



**LIFE | 11**  
Palm Springs an ideal vacation spot for winter haters.



**SCHOOL SCOPE | 16**  
Program brings Chinese culture to students of all ages.



**SPORTS | 22**  
Falcons rebound from early-season injuries.



# THE saratogafalcon



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

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

Friday >> December 14, 2018

Vol. 60, No. 6

## CHICAGO bound

ORCHESTRA TO TRAVEL TO THE MIDWEST CLINIC TO PERFORM THEIR REPERTOIRE

BY Sofia Jones & Connie Liang

While it's safe to say most students are stressing about finals or dreaming about winter break, the 42 members of Saratoga Strings, the school's top orchestra, will be on a plane next week to Chicago and performing at The Midwest Clinic — a prestigious conference centered around band and orchestra concerts.

From Dec. 19-Dec. 22, Saratoga Strings will perform a repertoire totaling 75 minutes of music. Approximately 18,000 educators, students and industry members from all over the globe will be attending the clinic.

Last spring, as part of the auditioning process, the orchestra created six recordings in hopes of being one of 300 groups chosen from around the U.S.

Director Michael Boitz said he was pleasantly surprised when he found out that the school had been selected.

"We've performed at the Midwest Clinic once in the past, and it seemed like a once-in-a-lifetime experience," Boitz said. "I didn't think we would be fortunate to get this opportunity again."

Boitz credits this opportunity to a strong senior class with individuals who bring ambition and dedication to

the program.

The music department directors wanted to showcase the abilities of various students and their unique skills. For instance, some individuals are featured in parts of the music on unconventional orchestral instruments, such as senior Dermot Gleeson on acoustic guitar and senior Andrew Gao on piano.

"I'm really grateful that Mr. Boitz wanted to feature me," Gleeson said. "I feel especially lucky that he's willing to put it in the program for such a big event."

However, Boitz noted that this number of performers leads to the concern of running over the performance time limit.

In addition to this worry, some students were concerned about the need to take finals early.

"Checking in with each teacher to set up a schedule has been a bit of a hassle," said junior Alvin Liu, who plays violin. "I also have to study more in advance so I can be ready for a more crammed finals schedule than usual, but nonetheless, I'm excited for the trip."

Boitz hopes to do a trip of this magnitude again in the future. "This is a spectacular group full of amazing musicians, and I'm sure we can do anything we put our minds to," he said. ♦



FALCON // EDWIN CHEN



FALCON // EDWIN CHEN



Courtesy of MICHAEL BOITZ

(Top Left) Music director Michael Boitz conducts the Saratoga Strings Ensemble on Dec. 10. (Top Right) Senior cello principal Thomas Lim leads his section in playing Martinu's "Double Concerto for Two Orchestras." (Bottom) The Saratoga Strings Ensemble poses for a group photo with guest conductor Dr. Mallory Thompson (front center) and associate band director Jason Shiuan (top left).

## Freshman duet wins annual Saratoga Idol

BY JunLee & NityaMarimuthu

The freshman duo of Selina Chen and Elaine Liu stood backstage at the McAfee Center on Nov. 27, changing into a spare set of clothes, sure that they would not be called back to the stage where they had just performed their duet of a Chinese song from the TV series "Eternal Love." Chen played the Chinese harp, while Liu played the Chinese flute and sang.

When they heard their names being called as the winners of the annual singing competition, they were shocked and surged forward to the stage, realizing as they walked that they still had their spare set of clothes over their traditional Chinese dresses that they wore for the performance. They hurriedly got back in their Chinese clothes and went to collect their award. Chen described the situation as a "mess."

The junior class officers organized Saratoga Idol. Chen and Liu received the judge's pick, while the group ARM, consisting of juniors Alena Jarrett, Mihir Betadapur and Risa Carter, who sang "Last Christmas," won the People's Choice Award, which was voted upon by the audience. Junior class representative Claire Smerdon said that they had a high participation this year, with the class fundraising more than \$500. Leadership teacher Matt Torrens estimated that around 75 people came out to watch the performances. Each of 15 performers.

"We had a lot of people that were just really talented and were doing it because they just really enjoyed singing and they wanted to show off their talent," Smerdon said. The People's Choice Award was determined by audience members, who could vote through QR codes or the

>> IDOL on pg. 5

## SUFC week to advocate overcoming insecurities

BY AshleyFeng & HowardTang

Last year, students flowed out of the Large Gym in a trail of tears after they listened to alumnus Solomon Bailey's touching speech during the Speak Up for Change assembly about Breaking Barriers. This year, on the week of Jan.

21, the Outreach commission hopes to replicate their impact with the theme "Escaping the Mask We Live In."

A mandatory school assembly during an extended tutorial will kick off the weeklong event.

Four student speakers talk about some of their experiences overcoming their insecurities. Students who signed up using the online form on the school Facebook group will undergo a selection process facilitated by the Outreach commissioners.



Laique

Additionally, a teacher panel will share their stories about similar topics during the assembly. During the week, several activities will be organized to help foster a community of acceptance.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, activities will be set up in the quad examining the topic of insecurities. For example, students can write down their frustrations on a confessions poster.

"The poster serves as an anonymous outlet after the assembly so students can debrief afterwards," Outreach commissioner Iman Laique said. "When people speak out about things so raw and real, it can be difficult to hear as well as eye opening. The poster activity is a way for students to share things about themselves

>> SUFC on pg. 4

### >> what'sinside

#### NEWS

##### Fundraising efforts

Community members and students combine fundraiser efforts to support Camp Fire victim relief funds. **pg. 6**

#### ENTERTAINMENT

##### Hakone Gardens

Local park's unique tea ceremony performance offers a glimpse into Japanese culture. **pg. 14**

#### OPINION

##### Staff editorial

Flipped learning has its advantages, but must be applied properly in classrooms to benefit students. **pg. 7**

news >> briefs

Allen gone on maternity leave; substitute fills in

After having given birth to a son recently, guidance counselor Eileen Allen has gone on maternity leave, temporarily leaving her position in the hands of substitute Jolene Soares.

After spending years in the entertainment industry, sales and business administration writing grants, Soares became a substitute teacher in nearby school districts.

"I like the idea that Saratoga had so many students involved with performing arts," she said. "I thought that was really unique."

Soares believes her experience with substitute teaching, taking part as a leader in religious organizations as well as being a member of the Parent Teacher Organization and a mother to four children provides a strong background to help Allen's students.

So far, she said her experience has been "fabulous," with a lot of the staff welcoming her and supporting her, along with a great experience learning about the students here.

— Nitya Marimuthu and Kaitlyn Tsai

Renovations near pool area create hangout spot

Over the summer, the school completed construction of a small seating area in front of the pool. The area is intended to be a place students can go during lunch and has a view over the parking lot and tennis courts.

Costing about \$20,000, benches and plants were installed in a previously unused section of grass in front of the pool, with a path going through the middle.

"As we've improved the foyer of the gym, we're now talking about encouraging students to go hang out in those areas," said activities director Matt Torrens.

According to Torrens, the construction was funded by a combination of ASB funds, district funds and funds from an ASB Foundation created for facilities.

"We just thought it would be a nice location, like Hyde Park, a place where people can just relax," Torrens said.

— Allen Chen

>> correction

In the Dec. 2 issue, the Falcon published a story on pg. 20 titled "Season ends on a heartbreaking, high-scoring CCS loss to Los Altos," while the football team actually lost to Gonzales in the final CCS game.

The Falcon aims to produce content of quality and integrity. Please contact daniel.bessonov@saratogafalcon.org to report any inaccuracies in the issue.

>> falcononline



Top Story

New K-pop group rises to the top of billboards and gains quick popularity in the U.S.

Top Photo

Senior Patrick Li goes up for a layup in the annual boys' varsity versus alumni game on Nov. 23.

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 // EDWIN CHEN

Overflowing >> A Christmas tree stands in the office surrounded by all the gifts that students donated to the Family Giving Tree drive.

Giving Tree spreads cheer over the Christmas holidays

DONATION DRIVE RUN BY SOPHOMORE CLASS GATHERS MORE THAN 250 GIFTS FOR UNDERPRIVILEGED CHILDREN IN THE COUNTY

by JunLee & Nitya Marimuthu

A tall Christmas tree stood in the office on Monday, Dec. 10, bare of the tags that previously covered every branch.

Leadership received tags from Gallaher, each containing the child's name, age and gift they wish to receive. These tags were distributed among the high school, Redwood Middle School two of the three Saratoga elementary schools.

The tags at the high school hung on a Christmas tree in the office for students to take while others were distributed in classes.

Every year, the classes take turns running the Giving Tree drive, but sophomore class ran the drive both this year and last year, as freshmen.

class president Erica Lee. The Leadership class worked with service learning director Tim Gallaher as well as the Family Giving Tree organization to run the drive.

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Sophomore class secretary Tyler Chu said that Leadership

teacher Matt Torrens liked the way they ran the drive last year, so he asked them to run the drive again this year.

Leadership gave out around 400 tags this year, according to sophomore class treasurer Lauren Tan. Last year, a lot of students participated in the drive, with around 250 gifts donated.

"Last year a parent was touched by what we were doing and donated a teddy bear for each gift under the tree at Argonaut," Tan said.

One of Leadership's goals for this drive is for students to realize the effect they have on others, according to Tan. Both Tan and Lee hope that students understand the joys of helping people and the effect that their gifts have.

"Hopefully students enjoy buying the cute little gifts and realize that they're making another person's Christmas better," Lee said.

Finals schedule adjusted semesterly

by Angelina Chen & Amanda Zhu

This semester, according to principal Paul Robinson, the finals schedule was revamped in order to take into consideration complaints from teachers with finals on Monday and Thursday.

The Monday schedule will now have 20-minute periods in all seven classes followed by the two-hour second-period final in afternoon. On Tuesday, fourth and sixth have their finals in the morning. On Wednesday, fifth- and seventh-period finals take place.

The administration wanted to ensure that no teachers were stuck with an inconvenient final time-block every semester, and given that the Monday and Thursday finals warranted the most complaints from staff, they wanted to ensure the schedule was "rotated equitably."

"We work it through with our leadership team, which is our department chairs our administrators and teacher coordinators," said Robinson. "We think: what's the best way to set this up and should we do some kind of rotation because not everybody wants to be the last final."

Robinson said that seventh-period teachers were given special consideration this year to ensure they aren't always the last final.

"The hard part is that it's a real class, that's why we try to move it around so that it gets treated like

every other final," said Robinson. Robinson and the administration started planning this year's finals schedule with three possible combinations. However, after leadership from Los Gatos High proposed an alternate schedule, Saratoga opted to follow their lead.

"After a few basic adjustments, I think what we finally ended up with was pretty good," Robinson said. "The schedule will have odd number classes and even number classes on the same day, with 'an even number class that sits out by itself.'"

Finals Schedule

Table showing Finals Schedule: Monday (All classes), Tuesday (Period 6, 4), Wednesday (Period 7, 5), Thursday (Period 3, 1), Friday (NO CLASSES, Teacher work day).

GRAPHIC BY MICHAEL WONG

Unorthodox colleges: viable alternatives to Ivy Leagues

by Nitya Marimuthu & Rahul Vadlakonda

With seniors at the crux of the college application season, prestigious schools such as Harvard and Stanford line many students' college lists. However, senior Rohan Pandey is also looking at a vastly different group of schools.

For instance, Pandey is also applying to Make School in San Francisco, an international institution for computer science education. He made this non-conventional choice because the school seemed to meet all of his goals as to what a college education should be.

He was particularly attracted to its focused engineering curriculum, its links to the startup culture of Silicon Valley and its focus on modern engineering skills.

Although the accredited Make School is still developing its reputation, Pandey said he is happy to take the plunge.

"My parents were originally pretty skeptical, but after looking at salary and job placement statistics, they were convinced," he said. "Most friends think it's pretty cool, but in Saratoga there's always

gonna be a few people who are obsessed with Ivy-League-type education and think this type of approach is weird or wrong."

In addition to the Make School, other seniors' lists contain schools such as Minerva and Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD). Such schools are often known as "alternate colleges."

A subjective term for schools that seniors usually do not apply to, alternate colleges boast a more personal, defined and focused curriculum to allow students to have more abstract thinking they can then apply in the professional world.

Alternate colleges come with many benefits for students who would like to learn in a different setting, advocates say. However, many students feel discouraged from applying to colleges that are "off the beaten path," guidance counselor Eileen Allen said.

"Kids have a pressure to apply where everybody else is applying and they want to be able to say they're going to the school that everybody knows the name of, even when it's not ultimately the best choice for them," Allen said.

Assistant principal Brian Safine

agreed that the peer pressure to apply to a well-known school is one of the main reasons that students shy away from these schools.

He believes that most educators would support students choosing schools to apply to that meet criteria that the students set. The challenge, Safine said, is to be able to explain to others why the student chose to attend a college that is not as common.

The competition for mainstream colleges like Stanford versus alternate colleges such as Colorado College — a college steeped in Buddhist principles — differs substantially. According to Naviance, there were 67 applicants from the Class of 2018 to Stanford versus only one applicant to Colorado College.

Despite a stigma against applying to non-traditional schools, Allen said that there is a high reward for students who do so when it comes to acceptance.

"There are just some schools that are so popular that they go from being a little more accessible to being more difficult to get into," Allen said. "So I think sometimes if you think outside the box you can get into a really exceptional place and you are sort of rewarded for thinking outside the box."

Student releases sleep tracking application

JUNIOR SIDNEY HOUGH INSPIRED TO MAKE SLUMBERBUG IN RESPONSE TO PEERS' EARLY MORNING SLEEP DEPRIVATION WOES

by Connie Liang & Kevin Sze

When Junior Sidney Hough walked into her first-period English class a few months ago, she saw a familiar scene: Students dozing off and complaining about their lack of sleep due to various essays or last-minute studying for a math test.

It's a common scene in first- and second-period classrooms, and the recurring pattern led Hough to design an app called Slumberbug.

Hough released her app, Slumberbug, "an elegant and unique application that helps users stay on top of their sleep routines," to the iOS App Store on Nov. 27.

Hough, however, highlights how Slumberbug's function differs from other similar applications in that it tracks a daily energy level rather than setting strict bedtimes and wake times like many other solutions on the market.

When the energy level runs out, it is recommended that you go to sleep. In this way, the aspect of meeting time-specific goals is reduced, allowing for users to focus on the more important task at hand: sleeping.

Hough admits that she herself is often distracted by her phone when she should be trying to go to sleep. "What happens to me is in the middle of the night, I'll go on my phone automatically and that stimulates the brain to blue light," Hough said. "If there was a deterrent, I feel like people would get a lot better sleep and focus more on school."

Her goal was for Slumberbug to offer flexible sleep management through a simplistic, easy-to-follow interface.

Currently, Slumberbug is offered on the iOS App Store for free under the account name of Sidney's dad, Geoffrey Hough. The first few of Hough's apps were experimental because she wanted to get familiar with creating apps.

"I got kind of bored of them and I wanted to do something more serious that was actually designed for use as opposed to an experimental project," Hough said.

On Dec. 3, Hough updated Slumberbug to version 1.0.1 which included small performance improvements and introduces notifications.

Slumber Bug is currently available for iPhones and iPads with iOS 11+.

Advertisement for Insight Education, featuring text: 'Insight Education Apply to College | Prepare for Life! High School & College Admissions Counseling College Applications, Essays, Interview and Financial Aid Assistance with Experienced College Admissions Counselors SAT & ACT Test Prep Classes SAT Boot Camps ACT Boot Camps Contact Us Today! (408) 252-5050 info@insight-education.net www.insight-education.net'

# Underclassmen off-campus lunch ban still controversial

BY Neeti Badve & Kaitlyn Tsai

As the lunch bell rings, waves of students stream toward the quad; among these, several upperclassmen head out the front entrance on the hunt for their favorite lunch spots. Among them are a few underclassmen who hiding in the crowd and trying to sneak off campus.

Several times a month, the staff catches such students and assigns them Saturday school. The rules are simple and known across campus: Freshmen and sophomores know they are not permitted to leave campus during lunch, but they don't know the historical reasons for the policy.

According to assistant principal Kerry Mohnike, the school had an open campus for all grade levels through the mid-1990s. The schedule was different then, with seven

periods a day, no tutorial and a 30-minute lunch after fourth period.

"Students left in droves — there were lots of speeding tickets, and I recall several car accidents around the surface street both in the morning and the afternoon," Mohnike said.

However, because the size of the cafeteria cannot accommodate all students, the administration continued to allow all students to go off campus until 1995, when the school closed the campus to underclassmen.

Mohnike also addressed the legal restrictions regarding the policy, adding that the school has a legal obligation to oversee students. In legal terms, this responsibility is called "in loco parentis," meaning "in the place of a parent."

Administrators and staff members must ensure students' safety while they are on campus, and allowing only upperclassmen to go off campus is one way of doing so.

Some students, like sophomore Aindri Patra agree with the lunch restrictions, saying the rules are important for maintaining order at school and keeping students safe.

"Things would get out of hand — keeping track of students and the chaos of getting in and out of school would be too much," Patra said.

However, other students would like the off-campus privilege to extend to underclassmen.

"Some sophomores can already drive, so they should be allowed to go off like the juniors and seniors," sophomore Kaitlyn Yu said.

She also mentioned the lack of options

underclassmen have for food compared to their upperclassmen peers.

"Some people want to go off instead of eating their own lunch or buying the school lunch, and since they have upperclassmen friends, they should be able to go off with them," Yu said.

Even some upperclassmen disapprove of the off-campus lunch rules; senior Ria Jobalia agrees that underclassmen should be able to go out for lunch.

"Underclassmen should be able to get different food if they want to," Jobalia said. "There are food spots in downtown Saratoga that students could probably walk to, even if they cannot drive."

Despite these complaints, there is no effort underway to change the closed campus policy for underclassmen — and they'll have to risk Saturday School if they want to leave campus during the school day. ♦



Jobalia

## SUFC

continued from pg. 1

and maybe even read something that they didn't know someone else was experiencing."

On Friday, a fair will be held during tutorial and lunch where Saratoga alumni and Stanford graduate, Nikhil Goel, will be talking about the expectations of college and how he overcame them.

Afterwards, cultural and language clubs will be in the quad sharing aspects of international communities so that students can learn about other cultures and embrace their own.

"More than anything, our goal is to build on Breaking Down the Walls and connect the student body on that deeper level, so we can be kinder and more understanding of our peers and ourselves," Laique said. ♦

# Speech team gains experience and performs well at CFL Evergreen tourney

by Edwin Chen

At the Coastal Forensics League (CFL) Speech Tournament at Evergreen Valley High School on Dec. 2, the speech team took home two awards, a major improvement from the previous CFL Milpitas speech tournament in late October in which the team was shut out.

Junior Anishi Patel received seventh place in Oratorical Interpretation, an event where competitors interpret and deliver a previously publicly delivered speech, while freshman Selina Chen received sixth place in Program of Oral Interpretation, a less

popular event where speakers must combine three pieces of writing (poem, prose or article about their topic) into a 10-minute speech.

Chen's speech was about a Chinese mother and her struggles with her Americanized children.

"My speech doesn't have a very good argument, but there's a lot of interesting acting involved," Chen said.

Chen contributes her unique speech to her success at the tournament.

The top seven competitors in each event received a wild card, which results in an extra spot in addition to on top of the

standard spots given to each school during the March State Quals tournament. Each school is permitted a total of 22 entries at the State Quals Individual Events tournament, but wildcards are not counted as part of the 22 entries.

Patel and Chen both received wildcards for their performance during the tournament, guaranteeing them a spot in State Quals, while the rest of the speech team did not make it past preliminary rounds in their respective events.

Twelve different speech events were offered at the tournament. There was no distinction between varsity and JV. ♦

# Is the flip flop hall pass policy a success or a flop?

by Eileen Bui & Sandhya Sundaram

As first semester comes to a close, flip flops of various colors are now a common sight on campus, whether they're hanging on hooks near classroom doors, swinging from students' wrists as they walk through the hallways or sitting in designated boxes installed in bathrooms.

At the start of the year, flip flops were introduced as the new bathroom passes and a signal to roving administrators and campus supervisors that students are outside of their classrooms for legitimate reasons.

So far, students and administrators seem to have different opinions on the effectiveness of the policy. While administrators are in favor of it — assistant principal Brian Thompson noted "much less traffic in the hallways during instructional time" — numerous students The Falcon spoke to see multiple faults in new policy's execution.

**"A hall pass doesn't keep students from taking things [i.e. phones, juuls] with them to the bathroom."**

JUNIOR Sharon Bal

Thompson said that the primary goal of the policy was to have students return to class at a

reasonable time when using the restroom during class.

In previous years, he said students would gather other kids out of class, sometimes standing outside classrooms to pull out their friends, take long strolls around campus or (in some cases) gather in bathrooms to juul, a form of vaping.

Campus supervisors and administrators were constantly having to chase students down and return them to classrooms and never knew who didn't have a class and who was AWOL from a class.

With the implementation of the flip flop policy, students now have designated areas to use the restroom based on the location of their classroom.

Since the flip flops for each classroom are color coded by the section of campus it is located in, it is easy for staff to identify students who have strayed from where they're supposed to be. In addition, students must go to the bathroom one at a time, leaving their cellphones in their classrooms, and return promptly.

Thompson said that at times, administrators and supervisors still stop students wandering in the hallways during class and monitor them, but for the most part, students have followed the policy.

"Our students are great, and they're doing what they're supposed to be doing much better before," Thompson said.

In contrast, junior Sharan Bal

said that she believes that few students actually take the policy seriously, since she frequently sees students walking around campus with friends or on their phones without a flip flop.

Furthermore, while some teachers follow the policy strictly, others aren't as strict and let students leave classrooms without flip flops.

Bal also said that the implementation of color coding and the designation of areas for breaks seem effective in theory, but don't perform in actuality.

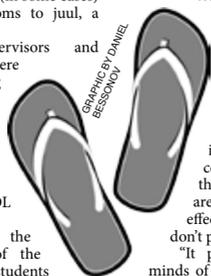
"It puts fear into the minds of students, but I feel like there aren't many active hall monitors or teachers that check if someone has the correct flip flop," Bal said.

With regards to the rise of juuling among high schoolers, Thompson said that the policy doesn't necessarily completely solve the problem, but rather helps discourage the issue by taking away pressure for students to meet up with others during class.

"I know that it's not perfect, but it's definitely less than what it used to be," Thompson said.

On the other hand, junior Armina Mayya said that those who want to juul can find a way to do so at other times.

"Just having a hall pass does not help the situation," Mayya said. "A hall pass doesn't keep students from taking things [i.e. phones, juuls] with them to the bathroom."



## THE LOST KING OF ITHIRIS

Redwood Middle School Musical

By: Margie Alejandro



From kings and queens to villains and sword fights, a place of dreams awaits those who care to explore the legend of the LOST KING OF ITHIRIS

DATE: January 18, 19 and 20

LOCATION: McAfee Performing Arts and Lecture Center, Saratoga High School

\$10 tickets purchased: online (bit.ly/redwood-musical) or cash only at the door

Cast A

January 18 @ 7pm  
January 19 @ 11am  
January 20 @ 5pm

Cast B

January 19 @ 3:30pm  
January 19 @ 17am  
January 20 @ 1pm

# Winter formal well received, despite location

BY Sofia Jones

With the winter formal taking place in the Large Gym on Dec. 1, some students worried that the location would mean a lower-quality venue and worse experience than ones held off campus.

To combat these fears, the dance commission hired professional decorators, created a photo booth and made sure there were more food options for the 500 plus students who attended.

The theme of the dance was "A Whole New World," and the food was meant to reflect an Arabian night.

The gym had drapes covering the entrance and hanging from the ceiling and seating areas with pillows. The decorations were done by iDesign Events, a local event planning business.

The Small Gym featured a gazebo in the center where the catered food was located. Games such as ping pong were available to play in the dance room.

The food available was ice cream from Scoopzilla and tacos from the Madd Mex Cantina food truck. Many students were pleased with the options from popular food spots, which seemed better than last year.

"Last year I ended up waiting in line a long time for food, and it felt underwhelming once I got it," junior Ashleigh Abe said.

"This year, the food tasted amazing and I was able to go back a couple times without having to face a super long line."

Junior dance commission member Nicole Wong felt that the on-campus location allowed for more freedom with decor.

"Since we didn't have to worry about the cost of the location, we could go all-out with the decorations and food, and really focus on making it look as good as possible," Wong said.

She also felt that the criticism of the location was unwarranted. Despite understanding why some students may not want to spend upwards of \$35 for an on-campus dance, she argued that a dance is about more than location.

"When I first heard that formal would be on campus, I knew that decision was bound to get a lot of criticism," Wong said. "After I got involved with the process of planning, however, I was excited for formal, and knew it would be amazing."

The rationale behind holding formal on campus, however, wasn't entirely motivated by flashier decor and better food. A financial mistake from a couple years ago resulted in a financial shortfall for the commission. The head dance commissioner had forgotten to account for the cost of the food in the ticket price, leaving an inadequate amount of money in the budget for future years.



TALISMAN // LEI OTSUKA

Students dance, socialize and enjoy the music in the Large Gym at winter formal on Dec. 1.

However, winter formal last year cost around \$20,000, whereas it cost around \$17,000 this year. The price difference is not as dramatic as some may have expected, due to the better quality of decor and food compared to last year. Despite this, the formal turned a large profit, with tickets alone making about \$22,500, which helps to ensure more high-quality events in the future.

Although some students had expressed concern that an on-campus formal would be less exciting, many found the experience to be better than expected.

Junior Nicholas Sabato said, "This was my first time going to a school event, and I was expecting to be disappointed. I actually had fun there, and I can't wait for future events." ♦

# Drama honors students set to perform 'Love's Labour's Lost' at One Act Festival next March

BY Anishi Patel & Oliver Ye

It's been a semester of Shakespeare all around.

In their English classes, freshmen are reading "Romeo and Juliet," sophomores are reading "Julius Caesar," juniors are reading "Hamlet" — and "Caesar" was the school's fall play.

In fact, according to drama teacher Sarah Thermond, the four seniors in Drama 4 and juniors in advanced drama love Shakespeare so much they have opted to perform a portion of "Love's Labour's Lost," one of Shakespeare's early comedies, for their final this year.

"Shakespeare's great because it's public domain and we don't have to pay for rights," junior Surbhi Bhat said. "It's also really interesting because as long as you justify it, you can set Shakespeare in any era and costume the play any way you want."

In addition to performing part of "Love's

Labour's Lost" for their final, the students will also be performing the same play in March at the 2019 Northern California One Act Festival.

The team will compete for a chance to perform on the main stage at the California State Thespian Festival.

"One of the things that is always the dream of any student going [to the Thespian Festival] is to get to perform on the main stage in front of 1,100 people," Thermond said. The students will have to compete against eight or nine other schools at the One Act Festival to qualify for a mainstage performance.

The Falcons have never won the One Act Festival, but they placed second at the 2016 California State Thespian Festival after Thermond secured a spot by sending in a video of that year's fall play: "Pride and Prejudice."

If the Falcons do not win the One Act Festival this year, they will be able to send in a recorded performance for another chance



Ganti

## IDOL

continued from pg. 1

provided link, according Smerdon.

The judging panel consisted of Spanish teacher Bret Yeilding, Chinese teacher Sara Tseng, drama and English teacher Sarah Thermond and principal Paul Robinson. Smerdon said that each judge had a rubric, numbered 1-10, with categories such as charisma, song choice and performance.

Chen said that she was not expecting to win at all. However, she was not nervous to perform due to her extensive knowledge in the instrument.

According to Chen, their only setback was a last-minute change that they made to the song, requiring them to rework the whole performance.

"We lowered the tune of the song the day before the actual show so before the show basically we had like one hour to redo the whole thing," Chen said. "So that's why I was kind of shaky, but otherwise I wasn't really nervous."

Chen said that she had a good experience at Saratoga Idol and she felt very comfortable on the stage.



TALISMAN // MARK GUDRY

Freshman duo Selina Chen and Elaine Liu smile at Saratoga Idol on Nov. 27 as they receive the judge's award for first.

"It felt pretty natural because it's the McAfee and we're all familiar with it and we're familiar with the audience and the judges," Chen said. ♦

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**SJ ACADEMY**

# Community fundraiser efforts contribute to Camp Fire victims

BY Anna Novoselov, Kaitlyn Wang & Phoebe Wang

After school on Nov. 28, a line stretched from the cafeteria out into the quad as dozens of students waited to purchase tacos, chips and beverages from the Tacos for Paradise fundraiser.

United by a common cause, teachers, administrators, parents and students volunteered and raised \$1,956. A retired Los Gatos High School's art teacher donated \$44 to reach an even \$2,000, all of which is going to the North Valley Community Foundation to help the Paradise community.

Organized by science teacher Kelly Nicholson and Los Gatos High ceramics teacher Leah Aguayo, who taught at Saratoga for 35 years prior to moving to Los Gatos, the fundraiser took place days after the Camp Fire was completely contained on Nov. 25, according to NPR. The deadliest wildfire in California history lasted for more than two weeks, leaving at least 85 people dead and almost 14,000 homes destroyed.

Aguayo's idea of hosting a fundraiser came about three weeks before the event, when she learned about the fire's devastation through Facebook and the news. She remembered feeling powerless and upset when she heard about the victims of the Butte County fire.

"I could barely stand to think about those poor families and if that were to happen to our community here," Aguayo said. "If the mountains caught on fire here and Saratoga was wiped out or Los Gatos was wiped out like that, what would we do? It could happen to anybody, and unfortunately it happened in Paradise, California."

Because Paradise has a larger population of elderly people compared to most of California, the community will have a harder time recovering.

Many residents are retired and likely on fixed incomes with Social Security as their main income source — an amount that is not sufficient to live on in the high-cost state, Aguayo said. "They probably spent all of their money moving out of this expensive area to find their paradise to retire in and to live about their lives in a good place, and the fires just happened so fast," Aguayo said.

Aguayo decided to host a taco fundraiser because delicious tacos "could feed the masses." Chicken and avocado tacos were available for \$5 each, as well as water for \$1 and chips and salsa for \$1.

Aguayo said. "Saratoga knows Mrs. A. I am a part of this school, and it was very sad for me to leave, but I'm back. There are so many teachers that are stepping up to help. We all feel so good doing this."

Students at the fundraiser also noticed how the community came together to support the cause.

"It really shows that Saratoga High School cares," junior Risa Carter said. "I know some of the teachers have connections with some victims of the California wildfires, so I think it's great that Mrs. A created this and teachers and students are stepping up."

Volunteers from both Saratoga and Los Gatos made the fundraiser possible.

Aguayo stressed that Saratoga and Los Gatos are not simply rival football teams — they are part of one district that should collaborate, not compete.

"Let's just bridge that gap and do events together," Aguayo said. "Everybody here feels so good about helping. We should be together. We should not be competing over anything. Love the sport, don't hate the team."

The second Tacos for Paradise fundraiser was scheduled to be held at Los Gatos High on Dec. 13. Students at Saratoga are also taking matters into their own hands, holding smaller fundraisers to contribute to the Camp Fire relief efforts.

Senior Thomas Lim held a cello concert along with junior Davis You from Palo Alto at the McAfee Center for Performing Arts on Dec. 8.

"We wanted to do something about the fires," Lim said. "Music is very connective and healing and has the power to bring the



ALL PHOTOS BY EDWIN CHEN

(Top) Students and staff come together to raise money at Tacos for Paradise on Nov. 25. (Bottom Right) A parent volunteer sets out trays in the cafeteria. (Bottom Left) Assistant principals Kerry Mohnike and Brian Safine sell tickets for tacos during the fundraiser.

community together to do great things, so we thought it would be a great opportunity for us to share music and help the cause by bringing our own community in solidarity with the victims."

The concert raised nearly \$2,000. Lim said that they plan on donating all of the profits to the wildfire victims through Red Cross and the California Wildfire Relief Fund.

"We played really well, had a great turnout and raised a lot of money so I felt like it was a big success," Lim said.

Additionally, the Red Cross club collected money by placing collection jars in classrooms, working with activities director

Matt Torrens and creating an organized donation system, which included a list of recommended items to donate, such as gift cards, backpacks, food, blankets and toiletries.

"A main focus of our club is disaster relief," Red Cross club event coordinator sophomore Allison Ha said, "so the fires were something we wanted to find a way to get involved in."

To help the victims, Ha said that students can raise awareness of the situation, and donate money and supplies to official organizations like the Red Cross.

"Our goal is to do as much as we can to help make the recovery from the fire easier," Ha said. ♦

# Culinary experiences across campus showcase cultures

BY Anna Novoselov & Phoebe Wang

Students in nearby classrooms are justified in feeling a bit envious as delicious auras waft out of room 408 while French students enthusiastically flip crepes on a dome shaped pan.

Toppings such as strawberries, whipped cream and Nutella line a table in the back of the classroom and students talk, watch a movie or play games while enjoying their food.

"It's a way to have a little French culture and at the same time, get a little break from the regular grind," French teacher Elaine Haggerty said. "Students love it."

In foreign language classes, such as French, students learn about the culinary traditions of various countries.

Food is a way for students to connect, bond and learn about culture.

When Haggerty started teaching at the school, she found three crepe makers in her classroom cupboard.

Students told her that a previous French teacher had crepe parties, so Haggerty decided to continue the tradition.

The class usually makes crepes once per semester: once in November to celebrate All Saints Day and once in May to celebrate Mardi Gras.

"I'm lucky because it fits my curriculum," Haggerty said. "One of the things we're supposed to teach is French culture and one of the things they do in France is eat crepes. So it's easy for us to do something like that."

Junior Neda Riazati said that students contribute to parties by bringing ingredients and utensils.

The joint effort and delicious reward

strengthen the camaraderie among students. "Since there are not a lot of people taking French, the people in each level tend to stay together for all four years," she said. "This is another way to get us all close to each other and it brings the French culture into the classroom. It's just really fun."

In addition to crepes in French, the Spanish program and the Chinese program have also incorporated culinary culture into their lesson plans to expose students to more unique international flavors.

**"[Eating French food] brings the French culture into the classroom. It's just really fun."**

TEACHER Elaine Haggerty



In the Spanish program, students participate in sugar skull decoration for the Hispanic holiday of the Day of the Dead, which is celebrated from Oct. 31-Nov. 2. According to AP Spanish teacher Arnaldo Rodriguex, the sugar skulls, a tradition mainly from Mexico, represent death and are part of the celebration of dead loved ones and ancestors.

Junior Michael Tang, a student in AP Spanish Language, said that food is an integral part of understanding Spanish culture and it helps convey what simply can't be learned from a textbook.

"There is a spectrum of how much of

the Spanish culture we have to be exposed to and I think that without these kinds of activities the coverage would be much more limited," Tang said. "Being in a Spanish class at a higher level is more than just learning a language."

The Chinese program also includes traditional food as part of the learning experience.

According to senior Mackenzie Lee, an AP Chinese student, students bring in moon cakes for the Mid-Autumn Festival and discuss their historical and cultural significance as well as how to make them.

In addition, Lee said that students also learn about the eight types of traditional Chinese food styles found across China.

But, this culinary experience isn't limited to just language classes. Students with a passion for cooking and bonding over their love for food have the option of joining Culinary Club, which meets in English teacher Suzanne Herzman's room during lunch every other Monday.

The club's president, senior Sally Lee, said she joined the club during her sophomore year because she was interested in cooking and had many friends who were dedicated to it.

The following year, she applied to be an officer.

"One of the reasons why I wanted to become an officer was to encourage a passion for food, and I wanted to achieve this while still maintaining a fun and relaxing atmosphere," Lee said. "I also wanted this club to be a place where we could step back from academics and relieve our stress."

Because the club does not have access to cooking facilities and equipment, officers are unable to organize cooking lessons and live demonstrations.

However, members often bring in a pre-made dish to share with other students and use slide-show presentations to teach their tips and recipes.

Lee said that the officers hope to start a potluck tradition for future years and encourage more members to bring in dishes. The potlucks could fall around holidays such as Thanksgiving or Christmas and have themes such as cookie decorating or pasta day.

"We hope that in making these changes, people will be more willing to recreate the food at home and bring it in to share," Lee said. "Themes create festivity to encourage people to participate." ♦



GRAPHIC BY ASHLEY FENG

## FOURTH PERIOD STAFF POLICY

The Saratoga Falcon is published 12 times per year by the Advanced Journalism classes of Saratoga High School, 20300 Herriman Ave., Saratoga, CA 95070. Views expressed in The Saratoga Falcon are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the administration, faculty or school district.

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

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# Flipped learning is no magic remedy

Flipped learning, introduced in the '90s, reverses the traditional way classes are taught by designating homework time for self-learning and class time for group or individual work.

In theory, flipped learning increases students' retention of knowledge and helps deepen their understanding of the subject by leveraging the power of a classroom "group space" for collaborative learning and allowing teachers to give personalized help to students while they work.

In reality, the flipped model often passes down the responsibility for teaching from the teacher to the students and leaves students on their own as they tackle difficult concepts.

Rather than being educated by the teacher — the most knowledgeable person in the classroom — students are too often taught by document packets, articles, video guides and pre-recorded lectures at home. Class time is filled with unfulfilling work such as video notes or even traditional homework, which leads to the feeling the teacher doesn't actually teach.

In an ideal model, flipped learning should be used to enable potent in-class activities such as Seminars or labs. But many teachers who use flipped

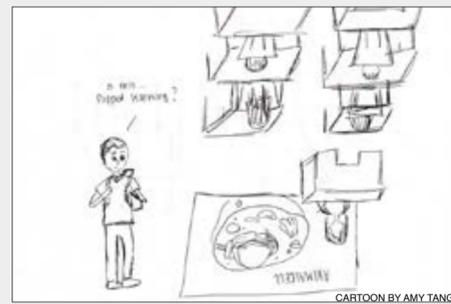
classrooms instead opt to consistently designate class time for work such as completing and reviewing video notes, annotating articles or filling out worksheets.

Providing no new knowledge or perspectives, this in-class work leads students feeling that class time is wasted. The promises of more one-on-one teaching and better use of class time for teachers to help students don't materialize.

Rather than badly executing flipped learning, most teachers would be better off following more traditional methods.

For example, tailored lectures can greatly help to organize key concepts and ideas in history classes. A passionate, knowledgeable lecturer provides a human element to history, helping students absorb and understand key ideas with anecdotes, humor and answers to students' spur-of-the-moment questions, all of which are often missing from lecture videos.

In-class lectures also make review simpler for students by organizing all the material that will be tested in class. In comparison to self-written textbook notes or packets of articles, lecture notes are far superior because they come from a teacher's years of experience and highlight what



CARTOON BY AMY TANG

the teacher considers important.

Perhaps the best application for flipped learning is to complement lecturing by setting up Socratic in the humanities or labs and other hands-on activities in the sciences.

In these cases, flipped learning truly benefits students by allowing more in-class time to carry

out these engaging activities, unlike the tedious, unproductive work that is often done in uncreatively flipped classrooms.

A consistent lack of teacher input to create a "student-centered" teaching environment only saturates class time with trivial and uninformative activities. ♦

**Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board**

<i>Editors-in-chief</i> Elaine Fan Sanjana Melkote	<i>Opinion Editor</i> Amy Tang	<i>Reporter</i> Mathew Luo
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*The Falcon staff voted 28-1 in support of this article.*

# Academic honors programs often mislead by marketing themselves as exclusive



Anishi Patel

...," a thick, gold embossed packet from NYLF may seem more promising than the recyclable pamphlets around it.

The NYLF offerings are summer programs designed to expose students to various careers and to further their interests, a similar aim to many other field-specific camps. The NYLF programs, though, are a little pricier: tuition for the one-week summer 2019 program is around \$2,600, averaging out to \$433 a day if travel time is excluded.

The packet includes a list of students from your high school who have attended the programs in the past, information such as tuition and transport, a sample schedule, lists of guest speakers and program admission letters from deans at associated colleges. Almost every document in the packet explicitly states the recipient's name, likely to further enforce the idea that the programs are extremely exclusive.

"[NYLF] is just a little bit shady because they send you this beautiful envelope and it looks like this really prestigious thing," counselor Eileen Allen said. "It seems sort of unethical how they present it to kids."

Allen emphasizes that this does not mean the NYLF programs are useless — just that they are provided by for-profit companies and may be misleading.

While the NYLF are legitimate programs, there are virtually no admission criteria to qualify. In fact, the first step to applying is to be nominated by a teacher, counselor, youth leader, etc., but students can also nominate themselves.

Hidden among promotional letters from colleges that urge students to take virtual campus tours or to "Imagine yourself at

In addition to being marketed for "top students," some of the programs are located on college campuses like Harvard, NYU and Stanford, which makes up a large part of their appeal.

Summer programs are not the only organizations that can potentially mislead students. Awards that claim to be exclusive can also deceive students into overpaying for a certificate of recognition or other such "honor."

The NSHSS describes itself as an organization that aims to "support academic achievement and world betterment" by recognizing exceptional students and connecting them with scholarships and other academic opportunities. It was founded in 2002 and has over 1,500,000 members.

One of the NSHSS's claims to prestige is its co-founder, Claes Nobel, who is a "senior member" of the family that established the Nobel prizes, according to his NSHSS biography.

To qualify to join the NSHSS, students must meet one of these criteria: a minimum ACT score of 26, SAT score of 1,280 or PSAT score of 1,150. Students can also qualify by being in the top 10 percent of their class, an achievement that varies in difficulty nationwide.

Once a student is accepted, they must pay a \$75 fee to become a lifetime member and receive a certificate recognizing their "academic excellence."

"I got an email that said something like 'Congratulations, all your hard work at SHS has paid off!' and the [NSHSS] website seemed really legitimate," junior Nicole Wong said. "My parents

**\$2MIL** in scholarships awarded per year

23% of NSHSS members first in their families to attend college

GRAPHIC BY KAITLYN TSAI

were down — my mom was one of the scholars at her old school."

But Wong checked with her college counselor before paying the \$75 admission fee and was told NSHSS was a scam and that the organization only wanted her money.

Wong reported feeling somewhat disheartened after hearing about NSHSS from her counselor: "I thought it was real and could help me with my future," she admitted.

NSHSS has been widely criticized as a "scam" or something close to it by multiple college prep blogs and sites, and Lockwood College Prep even satirized a copy of NSHSS's acceptance email.

The NSHSS is not to be confused with the National Honor Society, or NHS, which is an established honor roll program that has chapters at multiple high schools.

Overall, although both the NYLF and the NSHSS are not traditional scams in the sense that they take participants' money and offer nothing in return, it is important to thoroughly research and question opportunities and awards that market themselves as prestigious. ♦

# Netflix wisely elects to preserve classics

BY NeetiBadve

We've all been there: sitting on the sofa, determined to find a new show to obsess over, only to waste half an hour browsing through the Netflix show options and ultimately deciding to rewatch an episode of "Friends" or "The Office."

Too real? Netflix itself seems to agree as the company paid a whopping \$100 million to renew "Friends" until the end of 2019 due to fan outrage. However, due to the unquenchable thirst for content the digital age has brought, Netflix needs to fix its content fast to be able to make up for the potential loss of "Friends" and similar shows.

An example of a newer series on Netflix that simply does not live up to the older classics is "Riverdale," which saw a viewer decline near the end of its second season due to its struggle to find a single direction to go in. Every episode contains three to four disconnected storylines. In order to meet the demand for more episodes, the plot strayed so far from the "small town with big secrets" world they intended to create that the characters do not seem legitimate anymore.

So what makes shows that wrapped up three, five and even 14 years ago consistently more appealing than the new shows Netflix continues to release? Most of all, it's their reliability.

All the highest-rated Netflix originals share this common characteristic: The characters are authentic and relatable. "Stranger Things," "American Vandal" and "Orange is the New Black" all succeed in portraying conceivable characters, even if some situations they are put in are not possible in the real world.

I found this feeling lacking in newly released shows like "Insatiable," which is marketed at teens but unrealistically depicts a high-school life filled with stereotypes, unnecessary drama and a confusing plot.

Critics and viewers have called "Insatiable" the worst Netflix original series ever. In fact, a petition to cancel the show received more than 230,000 signatures, and these people are right to show their displeasure. "Insatiable" purports to be satire, playing every bit of offensive dialogue and questionable storyline for laughs, yet none of it is funny," said AV Club critic Danette

Chavaz.

It portrays high schoolers as shallow, narcissistic and always on the look for revenge, when really, we are too busy studying or doing homework to plan elaborate schemes of retribution or murder. All the show really accomplishes is an overdose of fat-shaming.

With a new Netflix original series being released monthly, it would seem as though there are hundreds of options to choose from, but what Netflix really needs are shows that audiences can come back to at any time and still feel connected to. Instead of advertising cliché teenagers or the same stories told in a different way, Netflix should highlight real problems without unnecessarily overdramatizing them.

Netflix attempted to do this with "13 Reasons Why," and they made a product that impacted viewers. However, the added drama was still noticeable. For a topic as serious as suicide, their depiction of it essentially led to its glorification, earning the show backlash from organizations like the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, which voiced concerns of copycat acts on the part of vulnerable teens.

Furthermore, the show never tells the viewer how to better their mental health, nor does it show any character learning how to cope with the problems they face.

What makes older shows like "Friends," "The Office" and "Parks and Recreation" appealing is they address real-world issues and situations through humor and provide solutions and explanations for them.

"Parks and Recreation" does just this when Leslie Knope and April Ludgate are angry that the garbage men would not hire women because they were not "strong enough." To fight against the sexism, they volunteer to join the garbage route and prove women can do the same job as men.

Through humor about trash and subtle references to feminism, the show tackles women empowerment and its importance while still being entertaining.

While it's unrealistic to expect every Netflix original to be groundbreaking, it has to learn to keep its audience in mind when deciding what shows to produce. The company needs a wake-up call.

As "Friends" icon Monica Geller once said, "Welcome to the real world! It sucks — you're gonna love it." ♦

# Procrastination is surprisingly effective if executed correctly

BY NeetiBadve & RohanKumar

Would you rather undertake the prolonged, tiring task of writing a "Lord of the Flies" essay, or would you rather simply push it to the side, clean up your super messy room and come back to writing that essay later?

Technically, doing something else productive instead of assigned tasks means there is little or no loss in actual productivity. That's why productive procrastination isn't so bad and in fact may be good.

Productive procrastination differs from regular procrastination because it comes with a rewarding sense of accomplishment without the pain of doing the daunting assigned task. Plus, it can't be considered complete laziness, because productive procrastinators complete tasks on their to-do lists that otherwise would not have gotten done.

If a student had completed the assigned task first, they would have stopped working and not finished anything else for the rest of the day. By filling time and crossing off the extra to-dos, active procrastinators get more done, while building up momentum for the ultimate task.

Remember that essay that was assigned? A non-procrastinator starts as soon as they get home, spending an hour thinking about the prompt, and then the rest

of the day writing. A productive procrastinator, on the other hand, watches videos on Coursera or puts some work into Duolingo to put off the essay for just a little longer, and motivated by their productive spree or the urgency of an upcoming deadline, is able to jump into the essay and finish it just as quickly as the non-procrastinator. Even better, during procrastination, the mind continues to subconsciously tackle the essay, ultimately leading to more

shorter span of time. This ability to save time is invaluable, and opens up more time to do other useful things. The critical part of the strategy is to know when to start doing work.

If it is started too early, the strategy does not work optimally. If it is started too late, then the work may not get done on time. Therefore, effective productive procrastinating depends on a person's ability to predict their top efficiency and determining the exact distribution of time that leads to the best results. Thankfully, studies have shown that this work strategy actually comes naturally to humans.

According to Dr. Piers Steel of the University of Calgary, human beings' behavioral and psychological instincts lead them to "pursue any vile task as long as it allows us to avoid something worse."

To translate into high school terms, it means that students are willing to clean their room, water their plants or even learn a new language if it means they do not have to do their looming history project. This innate desire to do something besides the strictly assigned task can be channeled into useful work with a little bit of self-control, ultimately yielding massive amounts of productivity.

Active procrastination is not as bad as it is made out to be; rather, it promotes greater productivity, while eliminating any sense of guilt, stress or self-blame that comes with regular procrastination. ♦



GRAPHIC BY ROHAN KUMAR

# Lacking resolve and tough goals encumber New Year resolutions

BY AngelinaChen & RohanKumar

Many people enjoy playing video games, feasting with family or sleeping in on New Year's Day. Others indulge in making resolutions that will often be broken days or weeks later.

To be sure, the coming of a new year gives people a chance to restart.

But for many goal-setters, creating goals is easier and more exciting than actually taking action and working toward achieving such promises.

According to the Business Insider, 80 percent of New Year's resolutions fail by the second week of February. Clearly, setting these goals is not actually effective. The question is: why?

Of course, a lack of resolve can hurt the prospects of maintaining goals. Without a certain amount of discipline, it is impossible to stay on track. Some people try to find excuses to circumvent their goals, exploiting "loopholes" in their own resolutions.

A common goal is to "eat healthier." But when the temptation becomes too great, people often say, "It's fine once in a while," even though this may mean enjoying unhealthy foods every week.

Of course, a person's discipline is not always the main problem. Often, overly drastic New Year's resolutions are impossible to keep, which can be discouraging and lead to a relapse of bad habits. Expecting to change a long-standing habit in the span of mere days is unreasonable.

Ultimately, when individuals aren't able to realize the changes they envision, they give up on attempting to improve.

New Year's resolutions should not require a massive change of lifestyle. For example, going from playing seven hours of video games a day to playing no video games at all would be too drastic for many.

More likely than not, this will result in the people succumbing to their desires to play video games, feeling like their resolution failed, and reverting back to their usual

gaming pattern.

A more manageable goal would be to reduce video game time by one hour each month, requiring a much more gradual change and reducing chance of discouragement.

It is important to craft effective resolutions. Targets should be specific and measurable to prevent people from cheating themselves.

When it comes to discipline, being self-accountable for resolutions can be challenging. Without someone impartial to supervise progress, it is easy to lie and make excuses. As a result, if possible, having a partner for accountability purposes is extremely helpful to maintaining goals throughout the year.

Though some people are able to keep their New Year's resolutions and improve their lives for the better, many relapse to their old habits as a result of a lack of self-control or ineffective resolutions. However, by following these guidelines for setting successful goals, you might be able to make them last all year. ♦

# Trump era events prompt attacks on free speech, anti-journalism sentiment

BY DavidKoh & JeffreyMa

Jamal Khashoggi's murder in Saudi Arabia's Istanbul consulate on Oct. 2 has had a reverberating effect on politics and policy around the world and on the geopolitics of the Middle East as a whole and on Saudi-U.S. relations for years to come.

But as media attention remains fixated on the incident's role in the geopolitics of the region, Saudi-U.S. relations and domestic Saudi politics, it's easy to overlook what Khashoggi's death fundamentally is: an attack on free speech.

A Turkish investigation deemed the Saudis' short-term motive for killing Khashoggi to be preventing the publication of a chemical weapons on civilians. A CIA assessment based on messages from Saudi inner circles concluded that Mohammed bin Salman, Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, likely ordered the killing.

The country's choice of simply eternally silencing their critics reflects a greater trend worldwide — a stark reminder of the endangered status of journalists.

The murder should not be seen as just another casualty of an increasingly turbulent Middle East; rather, it is a wake-up call for the decline of free speech worldwide.

As many Americans begin to frown upon journalism in the age of Trump, other places have already begun to cease toleration of it. In this waning of media — of free speech — rides the rise of strong-men leadership.

In Turkey, where Khashoggi

was murdered, president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has a strained relation with journalists, to say the least. During a state visit to France, Erdoğan supposedly spat at French reporters and pronounced journalists to be the "gardeners" of terrorism.

According to Stockholm Center For Freedom, Turkish prisons currently hold 234 journalists for reporting anti-governmental messages, often on a charge of supposed connection with terrorists.

Farther north, as Eastern Europe has continued to shift toward the far-right regimes, crackdowns on the media have either worsened or commenced.

In Hungary, prime minister Viktor Orban tightly grasps the country's media, while in Poland, the Law and Justice Party implemented state control of public broadcasting.

Increasingly nationalist agendas have coalesced control of the media and power in the hands of the few, pushing these countries in the direction of already firmly established dictatorships like Belarus and Russia.

On the other side of the world, Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte's stance is no better. The Philippines is often described as the worst place for journalists to work in South East Asia, and it is so bad that Duterte has gone on record calling for the deaths of journalists.

China's Xi Jinping earlier this year cemented his dictatorial power by abolishing term limits on the Chinese presidency. Coupled with this power grab, widespread attacks on media were launched,

with bans on words like "coronation," "empire" and "dynastical." Government censors on the image of Winnie the Pooh and on the letter "n" turned into widespread laughing stocks of "Emperor Xi"'s policy.

More recently, Brazil's far-right president-elect Jair Bolsonaro has adopted the Trump-like stance on journalism, gaining popularity with fiery nationalistic rhetoric and attacks on the press. His followers have repeatedly assaulted reporters and journalists both physically and through social media.

Amid a worldwide decline in free speech, Trump's war against the media is only worsening the issue.

Instead of defending what is often called the fourth branch of government, he throws false accusations of deceptions and fake news.

Trump's words have unleashed a firestorm against the media both domestically and internationally.

In August, a California man was arrested for threatening to shoot journalists of the Boston Globe after the newspaper President Trump's actions in an editorial, quoting the President in accusing the news source of being "the enemy of the people."

In October, a zealous Florida Trump supporter attempted to mail several pipe bombs to multiple critics of Trump, including the Clintons, former President Obama, Joe Biden and John Brennan, though the package marked for Brennan was sent to CNN.

Khashoggi's death only further underscores Trump's already spotty track record when it comes to



Courtesy of NEW YORK POST  
Dissident Saudi writer and Virginia resident Jamal Khashoggi, who was assassinated by Saudi agents in an Istanbul consulate, spoke at an event.

free speech.

His response to the death has been underwhelming, especially as the "leader of the free world." Trump took to Twitter calling the entire incident "fake news" on Oct. 19. And although he eventually acknowledged the incident itself as well as the Saudi involvement in it, Trump proceeded to greenlight a \$110 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia.

Even after the CIA's conclusion that the Saudi Crown Prince ordered Khashoggi's killing, Trump released a statement saying that "the United States intends to remain a steadfast partner of Saudi Arabia to ensure the interests of [America]."

While threats to free speech around the world, especially in Asia and Eastern Europe, can be excused as outside of the American sphere of influence, failure to adequately address such a blatant disregard for free speech by one of America's closest allies in the Mid-

dle-East and globally is utterly unacceptable. If Saudi Arabia is not censured for Khashoggi's death, America will have forfeited its title as "leader of the free world" in all but name.

In this anti-media time, this age of Trump, journalism remains the bastion against the rise of strong-men leaders. As the so-called leader of the free world, Trump should be upholding its importance; instead of stoking the flames of anti-media sentiment, he should be quelling it.

Trump fails to see this imperative on free speech, and given his resume of actions, Trump won't be changing his rhetoric on the media anytime soon.

And while Trump's actions and words may be influencing this issue, in the end the mantle still falls to the public:

Only if the public's faith remain in the media can America continue to serve as a leader of the free world. ♦



GRAPHICS BY FRANCESCA CHU

# YOUNGER SIBLINGS ARE... EXPECTED TO ACHIEVE ABOVE AND BEYOND

BY KaitlynTsai

When Apple released the first iPhone in 2007, its capabilities amazed people so much that they nicknamed it the "Jesus Phone." But in recent years, each new iPhone model has been greeted less warmly as people expect more from each new model.

This same concept applies to siblings. Although older siblings help pave the way for their younger siblings, they sometimes shape their brothers' and sisters' futures too much. Younger siblings are often expected to follow the older sibling's paths while taking everything a step further, placing unfair pressure on the younger siblings.

For example, if an older sibling aced both semesters of Precalculus Honors with As, the younger is expected to do the same. And if they do achieve that, there is no praise because that is merely what is expected of them. This pressure typically stems from three different cases, all based on the older sibling's life.

Case one: The older sibling is extremely successful. Proud parents expect the younger to do the same — and more.

Case two: The older sibling is somewhat successful. The parents, not entirely

satisfied, project the older sibling's faults onto the younger one and push him or her to do even better.

Case three: The older sibling is not successful. The parents are disappointed, and place pressure on the younger one to strive for the best to bring honor back to the family.

These comparisons are hardly fair; parents should adapt to the path that younger siblings may want to take, even if it's different from the first child's.

In fact, from receiving hand-me-down clothes to being known as so-and-so's younger brother or sister, younger siblings often feel like their identities are heavily dependent on their older siblings. This repression explains why some younger siblings rebel and become the "bad children." They want to forge their own identities, free of the constraints their older siblings wore.

Perhaps the largest downside to being a younger sibling is the stigma around it; because we are supposed to be spoiled and have things easier, people often scorn and invalidate the aforementioned problems.

Admittedly, it isn't easy being the guinea pig, but being the next in line and expected to succeed can be even harder. ♦

# GIFTED WITH PRIOR EXPERIENCE, LENIENCY

BY NityaMarimuthu

When baking cookies, it is a good idea to put a few testers in the oven to predict how the batch will turn out.

If the cookies are too puffy, flatten them out. If they are too flat, lower the temperature. Maybe let the cookies chill in the fridge a little bit until they get that perfect crispy on the outside, chewy on the inside texture that melts in your mouth.

This same concept goes for children. The first one, the oldest, is like that tester cookie.

They venture out into the world with a half-baked plan, trying to figure out which classes to take, how to navigate the social scene and how to apply for colleges. Every experience is new and unknown.

The next child, however, has it easier. They already know from their older sibling which classes are beneficial, how to make new friends, how to get the most food for the smallest price and other useful life hacks that the older sibling relays back to them.

Younger siblings are seen as the "babies" of the family. Parents are often worn out by the stress of handling the first child, so the younger gets the path of least

resistance.

While the first child has to fulfill all the parents' dreams and hopes, every following child just fills the occasional gap here and there for the parents' diminished expectations.

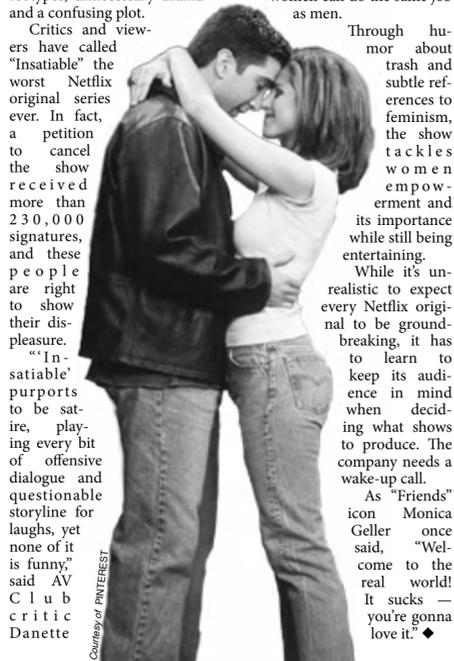
For example, the first child is expected to leave for school 20 minutes early, so that they can not only come before the first bell, but have 10-15 minutes to socialize with their friends.

By the second child, leaving the house before the first bell rings is rare. Socializing can be saved for all the detentions they rack up.

Being the youngest child means getting the privilege to learn from the older child's experiences and mistakes. It means that all the supplies are laid out, ready to be used after the first child has already assembled them.

More often than not, the younger child gets the opportunity to follow their own path rather than the one laid out by their parents.

As Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "Learn from the mistakes of others. You can't live long enough to make them all yourself." With the feedback from the first batch, subsequent batches of cookies are ready to handle to heat of the oven. ♦



Courtesy of PINTEREST

# Paced studying works better than cramming

BY RohanKumar

Staying up all night to study for a massive APUSH final is not fun. It's hours of staring at a textbook while random concepts rebound off your skull. For five seconds, the fleeting notion that Lee Harvey Oswald killed JFK hovers in the tired recesses of the hippocampus before it floats on out.

Students often sleep late in order to study for upcoming tests, attempting to cram a plethora of random facts into their brains. It is hardly surprising that this strategy is ineffective.

The truth is, the closer to the test date that a student studies, the less likely he or she is to remember the concepts. To synthesize arguments, the brain must be able to make connections.

Briefly barraging a person's brain with ideas does not permit it to make long-lasting connections.

Worse still, this surface-level studying tactic ultimately leads to the concepts being forgotten quickly. Many subjects are taught incrementally, building on previous chapters and making it critical that students thoroughly understand the previous ideas.

Committing these concepts to long-term memory also means less time is necessary to study for finals.

Cramming can be extremely stressful, since it comes with little room for error. The stress itself along with the lethargy

that comes from sleeping late can make it harder to remember information, leading to decreased productivity.

Fortunately, there is a simple solution: Study for weeks ahead of time. Not only does this tactic permit studying at times of peak productivity, but it also allows students to revisit concepts in order to input it into their long-term memory. According to Oxford Learning, spreading out study times without increasing the total amount of time spent increases retention.

Studying ahead of time is far more effective, but can take more work in terms of self-control and planning. It's difficult for many students to force themselves to study in this common-sense fashion, especially when they do not feel the pressure of having a test the next day.

Setting deadlines is extremely important to manage studying time. Allotting an hour each day to complete a certain number of chapters can help enforce discipline and result in more effective learning. These deadlines ultimately alleviate the workload right before the test.

Though it may be the default studying mode for high school students (if they study at all), cramming leaves much to be desired.

It is stressful, ineffective and completely unnecessary. By incorporating deadlines and committing to studying ahead of time, students can learn concepts faster, longer and in much more depth. ♦

# Cramming for tests is, unfortunately, effective

BY OliverYe & SamanthaYee

Why spend nine hours over the course of a month poring over the California Drivers Handbook for the drivers education test if you can cram the facts into your brain the night before?

For a few hours, the fact that the minimum parking distance from a fire hydrant is 15 feet will reside in your brain.

If students are capable of getting grades they deem adequate by cramming, and manage to save a couple hours for other activities, then the end justifies the means.

Cramming for exams is generally frowned upon, but the success of this method is responsible for the culture of procrastination and nights of intense studying.

If a majority of test material is fact based, it can't be helped that many students choose to force information into their heads at the closest possible time to the actual exam rather than study earlier and forget the information a couple weeks afterward.

It's not to say that cramming is a healthy way to study or that it helps with long-term retention; however, the positive quantitative results produced encourage this habit.

Because students may have learned the concepts previously and vaguely remember

certain aspects of it, cramming is an effective way to help them refresh their memory of the required material.

Many tests are not cumulative, and merely require memorization of certain facts.

For example, if a student needs to know that the Treaty of Tordesillas was ratified in 1494 for a test, and feels that it will not be a useful thing to know in their future, then it would be perfectly acceptable for the student to cram the information into their brain the night before only for the test.

Additionally, if focused cramming produces similar results to studying over a longer period of time, there is little reason to study in advance.

An undesirable side effect of habitual cramming is chronic procrastination, but more often than not, students end up learning how to produce the best results within the shortest amount of preparation time possible.

By narrowing down priorities and adopting skills to work faster, cramming maximizes efficiency.

Contrary to popular belief, the results of cramming aren't entirely negative. For some, it's very possible to remain a successful student with a heavy workload, while not having to spend numerous hours a week studying. ♦



Courtesy of WALMART

# SAT, ACT classes overpriced, antiquated

BY DanielBessonov

Studying for either the SAT or ACT is an integral part of many juniors' summer schedules. Students often attend test prep centers in order to receive instruction and practice — aspects critical to succeeding on the highly anticipated tests.

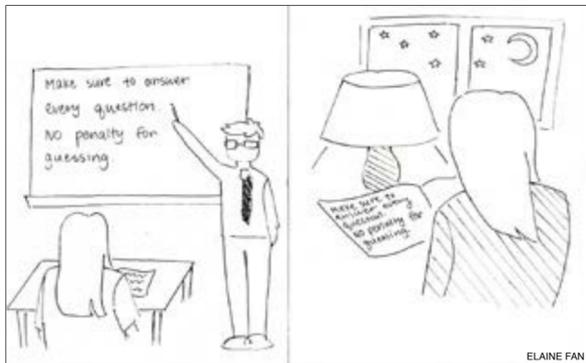
Many students attend local prep centers such as the Jay Koo Academy, AJ Tutoring or Elite Prep — all institutions that specialize in SAT, SAT Subject Test and ACT tutoring. While some students have no doubt seen their test performance improve in these programs, many others have echoed the sentiment that these grueling, summer SAT and ACT prep sessions are unnecessary and overpriced, stating that they would've opted out had they known prior to signing-up.

As one of these students, I can confidently attest to the fact that I would've been much better off had I used the 47 hours I wasted at one of these institutions learning on my own. To start, College Board has recently started democratizing the SAT — attempting to take away the advantage affluent students have in preparing and hiring help for the test. Accordingly, they've published a wealth of free, official practice tests and resources.

The "proprietary" content provided at most prep-centers are in reality just these freely available resources. What's the point of paying upwards of \$2,000 for printouts of something that's free and available online? Ink might be expensive, but these prep centers aren't printing the practice tests on four-karat, gold-plated paper.

In addition, the coveted strategies that some instructors provide are often easily found online. A simple search for "SAT and ACT strategies" on Google yields a plethora of test-taking tips and advice.

Sites such as Khan Academy, uWorld and College Board's own Collegereadiness, along with books from publishers including Barron's, Princeton Review, Ivy Global and Erica Meltzer all provide resources for a fraction of the cost of these summer sessions. Logically, these prep-services can't provide much more than books can. If they're not making the test, there's no way they're more knowledgeable than another



ELAINE FAN

publisher.

Self-study materials also provide students with a more tailored approach toward standardized testing.

Prep centers often employ a "mass training" mentality, wasting hours going over content and strategies that aren't applicable for all students. By buying and using only what they need, students can optimize their schedule and get more out of less study time. Although this requires serious self-discipline, students can exercise "self-control" tools (that block certain websites, etc) to recreate a prep-center-like environment.

As previously mentioned, Khan Academy, which is sponsored by the College Board, provides free lessons, practice problems, and full tests for students, which are available through the web or an application for your phone. Not only is it more convenient than going to a prep center, but it also provides tailored analysis for a student's weaknesses and strengths based on the tests they take online. What prep center can come close to the functionality, convenience and overall effectiveness of such online resources?

Many argue that the value in prep centers lies not in the content they provide, but rather the studying and test-taking environment they create. Some students find that they simply can't focus for long enough to

take a full practice exam at home.

However, there are still options for such students that don't entail paying thousands of dollars to take tests in a quiet environment. C2 Education, another test-prep center, offers a service in which students can sign up to take individual practice tests. This way, students that have trouble focusing don't have to break the bank to find an optimal studying environment. Students could also exercise the time-tested strategy of going to the library with a couple friends, and all taking tests together — holding each other accountable for not checking phones, texts, and social media.

In large part, the only reason many of these services are still alive is peer and parental pressure. If one hears that a friend or son of a distant auntie got a 1580 after attending X academy, they automatically assume that going to X academy will yield a similar score. In reality, the academy's don't have anything new or groundbreaking to offer. They simply regurgitate already-existing information and create an easily recreateable quiet environment.

Ultimately, summer SAT and ACT prep-courses are antiquated and overpriced. Students should stop wasting their summers cooped up with forty-other overpaying students and take matters and their education into their own hands. ♦

# LETTER TO THE EDITOR

DEAR SARATOGA FALCON,

I was pleased to read your article on girls being welcomed to join BSA's 11-17 re-branded program: Scouts BSA (formerly Boy Scouts). I would like to clarify some items and provide additional information.

Coed-Scouts BSA troops are single gender. Our program encompasses youth from 6th-12th grades. Scientific studies have shown a significant advantage for both genders being single gender from ages 11-14. Additionally, by keeping troops single-gender, both genders are able to have all leadership opportunities throughout the program. The confusion about coed stems from the organization of "linked troops." A linked troop is a pairing of a girl troop and a boy troop. They may go on some outings together and have meetings at the same location and time. But they operate separately and independently, with girls leading their troop and boys leading their troop.

February 1, 2019 is the first day for girls in Scouts BSA. Some may wish to attain the Eagle rank but already be 16 or 17. Normally, Eagle rank must be attained by age 18. A special exemption will be offered for any 16-17-year-old boy or girl joining after 2/1/19 giving them a total of two years to complete Eagle, even if the two years extends past their 18th birthday.

Saratoga Scouts BSA Girl Troops: We have two girl troops in Saratoga — Troop 566 (linked with boy troop 566) and Troop 582 (linked with boy troop 581).

Thank you for your interest in scouting. Imagine if our nation were run by people for whom "help other people at all times" (all people) was a core tenet.

Dave Holt, Scoutmaster Scouts BSA Troop 582 Polarix District Chair scouterholt@gmail.com

# The greatest presents are not items but experiences

BY AnnaNovoselov

As my sister (now 12-years-old) and I opened up presents on Christmas day a few years ago, the largest and most beautifully wrapped ones were naturally chosen first. The thin piece of paper stuck between numerous presents went unnoticed until the very end, when all the other gifts had been unwrapped.

Little did I know the paper would turn out to be the best present of all.

As I read the print on the piece of paper, I began grinning: It was a printout confirming accommodations for a family trip to Hawaii later that year.

Unlike a piece of jewelry, some shoes or an electronic appliance that I would rarely use, the vacation brought me a week of adventures and relaxation.

The next Christmas, there was another piece of paper; this time, it did not go unnoticed. The paper announced that my family would be going to Panama that February.

Once again, I got to de-stress on a beach and forget the burdens of schoolwork for a week.

While there was not a similar paper under the tree last year, these experiences have taught me that the happiest people are rich with memories.

But, vacations are not the only

experiences that can be gifted. A fun day exploring the city or even a small picnic can be meaningful inexpensive gifts.

In a materialistic society where people are always bombarded with commercials for new gadgets or games, it may seem that the people who purchase the most are the happiest.

However, that is not the case. Things become clutter stored away in the back of closets or in boxes in the attic, often forgotten. Memories, on the other hand, stay forever and remind people of joy when times may seem dull.

Materialistic things are temporary. Experiences should be the most treasured gifts as they strengthen relationships and create everlasting moments of joy. ♦



# Jamba Juice's secret menu

Overview White Gummy Bear 9.5/10

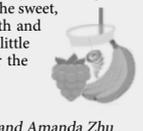
Jamba Juice has always been known for its drinks that are good for the tastebuds and soul. Even on cold winter days, every drink is sure to be a treat. Popular flavors include Caribbean Passion or Strawberries Wild. But when a chain has been open for 30 years they are bound to have a few unusual drinks. From concoctions inspired by popular candies to classic smoothies, look no further because here they are, tried and tested!

White Gummy Bear is made of peach, strawberry and pineapple, giving it a sweet and tangy at the same time, replicating the taste of the clear gummy snacks it is named for. The splash of lime, raspberry and orange sherbet balances out the sweetness, leaving a hint of freshness as an aftertaste. \$6 may be pricey, but this smoothie is satisfying all year-round.



Raspberry Refresher 9.5/10

Made of raspberry juice, raspberry sherbet and fresh raspberries with a hint of banana, the Raspberry Refresher will leave you wanting more. This smoothie is perfect for a relaxing afternoon. The sweet, cherry-red drink will both satisfy your sweet tooth and curb your cravings for anything raspberry. It is a little costly at \$6.09, but you're sure to be yearning for the largest size of this drink.



— Neeti Badve, Angelina Chen, and Amanda Zhu

# PSA for all winter haters: Palm Springs is ideal place

BY SandhyaSundaram

I'm an avid hater of winter, and I'd do absolutely whatever it takes to fool myself into thinking that it is summer when it's December. The perfect way to do this: Flee to a warm-weather destination in the middle of the winter.

Last summer, I went on a road trip with my family to Palm Springs. Whether you like relaxing in the pool, seeing astounding views or touring national parks, there is something for you in Palm Springs.

In Palm Springs, there is an aerial tramway leads up the Chino Canyon.

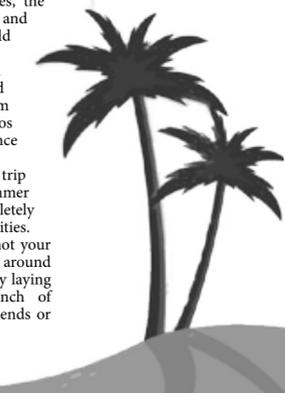
The views of the vast desert can be taken in by day, sunrise

or night. Although my family didn't do this because of time constraints and large lines, the photos of the scenery and views made me wish I could have experienced it.

Apart from the natural parks, warmth and poolside relaxation, Palm Springs is also close to Los Angeles with its abundance of entertainment options. The best part of the trip was that it felt like summer because of the completely different climate and activities.

So if winter really is not your thing, instead of moping around in a blanket and miserably laying around watching a bunch of Netflix, convince your friends or

family to take a road trip to Palm Springs. You won't regret it. ♦



# Breaking it down: online shopping

Showpo is a slightly pricier option, ranging from \$30 to \$60 per item, but this Australian boutique has a wide range of outfits and sizes, featuring petite and plus size models wearing the same items side by side.

But be careful when ordering knit sweaters. Even though they are cute, they stretch out and the material becomes rough after a wash or two. Showpo also has decent prom dress options that are good quality and cheaper than other stores with similar dresses. Amy ordered a maroon two piece dress for \$60 and it fit really well, along with a maxi black off-the-shoulder dress that was made of high quality material and worth the \$50.

Showpo's blouses and shirts are also worth their price. Amy bought a black blouse and it looks just like the photo and fits true to size. There are occasional sales, and Showpo will notify people who are subscribed to their email newsletters when these sales are. There are not as many options as PrettyLittleThing, but the quality of clothing is arguably better.

We would recommend Showpo's semi formal dresses or rompers, blouses and shirts.

Ordering from PrettyLittleThing is a hit or miss. Amy ordered two different dresses in the same size, yet one was way too tight, while the other fit perfectly.

Be warned, when the description says mini dress, they mean it. The short dresses are extremely short, but this can be fixed by ordering a size up, as the fabric is stretchy and flattering.

The cropped sweatshirts are cute, but should also be ordered a size up or at risk of being really short. Amy ordered a cropped sweatshirt in size 2 but a 4 or 6 would have fit better. A general tip with this store: avoid white because it will be see-through. Overall, the clothes are inexpensive and you get what you pay for. There will always be a sale, so don't shop on days when the sale is only 30 percent off because a 40 percent off sale invariably comes two-three times a month. The best items to order are dresses and basic tanks, tees and comfy shorts.

Urban Outfitters offers trendy clothing that all your favorite influencers are currently wearing. It's definitely more expensive, ranging from \$20 to \$80 per item, but that also means you don't have to worry about poor quality. Because everything is so trendy, you'll probably see 10 other people wearing the same thing, but you will still look great.

Watch out for sales, and order items during their off-season (buy winter clothes in the summer and vice versa). Also, reviews are helpful for combatting sizing issues. No matter your gender, check out the men's section for graphic tees and sweatshirts because they are cheaper than women's, and the oversized look is very in right now. The best things to order are fluffy jackets, plaid pants, graphic tees and sweat-shirts.

There are so many options on the Forever 21 website that you could probably find anything you would ever want. And ordering online is much better than going in-store because you can avoid the mess and Black Friday-like chaos the store faces everyday.

The quality can be hit-or-miss but it's more often a hit, and the clothes generally range from \$10 to \$30. Forever 21 also has a wide variety of jewelry that looks more expensive than it is (Pro-tip: Paint clear nail polish on metal jewelry so it doesn't rust).

Summer clothes on the site are cuter than the winter clothes, but be careful when ordering light colors because they can end up being see-through. Also, always read reviews before ordering, since the quality can vary greatly between items. In general, if you have time to sift through many products, there are many deals and steals. Forever 21 is best for ordering tops, jackets, sweatshirts, basics, jewelry and accessories.

— Francesca Chu and Amy Tang

ALL GRAPHICS BY KEVIN ZIE

## Alumna helps build a multi-billion dollar health-care company

By Anishi Patel

During her time at MIT, 2007 SHS alumna **Sivakami Sambasivam** helped invent low-cost delivery systems to bring food and sanitation to thousands in Kenya and Mexico. She worked to provide malnourished children with vegetables in the winter when weather conditions are too extreme to grow them.

She and her team raised \$20,000 to build greenhouses across three Mexican communities.

After graduating from college, Sambasivam joined then-startup GoodRx, a company that works with pharmacies and doctors to put together coupons for prescription medications. GoodRx's mission is to increase access to medication for all Americans — the uninsured, underinsured and the insured.

GoodRx, most recently funded by Silver Lake at a \$2.8 billion valuation according to CNBC, has quickly become an eminent health-care unicorn, helping solve the country's immense problem of patients not taking prescribed medications because of cost or other reasons: A recent New York Times study stated that GoodRx prices are lower than insurance 40 percent of the time.

The company's success has been in no small part due to Sambasivam's efforts as their fourth employee and vice pres-

ident of marketing. The company now employs just under 150 people and is located in Santa Monica.

Q: When did you decide on your career path and what events prompted that decision?

A: Throughout high school, my career path was inspired by two things: I always wanted to help people and I loved biology. In high school, I assumed the only career opportunity that fit these two criteria was medicine. But at MIT, my classmates and I were given some amazing opportunities to explore how social entrepreneurship could make this same impact: We were able to invent low-cost delivery systems to bring food and sanitation to thousands in Kenya and Mexico, and it was through this distinct experience at MIT that I realized being a doctor wasn't the only option to help people.

Q: Where have you worked and what do you feel is your most impactful achievement since graduating?

A: Right out of college, I worked at Bain and Co. as a

management consultant. However, I began to miss the parts that I had loved most about my experiences in Mexico and Kenya — working with a small team, tackling an unmet health-care need, interacting with customers first hand, and building innovative technology. I decided to quit my job at Bain and join the startup GoodRx.

Within my first year, we were able to patent a methodology for analyzing drug pricing and we used algorithms to create "Kayak.com" for prescription drugs with prices lower than what most Americans had ever been able to access. Since then we've grown exponentially, and I'm proud of the impact we have had: To date, we've saved our customers \$6.5 billion, increased medication adherence by 60 percent for our customers and helped more than 10 million Americans save money with GoodRx each month.

Q: What is your vision for health care?

A: Non-adherence is still a huge problem in our country. Even with Obamacare, we have tons of people that simply can't afford their prescriptions or insurance for that matter. So instead, these people simply don't take their medications. I envision one day a nation where patients no longer worry about affording health care regardless of insurance status or income. ♦



Sivakami Sambasivam, 2007 Alum



The highly talented and famous graduates of Saratoga High

## From computer science to music

By Kaitlyn Tsai

Name: Cynthia Yih Shih, stage name Vienna Teng

Age: 40

Education: Saratoga High School (Class of 1996), Stanford University Computer Science (Class of 2000), Ross School of Business, University of Michigan (Class of 2013), School of Natural Resources and Environment, University of Michigan (Class of 2013)

Occupation: Singer-songwriter  
Genres: Folk, pop, indie folk, chamber pop (accompanied by her own piano compositions)

Albums: "Waking Hour" (2002), "Warm Strangers" (2004), "Dreaming Through the Noise" (2006), "Inland Territory" (2009) "Aims" (2013)

Awards: Independent Music Award for Best Song (Pop) for "Level Up" (2014), Independent Music Award for Best Song (Sing Out for Social Action) for "Level Up" (2014), Independent Music Award for Best Song (A Capella) for "The Hymn of Acxiom" (2014), Independent Music Award for Best Album (Adult Contemporary) for "Aims" (2014)

Despite her success as a musician, Vienna Teng acknowledges the personal

challenges that arise from her career. On her website, Teng said it takes her months, sometimes even years to write a song.

"I don't revise all that much; it just takes that long for all the pieces to form and assemble," she said. "And it seems to get harder as I go, as the self-critic voice gets more insistent."

In a 2004 interview, Teng told NPR's Liane Hansen her perfectionism greatly shapes her career. However, it encourages Teng to constantly evolve and improve her work.

"I never feel comfortable unless I'm moving forward, or moving in some new direction," she told Hansen.

Today, Teng works as a management consultant but is also maintaining her music career. She still records songs and goes on tour, according to the biography on her official website.

"Every musician has a different kind of marriage with music, and mine seems to thrive on a healthy dose of long distance," she said. ♦

Vienna Teng, 1996 Alum



## Olympic gold medalist overcomes a battle with alcoholism

By Neeti Badve

Some alumni do not wait until after high school to achieve greatness. 1986 alumna **Carrie Steinseifer** gained widespread fame before her junior year at SHS as an gold medal-winning Olympic swimmer in the 1984 Games in Los Angeles, but following high school, she gained perhaps her biggest and most lasting victory: defeating alcoholism.

At just 15, she not only won her first Nationals title, but went on to win two gold medals in the 4x100 medley and 4x100 freestyle relays at the 1983 Pan American Games in Venezuela.

Through constant training of four hours a day, six days a week, Steinseifer not only qualified for the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles at only 16 but also made it to the finals in the event.

Going into finals for the 100-meter freestyle, Steinseifer was seeded third overall, seemingly out of contention for the gold medal.

"Even at the first turn of the 100, I thought, I'm not going to medal. I wasn't necessarily favored or even discussed in that winner's circle conversation," Steinseifer said in a self-written article for excellesports.com.

However, despite her doubts, Steinseifer finished with a time of 55.92, tying 22-year-old fellow American Nancy

Hogshead for the gold medal.

At the same Olympics, Steinseifer won two additional gold medals as part of U.S. relay teams.

After her 1986 graduation, she continued her streak of freestyle dominance, winning six international medals — five gold and one silver — as well as three NCAA championship-winning relays for the University of Texas Longhorns.

But despite her wins and seemingly endless successes, Steinseifer failed to qualify for the 1988 Olympic team. This led Steinseifer to experience a loss of identity, and she unexpectedly decided to quit swimming altogether.

About a year later, Steinseifer returned to the water with a new goal in mind: to retire on her own terms.

"I started from zero, and that next summer I made the national team. I had peace and was able to retire knowing that it wasn't about my capabilities," Steinseifer wrote in her article.

Though her return to the sport was successful, the end of Steinseifer's career likely could have been avoided altogether had alcoholism not plagued her whole life.

Growing up in a household of alcoholic parents, Steinseifer used swimming as an escape for her fear and anger.

"I took it all out in the pool because nobody can see you cry underwater, right?" Steinseifer said, in an interview for rehabreviews.com.

At 17, she tasted her first drop of alcohol on a flight to Tokyo with the national team. Despite it being her first drink, Steinseifer had enough wine coolers to vomit and pass out on the airplane. That was only the beginning. She continued to abuse alcohol for the next 13 years.

Throughout her career, Steinseifer taught herself to push her body to the limits. She did the same with alcohol, slowly increasing the quantity and frequency of her drinking with age. She had trained her body to become invincible, but the poison she consumed every day for years finally caught up with her when she turned 30.

"It'd become everything that I hated in life," Steinseifer wrote, "and I didn't even see it coming."

Steinseifer turned to Alcoholics Anonymous, chasing after sobriety as if it were her next gold medal.

After overcoming her denial, Steinseifer enrolled herself into treatment programs and now happily reports that she has not only achieved sobriety, but has also found new purpose in life.

Now, at age 50 and living in Oregon, she is a strong advocate against the stigma and stereotypes of addiction within the athletic community and works at the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation for addiction treatment and therapy, helping others who have struggled with alcohol.

"I talk about recovery openly," Steinseifer wrote in her article. "It's so much bigger than the medals. It's about using this platform to help other struggling people who are ashamed to come out of their front door." ♦



Carrie Steinseifer, 1986 Alum

## Searching for Steven Spielberg

e-size money

Kevin Sze

"Hi, is this Mr. Richard Lovett?" I asked.

"This is Mr. Lovett's office," responded a female voice.

"Hi," I repeated, nervously. "I'm Kevin Sze from The Saratoga Falcon, the newspaper of Saratoga High School where Mr. Steven Spielberg graduated. I wanted to contact Mr. Lovett in hopes of getting an interview wi—"

"Right," the voice interrupted. "Can you send me an email with everything regarding your situation?"

"Sure," I muttered, a bit annoyed that she had interrupted me mid-sentence, but also encouraged that she didn't hang up immediately. Could getting an interview with iconic filmmaker Steven Spielberg be possible?

A couple weeks prior, I had half-jokingly signed up to interview Steven Spielberg for a

newspaper story about famous alumni — with none being more famous than the iconic 1965 grad. I learned that Spielberg's favorite class had been writing for the newspaper and being a sports editor for the newspaper, so I figured getting an interview might not be impossible.

I eventually decided to give the story a shot, thinking that if I could pull it off, it'd be an even greater achievement than Lebron coming back from a 3-1 deficit in the NBA Finals.

After doing some Sherlock Holmes-worthy investigation (a.k.a., googling "Who is Steven Spielberg's agent?"), I found Lovett's contact information. I called the first number and was put on hold. The woman at the end of the line referred me to another woman, who transferred me to another woman who said she would get back to me. A few days passed, and not surprisingly, she didn't get back to me.

But, as the resilient reporter I am, I decided to call the number back, several times, only to hear it go to voicemail after a single ring. At this point, I figured

Lovett's assistant or whoever had picked up the phone the first time around hadn't taken me seriously and blocked my phone number.

I did some digging on the internet, talked to three different women (where is the diversity, Mr. Lovett? Actually, where are you Mr. Lovett?) for about 30 seconds each, was put on hold for longer than the total time I actually spent talking to people, only to return to the same conclusion: This wasn't getting me anywhere.

I'm not saying that I blame Lovett or Spielberg for any of this. Both men are extremely busy, and giving an interview to Saratoga High School, a place, according to The Mercury News, Spielberg absolutely hated due to the anti-Semitism here as a junior and senior, was unlikely.

Although it's been a roller-coaster ride that mostly ended in annoyance and disappointment (they could've at least sent me a short email saying I'd be receiving no interview), I've learned to not expect the impossible. But hey, you have my number. So call me maybe? ♦

## Founding an investment firm

By Nitya Marimuthu

Name: Mark Kvamme  
Age: 57  
Education: Saratoga High School (Class of 1979), B.A. degree in French Economics and Literature, University of California, Berkeley (Class of 1985)

Occupation: Venture capitalist, partner and cofounder of Drive Capital (Firm that invests in companies in the midwest; founded in Columbus, Ohio)

Notable previous positions: Chief investment officer and president of JobsOhio, partner at Sequoia Capital (invested in LinkedIn), Worldwide product manager at Apple France, chairman and CEO of CKS Group, held occupations in more than 20 other companies

Current residence: Ohio  
For nearly his entire life, Kvamme lived in the Silicon Valley, working in the technology sector at companies such as Apple, LinkedIn and his own business, the advertising agency CKS groups. Then, at age 52, Kvamme moved to Ohio for his next business venture.

Together with Chris Olson, a coworker of Kvamme's at Sequoia, Kvamme co-founded Drive Capital, a private investment firm. Kvamme and Olson decided to target the Midwest — where they believed the "world's next household name" would be — due to a lack of exposure to large tech companies (unlike the Silicon Valley, where successful companies are a dime a dozen).

Since moving to Ohio, Kvamme has led Drive Capital to invest in more than 20 companies, ranging from artificial intelligence to farms to billing at restaurants.

"My joy is looking into the eyes of a newly minted entrepreneur and seeing the grit and heart they have to defy the odds and build something great out of nothing," Kvamme wrote on his website. ♦



Mark Kvamme, 1979 Alum

## Other Notable Alumni

**Cyndy Poor** (Class of 1971)  
Track olympian and American record holder

**Lance Guest** (Class of 1978)  
Actor in 80s Sci-fi movies

**Ed Solomon** (Class of 1978)  
Actor, director, writer and producer

**Patricia Miranda** (Class of 1997)  
Bronze medalist Olympic wrestler

**Andrew Bosworth** (Class of 2000)  
Facebook's augmented and virtual-reality vice president

**Varun Sivaram** (Class of 2007)  
Philip D. Reed fellow for science and technology at the Council on Foreign Relations

**Alex Lagemann** (Class of 2007)  
Rapper and TV Personality

## Actor shares his aspirations in the industry

By Selena Liu & Callia Yuan

As a junior in high school, 2011 alumna **Jay Lee** remembers practicing for his English 11 Honors Shakespearean skit — a play scene detailing the final sword fight in "Hamlet." Surrounded by classmates who would go into professions such as engineering, computer science and medicine, Lee led rehearsal after rehearsal with his classmates.

"Even now I'm not quite sure how to articulate the feeling of seeing that 100 written on our grade report," Lee said, in an interview with The Falcon. "But I'm convinced that moment had a profound impact that triggered some seismic mental shift."

Fast forward to first semester senior year, Lee questioned what career path would suit him the most. With years of experience performing in both middle school plays and high school drama department performances, Lee finally decided on a college major: theater.

"In hindsight, it should have been an obvious decision, perhaps not even a decision at all," Lee said. "By the end of my first year of college, I knew there wasn't anything else in the world I wanted to do than to live in the arts."



Jay Lee, 2011 Alum

Upon graduating from USC,

Lee continued to direct productions and went on to write scripts for theater companies and film shorts in the entertainment industry.

"I just closed a musical I assistant directed at USC called Happy End by Bertolt Brecht, and the other month I closed a show called Three Days in the Country (adapted from A Month in the Country) at Antaeus Theatre Company," said Lee. "Now, I'm going into pre-production for a play I'll be directing at USC this spring called 'Holy Ghosts' by Romulus Linney and a few shorts some friends and I are hoping to shoot before the holidays. As for TV/Film, I've done a variety of projects from network shows to smaller proofs: Colony, Bully (with Danny Trejo), Angie Tribeca, The Filth, @asst\_ and a few other shows and commercials that are currently in post-production and will hopefully trickle out later down the line."

In his biggest success to date, he landed a role in "American Vandal" season 2. The series is a parody of true crime documentaries and he plays the role of Tanner Bassett. The Falcon reached out to him to learn more about this project and his career.

Q: What was the most important factor leading to your success in the acting industry?

A: Luck. I've had clear enough waters over the years to be able to veer off course into serendipitous directions now and again. It's knowing how to paddle myself forward regardless of my standing with the industry that I would attribute any sense of success I have. I happen to have been incredibly fortunate to have collided with folks who were generous enough to invite me onto their sets

or rehearsal halls time and again.

Q: What has the industry taught you?

A: It's not really a concrete lesson or skill, so much a shift in perspective. Pretty soon after I graduated college, I realized that, starting out in the acting industry, it's very rare for a job I book to be fulfilling in a deeper, creative way, so I split my priorities to balance my time between "career" and "creative" projects. It's still, of course, very exciting to book and terribly fun to shoot the first TV job or commercial gig, but most scripts just aren't "Breaking Bad" or "The Office." And that's OK. Being an actor is a job. I don't get to sleep much, and finding time to eat can in itself be the ordeal of the day, but by golly, I go to bed each day knowing I've accomplished something and get to wake up to doing it all over again. And that's a dream come true.

Q: Has your experience at Saratoga High impacted your career path decision?

A: Absolutely. For one thing, the school provided opportunities to perform, and by the time I was a senior, I really felt that I was part of a supportive, creative community. But even with the drama department aside, I had teachers who gave credibility to my proclivity for performance as more than just a hobby, which I feel on a subtler level had a deep influence on my development.

Q: Has your attitude toward the industry changed from high school to now?

A: Can I propose that we finally divorce the words "starving" and "artist" from each other? To live in the arts, to live artfully has, in my experience (albeit still a limited one), been the closest thing to a state of grace I have ever witnessed in others, if not myself. ♦

## New York Times bestselling author acts and performs poetry

By Kaitlyn Wang

Dressed in a full-body, foam banana costume and trying to maintain a smile, 1987 alumna **Beth Lisick** hands out bananas at a plaza in San Francisco. Helping a friend with The Fruit Guys, a fruit delivery service, is one of the many odd jobs Lisick describes in her books.

An actress and author, Lisick has written two short story collections and three nonfiction works full of self-deprecating humor, including content for mature readers. Her memoir "Everybody Into the Pool" (2005) was a New York Times bestseller.

"I didn't write it for any other reason than to write funny stories," Lisick said in an interview with Metroactive about "Everybody Into the Pool." "I love hearing people's personal stories and I think if I have stories to write about, everybody does."

In her books and in an interview, she describes her high school self as a jock — she set the school record for the long jump in 1987 — honor student, freshman Homecoming princess, member of the school newspaper staff and class vice president.

Lisick attended UC Santa Cruz and majored in American Studies. Her boyfriend in college was a painter, and she remembers wondering: "Who gave you permission to think that you could make art? Like, why does anybody care? I mean, I care what he painted — I loved what he painted — but I just thought, how did he get that self-confidence to think that anybody would care?"

After speaking at an open mic for the first time in San Jose in the early '90s, Lisick discovered her talent for spoken word.

In 1994, Lisick toured with the Lollapalooza rock festival, which paid her free beer for performing spoken word and slam poetry. She also performed on tour across the U.S. and Europe as a member of the roadshow Sister Spit, "a group of queer-centric, feminist, irreverent artists ... performing mainly at universities and art centers."

Lisick's work was published in "The Best American Poetry 1997" and "Word Warriors: 35 Women Leaders in the

Spoken Word Movement," among other publications.

Being an artist does not guarantee a steady income, and at times it was difficult for Lisick's family financially. Lisick describes the shift from her childhood in the suburbs to her life in a part of Berkeley nicknamed "Brokeley," reflecting on how her "yearly income hovered right near the poverty line" when she was 35. A Bay Area native, she moved from "Brokeley" to Brooklyn, N.Y. with her husband Eli Crews — a musician, music producer and engineer — and their son Gus in 2012.

Identified as an actress, writer, producer and director on IMDb, Lisick has acted in 22 films and shows. Most recently, she has starred in the comedy "39 and a Half."

Grateful for writers who are "brave and generous enough to share" their work, Lisick emphasizes that she enjoys storytelling on the page and screen. "There aren't many things I love in life more than reading and watching and listening to stories," she said in an interview with The Rumpus. ♦



Beth Lisick, 1987 Alum

## Tea Ceremony at Hakone Gardens offers relaxation

by ColleenFeng & SherrieShen

From koi, bamboo and tea gardens to exquisite pathways and stone steps, Hakone Gardens, located on Big Basin Way in the hills of Saratoga, showcases the wonders of Japanese estates and culture. Other attractions at the gardens include a moon-viewing bridge, wisteria arbor and cherry trees.

Since its founding over a century ago, Hakone has become a national and city park, offering many opportunities for Saratoga residents to interact with Japanese culture. One such event is the garden's public Japanese Tea Ceremony. Held on the third Sunday of each month from April to November, excluding August, the ceremony requires an appointment. In addition to the \$7 tea ceremony fee, there is an \$8 garden entry fee for a total of \$15. Curious about the experience, we decided to check out the tea ceremony.

going through the pine" in kanji. The tea master, dressed in traditional pants called a hakama, explained that the room was created so that when the tea boils in the floor compartment, it sounds like wind breezing through the trees.

The tea master — who has been studying and conducting tea ceremonies for over 40 years — briefly introduced different types of tea and began the ceremony. We were given a tea biscuit: two small, red-bean pancakes with chocolate filling inside.

Then, the tea master's wife entered the stage to begin performing the role of the host in the ceremony. She brought the equipment for serving tea and knelt down in front of us as she cleaned the utensils and whisked and poured the tea. Then, everyone received a bowl of powdered matcha tea to sample, which tasted very bitter, but still had a delicious aroma to it.

When everyone was finished, the tea master started to speak more in-depth about the historical significance of Japanese tea ceremonies. He explained that in Japan, tea ceremonies are performed for all kinds of reasons. The tea master's own wedding was conducted as a tea ceremony.

Overall, we would recommend the hour-long tea ceremony at Hakone Gardens, as it was a unique experience. Although parts of the explanations were long and dry, it was obvious the tea master and those who helped demonstrate the ceremony truly love this art. After all, they provide this service free of charge. But it's a good opportunity to relax and a welcome break from long hours of writing college application essays. ♦



Top Left and Bottom Left: A samurai statue, large Japanese pottery and lilies line the entrance to the Hakone Gardens Tea House.



The tea master's wife kneels on tatami mats to conduct the Tea Ceremony.



A Japanese Geisha doll is displayed in a glass case at the museum located in the corner of the Tea House.



GRAPHIC BY EMILIE ZHOU

After buying tickets at the gift shop, we headed to the tea house and took our seats in the audience. The stage had bamboo matting, and on the wall was a flower and scroll that read "sit quietly and listen to the wind

## Downtown Christmas Tree Lighting

DOZENS ATTEND EVENT IN SARATOGA DOWNTOWN

On the day after Thanksgiving, the 17th annual tree lighting took place in Blaney Plaza in downtown Saratoga. In the late afternoon, the square was packed with people in raincoats and holding umbrellas to protect themselves from the rainstorm that had begun earlier that day. City clerk Debbie Bretschneider attributed the large turnout to advertising the city did on its website, Facebook page and Twitter feed.

The ceremony began with the mayor, Mary-Lynne Bernald, addressing the crowd, followed by a performance by the Marshall Lane Elementary School choir. This year, a high-quality sound system with microphones and speakers broadcast the singing along with keyboard accompaniment. After the performance, the Christmas tree, which was planted three years ago after the previous one was hit by a car and now stands roughly 20 feet tall, was lit. However, there were some technical difficulties, possibly due to the weather.

"Unfortunately we had a little issue with electricity and the lights kind of flickered a little bit, but the tree lit up, and that's what's important," Bretschneider said. As in the past, the Saratoga Youth Commission passed out free hot chocolate to audience members at the event.

"It was pouring rain that night, yet so many people still came out," said junior Mary Elizabeth Miller, one of the Youth commissioners. "And passing out hot cocoa, it was so much fun to see the kids' faces and how happy they were." Bretschneider agreed that the event was a success. "As one of the people who helped organize, it's great when it all works out," she said. "We have a really nice big tree now, and it's spectacular when it's lit." ♦

~ Kaylene Morrison

GRAPHICS BY ANISHI PATEL AND EMILIE ZHOU

## Freshman trio forms music group

IN ALL SERIOUSNESS GAINS TRACTION ON INSTAGRAM

by AngelinaChen & AnnaNovoselov

In an Instagram video posted Nov. 21, freshmen Anjali Nugehalli, Kavita Sundaram and Sanjana Somayajula sit side by side singing "Sweater Weather" by The Neighborhood and gradually transition to "Royals" by Lorde while Sundaram strums her guitar. Their voices blend together during the chorus, yet stand alone during the beginning notes.

Bonded by a mutual love for singing, the three girls formed a singing group called In All Seriousness last March.

The group created an Instagram account, @inallseriousnessmusic, which as of Dec. 2, has 280 followers and eight posts. The account features videos of the girls singing popular songs such as "No Tears Left to Cry" by Ariana Grande and "Everything Has Changed" by Taylor Swift and Ed Sheeran.

When Nugehalli suggested that they combine their talents and form a music group last March, Somayajula and Sundaram thought it was a great idea.

"I turned to them and said, 'Hey guys, we should create a singing group,'" Nugehalli said. "I was kind of joking about it, but it turned into something more serious."

From there, the girls began to practice and record videos of them singing together. The hardest part, they say, is choosing a popular song and adding interesting elements, like slightly changing the melody.

The girls have recently started posting song mashups, such as one video combining "Titanium," "Elastic Heart" and "The Greatest" by Sia.

The girls take turns singing the main and supporting parts. Nugehalli usually sings the higher parts while Sundaram and Somayajula sing the lower parts.

Sundaram said that it takes the girls about seven tries to record the final video after choosing a piece and practicing it. They "try to post only their best content," she said, which they usually film using an iPhone.

Currently, the group's fan base consists mostly of friends and family, but the group



Courtesy of SANJANA SOMAYAJULA

Freshmen Anjali Nugehalli, Kavita Sundaram and Sanjana Somayajula form singing group In All Seriousness. The group posts videos to their Instagram account: @inallseriousnessmusic.

hopes to gain more exposure through their Instagram account and perhaps other social media platforms.

One of their biggest supporters is Sundaram's mother, Shankari Panchapakesan, who views the final videos in person.

"[The girls] are able to pursue a passion and get recognition and visibility amongst their peer group," Panchapakesan said. "There is a lot of positive reaffirmation, which is great fuel to pursuing their singing."

However, Panchapakesan also noted the disadvantages in pushing the girls deeper into the world of social media, referencing a culture on Instagram that obsesses over likes and followers as a superficial measure of talent.

The group tries to meet and post a video on Instagram once a week. Sundaram hopes the group can have a regular meeting schedule in order to post and film more often.

The girls hope to share their passion with others and continue doing what they love.

"It's two awesome things combined in one," Sundaram said. "I get to be with some of my best friends so it's really fun to sing with them and have an end product that we're really proud of." ♦

## Stunt doubles should get more industry recognition

by KaitlynWang

In August 2017, stuntwoman Joi Harris died in a motorcycle accident on the set of "Deadpool 2." Harris was the "first African American female professional road racer," The Guardian reported, and she had successfully run through the scene four times beforehand. She was 40.

In the midst of explosions, flames, fight scenes and car crashes, actors step away, letting stunt doubles step in to perform such a convincing job that the audience isn't aware that a different person is performing the stunts.

While taking on the most dangerous scenes, the pressure they face can reach ridiculous heights. Many viewers would do a double take if they knew that a stunt double was severely injured or had died while filming a scene from a favorite movie or show.

Actor Daniel Radcliffe's double in seven "Harry Potter" films was stuntman David Holmes. During a wire gag in the first "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" movie, a wire pulled Holmes back into a wall while an explosion occurred. He fell to the ground and has been paralyzed from the chest down since 2009.

Despite the horrible, life-altering accident, Holmes told The Guardian that he still loves the

excitement and challenge of the stunt industry and continues to consider performing stunts "the best job in the world."

But Holmes wishes that people in the entertainment industry wouldn't overlook the sacrifices and risks stunt performers take to bring the thrilling scenes audiences love to life. He hopes that more recognition — in award shows, for example — will result in greater appreciation, contributing to more regulations and a lower likelihood of fatalities.



Courtesy of MOTION GRAPHICS

Recognizing stunt performers' roles is crucial because they deserve to be acknowledged for their work. While some actors like Tom Cruise choose to perform most or all their stunts and risk possible injuries, the most dangerous work is usually carried out by stunt performers.

Andy Armstrong, who coordinated stunts for "The Amazing Spider-Man" and "Thor," told The Guardian that the Screen Actors Guild should have more control over who can work on a set. Armstrong said that regulations are so loose that a member of a film crew could walk into a restaurant and

ask a waiter to become their film's stunt coordinator. In other words, the safety of performers may lie in inexperienced, unqualified hands.

As if falling miles and crashing into cars wasn't dangerous enough, stunts are even worse for women because they need to wear high heels and revealing clothing.

A New York Times article examined the experiences of eight stuntwomen, including Jadie David, who broke her back twice. Some have chosen to stop performing stunts and shifted to coordinating stunts instead, while others have continued their high-risk careers. Hoyle agrees that stunt performing is the "best job in the world" — even though the world

might not recognize the sacrifices. Stunt performers deserve appreciation too. Audiences may not see them as the separate actors they are, instead remaining focused on the way a story unfolds. According to IMDb, "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them" included 88 stunt doubles and "Blank Panther" included 181. The role of stunt doubles does require them to substitute for actors and not draw attention to themselves, but they literally risk their lives to tell stories. Too often they receive broken bones, bruises or even worse but little or no recognition. ♦

## Iconic entertainers motivate teachers

by AngelinaChen

It can be hard to imagine that teachers were once as embarrassingly obsessed with famous idols as most students are currently. When she was younger, English 10 and drama teacher Sarah Thermond obsessively watched and re-watched several screenplays and movies all starring her favorite actress, Emma Thompson.

Thompson is a British actress, screenwriter, activist, author and comedian. Thermond discovered Thompson in high school when she saw her lead performance as Elinor Dashwood in the screenplay for "Sense and Sensibility" by 18th century English novelist Jane Austen. Thermond was quickly intrigued by Thompson's over-the-top, hilarious acting. Since then, she has shared the screenplay with friends and family who also found Thompson's performance impactful, despite being unfamiliar with acting.

"People who already know a lot about acting can respect what she does, and people who don't know much about acting can still respond to it," Thermond said. "I think that makes someone an ideal artist and performer."

Thompson has starred in many children's films, historical pieces and modern movies, playing professor Trelawney in the "Harry Potter" films, the main character Fiona Maye in "The Children Act" and the titular nanny in "Nanny McPhee." Thermond admires

Thompson's versatility above all. "I feel like in a lot of the performing arts in the media world, it's really easy for performers to get typified to be only able to do one thing," Thermond said. "I really respect somebody who with their career has tried to show that you don't have to limit yourself and you can do a bunch of different things and be equally successful in all of them."

Another performing arts teacher, choir and orchestra teacher Andrew Ford, also draws inspiration from an artist he admires: American composer and conductor John Williams. Williams has composed many film scores, including ones backing the "Star Wars" series, "Jaws" and the "Jurassic Park" films.

According to Ford, Williams' musical pieces aren't simply "notes on a page," but create a story that is "inspiring and relatable to life." He teaches this same message to his students.

"When we sing a choir piece, or play an orchestra piece, all of the music should be telling a story," Ford said. "Williams' music always reminds me to help my students do this."

Williams' work motivated Ford to become a music educator.

"Role models are necessary because we all need to be inspired even when we think we've 'finished' our journey like when we complete college or get a job," Ford said. "They help us continue to grow and find new goals." ♦

## 2018: A year of Asian empowerment in media

**FEB. 13** Chloe Kim lands gold

**AUG. 15** "Crazy Rich Asians" is a hit

**AUG. 17** Rom-Com succeeds with Asian lead

**SEPT. 8** Naomi Osaka wins U.S. open

**NOV. 15** BTS releases "Burn the Stage"

At the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang-gun, South Korea, 17-year-old Chloe Kim made history by being the youngest woman to win an Olympic gold medal in snowboarding. Before the 2018 Winter Olympics, Kim was a four-time X Games gold medalist and the first woman to win two gold medals in snowboarding at the Youth Olympic Games. Kim is a Korean-American with parents who immigrated to the U.S. from South Korea. Kim's win was a step forward in increasing Asian representation in sports.

The release of Netflix original "To All the Boys I've Loved Before" was another step forward in Asian representation in the entertainment industry with its Asian main character Lara Jean Covey, played by Vietnamese actress Lana Condor. It is one of Netflix's most streamed original films and is seen as one of very few successful Asian romantic comedies. Numerous producers attempted to whitewash the film by making Lara Jean white; however, Jennifer Han, author of the book "To All the Boys I've Loved Before," declined those offers, insisting that the character be Asian.

At the 2018 tennis U.S. Open, Naomi Osaka represented Japan and defeated Serena Williams for the title of champion in the women's singles. Osaka is now ranked fifth in the world. Previously, Osaka won the Indian Wells Open and made it to the third round in both Wimbledon and the French Open. On her way to the top Osaka has faced numerous hardships, specifically racism. After her win at the U.S. Open, a cartoonist depicted her as white, completely disregarding her Haitian and Japanese heritage. Despite the difficulties, Osaka's win at the U.S. Open was another success for Asian women representation in sports.

Korean boy band BTS released a documentary, "Burn The Stage: The Movie," which follows their lives on tour. The movie sold nearly 1 million pre-sale tickets and has reportedly grossed about \$14 million. Additionally, it can be seen across 17 territories and had reached No. 10 in the U.S. box office. Throughout 2018, BTS has become more and more prominent, gaining an abundance of followers and raising Asian representation in both the media and the music industry. ♦

REPORTING BY EILEEN BUI AND GRAPHICS BY FRANCESCA CHU

## Chinese school provides invaluable opportunities for students of all ages

BY Kaitlyn Tsai

As the clock strikes 9:20 a.m., the chime of a handheld bell rings through the crisp Saturday morning. Across the Saratoga High campus, dozens of children hurry to their classrooms.

Some, clutching their parents' hands, struggle to keep up as their little legs carry them as quickly as possible, their oversized backpacks like turtle shells on their backs.

Upon a closer look into a classroom, one may find a group of approximately 20 students pulling out their supplies and Chinese textbooks, seated before a teacher who stands ready to lecture.

This is the Mandarin Language and Cultural Center, or MLCC, one of many schools belonging to the Association of Northern California Chinese Schools (ANCCS). MLCC hosts Chinese classes of varying grade levels at Milpitas High on Friday evenings and at Saratoga High on Saturday mornings. MLCC principal Jane Chen said she established the school in 1997 after realizing that many parent-run Chinese schools had teachers who lacked proper teaching experience and training. Chen decided a formal school would be far more effective and beneficial.

Every year, MLCC serves a total of approximately 1,100 students, from preschool to 12th grade, in its weekend heritage classes along with another 100 to 150 in private

school Mandarin Club programs. Students also participate in festivals and city hall events celebrating various Chinese holidays.

"Through hands-on activities, stories telling and puppet shows, many children enjoy and explore Chinese culture," Chen said.

Students at MLCC read from and discuss textbook passages to develop language skills; older students also focus on Chinese history and culture and more complex writing and communication skills. Homework typically focuses on listening, speaking, reading and writing and includes tasks such as recordings of passages and reading comprehension.

Aside from classes, MLCC allows more experienced students to volunteer as TAs for Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) classes, which are structured for those with less background with Chinese.

Several Saratoga High students take advantage of such volunteering opportunities in order gain both volunteer hours and experience working with people of various ages. Junior Vivian Lin, who used to attend MLCC herself, said she first heard about this opportunity from her eighth-grade Chinese teacher.

"I immediately wanted to apply, since I really enjoy being around little kids," she said. "I knew it would be a great experience."

As a TA, Lin juggles a variety of tasks including grading papers, monitoring the class, leading small group activities and



Second grade level students in Chinese as a Foreign Language class at Saratoga High listen attentively as the teacher goes over vocabulary related to bedrooms on the projector.

helping students who require extra assistance. Although she said maintaining these duties is tiring, she remains enthusiastic about her job because of the bonds she creates with the students.

"They're just really fun to be around and I'm always excited to see them at the end of the week," Lin said. "I have a couple kids from two years ago that still message me, which makes me extremely happy knowing that they still remember me."

Many Chinese-American and Taiwanese-American students recognize the importance of attending schools such as

MLCC. Going to such schools benefits students and parents alike in their daily lives, according to sophomore Audrey Lee.

"Attending Chinese schools lets us communicate with our parents more easily," Lee said. "It's also important for us to keep our culture and tradition, so we can pass it down to future generations."

Chen has dedicated herself to preserving Chinese culture and encouraging student growth through such education.

"Students will enrich their lives and broaden their minds by learning language and culture," she said. ♦

### The Saratoga Falcon evolves from pamphlet to newspaper

**September 23, 1963**  
The first issue of the Saratoga Falcon came out in 1961 as a weekly bulletin to keep students informed of the on-going activities around the school. With a pamphlet-like format far from the current newspaper, it discussed the changing of classrooms, a future party at the school, the school schedule and office announcements on its front page. The two-page issue had one page for sports, displaying upcoming football games and providing information for athletes interested in high school sports. The paper had hand-written headlines and a typewriter-like body text font, maintaining a comfortable and homemade look while making sure students stayed updated.

**December 19, 1980**  
In the '80s, the Falcon switched from a pamphlet-like format to an actual newspaper format. The front page of the Falcon's fifth issue in 1980 covered topics such as popular restaurants, new athletes and a letter to the editor, topics similar to those covered in the current newspaper. The 8-page paper only had two sections: forum and sports. Forum is comparable to the current opinion section; students would give their insight on various topics through columns and stories like "Who are the real losers of Saratoga High?", which critiqued the growing clique problem the high school had. Although there were no graphics, hand-drawn cartoons were scattered among the pages along with a handful of photographs, something lacking from the previous decades of newspapers. The Falcon issues of the '80s contained the basic traits of the modern school paper but still lacked many aspects of the contemporary Falcon.

**November 19, 1993**  
With the introduction of computers to the newspaper, the '90s issues saw a transition from hand-drawn graphics to computerized ones. Using the early page design program PageMaker, the newspaper staff used the early page design program PageMaker, implementing blue-colored full advantage of the new technology, implementing blue-colored graphics across all their 16 pages. Stories, photos and headlines were bordered by blue boxes, as blue and black colored inks were the only ones available to them, and the costs of printing were the same. The paper had the traditional sections of news, sports and forum; however, in addition to these sections, it also featured entertainment, music and lifestyles sections. The music section critiqued genres and provided information on different radio stations, while the entertainment section reviewed popular shows of the time including "Boy Meets World," "Frasier" and "Saved by the Bell." As a whole, the newspaper focused on information that affected the daily lives of students and made sure to include student opinion through Toga Talks and the forum section.

GRAPHICS AND STORY BY NEETI BADVE AND EILEEN BUI

## For some MAP seniors, themed murals replace finals

BY Kaylene Morrison & Emilie Zhou

Every few years, the school's atmosphere gets a little brighter as new student-made murals are added to the walls of various hallways. A new wall was most recently decorated at the end of the 2017-2018 school year, when seniors in the Media Arts Program painted murals for their English final. The murals portray major concepts students learn through the year.

According to MAP history teacher Mike Davey, who started the tradition, the murals help to alleviate some of the stress for seniors after they take AP exams while also "making the school more interesting to look at."

"I wanted something to refresh them about the major themes of the year and also at the same time make them focus on teamwork," Davey said.

The five murals outside Davey's room were done by his U.S. history classes about 10 years ago and the five murals inside were done two years ago.

Last year, MAP seniors painted 10 mu-

ral on the bottom windows inside and outside of MAP AP Lang and AP Lang teacher Jason Friend's classroom. The murals were completed with waterproof acrylic paint made for metal and each painting is approximately 2.5 ft. by 2.5 ft.

The murals painted around Davey's room focused on some of the major history themes from the year while the murals around Friend's room tended to focus more on major themes from the English curriculum. A mural highlighting the class of 2018's MAP experience connects the hallways between Davey and Friend's rooms.

Alumna Sahana Sripadanna is a 2018 graduate who took part in painting Friend's classroom. Her group's painting is designed to look like a Snapchat filter that overlays various social media icons and brands across a person's face.

"Each group was assigned to design a mural based on a MAP unit from the year," Sripadanna said. "We got dystopia, so we wanted to comment on how social media gone awry could create a dystopian environment."

According to Friend, students first come



Five small murals, painted by MAP seniors on MAP history teacher Mike Davey's room 10 years ago, depict themes from U.S. history such as civil rights, government and democracy.

up with several ideas, choose the best design with the help of Media Arts teacher Joel Tarbox and get their final designs approved by the administration. Then, students must apply the primer to the wall before starting the topcoat painting process.

The current MAP seniors will most likely paint their murals on either English 11 teacher Natasha Ritchie or history teacher Matt Torrens' room. After those walls are

filled, the tradition will continue with the sophomore and freshman MAP classrooms.

"We call it the 'Leave Your Mark' project. It's kind of their last chance before leaving high school to leave a permanent mark on the walls in one of their MAP classes," Friend said. "Especially for Media Arts students who are used to using technology to create their artwork, it's a fun last way of using the traditional artistic medium." ♦

## The play's the thing with some English finals

BY Sofia Jones & Aaria Thomas

Students have become accustomed to a certain type of final: sitting down with a pencil and paper and spending hours dumping a semester's worth of knowledge onto paper.

Whether it be multiple choice, short answer or an essay, students are just cramming, writing and — too often — forgetting much of what they just learned.

In recent years, though, many English classes have taken a different approach to finals, especially when teaching complicated works like those of Shakespeare. Performance projects are now common.

"Plays are best experienced, understood and absorbed as a theatrical experience," English 10 teacher Ken Nguyen said. "A performance project — and all of the subcomponents that are required of this particular task — engages students in accessing a number of different skills to showcase their

understanding and mastery."

For most performance projects, English teachers follow the same basic outline. Students, in small groups, choose a scene or a part of a scene such as a character's monologue. They spend some time annotating and learning them and eventually these scenes are performed in front of the class.

**"My hope is that students will be able to see the play in the way it's supposed to be seen."**

TEACHER Emily Wu

The key points students are graded on in this type of project are the memorization and understanding of their lines, as well as how much rehearsal was put into the scene.

Some like English 10 teacher Emily Wu ask their students to do a little more.

To receive a high score on her "Julius Caesar" project, students have to creatively incorporate props and costumes into their scene. These projects are usually worth around 100 points, which is similar to some finals.

"We don't intend for a performance project to replace standard finals, but it lines up well with the rest of the semester," Nguyen said. Acting out scenes from plays is not just a convenient way to wrap up a unit. There are certain skills English teachers want students gain by doing it.

"My hope is that students will be able to see the play in the way it's supposed to be seen," Wu said. "We do a lot of read-throughs and run-throughs with the plays, but I'm hoping students are able to really see how much it takes to put on a production and what Shakespeare's intention was in creating this play in the first place."

Students have time to prepare their scenes and make sure they get the most out of their section as they can.

Spending more time going over the text in preparation improves students' understanding of the play.

Sophomore Tia Jain, who did a performance project for "Romeo and Juliet" as a freshman, said that the scene she was assigned allowed her to go in depth into the material.

Jain also feels that the project is more stressful than a traditional final, because standing in front of a class full of peers is nerve-wracking, but in doing so, she gains valuable insight about the text.

"Just learning the lines is pure memorization, which isn't that hard," Jain said. "We have to think about the tone of our lines, and the context behind it, which makes it a lot harder, but it also lets us learn about our scenes much more in-depth."

This year, in the English 10 class

she is taking with Nguyen, they are doing another performance project for "Julius Caesar."

Sophomore Fiona Lee is excited for the performance, and despite the demanding requirements being stressful, she prefers a performance project to a standard final, because she thinks it is a creative alternative.

"It's hard to memorize an entire speech, because Antony doesn't speak like normal people would," Lee said. "However, it's kind of a stress reliever to have a fun project with peers among all the other normal finals."

Using performance projects to conclude a unit on Shakespeare's plays is a great way for English teachers to educate students on not only the content but also the spirit of the book.

"It was never meant to just be read, or sat down with," Wu said. "It's supposed to be on a stage with props and lights and directions and performing it in class gives it its intended purpose." ♦

## Fundraisers evolve with new laws and less volunteerism

BY Edwin Chen & Justin Guo

As sophomore class officers Lauren Tan and Arnab Mangal recently prepared for their after-school boba fundraiser, they anticipated the anarchy that was about to ensue at their table above the quad steps. When the bell rang, dozens of students rushed the table desperately trying to get a drink, showing their money in the class officers' faces.

This scene would have been unheard of a few years ago, but today, it is a common sight. Traditionally, clubs and teams often host larger, more formal fundraisers to raise money for travel fees, supplies and competitions. In recent years, the introduction of new laws and the rise in popularity for certain foods and drinks have significantly influenced the way fundraising is carried out on campus.

According to assistant principal Kerry Mohnike, California law restricts what items can be sold on campus. Since 2007, the state has enforced nutrition standards for "competitive foods" in schools — the snacks and foods that are not included in meal plans but that students can get on school grounds.

"Back 10 years ago, you could sell candy

on campus, but there are now laws restricting some of the things we can sell," Mohnike said.

California law limits the amount of sugar and fat that can be found in foods sold on school grounds. The rules also have placed restrictions on when fundraisers can be held on campus.

"We can't sell food items during the day," Mohnike said. "So boba tea became really popular at the end of the day."

The popularity of boba has led it to become a profitable way for clubs to fundraise. Class officers often buy 120 boba drinks at a time, which usually costs \$400. But by selling them for \$4-5 depending on the initial cost of the drink, they can generate a profit of up to \$150 if all drinks are sold.

The decline of parent involvement has also contributed to the rise of these smaller fundraisers. With sports teams and clubs lacking parental help, they have found new methods of large scale fundraising, one of them being restaurant affiliations. On Nov. 10, with the help of dance team adviser Julia Peck, the dance team held a fundraiser at Chipotle to raise money for their trip to Nationals next spring.

"The Chipotle fundraiser was a lot less stressful because all you had to do was ad-

vertise and let people show up," said sophomore dance team member Isabelle Lee.

Lee said that the dance team chose the Chipotle fundraiser because of past recommendations from others, and that the lack of funding from school led the dance team to come up with more methods to fundraise. Not all of those methods have been successful, such as the bake sales the team arranged on Aug. 24 and Oct. 26.

"We didn't make a lot of profit," Lee said. "It's kinda sad because everyone had to spend a lot of time baking things to sell."

Despite the effort behind a team of 20 people, the team was only able to raise a combined total of \$1,130 from both bake sales, which covered a mere fraction of their costs between regional competitions, camps, costumes, uniforms and their big Nationals trip to Anaheim, which costs a whopping \$20,000.

The dance team was left with extra food and ended up giving a lot away, Lee said. As students continue to explore both old and new methods of fundraising, one important idea still stands.

"There's not a pot of money that we can just draw from," Mohnike said. "If students want to do activities in their clubs, they have to figure out how to do fundraising." ♦

### HIGH SCHOOL FOOD RESTRICTIONS

"SNACK" FOODS MUST BE A FRUIT, VEGETABLE, DAIRY PROTEIN OR WHOLE GRAIN ITEM.

"ENTREE" FOODS INTENDED AS THE MAIN DISH MUST BE A MEAT/MEAT ALTERNATE AND WHOLE GRAIN OR MEAT/MEAT ALTERNATE AND FRUIT/VEGETABLE OR MEAT/MEAT ALTERNATE ALONE.

GRAPHIC BY EILEEN BUI  
SOURCE: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

# Heritage Orchard provides reminder of the past

by Kaylene Morrison & Michael Wong

Prior to its transformation into a center of technological innovation, Silicon Valley was known for the acres of orchards that covered its landscape. Now, only a few heritage orchards remain as reminders of the area's agricultural past.

One of these orchards is located by the Saratoga Library, nestled between Saratoga and Fruitvale Avenue. In 1984 the Saratoga City Council declared the 13.9 acre Central Park Orchard a Heritage Landmark to ensure that the land

would remain undeveloped.

The city-owned orchard has been managed by the Novakovich family since 1975 in exchange for the right to harvest and sell the fruit. The Yugoslavian family, which immigrated to California in 1911 and to Saratoga in 1925, also purchased another orchard located across the street from West Valley College. To this day, it is still owned and run by descendants of the Novakovich family. The property is currently under the ownership of Leah Novakovich and is run primarily by her sons, alumni Matt and George Novakovich.

Over the years, the Novakovichs have stuck to their family's traditional practices on the farm. "We've been cutting and drying apricots the same way for 50, 60 years," Leah's third son, Dan Novakovich, 61, said. "So it's the same as the way they used to do it back in the '50s, '60s and '70s."

Dan said he is not as directly involved with the management of the orchard, since he worked as

a firefighter for the city of Santa Clara for 30 years. He was also the only son to get married and have children: a son and a daughter named Emily, 23, who graduated from Lynbrook High.

**"You feel secluded, and I feel like you don't really get that in the Silicon Valley anymore."**

Emily Novakovich, whose family runs the Heritage Orchard

A fruit stand is set up at the Novakovich Orchards every summer, where Emily has spent her summers working ever since she was old enough. There, the fruit from both the Heritage Orchard and Novakovich Orchard is sold,

including cherries from May through June; apricots, peaches and nectarines from June through August; and corn and tomatoes from July through September.

"It takes you back in time," Emily said. "It's relaxing and quiet. I get to truly spend as much time as I want there. Just being able to be on the orchard [not hearing] anything for what seems like miles, you feel secluded, and I feel like you don't really get that in the Silicon Valley anymore."

Still, she only visits the orchards occasionally and currently lives in Phoenix, Ariz. Eventually, it may be Emily's responsibility to manage the orchard, as she and her brother are her grandmother's only grandchildren.

"I have no clue," Emily said, regarding whether she will eventually inherit the orchard. "I just like going over there and helping my grandma out, but who knows."

Even so, Emily has proposed several ideas for improvements. "It'd be nice to have a database

of previous orders we had," Emily said. "So if someone calls and says 'Hey, I'm Sam Smith and I want to order the exact same thing that I ordered last year and ship it to the same ten people that I've always shipped it to,' then we could pull up that order and say 'OK, let's do the same exact thing.'"

As Saratoga continues to modernize, the orchard serves as a reminder of the city's humble beginnings.

"It's the last vestige of the way things used to be in the Valley," Dan said. ♦

By Rohan Kumar

Prodding with sticks that deliver electric shocks, slaughterhouse workers stand behind a long line of pigs. Systematically, the pigs are forced forward, stunned, stuck, bled, decapitated and cut into pieces.

The reality of the slaughterhouse often does not extend past its bloodstained walls. Millions of Americans eat various meats of their choosing, unaware of how their food is produced and processed.

**Although food is such a fundamental part of life, students continue to remain unaware of the process that produces their meat.**

Factors such as religion, ethics and sometimes simply taste often influence students about what foods they eat. Meat is probably the most contentious food choice.

Organizations such as the American Dietetic Association advocate for a vegetarian diet. According to an article published by Harvard Medical School, vegetarianism not only resolves the ethical dilemma of animal abuse but also comes with health benefits such as reduced risk for chronic illnesses and a potentially longer lifespan. Vegetarian diets also leave a less severe carbon footprint since it takes large amounts of energy to produce even small amounts of meat.

At the same time, many experts oppose vegetarianism, saying it often leads to malnutrition. Animal proteins are considered "complete" (containing all of the required amino acids) while plant proteins are considered "incomplete" according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, making obtaining sufficient amino acids difficult with a plant-based diet.

Getting iron from meats is also easier than from vegetables since meats contain heme iron, which is also found in humans. Many meat supporters are not concerned with animal rights abuses, arguing that animal rights are not as important as those of humans and that eating meat is natural.

**Student-led responses**

Senior David Berkowitz-Sklar has made his support of vegetarianism a personal crusade. He is particularly focused on the livestock industry.

"Some people I know are veterinarians and they are vegan," he said. "I asked them

why and they told me that there are a lot of practices in the livestock industry that are unethical."

Sklar learned about the tiny enclosures animals are forced to live in and the often low welfare standards for livestock.

"I realized that I didn't want to keep on supporting an industry that I thought was not paying attention to the well-being of animals, so I went out full vegan," he said.

Although Sklar's diet now includes wild-caught seafood, he is still wary of purchasing animal products since he is unsure which farms they come from. If he could ascertain their origin and know that the sources were ethical ones, he would be willing to include more animal products in his diet, he said.

Sklar has presented about the livestock industry various times to his classmates. He also completed several hours of volunteering to support Proposition 12, a proposition passed on Nov. 6 that set more humane requirements for livestock enclosures.

The law prohibits selling animal products that are derived from inhumanely treated animals, and requires egg-laying hens to be raised in a cage-free environment — defined as allowing each hen to move around in an area of 1.0 to 1.5 square feet of floor space.

**"I feel better about my food choices and impact on the environment."**

SENIOR Raghav Malaviya



The proposition also requires 43 square feet of usable floor space for calves and 24 square feet for pigs. Specifically, it required that enclosures permitted animals "to stand up, sit down, turn around, and extend their limbs or wings."

Having spent much time educating others on where animal products come from, Sklar stresses integrating education about the livestock industry into the curriculum.

"We're educated to be global citizens and to understand global issues such as global warming or textile factories in China, like how they're exploiting child labor," Sklar said. "But we're never educated to think about how our actions are affecting the livestock industry, which is a giant industry and also the industry that we are most a part of."

While Sklar himself prefers a mainly vegetarian diet, he said his main goal is not to convert his peers to veganism, but rather to make sure that they are aware of the impact of their eating decisions. By practicing more

informed buying, consumers can change the practices that farmers use to raise livestock.

Another vegan, senior Raghav Malaviya, has also based his diet choice on the livestock industry. After his father went vegan three years ago, Malaviya switched from vegetarianism to veganism.

"After being informed on the cruelty of the dairy industry and the horrific environmental impact it has, I decided that it was just a better choice to be vegan," he said. "Ethically, I felt better about my food choices and impact on the environment."

Malaviya believes in the importance of education about food. Although he described food as an "ultimately personal choice," he said that every person deserves to know important information before making their choices.

**Revamping the curriculum**

Both Malaviya and Sklar learned about the production of animal products before switching to veganism. However, many students still lack information on the subject.

Health and science teachers have noticed this lack of education about the livestock industry and have attempted to rectify it.

Health teacher Amy Obenour brought in a speaker from the nonprofit Ethical Choices Program last year who explained the benefits of a vegetarian diet and talked about the various practices that livestock producers use to maximize their profits. Using interactive demonstrations, the speaker described the tiny enclosures that livestock are forced to live in.

Similarly, AP Environmental Science and biology teacher Kristen Thomson has also integrated the livestock industry into her APES curriculum; she shows students an hour and a half long documentary "Food, Inc.," which presents inside views of slaughterhouses and the treatment of livestock in feedlots.

"I think it's important for us to be aware of where everything comes from," Thomson said. "Awareness and being able to create

your own opinions on things — that's what is really important."

In showing her students the documentary, Thomson aims to present the facts rather than persuade her students to follow certain lifestyle choices.

"It's not my job to shame people into switching eating habits," Thomson said. "I just want people to be conscious of their actions, and I think that all I can really ask is if people watch it they remember it."

Many students, after watching the documentary, choose to continue to eat meat. However, a large percentage of students who currently eat meat are not fully aware of the treatment of animals in the livestock industry. Sklar fell under this category before his junior year, and he noticed that many of them were in a similar situation.

"I honestly think there have been a ton of people who've told me that they've changed their diet a little bit," Sklar said. "I know a lot of people have consciously started eating less animal products or buying cage free stuff in general." ♦

## stories from the Saratoga Library

# Photography exhibit displays joyous moments

by Anna Novoselov & Emilie Zhou

With her camera strapped around her neck, Elley Ho — a special education teacher with a passion for photography — glanced down at the picture she had just taken: a little girl crouched down over a piece of paper, copying the information Ho had written on the board in a native Nepalese village. Ho couldn't even see the pencil in the child's hand; it was so short and worn out, just like all the other tiny pencils in the girl's pencil case. "When I touched [the pencils] they had this texture I've never experienced," Ho said. "They were so smooth and overused that they were polished in a natural way."

With a flash of her camera, Ho had captured the moment and the girl's love for her pencils.

Knowing that the children needed new pencils, Ho and a few of the locals drove to the closest store five hours away. The next day, Ho used gestures to explain to the girl that she wanted to trade a new, long pencil for her stubby one.

"I asked if I could keep it because I thought it was such a neat look of a pencil, so overused," Ho said with a laugh. "She just wouldn't give it to me."

The photo, "Little Pencils," is at the Saratoga Library as part of Ho's "Children Around the World" photo exhibit, which showcases the daily life of children in native towns from various countries including China, Nepal, India, Peru, Cuba and several East African countries. The 33 photos were taken around 10 years ago when Ho

traveled in the summer, and will remain at the library until Dec. 31. For Ho's first few trips, she worked with organizations and nonprofits. Later, she used connections she had formed to plan her own experiences.

In her exhibit, Ho hoped to display the intrinsic joy of children. Despite their different backgrounds, "they're all in one world" and are inherently similar.

Ho, who has been working in special education for 20 years at the Santa Clara County Office for Education, discovered her passion for photography when parents of children with autism noted how well she was able to photograph their children, a task that can be challenging. Encouraged by these responses, Ho combined teaching and her love for photography.

"My desire is to reach out to kids that have special needs around the world and offer myself as a teacher and a photographer," Ho said. Although Ho grew up in Hong Kong and now lives in the Silicon Valley, she sees herself as a global citizen, not exclusively Chinese or American.

Ho prefers to visit and live with native communities rather than stay at hotels in popular tourist locations. She usually spent a month in each tribal village immersing herself into a community to best capture the little joys of their daily lives.

For instance, three photos behind the library's front desk features three children on their way to school in Peru. One child is holding an old radio; another, a handful of wood chips; and the



Top Left: A boy in Peru holds an old radio on his way to school; Top Right: Copying information down, a girl in Nepal writes with a small, worn down pencil; Bottom: In the Omo Valley in Ethiopia, Ho presents a map of Africa and laughs with two boys.

Courtesy of ELLEY HO

third child sits on a swing, taking a break from the two-hour hike.

While some photos are candid shots, others were taken when the children posed. Ho learned words that entertained the children, such as "laugh," and the children would giggle when she said the word before taking a photo. Although they acted silly at first, crawling over Elley to view photos as soon as they were taken, they eventually grew used to being photographed.

"It's a long process where you have to wait until they feel like you're part of them and almost invisible," Ho said.

To showcase her photos at the library, Ho filled out an application. Library assistant Betsy White said that local adult artists submit five examples of their work, which a committee evaluates.

"The work usually speaks for itself," White said. "There are many photography submissions but composition and subject matter make some rise above others. In Elley's case, the portraits are so immediately engaging and sympathetic and joyful."

All proceeds from the sales of her photos from Nepal and Kenya will be donated to the Nepal Ed-

ucation Initiative Organization and Asante Africa Foundation: nonprofits that work to increase children's educational opportunities in Nepal and Africa, respectively.

Ho said that she took a risk by following her desire to pursue photography and travel and has enriched her life as a result.

"To me, opportunities are always there, it's a matter of whether you respond," Ho said. "Of course there will be closed doors, but I almost always respond to opportunities and they almost always turn out to be open doors for me." ♦

ALL GRAPHICS BY KAITLYN WANG

SOURCES: METONOMICS, GLOBAL ISSUES, USDA

ALL GRAPHICS BY CONNIE LIANG AND EMILIE ZHOU

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

## Incentive-based practices propel team towards their goals

by Ashley Feng & Anna Novoselov

As members of the more competitive De Anza League, the girls on varsity basketball team know they need to work hard and communicate to win against teams like Los Gatos and Santa Clara.

"The teams will be tougher but it'll be a new challenge for us," said junior post Ella Parr. "We need a challenge this year and I think that's what we're going to get."

The girls have been enjoying success in most of their preseason games. They started with two dominating wins against Westmoor and Oceana, winning 64-27 and 58-26 respectively.

The team lost their first game of the year on Dec. 6, against Carlmont 50-33, but bounced back with a 41-28 win against the Notre Dame Rangers.

Their non-conference record sits at 3-1. The girls played their first conference game against Leigh on Dec. 11.

With the loss of key players to graduation last spring and the addition of new players the team has had to adjust to new playing styles and learn to work better as a team.

"We definitely felt an impact from losing the seniors last year, but we're all taking part

in covering for them," senior power forward Rachel Bakke said. "We've all known each other for a very long time and since the team has worked a lot together over the summer, we're very used to each other and we know how we all play."

### The team hopes to continue improving on its press defense, offense and communication.

Junior guard Anika Prasad and sophomore guard Jane Loo have been leading the team in scoring.

Prasad said the girls can play at the same level as they did last year and be one of the top three teams in their league if they continue working with the same work ethic that they have now.

"A lot of people have had to step up and everyone is working really hard," Prasad said. "The new players are really easy to get along with, they work hard, and I have no complaints."

The team has been focusing on consistently boxing out, communicating with each other and learning a new defense called "Pacline D."

"We definitely have an advantage with shooting and skill," Parr said. "We don't have a lot of super big players, but we can definitely push the ball faster than other teams can play defense on us."

Parr said that she has seen the team make "incredible progress," especially in the five-on-five transition drill, which she observes from the sidelines.

She tore her ACL and medial meniscus last January during a game against Los Altos High and has been slowly recuperating by easing back into the sport and avoiding aggressive exercises involving physical contact.

Parr has learned about how she could improve her own individual skills by watching her teammates play and seeing practices and games from the perspective of a coach.

Due the team's demanding practice schedule — Monday-Saturday each week as well as practices through Thanksgiving and Winter Break — the team has improved rapidly.

"We move the ball really well and

everybody can play well with each other," Parr said. "We fit well together and we are definitely working on improving as individuals and using that to improve as a team."

This year, coach Danny Wallace uses a white board at every practice where he lists each day's objective and goals that the girls have to meet.

For instance, one day he might decide that the team has to box out 60 percent of the time.

If the girls don't meet that target, they have to run more at the end of practice.

"It's cool to see how he thinks we're improving," Parr said. "If we don't meet [the target], at the next practice we're going to be so much more determined. And if we did meet it, we would be a really happy team that didn't have to run."

The team hopes to continue improving on its press defense, offense and communication, and put their full effort into each game.

"I want to go each game, proud of what we did on the court and make sure we have no regrets," Bakke said. ♦

Due to printing deadlines, *The Falcon* was unable to cover the conference game at Leigh High School on Dec. 11.

GIRLS' SOCCER

## Roll Tide: Senior commits to University of Alabama

by Colleen Feng

During the game vs. Monta Vista on Dec. 6, senior center back Sasha Pickard dodged opponents and booted in a goal for the Falcons.

Through moments such as this on the soccer pitch, Pickard placed herself on the radar of many college coaches. Recently, Pickard accepted an athletic scholarship from the University of Alabama to play for its Division I soccer team.

Although she received offers from schools such as Loyola Marymount University, New York University, University of San Francisco and Brown University, she decided on University of Alabama because she said it suits many of her personal interests.

"It's a big school with a real college town feel, and I loved the campus and the intense school spirit," she said. "They also have great opportunities for their athletes and they're

a Division I program, which I felt was right for me because I love the game."

For Pickard, the journey into the world of soccer began when she was 3 years old and her energetic nature led her parents to put her into soccer classes. As she played, it became her passion.

"I love being a part of a team that you have to work for, as well as the challenge of facing great players, and being able to step onto the field and get a release from everything else going on in life," she said.

As she progressed through more competitive levels, Pickard started to go to soccer showcases. After participating in these events, she added onto her experience in the game by joining the girls' varsity soccer team during her freshman year, a key moment in her soccer career.

Pickard also trained with her coach Ben

Maxwell outside of school in his program, Player One.

Although the recruiting process resulted in Pickard getting offers from multiple Division I programs, she acknowledged that this entire process could not have succeeded without perseverance and perspiration.

For other players who are interested in playing college level soccer, Pickard thinks it is imperative for them to handle any rejections they get in a positive manner by working to make themselves a better player.

"You have to continue to be optimistic in the process despite failures or disinterest from coaches," she said.

Her efforts to reach out to colleges, combined with successful play at camps, drew interest from coaches from the University of Alabama. They came to watch her play dur-

ing soccer showcases in November. Pickard and the Alabama coaches later arranged for her to come visit the Tuscaloosa campus.

During the tour, Pickard was able to visit its facilities, as well as meet students and faculty. Shortly afterward, Pickard made the decision that this campus would be her home for the next four years.

"It's been my dream to play college soccer for as long as I can remember and I'm so happy it's finally happening and I get to spend the next four years playing soccer for a school I love!" Pickard said.

For now, she remains a key player on the varsity team as the Falcons progress through the preseason. The girls recently beat The Kings Academy 2-1 on Dec. 8. Previously, they won 4-0 against Monta Vista on Dec. 6, tied with Burlingame High 1-1 on Dec. 1 and fell short to Christopher High 1-0 on Nov. 27 for an overall non-conference record of 2-1-1. ♦



Pickard Varsity center back

BOYS' SOCCER

## Lack of strength and experience costly during early games

by JunLee & OliverYe

After a successful season last year capped off with a CCS semifinals appearance, the Falcons moved up a division to the tougher De Anza League. As of Dec. 11, they were struggling with the early part of their preseason schedule, going winless after their first four games.

In preseason games against Leigh on Nov. 28, they lost 7-0. Against Lynbrook on Dec. 3, they fell 6-1. Harker beat them 4-0 on Dec. 5, and Independence won 4-1 on Dec. 10.

After winning their division last year, in addition to their deep CCS run, the team lost 18 seniors to graduation including most of their starters in the midfield and front-line, as well as their star goalkeeper Neil Rao. Freshman Mason Manzagol has replaced Rao in the net.

Including Manzagol, the team is now comprised mostly of freshmen and sopho-

mores, with the vast majority of their players entering their first year of varsity competition. Because of this, not only do the Falcons lack the experience to compete at the varsity level immediately, but they also lack the size to battle against bigger teams.

"Our team is smaller, doesn't have as many older players, and isn't as experienced, which is why we've been struggling," senior captain and leading goal scorer Owen Keogh said.

Because of the vastly different makeup of the team this year, coach Chris Stott has had to adjust the training regimen and practice routines of the team.

"The coach decided to do the same drills this year even though it might be tough because there are a lot of underclassmen," Keogh said. "The sophomores and freshmen had to adapt to the higher playing speed and physicality of varsity games."

Part of the team's transition to helping young players mature on the field is the addition of weightlifting to their training. The

team is working out on even days to get stronger and faster to become more competitive with bigger, more athletic teams in the league.

### "The lack of practicing showed in our first couple games."



SOPHOMORE Nolan Chen

"We are starting to do lifting sessions now, and it's really going to help us because the only thing we are really lacking to compete right now is team bonding and strength," sophomore right wing Nolan Chen said.

Another contributing factor to the lack

of success the boys have had is a lack of practice time because of the November fire in Paradise.

The team wasn't able to start their practice until just about two days before their first preseason game as a result of the bad air quality.

"A lot of training got cancelled, and this lack of practicing really showed in our first couple games," Chen said.

However, the team is seeing signs of improvement as they play preseason games. "We didn't have the time to get to know each other or even practice together once as a team. But I think every game we get better in all aspects," Keogh said.

The boys' goal this season is to remain in the De Anza League. Upperclassmen believe that the team has a lot of potential to improve throughout the season.

"Because we have a much younger team, we have a lot of room for improvement, and we will be able to develop players and keep a core group for years to come," Keogh said. ♦

BOYS' BASKETBALL

## After early-season struggles, Falcons bounce back at Los Gatos Wildcat Shootout Tournament

by Justin Guo & Siva Sambasivam

After going winless in their first five scrimmages, the Falcons, led by head coach Patrick Judge and assistant coaches Ben Neves and Thomas Marlen, have gone 1-1 in their first two official preseason games, and won two of their three games at the Los Gatos Wildcat Shootout tournament en route to the Consolation Championship held from Dec. 5-7.

Senior starters Sehij Dhindsa and Kyle Yu, both co-captains, were both injured during the first few weeks of the season, causing the team to adjust to playing without two of their primary scorers. Dhindsa, a small forward, was sidelined for two weeks with an ankle sprain, and Yu, a shooting guard, suffered a facial laceration, which needed eight stitches, in the team's first preseason game against Branham.

Sophomore guard Cameron King filled in for Dhindsa and Yu in the starting lineup when each were out. When healthy, the Falcons are able to run out a five-guard lineup with sophomore Tyler Chu, senior captain Hanlin Sun and senior Patrick Li rounding out the squad.

Yu has been the leading scorer in the early going, averaging 11.5 points in the he has played. Since Yu is the offensive catalyst, the team felt his absence when he was sidelined.

Though they were still able to pull out a win in the game that he left early, the Falcons lost their second preseason game with Yu out, to the Gunn Titans, 43-41, and were barely able to get going offensively.

The team has also gotten solid scoring from the rest of its starters, with Sun, Li and Dhindsa all averaging upwards of 8 points a game.

Recent success

The team attributed their recent success to their ability to not get down on themselves, despite the early losses, which are bound to happen with a young team.

"In the early parts of the season, we had a lot of young guys play their first ever varsity scrimmages and returners play their first game in a while, but I think the most important thing we've done to bounce back is sticking with it, no matter what happens," said Hanlin Sun, the team's senior co-captain and point guard.

Dhindsa added that staying competitive in almost every game that they lost helped players stay positive.

"Our team responded really well. In all the games we lost we were right there until the very end," he said. "It was just a matter of closing out our fourth quarters and playing a full 32 minutes. We knew we had what it took, but we just weren't finishing the job."

The Falcons were able to take a huge step forward in this regard during the Los Gatos tournament. Though they lost their first game to the Leland Chargers, the eventual winners of the tournament, 65-58, the Fal-

cons were able to piece together two of their best games on the season, the first against the Gunn Titans and the second against the Sobrato Bulldogs.

After falling behind by 21 and only scoring 5 points in the entire first quarter vs. Gunn, the Falcons, led by their bench, were able to go on a 39-6 run in the second and third quarters on their way to a commanding 71-58 win — their first time topping the 70-point mark this season.

One of the main reasons for such a high scoring was their ability to fill the passing lanes on defense and get up the court to score in transition. The team totaled 14 steals and four more deflections on the night and played at a fast pace throughout. Players know that as a smaller team, they will need this defensive intensity to be successful.

In their following game against Branham, the team was able to continue their pressuring of opposing offenses, coming up with another 18 steals. But perhaps more importantly, they contained Branham's leading scorer to just two points during the entire game, blowing the Bulldogs out 71-47.

During the tournament the Falcons were also able to use a deep lineup to keep their players fresh throughout the game, while tiring out opposing teams. The Falcons went 10-12 men deep in every game they played, while most other teams only played six or seven players.

Looking forward

With these two wins, the Falcons earned the Consolation Championship, and although it wasn't exactly what the team had hoped for going in, there were plenty of positives to be found, especially in the final two games.

"Obviously we're not satisfied, as we wanted to win first place in the tournament," Sun said. "We didn't play our best against Leland, but I think we really picked up our energy and found our team identity in the following two games, allowing us to bounce back and take the consolation championship."

That identity was their ability to wreak havoc on defense, space the floor and stay rested with their deep rotation. In addition to the over 30 combined steals in those two games, the Falcons also knocked down 23 total 3-point shots.

As an undersized team, the Falcons have had trouble rebounding and defending inside, and their interior struggles will likely continue to throughout the rest of the season. Thus, Judge has made it an emphasis to play to their strengths, with many five-guard combinations on offense to space the floor, along with pressure looks on defensive, including numerous full-court pickup schemes, which the Falcons ran almost exclusively in their wins against Gunn and Branham.

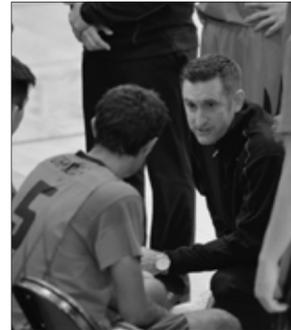
Another huge advantage that the Falcons have over most other teams in the area



Senior guard Patrick Li drives to the basket for a layup during the Falcons' first preseason game against the Branham Bulldogs. The team won 65-57 for their first season victory.



Senior Kyle Yu leads a fast break against the Leland Chargers at the Los Gatos Wildcat Shootout Tournament on Dec. 5.



Head coach Patrick Judge talks to the team about their rebounding and offensive movement during a timeout against Leland.

is their depth, playing 10-12 players on a nightly basis.

"Having a deep team is extremely valuable for us," Dhindsa said. "Our [bench players] provide us with that spark that some of the starters can't. Whenever everybody is getting involved and contributing, it makes winning that much more special."

In addition to the spark they provide, bench players have also been able to keep starters fresh throughout the game, and prepare for worst-case scenarios if one of the starters get injured. The team has prided it-

self on the mentality "Next man up."

Now that the team is fully healthy, they're turning to thinking about the league season and beyond. In fact, players believe that if they execute their game plan and play a full four quarters of "Saratoga basketball," they can be quite an opponent for any team.

"We've showed in spurts how good we really can be, but I don't think we've played a single complete game yet," Sun said. "For league and CCS it's all about us. We know we can win league and make it far in CCS, it's just up to us to go out and do it." ♦

WRESTLING

## Abe-led team sees rapid improvement with more members

by Mathew Luo & Phoebe Wang

With an increase in the number of wrestlers this year to 20 wrestlers, the team's primary focus has been on teaching basics and maintaining interest in the sport.

According to head coach Kirk Abe, who replaced last year's head coach Jose Daniel Gamez, 80 percent of the team is wrestling for the first time.

Since wrestling usually does not see the mainstream popularity that sports like football and basketball do, Abe said that many of these incoming wrestlers don't come primed with knowledge of the rules and as a result, have had to learn the sport from scratch.

For their first few matches in preseason tournaments in late November and early December, the primary focus during practices has been teaching the basics.

"My goal has been a fast track so that they know the sport, they know the rules [and] they know some moves so that they can actually wrestle," Abe said.

To boost the number of participants for future years, Abe has been holding open-mats.

These are several hour-long sessions where people interested in the sport can "wrestle [their] friends, swing, climb the ropes and learn techniques from older wrestlers," according to senior Victor Chen, a returning team member.

After participating in open-mats, which started in March, and practicing for over five weeks in the preseason, the JV wrestling team participated in the Tac tournament at Overfelt High School on Nov. 30.

Sophomore Hunter Hawley placed first, junior Nico Sabato second, sophomore Trevor Green third, sophomore Karran Vazirani third, junior Kole Tippetts third and sophomore Joshua Liu fourth, in their respective weight classes.

Chen credits with Abe's transition back to head coach with adding stability and inspiration, explaining the team's noticeable improvement from last season.

Chen is optimistic about the upcoming season not only because of the strong results

at the Tac tournament but also because the larger team can fill up additional weight classes at dual meets.

However, he says that the loss of key wrestlers such as alum Allie Little due to graduation and sophomore Linus Blom due to his transfer Los Gatos will make filling up a competitive varsity lineup difficult.

Abe said that this year is most definitely a year for rebuilding.

However, if wrestlers learn to love the sport, that will build the foundation for eventual success.

"My goal has been to get them to learn the sport and love the sport. When you have a passion for something, you put more effort into it," Abe said. ♦



REPORTERS TAKE A LOOK INTO SPORTS STUDENTS EXCEL IN OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

GRAPHIC BY ELAINE FAN

# Ping Pong

By Rahul Vadlakonda &amp; Oliver Ye

Freshman Henrik Zhang is a table tennis ace. In fact, he is ranked 16th in the nation in his division. His ranking is based on three separate national tournaments from 2017. Despite his success in the sport, Zhang's attitude toward the game did not start off positive. After his father initially coaxed him into playing table tennis several years ago, he began to gradually enjoy the sport the more he played.

But the road hasn't always been easy. In 2017 he failed to qualify for the U.S. national table tennis team. He also admits he he sometimes takes ribbing for play a sports that others do always see as a sport.

"Playing a sport that isn't as popular is hard," Zhang said. "Some people just start insulting. 'Oh, you play [table tennis]; that's not a sport,' but if you bypass that, then there's really no problem."

After Zhang ranked ninth place during the 2017 national tournament, missing the U.S. national table tennis team cutoff by a mere 5 points, he decided to channel more

of his energy into academics. Even so, he is still trying to earn a spot on the national team and is practicing 10 hours per week at the Swan Table Tennis Club in Sunnyvale. He is thankful for how many opportunities the center has provided for him.

**"When I play table tennis, it helps me escape my problems and it's my way out of teenage life."**

FRESHMAN Henrik Zhang

"We have the fifth best person under 15 in the world [at our center] right now, so there are a lot of people that I can practice with," he said.

He has also found that table tennis allows him to improve his studying habits. Since the method of gameplay in table tennis requires him to concentrate on the high-speed, crazily spinning ball for more than one hour at

PERSEVERING THROUGH SETBACKS AND DISCOURAGEMENT, NATIONALLY RANKED STUDENT CONTINUES SWINGING HIS PADDLE



Left: Freshman Henrik Zhang puts backspin on a shot at the National Tournament in July. Right: Zhang narrowly returns a serve in the Sacramento Summer Open in August.



Courtesy of HENRIK ZHANG

ability for deeper concentration.

While he is a player who is so close to making it to the national team, Zhang tries not to fixate on rankings and instead focus on more abstract benefits.

"When I play [table tennis], it helps me escape my problems at home; it's kind of my

way out of a teenage life," Zhang said.

With an inconsistent rate of monthly tournaments, Zhang does not know when his next chance to increase his national rank and will be. However, he hopes the work he puts in for upcoming tournaments will work only in his favor and finally secure his dream of making it to the national team. ♦

# Rowing

PHYSICAL DEMAND OF ROWING INSTILLS TOUGHNESS IN ROWERS AND TURNS TEAM INTO A FAMILY

By Howard Tang

Junior Je-woo Im was breathing hard, struggling to keep pace in his 2,000-meter race in the USRowing Southwest Junior Championships in Sacramento in early May. His hands were covered with calluses from four long years of gripping the rowing oars. His crew streamed along the water, desperate to row past the finish line before their long-time rivals, the NorCal Crew.

Because the school does not have a rowing team, students who wish to pursue the sport must travel to local rowing clubs located on large bodies of water suitable for these types of sports.

One popular option is the Los Gatos Rowing Club (LGRC), with its training facilities located at Lexington Reservoir.

The training schedule for rowers is intense. In addition to the time spent during commute, athletes like Im spend 2.5 hours from Mondays through Thursdays, 3.5 hours on Saturdays and 2 hours on Sundays, adding up to a total of 15.5 hours a week.

The season for rowing is also much longer than those of most school sports; it starts in September and ends in May or June, depending on the qualification status for the USRowing Youth's National Championship.

Although many students may become discouraged from pursuing rowing due to the \$4,400 per season cost and the pain and soreness that result from practices, most who persist say the sport is worth the cost.

For sophomore Emily Choi, who started began rowing last year and is part of the Redwood Scullers Club in Redwood City, the sport is something that brings together people of different backgrounds to work together toward a common goal.

"It takes a certain type of person to row," Choi said. "Not everyone can do it. Last year, half of my team quit because the time commitment and environment allowed for only the most self-disciplined, responsible and hard-working people to persist."

Choi admits she has had times when she wanted to quit, either because she had been performing badly in practices or because she wasn't improving as quickly as others

around her. She characterizes this conflict of perseverance as a game of mind over body, where athletes push their bodies to limits they never thought were possible.

Victories in this game of endurance, however, are not easily or consistently won. In her first year, she went through a series of unsuccessful practices where she blamed all the boat's problems on herself.

"I just had a really bad mindset, and I almost quit," Choi said. "I'm so glad that I actually didn't, because after three months of no improvement and plateau, I finally started improving again. Without those three months, which were probably the worst in my entire life, I would be way more mentally weak."

Like most racing sports, rowing requires athletes to strive toward speed goals that may at times seem impossible. But unlike many other racing sports, rowing requires perfectly synchronized perfection among team members. Some people call it the ultimate team sport: Every detail, aspect and person must be identical and flawless.

These team dynamics facilitate deep bonds among teammates and with coaches. The dozens of hours team members spend with each other further enhance their cooperation to a maximum.

"The team ends up being a small group of people extremely dedicated to rowing, so there is actually no team drama," Choi said. "All the typical whiny, gossipy, ungentle people end up quitting, so a group of amazing people is left. Your teammates end up becoming a second family."

Junior Dominick Richiuo, who rows on the same boat with Im, said the friendships resulting from the difficulty of rowing are tight. Although the two teammates do not see each other much at school, they occasionally exchange greetings and comments about their shared pain.

The agony of rowing, whether it be waking up early in the morning, fatigue in the middle of a race or the torment of persisting in a 2,000-meter erg test, has earned the sport a respect among athletes from other sports. It is also one of the most recruited sports for colleges.



All photos Courtesy of DOMINICK RICHIUSO

Juniors Dominick Richiuo (third from front) and JeWoo Im (back-most rower) of the Los Gatos Rowing Club row at the head of the Charles River as part of a competition in Boston.

According to Scholarship Stats, around 10 percent of male rowers and 18 percent of female rowers in high school continue to compete at the college level. According to Im, all the Ivy League schools, as well as Stanford and UC Berkeley, are competitive in rowing, making the sport potentially rewarding, despite the pain and hard work

rowers must persevere through to succeed.

"Every single piece on the rowing machine gives me pain, and when it starts hitting me, I really want to quit," Im said. "But when I see my teammates pushing as hard as me and suffering as much for the team, when the boat is relying on me to make the boat go faster, I just can't quit." ♦

# Go Karting

INSPIRED BY A1 RACING, SENIOR PURSUES PASSION IN GO-KARTING DESPITE HEAVY FINANCIAL COSTS AND TIME COMMITMENT

By Justin Guo &amp; Michael Wong

Near the start of high school, senior Eric Huang was drawn to go-kart racing after watching a Formula 1 race on TV. To feel the thrill of what it's like to race, he started watching YouTube videos. Before long, he was racing.

And he was good at it. Recently, he placed fifth out of 30 competitors at the KPX Karting Championship, a Northern California tournament.

According to Huang, the biggest difference between recreational go-karting and competitive go-karting is that most recreational races are hosted indoors while competitive races occur outdoors.

These outside go-karts are designed differently from recreational ones, since they're tailored to legitimate racing conditions and standards. In addition, while indoor tracks have smooth surfaces, outdoor tracks have rough asphalt, making actual racing harder and much more skill intensive.

"Instead of sliding around like an indoor kart," Huang said, "you can turn corners with grip and generate around two g-forces."

Outdoor go-karts also require particular safety features absent in their indoor counterparts.

"Outdoor karts don't have seat belts and are designed like a motorcycle — you are meant to be thrown from the kart in case of a large collision," Huang said.

In addition, competitive racers need to buy their own karts, which usually cost around \$4,500 depending on the specifications.

Huang said racers need their own karts since being able to customize the vehicle is

key to a racer's success.

"Since you aren't renting the karts, you can change all the aspects of the kart, like tire pressures or ride height," Huang said.

Furthermore, necessary safety equipment such as helmets, suits, shoes and gloves can cost upwards of \$1,000.

In addition to the cost of equipment, racers need to pay another fee in order to enter practice tracks, which costs around \$30 per day.

Nor is the go-karting itself easy. With the karts averaging 60-70 miles per hour, it requires many more techniques than just steering and flooring the gas pedal. One of the first skills Huang refined was applying brakes.

"When you first start out, braking is really hard because there's only one brake disc on each rear, so it's really easy to lock the rear wheels and crash," he said. "You have to learn to control your braking and turning relatively fast."

Additionally, racers must have strong arms and a strong core to develop the stamina required for races, because the long and tiring nature of racing wears down drivers.

When there are upcoming races, Huang tries to practice once a week, but the raceway at Sonoma where he practices is far and expensive.

He has found that fitting in practices with a busy school and extracurricular schedule is tough. While most sports have fixed schedules, go-karting has much more flexibility, since the time Huang dedicates for the sport entirely depends on him. Yet this flexibility is a double-edged sword; since racers control their practice times, their placing in tournaments may suffer if they sacrifice practice for other commitments.



Courtesy of ERIC HUANG

Huang drives into the third turn at the Monterey Bay Karters tournament on July 22.

Because Huang is focusing more on school and band during first semester, his practices are limited. However, he hopes to pick the sport back up during second semester, when his schedule will be less hectic.

When Huang does participate in competitions, he mainly goes to ones organized by Superkarts! USA (SKUSA), a premier organization with five regional karting series situated in the Western half of the country.

With Saturdays as practices and Sundays as match days, competitions are usually weekend excursions for Huang. His races consist of three parts — an initial qualifying round, two heats to determine positioning and then the main event which allocates the

majority of the competition's points.

Huang usually attends around 10 races each year, and he initially planned on competing in one of the biggest and most prestigious races hosted by SKUSA known as SuperNationals 22, in November to continue this routine. However, with the price tag coming to upwards of \$10,000, he canceled this plan.

Despite the costs in both time and money, Huang finds go-karting to be one of the most exhilarating sports to participate in, and hopes to continue it as a hobby.

"Karting is pretty unique," Huang said. "It's so much fun, and in what other sport do you get to go so fast?" ♦

# Fencing

STUDENT ATHLETES PARRY THE STRUGGLE OF BALANCING DEMANDING SPORT WITH SCHOOL, LEARN LIFE LESSONS

By Aaria Thomas

When you visit a fencing club, perhaps the first thing you notice is the noise: the sounds of metal on metal as blades cross and the thud of feet hitting the floor as kids advance and retreat up and down their strip, trying to score on their opponent. They push themselves to sit lower, move their feet faster and try new ways to hit their target.

The sport of fencing consists of three styles: foil, epee and sabre. Each style has a different weapon and target to score on.

The school has about a half dozen competitive fencers, including me. Fencers in each style dedicate hours of their time and energy into improving their skill and technique. Our school nights are packed with practices, and our weekends consumed with competitions in far-flung places.

Senior Ria Jobalia, who fences epee at a national level, said her practices take up a large chunk of time each day, and the hours add up as the week progresses. Jobalia got into fencing as a child after a grass allergy prompted her to find an indoor sport. She thought the swords used were cool and decided to try it.

Jobalia said she now practices four days weekly at Academy of Fencing Masters in Sunnyvale. Three of her practices are two hours long while the third is three hours long. In total, Jobalia spends approximately 15 hours a week fencing.

Training consists of a variety of activities that focus on improving aspects of a fencer's performance. Practices start with a warm-up of running and stretching as well as conditioning. Most of her time is spent improving footwork, tactics and techniques in drills and practice bouts. The drills done in practice target certain areas — mental or physical — that fencers struggle with.

"The hardest part about fencing as a sport for me has always been the mental side of it," Jobalia said. "Changing strategies when my opponent figures out what I'm doing, staying focused throughout a whole day

of competition, not letting one bad bout get to me."

Additionally, one of the biggest hardships Jobalia and other fencers face is time management; the long practices can make it difficult for many students to keep up with their academics. Sophomore foil fencer Jason Chin said he learned that managing his time well was essential to completing the work he needed to get done.

"I've learned that I can't really goof off as much as I wanted to," Chin said. "There's no time for me to do other stuff."

To ensure that they get everything done, fencers create strict schedules. For Jobalia, it is imperative for her to start homework as soon as she gets home from school. Chin, who practices at the Massialas Foundation in San Francisco four days a week, must complete his schoolwork while waiting for his practice to start.

Many fencers also compete in local or out-of-state tournaments. Jobalia and Chin both compete about twice a month, often traveling out of state. Fencing competitions can sometimes last up to six or seven hours. According to Chin, there are many of people around, as well as noise and other distractions, which can make it hard to focus school work and a little stressful. Even so, Chin finds that the fun of competing outweighs the stress of always being so pressed for time.

"The best thing about fencing to me is the number of friends you make," Chin said. "I've traveled to many different countries for tournaments and I've made a lot of connections."

In addition to creating relationships, fencers learn skills that can be applied to other aspects of their lives.

"The most important skill I've developed at fencing is probably my ability to stay calm no matter what," Jobalia said. "When I'm losing a bout, I know I have to stay calm because if I get nervous and jittery, I'll lose my focus and lose. This helps me a lot on a more regular basis because before a big test or



Courtesy of JASON CHIN

Top: Sophomore Jason Chin lunges toward his opponent during the North American Cup. Bottom left: Chin talks to his coach during a break between rounds. Bottom right: Chin avoids a shot from an opponent during a national tournament in Kansas City.

anything major, I can always keep my calm and go through anything pretty relaxed."

However, the steep time commitment required for fencing remains a consistent obstacle. As competitions further impede on time spent on homework and class time, fencers use the plane rides to and from tournaments to complete assignments.

While some students are ultimately able to balance fencing and schoolwork, it can be more difficult for others. Junior Derek Shay, who once fenced four days a week and competed every two weeks, had to stop due to the toll it was taking on his academics.

"It's honestly a big strain on homework

and school so that's why I stopped a year ago," Shay said. "It often interferes with my work and my grades were slowly dropping."

Those who continue to fence inevitably tend to find it difficult to balance with studying. Jobalia said that during AP season of her junior year it became difficult, leading her to miss several weeks of practice, since there was "too much going on at once."

Despite the struggles they face, fencers still find the sport worth the dedication.

"I like how when I fence, my senses and adrenaline take over, and all that matters is beating the person in front of me," Chin said. ♦

>> snapshots



FALCON // KAYLENE MORRISON



TALISMAN // DANIEL NING



FALCON // HOWARD TANG



Courtesy of NOW AND FOREVER STUDIOS

Sophomore Akshar Sarvesh solos for Saratoga Idol in the McAfee on Nov. 27.

Saratoga Strings perform their winter concert in the McAfee Center on Dec. 6.

Junior Bryan Hasegawa shoots a ball in the basketball arcade game during Winter Formal on Dec. 1 while junior Brian Wu prepares for his next shot.

Juniors Andrew Lee and Brian Fok rehearse their "Hamlet" scene with their group in the quad on Dec. 11.

# My red-day binder fell off the roof of my car on Saratoga Sunnyvale Road and you probably saw it

patele-tubbies

Anishi Patel



It was Friday, Nov. 16, and we were in the middle of the Unfortunate Smoke Week.

I'm not a very superstitious person, but something happened during fifth-period calculus that day that had me lying in bed thinking for the next couple nights.

We were learning about optimization and I was thoroughly confused. So, naturally, I zoned out and began thinking up creative get-out-of-class scenarios. Perhaps it was the Camp Fire situation or a smoke inhalation-induced thought, but one of the first scenarios that floated into my head was, "What would I do if a tiny fire popped up next to me?"

This got me thinking about what I'd sacrifice to extinguish this fire. Not my backpack, surely, because it was a new Herschel and I'd rather put out the hypothetical fire with my hands than use the backpack. Maybe my foot, but who was I kidding? My legs weren't long enough to reach the spot I had chosen for my fire. That left my big, yellow red-day binder. It

would have to go.

Little did I know... I walked out of math that day holding my binder — one downside to Herschels is that they are a little small. To get my keys out of my backpack, I decided to put the binder on the roof.

Now, I'm not the best driver, but until that point I could safely say I'd never done anything downright stupid.

Besides, people leave stuff on their cars and accidentally drive away all the time — phones on the roof, drinks on the hood — no big deal, right?

Wrong.

This was my red day binder. Red days are my hard days, meaning the entirety of my junior year academic life was IN THAT BINDER.

I drove away with junior Connie Liang sitting in the passenger seat, neither of us realizing the dark spot clearly visible on the soft-top canvas roof of my car was a binder.

We heard the first muffled scratch as we exited the school parking lot. Something was definitely on the roof. I thought a squirrel had jumped onto the car from the trees near the McAfee. Connie later told me she had thought the sound was an injured bird. We simply exchanged a look and drove on, possible animals stranded on the roof be damned.

From Herriman we turned onto Sara-

toga Sunnyvale, and I'll admit, my turn wasn't as slow as it should have been.

The spot on the roof disappeared with a less-muffled scratch and reappeared as a flying yellow binder in the driver's side window.

After I screamed, I made a U-turn that would have failed me my driver's test, parked the car and ran out to the intersection with Connie, the binder had been run over multiple times and papers were strewn across the road.

Half a semester's worth of calculus notes?

Painstakingly completed biology active readings?

Every English assignment to date? Roadkill.

And the binder itself ... well, let's just say I never knew binder rings could bend like that.

Shoutout to the two people who took mercy on a poor kid that day: the lady who parked her car in the middle of the street to help us collect papers and junior Charlie Wu, who was walking home and kindly stopped to join us in our real-life version of "Crosby Roads."

After scurrying around on the street between traffic for about 10 minutes, Connie and I carried our armfuls of paper back to my car. We then realized we'd spent the entire time breathing in the smoky air.

Connie, IOU a pair of less-damaged lungs.

That weekend, I used half a Hi-Polymer eraser removing tire marks from my papers, and on the Monday school started again, I began to make the rounds. I couldn't wait to see how my teachers would react: Did I beat their worst "My dog ate my homework" stories?

First was Mrs. Lenz's AP Biology class, where she attempted to hold back laughter while helping me find new copies of my lost material.

In English, Mrs. Keys made sure everything I needed was accessible on Canvas. When I told her the story, a junior sitting next to Mrs. Keys' desk overheard and apologized for possibly having run over my papers on Friday.

To the dozens of cars that must have driven over my binder: I forgive you! Sorry I couldn't remember to get all my stuff inside the car before driving off.

The last stop was math, but I decided to wait and turn in a worksheet that had been run over: It was done, after all. I left a sticky note explaining what had happened and added a smiley face for good measure. The next class, I got my homework back with full credit and without a single comment. Mrs. Mantle hadn't batted an eyelash, and to this day, I wonder what other homework horrors she has seen. ♦

ISSUE

Highlights

"Why spend nine hours over the course of a month poring over the California Drivers Handbook for the drivers education test if you can cram the facts into your brain the night before?"



— reporters Oliver Ye and Samantha Yee on cramming (pg. 10)

Saratoga alumna Carrie Steinseifer won

3

Olympic golds in 1984 (pg. 12)

Around

270

gifts were donated to the Family Giving Tree (pg. 2)

GRAPHIC BY HOWARD TANG

## On the twelve days before finals

MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME:

- 12 Advice to study early:** What do you mean, finals are next week?
- 11 Hope:** If I get a 100 on the final, I'll have an 89.49%. And teachers round up, right?
- 10 Motivation to finish the semester:** Should I even wake up today? At least let me sleep a little more. Those five extra minutes in bed will make a difference.
- 9 An efficient working environment:** Four days without Wi-Fi... I finally went outside. JK, I turned on data 5 minutes in.
- 8 Food:** It's 10:30 p.m. but Teaspoon is still open till 11 p.m. Down for a boba run?
- 7 Noise-canceling headphones:** Need light music to block out the ever-present distracti- who just texted me?
- 6 Legible notes to study with:** I don't know where my notes went. Also on an unrelated note (pun intended), I can't read my own handwriting.
- 5 Answer keys to endless study guides:** Well, this is unfortunate. I can't find the answers in the notes you just gave me.
- 4 Emotional support after throwing my math textbook across the room:** Yeah, I know I'll be OK. I've already accepted how OK I am. Mediocrity for life. Also, I need your textbook. Please? :)
- 3 A box of Kleenex to wipe my tears:** Tears of joy after studying, of course.
- 2 Reminders to sleep:** What? It's only 1 a.m. I still have seven hours of studying left.
- 1 Nothing:** It's not like anything will save my grades anymore. thank u, next [semester].

>> Justin Guo and Michael Wong