

Having heard about the poverty, war and disasters suffered by Nepal, freshman Selina Chen stepped off the airplane during winter break expecting a city torn apart; instead, she fell in love with this colorful place full of insights for me to discover.

The Nepalese flag uses the blue, which represents peace, as a border surrounding the red, which represents aggression. Selina's interpretation is that Nepal wants to make peace when possible, as the greatest contributor to the UN Police, yet it is brave if war comes.

However, human rights issues prevail. The literacy rate and secondary school enrollment rate are low; therefore, Selina and her friends dedicated

their time to paint Mahalaxmi Secondary School.

Although living an underprivileged life, Nepalese people are proud of who they are. Selina came across an old man selling toys on the streets. She asked him the price without intending to buy it, but he persistently followed her. Selina felt empathy for this man and wanted to be kind so she gave him 200 rupees for the 150 rupees he charged. She expected him to be grateful and leave; instead, he returned with others toys and kept bugging her. Later, she realized her mistake: the man saw himself as a vendor seizing an opportunity, not someone living on others' pity. Selina realized she should respect his pride.



Exploring one of the least developed nations

Exploring one of the least developed nations

This thinking is significantly different from that of the two cultures Chen has previously lived in. In the United States, everyone is encouraged to be a leader. This results in unsolvable conflicts, an example being Democrats versus Republicans. Both aim to be the leader, neither willing to follow. Guess what? Nothing gets done. The government shuts down for 35 days, and Trump is still trying to fund the wall.

On the other hand, China forces everyone to be followers of the communist party. This results in a dictatorship where ideas are censored and voices are stifled. While the government might be more efficient, the people are not free.

Only in Nepal do people under-

stand that some must be willing to follow the leaders, creating a democratic communism. It is true that Nepal is a third world country, but its condition is a result of its geography. This leader-follower statement holds true due to the efficiency the Nepalese government has shown. Nepal's civil war ended in 2006. It quickly pulled itself out of bloodshed and established a stable government.

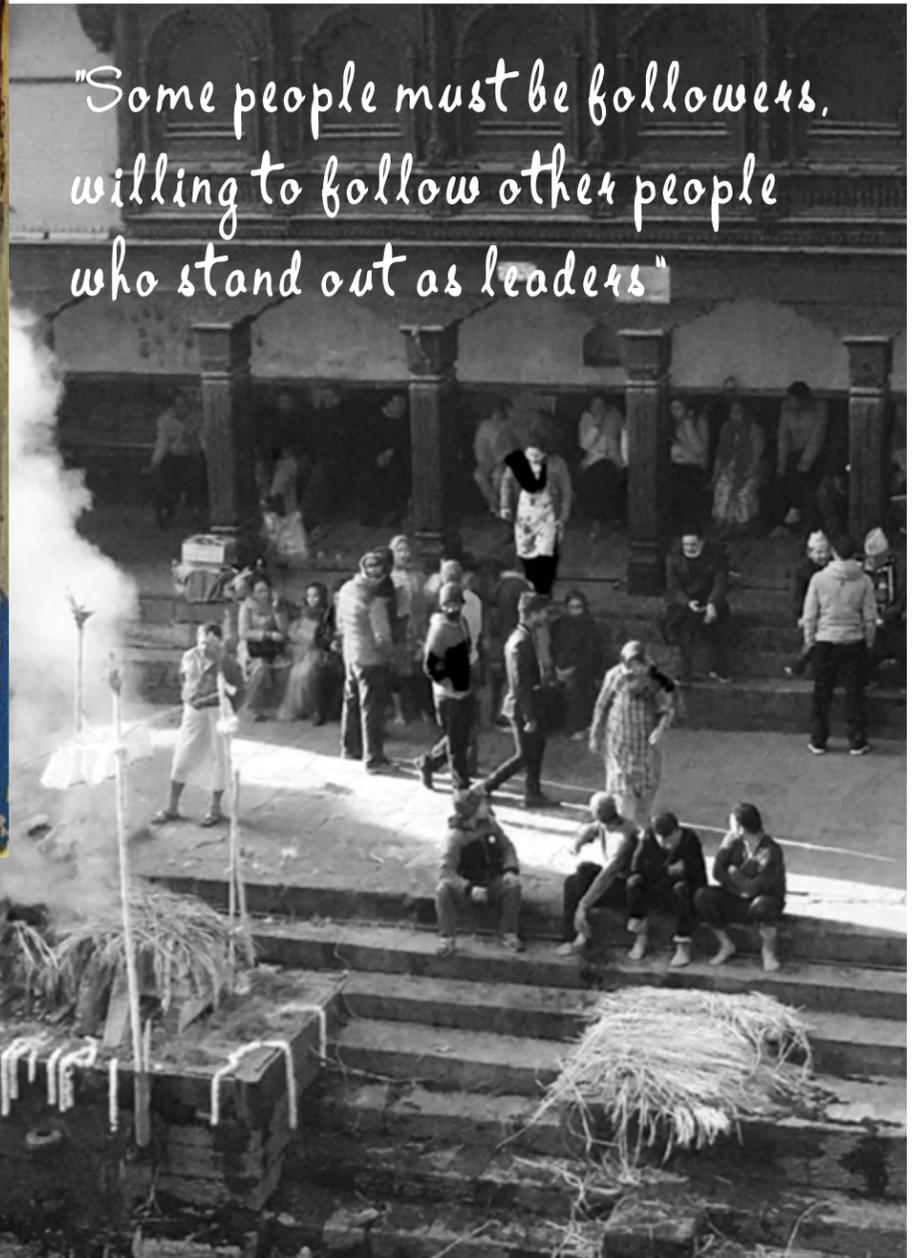
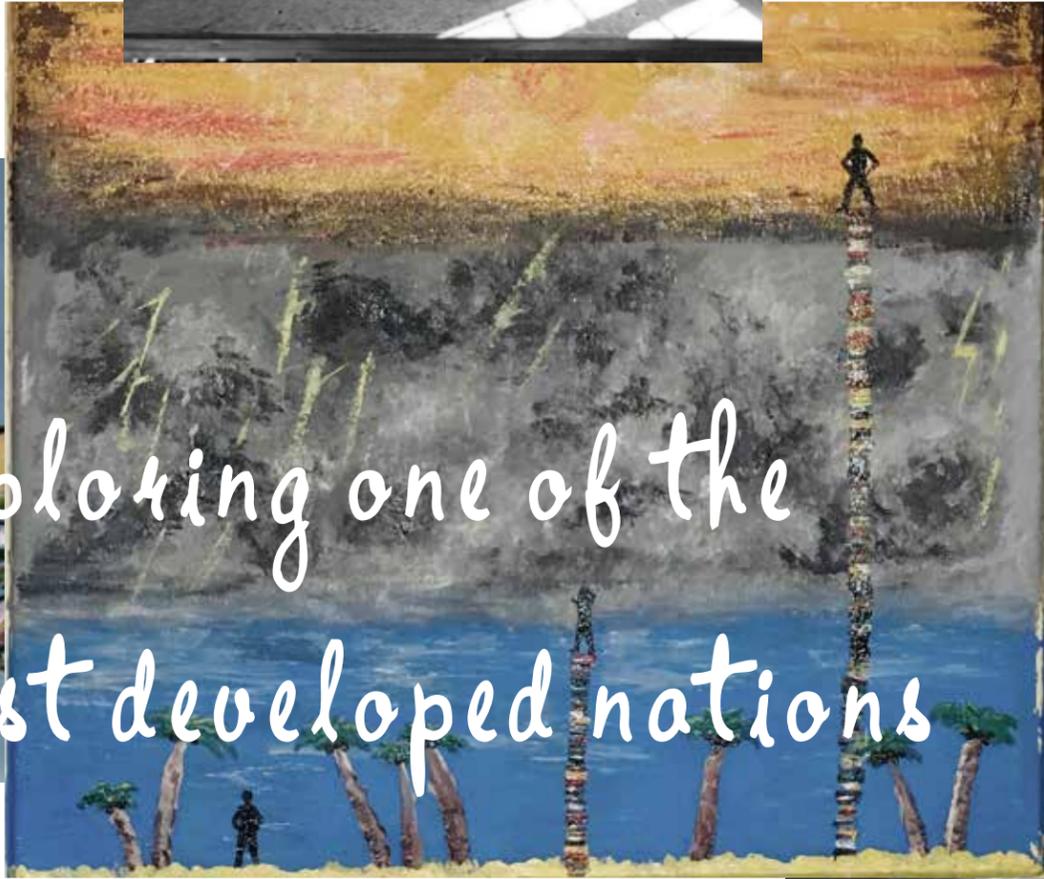
As the airplane descended into San Francisco Airport, Chen looked out the window to see the brilliant hues the sun had painted on the flaming clouds, just like the mural.

Coming back from Nepal, she have gained understanding to see one more layer of the world.

—Vicky Bai

"Some people must be followers, willing to follow other people who stand out as leaders"

Exploring one of the least developed nations



For two days Selina and her friends toiled to paint solid colors, but the true fun was when they painted murals.

They wanted their murals to be inspirational for the students of the secondary school. The biggest mural portrayed a complex scene. A person standing on the ground is gazing onto a beach, ignorant of the rest of the world. A second person is standing on a stack of books, reaching a height where he looks into a chaotic lightning storm. The third person is standing on a higher stack of books, and he is able to see

into a splendid sunrise, reaching a state where he has enough knowledge to understand the true world. They wanted the students to know that studying is rigorous, but only so one can succeed.

On the fourth day, a Nepali teacher guided them in an activity where two people must draw a star with one pencil. Chen felt this was pointless (pun intended). However, the teacher's explanation made her think.

He said some people must be followers, willing to follow other people who stand out as leaders.

TOP: Freshman Selina Chen paints the walls at Mahalaxmi Secondary School in Nepal. **CENTER:** One of the vibrant murals that Selina and her friends dedicated their time to painting. **LEFT:** Colorful decorations hang around the streets of Nepal. **RIGHT:** At the cremation site of Monkey Temple, people gather to burn the corpses of Hindu people.

switching strings

switching strings

Shivali practices her piece before she goes to perform for Principal Robinson's surprise retirement party on May 17.

Violins come in 9 different sizes which are 4/4, 3/4, 1/2, 1/4, 1/8, 1/10, 1/16, 1/32, from largest to smallest. They can be about 13 to 21 inches long, and older kids and adults use 21 inches.

On the other hand, there are only 4 sizes, 1/4, 1/2, 3/4, and 4/4, for the bass. The height of the bass can range from about 61 to 75 inches long, which is 5 times bigger than the violin.

The bass is the bigger version of the violin, but it is low pitched, while the violin is high pitched. When playing the bass, you stand upright versus sitting down while playing the violin.

The differences of these two instruments is a lot, so switching from one to another, can be difficult. Shivali Kattumadam has been playing the violin for nine years and as she entered high school, she wanted a change. She decided to switch to the bass.

Shivali had a lot of factors in choosing the bass over the violin. Her passion in playing the violin for nine years was fading and she was always curious in the bass. She also wanted to play multiple instruments.

"I really think that to devote your time to learning or doing anything, whether it is a sport or an instrument, you need to have a passion and an interest in it," Shivali said. "I didn't really enjoy playing the violin anymore."

The transition between changing from the violin to bass wasn't easy for Shivali. "Passion and interest is just the first step," she said.

Shivali had to put a lot of work and time in to playing the bass. Since she really wanted to, she was committed to spending time to practice everyday and taking private lessons, which she still does.

Her passion for the bass really motivated her to push herself to be as good as the students who have been playing for years.

Though the transition between switching instruments was a little hard for Shivali, she does not think it is much harder to play the bass than the violin. This is because there are so many similarities between the two instruments and she has had some prior experience with the bass.

"It takes a lot more strength to play the bass, while playing the violin takes more precision," Shivali said. "The bass music is definitely easier

because it's mostly just background support and providing a beat. The violin makes the melody of the song, which is harder to play."

Shivali also had several role models and teachers along the way. Mr. Ford and Mr. Boitz are the conductors of the Saratoga High orchestras and they were super supportive and encouraging for her.

"... especially when I was scared to play during class, Mr. Ford and Mr. Boitz were really kind to me," Shivali said. "They guided me through this whole process and I honestly wouldn't be at the level I'm at if it wasn't for them."

All freshman are in the freshman orchestra, so Shivali plays for that ensemble. There are 4 ensembles which are the Freshman Orchestra (FO), the Philharmonic Orchestra (PO), the String Orchestra (SO), and the Saratoga Strings (SS).

Both teachers helped Shivali audition for higher orchestras though she wasn't at that level. But "they saw that [she] had potential." So next year, Shivali will be able to join the Strings Orchestra.

She is really grateful for their help through this whole change. She also has a private bass teacher who is super supportive of her and wants her to succeed, just like Mr. Ford and Mr. Boitz.

Shivali is so thankful that she continued orchestra for all this time. Before, when she was in elementary school, she was an unmotivated student, but now orchestra is one of her favorite classes. She loves the environment of the class and the supportive teachers she has.

"The music is challenging, but that's what is fun about it," Shivali said. Having all of her close friends in the class also makes the class a fun and nice place to be.

"I really love music and I'm so happy I get to continue making it with an instrument that I love," Shivali said.

— Mira Bugata

"I really love music and I'm so happy I get to continue making it with an instrument that I love."

from rags to riches

When sophomore Henry Weng decided that he wanted to pursue a career in business, he immediately realized the lack of available resources accessible to him at school. Frustrated, Henry decided to take matters into his own hands and created the economics club.

According to Henry, the only business-related courses offered when the club was founded were AP Gov and economics, both of which are currently only accessible to seniors. When he founded the club early in the 2018-2019 school year, Henry sought to “create an environment that gave students an opportunity to pursue economics, regardless of age.”

Henry soon realized that maintaining a club was no easy feat. “We definitely had a lot of trouble keeping the club going at the beginning of the year,” Henry said. According to George Bian, vice president of the economics club, meetings were often canceled due to the lack of attendance, and officers had trouble learning how club procedures worked.

Despite these obstacles, the club finally managed to get on track in the middle of the first semester. Officers began enforcing a mandatory attendance policy for members of Team A and Team B, the two most experienced teams.

“We fixed a lot of problems during the first semester,” Henry said. “The club as a whole learned a lot about different aspects of club leadership and how to run a club.”

“By the end of the year, we had organized a ‘field trip’ to the San Francisco Federal Reserve,” Henry said. He described the trip as “a great success.”

Members of the economics club went to San Francisco to participate in the National Economics Challenge (NEC) at the state level, according to Henry.

“I was really surprised to find that not one, but two Saratoga teams had qualified for states,” he said. “I was really

proud of everyone.”

“The competition was really intense,” Henry said. Competitors tested in four categories at the competition: microeconomics, macroeconomics, current events, and quiz bowl.

“[We] had a great time overall,” Weng said. “The contest was challenging and fun, especially the quiz bowl, which tested how fast we could come up with the right answer.” He said that he also enjoyed the free food, which he described as “Michelin-star quality.”

At the competition, members of the A-team placed 4th while members of the B-team placed 6th. “We did pretty well,” said Henry, “but I think we could’ve done better.” Overall, he said that he was pleased with how well the club as a whole had improved throughout the year.

“At the beginning of the year, most members of the club had never studied economics in their life,” Henry said, “[but] by the end of the year, two of our teams managed to qualify for states!”

Henry said that the club has helped him personally develop, as well. “It’s helped me learn how to be a leader,” he said, “and I feel that I’m creating a community of like-minded individuals who all want to pursue economics.”

He still thinks that the club can further improve in certain areas. According to Henry, the club will actively try to increase transparency with club members as well as host more activities outside of school in the coming year.

Overall, Henry and George believe that the club has been a great success.

“I think that I’ve accomplished my goal of creating a place where people are free to pursue economics,” Henry said, “and I’m excited to see how the club will continue to change in the future.” ♦

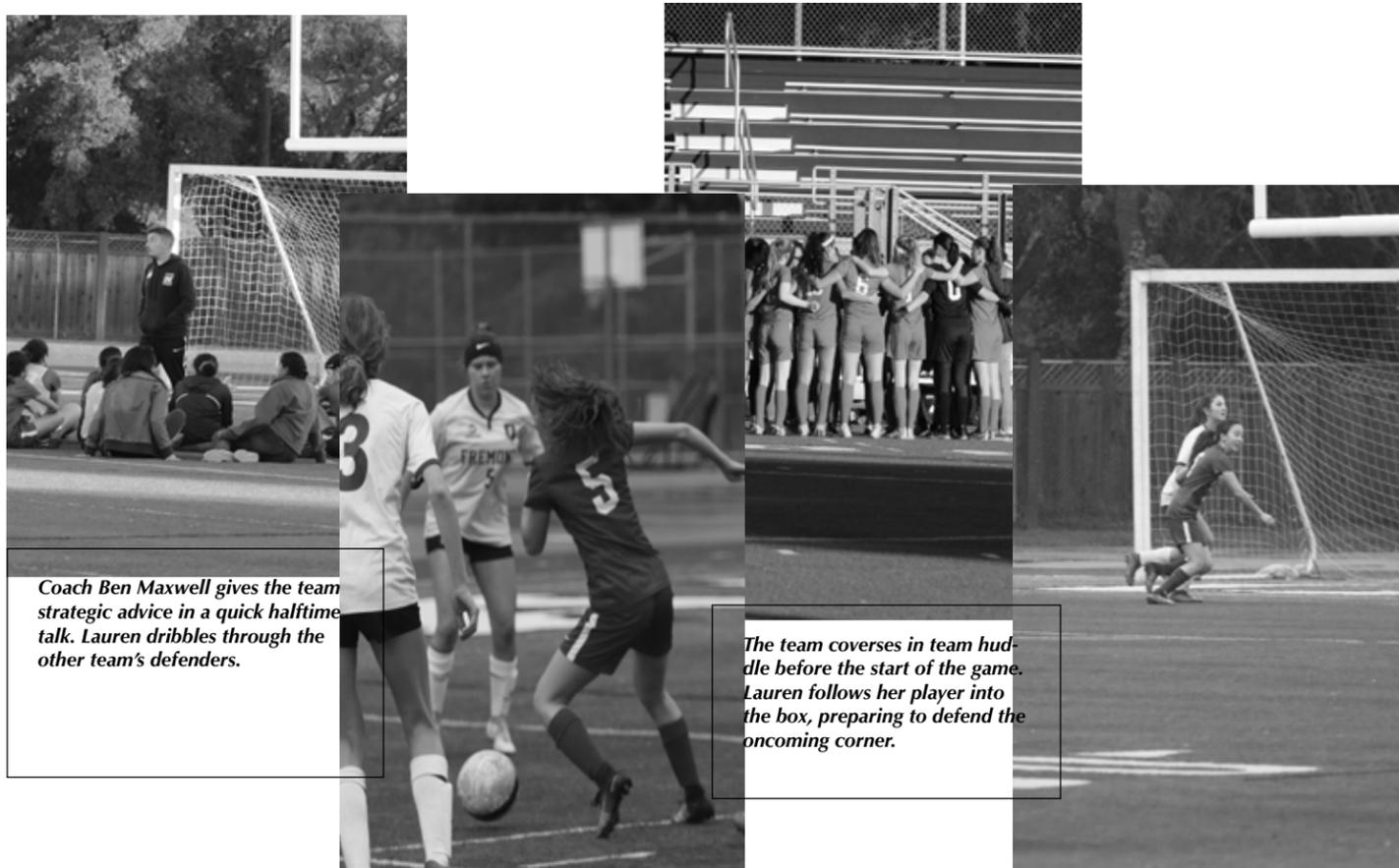
—Andy Chen



Top: Members of the Economics Club pose in front of the Monetary Policy Monument at the San Francisco Federal Bank.
Right: Team A buzzes in to answer a question at the NEC.



Top: Members of Team B work together during the current events round of the NEC.
Right: Henry Weng, the Team A representative, stands up to answer a question during the NEC.



Coach Ben Maxwell gives the team strategic advice in a quick halftime talk. Lauren dribbles through the other team's defenders.

The team covers in team huddle before the start of the game. Lauren follows her player into the box, preparing to defend the oncoming corner.



Freshman Lauren Yarrington breaks away from her defender and countere-attacks the opposing team's defense.

10 freshman soccer player

taking shots; scoring goals
 taking shots; scoring goals

Lauren Yarrington stepped onto the soccer field and started her first varsity soccer game of the season in late December.

Lauren was one of only three freshman to make the Saratoga High girls varsity soccer team and approached the team with insecurity and apprehension.

"It was really intimidating because everyone was bigger and really good," she said.

Although Lauren was already acquainted with the varsity coach Ben Maxwell from outside soccer trainings, she didn't feel it gave her any advantage in tryouts.

Lauren said tryouts were really scary because coaches would speak with each other and a player wouldn't know if they were talking about them. She also said it was unnerving because everyone was trying their hardest and she would count all her little mistakes.

When she received news she made the team she was in genuine shock.

"I never expected to make varsity, especially as a Freshman, so everything was intimidating," Lauren said.

She was really nervous for the first game when all the other girls knew each other and

she was unsure of the team dynamic.

During the first team meeting Coach Ben announced the game plan and Lauren found out she was starting. To start a soccer game means a player is typically one of the better ones on the team. Lauren starting in the midfield position, which is one of the most difficult positions in soccer, just fed further into her anxiety.

When she began the game all she remembers was being unsure of what to do. She said she ended up just running around in circles and hoped she was playing fine.

After the first game, Lauren said the games got easier because she got to know her fellow players and how to adjust to high school play.

Lauren said their coach Ben would require the team to go out and have team bonding. She thinks going to the mall and breakfast together helped the team to become friends rather than just teammates.

"The upperclassmen were really nice," Lauren said. "They treated the Freshman as equals and I think that's what really set us apart from other teams."

Lauren said one very inspirational upperclassman was centerback and team captain Sa-

sha Pickard. "Sasha is amazing. She's aggressive and overall a really good player. She made all the players feel like their position on the team mattered and that helped us win games."

Lauren also learned to become a more forward player in high school. She said club is definitely more technical, while high school is a lot more physical and girls are more passionate and therefore more aggressive.

"At first I used to shy away and not really play physical," Lauren said, "but after getting pushed down a bunch of times I got really frustrated."

Lauren adjusted to playing girls that were both taller and heavier than her. "My friend and I, who was also on varsity, would have a joke," she said. "Who would get pushed down more times during the game? It was usually me."

She also drew inspiration from her fellow teammates like Sasha and that would motivate her to hold her ground and push through.

Lauren said she really enjoyed high school soccer and looks forward to playing next year. "I can't wait," she said. "Hopefully we'll get some new Freshman so I won't be smallest on the team anymore."

—Emma Foley

finding true passion

A Once known for his math and baseball abilities, George Bian stepped out onto the football field in September 2016 as a freshman, unaware that he would later be named one of Saratoga High's all-time top football players.

As a middle schooler, George was a core member of the Redwood Math Club, earning near-perfect scores on numerous national-level high school math competitions. Additionally, he was renowned in the Saratoga Little League as one of the best batters in the area.

However, George later decided that "math was getting boring"; he only did it because his mom wanted him to. For the same reason, he switched from baseball to football, which he considered more fun.

Lucky for him, these interests didn't just come out of nowhere, so he wasn't starting completely anew. Ever since he was in elementary school, George always had an interest in business, derived from his "trading of Pokémon cards at a young age." He also began to develop an interest in football earlier on in middle school P.E.

However, George's participation in Leadership began only in his freshman year, when he realized all that the community had done for him throughout his elementary and middle school years.

He decided that he would "give back" by participating in ASB, allowing fellow classmates to receive the opportunities that he had taken for granted earlier on.

While people interested in math and leadership typically have very different backgrounds and cliques, George felt that he really didn't change all too much. "I don't think I went through a 'drastic change,' and I don't think most people go through 'drastic changes,'" George said.

While his friend group has changed over the years, George felt that it's unfair to assume that people no longer interact with those they had once been friends with. George is still friendly to the people he was in the past, but he now gravitates more towards people who share his current interests.

"It's a natural process that comes with growth," he said.

However, he noted a rare exception to his general rule about 'drastic changes': future Saratoga Falcon Editor-in-Chief Jeffrey Xu, who only began participating in school-wide events in high school, along with making a major shift from math to physics and chemistry.

"I have the utmost respect for that guy because he really tries to put himself out into the world," George said. "I can tell that he participates in a wide breadth of activities because he wants to live life to the fullest."

Jeffrey felt that high school was a time for him to grow up and exit the shell he had hidden in throughout elementary and middle school. High school was his 'prime time,' as he began to discover his strengths and further develop them.

"High school is a more rewarding experience than middle school because I feel that I am more active socially, physically, and intellectually," Jeffrey said.

George affirmed Jeffrey's statement, also emphasizing that their transitions, rather than being major shifts in personality, were simply a phase of "growing up and determining personal identity."

Despite having a rather late start, George grew to be talented in everything he did, whether it be breaking league football records or being one of the most well-known people on campus as ASB vice president.

"There is literally not a thing he is bad at," Jeffrey said. As a result, George has no regrets about either his past or present: "I like my life the way it is... looking back to the past and reminiscing on what I should have done will only harm my future. Life goes on — what can I say?"

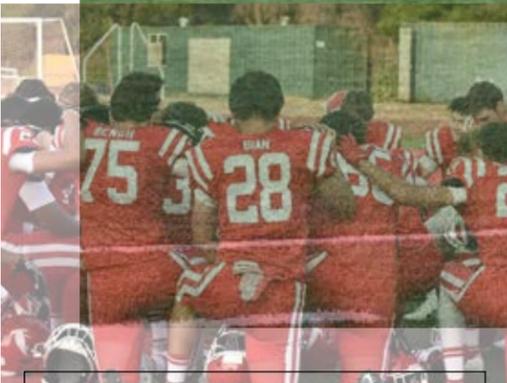
Throughout his three years in leadership, George has organized numerous events, ranging from Junior Prom to selling boba on the quad steps.

He was generally satisfied by being able to run spirit-based events but felt that many students aren't receiving a "full high school experience" due to academics being their top priority.

George's guiding principle was that the transition he made and was simply a part of life.

"Life is a journey," he said, "and I want to make every part of it worth it."

—Preston Fu



George Bian enjoying life in each of his daily activities: football, leadership, and economics. Above, up and down: George sprinting down the football field; huddling with the team. Below, left to right: George lifting weights; in leadership; at the state economics competition with the Economics Club; and with the junior class officers.



"Looking back to the past and reminiscing on what I should have done will only harm my future."

zero to hero

From amateurs to athletes, the JV lacrosse team started this season with all new players: Apurva Chakravarthy, Audrey Kline, Caroline Keogh, Carolyn Ding, Casey Gilligan, Chelsea Potter, Eva Ji, Isabella Lee, Karina Bik, Lauren Vandevort, Lily Faye, Lisa George, Nandini Desai, Naomi Mallik, Olivia Kinoshita, Rima Christie, Riya Lodha, Sadaf Sobhani, Simone Karani, and Sophia Taxin. By the end of the season, the team had won a total of five games.

Forming a cohesive, competitive team comprised solely of freshmen with no experience was no easy task, and the team weathered countless trials and adversities together. The first day of practice was one of the hardest, as Olivia Kinoshita recalls.

"The first day was rough. It was raining and cold and miserable. I was thinking about quitting, but I decided to keep doing it, and I'm glad I did," Olivia said.

Freshman Macey Hartmann was pulled to the varsity team despite starting the season with little experience. She said she remembers having difficulty learning lacrosse initially because the rules were so complex. At the beginning of the season, she faced trouble sharpening her technique, more specifically in catching the ball consistently, especially when compared to the older, more experienced varsity members.

"The biggest lesson I learned is that I can't let one missed catch or throw ruin my

day. I need to let the embarrassing moments roll off my back and not affect my practice," Macey said.

The JV players also persisted, honing their skills through a variety of techniques. Macey and Olivia took to the Internet and learned more about the sport by watching Youtube videos on catching and shooting, basic rules, and practice exercises.

One of their favorite activities was playing "wall ball," an exercise in which the player throws the lacrosse ball against a wall and catches it without letting the ball touch the ground, helping develop hand-eye coordination. And, on top of their eight hours of practice per week, many girls even stayed after practice to work on shooting with the goalies.

During the middle of the season, the JV coach, Nanu Sidhu, informed the team that he would be cutting back his hours of coaching due to his new job schedule.

At this point, many players had begun to lose their motivation. Many felt as though their hard work was pointless and in vain when they were not going to have a coach for most of their practices.

To rally the team, the captains intensified their efforts, stepping up to take on the role of coach.

For the captains, this change was even more of a challenge as they had to serve as a coach for their fellow teammates and friends.

"Figuring out drills for the team when Nanu wasn't there was a really big challenge. Sometimes it would be hard controlling everyone since they are also our friends," Olivia said. "I learned to not try to coach your teammates because it just doesn't work."

Surprisingly, Olivia and co-captain Rima Christie's coaching motivated the team to work harder, encouraging them to show resilience during this time of difficulty. The adjustment was undeniably tough, but the players came together in the face of such a challenge, eventually becoming a better, stronger, and more determined team. Olivia, in particular, had other motivators to encourage her to persist through such an unforeseen situation.

"Having a new challenge with a sport I haven't tried helped inspire me. Also, having friends around me to help encourage me and get better also played a big part," Olivia said.

By the end of the season, the team had grown immensely, going on to actually win almost all of their games, despite their inexperience.

"By the end of the season we were all playing so well, it made me so happy seeing what our team had become," Olivia said.

From zero to hero, the junior varsity lacrosse team and its members took their challenges of the season head-on, working hard and working together to grow from beginners to experienced lacrosse players.

—Simone Karani

Top to Bottom: The team gets their sticks checked before their game, the coach talks to them after their game, and their team photo.



There weren't too many victories, but that wasn't necessary for a fun season



"I think at Saratoga, I made a lot of change and a lot of people will remember me because of how outspoken I was and I didn't have any fear in talking about the problems I face."

BABY STEPS TO THE FINISH LINE

Freshman year wasn't the best for Senior Leena Elzeiny, but since then, from her sophomore year to her senior year in high school, she's had time to develop as a person. Whether it's from maturity or simply organizing her studying schedule, Leena has changed a lot as a person throughout her high school years.

Elzeiny would describe her freshman year self as inexperienced and a little child who didn't know how to take work seriously.

She describes her freshman self as afraid of commitment.

"That's probably one of the things I realized in my sophomore year. If you look at all of my extracurriculars, the majority of them started in my sophomore year because that was when I wanted to be more out there," she said.

She remembers freshman year as having a lot of time on her hands but not doing anything with it.

"I had higher expectations in my freshman year than I do now," she said.

During freshman year she strived for higher grades. After sophomore year, she said that she was living life on the edge.

"My freshman year I didn't have any extracurriculars and then in my sophomore year I picked up both a sport and robotics," she said.

She did sports for both of her sophomore semesters which she felt "murdered my time."

In middle school, she didn't do any extracurriculars, which she carried into freshman year. When sophomore year started, she took a lot of extracurriculars.

"I think with me taking those extracurriculars, it was me taking my first steps my sophomore year, and realizing that I have the potential to do so much more and pretty much developed an enthusiasm for pretty much everything," she said.

She kept doing Lacrosse, and robotics throughout her sophomore and junior year as well as joining newspaper in sophomore year.

"Not saying I have any regrets whatsoever, but my enthusiasm to try to do different things in my junior year was exponentially different than my freshman year," she said.

One thing she found eye-opening for her was in freshman year when her biology teacher showed her a movie about global warming and environmentalism. Since then she fell in love with the environment.

Although she is striving for to do engineering in college, she feels that she developed a hunger to see into more things after doing mock trials. She didn't feel content.

"Now I'm probably less impulsive than I was in freshman year or at some point in high school, but I do think I am way more willing to screw up," she said.

She describes her freshman self as just an average

student but now, in her senior year, she feels that she's putting a lot more thought into what she is going to do. She feels that she is willing now to take those risks.

"Physically in freshman year, I developed a love of pushing myself in P.E. I recognized that I was one of the few people who actually enjoyed how difficult it was and actually enjoyed the weight training," she said.

This is one of the reasons she joined sports.

Her love of sports caused her to join boxing and, recently, martial arts.

In her freshman year, Leena feels that she was confident. Over time, however, she realized that being self-conscious was bound to happen.

"As I've grown, I think I have become more self-conscious in a lot of ways, such as how I'm perceived by other people and how I'm projecting my personality," she said.

Even through the amount she's developed as a person through high school, she still wants to change some aspects of herself.

"I definitely want to help more people because that was one thing that was my suit in freshman year and my sophomore year and I think a lot of my friends would agree that I put in a lot of effort for the people around me to know they can come to me for help," she said.

After deciding to move to middle college for junior and senior year, she felt that she wasn't able to build a social circle enough that revolved around helping others. She believes that she lost sight in junior year of what she really wanted to do.

Since then, she's gotten her love of helping others back and is taking baby steps towards achieving her bigger goals in helping people.

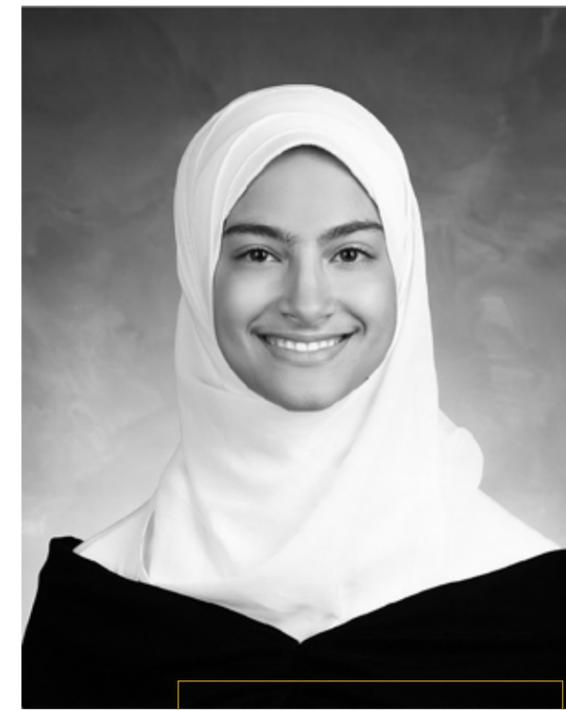
"I don't plan to be anybody huge and have my name down in history but I do want to have an impact," she said.

She wants to do anything she can, even if it's just a small impact, to help others.

Ending on a good note, she said that she feels like she impacted the circle that she's around.

"I think at Saratoga, I made a lot of change and a lot of people will remember me because of how outspoken I was and I didn't have any fear in talking about the problems I face," she said.

By Sarah Khokhar



Leena Elzeiny's last portrait photo of her high school life shows off her smiley and outgoing personality.



Life-changing license

Life-changing license

From driving golf carts to driving actual cars, student's lives are changed through the process of getting their driving license.

Driving for the first time spooks anyone. For seniors Reva Vaidya and Kami Cheatham, it was not any different.

Reva recounts her experience as a first-time driver. "It was really scary because the car is really big and you sit in the left so you feel very off-kilter."

Vaidya drove the car slowly in circles in an empty parking lot.

From going at 3 miles per hour in circles to mastering merging onto a freeway, driving requires skill and mastering over months of training.

California State Law requires six months of holding a permit before applying for a driving test; permitted, you also get the hours needed to sign up for a driving test.

With encouragement from the school, more and more students actively get their license in high school.

"We get driver's ed in the school unlike other schools where students have to take an online course on their own time," Vaidya explained.

"All that's left is to get your pink slip and take the test," Cheatham further explained.

This encouragement has caused a significant increase in the number of teen drivers in Saratoga.

However, it has also increase the number of people who have not passed their driving test.

Student's urgency to get their license plays a major role. In most cases, this means exactly after six months have passed, students take their driving test.

"I took my driving test exactly six months after getting my permit. At that point, I still felt like I hadn't driven much," Vaidya said.

Vaidya further delved into her nerve-racking driving test experience: "My proctor was really intimidating and I also made a few critical errors. I remember braking really hard during one of the stops I had to make."

Vaidya was still inexperienced at the time, and, unfortunately, did not pass. However, with more practice, she has become a successful driver.

To be a responsible driver, Cheatham explains, you should be cautious and aware of what one is doing behind the wheel.

Cheatham believes that driving is also an important step towards independence. Whether it be driving to school or to an extracurricular or afterschool activity, driving yourself provides less dependence on other people.

Another highlight of taking the wheel is going off-campus during lunch. Driving around the city to different restaurants and areas is a unique Saratoga experience.

Especially in senior year, majority of seniors are off campus due to the relaxed environment.

Vaidya thoroughly enjoys driving and jams to her music, no matter her destination.

In the end, driving really changes students throughout the course of high school, whether it be gaining independence or going off campus.

—Nithya Koneru



Left to Right: Senior Kami Cheatham gets into her car, check the mirrors, turns on her mirrors, turns on the engine, and zooms away.

Freshman Allison Lim and her teammates enjoy cookies to refill their energy on the track field after a long, tiring practice. Their practice included 100-meter sprints with intense core workouts in between.



"The more experienced athletes were really welcoming and made me feel very comfortable."

- Allison Lim



tracking her distance

tracking her distance

Freshman Allison Lim got ready for her first track meet on Feb. 28. Feeling nervous, she took a deep breath and spread chalk over her hands carefully. As she heard her name, she approached the sand pit.

Bending down to the starting position, Allison whispered to herself, "three, two, one, go." After a powerful spin, she made her first shot put throw.

Allison started track for the first time this year because she wanted to be in better shape. After tryouts, however, she was assigned to the throwing event. According to Lim, she is not a very fast sprinter, so throwing was actually a better fit for her.

"The tryouts were tough," Lim said. "We had lots of sprints and core workouts. I also didn't know anyone else in throwing."

Despite the hard tryouts and not knowing any of the throwers, Lim was not nervous about the first practice.

"The more experienced athletes were really welcoming and made me feel very comfortable," she said.

Over the season, Lim learned the techniques for the two events she had in throwing, discus and shot put.

One of Lim's favorite parts of track was the meets. "I'm always excited about the opportunity to compete and cheer my teammates on during meets, especially the relays," Lim said.

By attending many meets, Lim learned to cope with stress before and during competitions. She ended up surpassing her expectations in many meets.

"I never knew that some of my teammates were so supportive. It made me feel a lot less nervous," Lim said.

Lim also became more physically fit. As someone who struggled with body image, she felt more confident and content about her body by the end of the season.

Along with improving physically, Lim also grew mentally.

"My growth this season was actually mostly mental. I learned to be persistent by putting in the extra effort and pulling through hardships," Lim said.

Lim injured her elbow during the season, which was a major set back for throwing. However, she worked through it and improved her throwing distance.

Not only did Lim become more persistent, she also learned to be more time efficient.

"The most important skill that I got from track is probably time management," Lim said.

Before she started track, Lim spent one to two hours on social media and hanging out with friends during tutorial. Since track was very time consuming, she adapted to the change by utilizing tutorials, free periods, and weekends.

"I've learned to prioritize what is important to me so I didn't have to give up any of my other extracurriculars," Lim said.

She also found creative ways to save time, such as setting time limits on certain apps to decrease screen time. During the weekend, she tried to finish the homework due on Monday and Tuesday to lighten the workload of the week.

"Now that the season is over, I realize I have a lot more time I didn't have before because my improved time management skills," Lim said.

The overwhelming commitment required from track also distracted her from personal problems.

"I was able to be distracted from academic and friend problems during the practices, and I always felt happier after a practice," she said. "I really enjoyed my experience in track this year, and I will definitely join again next year."



—Serena Li

by Savannah
Lin

From Fencing to Field Hockey

Freshman Nandini Desai stopped mid-lunge for the ball a few feet away from her. She threw up her hands in aggravation as she realized she broke one of the most basic game rules of field hockey: the hockey stick does not go above the waist.

"In fencing, the sword could basically go anywhere, above or below the waist," Nandini said. "Switching to field hockey where the stick has to be below the waist at all times was an awkward transition."

Nandini has been a competitive fencer for five years, but in eighth grade, when Nandini suffered a leg injury, she decided fencing was not the right sport for her.

Nandini moved from Basis to Saratoga High School as a freshman. At first, Nandini did not want to play a sport at a new school. She thought it would be humiliating to see a new student without friends try and play a new sport.

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"I didn't want to play a sport at Saratoga because I was still uncomfortable walking through the halls of the school in the first place," she said. "But my sister told me that field hockey would be the right sport for me to make friends."

Once Nandini slowly began to get to know all her teammate's names, she realized her sister was right. Field hockey provided her a comfortable place to make friends while she practiced.

In the first weeks of practice, however, she felt like a fish out of water. Nandini described her personality as hard-hitting and aggressive. At her first practice, she always hogged the ball and attempted to score even if it might not have been the best strategic move.

"The hardest transition for me is that during field hockey, I have to remember that I am playing for the team, not individually," she said. "In fencing, you play to win a medal for yourself. But in field hockey, you are playing for your team."

It was challenging for Nandini to get comfortable

with field hockey as fencing was totally opposite with very different rules and regulations. In fencing, a player has to be very aggressive towards the opponent and Nandini felt that since she was used to being too aggressive she caused many careless mistakes and fouls.

"There are not that many similarities between fencing and field hockey," Nandini said. "The conditions were also very different as fencing is in an air-conditioned room while field hockey is played outside and you need to adjust to the weather. However, fencing gave me stamina, which is very useful during field hockey."

Being very competitive without understanding the rules resulted in a lot of fouling, so Nandini decided to switch to the goalie position.

Being a goalie that the team depended upon came with a lot of hard work and practice. She struggled to defend the goal during the first few weeks.

Frustrated with herself, she took on an approach to improve herself after practice. During her free time at her house, Nandini faces the mirror and practices the primary defensive and offensive moves with her hockey stick, observing if her form was correct.

"Staring at myself in the mirror really motivates me to do better. My teammates also motivate me and the upperclassmen give me advice on how to practice," she said. "I am really grateful when they agree to come early to help me practice defend the goal while they take turns shooting the puck towards me."

After understanding the rules of field hockey and familiarizing herself with the equipment and setting, Nandini realized that field hockey was indeed the right sport for her.

"It is a win-win situation," she said. "I get to play an awesome sport that I will never get tired of and also gain some close friends that will encourage me all the way."



Freshman Nandini Desai smiles at the camera, feeling confident for a good season. She is one of the new players on the field hockey team, but she believes that she will eventually be good at the sport.



Freshman Nandini Desai eyes the ball passing around the opposing team, preparing herself to defend her goal at any time.

"It's a win-win situation. I get to play an awesome sport that I will never get tired of and also gain some close friends that will encourage me all the way".

by Charlie Liu

New coach, new badminton

At the beginning of the season, students saw a facebook post on the new badminton team page, "Only when all players continue to improve their personal skills, will the team improve as a whole - SHS badminton goal is to win the league," said the new Badminton coach John Li, laying down an ambitious goal upon players on the badminton team.

Since winning the league with an undefeated record in the El Camino League last season, the team hoped to stay in the De Anza league and not drop down as they did two years ago.

Three months before the season, students were surprised to find their former coach Charley Situ replaced.

After losing key senior players like Stephen Ding, a top-fifteen nationally ranked player, Austin Wang, a V1 doubles player, and Mana Shimokawa, a V1 Girls Singles player, the Falcons turned their hope to seniors Nicholas Zhang and Nathan Luk, the V1 doubles pair, and two nationally ranked players sophomore Ryan Hsiao and freshman Adrian Mar.

From the very beginning of the season, John had implemented new training routines in hopes to improve the stamina of players. Students had to run three laps and do two sets of stairs everyday before practice. John was adamant about enforcing the drills and often texted students through google hangouts to enforce the running. Then, they started warm-ups and were assigned specific drills or games.

"Because it's such a big discrepancy from last year to this year, everybody took a little time to get used to how it is working right now, so it wasn't easy. Hopefully, being more disciplined and having more practice on fundamentals really helped the team," Says John.

In previous years under Charley Situ, running was not part of a daily routine. Training was much more game-based and involved much simpler footwork practice.

John's intense running routines were initially not well-received, however, all members benefited significantly. Eventually, the team grew more disciplined. Running before practice became a routine. Students came into practice, dropped off their bags, and ran to the track like it has become their second nature.

"Although many players disliked how physically demanding the workouts were, I think, in the end, the training really helped boost our stamina and our gameplay in the long-run," says Junior Jeffrey Xu.

Games also saw students' stamina improve. Two years ago, students often lost in the first two games without a fight. Now, the duration of games increased as John worked closely with each member. More matches took three games, the scores were much closer. The school often lost by more than ten points in the past. Now, the team has come within 14-16 or even tied some opponents.

Two years ago, the team finished last in the De Anza league with only one win. This season, the badminton team ended up with two more wins and was able to stay in the upper division.

On top of the new training, the coaches method of determining the line-

up also became a headache to many students.

"Charley has a lot of experience, the other [John] did not have as much experience, and therefore was unable to command as much respects from the players. it was kind of hard to organize," comments Senior captain Nathan Luk.

The inexperience of the coach resulted in a lot of confusion and misunderstanding. Often times, students did not know how the lineups were decided, why some players are playing a particular position, and the disparity in each game has become confusing. Five games into the season, many students were questioning the methods of deciding line-ups. Some claimed that the school should not be stacking.

Traditionally, under Charley, the decision for lineup was purely based on winner of challenge games. However, John had put more focus on winning and tried to employ new strategies to help the team win that were not well received initially by the team.

Under Charley, JV players were allowed to move up to Varsity and Varsity players were subject to moving down through challenges that were hosted very Monday.

In contrast, John decided on a more rigid team structure. JV and Varsity were separated at the beginning of the season and no JV players could play any Varsity games. He observed players to determine line-ups based to the strength and weakness of players. The method of deciding line-ups eventually sparked disagreement.

Mid-season, the entire team held a meeting to decide on the line-up devising plans. The team reached the conclusion to allow captains to decide the line-up, allowing students to be much more involved in the team's fate than they were in previous years.

A key game for the Falcons came at the 16-14 win over Palo Alto on Apr. 18, when Varsity 1 Singles Adrian Mar was absent. The deciding game was the Varsity 3 girls doubles match, when Seniors Mackenzie Lee and Serena Yin won the last game 22-20. The team was finally able to capture a win in girls doubles that it traditionally struggled to.

The game saw the entire team rally around in support and showed signs of hope that the team could stay in the upper league. When the final point was scored, the entire team bursted into a pandemonium of happiness.

Assistant Coach Calvin Blocker comments, "the game against Paly put us together. We knew it was going to be either them or us who goes to the lower division, so that was our turning point. I saw them come together as a team."

This season, students were much more involved in helping the team succeed. Thanks to John's encouragement, the captains helped train JV and decide line-ups, students were more encouraging at games, and parent involvement improved.

Despite losing the remaining three games of the season, the team was able to stay in the De Anza league.

As student look back from the future, this season will be the start of a drastic transformation for the team. Badminton will become a place where there are more and more opportunities to take leadership roles.



Above, sophomore Ryan Hsiao, V1 singles, returns a shot in an away game against Monta Vista on March 5. This was the very first game of the season.



Freshman Victoria Tso, one of the best additions from the Freshman class, who plays V1 girls singles, smashes in game against Monta Vista on March 5.

Below from left to right: Nicholas Zhang and Wilson Fung; Alvin Ren; Serena Yin and AJ Lee; Adrian Mar; Mackenzie Lee and Ryan Hsiao



soprano to bass

Sophomore Isaac Sun trudges off the lower field to pack up his instrument. Behind and around him, dozens of bandmates follow, conversing after the day's long practice. Had it been two years earlier, he would be carrying with ease a slim, hollow metal pipe.

From his hands instead trails an intricate mass of metal the size of a kitchen cabinet. He forces the instrument inside its case before closing it with a heavy thump.

Another long day of band practice has ended, and there are many more to come for Isaac, the only junior of 4 incoming drum majors for the next band season.

"When I tell people I'm a tuba player, they always laugh," Isaac said. "If you told me I'd be playing tuba today two years ago, I'd probably laugh at you, too."

Isaac started piano at the age of five and developed a long-lasting love for music. At nine years old, he switched to the flute, which he played in both elementary and middle school in San Ramon.

After his family relocated to Saratoga, Isaac continued to play flute in the band at Redwood Middle School. At the start of 8th grade, however, his band director strongly encouraged Isaac to play tuba, a suggestion he took to heart. He quickly discovered his apparent adeptness at the new instrument.

A few months later, an outside organization's music director invited Isaac to play in his top music group after observing his playing. The invitation was what first caused Isaac to consider dropping flute entirely in favor of focusing on tuba.

The tuba is now the only instrument that Isaac plays actively. "Learning a new instrument has taught me better discipline and efficiency," he said. While it was a lot of work, Isaac felt that it's more than justified by his current skill level.

Additionally, Isaac felt his incoming leadership role as drum major will have a major effect on the effort and time he invests in band.

The commitment for band members is already substantial. Band members have a 9-5 practice on Saturdays, after-school practices every blue day, and shows on Friday nights. A fourteen-day summer marching band camp is also mandatory, as are commitments during competition season that occur biweekly.

"It's a drum major's responsibility to attend all of these commitments consistently, along with other events," said Isaac. "To make room, I'm dropping or cutting down a lot of my current activities, like basketball."

For Isaac, the JV captain of the school's basketball team for this past season, cutting basketball is no small sacrifice. Isaac has played basketball since the 6th grade and was awarded first team all-league in his freshman year.

Nevertheless, Isaac believes that he will ultimately thrive the most in band. "In activities like basketball, you're limited by the rest of your team regardless of how hard you work to a certain extent. However, in band, you reap what you sow. There's no limit to how hard I can work and I know I'll always benefit from it."

Isaac is also actively involved in a variety of activities, as evidenced by his summer schedule. He decided to forgo attending summer camps in favor of

studying, summer classes and planning for the Science Olympiad club, which he will be the president of the coming school year. He also worked out a summer practice schedule around his various classes with his basketball coach. These activities will be enough to keep him busy all summer, he said.

Despite all the chaos Isaac handles on a daily basis, music is an unchanging constant in his life. "I'm so spread out that a lot of times I get so caught up in fulfilling all my duties that I have no space to relax and take a break from all of it," Isaac said. "That's where music comes in. I love playing because it creates an environment where I can recharge and relieve stress."

"When I ask myself why I do this much and why I try this hard," Isaac said, "the answer always comes back to the end goal." He felt that part of it is his personality; he naturally enjoys doing a little bit of everything. While this tendency may be strenuous, Isaac felt that the experience and rewards make the challenges well worth it.

This perseverance, Isaac believes, was the deciding factor in him being chosen as a drum major. He felt that he was selected for certain qualities he possesses: his confidence, decidedness, and most importantly, his tenacity. "I worked really hard for it," he said.

Isaac is eager to see what challenges the next year will bring. "I know it won't be easy and I can't guarantee I'll be able to do everything I set out to do, but I will undoubtedly give it my all."

Isaac knows that all the effort he's poured into his work will pay off eventually, not only in college applications, but also in helping him build valuable time management, leadership and organization skills. But all that's still "a long way away," he felt.

He smiles. "For now, I'm great with lugging around this giant tube of metal."

—Esther Luan



Sun guards the ball against an opponent during a Jan. 16 home game against Milpitas. The team lost the game 49-41.



The marching band plays during the Levi's Stadium Homecoming game on Sept. 30, with a performance that took months of practice.

I love playing because it creates an environment where I can recharge and relieve stress.



CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM:
Freshman Enoch Jung waits for the shuttle to be returned from his singles opponent, Enoch returns a shot in his mixed doubles game with partner Shawnee Chu, Enoch serves to start of a rally in his singles game



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:
Enoch Jung reaches to return a shot, Enoch lunges forward to return a low drop shot, Enoch runs to get a high clear shot from the opponent



“Varsity badminton has truly been a wild journey that I hope to continue into my high school years.”

rallying to victory

rallying to victory

As freshman Enoch Jung stepped into the gym on the first day of badminton tryouts, he was filled with confidence and high hopes for joining the varsity team.

“I had expectations of making varsity badminton before the season even started. I had the experience, I was capable, and I was ready,” said Enoch. “Tryouts flew by really fast. And when I had been notified that I made it, nothing but excitement filled me.”

Enoch usually plays singles three for varsity badminton, even though he is only a freshman. He has played for five years already and hopes to play more in the future.

Enoch had initially joined to further his own game and skills, and to get out of his P.E. class, but he soon discovered that it there was more to the team than that.

As a singles player, he said that he needed to get used to supporting the whole team, and to not just focus on his own needs in the sport, because for the team to win the overall match, each person needs to contribute to the overall score by winning their own game.

The change has not only been behaviorally and mentally, Enoch’s physical skill in badminton has also improved significantly. He is now able to control the shuttle better and last longer and run faster on the court. He says that varsity badminton has really helped him develop and grow as a player on and off the court.

“With each practice and each match, the entire team started to gain stamina and skills. Likewise, each practice let me hone my own skills and increase my endurance. I also learned more about key skills like sportsmanship and communication. It was a great experience,” said Enoch.

But playing for varsity also had its downsides for him as well. Standing at only 5 feet 3 inches, he often faces taller and older opponents, but Enoch doesn’t let this hold him back from winning.

“Whenever I go up against my opponents from other schools, I can see the relief in their eyes,” said Enoch. “They see me and instantly think that I’m not good because of my height. That is just one of the things that gives me fuel to push harder and fight back.”

Enoch remembers one match in particular where the bigger opponent’s underestimation of him made Enoch ultimately the winner. He was playing singles three as usual, and his opponent, from Milpitas was at least 5 inches taller than him.

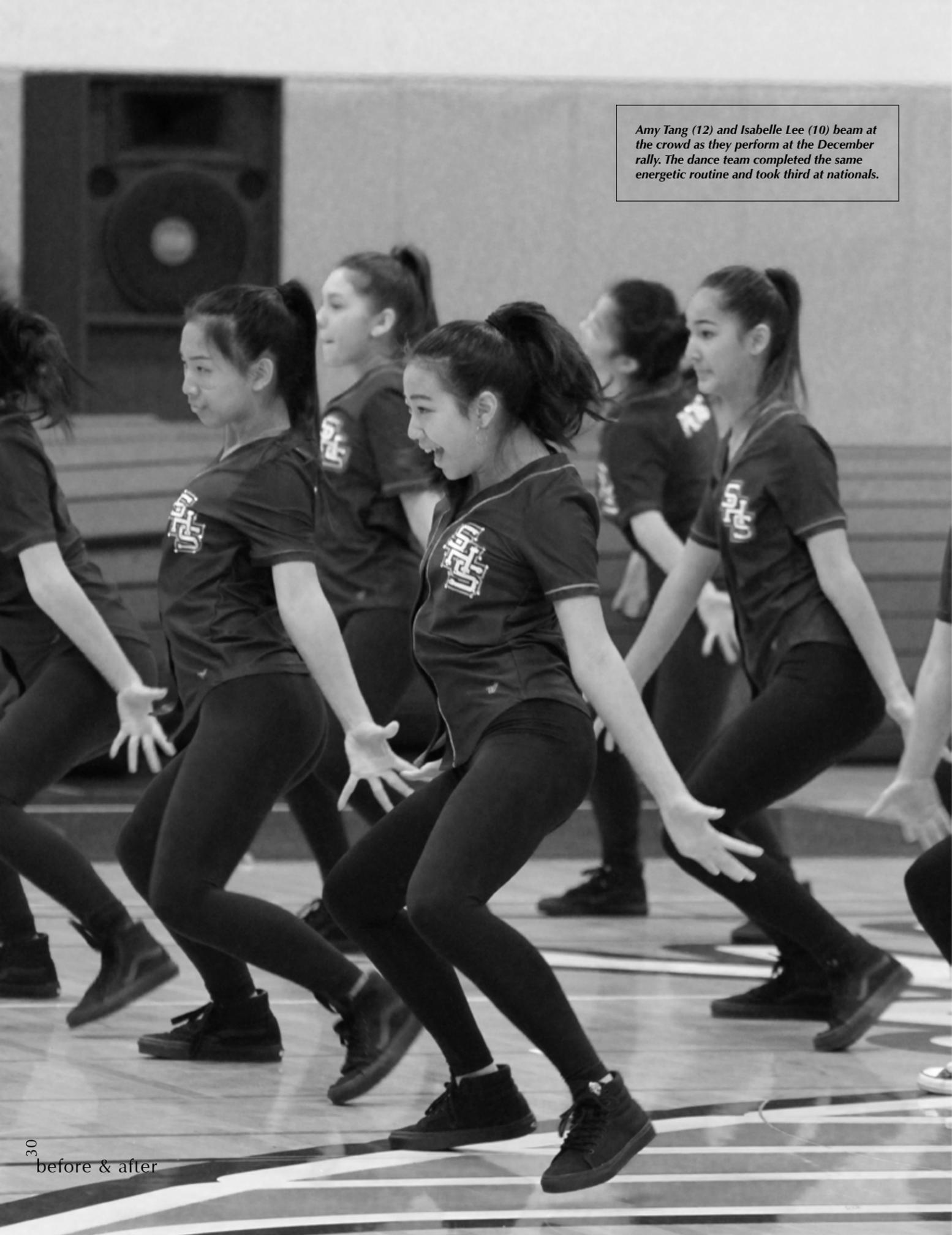
As they went up to shake each other’s hand before the match, Enoch saw his opponent smirk a bit when he saw his size. “It just made me want to beat him more,” said Enoch.

As the match progressed, Enoch slowly but surely came out on top and won the match. Enoch said, “It felt really good to beat someone who underestimated me just because of how short I am.”

Overall, Enoch thinks this season of badminton for him has been really great. Not only did he improve how he played badminton, but also he got the chance to learn and work on key social skills that he thinks will definitely help him later on in life.

“Although there were many instances where I faced defeat, I still loved playing badminton with the team. Those are the moments when the team comes together, and we bond,” said Enoch. “Varsity badminton has truly been a wild journey that I hope to continue in my high school years.”

—Allen Luo



Amy Tang (12) and Isabelle Lee (10) beam at the crowd as they perform at the December rally. The dance team completed the same energetic routine and took third at nationals.

growing pains

“Wow.” When the 2017-18 members of the school dance team heard how big the new team would be, they were shocked. “I was like, how are we all going to fit in the room?” said senior Amy Tang.

Previously, the dance team had only had 11 members. This year, after an unexpectedly high turnout at their auditions, eight new girls were added to the team, making it almost twice as large.

“I was a little bit nervous, but I was also excited because there were so many new faces and we could do a lot more things. With a small team, that’s sometimes hard to do,” junior Joelle Compeau said.

The new team met for their first official practice at the start of May of last year. For the returning members, the number of new girls took some getting used to.

“There were so many people and I didn’t know so many of them,” senior Francesca Chu said.

Once the initial shock faded, it was replaced by a realization of how a large team could be advantageous. “I just thought, ‘whoa’, there’s so many new people that can do all these different things,” senior Alexandra Li said.

The team has two to three hour-long practices three times a week and four hour-long practices on most Saturdays. In addition, an hour of weight training each week supplemented the regular dance practices. These additional training sessions were introduced this past September to help the team increase their strength and stamina.

At first, the size of the team proved to be a challenge logistically. “It’s a lot more crazy to get anywhere,” Francesca said. “Whenever we go to competitions there’s so many people that have to be looked after and kept track of.”

Alexandra notes that the team “used to be able to all fit in one car,” but now that the team is so large, it is harder to be close with all of its members. “We’ve sort of split into different groups because there’s just so many of us,” she said.

Joelle agreed, saying “I feel like sometimes there’s a little more disconnect between [girls of different] grades, but the captains this year have really encouraged us to bond with each other.”

The team also suffered from a high number of injuries this season, forcing some dancers to be pulled out of routines at the last minute. Because of this, the team ended up with many different versions of each of their routines, often performing a different version at each of their regional competitions and performances.

As the year progressed, the team came together and learned how to work as a complete unit. At their final national competition in Southern California, they brought home second, third, and fourth place trophies, the highest an SHS dance team has ever achieved.

“It was a little bit overwhelming at first, but I was really excited to see the potential of the team, and I’m really happy with how we performed this year,” Amy said. ♦

—Audrey Mah



The dance team gets ready to perform at the homecoming game at Levi’s Stadium.



The team gets in ready position for their performance at the Jan. 26 Homestead High School competition.



all grown up

"I remember my first time walking through the halls of Saratoga High as a freshman. My first time walking the halls of UC Berkeley felt like I was a freshman in high school all over again."

Those are the words of Sarah Deng, a Saratoga High alumna who now attends UC Berkeley and majors in neuroscience. Sarah's first year in college was a big change for her, and it was hard for her to adjust at first. Sarah, being introverted and shy, was really worried about meeting new people.

"I was overwhelmed by the fact that I didn't know anybody at this school," Deng said. However, after the first couple of days, Deng quickly grew close to those dorming with her and other students in her class.

"I've met some really amazing people here. Their support has made my transition to college a lot easier." Deng recalls her roommates introducing her to new people, and always helping her with schoolwork when she needed it.

Sarah is also a passionate dancer, and drives back to Saratoga every weekend to attend dance practices at SVDA, the dance studio she's been attending since the age of 5.

"SVDA is more like my home than anywhere else," she said. "Even though I'm in college now, I still want to be a part of the SVDA community so I try to go to as many practices as I can."

Driving to dance practices every weekend may take at least a couple of hours due to heavy traffic, which puts a lot of stress on

Sarah, leaving her even less time to take care of her responsibilities as a student.

"The biggest change I've experienced throughout my transition was the increase in responsibilities and becoming independent," Deng says.

Working a part-time job at a local boba tea shop and being part of a dance team makes it hard to balance her workload.

"I always feel like there's not enough time for me to get everything done, so I'm always in a rush to do something." Deng has also recently adopted a stray cat she found on campus, adding to her numerous responsibilities.

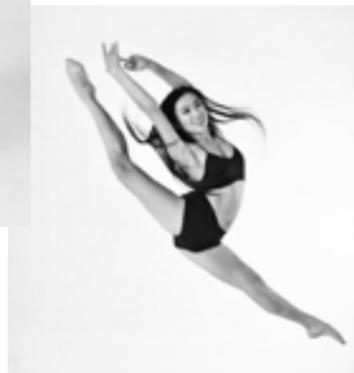
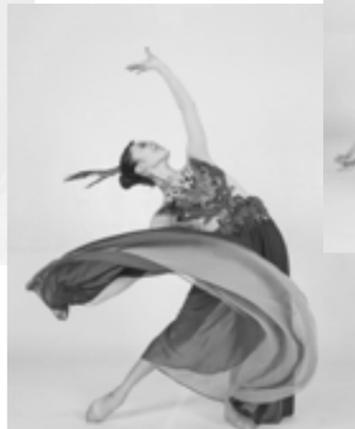
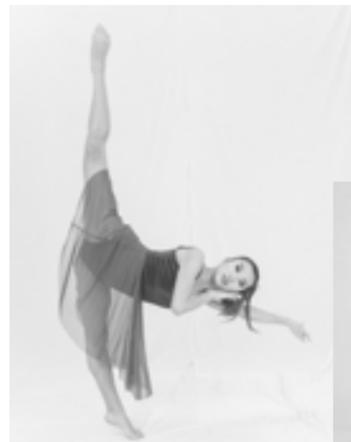
Janice Yu, Sarah's mother, feels that Sarah has matured a lot and has become much more independent and responsible ever since college started. "I can notice that she's all grown up now and she can do most things on her own," Yu said.

Sarah feels that the changes she's had to make since high school has had a positive impact on her. She has become a valued and important person in her community.

The changes she's experienced lead her to become a much more capable person, and helped her develop good habits.

"I'm so grateful to everyone in my life right now, and to everyone that has helped and supported me through the ups and downs."

—Kristina Meier



Below Deng strikes a pose for her dance studio on picture day

Below, Deng smiles on her highschool graduation day in front of her house



CHANGING

"GO FISH!!" were the constant words of spirit and encouragement from junior Mitra Mokhlesi at the FIRST Robotics Worlds Championships in Houston in April.

The Mechanical-Science Engineering Team (M-SET) consists of four First Technical Challenge (FTC) teams and one First Robotics Challenge (FRC) team. Mitra, an active member of M-SET, is co-president in the outreach section of the club as well as a member of the electronics team of the First Robotics Challenge (FRC) team, 649.

Mitra has been part of the club since freshman year, starting on an FTC team and then transiting to 649 for her sophomore year onwards. Mitra has gone through various positive and negative experiences in the club. Mitra is applying for president of the club this year.

In her freshman year, she was part of the FTC team, Lionfish, and was part of the hardware section of the team. She learned to deal with her teammates who worked at many different speeds and often didn't communicate with each other. Additionally, she had to learn to be resilient and strong when some boys on her team pushed their fellow teammates to the side and told them to "go do something else besides working on the robot."

Along with learning to deal with working with her teammates, the parents of the students who were on Lionfish constantly told the kids to send them weekly "progress reports" to inform them on what the students were accomplishing.

Mitra finally hit a point where she was completely "fed up" as the parents weren't even coming to mentor and supervise in the robotics room but wanted to "know absolutely everything the students were doing." She sent all the parents an email, saying that they could come to the room to see their progress if they wanted to. Mitra felt confident and satisfied for receiving the team's necessary "space" back.

Still enjoying her freshman year in robotics, Mitra ended the season on a good note.

In Mitra's sophomore year, she moved to FRC as she liked the competition challenge more. She was part of the hardware section and found that she had a much fuller experience.

In her junior year, staying in FRC, Mitra moved to the electronics section as she thought it be good to have experience as she is planning to major in engineering in college.

Two years ago, Mitra and her teammates decided to begin an outreach section of the team to make all five teams more well-rounded.

Mitra, along with others, has organized many outreach events to spread STEM within the local community and beyond. She has developed a strong relationship with a family services organization, CityTeam, in Mayfair to help spread STEM with M-SET's older robots especially to disadvantaged youths.

"Outreach has helped our team get out of our little Saratoga cocoon and see what other people go through on a daily basis," she said.

After starting outreach, Mitra's goal not only has been to spread STEM, but also to receive the Engineering Inspiration Award, which celebrates a team that best spreads engineering in their local community. The award is pretty special as it can qualify a team for the FIRST Worlds Championships. In one of 649's regionals, Mitra was surprised that the team received the award.

"I was completely ecstatic. I was jumping up and down as I wasn't sure our team would receive it since we hadn't been doing outreach for that long and hadn't organized many events. But, I think it all came down to quality over quantity, which is what we had."

Junior Krishna Minocha, the other co-president of the outreach section of the club, says that Mitra works incredibly hard to plan outreach events and sends out emails to all the members of the club to sign up or volunteer. "Mitra is on top of everything for outreach and is very passionate about FIRST. Since outreach has started, Mitra has added so much value to our club, and we are so grateful for her," says Krishna.

Divya Aggarwal, a current senior, who was an electronics lead this year has gotten to know Mitra in the last two years. Divya describes Mitra as hardworking, excited, driven, incredibly passionate, and putting effort into everything she does.

"Mitra doesn't care about what other people will think of her and will do what she thinks is right. With that attitude, she has single handedly changed the culture of the club to focus more on outreach and actually making a difference and spreading STEM. This huge social impact that our team is now known for, is very new. In previous years, this idea of spreading STEM and outreach has always been a joke. She has made that joke a reality. A president should be able to properly represent our team with pride and excitement, and I think Mitra is the best candidate for that job. There is no one that I know that loves M-SET and FIRST more than her," says Divya.

Mitra believes that she will make an excellent president as she has a well-rounded and thorough knowledge of the team and does both non-technical and technical work.

"Robotics has not only helped me find direction in what I want to major in as I love engineering, but also has helped me find my passion and love for STEM and spreading it beyond my community. It all brings me so much joy," said Mitra.

by kaasha minocha

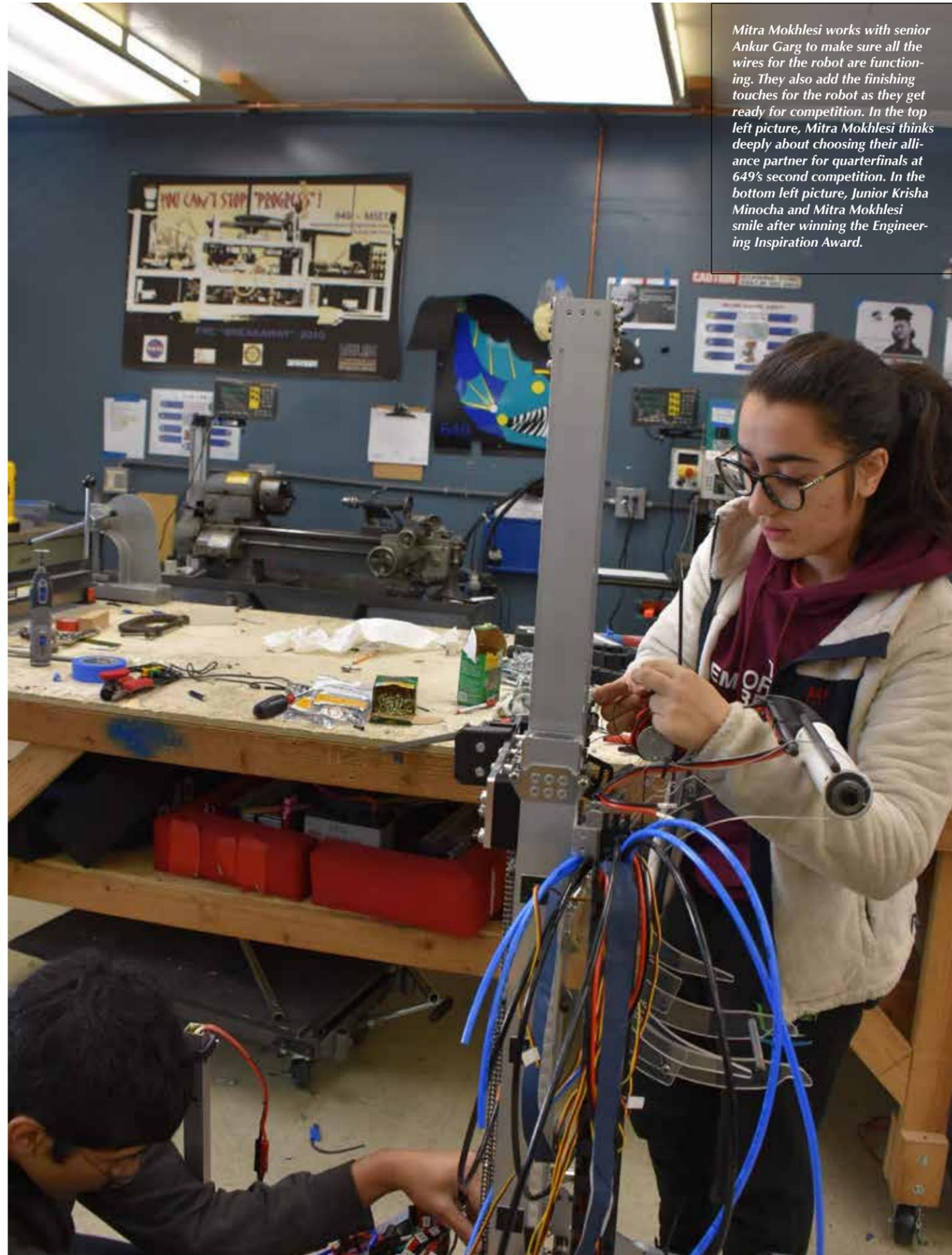


MITRA MOKHLESI

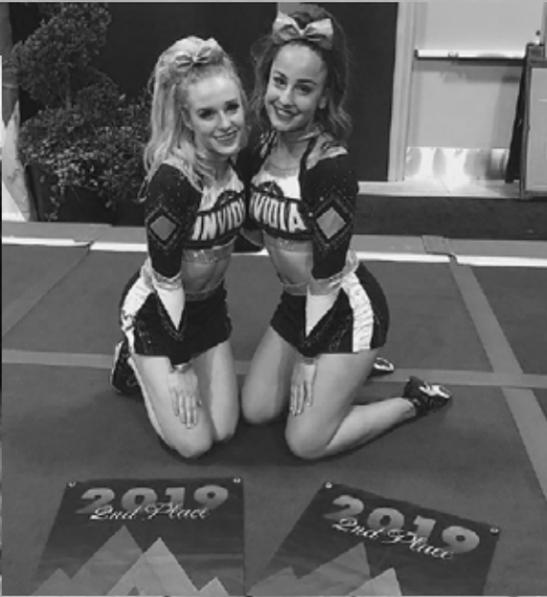
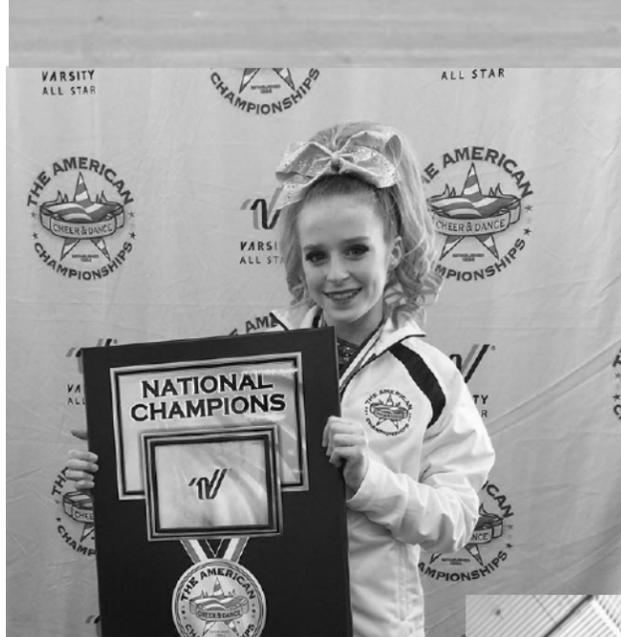


MITRA MOKHLESI & KRISHA MINOCHA

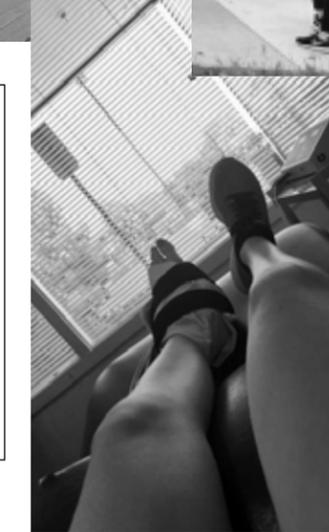
"Robotics has not only helped me find direction in what I want to major in as I love engineering, but also has helped me find my passion and love for STEM and spreading it beyond my community."
-Mitra Mokhlesi



Mitra Mokhlesi works with senior Ankur Garg to make sure all the wires for the robot are functioning. They also add the finishing touches for the robot as they get ready for competition. In the top left picture, Mitra Mokhlesi thinks deeply about choosing their alliance partner for quarterfinals at 649's second competition. In the bottom left picture, Junior Krishna Minocha and Mitra Mokhlesi smile after winning the Engineering Inspiration Award.



top: Emily and her team perform their stunt dance at Regionals
 second line, left: Emily grins after winning the National Championship
 second line, middle: Emily does a needle stunt while being supported by her teammates
 second line, right: Emily cheers with her teammate after getting 2nd place in a competition
 bottom line, left: Emily's foot after surgery
 bottom line, right: Emily poses with her team during their Florida competition



cheering from the sidelines

It was February, 2018 when current freshman Emily Eckerman noticed a sharp pain in her left foot. Being part of a highly competitive cheerleading team, Emily tried to push through the pain, not wanting to let her team down.

However, by April of that year, the pain in her foot had progressed to the point of nearly complete immobilization. At this point, tumbling became impossible, and Emily knew that it was time to get some professional help.

Emily's pain was quickly identified as "tarsal coalition," where an abnormal connection forms between bones on the foot. Unlike other common repetitive strain injuries faced by athletes, tarsal coalition was something Emily was born with, but became symptomatic due to intense athletic performance.

"I had severe pain in two different locations- the top and side of my foot," Emily said. "When it got really bad, my foot just stopped moving and even walking became a challenge."

Emily's extra bone formations began rubbing on her peroneal tendon, an important structure on the outside of her foot, threatening to tear. This was the indication that surgery was the only option to prevent further damage.

On June 19, 2018 at the Fremont Surgery Center, Emily headed into surgery. Despite reassurance from her attending physicians and family, Emily couldn't help but feel nervous about the procedure. The podiatric surgeon was going to cut into her foot to remove the two extra bones that were loosening the tendon, and then stitch the tendon down to the bone in order to keep it intact.

"I started stressing about what would happen to my future in cheer if the surgery didn't go well," said Emily. "But I had to bring myself back to the present and not worry about things out of my control."

Fortunately, the surgery went well, but the most difficult period was about to come: the recovery. Emily was ordered to wear a boot for four months, and then go straight into vigorous physical therapy as soon as it was taken off. She would not be cleared to tumble for at least four months.

"The hardest part for me through this process wasn't even the pain," said Emily. "It was sitting out on the sides, watching my teammates get better, knowing that I wasn't improving with them."

Physical therapy was a grueling time, lasting three months, but Emily knew that the vigorous recovery was only going to benefit her in the long run. As soon as her physical therapy ended, she began chiropractic care, which she still does today.

Emily's chiropractor not only aided her in pain relief and recovery, but also guided her towards a healthier lifestyle to avoid future issues.

Emily's road to recovery was not an easy route by any means. She often felt resigned, wanting to quit cheerleading all together.

"It was really difficult to keep pushing myself in physical therapy because when coming back from a serious injury like this, it's pretty much

impossible to get back to the same level," Emily said.

Even after Emily returned to tumbling in August, she found herself surprisingly agitated, instead of simply grateful to be back.

"I was really frustrated because I knew that I wasn't as good as I could have been without my injury," Emily said. "I felt so defeated to be held back by something that wasn't even my fault."

In order to get over her frustration, Emily had to step back and regain perspective on why she pursued cheer in the first place. As time went on, this initial agitation turned to determination to get back what she had. Competitive cheer had taught her more than just back handsprings and front tucks- it had taught her valuable life lessons.

"While constantly traveling across the country for cheer, I had to develop great time management skills early on," Emily said. "Otherwise, I'd be stuck working doing homework all through the night after four-hour practices."

Not to mention, being part of a team had showed her the importance of being an emotional cheerleader for the people she cares about.

"Being on such a close-knit team has taught me that lifting others up- literally, is the only way to reach our full potential," Emily said. "We all understand and support each other no matter what, and I think that lesson has carried into my daily life as well."

Throughout the journey of recovering from her injury, Emily faced challenges that seemed impossible to overcome. However, she had to truly reflect on the sport that she had been pursuing for almost ten years, and realize how much she'd grown and changed because of it.

"My injury taught me that life isn't perfect, and isn't always going to turn out the way I want it to," Emily said. "But it's also showed me that there are some things that I have to dig deep and fight for, because they've shaped me into the person I am today."

Note: Emily's recovery has continued to go well. She returned to competition at the beginning of 2019, and her team has done very well. She plans on continuing cheer throughout high school.

—Anjali Nuggehalli

"I felt so defeated to be held back by something that wasn't even my fault."





Each person feels pain in his own way, each has its own scars.
 -Haruki Murakami

Christopher visits the Castle Air Museum, formerly a United States Air Force Strategic Air Command base.

Making History

Three years ago, senior Christopher Lee scanned through the school library in search of a book that would ease his boredom. While going through the long line of the thick tomes, to short stories, Greek myths, and fictional adventure stories, Christopher would come across a wide variety of subjects. Some sparked more interest than others, but among them, was a book that would blossom him a passion, History. A passion that would guide him through the rest of his high school career.

"One of the books I found, 'Japan: Past and Present' was my introduction to Japanese history," Christopher said. "I remember being so diverged into the stories, I just kept on reading chapter after chapter non-stop."

Learning the history of a country and experiencing the excitement to learn rapidly grew inside him. However, he was not always willing to learn about something so passionately.

Back in the first years of highschool, Christopher's parents pressured him to excel in his math classes, which he had difficulty finding motivation in. His Father worked in the computing field and wanted him to take a similar path, his mother expecting no different. Christopher said the pressure gave him a feeling of a lack of purpose, which greatly hurt his motivation towards school.

"It's a difficult situation when you have no motivation, and have no interest in the typical STEM career, especially when you have parents who expect that of you without any alternative to appeal with," he said. "For me, picking up that book on a whim and finding it as engaging as any other fiction book was a changing point in my life."

Christopher recalls a groundbreaking moment for himself was that although his parents always pressured him to perform well in higher

level math classes, he never felt that pressure in a humanities class. It was treated as a necessary prerequisite of high school and nothing more.

To Christopher, no longer was STEM something he had to default to. As he says, discovering a real and tangible passion gave him direction to a much confusing early high school career.

"I think that history taught me to think in a much different way, and that there were always more sides to a story one could ever truly comprehend," Christopher said. "...and that it is the responsibility for people to take into consideration as many as they can."

As an example to this, he says that learning about the geopolitics between Russia, Japan, and Korea leading up to the Russo-Japanese war allows him to understand how politics in both past and modern day have developed.

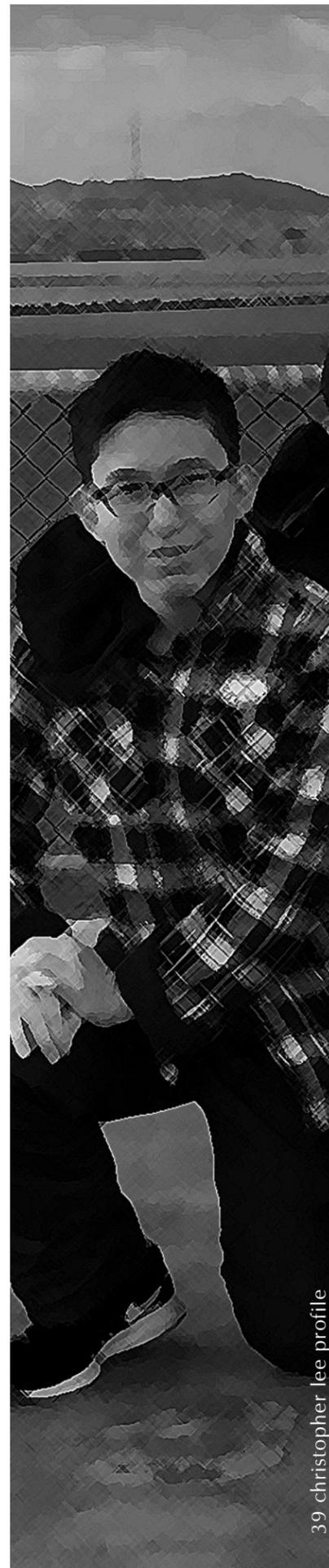
Now with an interest he was willing to pursue, Christopher now had a path to follow for himself.

In 2017, he started the Military History Club along with his friends, Eric Bao and Kyle Young, a club now with around 15 members, in pursuit to spread and educate the same subjects he had been interested in. After he had determined himself to follow this path, Christopher cut his STEM electives and chose those that had most relation to history, such as APEuro.

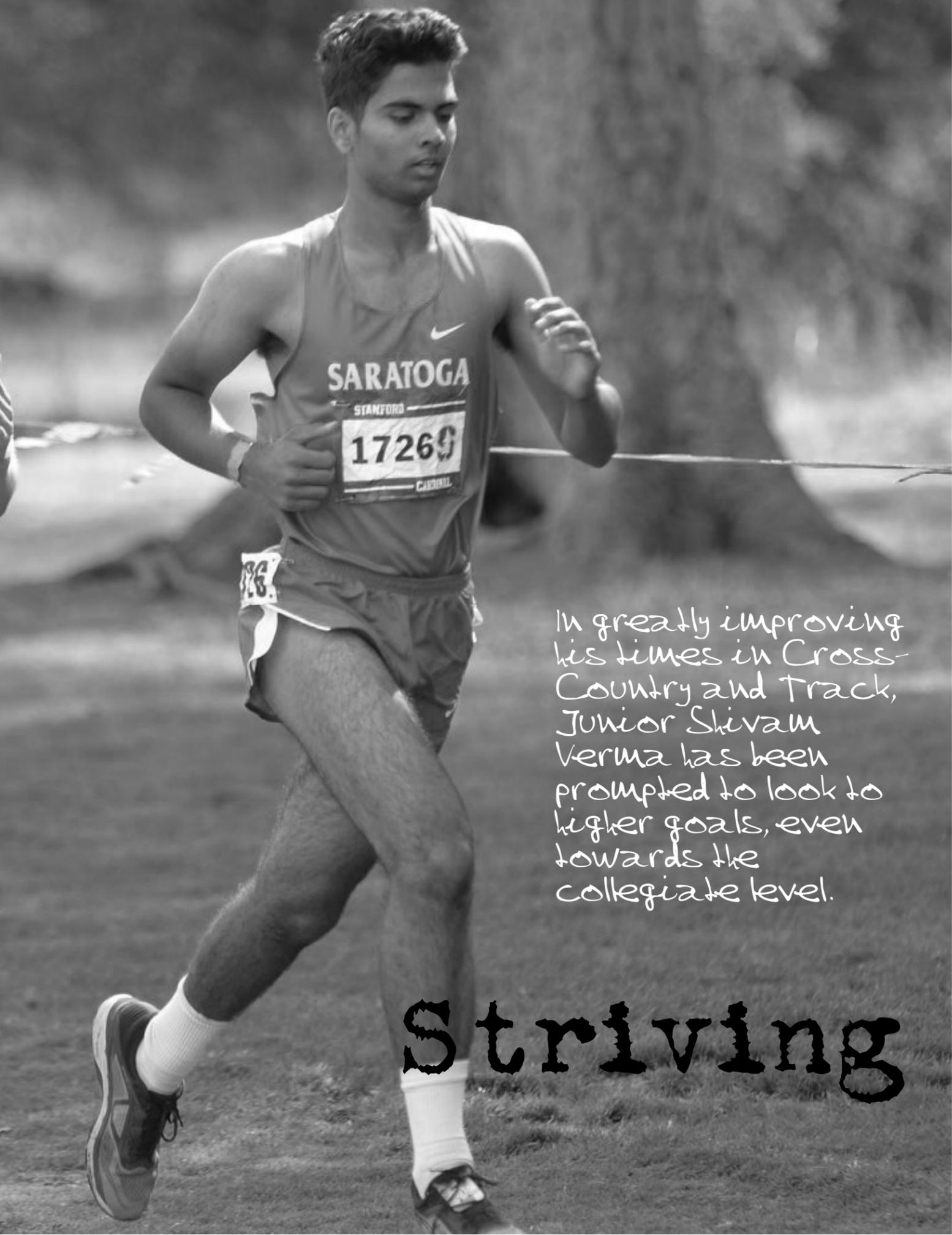
"Before reading that book, I'd have to admit that I had no interest in history," Christopher said. "But after reading about Japan in that book, I got more hooked up into it, and as I continued learning about Japan, I started branching to other countries too. That's another great thing about history. You have to learn about more than one country to understand the whole big picture."

Christopher is now enrolled and plans to study Humanities at the Oxford College of Emory University to pursue a better understanding of what changed him, and what he is truly interested in.

—Miwa Okumura



39 christopher lee profile



In greatly improving his times in Cross-Country and Track, Junior Shivam Verma has been prompted to look to higher goals, even towards the collegiate level.

Striving

For many distance athletes, achieving a personal record, or “PRing,” is often what they strive to accomplish at the minimum when they compete.

Not many imagine to “PR” 49 seconds over the previous season. For junior athlete Shivam Verma, a 4:33.49 1600m (or “mile” as it’s often referred to) was altogether a surprising accomplishment for him, having only run a 5:22.96 the season prior. In doing so, he’s been prompted to look towards even greater goals, despite having an unlikely background in track.

As a freshman, Shivam played soccer and hadn’t even considered track at all until he was prompted to do so after noticing his ability to outrun other players during his Soccer season. He joined Track in the spring, also deciding to join Cross Country in his Sophomore year.

“My times were pretty average,” Shivam said. “I had no expectations, just to have fun, and I didn’t watch my diet or train during the offseason.”

However, during the summer following sophomore year, Shivam took advice from a runner he met during a summer camp who’d been excelling as an athlete himself. His mile time and physique impressed him and left him with a new mindset going forward.

“He was named Cosmo, and had a 4:39 mile at the time,” he said. “I was like ‘whoa,’ he’s fast, and he was kind enough to let me run with him. He pushed me really hard.”

Advice that Shivam would take after the conclusion of that summer were mostly simple adjustments, like sleep and diet, and he maintains that “running with him was the advice.”

After training over the summer, Shivam would return to Cross Country season, to find himself running closer, and often with, some of varsity’s fastest runners, especially during the first invitational of the season at Stevenson.

“I was kinda happy, I guess,” he said, “I didn’t get surprised until track.”

After initially running the 1600m during his first meet at a 4:49, a time he wasn’t expecting, his time would progress gradually, until running his season and current personal record of 4:33.49 at a dual-meet against Homestead. As for how he built on the progress he made early on in the season, Shivam accredits doing so to training hard and mental conditioning, as he maintains that he knew he was as fast as anyone on the team.

In the meantime until next the onset of next year, Shivam has thought about college and university, as offers have come in from mainly D3 schools, and he has been even contacted by the University of Miami, a D1 school.

“I’ve gotten many offers from schools I’d never go to,” he said. “But I’ll try reaching out.”

Shivam describes himself as being “very content” with the end of this season. As for his next season, he plans to consider such offers and continues to look towards milestones he wishes to surpass in his field, aiming to break 4:20 in the mile.

—Sina Salehi



Top: Shivam Verma runs the 800m during the St. Francis Track invitational. Middle: Shivam warms up for the Stevenson Relay invitational during Cross Country. Bottom: Shivam Races at the Crystal Springs meet during Cross Country.

to stride
Striving to stride

Growing through Guard

In one of senior Kimi Uenaka's first memories of Color Guard at Saratoga High, she was struggling in the middle of an audition on the rifle. In fact, she was told that her entire technique was wrong by an instructor, and wasn't able to meet almost all of the requirements for spinning a rifle.

And despite the negative feedback, Kimi was one of the first freshmen to make it onto rifle line.

"That year, I was given solos, high tosses, and complicated choreography. Because I was younger then, I felt so overwhelmed," Kimi said.

Over the past four years, she has been pushed to improve and is better now because of it. Not only is she an accomplished performer, but she is also one of the captains of Saratoga's Color Guard and Winter Guard. She has also toured with professional guards that compete at a world level.

But she still recalls that sophomore year wasn't any easier.

"It was pretty emotional and is the big mountain that took lots of time and energy to get over. But guard is such a team sport so it's impossible to feel like you aren't being supported," Kimi said. "My favorite part of guard is this whole family feel to it."

Another big advocate of Kimi's guard career is her family. Her father is the main provider of action shots for the entire Color and Winter Guard, and her mother alters their costumes and is there for every show.

In fact, team members refer to Mrs. Uenaka as their "fairy guardmother." Her grandmother got her a rifle in Eighth grade, so every day after school she and her twin sister would practice.

The support system Kimi has promoted her success and provided her drastic milestones that show so much improvement.

"I was on the T-Pole in Eighth grade, which is a big flag that you just hold and march with during parades. That wasn't a big confidence boost. But, in high school, I made the rifle line, and later got onto the Varsity Winter Guard team," Kimi says. "Then, in 2017, I got onto the weapon line for SCVC, a professional Color Guard that competes and tours in the summer. It's the goal."

Her most recent accomplishment is winning first place at the California Color Guard Circuit with Saratoga's Varsity team. Their show, Emily, is considered the best in California.

She became caught up in this strenuous sport when she tried dance and basketball and didn't really improve despite the work she put into it.

"Color Guard took the two elements I liked about those activities--athleticism and performance--combined them, and placed me into this supportive and loving community that I couldn't really leave even if I wanted to," Kimi said.

Guard isn't her only activity at this school. She balances Girl Scouts, being Vice President of her church's youth group, Editor-In-Chief of the yearbook, and Captain of Color Guard.

This balancing act came over time, and even now isn't perfect. But her advice is key to getting through.

"The secret is to only do the things you're really passionate about," Kimi said.

And while significant changes have been made over the years that improve Kimi as a performer and a person, she still has strains now.

"Struggles I have now include but are not limited to: Senioritis, boba addiction, constant pain from a previously dislocated pinky, swelling fingers, bruises, bumps, soreness, fatigue, lightheadedness, blurry vision, and lactose intolerance," Kimi jokes. "But in all seriousness, I have an inability to fully realize the fact that I won't ever do this activity again. I'm not ready to leave my guard family."

Seeing where she is now compared to who she once was, she said she can't imagine how she would've ended up if she hadn't been through the roadblocks that she's been through.

"If I hadn't done guard, I probably wouldn't have grown into the person I am now, so I wouldn't change a thing," Kimi said.

—Kavya Sarathy



Senior Kimi Uenaka stands proud in warm-up before heading on stage with her Varsity Team. She has been a part of this sport since seventh grade, and has improved a lot since.



Nandini went to the pumpkin patch before Halloween to take pictures and hang out with her friends as she reconnected with them

NANDINI

Hugs and kisses were exchanged as 10 year old Nandini Desai says goodbye to her childhood friends, knowing she'd see them in high school although that seemed like forever then.

She would be going to Basis Independent Silicon Valley School, and although it was in San Jose, sometimes she would feel far away from Redwood and her old friends.

"It was hard leaving all my friends behind, but I feel like we all needed to grow up a little bit."

Nandini decided to go to Basis for a certain academic rigor her parents believed she would not have faced at Redwood. She wanted a challenging experience that would prepare her for high school and help her develop good study skills, and decided Basis was her best option.

"I remember I was so excited to go to Basis, honestly, I felt like the coolest person ever," Nandini said. "Everyone was new at Basis in sixth grade, everyone was confused so we figured it out together."

As a freshman, Nandini came to Saratoga High School with high expectations, fear and excitement, knowing she would shortly see her old friends from Argonaut. Nandini describes her move to Saratoga High School as a "weird transition" because her old classmates had grown up and "become their own person."

Although she was invited to sit with her childhood friends, Nandini felt the need to take a minute to herself as she was confused and uncomfortable.

"My first day was rough, I went to the library and ate lunch by myself," Nandini said feeling she has smoothly transitioned into the new school year. "It was kind of uncomfortable at first and I had to develop a rhythm, yet I found my groove at this school and there are so many cool people that I really like here."

"It was unspoken that Nandini would rejoin our group, she kind of just slid back in," said Nandini's elementary school friend, Alaina Srivastav. "She fit perfectly in and she has this type of personality that people are automatically attracted to her and you want to be her friend."

Nandini joined many clubs including ASL and Chinese club, however the one she enjoys the most is Speech and Debate.

"The club helped me transition into school and my friend helped introduce me to more people," she said.

Nandini is also a part of the JV field hockey and lacrosse team. She hoped that field hockey would teach her good teamwork skills, and it helped her make many new friends.

"Nandini is a very supportive player and it's fun to play with her because she's very enthusiastic and cheers you on," said her teammate, freshman Karina Bik.

"Saratoga is very academics focused which I like, the teachers are really good and the people are all super hardworking and motivated which is a good environment to be in," Nandini said.

She enjoys being in a spirited school as it makes her happy.

Nandini decided to run for sophomore treasurer for the new school year, and won, which surprised her although she worked hard for it, and believes she can help the school with her strong leadership skills.

In the meantime, Nandini will be studying for finals, getting ready for her dance competition, speech and debate banquet, but looks forward to the new school year.

—Lihi Shoshani

Returning to your roots

Returning to your roots

VOTE

NANDINI

DESAI

CLASS OF '22

TREASURER



Becoming a Runner

"Just one more to get through. Push forward." With those words ringing through her head, senior Siena Parsons pushed forward against the other runners. Slowly passing the third runner and then the second, she was neck to neck with the first place runner. Forcing her legs to go faster, she finally passed first place and finished the race with satisfaction.

The senior cross country and track star finished her last running season after six years of dedication. Parsons had been running since sixth grade, when her father forced her to join the cross country and track and field teams at Redwood Middle School.

"My dad was a runner, but I don't think it 'runs in the family' or anything. He did both cross country and track and he said he met an amazing family through it. I wasn't sure what he meant at the time," Siena said.

Siena said she was very nervous and scared of the coaches at first. The idea of running such long lengths startled her, but she adjusted quickly. After getting used to the sports she decided to sign up for cross country and track on her own for the rest of middle school.

Siena started with a nine minute mile and eventually worked toward a 6:50 time by the end of eighth grade. In high school she continued to work on getting her times to improve. Although she was already experienced during freshman year, Siena recalls she had a difficult time running cross country in the beginning of

high school.

"It was different. The first pre-season run I ran was Springer, which is around two miles and hilly. I couldn't even run up the big hills, I had to walk," she said.

Still, Siena pushed herself, and eventually became one of the best runners on both her teams. In cross country, she was on varsity and served as a captain junior and senior year. In track, she was one of the top girl runners in the mile and two mile events consistently throughout high school.

"I knew it was keeping me healthy, and I liked to try and beat my old times. When you do something for so long and keep a good level of effort, I think you'd naturally improve too," Siena said.

Freshman year, Siena had mile times around 6:30 and two mile times around 14:30. Up till junior year, these times were kept consistent. But Siena amped up the power after that, and pushed herself to get to a 5:50 and 12:40. Senior year, the times only dropped by a little, but there was significant improvement from sixth grade.

Siena had a high level of self-motivation. She remembers difficult runs she had to get through, like in freshman year, when she had to run seven miles through pouring rain for a track practice.

Many of her old teammates would agree as well. People describe her as hard-working and an amazing runner. Her teammates often say her sweet and encouraging personality helped them

run during the season.

"I've known her for a couple of years through my sister and she's got a great personality. She's really fast, and she seems invincible!" says Mira Bugata, a freshman who ran cross country with Siena.

But, like most dedicated runners, Siena had injuries. She developed shin splints her sophomore year, and though she took care of the injury as well as she could, she kept running despite the pain.

Siena doesn't think of running only as a way to keep fit, though. She has also made lots of friends from cross country and track, and describes them as "my fam."

Coach Moon, Coach Tippetts, and her close friends in both sports kept pushing her to improve.

"I love running as a whole. I love the people I meet through it, but it's also just something I enjoy. It sometimes takes my mind off stress, and it improves my day," said Siena.

Siena doesn't want to stop running. She plans to join a recreational running club in college and may visit the coaches and new teams a couple of times.

"I do want to go back, since I spent so many hours running on the track and on routes, but also because of the people. I understand what my dad was talking about. It's like a second family," Siena said.

—Alaina Srivastav

Encouraging friend

Determined

with Julia Hoffman



with Rareeha Rao

Siena Parsons

Cross country captain



Track Runner
in 1600 and 3200 races

49 senior runner



Siena runs at the two mile Lynbrook meet on Sept. 10.

gaining experience

During the weekly History Bowl practice, the eight members of the Junior Varsity division walk in to practice. They start fiddling with the buzzers used for answering questions until the captain of history bowl walks in and opens up his laptop. The practice's plan was as follows: Start off with a presentation on Court Cases, and eventually move onto asking "tossups" from question sets used at previous tournaments. This was a regular day in History Bowl, with multiple people answering within the first few lines of each question.

Surprisingly, going back a few months can make evident how much the team has progressed in the past few tournaments. Over the past few months, the team has changed from being a quarreling and unmotivated group to creating strong team chemistry and a good foundation in history. Sophomore Winston Liu described the JV team at the beginning of the year as, "Conflicting and unable to cooperate within a team environment." Liu also stated that he, "Believed the current state of the team is more relaxed being more ready

The dramatic change started to occur after the first tournament. The JV team suffered an enormous defeat. The team members realized that they have to start studying and cooperating or they would taint Saratoga's perfect reputation for being one of the best teams in the nation.

Although there are many factors contributing to the success in the past few months, a push to create a passion for history was the biggest one. Team Captains Kiran Rachamalla and Jason Hong have implemented slide show presentations within each practice, which are informative and humor

They have also created spreadsheets with entertaining history YouTube channels. These tools made more people interested in studying and in turn helped push people to enjoy and learn at the same time.

Aside from the resources provided, students have also pushed themselves to consistently perform better and set time aside for studying each day. Many individuals felt the need to perform better after the poor results during the first tournament.

"I felt peer pressure to do better coming from the team to perform well," Freshman Henrik Zhang said.

The sentiment towards studying was felt equally by other members of the team such as Freshmen Bora Alaybeyi, who also claimed that "I started studying more once I realized that the team is going downhill in terms of progress."

Currently, Saratoga's JV team is one of the best in the nation, ranking 39th out of the hundreds of teams that competed in local and national level tournaments. Each individual member has developed a unique skill set contributing to the team chemistry and overall knowledge. Freshmen Bora Alaybeyi says that, "Derek Hsu and Henrik Zhang have developed an interest in US History, while Nirmik Tambe and himself have developed knowledge in general world history." Junior Captain Jason Hong has good prospects for the team and predicts they will rank within the top teams next year as well.

— Dhruv Singh



Top Left: Winston Liu proudly displaying his History Bee plaque; Top Right: Saratoga Jv competing against Montgomery High School; Bottom: Saratoga JV group photo



Saratoga JV Team holding their 5th place trophy after the 2018 Nationals



Becoming a Runner

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with Julia Hoffman

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Siena runs at the two mile Lynbrook meet on Sept. 10.

Acting As A Career

By Dana Steinke

Acting As A Career

As the curtain opens, the audience members may be able to spot freshman Jennifer Sheng on the stage. She has started taking part in musicals and plays this year, something she has never done before.

She plans to take part in the shows and musicals next year, and also wants to take drama as a class, against her parents wishes. She also has started working on her singing, and hopes to get better in the coming years.

Her parents, however, do not support her pursuing a career in acting or a job that is a form of art. They want her to become a doctor or a programmer, or some other job that is related to science, and they think that acting does not have any use and can't get someone anywhere in life.

Also, her parents think that the being a doctor or programmer will get her more money and give her a better life. But Jennifer wants to become an actor in the future, so her parents might have to let go of their dreams for their daughter and realize that STEM or other related jobs are not the only way to go for a job or career path. Even though being a doctor, lawyer, or a STEM related job are good careers, there are other good ones out there.

"I like acting because I like being different characters and listening to the stories that come with them," Jennifer said. Acting, she says, is a good way to escape the stresses of life, and it is also a good way to improve your public speaking skills.

Before, she was a lot more quiet and shy. She did not talk to anyone unless she was forced to. When she started drama, she barely knew anyone else who did it. Since then, she has made a lot of friends in the drama room, and has gotten a lot more comfortable with talking to people. For many people, drama is a way to step out of their comfort zone, and that is what happened with her.

With high school, the workload is a lot larger than middle school, but she has to do rehearsal and memorize her lines as well. "On some days, I have rehearsal until 9:00," said Jennifer. Fortunately, not all of that time is spent on stage, so Jennifer can find time to do her homework and study for upcoming tests or quizzes while memorizing her lines for the plays or practicing her songs for the musicals.

"It definitely has taught me a lot about time management and concentration," said Jennifer. "Sometimes I finish my homework early, and instead of playing on my phone, I do the next set early," she said.

She also has to focus in an environment that can sometimes be chaotic, loud, or have lots of distractions. Because of this, she has gotten better at blocking out her surroundings and concentrating on the task at hand. This skill is not only useful when she has to listen to other people performing, but is also useful in day-to-day life, when she has concentrate in difficult situations.

"When you are on stage, you just have to forget that there are hundreds of people looking at you," she says, on the topic of performing on stage. "When I am in character, I don't really think about the audience that much," she admitted, when questioned further about stage fright.

Jennifer is very enthusiastic about acting and drama activities, and hopes to continue to progress in these new areas. In the future, with her hard work and parents' support, Saratoga High School students and alumni may see her in a famous movie or in a Broadway musical or show.



Jennifer Sheng, the second from the left, sings in the musical. She is playing one of the nuns in the Sound of Music.



"I like acting because I like being different characters and listening to the stories that come with them." - Jennifer Sheng



The cast of the Sound of Music smiles for a group photo.



Erin looks at the pitcher with fierce determination to hit the ball and hopefully score a run.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Erin waits to catch in the alumni game. Erin bunts the ball to score a run. Erin prepares to catch the incoming pitch.



run hard; turn left

She stepped onto the white rubber plate, wrapping her hands around the cool metal bat. She was nervous, but adrenaline pumped through her veins. She gripped her bat tighter, and watched the pitcher wind up. First pitch. Strike. Second pitch. Ball. This was it. Third pitch. Her bat connected and she swung through, watching the softball fly through the air. She ran from base to base, until finally ending back at home plate. A home run! She was overjoyed and felt satisfaction from getting a run.

Freshman Erin Wu has improved tremendously since that day in fourth grade when she hit her first home run. So much so that she was the only freshman on varsity this year. Erin loves softball and hopes to get a scholarship to college to play it. From ten-years old and playing for Los Gatos Saratoga Cupertino (LGSC), to now a fourteen-year old playing for high school, Erin has come a long way.

Introduced to the softball by her mother, Erin fell in love with the sport almost immediately. She aspires to be like Buster Posey, the starting catcher for the San Francisco Giants, because "I wanna be a good catcher."

Erin's favorite part about softball is hitting. "I like batting because it's rewarding and it's satisfying to hit the ball far," she said. When she was younger Erin tried out loads of sports, like swimming, track, and soccer. "I chose softball though because I wasn't fast enough for swimming or track, I quit soccer in elementary school, and softball helped me take out my frustrations," she explains.

Now that she's in high school, Erin is looking to maybe play softball in college. "My cousin got a college offer, and that really inspired me to try and get one too. Hopefully I'll get to play for UCLA one day," Erin said.

Erin was surprised on how nice the upperclassmen were to her on the high school team. "It definitely was awkward at first, but then we bonded and they were extremely nice. They were really fun and encouraging, and made me feel like part of the softball family."

"My favorite part about the season was the trip to Santa Cruz because we got to

stay with the team overnight, and bond even more," Erin said. "We did this thing called kangaroo court where we were interrogated, and it was a whole lot of roasting, but in the end I got proven guilty, so I had to make everyone cupcakes, but I had a blast."

Erin credits all of her coaches for helping her grow as a player, but she mainly thanks her mom to help her gain knowledge, and skills. "She's my biggest support, and I know how cliché it sounds, but I don't know what I'd do without her," she said.

Throughout the years, Erin's catching has gotten better, her throws farther, and her hitting harder. Before games she listens to her pop playlist, and is excited. "My favorite part about softball, besides the playing, is meeting, and connecting with new people," she said. She's gotten numerous awards, like MVP, and isn't planning on quitting on any time soon. "Even if I don't get a scholarship for college, softball has helped me out in countless other ways, and I'm very glad to play. It's opened different doors for me, and I grew not only as a player, but as a person as well."

-Amarangana Tyagi

En Garde!

When freshman Helen Yin tells people she fences, she is met with a variety of questions and responses. Most people are curious. After all, fencing is not a very common sport, so she's often met with curious questions such as "what is fencing like?" or "does it feel like real fighting?"

Helen trains at Massialas Foundation, which is also called MTeam, a top competitive foil fencing club in the US, located in San Francisco. She trains two to three days a week for two or two and a half hours at a time. Helen fences competitively, and she goes to 15 to 20 number of competitions during fencing season running from September to July. She has traveled to St. Louis, Denver, and Utah for fencing competitions, and most recently has gone to Seattle, Washington.

Looking at Helen's competitive schedule, you might think that she has always been a fencer, however, that is not the case. Two years ago, Helen was still a gymnast. Helen started gymnastics when she was around seven. She did gymnastics for five years, and participated in many competitions, including state competitions. It was not until the end of 2017 when she switched to fencing. "Gymnastics takes up a lot of time and it's really hard and dangerous, so I wanted to switch to something a little less intense," said Helen. It's true, gymnastics is one of the top ten most dangerous sports. Helen once broke her arm and was in a cast for months due to an accident during gymnastics practice.

Switching from gymnastics to fencing was not a small feat. Helen started fencing at the age that is considered an "old beginner". This means that in order to catch up with other competitive fencers who start earlier than her, Helen must put in much more effort and commitment, and it required a lot of changes from her gymnastics training.

"The hardest part in fencing is you need a lot more endurance than gymnastics, and endurance is not something that I have," she said. In gymnastics, all routines are around one minute, but in fencing, a bout can last nine minutes, with one-minute breaks every three minutes.

In addition, Helen also struggles with controlling her strength and being more accurate instead of being strong. "Gymnastics you use a lot of strength with larger muscles, but in fencing, you need more accuracy and not as much power for most of your body. In gymnastics, I train a lot to use my arm strength, but in fencing, it's not really needed."

Despite being relatively new to fencing and having many odds against her, Helen has already accomplished many achievements. In fencing, fencers are rated from letter A to E, and new fencers are rated as U (unrated). Recently Helen has reached the E rank and has also received national points toward qualification for national competitions. This is no small achievement. Some people can take up to seven years to get to E rank, while Helen has only taken a little more than one year.

While working hard to redirect her skills to fit fencing, Helen believes that her gymnastic training also contributed to her fencing success. "I'm more balanced than the other people because I have more muscle in other parts of the body," she said. This allows her to be able to execute parries and beats of the blade against her opponent more easily.

Switching to fencing has come with a lot of time commitment. Although Helen enjoys traveling around for fencing, it takes away a lot of her time, so she is required to spend her time wisely to compensate for lost time. During the drive to MTeam, which is one hour, Helen brings along homework to do, and on plane rides she also does homework. As a result, along with her fencing training and competitions, Helen improved her discipline and time management.

Looking at her current situation, Helen has made a successful transition from gymnastics to fencing. According to the Academy of Fencing Masters, 32% of male fencers and 38% of female fencers go on to fence in college. Compare that to football, which is 7.8% or basketball which is 5.9% for males, and 6.3% for females. Helen herself plans to continue fencing into college, and she will continue to learn and improve with many medals to come.

—Chrystal Wang



Above: Helen performing a gymnastics routine in a competition. Spectators stand by and watch her perform.
Right pictures: Helen participating in several fencing competitions.

Anouk Yeh and Harshini Velchamy sell egg rolls during club rush on March 15 to promote the Leo Club. They made over \$200 selling King egg rolls.



Anouk Yeh, Isabella Lee, and Cindy Jin help out with various crafts and activities during the Celebrating Differences Carnival on Sept. 22, a carnival to empower people with special needs.



"WITHIN THE 30 MINUTES DRIVING ACROSS THE BORDER, I SAW HOW THE GENERAL WELL-BEING IN SAN DIEGO IS A LOT HIGHER THAN TIJUANA EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE SO CLOSE TOGETHER. IT REMINDED ME OF SARATOGA VERSUS THE REST OF THE WORLD."
ANOUK YEH



from cub to lion

When freshman Anouk Yeh went to Tijuana on a mission trip with her church, she immediately noticed the stark contrast between San Diego and Tijuana, located only 20 miles apart.

"Within the 30 minutes spent driving across the border, you really got to see how the general well-being in San Diego is a lot higher than Tijuana even though they are so close together," Anouk said. "Even though these two countries are right next to each other, there is such a high disparity. It kind of reminded me of Saratoga versus the rest of the world."

She was inspired to start a club at Redwood Middle School to help less fortunate communities through charitable acts. Since her mom was a member of the Saratoga Lions Club, Anouk was inspired to revive the school's old Leo club.

"Leo club stands for leadership, experience, and opportunities, and I hope that by starting Leo club, I can give students opportunities to help out and lead not just in the community, but also help around the world," Anouk said.

Initially, after the club was formed at Redwood, most of the members consisted mainly of Anouk's friends who wanted to support her. They gathered in a classroom every week to listen to Anouk and the other officers introduce upcoming volunteer opportunities or recap past ones.

According to Anouk, it was much easier to start a club at Redwood compared to at SHS, where the process is fairly rigorous.

"At Redwood, we just talked to the principal if it was okay to start a club, and she agreed," Anouk said. "While at SHS, we had to get paperwork, proof of past events, and recommendation letters from teachers."

When Anouk and the other officers finally formed an official club, there they faced many more obstacles. At the start of the year, the primary challenge was recruiting members

for the club. "Because it was basically a freshmen-run club, many upperclassmen didn't really want to join our club," Anouk said. "So at the beginning of the year, we wanted to make a name for our and prove that we were doing legitimate projects."

During Club Rush, the Leo club created posters and handed out candy to promote their club. Every chance they got, Anouk and the Leo club members advertised their club and worked hard to promote their projects.

In one year, Leo club has expanded from only 15 active members to almost 40 members who regularly attend meetings and frequently participate in events.

Although the majority of the members are still freshmen, Anouk is proud that the club was able to recruit a diverse group of people, which she considered to be a huge accomplishment.

Anouk's current goals are trying to recruit members of different grades and attempting to find immersive service projects that can cater to a variety of members.

The officers want to ensure every member can participate in projects that interest them. The club will still participate in the same core events every year, such as the Celebrating Differences carnival and Rise Against Hunger food packaging.

The club has not only made a positive impact on several communities, but it has also had a strong influence on Anouk. Throughout the process of starting a club and learning how to run it, she has learned valuable lessons regarding leadership and accountability.

"I've learned to make sure that all member's ideas, opinions, and suggestions are included," Anouk said, "and I've also learned that I can't expect others to be genuinely invested if I am not passionate about service myself."

—Tiffany Wang

There was always a small figure running silently on the track. Her hair was always tied back and she was always looking down. Sometimes, she was submerged in the crowd and was hidden behind the laughters. So quiet she was, no one have an idea what changes Tina Hu, a freshman, is going through.

Hu comes from a small village in Zhe Jiang, China. She joined the track team as soon as the season began and did not have any experiences on running but only motivations from her uncle, a marathon

runner.

"Before the track season, I cannot run long. Even if it is just a mile, I still need to rest for two or three times," Hu said.

Hu improved her mile time from eight minutes to six and a half minutes over the track season, but not only that, she also gained the confidence to communicate with other people in English.

"I used to be really shy but now I just find every opportunity to practice my English and I am finally not afraid to talk!" Hu said.



Before Hu comes to America for a better education, she used to attend a school that did not focus on academic knowledge but only agriculture skills. She used to spend her every day in forests and shrubs, digging bamboo shoot and analysing herbs and vegetables. She is a master in the agriculture field but when she moved to America two years ago, all that confidence are gone.

Hu struggled through language barriers, which she is still working on overcoming it.

"In the beginning when I was running, my head was always facing down because I was so scared

to say hello to other people because of my poor language skills," Hu said.

Hu's worries gradually faded away as their workouts become more and more intense. The only thing that occupied her mind is to persist till the end. Every day during the season, the track team will begins their practice at 4 o'clock then they will start their daily warm up, which is 10 minutes of jogging. After warm up, they will start running. They sometimes will go to Montava for long distance running but for most of the times, their coach will observe them on the track.



Even Hu cannot believe how quickly she had improved.

"After training for a month or so, I can run a mile without stopping. And before the first race, I did not realize I could run that fast but it turns out that my mile time in the race is 6:36, which is the fastest time I ever ran," Hu said.

Hu has trouble sleeping at night and usually wakes up at 3 o'clock in midnight. During the track season, even when her legs are sore from the practice, she can sleep well. In the morning, she is able to remember what dreams she had, which did not happen to her before running.

"I massage Tina's sore legs every night after practice, and you can really feel that her muscles are getting stronger and harder every day," said Peng Xu, Tina's mother.

When reaching the end of the track season, Hu's mindset changed drastically from the beginning. The harder Hu trained the previous day, the more she want to run the next day.

"The thing that keeps me running is the feeling of achievement. I just felt like I have achieved so much after running two or three miles. So because of my growing confidence, I will keep running the next day, even though the process is painful," said Hu.

Hu participates more actively in school and is willing to try new things, despite the knowledge she received in the past is really limited.

"She always go to the Chinese classroom during tutorial before Tina started running, because that is where she felt the most comfortable in, but now, she spent most of her time in ceramics classroom. She starts to really love art. Running definitely expanded her perspectives," said Peixuan He, Hu's best friend.

Hu has overcome the challenges and the pain in running. She wants to keep running in her Sophomore year.

"I learned a lot through the track season but it only makes me believe one thing in the end and that is no humans are limited," said Hu.

—Xinran Xu (Cici)

Left most: Tina Hu, a freshman, running in a meet in the early of the season on the dusty trail of Crystal Spring. Top: Hu (left) running on the track in a race. Below middle & top left: Hu running in a tournament through a curve. Below: Teams from many high schools gather on the track, starting a race.



a freshman idol

a freshman idol



Freshman Eliane Liu and Selina Chen perform in Saratoga Idol on Nov. 27. They played a chinese piece, Eternal Love, and won first place overall as a duet.

Backstage of the McAfee theater on Nov. 27, minutes before her performance on Saratoga Idol, freshman Elaine Liu tried to calm herself down with a quick prayer for good luck. As she walked onto the stage, her legs trembled and hands became moist with sweat. Many unfamiliar faces greeted Elaine as she picked up her Chinese flute and played the first note of her piece, "Eternal Love."

The theater resounded with the lovely music of the Chinese flute and Elaine's singing. After her performance, the audience erupted in applause. She gave a shy bow, and hurriedly walked off stage.

Not expecting to be called back on stage, Elaine changed into her spare set of clothes. Minutes later, however, her name was called as the winner of Saratoga Idol, and she hastily changed back into her traditional Chinese outfit and went onto the stage to collect her award, still not sure if the judges had called up the right winner.

"Right before walking on stage was the scariest and tensest moment for me," Elaine said. "And after we were done, I was relieved that I didn't make any super big mistakes."

Elaine could not believe her ears when they first announced the winners. "I thought for sure someone else would win because I thought the other soloists and groups were very talented," Elaine said.

Instead of a competition, Elaine saw it more as a entertaining event that could give her more experience. "I saw the event as a fun performance that could introduce me to other talented singers and musicians at Saratoga High School."

Before her decision to participate in Saratoga Idol, Elaine said she felt very uncomfortable singing in front of others. "Performing with the Chinese flute, I have almost no stage fright," Elaine said, "but when I sing, it is a completely different story."

Elaine said she almost backed out of Saratoga Idol, but because of her friends' strong encouragement, she found the courage to perform. "Although I was scared, performing as a duet with Selina helped me calm down a little," Elaine said.

"I was filled to the brim with as much excitement as horror, which went away right as I started to play," Elaine said. While on stage, Elaine said she was surprised that her legs didn't give way beneath her because she was shaking so much.

Elaine said she felt more confident in her ability to play the Chinese flute than her ability to sing because she has had much more experience performing with her flute.

"I feel like I have a special bond with my Chinese flute, especially when I perform with it," Elaine said.

Elaine started practicing her Chinese flute ever since small, around the age of five. "I've played it for so long, without it, I would not feel like me, so having it on stage really helped reassure me."

Having won Saratoga Idol, Elaine said, "My experience in the Saratoga Idol competition is one that I will never forget because of the people I met and the voices I heard."

—Jocelyn Yang



"My experience in the Saratoga Idol competition is one that I will never forget because of the people I met and the voices I heard."

- Elaine Liu



SELMIXES

SELMIXES

Ethan Chang grabs his Canon 7D camera and various lenses in his camera bag in preparation for a photo shoot. He travels to a beautiful part of town where he meets up with a friend he met over Instagram. Ethan instructs his friend to pose in front of a nice background, good lighting, and he snaps several pictures, capturing as many shots as possible. He presses his finger lightly against the button on his camera. He adjusts the angle very slightly between shots.

After a long photo shoot, Ethan sits down to edit. He looks through the album of photos to select the best work on. He touches up the imperfections, adjusts the focus, and alters the color of the photo, making it in his own distinct style.

Ethan, who goes by the Instagram handle "selmixes", has found a large audience in photography. His account has accumulated over 12,000 followers, with his posts averaging 3,000 likes each.

Ethan first started creating content when he started making music during the winter break of seventh grade. He learned all his skills from YouTube and developed his own style with experience. Prior to this, he tried to run a YouTube channel, with little to no luck.

After making music for a good year and a half, Ethan found passion in photography. Ethan was first inspired when senior Nick Burry took him out for a photo shoot after getting in contact through Instagram.

Ethan thought photography looked very fun and started learning from Nick.

Similar to music, Ethan learned many things about using a camera from YouTube. However, he learned color grading techniques, angling, and filming techniques from Nick. Ethan would also receive feedback from Nick on his edits.

Over time, Ethan has developed a distinct style in his photos. "I didn't really find the style of my photos, but rather the style found me," he said. From his experience, Ethan edits by what looks good, and what looks bad.

Ethan normally goes on photo shoots with others. Usually, these people are friends from school or people he met over Instagram. He has been refusing to make money from his hobby.

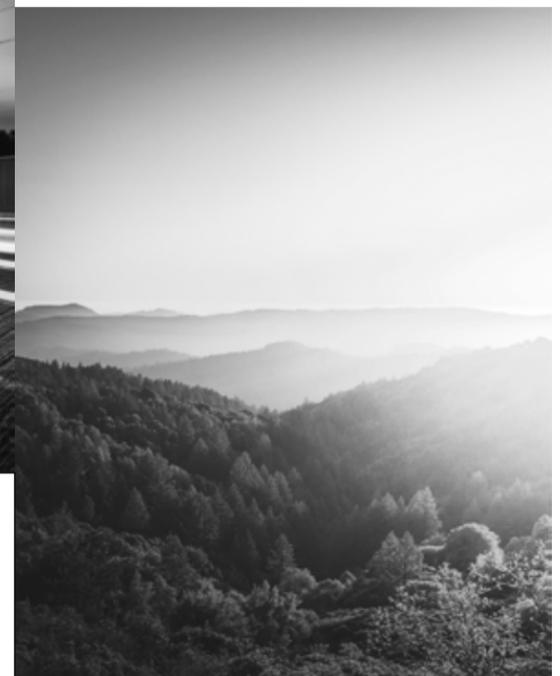
Ethan also runs a secondary Instagram account, with handle "selmkolder". Inspired by the photographer and videographer Sam Kolder, Ethan showcases his photography, leaving it open for feedback.

Ethan has also faced a lot of criticism in the past, which taught him a very important lesson. "Everyone is gonna get hate, but I didn't really care," he said.

From his hobbies, Ethan has developed deeper skills. "Photography has opened more eyes to see more things around me, meet more people, and improve my social interactions. I see the world differently and I notice more details in the world," he said.

Ethan hopes to take his hobby to a higher level in the future. He said that he plans on becoming the president of the school's photography club. Despite not being the most profitable career, Ethan hopes to pursue it as it is something he enjoys.

—Bill Yuan



Top: This photo was captured by Ethan and posted on his "selmkolder" Instagram account on April 17. Pictured is a streak from a car's headlights on a highway.
Right: This photo was posted to the "selmkolder" instagram account on April 24, captioned, "Hills".

Becoming a tennis captain

Senior Merrick Wang is waiting on the courts at 2:30pm., waiting for the team to come to practice. When the rest of the team came, he started barking at them to start running and show some effort on the court.

"I'll always push them to give their best effort," Merrick said. "I don't like to see the younger players slack off."

But, four years ago, it has been Merrick who has been barked at to give his best effort by the captain.

"When I was a freshman, I had to give my all," Merrick said. "Now I feel like a leader, telling the younger ones to give their best effort."

That is only one case out of many of how Merrick has changed for the good since he was a freshman on the varsity tennis team.

For example, when Merrick was a freshman, he had to fight to get a spot on the lineup.

"I had to work hard at practice and had to focus on the ball," Merrick said. "One bad practice, and I was going to be out of the lineup for the next match."

Everyday, he strived to improve his strokes so he has a chance to play a match. Now, Merrick is consistently in the lineup, and has not gotten benched one match in the season.

"When I was a freshman, there were a lot better players than me on the team. Now, since I improved a lot, I can play a good match against one of our best players," Merrick said.

In addition, when Merrick was a freshman, he was one of the shortest and weakest players on the team.

"It was scary playing players bigger than me," Merrick said. "I had to learn to keep my calm and play my best against a bigger player, and I ended up losing to them most of the time."

Four years later, after working hard in the weight room and eating right, Merrick is the tallest player and one of the strongest players on the team.

"It feels like I can get into the younger players mind, because they are scared of playing me in tennis," Merrick said. "So, I can win because they are nervous playing bigger guys like me."

Also, Merrick worked on his footwork on the court and his speed on the court as well.

"I used to be really really slow," Merrick said. "I couldn't get to balls that were easy to get for most people on the team."

After getting stronger in the legs by doing leg exercises, he is now

one of the fastest on the tennis team.

He credits his vast improvement to his hard working personality, something he didn't have before he started playing on the tennis team.

"After seeing the other players, I knew I had to work hard in everything to improve and start winning players on the team," Merrick said.

But that's not all Merrick has changed while being on the tennis team.

At first, Merrick didn't support his teammates, because he wanted to take their spot. But, coach Florin Marica had saw that he didn't support his teammates.

So, after the next practice, Florin had talked with Merrick in private alone.

"He told me that this is not an individual sport when you're on the high school," Merrick recalled. "You have to support your teammates. It's not about you anymore,"

Merrick has first been angry at what Florin said to him. But, after thinking about it in his house, he knew that what Florin said to him was right.

"The next match, I gave some encouraging words to my teammates," Merrick said. "But then I realized it made me play better. A lot better."

Since then, he supported his teammates with encouraging words. Now, Florin and the whole tennis team thinks that Merrick is the most supportive teammate on the team.

"I'm doing whatever I can to help my teammates win their match," Merrick said.

But now, Merrick misses going to tournaments with the team. He says that it was a fun experience to compete with teams not in their league.

"Playing new teams is more fun than playing the same teams over and over again," Merrick said. "I'm sad that we didn't go to any tournaments this year. I will miss them."

Overall, Merrick says that being on the tennis team has helped him improve as a person and improve as a tennis player.

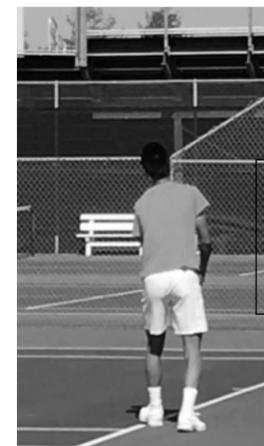
"I went from not supporting at all to supporting anyone, not just on the tennis team," Merrick said. "I also improved my tennis skills a lot in four years. I'll miss the environment here, and I will definitely miss high school tennis and its experiences. It has made me a better person, on and off the court."

—Anthony Zheng

MERRICK WANG



Merrick is hitting a backhand down the line to win a crucial point for the match.



Merrick is getting ready to serve the ball. He was serving for the match to give Saratoga the win.



Merrick is returning the opponent's serve to start the point.

"I had to juggle several subjects while still trying to be proficient in all of them."

stem gem

by tej bade



Last month, sophomore Rohan Kumar qualified for the USA Junior Mathematical Olympiad (USAJMO), a prestigious math competition for which about 2.5 percent of test takers in the nation qualify.

Yet math is not even his favorite subject. While Rohan has not abandoned this field, he has shifted his focus to other STEM subjects, especially in the last year.

His interest in math and science began in sixth grade when he started to participate in math competitions.

"Math is the subject that I can sit down and perform the best on because I've been competing for so long," he says. As an active participant in the middle school math club, he dedicated about 20 hours a week to the subject. Even though his mother pushed him at first, his STEM journey quickly became self-motivated. In the middle of eighth grade, Rohan began to feel differently about math.

"I wanted something more practical for a job," he said. Rohan realized that he did not want to pursue pure mathematics as a career and that he was intrigued by nature. Thus, a new interest in biology was born. He began to consider a career in the medical field.

For study material, Rohan first looked to the Campbell biology textbook, the one used in the AP biology class. He began to dream of competing in Science Bowl, an academic competition that tests students' knowledge in all areas of science and mathematics. He started to study seriously, spending more and more time by studying past Science Bowl topics, which range from human anatomy to optics to Newton's laws of motion.

"Once I started studying biology, I improved as a Science Bowl player, and I decided to try out for the team in high school," Rohan said. After all of his hard work, he made it onto the Science Bowl team as a freshman last year.

Rohan also looked into physics not only because of his curiosity about other sciences, but because it used similar skills required of competition math. Piling more studying onto his workload, he competed in physics at the Science Bowl.

"This year is the year where all my studying came together," he says. After all his hard work, Rohan made the A team for Science Bowl. Next year, he plans to take AP physics, AP chemistry, and multivariable calculus at West Valley College.

In Science Bowl, teams are put in a round robin bracket. The top teams from each bracket advance to the double-elimination playoffs.

Qualifying for semifinals in biology means a team is in the top 500 of test takers, and in physics, the top 400. Rohan's team made it to the semifinals in the double-elimination bracket but lost to the second place team, ultimately placing third overall.

Rohan realized that different competitions require different skill sets. He likes the style of math competitions the best since the problems are quick, and they require much insight. On the contrary, according to Rohan, physics "requires too much conceptual knowledge" and biology is very memory-intensive. Because these two subjects don't require as much analysis, Rohan looked to another subject: computer science.

This year, Rohan started looking into computer science and decided that "it was more suited to my interests, given that I enjoy algorithmic thinking," he says. Because of his interest in coding and career stability, Rohan plans to be a software engineer.

Another reason for deciding to take computer science more seriously is because his entire immediate family has experience in the field. Rohan recently qualified for the Platinum Division of the USA Computing Olympiad (USACO), the high-

est division before participation on the USA computing team is considered.

Rohan studies past USACO questions and practices creating algorithms that will solve the problems, instead of coding the entire problem out.

In the past, Rohan has dedicated the most time to biology, but with his new pursuit of computer science, his time will be spent differently. Last summer Rohan did research at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Rohan was excited to take biology to the next level and it wouldn't hurt to have this accomplishment on his resume.

But after a while, he realized that the research he conducted didn't interest him, confirming his decision not to pursue biology in the future.

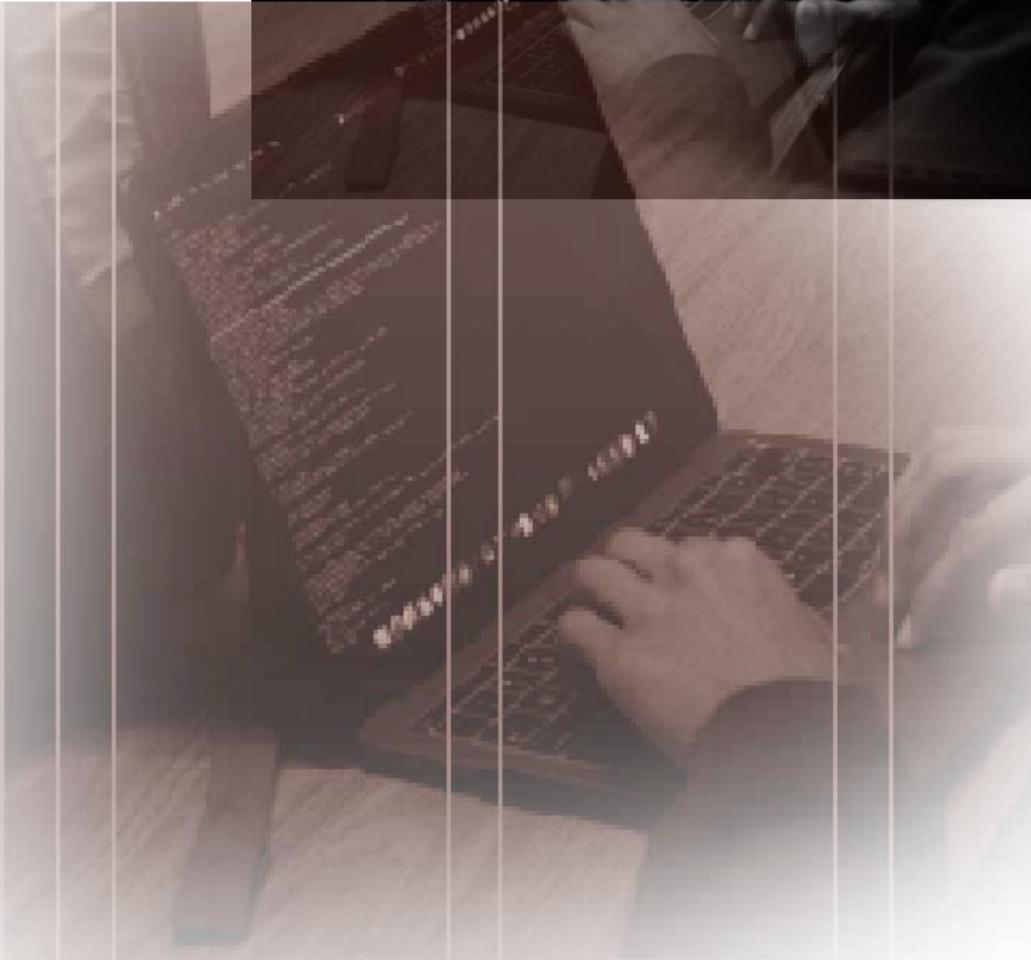
This year, Rohan applied to the Canada/USA Mathcamp due to its prestigious program, which Rohan thought would help him with his problem-solving skills.

Therefore, the camp would be useful because math, computer science, and physics, all require good problem-solving skills.

Rohan now has plenty of knowledge across various sciences, which is necessary as a Science Bowl contender. There are several other takeaways from his work.

For example, "it improved my time management significantly as I had to juggle several subjects while still trying to be proficient in all of them," Rohan said.

Furthermore, these experiences gave him a better sense of what field he is most interested in to pursue as a career. From Rohan's foray into the science and math world he has not only become more knowledgeable but has acquired life-long skills.



CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM: Samantha Wiesner and Nathan Glon high five after crushing a rally game. Caroline Keogh and Rima Christie enjoy the wonderful weather at tutorial. The 7th period beginner PE class races in 20 yard dashes.



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Anthony Zheng focuses on the ball as he prepares to serve. Sadaf Sobhani cheers along with the rest of her class during a rally. Savannah Lin performs in front of the school at homecoming quad day, repping green. Jovy Zhou waits patiently for his cue.



*High school
to the
freshmen
mean that
they would
have to adapt
to a new
environment,
and they
would
have to act
with more
maturity*

new beginnings

From the moment her alarm buzzed repeatedly that morning, freshman Emily Eckerman was riddled with nerves. She had no idea what to expect on her first day of high school. She arrived on campus frantically seeking a familiar face.

When the bell rang at 8:10, she and three others began roaming the hallways in search of their first period. Schedule in hand, they walked around aimlessly for a solid six minutes, going to every MAP class. It wasn't her fault all the MAP classrooms looked the same.

She was finally able to find her classroom, with much inconvenience, but she felt very lucky not to be alone, and to have her friends by her sides through this traumatic experience.

Similarly, freshman Anjali Nuggehalli was intimidated at the thought of high school. "The first week is really scary, and then you get more comfortable," she said.

Freshman Shivali Kattumadam realized she would have to up her game since grades actually matter this year. One big change from 8th grade to 9th grade was the workload.

At first this was harder for her; she had to teach herself how to take useful notes in class, and how to use them for exams, but it got easier with time.

With Emily's unbelievably busy schedule as a competitive cheerleader, she had to learn how to manage her time, constantly doing work at tutorial, and never wasting a second.

"You have to have a lot more responsibility with what you do, because you have harder classes, so you really have to be on top of everything," she said when emphasizing the gravity of time management.

Among all other aspects of teenage life, emotional and social activities play a big role in finding yourself.

"When I first got to high school, I was really scared that I'd be lost amongst everyone else, and I'd lose my friends," Anjali Nuggehalli said.

But it all worked out for the better. Her subconscious worry

about losing friends and being alone showed her who her real companions were, and which friends would stick with her through thick and thin.

High school is not only an academic haven, but it is a time of self-discovery. Like most other students, Anjali now knows what kind of person she wants to be, and her principles with maturity.

One student though disagrees. Emily feels that you can never really figure out life. That your perception is constantly changing, and that is not necessarily a bad thing.

Figuring life out is not only comprised of soul-searching, but career-wise, most freshmen have no clue as to what they want to do.

"I don't think I had a clear picture of what I wanted to be in middle school, but if anything I am even more confused now," Emily said as she explored the endless opportunities offered to her here.

In middle school, it was sort of a given that she would go into tech, as she was living in Silicon Valley, but she has realized there are infinite possibilities for her to pursue.

One aspect of high school, according to Sanjana that has really helped her reach this turning point is, "classroom quality."

Sanjana recalls the horrid 48-minute periods of 8th grade, when the class would waste away, with a passive aggressive teacher, completing pointless assignments.

She said "teachers don't breathe down your neck," when stressing the classroom quality at Saratoga.

In addition to academics, the high school has more spirit and student run events. Freshman Kavita Sundaram really enjoyed Bombay in the Bay, Homecoming, and the BENEFIT fashion show since it promoted more of an independent culture within the students.

She continued to say, "I feel like we have more autonomy and more freedom in high school. I've enjoyed it a lot more than middle school."

—Nika Bagherian

Freshman Class President Derek Hsu deals with the differences in middle school leadership and high school.

growing via leadership LEADERSHIP



Top: Derek, along with class officers Apurva Chakravarthy, Esther Luan, Weilin Sun, and Cheryl Wu, smile for a picture promoting the Winter Formal on December 1st. Bottom: Derek explains to the Leadership class the upcoming plans for the freshman class office.



It was 8 a.m. on a Friday morning in August. Freshman Derek Hsu went over to Leadership Teacher Matt Torrens' room to find out the results of the election for the new freshman class officers.

He breathed a sigh of relief as his weeks of tiring and stressful campaigning came to a close when he was announced Freshman Class President.

What Derek didn't realize was how much different his leadership experience this year would be to his prior experiences.

His first challenge was Homecoming. Coming into high school, he and the four other class officers had no idea what a big event Homecoming was every year.

They were shocked to find out how much preparation was required to put on a polished, well-rehearsed Quad Day, complete with a skit and decorations.

Moreover, they realized that they had to work incredibly fast, as they only had a few weeks to plan a performance that most classes started planning since the very beginning of school.

However, Derek realized that this would be the Class of 2022's chance to show the rest of the school how spirited they were, so he and the other officers put in their hardest to make Homecoming a success.

Derek said he learned a lot about working under pressure and the importance of communication because of the time crunch they had for Homecoming.

However, even with their Quad Day turning out a success, the class officers began arguing a lot. They still had to learn how to trust each other's judgment and capabilities so that work could get done.

This was where Derek saw the first stark difference between middle school and high school. When serving as ASB secretary in 7th grade and ASB president in 8th grade, most arguments would be solved by Redwood Leadership Teacher Eveonne Lockhart. In high school class office, if arguments weren't solved among the officers, nobody would solve their problems for them, and no work would get done.

"It was really frustrating having everybody fighting, and we were all so

stressed out," Derek said. At this point, he began to become worried about how the group would work for the rest of the year.

Because of this, Derek said that he had to learn how to be a lot more patient. He organized a class office bonding event to try to get everyone to become less stressed and just have fun together, because "to work well as a team, a class office first needs to be friends, and respect each other's opinions."

Soon, the class office started listening to each other's ideas and opinions, and started arguing a lot less.

"This was a learning curve, but because of this, I definitely became a lot more patient, and a lot more willing to listen to people's ideas. It definitely improved my skills as a team member," said Derek.

He also noticed another key difference in the two leadership classes, and that was the way administration respected and made changes based on students' opinions. In middle school, administration didn't really take into account the opinions of the leadership students, but in high school, "Administration is a lot more respectful to students' ideas and they count them as valid points." He liked that his opinion mattered and could actually bring about change.

Regardless of the many differences between the two Leadership classes, after a few months of being in high school leadership, Derek felt that he truly understood the way things worked and he was not taken aback as much by the differences in the classes.

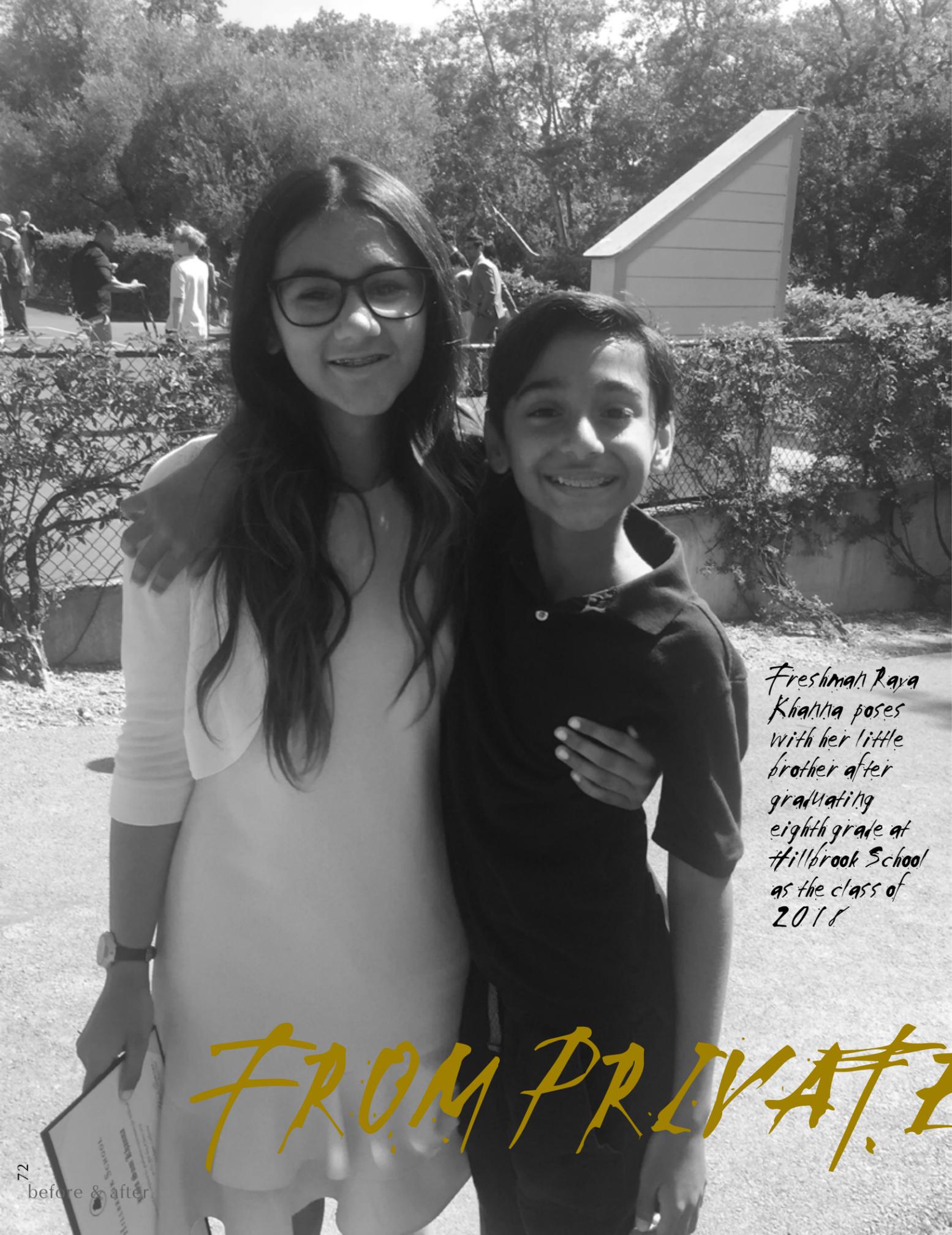
The transition between middle school to high school is never easy, and neither is the transition into a different Leadership class, where the responsibility to fundraise, plan events and keep everyone in your class up to date lies completely on five people. However, because of this experience, Derek felt he has become more organized, responsible and patient. Because of this, he knows how to communicate better, and he has also become a better listener.

"Leadership has always been a part of my life, and I hope that it always will be. I love doing my part for my grade, and it's taught me skills that I'll keep forever," Derek said. —Apurva Chakravarthy



Left: Derek, ASB President at the time, led the Pledge of Allegiance at the Class of 2018's graduation from Redwood Middle School. Bottom: Then-fifth grader Derek smiles after being elected ASB President. Right: Derek, along with other class officers, explains to the Freshman parents what the class office's plans for the next year are.





Freshman Raya Khanna poses with her little brother after graduating eighth grade at Hillbrook School as the class of 2018

After nine years of going to a private K-8 school in Los Gatos, freshman Raya Khanna was excited to continue her private school education at Mitty, where most of her close friends were planning to go to. So, when she got her acceptance results, she was disappointed.

Raya applied to Mitty for high school expecting to get in, considering she came from Hillbrook, a private school with a good reputation. However, Mitty had many applicants that year, not allowing Raya a spot. She had to switch to her backup plan of going to Saratoga High School.

This quick change in plans of reality was something Raya's family was not prepared for. Not only was Raya upset about not getting in, but she was scared about how it would be like to make new friends. She was also worried about if she would get a good education the way she used to, even though she knew SHS had a good reputation. Her parents were also hesitant because they didn't have much understanding of how the school was like.

"I felt bad about [not getting in]," Raya said. "I really hoped I would get in and I knew despite the fact that Saratoga is a great school, private schools have a higher chance of getting into [prestigious] colleges."

Although Raya knew that Saratoga High was a good school with many resources, she had some worries. She had to deal with going to a new school for the first time and meeting completely new students.

"I was nervous as heck...I was so scared to be in a new environment with new people," Raya said, "and I was not much of a people person."

However, Raya said that over summer, she tried to focus on social skills in order to gain confidence of meeting new people at school, which helped her allow herself to reach out to new people and gain more friends.

"Once I went to the [freshman] orientation, I was pretty chill because I met a few people. On the first day of school I met a ton more. My friend group and friends in general sort of started to expand after that."

In addition, Saratoga High has much more students than in Hillbrook, where each grade level ranged from 30-50 students. This played a major role in giving Raya more opportunities to talk to more people.

"It's good to be around so many people because it has made me talk to people, which has made me more social," said Raya. "I may not be able to remember names but I can talk to people more easily."

After meeting new people, Raya became more hopeful about school at Saratoga High. She became less worried about her social life than she was before she met people at the freshman orientation. In addition, she was more hopeful about her education at a public school, which she now felt wasn't so much different from her old school.

Raya thought that the transition to Saratoga High was a lot smoother than expected, after having many positive encounters with new students as well as with teachers. In fact, Raya's main struggle was simply to set up her school email, she said.

Raya felt that Saratoga High was like a continuation of Hillbrook for, rather than it being a completely new school. She felt as if she was already familiar with the school.

"Saratoga has sort of exceeded my expectations for a new school, which is nice," said Raya. "Everybody is pretty much kind to each other."

Raya even feels that she prefers Saratoga High over Hillbrook, due to the number of people at the school, giving her a wide range of new people to meet and make friends with. Additionally, she enjoys the outdoor campus as well as connecting with her teachers.

Before going to Saratoga High, Raya's family paid to go to a private school in order to get the best education for Raya because they knew they were able to afford it. But, they are now confident that Saratoga High's curriculum and education as a public school is much more advanced than expected, and even more advanced than Hillbrook's.

Both of Raya's younger siblings, two twins who are currently in sixth grade, had originally planned on going to private high schools such as Bellarmine or Presentation. However, from all the positive feedback Raya has given to her siblings and parents about Saratoga High, their consideration of going to SHS has been much more open.

Raya agrees that she is much happier at Saratoga than she expected, and she is happy to have the opportunity to go here. She originally felt sad that she wasn't accepted into Mitty, but in the end, she is happy she ended up at SHS after all of her very positive experiences.

"If I went back now knowing what I now know, I wouldn't have applied to anything," said Raya. "I would have gone straight to Saratoga because this is a really good fit for me."

—Alissa Doemling



Freshman Raya Khanna starts a new public school at Saratoga High after spending 9 years in a small, private K-8 school in Los Gatos.

FROM PRIVATE TO PUBLIC

Pursuing pursuing passions PASSIONS

How has a senior become a strong leader in the marching band?

LEFT TO RIGHTS: Aj Lee plays the drums for the jazz concert last semester. Jaewoo Lee and Aj commemorate their last band season together with a photo. Aj leads the marching band in warm ups before the show.. After the end of year concert last year, the French horn section takes a group photo.

The marching band was practicing for their upcoming season at 9 a.m. near the end of July on the football field. The three drum majors stood on their elevated platforms conducting for their 2018-2019 show, "A Dream Within." The 150 musicians looked up and saw AJ Lee, a muscular, broad-shouldered, sunburnt, 5 foot 11 inch senior whose arms waved in the air with stern authority.

Despite his leadership and participation in different programs and activities around school, such as band and homecoming, AJ describes himself as an "extroverted introvert who wants to play Smash, eat or binge Youtube."

"Going into high school, I expected piles of homework and difficult classes," AJ said. "I was a scared, anxious, antisocial student trying not to fail his classes."

He never considered that he would have trouble finding friends.

"During my freshman year, I hung out with seniors that didn't go off because they felt bad that I sat alone," AJ said.

Transitioning to high school could be daunting for any incoming freshman, but AJ found comfort in the things that stayed the same for him.

One commonality he had from middle school was participating in Saratoga's band. AJ currently plays French horn and is the first chair in the school's highest level band, Saratoga Wind Ensemble or SWE.

"I started playing French horn in middle school and joined the music department because my brother was in it," AJ said.

His brother, Jaewoo Lee, now a college sophomore majoring in trombone performance, was first chair for trombone as well as a drum major in his senior year. His achievements motivated AJ to practice harder and fulfill the expectations of his parents and teachers.

AJ continued band throughout high school, and in January of his sophomore year, music director

Michael Boitz announced that the music directors were taking applications for next year's leadership positions, including drum majors. At the time, AJ thought he was ready to follow in his brother's footsteps and become a drum major. He received the position in his junior year, compared to his brother who received it in his senior year.

"I wanted to be drum major to one-up my brother," AJ said. But he made a mistake that almost cost him the position.

"In my junior year, I yelled at someone I had no right to yell at," AJ said. He disrespected his bandmate and took advantage of the role he was given. After feeling terrible for what he had done, AJ apologized to that person.

Despite being in a position where he was looked upon as a role model, AJ said he has often contemplated quitting band due to the time commitment and the peer pressure to succeed.

"I've thought about quitting at least 30 times a year," AJ said. "But I think about how the music directors have probably had this feeling of futility for so many years."

AJ has persevered through these past two years, and looking back, he is glad that he stuck with band.

"I don't think there's any emotion I've ever experienced that wasn't a result of being in band," he said. "There have definitely been terrible mistakes, but I've had more positive experiences than negative ones."

AJ remains the same introvert he was in his freshman year, but he has learned many things along the way.

"People are nicer than you think. Be sure to say 'thank you' and 'sorry' more. Everyone should learn to be respectful," AJ said. But the most important thing he has learned is perseverance.

"If you do anything in high school, find what you're passionate about and don't give up on it," AJ said. "Don't be afraid of making mistakes."

—Wilson Fung





Freshman Adrian Mar goes to nationals in badminton, playing across the world and against people of all ages.

Sidelines to Nationals

The crowd went wild as freshman Adrian Mar scored the final point in the international tournament at Brazil and won gold in boys' doubles for the USA.

In the gym, a then 7-year-old Mar stood there, birdies whizzing overhead, the net standing over him, rackets swinging around. He stood there in awe as he watched his mother play. "The moment I started playing, I discovered my love for badminton."

Another seven years later, it was the finals for the boys doubles with the USA as one of its final competitors. Mar sweating, ready for the birdie to come whizzing back over the net. When it came over, he was ready. With a flick of his wrist, he whizzed it back over, the shuttle hitting the ground. The USA had won gold in boys doubles in Brazil.

Now, he spends 14 hours a week practicing badminton with his coach and about five extra hours at home conditioning.

"I usually do a mix of drills and conditioning, which includes sprints and two versus one situation with my other badminton friends." This, Mar says, is what leads him to get to this level in badminton, by "putting in countless hours of hard work.. and to keep pushing myself past my limits."

Mar started his career when he was 7, slowly putting in more effort and work as he progressed. Even after all this, what keeps him in the sport is the "feeling when playing on the court as it provides a very lively environment."

On the court and even while practicing, Mar said that he feels lots of pressure due to the national ranking he currently holds. He tries to think positively and enjoy the time on the court. Gradually, he has gotten accustomed to the pressure and overcome it.

He has been to many places to play in many tournaments, everywhere from local and regional tournaments to national and international ones. His favorite experiences were from the many people he met and the various opponents he has faced.

Mar, being at the level he is at, chose to play at a higher age group in order to have enough competition.

"I face a variety of levels when it comes to competition. Some can be moderate in terms of competition, while some are very tough, and are a challenge for me to face," Mar said.

Every tournament requires a lot of training and conditioning. Before each game, Mar runs to warm himself up and condition himself while listening to music to calm himself down. This helps him keep his cool and have a positive mentality. He also has a unique playing style, which he says is what differentiates him from his opponents.

Mar's training, conditioning and countless hours of hard work ultimately led up to a single tournament in Brazil in 2017. It was the finals, and Mar was representing the USA in the 15-year-old boys doubles. It was the last point as the players got in their formations, the opposing team getting ready for their service. The shuttle was dropped and then hit towards Mar.

He returned it while everyone in the bleachers watched. His parents and friends looked on as the small shuttle was being hit back and forth. Mar saw his opportunity and struck the shuttle down into the ground, hitting the floor, scoring the twenty-first point, winning the gold medal.

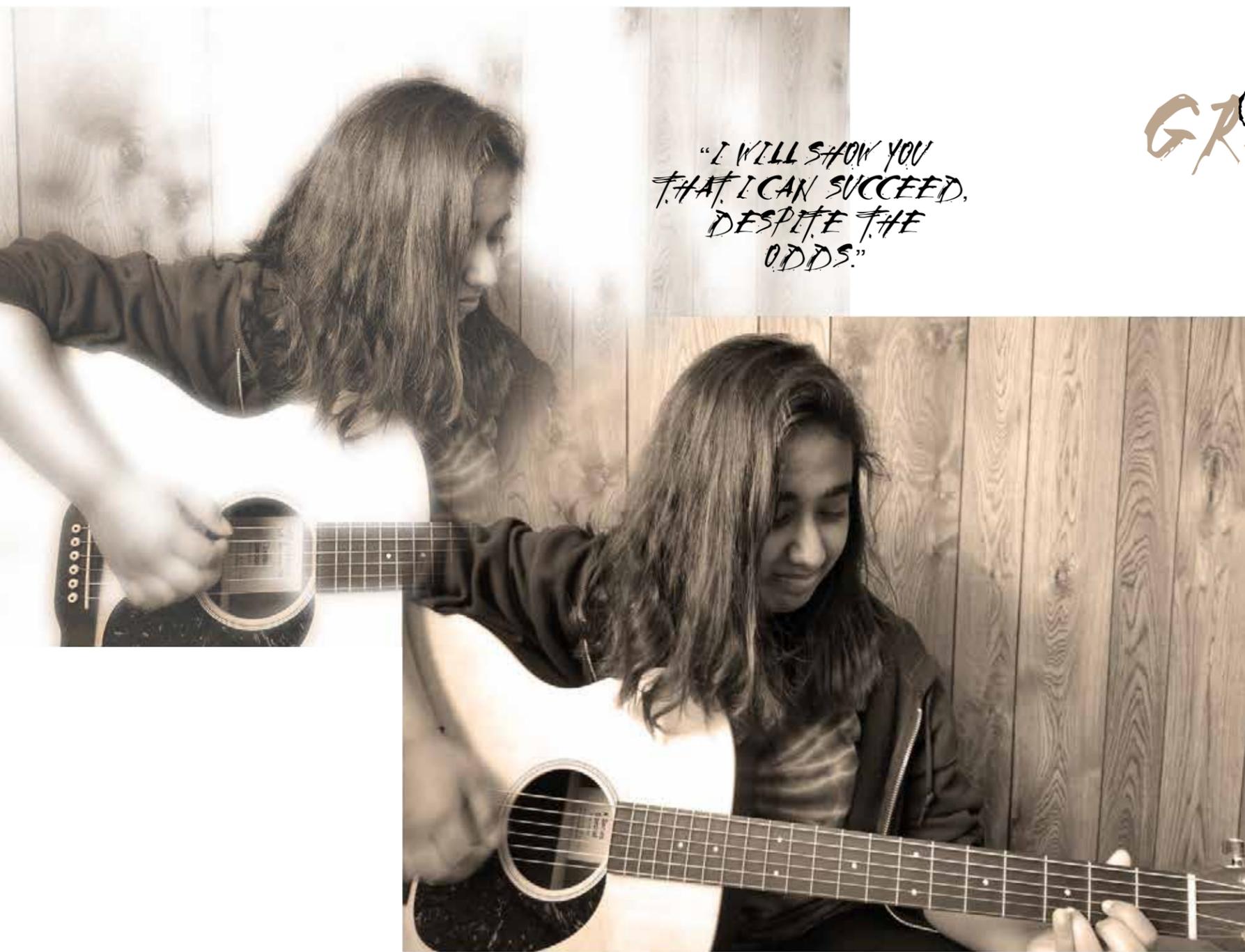
"That was my most memorable moment in badminton and [it] was one of my few international tournaments where I could represent the USA and win gold for boys doubles," he said.

The time Adrian took to develop his own play style and hone his craft allowed him to improve as a badminton player and as a person.



Adrian Mar celebrates after scoring point in a tournament.

—Ryan Huang



"I WILL SHOW YOU
THAT I CAN SUCCEED,
DESPITE THE
ODDS."

by kristen hung

Growth through music

Since she was 3 years old, Medha Nair had been passionate for music. When she lived in Bangalore, her parents would always play Bollywood music that she greatly enjoyed, and that ultimately sparked her passion. Upon reaching the fourth grade, praise from a teacher was enough to give her a surge of confidence and send her on the track of a musical career.

In the sixth grade, Medha felt her passion manifest itself within her when she truly put her heart to a music-related event; she practiced all year for a singing competition.

Although she didn't end up taking the first prize, Medha felt as though the experience itself was an even better reward, for she believed she had found a path perfect for herself.

When asked if she had considered anything other than music for a potential career, Medha said she "couldn't imagine doing anything other than music."

However, she mentioned that she had not participated in many music-related activities before she moved to Saratoga right before her freshman year; in fact, she admitted to not knowing how anything would work in the States and that the only option for her was to have a fresh start.

With that mindset, Medha decided to join the school choir. She believed that with the large, welcoming group, she would be slowly coaxed into the musical community of the Bay Area.

She immediately fell in love with choir, and began to ponder further options that would allow her to express her passion.

She tries to keep an open mind about her future career and is beginning to open herself up to other options such as psychology.

One of these was an online vocal course at the prestigious music school, Berklee College. Medha began taking the courses in the spring semester of her freshman year, and has been ever since.

She had always been optimistic about her chances of succeeding as a musician during her childhood, and she needed to force herself to think realistically when the time to actually kickstart a career drew nearer. She pushed herself to begin her college search and was attracted to Berklee almost immediately.

She immediately fell in love with choir, and began to ponder further options that would allow her to express her passion.

Medha said she chose Berklee because it had more options for aspiring pop artists like herself. Medha wanted to avoid opera, which many other music colleges offered as their main vocal course, as it did not correlate with what she hoped to do in the future.

She was also intrigued by the diversity at Berklee, as

she wanted the chance to be able to interact with people who had similar interests to herself; however, she also wanted to meet people from different backgrounds and who had different specific focuses.

In December, Medha found yet another chance to express her passion. She found GIFT, a project that was started by an alum's older brother. GIFT was a volunteering group that traveled to senior nursing homes and children's hospitals to sing for and even create small musicals to perform for the recipients.

She tries to keep an open mind about her future career and is beginning to open herself up to other options such as psychology.

Medha felt that this was a rewarding experience because she was able to make new friends and be part of another group while also volunteering and giving back to the community.

Despite her optimistic outlook on the prospect of becoming a musician, Medha admitted that she was incredibly scared and doubtful of her chances of succeeding in the musical world due to its incredible competitiveness and soaring demand.

She tries to keep an open mind about her future career and is beginning to open herself up to other options such as psychology.

Medha said, however, that spite has kept her going in the face of doubt. She mentioned that the doubt of the people around her to succeed had been her propelling force, and still is even now.

"My parents and others would sometimes say, 'a career in music is risky, so you shouldn't focus on it,' but I would think, 'I will show you that I can succeed, despite the odds.'"



79 medha nair

the violinist

Christine Lee has spent almost 12 years practicing her craft and slowly making her mark.

On Wednesday, May 8, at 9:14 AM, renowned violinist Hilary Hahn posted a new link to her Facebook page. The caption read, "Congratulations to the 2019 National YoungArts Winner in Classical Music, Christine Lee!" The link was to a YouTube video of Christine playing "Ford's Farm," a contemporary piece by composer Mason Bates, onstage at UCLA.

Christine, a junior, has spent almost 12 years practicing her craft, slowly making her mark as a member of the California Youth Symphony, National Youth Orchestra, and the school's top orchestra, Saratoga Strings. She was recently invited to attend the prestigious National YoungArts competition for classical music, along with senior cellist Thomas Lim.

However, it took time and effort for Christine to get to where she is now. In as early as fifth grade, she was beginning to feel the effect of constant practicing taking a toll on her.

"It was hard to find the motivation to keep practicing every day," she said. "My mom and I got into a couple of arguments about whether I should continue or not, but I'm so glad she convinced me to keep going."

Christine admitted to struggling with motivating herself to improve, especially as she came in contact with more and more musicians of a higher caliber.

"When you compare yourself to other people, you start thinking, 'Oh, I don't think I can ever get to that level,'" she said.

As a seventh grader, Christine began going to Music@Menlo, an intensive three-week summer program that focuses on chamber music. She called it an "eye-opening" experience, and accredited the program as her motivation to continue practicing in the next couple of years.

Since she has started high school, Christine has been making large strides on campus. As a sophomore, she won the annual concerto competition, giving her the chance to play a solo with the orchestra; and, as a junior, she was the concertmaster of Saratoga Strings during their participation in the Midwest Clinic, an international orchestra conference held in Chicago.

"When we went to Midwest, I realized that basically everyone [in Saratoga Strings] is like my sibling," Christine said. "If I ever have trouble, I know where I can go."

Violin has taught Christine "basically every useful skill in life," from perseverance to the importance of laying a foundation and not rushing through hard tasks. Since she started to play violin, she has indirectly learned to be efficient and thorough in her schoolwork. She has quickly adapted to the constant comparison that is so common in both high school and competitive music.

"Instead of thinking that other people are better than you, you have to learn to use the opportunity to listen to their talent and learn from it," she said.

Christine's drive and passion have not wavered since her first time at Music@Menlo, when she knew music was something she loved to do. Chamber music gives her a reason to love music and keep practicing.

"Once, I was performing once with a piano trio, and the three of us suddenly looked up and smiled at each other," Christine remembered, smiling. "I thought, this is it. This is why I play."

—Maddie Jin

LEFT TO RIGHT: Christine Lee performs at summer program Music@Menlo in 2018; at a local concert in 2012; Music@Menlo again in 2018, 2017, and 2016.





TOP TO BOTTOM:
Bella's new racket she bought for the badminton season
Bella and her team went for a boba run after season
Bella's new badminton shoes to replace her old tennis shoes
New grips for her new badminton racket



Most athletes on school sport teams face many hours of grueling practice outside of school. But Bella Lin, a freshman with little prior experience to badminton, was placed on the JV badminton team this spring season.

Her experience playing with experienced badminton players on the team changed her to be a more of a better teammate and adapt to a more productive lifestyle.

During middle school, Bella had always been excited to play badminton at school, because of her sister, senior Megan Lin. Bella started practicing badminton last May to June, learning basic skills at a small gym reserve at City Beach Santa Clara two hours once a week.

She said that lessons were "more fun than anything" since there was a number of younger kids, so the coaches always tried to make lessons more interesting and interactive. Despite being the only high schooler there, she was not discouraged. Bella said that they learned basics at lessons, like serving properly or more effectively, the best motions for hitting high and far, and how to make the birdie go downwards, landing close to the net. After lessons, Bella continued to practice by herself during the summer so she could be prepared for tryouts.

During tryouts in early February, Bella was very stressed and nervous for her first time at tryouts and the new coach this year for badminton.

"At first it was all pretty OK because I went to every single open gym prior, but then coach started making us go singles with him with everyone else watching you, and he started becoming stricter and stricter," Bella said.

Other than being nervous by the strict instructions the new coach imposed, the number of her friends quitting badminton during tryouts because of the amount of commitment required also made her nervous.

"About halfway through tryouts, most of my friends started to quit since the commitment was too much, if you need to leave 10 minutes early or have to miss badminton for your 7th period, the coach gets really annoyed."

Even Bella was on the verge of quitting, but through some careful consideration, she decided to stay on the team, despite the amount of commitment she has to make for badminton and the strict rules of the coach. However, Bella does not regret staying on the team. She said that badminton had taught her many new life lessons that led her to be a better person and teammate.

Because badminton is one of the largest team sport on campus, it is also coed, Bella made many new friends and memories with her teammates. She said that badminton taught her how to overcome loss and how to work with people whom she never talked to before. Bella got to play singles, doubles, and mixed doubles this season, with mixed doubles as her favorite, since she enjoyed working with people.

"This was my first time ever on a sports team so I got to hold experiences I never have before like going to games and feeling the need to win so I won't affect the team, and learning how to work with anyone I get to put together with on the team even if I've never talked to them before."

Other than learning to work well with her teammates, Bella also learned to balance her time with late night games or practices and her heavy amounts of homework and studying. She said that she made many new adjustments to her schedules, like utilizing tutorial and lunch time to do her homework.

"I often have to schedule my day ahead of time, due to the jam-packed schedules I have every day due to badminton. It gets pretty hectic sometimes, but at least I do not have to worry so much after games."

At the end of the season, Bella was overall really happy with the outcome of her badminton journey. Even though this is Bella's first and last time playing competitively, she said that she will not forget her time playing on a team and the lessons that followed her through badminton.

—Ashley Ko



Bella Lin pictured for her team picture profile for singles before tryouts in early February.

Fly Birdie fly

Learning life lessons are different to everyone, whether it comes from parents, siblings, or sports, they are always long lasting and memorable.



“isn't just a sport, it's a way of life.”

Diving Deeper

As a middle schooler, senior Lei Otsuka never imagined herself joining Coach Christian Bonner's competitive Senior Elite swim group. She made sacrifices and grew in ways she didn't expect when she competitively swam in DACA for all four years of high school.

Lei qualified for CCS every year of her high school swimming career. She also managed to compete at State's and Sectionals following CCS, a high honor for a highschool athlete.

Her swimming experience made her more confident and driven. She learned discipline and perseverance from the commitment she was required to have. Lei said, "I loved swimming more than the hard choices I had to make."

None of her accomplishments came from leisurely tanning in the pool. As Lei Otsuka's life rapidly transitioned from two laps of butterfly to 20 laps of freestyle, it began to take a toll on her personal life.

"The level of commitment and competitiveness we were supposed to have for the sport, left little to no room for any other extracurriculars during the school year." She made hard choices to adapt to her swimming life.

Lei gave up pursuing her field of interest, political science and economy, to reach her full potential as a competitive swimmer. However, these sacrifices weren't limited to school. She lost summers and much of her free time with friends to be able to practice for an upcoming meet.

At first glance, her practice schedule might have seemed absurd. Non swimmer friends would find her practice schedule unreasonable. Sacrificing freetime Lei practiced 15 hours on an average week including early mornings before school.

"It's a little crazy to think about how much time we put into the sport because it's not just practice time you have to factor in, it's the recovery time as well."

After a typical swim meet, athletes must take time to relax and recover their muscles. She would spend most of the day rolling out her muscles and sleeping before school the following day. Lei explained how meets took most of her mental and physical stress.

With all of the negative sides of the transition from swimming in middle school to high school, one could easily wonder why she would want to continue such an aggressive sport. Intense schedules and the weight of highschool are already enough to encourage one to quit.

Even when practice was tough, Lei found ways to find gratitude for choosing the sport and built important relationships among her team. She considered her team as a family.

"I love my teammates more than anything and they were the reason I kept going," Lei said. "I also have to credit Christian [my coach] because he pushed me to be more than I was. Not just in swimming, but to grow as a person."

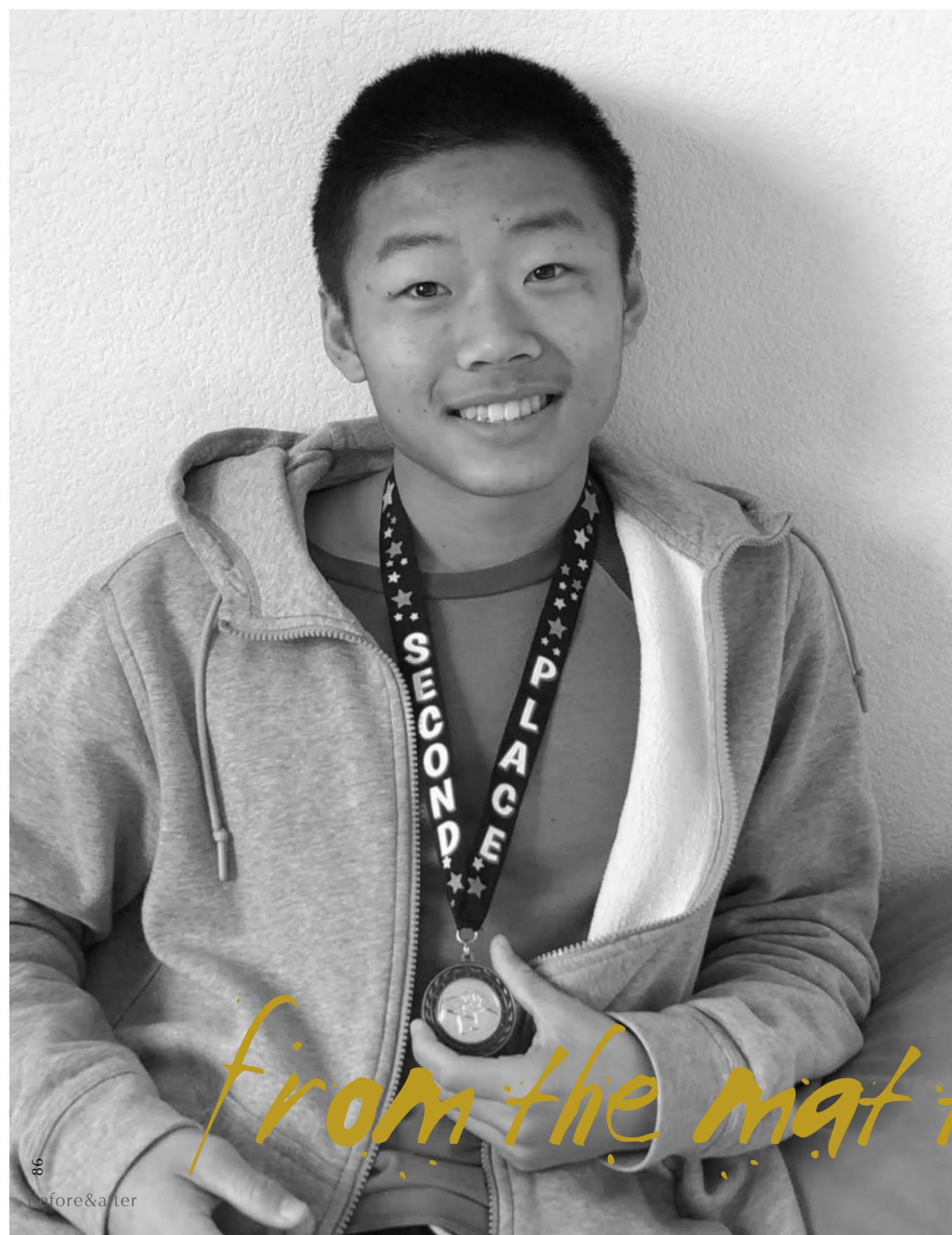
Lei not only left swimming with best times, but she left with more character and achieved goals in other aspects of life she didn't expect. After 12 years of competing, Lei learned that swimming "isn't just a sport, it's a way of life."

-Isabel Lee



Lei Otsuka (right) getting ready to leave for prom after competing at CCS. She rushes after a late start for her prom prep, but stops to take a few quick photos with friends and coaches before leaving.





Senior Victor Chen had spent his life on the mat: wrestling all throughout middle and high school, becoming captain of the wrestling team and even finishing 12th in CCS. However, this year he joined track after it had been recommended to him by a friend's mom.

According to Victor, the difference between the two sports was vast, not only the sport itself but the community surrounding it: the parents, coaches, athletes, and supporters. The wrestling team, compared to the track team, was closer as a whole, according to Victor. While being a captain and four year wrestling participant may have had an effect on this, Victor felt he became closer with his teammates because he was literally touching them when wrestling at practice.

"I mean, in wrestling we're, like, touching each other during the practices so it's almost impossible not to become closer." The dual practices worked out well for Victor, by the time wrestling CCS and track league trials rolled around, he felt more than enough prepared.

On Feb. 14 and 15, Victor competed in CCS, which is a 32-man double elimination bracket for each weight class. He then participated at the track league finals, where he competed against 17 others for a top 8 spot on Mar. 29. While Victor finished 12th in CCS wrestling, he was knocked out at the track trials, despite running a PR(Personal Record) of 58.63 seconds. However, Victor had not expected as much of himself at the meet than he did at CCS.

"I mean, I joined track this year, so I can't really expect to do as well in track as I do in wrestling."

Victor believes that his workout for wrestling was a major help in track, as the wrestling workout was much harder than the track one.

"The workout for wrestling is much harder. You're working the entire time while the track workout is a cycle of sprints and rests." The practices were about the same length, but at different times. Despite sometimes attending two practices in the same day and being a captain of the wrestling team, Victor said that he never had

time management problems.

"I usually sleep at 10-11 every night, which is earlier than most people. The college app. season was kind of crazy but I managed to get through it." His body, on the other hand, sometimes was bruised and battered by the harsh practices. Victor recalls facing one of the harshest wrestling workouts he had ever had, nearly burning out and his muscles in pain after, only to be hit with the toughest track practice he had experienced so far. The wrestling practice had consisted of continuous non-weight exercises, such as push-ups and squats, which worked their muscles to the maximum. On the other hand, Victor ran sets of 400s in the track practice, the workout that every mid-distance runner dreads.

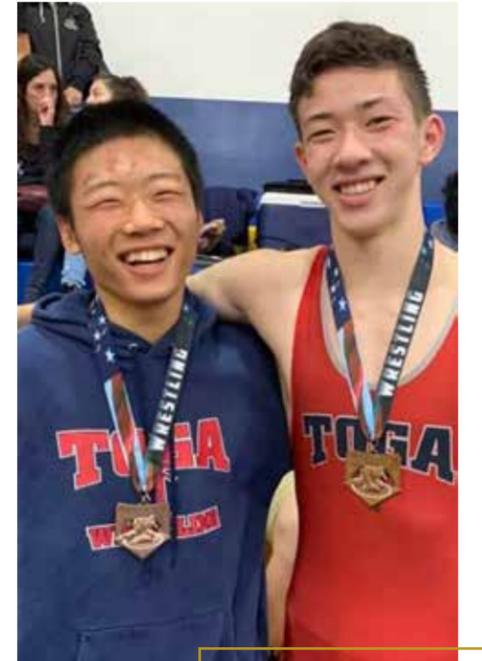
Victor concentrated solely on getting better, never once skipping a practice except for doctor appointments, meetings, etc. By the time his season ended for both sports, he was happy with his achievements.

"I think that I could have run faster in track if I started freshman year, but I'm still happy with what I got. I'm really happy with the 12th place finish I had in CCS, too."

Overall, Victor really enjoyed his time with both teams, making friends, competing side by side with his teammates. The only thing that he regrets is not being able to stay longer.

"I would stay if I could, because both teams were so much fun," said Victor. "But I guess I'm going to move on now. Hopefully I get to do this again."

—benjamin li



Victor with his friend, Cole Tippets at a wrestling tournament

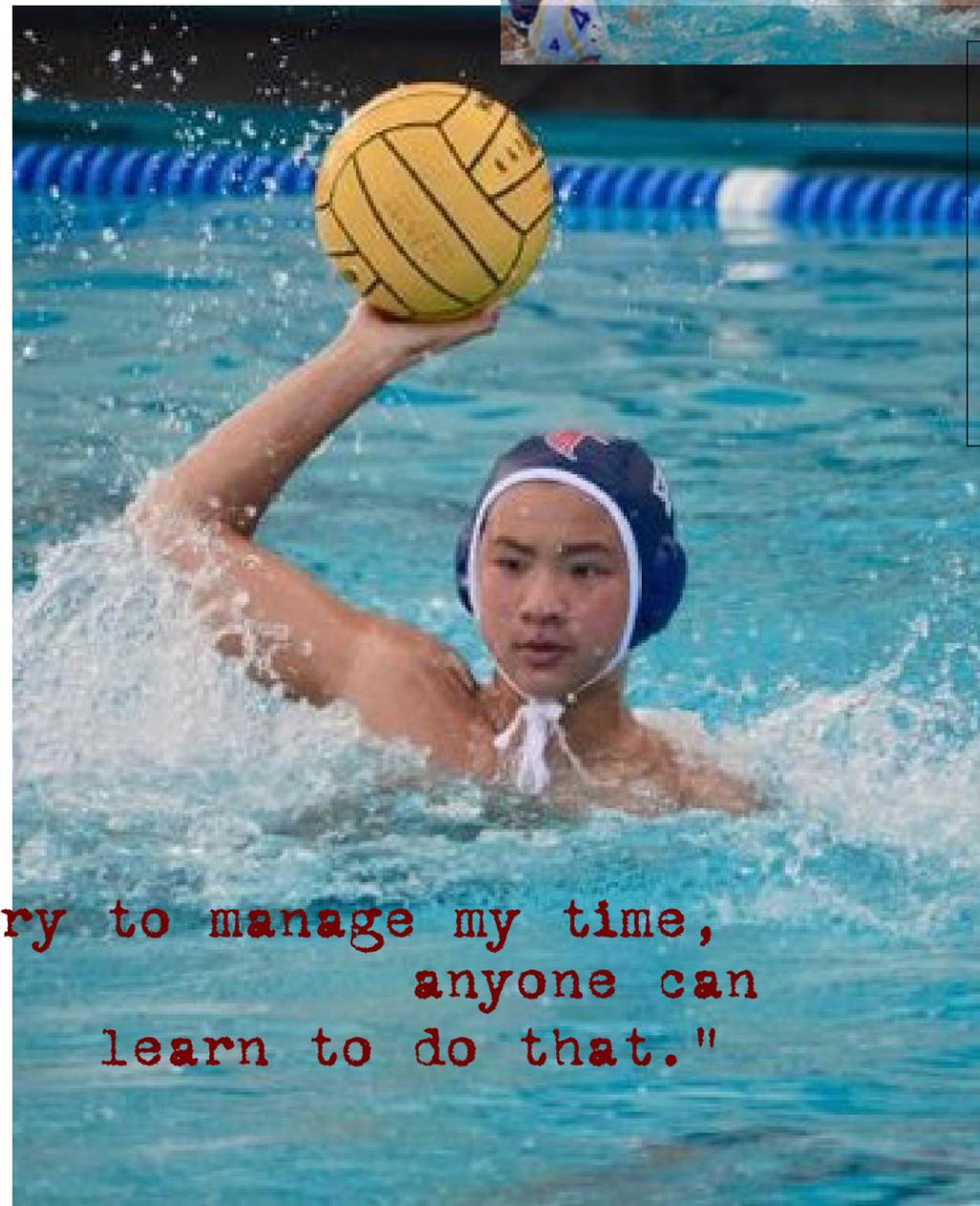
from the mat to the track

Playing UP

by jonathan li



Marcus Kuo surveys the pool, looking to pass to his teammates while avoiding defenders. Water polo is a very aggressive sport, and any lapse in focus can lead to a turnover.



"I try to manage my time,
anyone can
learn to do that."

It's 2:10 pm, and as the bell rings, freshman Marcus Kuo leaves his classroom in a hurry, stuffing binders and pencils into a bag as he speed-walks toward the parking lot. He slings his backpack over one shoulder, a bag filled with towels and swimsuits occupying the other. Swinging by his side, grasped tightly in his right hand, is a dark blue case, containing a \$2,000 Yamaha Violin.

To passing students unfamiliar with him, Marcus is just another frantic freshman, hoping to arrive to his next class on time – and they aren't entirely wrong, he prefers to stay on top of his school work, and has an almost immaculate attendance record. Marcus doesn't, however, have a seventh period, but rather an upcoming varsity water polo game.

At only 15, Marcus already has more than seven years of experience in water polo. He first started playing when he was 8, choosing to join DACA's water polo team.

Marcus said that it was a small and close-knit club where he was able to make good friends. It was there that he found a passion for water polo.

Later on, at 13, he joined the Stanford water polo club, which was "a huge transition" for him.

Marcus said that jumping from a small, non-competitive team to a pre-collegiate club was probably the turning point in his water polo career. He was constantly forced to work for a position, struggling to rise through the club's ranks.

Over the course of only one year, Marcus was able to perfect his skills, and learn how to play against players twice his size. In the game of water polo, where players essentially drown each other, that was especially hard.

Moreover, because of the size of the Stanford water polo club, players spent more time perfecting their own skills and rarely practiced outside of their assigned teams, making it hard for Marcus to fit in easily. But he managed to, and became close friends with his new teammates.

When Marcus tried out for the school water polo team, no one was surprised when he was placed on varsity – in fact, the coach practically offered him the spot. Asserting his position, on the other hand, was a different story. Standing at around 5'9", and weighing a modest 140 pounds, Marcus was dwarfed by his junior and senior teammates.

"It was different, because I had to find ways to play against bigger guys," Marcus said, "But I'm one of the smaller guys on the club team anyways, so it wasn't too difficult."

The preseason started out pretty slowly for Marcus, as the coach was uncertain of his skills, and reluctant to play him over his older and bigger teammates. As the preseason drew to a close, however, after multiple tournaments and games against D1 high schools, Marcus began to prove himself.

He was averaging one to two points per game, two assists, and four steals. He became one of the most consistent players on the team, so much so that he became one of the starting six, and the coach always let him play for at least half of the game, if not the full game.

"The biggest challenge of playing water polo," Marcus said, "became managing my time."

Outside of water polo, not only did Marcus maintain excellent grades, he played in the orchestra, where he managed to audition into the Saratoga Strings – the highest level orchestra offered by the music program, adding more work onto his schedule. Somehow, he managed to perform well in all of them.

Despite this, he remains remarkably humble about his achievements, awkwardly laughing when he is praised, and fumbling to explain how he does it.

"I try to work efficiently," Marcus says. "I try to manage my time, anyone can learn to do that."



Marcus Kuo (third to left) eats with the freshman orchestra

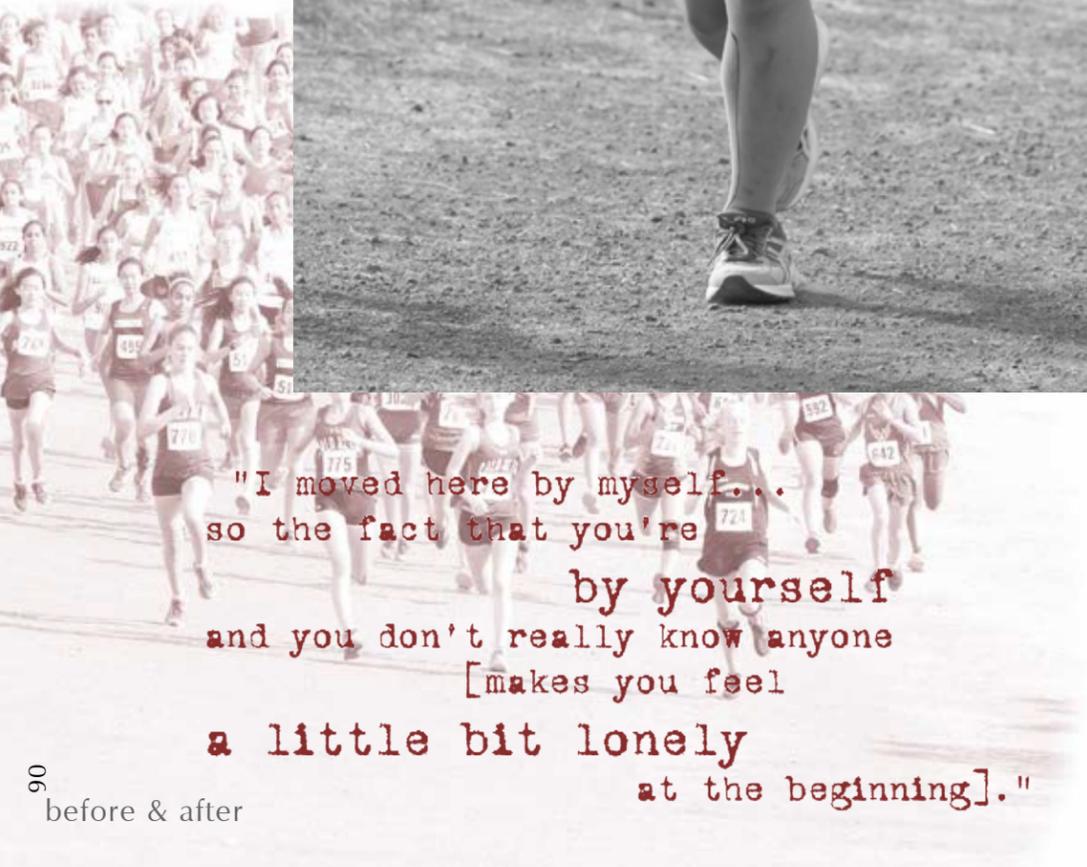
NAVIGATING LIFE

AWAY FROM HOME

by nicole lu



Mónica Delgado looks ahead as she runs along the steep hills in Crystal Springs. The 3-mile trial in the mountains is notorious for its many bumps and hills, proving a challenge for many cross-country runners.



"I moved here by myself... so the fact that you're by yourself and you don't really know anyone [makes you feel a little bit lonely at the beginning]."



and communication skills.

Meanwhile, Julia, who is thinking about studying abroad in Spain, is able to practice her Spanish and learn about a different part of the world. This beneficial relationship allows both to understand each other's cultures, forming a stronger bond between the two.

Being exposed to a much larger school with different customs has also helped Mónica grow out of her shy, reserved personality; this has pushed her to discover hobbies she didn't consider before. Mónica has done cross country as well as track and field for the first time, and has immersed herself in different clubs such as Red Cross Club, Crochet Club, and Culinary Club.

Here in America, Mónica and Julia have bonded over simple activities, some of which Mónica has never experienced like walking to school every day. One of Mónica's favorite pastimes is volunteering, a fond memory back in Spain. Together, Mónica and Julia volunteer for a variety of events and usually work with the city council to pick up trash around the neighborhood.

"Sometimes we volunteer and we go to the school dances," Mónica said. "We walk to school when it's not raining, and we sometimes walk the dogs and talk to each other. I really enjoy staying with Julia's family because they're always so nice and we do a lot of things together. I feel like it's really helping me connect with the culture."

Although she's not sure when she will be able to come back, Mónica is extremely grateful for the opportunity to move to a new country and experience new things. Over the course of this year, Mónica has seen herself grow more independent and confident in her abilities thanks to the support of Julia's family. Both hope that they can still keep in touch when she returns to Spain.

For Mónica, the aspects she has learned about American culture and the self-discovery she found along the way are lessons she will carry around for a lifetime.

"I've learned a lot about diversity, especially here because there's a lot of [it]," Mónica said. "There's a lot of different races, different cultures, and different religions. It's not something you can see everywhere in the world, so now I appreciate more places where there [are] more diverse people since you can get a little bit from all of them and learn from them."



Julia Gonzalez (far left) with Mónica Delgado (far right).

Almost 5,800 miles and 13 hours later, sophomore foreign exchange student Mónica Delgado found herself at the airport a week before school was to start, nervously waiting to meet her host family for the first time. She had been communicating with freshman Julia Gonzalez, her host sibling, since she was assigned with her family in April 2018. Despite Mónica's excitement of being in an entirely new country, she couldn't suppress the anxiety she felt being alone for her first moments. After what seemed like an eternity of fidgeting and worrying, Mónica spotted her new family hurrying toward her. She shyly greeted them, wondering about the life she would lead for the next 10 months.

In a flash, nine months whizzed by, and Mónica's remaining time in America is slowly draining away. Her departure is set for June 11, after which she will return to her home in Madrid, Spain. This may be Mónica's only visit to America, but the lessons she has taken away from navigating life in a new country has enlightened her about various cultures around the world.

Coming from a small private high school in one of Spain's bustling cities, Mónica found it difficult to adjust to Saratoga High School, a public school in a generally small city. She had to grow accustomed to the education system and the longer class periods, a decent jump from her previous 45-minute classes.

"I feel like there's more group work here, [while] in Spain it's more individual. I like how here you don't necessarily have to memorize everything," Mónica said. "It's not just memorizing specific things for a test and then forgetting about it; it's more long-term learning."

As one of only three Asians in her old school, she was able to experience different religions, beliefs, and races in California, a stark difference from the Christian-oriented Caucasians that made up most of her school.

Mónica was prompted to transfer to the States because she wanted to improve her English skills and learn about the different cultures that characterize America. She also wanted to foster more independence away from her parents, which has exposed her to new situations that have toughened her for the real world.

Thanks to the help of exchange organization Cultural Homestay International (CHI) and its partnership with the Spanish IHS program, Mónica was able to smoothly integrate into American life. Her first moments, however, were overwhelming.

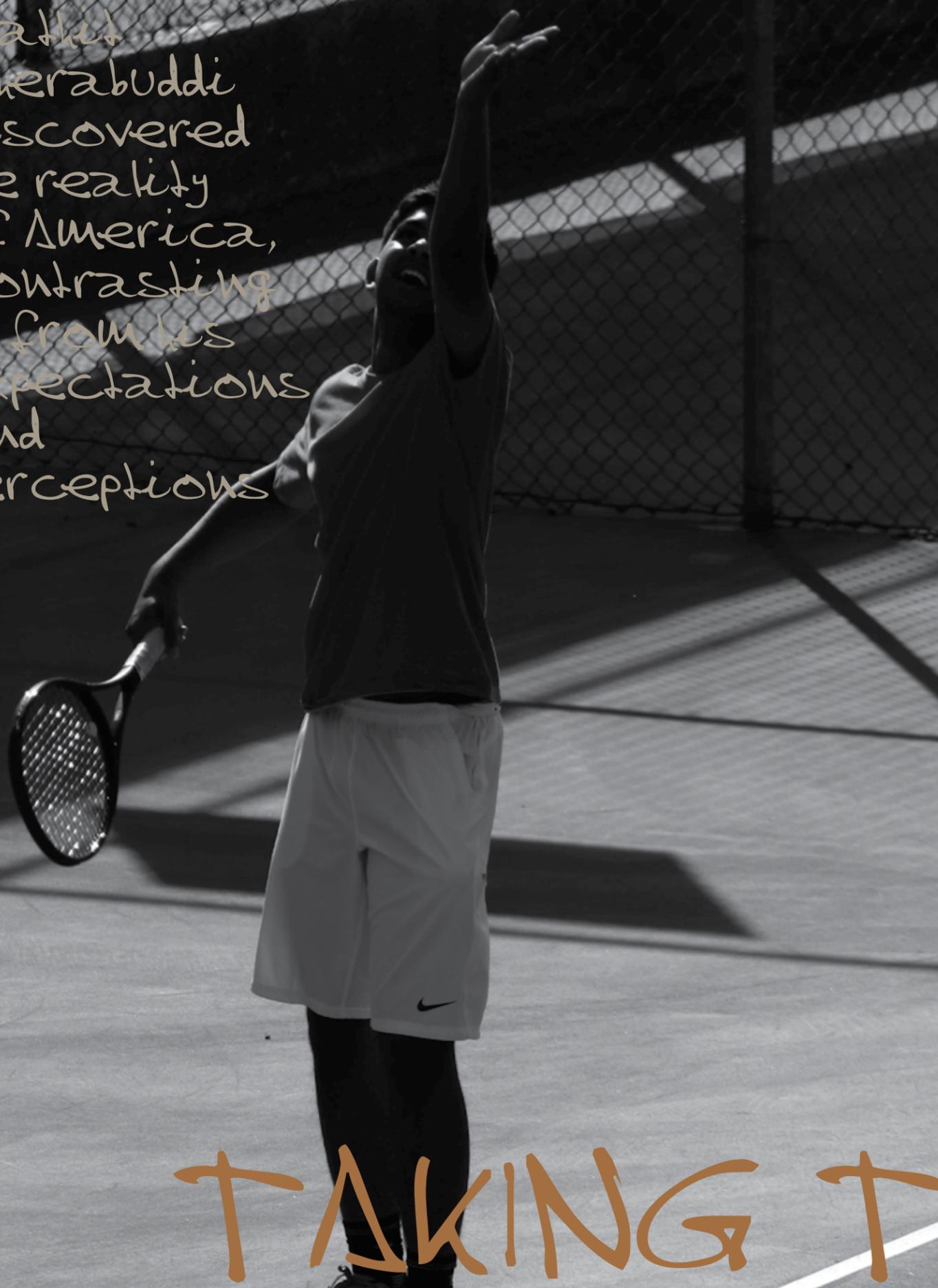
"I moved here by myself," Mónica said. "I didn't come with my parents or my siblings, so the fact that you're by yourself and you don't really know anyone [makes you feel a little bit lonely at the beginning]."

Fortunately, Mónica was warmly welcomed by Julia's family of 10, and they were soon able to establish a strong bond. Since Julia's father is half-Spanish, her family was able to learn about the side of their heritage they don't really address from Mónica's experiences. In turn, Julia's family has introduced her to different aspects of American culture, such as the various global cuisines they regularly dine on.

"She's more open-minded in trying new things because where she was from there wasn't a lot of diversity as it is here in California with this melting pot of various cultures," Julia said. "When I first met her, it was so interesting to me because my parents, in terms of cuisine, enjoy eating, for example, Ethiopian food and Indian food. She said she had never tried any of these cuisines before."

As a sort of mutualism, Mónica is able to learn more about the English language with Julia's mentorship. Combined with her new experiences, she has seen an improvement in her writing

Prathit Cherabuddi discovered the reality of America, contrasting it from his expectations and perceptions



TAKING THE LEAP

Freshman Prathit Cherabuddi thought he knew America.

He would travel here every summer from Hyderabad to visit family, getting a better sense of the country with each trip. So when his parents sat him down last summer to discuss their move to Saratoga, he was ready for the change.

He put his formal Indian school uniform in the dusty corner of his closet, swapping it out in favor of a maroon hoodie and jeans. He began eating sandwiches and other typical American foods for lunch, rather than the traditional curries students in India frequently bring. He visited his new school, walking from the sports courts to the quad to the various classrooms.

All the prior trips and knowledge of what to expect couldn't have prepared him for the feelings of homesickness and loneliness that perpetrated his new life, though. Despite this, he quickly adapted, reminding himself that moving was simply a part of life that affected everyone. His friends and family, now suddenly thousands of miles away, stayed in touch, calling once a month simply to check in.

The sudden lack of friends in Prathit's life left a hole in his social life, and he was eager to find new friends to fill it with. His outgoing, extroverted personality quickly attracted a new social circle, which was instrumental in helping him settle into his newfound world.

Over the first few months of high school, Prathit adapted to the personage of an American teenager along with his newfound friends. He spoke English wherever he went, to the point where his Indian accent had all but disappeared. He spent his breaks lounged in the library and corridors, laughing at memes on social media.

This realization was followed by another discovery — this time, around the American education system. Prathit's Indian life was based around his schoolwork — his typical day would be school followed by bucket loads of homework. Compared to the constant outpouring of homework he had in India, he was anxious for the lessened American homework load he'd heard so much about.

But despite the lowered homework load, Prathit found that the school system didn't disappoint — rather, he was impressed by it.

"My friend Adrian was really bad at the lower education," he said. "But he got smart because the system works really good, with tutorials and other stuff like that."

In a way, that lessened homework load was what he had expected — it allowed him to spend far less time worrying about school. What Prathit hadn't anticipated, though, was the various extracurricular activities Saratoga students frequently take part in — the sports, musical instruments, clubs, and competitions.

Rather than falling behind, Prathit took advantage of his newfound time and decided — for the first time in his life — to take up tennis, a stark contrast from India where sports are typically discouraged in favor of studying. He watched tennis videos on YouTube to hone his skills, eventually succeeding in making the boys JV team. Over the course of the season, he slowly improved, working his way from the bench to playing valuable doubles' minutes.

In addition, Prathit took up swimming, which he'd only learned the stark basics of in India. He was delighted by the abundance of swimming pools.

"In India, you have one governed pool for the whole colony," he said in amazement. "Here, there are no gated colonies, and everyone has their own swimming pools."

In some ways, Prathit remains the same. He's still the social butterfly he was in India, with ample friends. He still eats the same chapatis and curries at home he did when living in India.

But he's inherently turned himself into a typical American teenager. He wears a branded red hoodie everywhere and speaks English like he's been using it regularly his entire life. He's taken up two sports he's learned to love and has contributed to the school team as a valuable teammate. He's dispelled his misconceptions and stereotypes about Americans, instead seeing how they differ -- both good and bad -- from Indians.

When Prathit visits the bustling city of Hyderabad over the summer, his friends and family will see the same Prathit they've always known, complete with the checkered shirts and jokes in his native language of Telugu. But when he returns to America in August, he'll don his signature maroon hoodie and pick up his tennis racket to become the Americanized Indian his friends and family now recognize him as.

by viraaj reddy



Despite never having played a sport, freshman Prathit Cherabuddi (center, second row) diligently taught himself tennis through YouTube, improving day by day to finally make the tennis team.

THE MAP EXPERIENCE



Many students in MAP say that the program has made them more hardworking and dedicated people. Having to work on projects outside of class and filming in places outside of their homes, students say that their perseverance has been tested and their commitment has been proved.

Graduating from middle to high school, freshman Emily Eckerman was hoping for something different. She was tired of the same old format — taking standard English, history and math classes — and she wanted a change.

Having taken multiple media arts classes in middle school, and enjoying them thoroughly, she thought the Media Arts Program might be that change for her, and she turned out to be right.

MAP, the media arts program, is a program where media and filming are incorporated into regular classes like English and history. It's a way for students to exercise their creative side by making documentaries and film projects instead of focusing only on essays.

Emily was drawn to MAP from the moment she stepped into her classroom.

"The whole environment of the class was completely different from any English class I had ever taken before," Emily said.

Aside from the herbal tea that her teacher provided for everyone, the classroom was equipped with a laptop cart and Macbooks for editing. Emily immediately knew that MAP was the place for her.

For Emily and others, MAP is an outlet for creativity and experimentation, but it can also completely change the kind of person a student is.

Freshman Emma Foley says that MAP has taught her how to work with many different kinds of people. She says, "You can't always depend on people. You have to learn to work with people who don't always pull through."

For Emma, MAP has taught her how to work together with different personality types, and how to set aside their differences to achieve a common goal.

"Sometimes you just have to suck it up and do your share for the grade," she says, "even if other people are not doing their share."

Coming into high school Emma hadn't been prepared to complete difficult projects by herself, but MAP changed her by teaching her to work with all kinds of people and to sometimes sacrifice her time and effort in order to get a good result.

Along with this, Emma says that she has learned to use skills that she would have otherwise never used; things that she didn't

*"You can't always depend on people. You have to learn to work with people who don't always pull through."
- Emma Foley*



even think she was capable of until she tried them out. Some of these skills include filming and using media as means of conveying a persuasive message.

For students in MAP,

**MAP has taught me
so many
important
skills
and made me a
more creative
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I'm really glad I
chose to take it.**

learning to work together with different people seems to be a common thread in everyone's experience. Emily said, "MAP teaches me to work better with other people."

As a part of that, Emily says that MAP has taught her how to manage her time well since she has had to fit filming into her busy schedule and coordinate the schedules of all her group mates as well.

"Coming to school on a weekend or holiday has forced me to manage my time well and proven to me that I am a dedicated person."

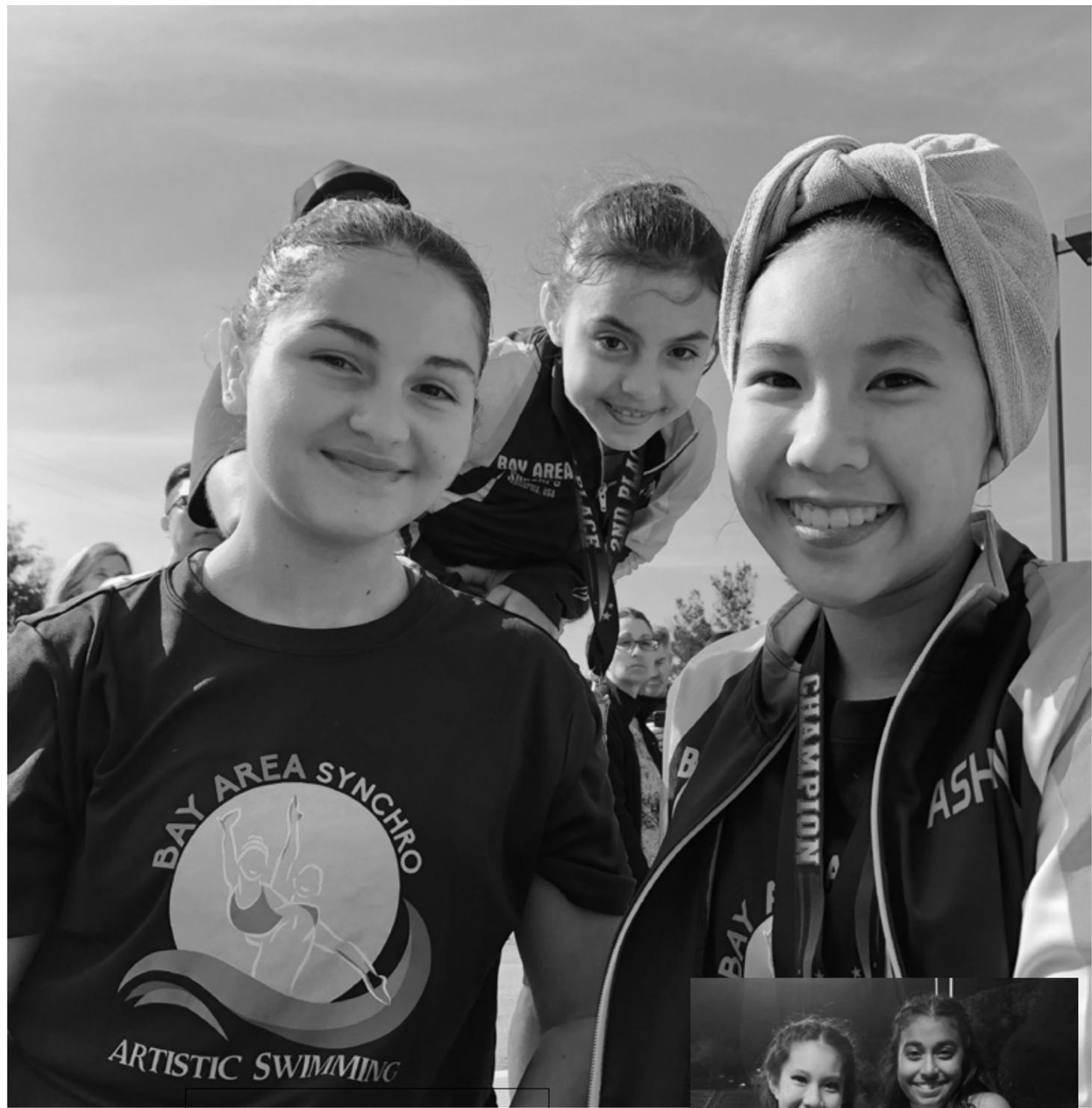
She says that joining MAP has changed her for the better, making her a more motivated and dedicated student, since she often spends holidays working to complete a project.

For Emily and many other students, MAP is more entertaining and stimulating than regular classes. "MAP has made English a lot more fun and it's now a class that I look forward to," Emily said. "Instead of sticking to writing essays and doing grammar, I get to edit a video or film with my friends."

Many students say that after taking MAP they become more hardworking students that can work well with different people. They also get better at managing their time and putting their best effort into the work they do.

MAP has taught many students values that they wouldn't have learned otherwise, making them grow and change for the better. Emily says, "MAP has taught me so many important skills and made me a more creative thinker; I'm really glad I chose to take it."

—Kavita Sundaram



Top: Ashlyn Pham poses for a picture with some of her other teammates after finishing an artistic swimming competition.
 Bottom Right: Ashlyn Pham and her teammate, Kavya Sarathy, smile after performing their color guard routine.



swimming to synching

As freshman Ashlyn Pham began stretching before color guard rehearsal, she felt a sharp pain in her back and realized that she could not do as much stretching as her other teammates. Ashlyn started color guard her freshman year, so this was her first season. When she signed up she thought it would be mostly about spinning flags and not much about flexibility. When Ashlyn realized she wasn't as flexible as some of her other teammates, she knew that color guard was not the right sport for her. Ashlyn had scoliosis and it was not getting any better since she had to strain her back every day during color guard season.

As Ashlyn thought about different sports she could do instead of color guard, she decided she wanted to try swimming. From what she had remembered as a child, Ashlyn had always loved going to swim lessons but felt like she wanted to do something more than just swim for exercise.

"Swimming seemed like the best choice for me especially since it was recommended by my doctor when I found out I had scoliosis but as I continued on, swimming back and forth and doing laps got a little repetitive and I wanted to do something more than that," Ashlyn explained.

After Ashlyn told her parents that swimming was getting boring, her parents looked up sports for disabled athletes like her. They soon came across the sport of artistic swimming, previously known as synchronized swimming, which really caught Ashlyn's eye.

"It sounded so interesting because it was a good way to stay active, be in the water, and do beautiful routines and dancing," Ashlyn said. "Also, not a lot of people do the sport so I thought it would be fun to try."

Ashlyn loved artistic swimming from the start because she had done dance and swimming in past years. Even though she enjoyed her new found activity, it was a little hard to get the hang of things because she had to practice holding her breath for long periods of time and to keep her eyes shut while performing her routines.

Ashlyn attends practice at two places, Camden community pool and Sutton Swim School. She goes to practice two to four times a week for about one and a half hours at each practice. Every day when she gets there, she is always so excited to learn new skills.

It only takes Ashlyn two full practices to learn a routine that she will perform at her competitions. After she learns the routine it takes weeks to perfect and to memorize everything because the routines are normally about two minutes long.

For her competitions, her team has traveled to Monterey and San Francisco. Ashlyn has a competition coming up in June that is taking place in Mexico but unfortunately, she will not be able to attend because it conflicts with school finals week.

All of Ashlyn's teammates have a disability like her, either mental or

physical, and that really helps her gain confidence in herself and her body. She feels that she is not alone and there are so many supportive people to help her. Ashlyn said, "We all struggle with a disability so it brings us together as a team and creates a tighter bond."

Ashlyn's scoliosis continues to get more and more severe and she will eventually have to get back surgery to correct her spine problem. The surgery will cause a section of her back to be immobile but artistic swimming is preparing her with exercises to slow the progression of her disease and to improve the chances of successful surgery.

"I am definitely going to continue with artistic swimming even when my back does get better because it will help me recover faster from my surgery!" Ashlyn said.

Ashlyn hopes to continue the sport through high school and into college, but due to her back disability, it may be harder since some teams may not accommodate her needs.

Ashlyn had a great experience in color guard and was so happy she got the opportunity to make lots of new friends. She loved the beautiful choreography and flag silks, but unfortunately it was not the right sport for her due to her back problems. Ashlyn has now found her new passion for artistic swimming because it has a little bit of everything she loves to do.

—Lauren VandeVort

"It[artistic swimming]sounded so interesting because it was a good way to stay active, be in the water, and do beautiful routines and dancing," Ashlyn said. "Also, not a lot of people do the sport so I thought it would be fun to try."

Ashlyn pham and the rest of the band start their performance during a marching band competition at Diablo Valley College, Bands of America Regionals.



97 Ashlyn Pham

“And in first place, from Saratoga High School...Ronak Pai and Adhit Sankaran.” The audience of jittery high schoolers roared as the annual National Speech and Debate Association national qualifying tournament came to an end. Applause echoed through the auditorium of the Bellarmine College Preparatory as the public forum duo made their way to the front of the stage.

Juniors Ronak Pai and Adhit Sankaran defeated all the odds that they had been faced with in the past few years with their win at National Qualifiers, leading Saratoga High’s speech and Debate team to an astounding victory.

Saratoga High Speech and Debate Team is headed towards success. But six months ago, no one would have expected the club to survive. After the crippling loss of their head coach, Chris Harris, from the previous year, the beginning of the season this year was a period of adjustment to get the club back into a competing state. There was only one interim debate coach and no speech coaches at all. According to speech captain, Anishi Patel, for the first semester, the student speech captains were essentially the coaches.

Most practices the captains would work with the novices and help strengthen the skills they needed to master in order for them to succeed. Unfortunately, with the burden of teaching the underclassmen, the captains themselves would get little to no time to work on their own speeches.

Halfway through the year, speech coaches were finally hired and the responsibility placed on the captains’ shoulders was lifted, giving them more time to work on themselves, which furthered the teams’ success streak.

Nevertheless, despite all of these initial obstructions, the speech and debate team has pulled through to qualify at multiple state and nationwide tournaments. Anishi credits the advancements of the club to an increase in enrollment and enthusiasm from new members, new coaching, more transparency for tournament booking and financial details.

The team has evolved to having three coaches-- 1 for debate and 2 for speech-- consistent and effective practices and more strict compliance of club guidelines. The three coaches for the team include Victor Rivas Umana (debate), Steven Leal and Jennifer Leal (speech).

Under the guidance of these new coaches, new members of speech and debate have gotten more comfortable and confident with their abilities.

“Speech and debate has not only taught me communication skills and public speaking but has also helped me pay attention to detail and manage my time more wisely,” says freshman Nandini Desai.

Despite how far the club has come, there is still room for improvement; Anishi says, “We could get tournament sign-ups and projected costs out a lot sooner, more presence from boosters, better time management during practices and mandatory tournament sign-ups to enhance the speech and debate experience.”

In the following years, the speech and debate team is projected to follow in the pattern of success that was exemplified this year.

Nandini, who has spoken competitively for years, says, “The club has had a lot of ups and downs since it was first ratified. It has been a long struggle. But all our bumps and mistakes along the way have made this club truly wonderful today. Before, the club was a mess. Today, the club is a success.”

—Harshini Velchamy



Toptobottom: Speech team after CFL tournament; Speech team after qualifying to CatNationals; Speech team after Stanford Invitation; LD debate team after SCU Tour-



Saratoga Speech Team and Extemporaneous Speaking Team after Stanford Invitational where two original oratory competitors broke to semifinals.

Undebatable success
Undebatable success

“Before, the club was a mess. Today the club is a success”



One teammate helps another launch into the air for a difficult lift at the 2018 Synchronized Swimming Comen Cup in Seville, Spain. Steele competed here in both team and duet events.



Beautiful but powerful: a teammate is launched into the air for a difficult throw. The team extends their leg out of the water as a strenuous but pretty trick. Freshman Claire Kim poses her legs in a similar trick, and three teammates perform another throw where the flier strikes a difficult and stunning pose.

Synchronizing my life

*“I really do love synchro...
It's given me a direction to
fight towards.”*

“Who I was before synchro? Um, I don't really remember all that well.” Synchronized swimmer sophomore Chiara Steele is a member of the prominent Santa Clara Aquamaids synchronized swimming team and one of the ten swimmers in her age group chosen to represent the country in the national team. She trains 27 hours a week under the instruction of past Olympians such as Sonja Velden, and she has dropped all other extracurriculars to focus on it.

Synchro, a fairly obscure sport, consists of 1-10 swimmers performing gymnastic-like tricks and dancing in the water to music. Swimmers are not allowed to touch the floor of the pool; they are forced to tread water while lifting up or even throwing other swimmers — all the while smiling and putting on a show. Practice for this underappreciated sport is grueling and strenuous: sometimes, practices are held for four hours a day, sometimes eight.

“I started doing synchro because, well, I used to do ballet but they told me I was too tall, so I ended up doing synchro instead,” admits Chiara, laughing. She started out on the recreational team, describing it as “something just for you to hang out with other people.”. Soon enough, she joined the competitive team and began her hectic, jam-packed life of competitive synchro and ever-increasing schoolwork.

“A lot of people ask me how I, like, do everything,” says Chiara. Saratoga High is infamous for its academic rigor. Many students find it difficult to keep up even without

extracurriculars. So how does Chiara do it? “It's a lot of prioritizing and time management,” she says. “But it's also the drive and determination synchro has given me.”

“You know, the big Saratoga thing is college,” she continues. She adds that although some swimmers swim to spice up college applications, most such swimmers quit. “Synchro is just so much that if you don't truly love it, then you're not gonna, like, do well. But at the same time, the fact that synchro is helping me get to college is really good because it's another thing that helps keep me in the sport. Like, I'm getting something out of it.”

Within this shared drive, continues Chiara, is shared hardship and shared exhaustion and shared bonds. “We see each other at our highest and lowest, and that helps us connect,” says Chiara. “I've learned how important it can be to have people around you who support you.”

Chiara spends a majority of her time either with her teammates, practicing, or thinking about synchro. “When something is so ingrained in your life, and your best and worst moments happen in it and your closest people are all part of it, it kinda becomes your life. Like, it's not like it's taken over my life; more like, it is my life, it's my lifestyle and it has made me who I am.”

“When I think about what my life would have been if I never did synchro, I think about my life before synchro, which was like, ballet and not really doing anything,” says Chiara. “I really do love synchro and everything it has brought me. It's given me a direction to fight towards.”

—Joann Zhang

From couch to competition

At the end of her freshman year, sophomore Anna Nugent sat in front of her desktop computer searching for a sport to play. She wanted to find a pastime to combat the inactivity that she felt during her freshman year. It was within the 17,430,000,000 search results that Anna stumbled upon rowing.

"I wanted the camaraderie that rowing would provide," Anna said. "[I also admired] how the athletes work together to make something so smooth."

Anna, at 5 feet and 6 inches tall with broad shoulders, thought that rowing would come easily for her. To introduce herself to the sport, Anna signed up for a summer learn how to row program at Los Gatos Rowing Club (LGRC) in June of 2018.

On the first day of practice, the intense workout overwhelmed Anna and the thought of flipping and falling out of the boat terrified her. Rowing was much more difficult than she had originally thought. Although Anna played a few sports through elementary and middle school, they never required great commitment, but the kindness of Anna's 25 new teammates and her two coaches, and her motivation to get fitter, convinced her that it was a good idea to start.

By the end of summer, Anna's rowing machine scores surpassed many of the women on her team, and were comparable to the scores of many novice men at the club. After this experience, Anna was hooked, and she decided to join the LGRC Novice Women's team.

With this decision, she had to figure out how to manage her time. Anna is a devout Mormon who attends early morning church class daily, as well as attending some church activities on Wednesday nights.

Her religious practices, combined with 13 hours of rowing practice weekly, totaled up to 20 hours a week of extracurricular activities. Before rowing, Anna admits that "it was hard trying to keep [her] homework load in check" and figure out her time management, but after she started rowing, she eventually managed to pull off the feat of balancing all of her activities while still sleeping around 9 p.m. every night.

Additionally, Anna, who also enjoys theater, planned to skip the spring season to participate in the musical, as she had done before she began rowing. As the season progressed, the team culture and her growing hunger for competition changed Anna's mind, resulting in her decision to stay for both seasons. She also believes that rowing greatly benefited her mental state.

"I feel a lot happier when I am rowing," Anna said. "Working out at that intensity always gives me a mood boost."

Anna felt like she was improving and was growing closer to her teammates; however, it still came as a surprise when her coach told her she was chosen to go to the San Diego Crew Classic, a televised national event where only eight rowers from her team are sent to compete in.

"I never thought I would be good enough," Anna said. "But hearing that helped boost my confidence, and I was extremely happy and proud that I made it into the boat."

Although Anna felt more confident in her rowing, she started to notice her knees hurting. Upon further investigation, she found out that her kneecap was too far over and up on her actual knee, which made it too flexible.

This flexibility became a hindrance because the motion of rowing would push the kneecap out of place. Even with Anna's efforts through physical therapy and numerous conversations with her coaches to try and solve the problem, she was forced to quit rowing at the end of spring season. Despite the great loss that Anna feels from being forced to quit rowing, she realizes how it has changed her for the better.

"My body wasn't built for rowing," said Anna. "My only regret is that I had to stop because of my knees. Rowing was totally hard and grueling, but worth it for the thrill I got when competing, the friendships I have made, and how it has changed me; I became better at managing my time, and I grew to love the hard work necessary for our training."

—Jeanette Zhou

LEFT TO RIGHT: Anna Nugent poses for a picture after her morning warmup before racing at San Diego Crew Classic. Anna smiles as she rigs boats at Faultline Faceoff. Anna and the LGRC Novice Women take their team photo. Anna Nugent and her boat launch before their race at San Diego Crew Classic. Anna poses with four of her teammates after they qualified for semifinals at Southwest Regional Championships.



