being a part of the community, and giving back whenever you can." ♦



GRAPHIC BY JAYNE ZHOU

## togetalks

What would you tell a young girl in STEM?

"STEM's a compilation of fields, so having one less than positive experience doesn't mean you won't like another field."



teacher Audrey Warmuth

"As long as they work hard and they remain curious, their efforts will always pay off."



sophomore Christina Xiao

"We need to work together to close the gender gap. We can't move forward with half the population left behind."



senior Stacey Chen

# Student activists help raise awareness, educate others

BY Kaylene Morrison & Alex Wang

In the wake of the Feb. 14 school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., dozens of the school's students have spoken out about what they went through, how they feel about gun reform and what changes they believe should be made.

From debating with NRA spokeswoman Dana Loesch to organizing nationwide scale marches, these students are not afraid to stand up for what they feel is right.

This activism is taking place on a smaller scale in thousands of other campuses across the nation. Senior Amelia Berardo is one such student activist who tries to educate herself and others on different types of privilege and disadvantage, such as access to higher education based on social class or race.

Berardo said that the difference in national attention that groups receive when speaking out for similar causes showcases an injustice toward these minorities.

One example is the March For Our Lives movement. Because the students leading this movement are predominantly white, they have found much more support for their cause than those from low-income and primarily black communities who advocate for the same cause.

"The Parkland survivors should not be the only ones getting interviews on national television when young black people have been fighting gun violence for years," Berardo said.

**"As young people we have a responsibility to change what we dislike about the world."**

SENIOR Amelia Berardo

Berardo has also been confounded by the ways people of particular groups are treated. As a personal example, she said that when she was in elementary school, she noticed that special education students were often treated differently by their peers. One of her friends could barely speak after being bullied for her autism.

This was a main factor in her desire to become a drama therapist for autistic children. Berardo said she has seen drama positively impact these special education students' verbal and mental growth. By the time she had graduated high school, Berardo's friend had grown much more confident in herself and her abilities from acting in plays.

Like Berardo, sophomore Krisha Minocha is also an advocate for feminism. She has taken leadership roles in multiple organizations whose goal is to empower young women to challenge stereotypes and create equality.

Minocha became convinced that she needed to take part in expanding women's rights mainly

due to her experiences as a female student in robotics during freshman year, when she was a member of FIRST Tech Competition, or FTC.

According to Minocha, the female to male ratio in the club is an uneven 1:3. This and the misconception that females are less successful in STEM has created major problems for the girls in robotics.

"It was hard to actually get to work on the robot because a lot of the guys would tell you to just work on the engineering notebook because that's supposedly what girls are supposed to do," Minocha said.

While the engineering notebook is an important component of the creation process, since it contains detailed documentation on everything accomplished by a team during each weekend, it has been deemed a job for the girls on the team because it is supposed to be aesthetically pleasing. Though Minocha eventually earned her team members' respect, 3 out of the 4 girls in her team, named Betta Fish, stopped showing up to meetings because of the discrimination.

This degrading experience inspired her to apply both for two programs — the Girls Advisory Team for the County of Santa Clara Office of Women's Policy and Girls Teaching Girls to Code (GTGTC), a program in which Stanford mentors teach girls in Bay Area high schools and middle schools to code. Minocha is currently planning a GTGTC event at Saratoga High to teach middle schoolers how to code.

As a member of the Girls Advisory Team, Minocha helped to plan and carry out the sixth annual Strong Girls Strong Women conference, which was held at the School of Arts and Culture at Mexican Heritage Plaza in San Jose on March 17.

The conference provided various workshops on economic security, media advocacy, education, health and wellness, healthy relationships, body image, identity and leadership.

Minocha helped run an activity in which participants printed empowering messages about equality, feminism, and women in STEM onto posters.

While the events Minocha has participated in so far have made an impact, she believes that there



GRAPHIC BY ELAINE TOH



GRAPHIC BY ELAINE FAN

# 14 in-depth

## Students should act on desire for change in any form

Kim possible



Lina Kim

Preparing to leave my house for the first March For Our Lives San Jose meeting in early March, I felt my heart hammering. A million thoughts tormented my head: Who will be there? What will the people be like? Are my abilities useful and worthy enough to participate in something so impactful? Briefly, I considered staying in the comforts of my home.

Getting myself together, I reminded myself that going to the march wouldn't hurt me in any way, but staying home would; I would miss out on an opportunity to participate in progressing change, especially in a movement that is personally important to me due to my motive to end gun violence.

March For Our Lives San Jose is part of the #MarchForOurLives movement, which is spreading across America and around the world. This movement is led by students, all with the goal of having their voices heard in gun violence issues. Participants are demanding that an inclusive, effectual bill, addressing gun control, be brought before Congress.

According to the March For Our Lives mission statement, the bill would comprehend "universal, comprehensive background checks, bringing the ATF, who's in charge of regulating the gun industry, into the 21st century with a digitized, searchable database, funds for the Center for Disease Control to research the gun violence epidemic in America, a high-capacity magazine ban, and assault weapons ban."

Upon arriving at the Billy DeFrank LGBT Community Center in San Jose, I saw that the meeting consisted of mostly high school students, some middle school students and even one or two elementary school students.

Seven Prospect High students, the masterminds behind the March For Our Lives San Jose march, started by introducing themselves and explaining the movement. They then discussed what needed to be done and the roles of the different subcommittees, such as the outreach committee and artistic committee.

I decided to join the fundraising committee, where I would not only spread awareness of the march, but also convince people to invest in the march financially by donating on the GoFundMe page or buying apparel.

The other members and I often went to the Snake & Butterfly, a coffee shop located in Campbell that let us fundraise in the front of their store. With a stack of flyers, stickers and T-shirts, we attempted to stop passersby and notify

them of the upcoming march. Not everyone shared our views. An older, white male came up to my group and asked why he and other gun owners should lose their right to own a gun, comparing the right to own an AR-15, a semi-automatic assault rifle, to other rights like freedom of speech. He continued to say that he should keep the right to protect himself with an AR-15.

Patiently, my peers explained that an AR-15 was not necessary to protect oneself, outlining the bill proposed by MFOL. The AR-15 is a militia gun that was created for use in battle: It can be used to kill an immense number of people in a short amount of time.

The man continued to spew his opinions in defense of the rights of gun owners, while talking over us. It was clear he was not even attempting to listen.

In that moment, it was hard for me to understand how he could stand there rambling about how he and other gun owners should not lose their right to own an AR-15, while that exact weapon had executed the murder of countless people, including hundreds of young students in school shootings. I wondered: Did he find his right to own an AR-15 more important than the rights of innocent individuals to have a future?

All the while I was never happy. I resented my mom pushing me for the sake of getting into a "good college" and having a "good future."

I found justification for my struggle in Davey said. The idea of a "school within a school" was an underlying idea that the MAP designers wanted to capture. This principle would allow teachers to jointly talk about the curriculum and figure out how to zero in on students' needs, since the teachers would become closer to students on a personal level.

Class of 2010 alumnus Mikaela Burton, one of the first students in the program, was immediately attracted to the prospect of learning history and English in a media-centric environment.

"I was drawn to the dynamic approach to learning material," Burton said. "As students, we were allowed incredible, thought-provoking, creative liberties when it came to projects."

Now, MAP is more well developed than it was when Burton and Mirzadegan first took the class, but its evolution took many years and iterations. The first year the program was implemented, it was a sophomore only class, and there were not as many media components in the curriculum.

According to Mohnike, it was the input from students that helped develop the program, which embodies MAP's core values of having students play an integral part in shaping the curriculum and program.

Another huge aspect of MAP that the designers wanted to emphasize was teamwork and teaching students to value their peers as co-learners and learn how to take roles in groups. Burton said this was one of the skills that benefitted her the most in her endeavors beyond high school and credits MAP for significantly shaping her career path.

"I would absolutely recommend that students check out the MAP program — it's a great way to add depth to the skills you're already gaining at SHS," Mirzadegan said. ♦

## >> falconfigures



# It's time to start running the rat race

## SOPHOMORE RECOUNTS STRUGGLES IN ACADEMIC PERSISTENCE

mat the luost rat



Mathew Luo

One autumn day in seventh grade, I was sitting on my bed crying. For the past hour, my mom had been berating me.

For most of that hour, I sat on my bed with my head down, blinking away tears that would come every so often after a particularly nasty comment from my mother. She drove herself into a half hysteria telling me how much she worried about my future.

That night, I went to sleep early and did my homework more diligently than I had done in years. My hands and feet felt cold, but my chest felt colder. It seemed as if blood was flowing out of my head, making me faint and dizzy. There was a terrible, irrational anxiety squeezing my chest.

Two weeks later, I started attending extracurricular math classes to make up for my "wasted" years. I resumed DACA swimming practices. I did all my homework the day it was assigned, and I even stopped playing video games after school.

I was working at everything with a maniacal frenzy. Upon seeing my improvement, my mom told me how lucky I was to be whipped into shape. I didn't feel very lucky.

My inspiration didn't continue. I fell back into my old routine of procrastination in a single month. Three months later, I failed to pass the American Math Competition (AMC) 10. Six months later, I quit a speech and debate class after spending five months learning nothing.

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"I would absolutely recommend that students check out the MAP program — it's a great way to add depth to the skills you're already gaining at SHS," Mirzadegan said. ♦

Other times, she would grow angry at my lack of initiative. She meant that I wasn't succeeding at academic Olympiads, that I wasn't looking hard enough for summer programs and that I wasn't finding unconventional ways to get a leg up on my peers.

She meant that I wasn't running hard enough in the rat race to college. Her lectures were often barely an hour long, but they were always enough to instill a sense of urgency and anxiety in me. Every time, that same cold feeling would return.

In seventh grade, I was the one crying after these rants, but by eighth and ninth grade, I only sat sullenly as my mom spoke. Instead of me, my mom would usually start weeping halfway through.

I developed deep, stupid misconceptions. Rather than seek differentiation among my peers, I sought superiority over them. I rejected my mom's expectations, yet I simultaneously wished for a way to express that I was better than others.

My attempts at superiority through academic endeavors miserably failed. I failed to pass AMC 10 four years in a row, dropped

the words of my teachers and counselors. They continually espoused the need for students to follow their passions and seemed to implicitly suggest it was important to value personal happiness above academic achievement.

Still, I wasn't happy when I was flouting my duties. I felt a burning hollowness as the result of doing less than I was capable of.

Internally, I rejected the high-pressure academic culture, even though I knew I wasn't happier doing so. All I knew was that my contempt toward those grasping for achievements to put on their college resume was well justified.

Weighted with this mindset, I spent my eighth and ninth grade years dull, sullen and unhappy.

At times, my mom showed a lot of empathy for my struggle. She would console me, paint me a picture of a bright future and tell me about her own hardships growing up in poverty in rural China and about her own youthful dreams.

She would tell me about her desire to be the first person in her extended family to get into college, which she said came to her in a rush of amazement and desire one day on her two-mile walk to school in third grade.

She would tell me about her pride at graduating at the top of her class in high school and securing a place in Nanjing College, which ranked eighth among all Chinese colleges.

As for me, I didn't have a dream of my own. Other times, she would grow angry at my lack of initiative.

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out of speech and debate, quit USA Computing Olympiad after a brief flirtation with it and struggled through a year of extracurricular AP physics.

Finally, I found a sort of solace in spiritual superiority. With my delusions of grandeur shattered, I resorted to thinking myself better than others because I had transcended the need to succeed, that I had broken myself out of the struggle of the rat race.

But my mother's message finally clicked one day recently, after I failed to qualify for the American Invitational Mathematics Examination (AIME), failed to get accepted into any summer programs and finally felt the weight of finals and looming APs pushing down on me.

College applications have become startlingly close and my vague fears of the future have crystallized into a realization. I have to work harder. I have to run faster.

Now, I see my contention and dissent, and it all seems shallow. For many years, I shirked the duties my mom placed upon me. I slogged through my extracurriculars. I did the minimum I thought I could get away with, and often, even less than that.

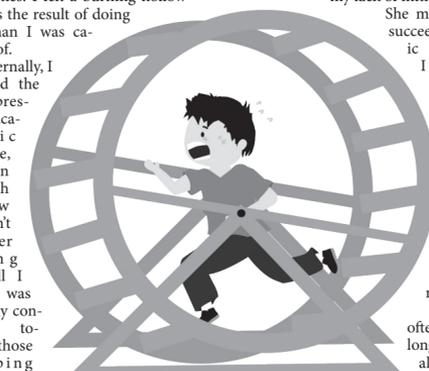
I had thought my excuse of "doing what I loved" was a mature justification for my attitudes toward the standard Asian educational dogma. But there was nothing I actually loved. I was lying to myself. I was wasting my time.

By acting glum and gloomy, I was making a fool of myself at home and at school. I was living a life of angst and unhappiness. By refusing to work hard, I had achieved so much less than many of my peers.

My mother had been right all along. The college rat race is evil, but it is necessary to participate in it. My contemptuous refusal to compete only dragged me down.

It is the best way forward. I am not sacrificing my happiness, for I had never previously found it.

It's time to start running. ♦



GRAPHIC BY ELAINE TOH

# Alumni look back at benefits of Media Arts Program

BY Siva Samsasivam & Jayne Zhou

Posters encouraging students to vote for all the different "isms" decorated the halls of the school last semester, a sure sign that the annual event for Media Arts Program sophomores, "Daveyland," was taking place. (The event is, of course, named in honor of teacher Mike Davey.)

MAP has always advocated for the integration of three core humanities subjects — English, history and media arts — and Daveyland is just one of the many simulations its teachers use to incorporate these subjects. It combines the "isms," such as nationalism or liberalism, that the students learned about in world history, with speech writing taught in English and Photoshop and InDesign skills taught in the Media Arts class.

More than a decade ago, Davey and then-English teacher Kerry Mohnike felt that the school was not representing interests of certain students and also not preparing students with the skills needed in the modern technological world. Out of this inspiration, MAP was born in 2007.

Teachers in MAP include social studies teachers Matt Torrens and Mike Davey; English teachers Jason Friend, Suzanne Herzman, Cathy Head, Natasha Ritchie, Meg Battey; and media arts teachers Joel Tarbox and Alex Hemmerich.

MAP currently has 328 students from all four grades and gives students the opportunity to learn the same topics and concepts from each subject as non-MAP students do, but in a less traditional class environment,

and editing original historical movies, Burton was able to explore a topic beyond the limits of writing a conventional paper.

Other students also understood the value of having a diverse skillset for the changing workplace environments that they might face. MAP offered students the ability to become more tech savvy, an area which was becoming more important in the workforce.

One of these students was Class of 2011 Alumnus Parisa Mirzadegan, who joined

Davey said.

The idea of a "school within a school" was an underlying idea that the MAP designers wanted to capture. This principle would allow teachers to jointly talk about the curriculum and figure out how to zero in on students' needs, since the teachers would become closer to students on a personal level.

Class of 2010 alumnus Mikaela Burton, one of the first students in the program, was immediately attracted to the prospect of learning history and English in a media-centric environment.

"I was drawn to the dynamic approach to learning material," Burton said. "As students, we were allowed incredible, thought-provoking, creative liberties when it came to projects."

Now, MAP is more well developed than it was when Burton and Mirzadegan first took the class, but its evolution took many years and iterations. The first year the program was implemented, it was a sophomore only class, and there were not as many media components in the curriculum.

According to Mohnike, it was the input from students that helped develop the program, which embodies MAP's core values of having students play an integral part in shaping the curriculum and program.

Another huge aspect of MAP that the designers wanted to emphasize was teamwork and teaching students to value their peers as co-learners and learn how to take roles in groups. Burton said this was one of the skills that benefitted her the most in her endeavors beyond high school and credits MAP for significantly shaping her career path.

"I would absolutely recommend that students check out the MAP program — it's a great way to add depth to the skills you're already gaining at SHS," Mirzadegan said. ♦

By acting glum and gloomy, I was making a fool of myself at home and at school. I was living a life of angst and unhappiness. By refusing to work hard, I had achieved so much less than many of my peers.

My mother had been right all along. The college rat race is evil, but it is necessary to participate in it. My contemptuous refusal to compete only dragged me down.

It is the best way forward. I am not sacrificing my happiness, for I had never previously found it.

It's time to start running. ♦

MAP as a sophomore.

"I knew that tech skills were becoming more and more valuable in both the workplace and in everyday life, so I joined MAP in order to learn as much as I could about things like multimedia journalism, digital animation, video editing, and photography," Mirzadegan said.

Like other students, Mirzadegan and Burton both loved the aspect of incorporating interesting and new concepts into their everyday school life.

"One of the best parts of MAP was the opportunity to incorporate media arts into our regular schoolwork," Mirzadegan said. "Project-based learning is a great way to reinforce concepts, and MAP helped students connect the curriculum to the real world in a unique way."

Mirzadegan was also able to use her experiences in the MAP program to shape her career in journalism as a writer and editor.

She currently uses the technology and collaboration skills that she learned in MAP at a company called Tynker, which is an educational programming platform that helps kids learn how to code games and programs.

After 10 years, MAP is still changing and advancing to improve the program. After the construction of the new music building, the old music building is being repurposed to be the new MAP annex.

Over the years, MAP has helped numerous students not only throughout their educational endeavors in high school and college but also in their careers after school.

Both Burton and Mirzadegan along with hundreds of other students enjoy their time in MAP and would recommend it without hesitation to any new students that come to SHS.

"I would absolutely recommend that students check out the MAP program — it's a great way to add depth to the skills you're already gaining at SHS," Mirzadegan said. ♦

by Anissa Mu & Anishi Patel

"Dear Blue, it doesn't seem fair that only gay people have to come out. Why is straight the default?"

In the romantic comedy feature film, "Love, Simon," main character Simon Spier, played by Nick Robinson, opens up about his life as a closeted gay high school student through a series of anonymous emails to a secret online correspondent, Blue.

Simon develops feelings for Blue, but an unfortunate incident results in Simon's untimely coming out, throwing a wrench in their blossoming relationship.

"Love, Simon," one of the first major studio films about coming out, is a romantic comedy adapted from Becky Albertalli's best selling book "Simon vs. The Homo Sa-

piens Agenda."

The movie revolves around the central themes of acceptance and love, announcing that Simon is "just like you" within the first five minutes of the film.

Since its release on March 16, "Love, Simon" has captured the hearts of teens and adults alike, with a worldwide box-office gross of over \$49.7 million.

The movie tackles more than romance; it also challenges LGBTQ stereotypes.

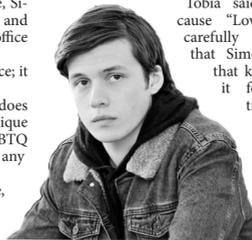
Spier doesn't have a sassy voice, nor does he particularly care for fashion; his unique personality demonstrates that the LGBTQ community cannot be forced into a box any more than straight people can.

Perhaps the best thing about "Love, Simon" is how it normalizes homosexuality, emphasizing that being gay is only one characteristic, not

an all-defining trait.

Even so, New York Times writer Jacob Tobia called the film industry's usage of feminine- or gender-nonconforming gay men "desexualized comedic relief."

Tobia said that because "Love, Simon" carefully establishes that Simon is "not that kind of gay," it follows the trope that only masculine gay men can be crowd-pleasing protagonists, which is



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in turn insulting to femme gay people.

While the film may have flaws, it makes an effort to display diversity not only in its story but also in its cast; three of the film's prominent characters, played by Keiyan Lonsdale, Alexandra Shipp and Jorge Lendeborg Jr., are of African American descent, and Lonsdale is bisexual himself, adding true LGBTQ representation into the mix.

Actress Katherine Langford, who plays Simon's best friend Leah, maintains that the film's success comes from its ability to connect with everyone.

"You take a piece from every character and resonate with them in some way," she told Popsugar Australia. "[There's that] feeling of insecurity. Not knowing who you are and trying to find out [when] everything around you is changing and evolving at such a rapid rate." ♦



## Movie Reviews: the Good, the Bad and the Ugly



GRAPHIC BY FRANCESCA CHU

## 'Avengers: Infinity War' revolutionizes Hollywood

by Andrew Lee

With the release of "Iron Man" in 2008, Marvel Studios ignited a film franchise that would become a vast universe of comic-book inspired action films. Over the years, Marvel introduced countless heroes and villains such as Captain America and Black Panther to the silver screen, making its expansive roster of comic book characters into beloved figures in Hollywood.

Before the "Marvel Cinematic Universe" had grown to become the colossus that it currently is, superhero films were often looked down upon for their poor box office performance. But in 2012, a previously bankrupt Marvel studios took the world by surprise with the release of "The Avengers," grossing more than \$1 billion.

Ten years later on April 17, 2018, Marvel released its third Avengers film, "Avengers: Infinity War," adding another successful movie to a list of 19. During its opening weekend, the film garnered a record of \$630 million at the worldwide box office (China, with its release set for May 11).

In the film, the villain Thanos embarks on a quest to collect all six infinity stones, which would grant him the power to control the universe. Caught unprepared, the Avengers do everything they can to stop the biggest threat they have ever faced.

Even with massive anticipation from fans around the world, the new Avengers movie exceeds expectations, setting an even higher standard for superhero films. This adventure keeps audiences at the edge of their seats, delivering exciting action sequences and an understandable plot.

Showcasing the many beloved heroes that Marvel has introduced over the years, "Infinity War" serves as an accumulation of 10 years of movies and the



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beginning of the conclusion to preceding characters. Although an incredibly ambitious number of 40 major characters are fitted into this movie, the film still takes the time to give each one his or her own special moment.

To its benefit, the movie makes many decisions that keep the film interesting, separating it from other generic superhero films. Marvel Studios shows audiences that it is not afraid to deviate from Hollywood tropes by creating dramatic conflict to its A-list characters and injecting a sense of hopelessness for the heroes.

The film also does a fantastic job of balancing its different characters and masterfully fabricates a plot where smaller storylines throughout the movie intertwine and eventually build up the climactic finale.

But still, like most blockbusters, "Infinity War" has its flaws. Some common complaints were that several popular characters were not given as much screen time as people expected, and that the movie made some abrupt cuts between scenes.

Also, new audience members may have some trouble understanding the plot of the story right from the get-go. Undoubtedly, the film requires some previous knowledge and requires the audience to watch more of Marvel's films in order to truly enjoy it.

Nevertheless, whether you're a die-hard comic book fan or a casual movie-goer, "Infinity War" will not disappoint. Packed with humorous and emotional moments, the film gets whole audiences laughing, and during some scenes, on the edge of tears.

The movie is filled with surprising twists and has the audience in an unexpected somber mood by the end of the movie. Its memorable scenes and impact on audiences worldwide has made "Avengers: Infinity War" one of the most ambitious films of all time and will further cement Marvel's legacy in the film industry.

Satisfied fans will look forward to the continuation of this story in the next Avengers film, which is expected to release next year. ♦

## 'Isle Of Dogs' does not live up to expectations

by David Koh

Despite Wes Anderson's past success in directing movies such as "Fantastic Mr. Fox," his most recent film, "Isle of Dogs," released on March 29, failed to impress.

When "Fantastic Mr. Fox" came out in 2009, I remember being amazed that the entire 90-minute film was composed of 56,000 individually created frames. Of course, when I learned that Anderson had released "Isle of Dogs," I was ecstatic. It was a perfect combination of two of my favorite things: dogs and animation.

Going into the movie, I had high expectations for Anderson's return to the stop-motion world after his 9-year hiatus, since "Isle of Dogs" had a 91 percent positive rating on Rotten Tomatoes.

But when I came out of the movie, I felt disappointed. "Isle of Dogs" is overly detail-oriented and lacks a developed storyline compared to "Fantastic Mr. Fox," which is more focused on telling a story rather than small details.

"Isle of Dogs" takes place in dystopian Japan where all dogs have been banished to "Trash Island," an island landfill, after an outbreak of dog flu. Searching for his long lost dog, Spots, 12-year-old Atari flies to the island and encounters a pack of dogs who aid him in his search. A parallel story follows Tracy Walker, a student who forms a resistance movement against the mayor who ordered the exile.

Anderson should have focused on developing his movie's plot through methods other than added voice-overs.

Every single Japanese stereotype I could think of was present at some point during the movie: bad teeth, cherry blossoms, sumo wrestlers, robot pets and sake.

Additionally, given Anderson's diligence in portraying Japanese culture in the film, I expected Atari, a Japanese boy, to be the main protagonist. Instead, in the middle of Japan, a blond white girl from Ohio becomes the leader of a resistance against the malicious mayor who had ordered the exile

of the dogs. Yoko Ono, who played Atari, was one of the few Asian actors in the cast.

Another issue I had with the movie was the lack of subtitles. There are points when Atari speaks in Japanese, leaving an English-speaking audience unable to comprehend what he was saying. In an interview with US News, Anderson's primary motivation behind including untranslated Japanese in his film is to preserve culture and maintain the Japanese in different translations of the movie.

"The movie isn't just in English or Japanese, it's translation crazy... I like keeping both languages alive," Anderson said.

That said, the movie has its merits. Anderson maintains the same character aesthetics as those of "Fantastic Mr. Fox," such as the dogs' realistic hair and human eyes. The eyes were the highlight of the movie for me; the animators' attention to the eye movement added depth to the film, especially during scenes where the dogs would look directly at the audience.

The ending of the movie is also disappointing and cheesy. The typical villain-turned-hero and hasty wrap-up of the movie is poorly done and underdeveloped.

Despite my negative view of the film's mechanics, I do think that Anderson's message behind the film comes through clearly.

By portraying the dogs as a marginalized group that is being oppressed by an evil politician who manipulates the population, Anderson effectively shows the dangers of mass hysteria and focuses in on its emotional impact. Furthermore, Anderson's portrayal of resistance to corrupt politicians seems to endorse civic engagement and resistance in the face of oppressive policies, providing a timely message in today's political climate.

I felt that the storyline was lacking and sloppily delivered through voice-overs. The bottom line: Anderson neglected to develop characters and events, instead zeroing in on unnecessary details. ♦



FANDANGO

## THE saratogafalcon

May 11, 2018

### BOYS' TENNIS

## Team suffers disappointing loss

by Mathew Luo & Howard Tang

Shuffling back-and-forth along the span of the tennis court with his No. 2 doubles partner sophomore Ronit Pattanayak, senior Varun Meduri smashed the ball toward his opponent and scored the final point, winning the first match of the game 6-0, 6-3.

The boys' tennis team was taking on Saint Ignatius High from San Francisco in the second round of CCS on May 4. They had entered CSS with a season record of 13-6 and were seeded sixth out of 24 teams, granting them a bye from the first round of CCS on May 2. Pressure rose as the Falcons attempted to maintain their place.

Despite Meduri and Pattanayak's victory, the team's hopes were crushed when the team lost 4-3. After No. 1 doubles junior David Berkowitz-Sklar and senior Nikhil Mehta and No. 3 doubles freshman Avyay Koorapaty and junior Merrick Wang lost, pressure was put on the four singles players to win at least three matches for the team to progress onto CCS quarterfinals.

But only No. 2 singles player freshman Stefan Meier and No. 3 singles player senior Tristan Xiao were able to defeat their opponents, with Meier scoring 7-5 and 6-3 and Xiao winning 6-2, 3-6 and 10-7.

Both No. 1 singles player Derek Pinai and

No. 4 singles player Anay Koorapaty lost their matches. The team suffered from the absence of their No. 1 singles player senior Dean Stratakos, who was at a tournament in Indiana.

"Going into the CCS, we knew that the singles competition would be tougher, so we couldn't rely on winning singles anymore," Xiao said. "Instead, we needed to focus on improving our doubles. Looking back, [the new strategy] was effective because we won No. 2 doubles easily and had close matches at No. 1 and No. 3 doubles."

Prior to CCS in their conference games, the Falcons won 4-3 and 7-0 in April 17 against Palo Alto; however, they lost their second conference match on April 19 against Gunn 4-3. Coach Florin Marica attributed these losses to the injuries of their three best players: Stratakos, Pattanayak and Meduri.

"It was unfortunate that injuries resulted in us getting eliminated from CCS for the past two years," Meduri said.

In addition to the team's qualification for CCS, Stratakos was able to qualify for CCS singles individually by scoring second at SCVALS on April 24 and 25. His matches will be at Aptos High on May 16.

Despite their disappointing end to the season, Marica is still satisfied with the Falcons' finish.



Courtesy of TALISMAN

Sophomore Ronit Pattanayak returns a shot against an opponent from Saint Ignatius High on May 4 in CCS Round 2.

"We all knew at the beginning of the season that we would be facing the very best teams in all of NorCal, and this year's competition was very fierce," Marica said. "Getting second in the league was very impressive. Our boys played well and struggled well." ♦

### ■ BADMINTON

29-1 (W) @ Los Gatos

29-1 (W) @ Mountain View

29-1 (W) Santa Clara

Total Record: 12-0

"Saratoga went undefeated this season and I'm really proud of the team I'm expecting Saratoga to be able to do well next season in the upper league, but I think it's best for our team to not let our success this year get to our head and to keep up the good work next year." — senior Catherine Zhang

### ■ SOFTBALL

15-4 (W) Lynbrook

8-7 (W) Palo Alto

20-16 (W) @ Freemont

Total Record (May 8) : 8-12

"We've seen all these teams before, and they're all home games, so we have that advantage. I'm expecting to finish out pretty strong." — senior Eryn Lee

### SWIMMING

## Girls place fourth despite lack of morale at CCS

by Connie Liang & Kaylene Morrison

As the sun set at Palo Alto High School after the Santa Clara Valley League (SCVAL) finals on April 27, dozens of teams crowded around the edges of the pool deck, under brightly colored tents and in groups taking team pictures and celebrating their accomplishments.

At the highly competitive meet, the varsity swim team ended up placing fourth while the JV team came in seventh.

Varsity coach Christian Bonner was pleasantly surprised at how well the team fared.

"We're in the upper division of one of the hardest leagues in the area," Bonner said. "When you look at the JV girls team, there was just a lot of individual improvement across the board. So the way we ended up finishing was a lot better than where we started off at the beginning of the season."

Freshman varsity swimmer Neeti Badve noticed this gradual but massive improvement in her own swimming and attributed it to the fact that many of the varsity girls on the team this year were freshmen who were unaccustomed to high school meets.

"I got off to a rocky start, but the last two meets at Los Altos and Leagues went really well," Badve said.

At the CCS meet, which will take place May 11 and 12 at the International Swim Center in Santa Clara, Badve will be swimming the 200-yard freestyle, the 500 yard freestyle, the 200 medley relay and the 400 freestyle relay.

"I surprised myself this season because I got four CCS cuts [times which were short enough to qualify for CCS] and I didn't think that I could do that," Badve said. "So next year, I want to get those CCS cuts again and maybe add a couple more."

Other CCS individual event qualifiers include juniors Lei Otsuka, Madeline Stu-

art, and Jeanette Khowong and freshman Neevati Devanagondi.

Freshman swimmer Grace Stuart said that despite placing last in the JV division because of a smaller team size, the JV girls still performed well.

"Even though we didn't have as many swimmers as other teams, many of us placed in the top eight or 16, which is awesome in my opinion," Stuart said.

Stuart had swam as a JV swimmer at every meet up until Leagues, for which she was moved up to varsity due to significant drops in time in many of her races, mainly the 500-yard freestyle.

During league finals, Stuart was able to achieve a personal record of 5:35 in this event, which is only six seconds slower than the CCS cut of 5:28.99.

"This season I felt that I did pretty well," Stuart said. "I worked really hard during each practice even though practices were pretty challenging."

### TRACK & FIELD

## Many track members achieve PRs at League Finals

by Anna Novoselov

The track team erupted in cheers as senior sprinter Jajit Singh grabbed a baton from senior Keon Roohparvar during the 4x400 meter relay race of the El Camino League finals meet on May 2 at Homestead High.

The team, which consists of Singh, Roohparvar, sophomore Alex Taylor and freshman Tyler Chaffin, was in third place with Singh, their anchor leg, approximately 50 meters behind the first place runner from Homestead.

Mouths opened wide as Singh passed the second place Monta Vista runner. With only 100 meters remaining in the race, he pushed ahead of the first place runner and secured the win for his team.

"All of them worked extremely hard to get to a position in the race where I could make a move and take the lead," Singh said. "I couldn't have done it with any other team than the one I had."

Head coach Archie Ljepava said that the 4x400 varsity boys team has a lot of potential and that that "they're not done yet." The team will compete in the SCVAL meet at on May 11 at Santa Clara High and possibly move on to CCS at Gilroy High.

Considering the results of the league final meet and the duel meets, out of seven schools, Saratoga varsity boys paced fifth, varsity girls placed sixth, frosh-soph boys placed sixth and JV girls places third.

Although track mainly focuses on individual events, distance coach Ian Tippetts said he noticed the team bonding throughout the season and becoming a group.

"The commitment to each other and to the team culminated in that 4x4," Tippetts said. "Everybody was cheering and really excited for that race. And I think the entire meet felt that way."

After the league trials meet on April 26, the top eight in each sprinting event advanced to finals. Distance events (800 me-

ters, 1600 meters, 3200 meters), jumps and throws were only held one of the two days.

Tippetts said that he thinks a lot of schools were surprised by how well Saratoga did because Saratoga's small team has many athletes doing three or four different events at every meet, rather than just focusing on one or two.

Singh placed third in the 200 meter sprint with 22.48 and first in 400 meters with 50.10.

Senior Amit Nag placed third in the 3200 meter with 10:11:35 and fifth in the 1600 with 4:33:34 while sophomore Julia Hoffman fourth in the 3200 meters with 12:00:62 and fourth in the 1600 meter with 5:19:76.

In addition to having 89 PRs at the home meet against Santa Clara on April 26, the team had 49 new PRs (personal records) at league trials and finals.

Ljepava said that the team was able to succeed due to the members' increased confidence and trust in the coaches.

"The team improved on their ability to compete with some of the best sprinters and runners in CCS," Ljepava said.

The top 16 runners from the El Camino and De Anza Leagues from of a total of 15 schools will advance to the Santa Clara Valley Athletic League (SCVAL) meet on May 9. 12 varsity Falcon athletes qualified in 16 events between boys and girls. The top six in each event at the SCVAL meet will then advance to CCS trials.

Tippetts said that he is proud of the team's efforts throughout the season and respects them as people as well as athletes.

"I think the biggest difference from the beginning and end [of the season] is the feeling of family and commitment," Tippetts said, "and not because the coaches did it, but because people really wanted to do well for their teammates and themselves." ♦

Due to printing deadlines, The Falcon could not cover the SCVAL meet in the print edition.

LARGE GYM

# Saratoga summer basketball camp almost cancelled due to increase in fees

by Anna Novoselov & Callia Yuan

Hundreds of local youths have attended the school's summer basketball camp. Organized by coach Mike Davey, the camp operates Mondays through Thursdays for four weeks in June and July.

At the camp, children from third to eighth grade dribble across the large gym, shooting and practicing moves, rotating through stations and improving their skills while having fun.

But the tradition of this camp came close to not happening this summer after the hourly rates to rent the Large Gym from the school district board unexpectedly rose in December to what Davey called an unsustainable level. Fortunately, for this year at least, Sports Boosters agreed to fund the additional cost.

What led to the school board's decision to increase rates was that Los Gatos High had been allowing community members and groups to use their gym free of charge — a practice that board members considered unwise because of the costs of maintaining school facilities. During a December meeting, the board voted to increase hourly rates to rent the gym from \$20 per hour to \$90 per hour. (The Falcon emailed district officials for comment but had not received a response by the time of publication.)

"When they raised the rates 425 percent without notice, without talking to us

and without negotiating, it was a little bit frustrating," Davey said. "We've had a relationship with the school, paying a certain amount [in previous years], but now I think they're flatly overcharging. It's more than any school district in the whole Valley; Palo Alto is the next closest, but they have a camp rate which would make it about \$40 an hour."

After Davey found out about the decision to increase the rates, he applied for a fee waiver, but his request was denied.

Davey decided to speak out at a January district board meeting along with students and parents to discuss possible solutions and the camp's influence on the community. Seniors Quinn Dozier, Harrison Fong, James Parden, Harshini Ramaswamy and Will Turpin shared their experiences from the camp, discussing memories and basketball skills gained from the program, both as campers and coaches.

"This camp belongs to the Saratoga community," Ramaswamy said at the meeting. "It belongs to the young children who will be disappointed to know that their favorite camp will be discontinued. It belongs to the former players who have come back to coach and learn valuable leadership skills. It belongs to Mr. Mike Davey and Mr. Danny Wallace who have poured their hearts and souls into ensuring that this camp is fun for everyone."

After the meeting, the Sports Boosters agreed to fund the additional costs of this



Participants of the Saratoga summer basketball camp practice dribbling with two balls. The camp was almost canceled due to an increase in rent, but was bailed out by Sports Boosters.

summer's rental. In the past, the camp had donated 10 percent of its profits to the Global Ischemia Foundation to support the study of brain injuries, but the donation will now be to the Sports Boosters.

"We thought that [their offer] was really fair and also could raise funds for the Boosters, which really need it," Davey said.

Now, Davey and varsity girls' basketball coach Danny Wallace manage the camp, with the help of current and alumni basketball players who coach the participants.

"Coaching there and helping kids just

reminds me of my childhood memories," said Fong, who played varsity basketball for four years and went to the camp for five years. "It really warms me to help kids work on their skills."

As a camper, Fong's favorite part was the competitions they would have every Thursday, where players would participate in different games like camp lightning and dribble knockout.

"That basketball camp changed our lives," Fong said. "I couldn't have been more happy that the Boosters decided to help fund it." ♦

BASEBALL

# Falcons steamroll through lower El Camino division

by Siva Sambasivam & Rahu Vadlakonda

Following a subpar season a year ago, the Falcon baseball team dropped down to the El Camino League this year.

That was the bad news. The good news is that with a 15-8 overall record, they have climbed to first place and are bound for CCS.

The Falcons' success has mostly come from huge contributions from upperclassmen. The depth of their lineup has complemented their change in style to a small-ball approach, with the team focusing on scoring runs through base hits rather than home runs.

Seniors like Robert Scott, Nathan Peng and Quinn Dozier have all been huge contributors in this year's explosive offense. Peng leads the league in all triple crown

good of an offense.

Besides playing catcher, Peng is also the ace of the pitching staff, leading the team with a 5-1 record and a 2.08 ERA. The UC Davis commit has also pitched four complete games, including two shutouts. The team's rotation is also bolstered by junior Matthew Jacobs, who boasts a 4-2 record and a 3.34 ERA.

Despite being in the lower league this year, Scott says the team has "come a long way" from a year ago.

Looking back on the season, Peng thinks the team's losses to opponents like Gunn and Lynbrook were games that they easily could have won. Peng sees defense and striking throwing as being two areas where the Falcons could shore up their game.

Ryan Gilligan, a starting freshman on the varsity team at shortstop, said that he enjoys playing on a winning team so early on in his high school baseball career.

"It feels great, especially as a freshman, to get a chance to play on varsity and to be able to play on a team that's doing as well as we are," he said.

The Falcons are enjoying their winning streak while it lasts; however, they understand that the successful performance this year means that they will be moving back up a league next year. Gilligan hopes they can continue this success next year, saying that if everyone on the team puts forth "100 percent" effort like they did this year, the Falcons will continue to win ball games.

On Tuesday, the Falcons were scheduled to play a key game against Santa Clara. A win would result in the league title and a CCS berth. ♦

Due to printing deadlines, *The Falcon* could not cover the games against Santa Clara on May 8 and Fremont on May 10 in the print edition.

"It feels great to be able to play on a team that's doing as well as we are"



FRESHMAN Ryan Gilligan

categories, batting .552 with 11 homers and 36 RBIs. Dozier is batting .375, while Scott is hitting an even .300. In fact, the team's depth throughout the lineup has led to a .339 batting average.

"Having a big lead makes it a lot easier for us to play defense and ultimately win games," Scott said.

But it's not just their offense that carries their games. Their pitching has been superb and would likely be the biggest strength on any other team without as

BOYS' GOLF



No. 3 junior Daniel Kraft swings his iron during the league tournament on May 1. He shot eight over par that day, but the team placed second, enough to send them to CCS on May 11.

# Team ends CCS drought

by Leo Cao & Alex Wang

After a long hard-fought season, the boys' golf team qualified for CCS, a feat last achieved four years ago.

By placing second in the league tournament, just two strokes behind traditional powerhouse Palo Alto on May 1, the Falcons achieved their top goal for the season.

"We were all really excited," junior Daniel Kraft said. "Everyone played really well." Kraft, who plays in the No. 3 position, said that he played an average round that day, but his score was only enough to be fifth on the team, meaning the whole team did well.

The No. 1 player, sophomore Kevin Sze, led the team with a score of one under par, enough to place second in the entire league tournament behind Jalen Xing, a player from Monta Vista who shot four under.

The top two teams from the league tournament qualify for CCS, with one other qualifying based on regular season record.

"It was a big win for our team," freshman

No. 2 player Michael Burry said.

Of the top six travel team players, three — Burry, and twins Albert and Geoffrey Jing — are freshmen, and Kraft is a new student this year.

With a team comprised almost entirely of new faces, many people who knew the team thought they would not make CCS, but Coach Dave Gragnola said it was "epic" to prove them wrong.

Recalling his experiences on the golf team at his old school, Woodrow Wilson High School in Washington, D.C., Kraft acknowledges that the Saratoga team is better. After transferring, Kraft qualified for a regional championship for the first time.

"I've made friends with everyone on the team even though I'm new," he said. "We're pretty close."

This tight-knit group of golfers needed to play well on May 8 in CCS at Laguna Seca Golf Ranch in Monterey to advance. ♦

Due to printing deadlines, *The Falcon* could not cover this tournament in the print edition.

BOYS' VOLLEYBALL

# Schneidmiller's departure doesn't stop team from fourth consecutive CCS appearance

by Siva Sambasivam

Coming off consecutive NorCal championships, the boys' volleyball squad has been the poster team for the school's athletic success in recent years. But following the graduation of record-setting outside hitter Joel Schneidmiller last spring, the team's run of success seemed destined to end abruptly this year.

Led by sophomore setter Mohan Duvvuri and senior middle Harrison Fong, the Falcons have figured out ways to continue to win games and stay in their place atop the best teams in the area, even without the current UC Irvine standout. After an 18-6 season, (13-3 in league) which saw them place third in the De Anza league, the Falcons will be entering their fourth consecutive CCS tournament.

"At the start of the year we were really learning how to play as a team especially after the loss of Joel," Duvvuri said. "However, we learned how to play without him really quickly and got off to an amazing start."

The team started by winning eight of their first 10 games, including the first of two seven-game winning streaks in the year, en route to an early lead in the

SCVAL De Anza league standings. Duvvuri attributed their continued success to their newfound style of play.

"Last year we had to rely on Joel a lot, and rightfully so, with him being one of the best players in the state; however, this year we are a much more balanced and we play more as a team," Duvvuri said. "We have become more defensive, extending plays more, and forcing opposing teams into more mistakes."

The team endured some rough patches in the middle of the season, but figured it out soon, winning 10 of their last 12 games. The Falcons were in a prime position to win their league, being only one game out of first, going into their season finale against Monta Vista, which they lost to the Mustangs 3-0.

"If we won our last match against Monta Vista, then we would have won our league, but even though we lost, we regrouped and now we still feel extremely good about our chances in CCS, especially with our team's experience," Duvvuri said.

The Falcons were scheduled to face a tough Pacific Collegiate team on Tuesday night in their first CCS match at home. (The print edition of the Falcon could not cover this game because of

printing deadlines.)

The two teams have some history, with PCS beating out the Falcons for the CCS title last year, but with the Falcons getting their revenge in the NorCal playoffs, beating PCS in the second round of that tournament.

"Losing CCS to them last year was really tough. Even though we beat them in NorCal, I think the entire team is really pumped for this first round matchup," Duvvuri said. "We will hopefully get to still a tough team to deal with."

The Falcons enter the playoffs as the fourth seed, and will face either No. 1-seeded Carmel or No. 8-seeded St. Ignatius, if they do indeed beat PCS. But junior Derek Chiou thinks their biggest challenge could come later in the tournament, pointing to Harker as being an especially tough potential opponent.

"We've been playing great volleyball this entire season, and as long as we stick to our game plan and execute like we have done in stretches during the year, then we can for sure, win the title," said Duvvuri.

After winning 19 games this season, Duvvuri and the Falcons only need two more wins to appear in their third straight NorCal Championship, and only three to capture their second CCS title in their last three years. ♦



Sophomore captain setter Mohan Duvvuri sets the ball to senior middle Harrison Fong. The two have formed a dynamic duo over the season that has proved instrumental in sustaining the departure of Joel Schneidmiller.

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Courtesy of NATALIE TJAHDADI

Junior Siena Parson's mother leads a hike on Stroll-it-Saturday during Earth Week at Long Ridge Open Space Preserve.

Band director Jason Shiuan conducts the combined middle and high school band at the Pancake Breakfast on Sunday.

The Banks family from the musical "Mary Poppins" smiles out their window.

Sophomore Kathryn Hamilton attempts to steal the ball in a game against Leland.

**buzzworthy** >> DJ's death affects EDM community

BY Anna Novoselov

"Wake Me Up!" by Swedish musician Avicii swept throughout the world, becoming a hit single and peaking at No. 4 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart in 2013. Avicii gained fame quickly, earning a name in the electronic dance music (EDM) industry as a widely successful and popular DJ.

Five years later, on April 20, 28-year-old Avicii, whose birth name was Tim Bergling, was found dead in Muscat, Oman. The cause remains unclear, but the Oman police have conducted two autopsies which ruled out a criminal cause.

The sudden news has shocked millions of fans.

"I was deeply saddened," said junior William Liu, who credits Avicii for introducing him the EDM scene. "To pay my respects, I listened to his music for the rest of the day [that he died], cycling through all his club mixes and albums."

On April 21, other fans gathered in Stockholm, Avicii's birth city, to honor the artist by dancing and listening to his music. Tributes at the Coachella music festival and moments of silence were held to honor the musician's legacy and mourn his passing.

According to E News, Avicii's family implied that the death was a suicide.

"He could not go on any longer. He wanted to find peace," they said. "Tim was not made for the business machine he found himself in; he was a sensitive guy who loved his fans but shunned the spotlight."

While Avicii loved making music, he had a traumatizing experience with fame, struggling with substance abuse, anxiety and depression. In his 2017 documentary "Avicii: True Stories," the musician revealed the severe mental and physical strain he suffered from the unrelentless pressures of the music industry.

Avicii was hospitalized in 2013 for acute pancreatitis, developed as a result of exces-

sive drinking. His strained health forced him to cancel numerous shows.

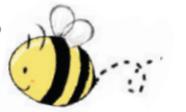
In 2016, he stopped touring to focus on improving his health. However, his manager, Arash Pournouri, and agency, At Night Management, continued to pressure him to perform despite its harming his well-being. At the end of the year, he ended his partnership with both.

"I wasn't shocked that he stopped touring," Liu said. "I was cognizant of his drinking habits so it wasn't a surprise. I was really hoping he wouldn't go so soon."

Avicii's story uncovers potential dangers of the music industry and the grievous effects it can have on stars. While many of his songs have a strong beat and inspiring lyrics, his last years of life were characterized by exhaustion and pain.

According to CBS news, his family requested privacy, thanking fans for the "support and the loving words about [their] son and brother" and saying that they "are so

grateful for everyone who loved Tim's music and have precious memories of his songs."



Liu has been a fan of the musician since listening to Avicii's collaboration with Dutch DJ Nicky Romero, "I Could Be the One."

"I always had him in my playlists and never skipped his songs" Liu said. "His music is simply addicting. It isn't hard to jam out to."

According to Geffen Records president Neil Jacobson, Avicii had recently finished an album, which features "some of his best music in years."

It is undecided what to do with the unreleased content.

"What he has given to us is more than enough," Liu said. "Even if some of his tracks are unreleased, his lasting impact on the EDM scene has far surpassed just the bounds of music." ♦

The lunchtime rush: Kirk is getting very hungry, but where will he sit?

LACK OF SEATING OPTIONS PRESENTS MANY CHALLENGES



Anishi Patel and Ananya Vadlakonda

It's noon. Upperclassmen rush to the parking lot, determined to use every minute of their allotted 35. Underclassmen scramble to the cafeteria, desperate to snag a slice of cheese pizza, knowing that to be left with pineapple pizza is to not eat at all.

But the rush for the best food comes at a price. When the "lucky" underclassman (let's call him Kirk) exits the cafeteria with his pizza and cookies, the quad is full. There isn't an empty table in sight. Kirk's friends spent too long chatting at their lockers to get one.

Suddenly, out of the blue, there's a spot of blessedly vacant green. A table! Kirk rushes over, almost drops his pizza, and comes to a sudden halt.

The table isn't empty. There's a backpack on it. One backpack. Just the one. One student who thinks he or she has the right

to occupy an entire lunch table.

Kirk storms away to go yell at his lazy friends and eat his nutritionally deficient lunch elsewhere.

"If the school isn't going to provide me with enough tables," Kirk thinks, "why doesn't someone find me a viable spot to eat lunch?"

Good question, Kirk. We're happy to oblige.

Lunch spot No. 1: The roof! They keep ladders in the storage sheds behind the science building, and we have lots of roofs, take your pick. Just not the one over the art room. Too soon?

Lunch spot No. 2: Climb a tree and claim a branch. You'll have to pay the birds their rent, but they're not picky. They'll take the pineapple pizza. Plus, you can intercept the bird caca before it falls on the people eating underneath. We're sure Kirk can sweet-talk the office staff into giving you volunteer credit for it.

Lugar del almuerzo Número 3: Maestra Rodriguez's room! Just kidding; someone who obviously wasn't thinking about how their actions could affect Kirk forgot to clean up after him or herself, and now nobody can use the room at lunch. Trágico.

Lunch spot No. 4: That one lunch

table between the 400 and 600 wings that nobody ever seems to eat at. Just imagine, the poor thing keeps itself fully functional and is even located next to a trash can, but nobody ever visits it. We named it Table Kirk. Catch the reference? One of us really likes "Gilmore Girls."

**The table isn't empty. There's a backpack on it. One backpack. Just the one. One student who thinks he or she has the right to occupy an entire lunch table.**

Lunch spot No. 5: The locker room! Just kidding, don't do this: it's sad. And smelly. And we found a moldy pizza in one of the lockers once.

Or, perhaps, instead of going through the trouble to visit these stellar lunch spots, Kirk could just petition the administration for more lunch tables. We know two Falcon writers who would definitely support him. ¡Viva la Revolución! ♦

topten

WAYS TO STUDY FOR AP TESTS

- 10 **Start studying during February break.** Oh wait, it's already May... Better late than never!
- 9 **Make a "study" schedule.** In other words, take Netflix breaks between intense five-hour naps.
- 8 **Buy a review book.** Maybe advertise them as "unused" when you inevitably sell them next year.
- 7 **Test your "knowledge" with practice tests.** They're harder than the real thing, so the 1 is really a 5.
- 6 **Remember to ask your teachers clarifying questions.** Just don't do that when you're taking the test.
- 5 **Get enough sleep.** Science says it will help you remember the material you never learned.
- 4 **Develop a photographic memory.** No, that does not mean drinking three Redbulls right before the test.
- 3 **Break a leg.** And an arm so you can take the makeup test instead.
- 2 **Review your notes once more...** if you took any in the first place.
- 1 **Don't stress during the test.** Stress afterwards when your answer was "Africa" and not "15."

>> Victor Liu