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SENIORS all in this TOGETHER

BY MathewLuo

On weekday nights, dancers moved to the beat of songs from “High School Musical” in preparation for their performance on Sept. 27. On weekends, dozens of seniors participated in creating decorations, painting figures and putting together an arch to go above the quad steps. The senior class leaders worked behind the scenes, organizing decorations

and enforcing deadlines.

Despite setbacks that affect each grade every year, the Class of 2020 has seen an increase in participation and enthusiasm across the board to match their challenges. Senior class president Claire Smerdon said there was roughly a 25 percent increase in participation from last year. Preparation began before the theme

>> SENIORS on pg. 4

Seniors Jackson Gress, Jolyn Tran, Kaitlyn Thompson, Ananya Krishnan and others lift the High School Musical Homecoming arch on Saturday, Sept. 21 for senior move in day.

TALISMAN // DANIEL NING

Registration for APs moves to September

BY EdwinChen & MichaelWong

Starting this year, the College Board has moved its AP registration deadline to Sept. 27, far earlier than the previous early-February deadline.

Those who fail to sign up by or cancel a test after Nov. 15, the waitlist deadline, will pay a \$40 fee.

Complaints about the aggressive nature of College Board’s move have mounted. Many students are concerned that they are being forced to make an early and possibly uninformed decision about testing.

“This is clearly a money grab by the College Board,” junior Nirmik Tambe said.

Tambe is enrolled in AP US History and AP Calculus AB and plans on taking both tests.

So far, he finds both classes manageable.

For its part, College Board has justified the earlier deadline with its since-deleted findings that students who commit to the test earlier are more successful. (Another interpretation of the data showed that more students failed as a result of the earlier registration.)

Junior Akshar Sarvesh says he understands this change, though it has little impact on his decision to take the tests.

“Personally, it doesn’t affect me because I don’t take any AP classes without the expectation that I will take the test,” he said.

>> AP REGISTRATION on pg. 2

Falcons put up tough fight against Wildcats

BY KevinSze & AlexWang

In a thrilling game with multiple lead changes, gutsy play-calling and high scoring, the Falcons fell to the heavily favored Wildcats 52-38 last Friday at the school’s Benny Pierce Field, which was almost a full house with cheering fans from both schools. The loss gives the Falcons a non-league record of 3-1 as they head into their Homecoming and first El Camino league game against Homestead tonight at 7 p.m.

With what will most likely have been their toughest game out of the way, the Falcons are looking to dominate in league play.

Homestead, which currently holds a respectable 2-2 record, had moved down from the upper league last year. Despite their wins, they have yet to beat a tough opponent this year.

“We feel confident that we will be able to beat Homestead because of how well we

played with LG,” said senior wide receiver George Bian, who piled up nine receptions for 149 yards and three touchdowns.

Senior quarterback Payton Stokes had 360 yards through the air with three touchdowns and one interception. He added 52 yards and one touchdown on the ground.



Bian

According to defensive coordinator Bret Yeilding, the Falcons are preparing for Homestead similarly to how they prepared for Los Gatos because the Mustangs run the same style of offense.

“We’ll try to do much of the same stuff and see if we can do it better than we did against Los Gatos,” Yeilding said. “For our offense, it’s really just continuing to do what we do, which is attacking by throwing the ball downfield.”

The Falcons knew that the Wildcats were a tough opponent heading into the game. In their three previous games, Los Gatos

>> FOOTBALL on pg. 21

Fall play cast focuses on vocal poise, depth

BY EdwinChen & AnjaliNuggehalli

Soon after “Sense and Sensibility” was announced as the fall play on Sept. 16, the drama department went through the casting process. Drama teacher Sarah Thermond oversaw auditions, searching for the qualities successful actors would need in this play.

The play, set in Victorian England, follows the Dashwood family — a mother, played by senior Ritika Kuppam, and her three unmarried daughters — as they try to rebuild themselves after the loss of their father and his estate. The plot focuses on the two older daughters, Elinor (played by senior Emilie Prillwitz) and Marianne (played by senior Eman Ahmad), as they navigate troublesome romantic relationships.

Other cast members include sophomore Taylor Zhou as Colonel Brandon, junior Elsa Ashraf as Lady Middleton and sophomore LJ Trueba as Sir John Middleton.

Thermond said that the actors must

delve deeper than just reciting the words from the script to play their parts effectively.

“Actors are often so focused on reading the words on the page during audition that they forget to bring their own ideas about how the character should be played,” Thermond said. “I encourage actors to take a unique take on their character and communicate it to the audience.”

For the first of two audition days starting on Sept. 5, students were asked to prepare a monologue from the script. They were then asked to read a different monologue that contrasted with the mood of the previous one so for Thermond could get an idea of everyone’s range.

“The monologue reading really demonstrates the actor’s take on the reading and how they interpret the character they’re playing,” Thermond said. “It shows their ability to hold the stage and make a long dialogue interesting and engaging.”

The second day of auditions was for

>> FALL PLAY on pg. 3



newsbriefs

Two staff members depart in mid-September

Two beloved staff members are leaving the school this month — one for retirement and another as she follows her husband to his new job.

Jeanine Sevilla spent her last day as one of the school's two campus supervisors on Sept. 17, a job she has held for the past 15 years. She was known for her friendly interactions with students around campus.

As of Sept. 19, administrative assistant Sarah Christeson departed from the school after working here for two years.

Christeson, who will be relocating to Orange County, where her husband has found new work, specialized in helping students find college and career opportunities. She also planned PSAT testing, AP testing and SBAC testing dates for sophomores and juniors.

Christeson is planning on returning to her roots in elementary school education and teaching in Irvine.

"It's sad to leave Saratoga High," Christeson said. "But I look forward to the new school atmosphere, especially being with a different age group."

Kathryn Sheridan, who worked at Santa Teresa High School as a support services technician, will be replacing Christeson. Sheridan will assume the role of scheduling and planning for testing, college and career activities.

Helen Jarrett, a substitute teacher in the district, is going to be replacing Sevilla as the new campus supervisor.

-Harshini Velchamy and Tiffany Wang

ASB purchases skateboard racks for installation

Due to raised interest in skateboarding as a way to get to school, the ASB has purchased two red racks capable of holding eight boards each. According to assistant principal Matt Torrens, one rack will be placed in front of the gym and one at the back of the school.

"We need two racks so kids coming from each direction have a place for their skateboards and don't have to carry them on campus," Torrens said. "ASB has been very responsive to the needs of the students."

The incorporation of these skateboard racks also addresses the problem of students carrying their skateboards on campus, as school policy prohibits skateboarding, roller-skating and biking on school grounds.

-Howard Tang

60 years of The Falcon

From the archives: For its 60th year the Falcon is presenting a series of stories reflecting on some of the most interesting moments of our school's history. This week's story is about the fallout of a prank pulled by the senior class of 1984:

On Sept. 6, 1984, members of the senior class pulled a prank where they glued pennies to campus door locks, put grease on the Falcon mosaic in the quad, painted derogatory signs on walls and put toilet paper and real estate signs up.

The seniors involved had been planning this for weeks; however, the janitorial staff cleaned up the mess before a majority of the student body saw it, according to then-assistant principal Karen Franza (later known as Karen Hyde).

Outraged by the incident, the administration threatened two possible courses of action: a classwide \$500 fine or cancellation of the senior-sponsored dance in February.

Senior class president Adrienne Gallmesier, along with seniors Lori Campbell, Lori Christopher and Melanie Cornwell held a See's Candy fundraiser and a raffle to pay the fine, though the punishment was never officially implemented by the administration, according to the story.

This story originally appeared in the October 12, 1984, edition of The Falcon. It was written by Stephen Mack.

picturethis



FALCON // ANGELINA CHEN

ROCK OUT! | Spanish teacher Sarah Voorhees points to the sky and smiles during the teacher quad day performance on Sept. 23. The teachers' theme was "Camp Rock" with English teacher Jason Friend playing the camp's director and history teacher Faith Daly playing the camp cook.

AP TEST

continued from pg. 1

Sarvesh thinks the College Board's decision will force students to start studying earlier and perhaps be more successful.

But Tambe suspects the earlier commitment time will lead to problems.

"Last year, I was hesitant about taking the AP Computer Science test," Tambe said. "Around February, I felt like I was really struggling with the content of the class and I felt unprepared."

Tambe ultimately decided to take the AP test. He may not have done so if he had based his decision on how he was doing early in the year.

"The content of the class varied in difficulty in September compared to February," Tambe said. "I didn't know what to expect in my ability to know the material that would be taught, so making a decision in September would have been too early."

Other students like junior Andrew Xiao are facing the dilemma of whether to take the AP test in difficult classes like Calculus AB.

He wishes he had more time to grow comfortable with the subject and make a better informed decision.

In the meantime, school officials are trying to help students navigate this change.

"The new timeline is out of our control, so we're going to do our best to support students with the new process," assistant principal Brian Safine said. "We realize that an accelerated timeline would make students commit earlier than they need to and it may create some more uncertainty in their minds." ♦

Going stale: HOSH Facebook page targeted for a resurgence

by Christine Zhang

This year, senior outreach commissioner and equity coordinator Surbhi Bhat is working to restart the Humans of Saratoga High (HOSH) Facebook page and Instagram account after its previous administrators graduated and posts became irregular.

Assistant principal Kerry Mohnike, a member of the equity committee, encouraged Bhat to put together a team to re-open the page. The equity committee works alongside the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) team to plan school-wide activities. Last year, they co-ordinated the weeklong Breaking Down the Walls event in the fall.

HOSH is modeled after the Humans of New York photoblog page, which features posts with a short account of an individual's story and photographs of the individual.

Bhat said that the HOSH team will include a writer and a photographer, who will interview people



Bhat

around campus for each post. Both the writer and photographer are to remain anonymous.

Bhat said that the goal of HOSH is to foster a more connected community.

"It's just to get to know other people's stories because we don't really talk about ourselves in public, especially not in high school," she said. "It's an interesting way for people to get to know other students on campus."

Mohnike had the same goal in mind when she encouraged Bhat to restart HOSH. She said it would provide a good opening for aspiring journalists while bringing the Saratoga community together.

"I would hate to see HOSH go away," Mohnike said. "It's a great opportunity for photographers and people who like to read stories and journalists in general, and it's a way to break down some stereotypes and myths about people."

Bhat wants to feature a wide variety of people on the page, so she hopes to interview students from different grades and communities.

She does not want to be subjective by picking only those whom she knows personally, as HOSH is designed so that anyone with a story to share can be featured.

"HOSH was run differently by the person before us, so we're seeing what we can do to make it our own but at the same time keep it the thing it's supposed to be," she said.

The HOSH Facebook page, which has more than 2300 followers, was started in October 2013. Its posts for the past two years have been inconsistent, and its most recent one was in February. Mohnike messaged the page and received a reply from an alumnus, which led her to realize that the HOSH team needed to "turn the reins over to somebody else."

She said that restarting HOSH would help spread more personal stories around social media.

"We can have real stories on the Internet, not just someone's best profile picture or their grand vacation to the Cayman Islands," Mohnike said. "I think it serves us all to be more in touch with the people that we hang out with here at school." ♦

falcon corrections

On page 1, the Falcon misspelled Nikhil Sridhar's name when listing National Merit Semifinalists. On page 9, all the students on the AP CS waitlist were ul-

timately added to the class. On page 18, teacher in fact work 187 days, counselors work 197 and administrators work 220 days a year.

The Falcon aims to produce accurate stories. Please contact jeffrey.xu@saratogafalcon.org to report any inaccuracies in the issue.

Freshman wins national teen dance contest

EXCELLING IN CHINESE STYLES, SHANNON MA RECOUNTS JOURNEY THROUGH DANCE AS RELIEF FROM STRESS

BY Preston Fu
& Christine Zhang

Freshman Shannon Ma was stunned when she was crowned the primary level Miss Teen Dance America this past summer in Anaheim, Calif., at the Kids' Artistic Revue (KAR) national competition.

"I didn't hold any hope to win," she said. "When they announced the winner and it was me, I was completely shocked."

Although her win of the Miss Teen Dance America title is her greatest dance award to date, Ma has received several other honors in various competitions throughout her dance career, both in solos and in group dances. As she transitions into high school, Ma finds herself balancing dance with a heavier school workload.

dances performed on each day. The winter showcase is traditionally located at Louis B. Mayer Theater in Santa Clara.

In 2012, Jun Lu's first competition team, which included Ma, was formed. The team officially started competing in 2013, when Ma was 7.

Ma said that the team approached their first competition with a carefree attitude.

"At first, we were so clueless because we didn't know we were going to compete, and then one day the teacher was like 'You're going to competition,'" Ma said. "It was really no pressure because she didn't have any expectations and it was new to us too."

For their first two or three years, the team focused on jazz dances, but they eventually turned to folk Chinese and contemporary styles. Ma's teacher gives the girls to choose between a few select styles.

Ma recalled her first solo dance, titled "Flying Apsaras," which she first performed at a Jun Lu winter showcase. She performed it at KAR in 2017, years after her first dance competition. The dance was originally intended to be a duet, but the day before the competition, Ma's duet partner sprained her knee, and Ma was forced to pull the dance off as a solo.

Since then, she has performed a solo every year at KAR. She has also participated in Showbiz, American Dance Awards (ADA) and Starpower. In July 2019, Ma won KAR's title competition for primary soloists and was named Miss Teen Dance America while her team won the title competition and received the National Grand Champion Award for secondary large group performances.

"If you throw away your worries and just do the best you can do, you'll never regret it."

FRESHMAN Shannon Ma

Ma began dancing at age 3 at Jun Lu Performing Arts. Her mom signed her up for classes after finding out about the studio in Westgate Mall; as it turned out, many of Ma's friends at the time already danced there. Ma took an immediate liking to dance and has danced with Jun Lu since.

Before 2012, dancers at Jun Lu spent an entire year preparing for one winter showcase. The annual event is held over two days in mid-December, with approximately 25

DRAMA

continued from pg. 1

callbacks, where certain actors are invited back for further review. The students did a dancing activity to understand for the early 1800s time period. They also did group readings to see how different people work together.

"While casting, we really observed how

people interacted with each other," Thernmond said. "Sense and Sensibility" is centered around relationships and people's perceptions of each other, so it's really important that the actors read well together."

Junior Shahmun Jafri said he found his auditions nerve-racking.

"I was really scared that I was going to mess up my line or that I wasn't expressing myself enough," Jafri said.

Jafri, who will play Thomas, a servant in

the play, finds that the play's emphasis on personal connection provides a challenge in understanding the different characters and acting out various emotional levels. Jafri plays a loyal but socially unaware character.

"Trying to play out the body language of the character and emphasizing vocal traits makes playing this character hard but fun," he said.

The casting process behind "Sense and Sensibility," based on Jane Austen's novel, is

more comprehensive than just successfully reading lines. The actors must read between the lines and form their own interpretation of how they want to depict their character. "Putting together this production is like a giant jig-saw puzzle," Thernmond said. "Recognizing an actor's intuition to portray a unique story line is what makes a great performance."

"Sense and Sensibility" will debut on Nov. 16 and play its last show on Nov. 23. ♦

MAP 10 students bond during annual field trip

BY Anjali Nuggahalli
& Jonathan Li

Sophomore Giulio Morini-Bianzino took a deep breath as he peered down the steep rope course. In the background, he could hear the cheers from his peers in the Media Arts Program (MAP).

On Sept. 18, sophomores in the MAP program traveled to a ropes course in San Francisco with teachers Alex Hemmerich, Mike Davey and Suzanne Herzman. The purpose of this trip was to bring the class together through a series of obstacles that required teamwork and communication.

"We did a lot of team-oriented activities that pushed people out of their comfort zones," Morini-Bianzino said. "It really bonded us together as a MAP family."

After a few warm-up partner games in the morning, the groups of randomly assigned students worked together, whether

it was crossing a rope bridge or balancing on wooden planks suspended in the air.

As students faced challenges throughout the day, different strengths and weaknesses were revealed.

"Some of the MAP students were scared of heights and didn't want to complete the challenges," Morini-Bianzino said. "I helped them by mentally preparing them every step of the way."

Besides overcoming fears, students also enjoyed the constructive and supportive environment.

Sophomore Emily Eckerman appreciated being surrounded by positivity.

"Without the communication and support from my MAP classmates, the ropes course would have been a lot harder," Eckerman said. "Having all my friends cheering me on made the experience so much more enjoyable." ♦

Vending machines to be added across campus

BY Rohan Kumar
& Andrew Lee

The administration has decided to set up new vending machines outside of the cafeteria, with an additional one already set up in the student center and another one planned for the area between the English wing and science buildings.

"We're trying to make a straight line from the cafeteria through the center of the school," assistant principal Matt Torrens said. "This is a central part of the campus, and we realize that kids are walking down different areas."

Adding the new vending machines, an idea initiated by principal Greg Louie, will make food more accessible to students during the school day, since the cafeteria is not open during tutorial. It also makes it easier for students who have science classes before or after tutorial to get food and beverages

such as pita chips, granola bars, and juice.

The vending machines will also add revenue to the school. Although the vending machines themselves do not cost any money to install, the company that installs them takes a portion of the profits.

With a single vending machine, the school takes a 5 percent share of the profits while the vending machine supplier takes the rest. With two vending machines, this percentage grows to 10 percent, and with three or four, it grows to 15 percent, Torrens said.

"That money goes right back to the ASB to benefit students by buying a ping pong table, keeping the dance prices low and other things like that," Torrens said.

Ultimately, the changes were motivated by the success of the vending machine in the student center, which, according to Torrens, made five times as much revenue as the one located in the cafeteria. ♦



SENIORS

continued from pg. 1

was revealed, Smerdon said. This included appointing choreographers, assigning senior Alena Jarrett to write the quad day script and determining that senior Jackson Gress would host decoration making at his house.

During the summer, some choreographers began planning dances and class leadership finalized their decoration lists.

Then, the senior Homecoming theme of "High School Musical" was announced a week before school began. Jarrett said she initially wasn't too fond of the theme at first but tried to make the best of it.

The senior class had to work around several constraints related to the musical, including the types of songs to use.

First, because "High School Musical" is a musical, class leaders determined that at least two songs from it had to be included for at least 30 seconds each dance except the K-pop and Bollywood ones.

"This rule makes things more spirited and sticks to the theme," Smerdon said.

Another factor they had to take into account was the three separate "High School Musical" movies to pull from. Jarrett said that this actually gave the seniors more material to work with.

"As soon as the theme came out, I sat and I watched all the movies," Jarrett said. "And as I was going, I wrote down the key details from the most iconic scenes and a list of roasts I wanted to make."

After school started, the seniors had to step up their intensity and effort to meet their deadlines.

The mixes had to be in by Sept. 13, the script by Sept. 15 and the decorations by move-in weekend starting Sept. 21. But the seniors still ran into problems — new and old — that plagued them throughout their timeline.

These issues included the lack of commitment from some dancers, difficulties managing the greater number of senior participants and even running into problems with rainy weather.

Smerdon said that one major problem choreographers had was that a lot of participants would not show up to their practices, making it difficult for them to anticipate formations.

"Once college apps start coming into the picture and school starts out, students realize it's really hard to balance," Smerdon said.

But despite the setbacks, the seniors appeared in good shape in the days before their quad day. Jarrett said that she had over two dozen volunteers to help her write the script, the dances swelled in size and participation in decorations increased as well.

As one last surprise for the senior class, Smerdon said she messaged many of the actors and actresses of the original "High School Musical" cast to send a short message to the seniors at Saratoga. Actress Kaycee Stroh, who played Martha Cox in the movies, responded with a video. They played it today during quad day as people were moving into their seats.

"It began as a joke between me and senior vice president Alex Lee," Smerdon said. "I planned for it to be a great reveal."

The seniors' quad day is their most momentous Homecoming day, Smerdon said. They worked with great spirit and were more ambitious in planning their Homecoming quad day.

"Just being a senior means that you want to step it up a notch in every single department," Smerdon said. ♦

Juniors recreate 'Teen Beach Movie,' revamp performance

by Alekhyia Vadlakonda & Christine Zhang

Junior Urmila Vudali dipped her brush into the yellow paint, laughing with her friends as they helped her recreate the "Big Momma's" sign that would go with the junior class' Homecoming decorations.

Nearby, other juniors were creating surfboards, and another cluster of students was working on decorations for a school hallway.

They all shared the common goal of making the best Homecoming decorations this year.

The juniors' Homecoming theme this year was "Teen Beach Movie," a 2013 Disney Channel original film featuring two surfers, Brady and McKenzie, who are transported into a beach party movie where bikers and surfers feud over a popular beach hang-out.

Their performance showcased six dances — partner, all girls, all boys, co-ed (aka stunt), K-pop and color guard — alongside their skit on Sept. 26, the junior quad day.

Auditions for skit roles were held in early September. Juniors Ajay Gupta and Shannon Ji wrote the script, and candidates performed excerpts of the script for their auditions.

Junior class president Cynthia Zhang and junior class representative Aliza Zaman decided the cast. Everyone who auditioned this year was given a part. Junior Cameron King played Brady while junior Sarah Wang played McKenzie, the two main characters of "Teen Beach Movie."

Dances began practices in the last week of August. Most dances held weekly practices until mid-September, but they started to occur more often as Quad Day drew closer.

Juniors Wilson Fung and Vudali were in charge of decorations. Vudali said they planned to divide the hallway in front of the office

between bikers and surfers, the central conflict in "Teen Beach Movie."

"I think we made pretty good progress. This year, we definitely want to step it up [to] not let our class down."

JUNIOR Urmila Vudali

They also built and painted an arch as well as recreated Big Momma's restaurant, a setting in the film.

For their smaller decorations, the juniors made surfboards, signs, a motorcycle and a jukebox from cardboard, construction paper and cardstock-like material.

On Sept. 7, around 20 students showed up to the decorating session. It was their second meet-

ing, and the group decorated for about five hours.

"I think most people don't want a repeat of last year," Vudali said. "Last year, I felt really bad because even though there was a lot of effort put into [our decorations], not a lot of people committed and that was just unfortunate."

Since Vudali's house is currently under reconstruction, the decorators used many of the supplies that they found from the construction waste, such as cardstock.

Others also donated materials like construction paper and box cutters. Decorators generally met either at Vudali's house or at junior Alisa Chankhuthod's house.

Vudali said she became the head of the decoration committee because junior class president Cynthia Zhang asked her to.

She later realized that it was an opportunity for her to apply her art skills to a project of a larger scale.

"I don't think they had many volunteers to be the head," Vudali said. "Both Alisa and I are in art classes and we work well with each other, so it's nice to have that kind of creative support."

Vudali participated in both the all-girls dance and the K-pop dance. The practices were usually around two hours on Friday evenings or over the weekend.

Junior Enoch Luk, who participated in the co-ed dance, was motivated to join because he wanted to improve on his performance from sophomore year.

"I did Homecoming in sophomore year because I didn't want to regret not doing it," Luk said. "This time, I actually want to perform instead of just following motions, and I also learned cool stunts."

Vudali held high expectations for both the juniors' decorations and their dances.

"I think we made pretty good progress," she said. "This year, we definitely want to step it up because we feel this responsibility as juniors not to let our class down. We have to do better than we did when we were underclassmen." ♦

TEEN BEACH MOVIE

GRAPHIC BY ROHAN KUMAR



FALCON // JUN LEE

Senior Jolyn Tran paints a sign to hang in the hallway for senior decorations on Saturday, Sept. 21.



TALISMAN // DANIEL NING

Seniors Nandini Thakur and Ashleigh Abe work on a poster together.



FALCON // JUN LEE

Junior Jessie Zhou helps paint the sign to go in the junior class arch.



FALCON // JUN LEE

Students pass under the seniors' 'High School Musical' Homecoming arch.

'Lemonade Mouth' debuts as soph theme

by Anjali Nuggeshalli & Kavita Sundaram

In the quad, Beyoncé's "Countdown" booms from sophomore Maya Crazz's speaker.

Dancing in front of her are 40 sophomore girls participating in the All Girls' Dance, led by Crazz and fellow sophomores Kristina Meier and Kaylie Wong.

The All Girls' Dance is only a fraction of the intricate and thoroughly planned "Lemonade Mouth"-themed sophomore quad day.

The sophomores participating in the All Girls' Dance began preparing over a month ago to ensure the sharpness and appeal of the dance.

"Because we started choreography and practices a lot earlier than last year, everyone felt more comfortable with the dance," Wong said. "This way, we could really drill the dance and incorporate more complex moves."

The sophomore class produced a performance with different music genres, roasts and advanced choreography.

The All Girls' Dance blends

together music such as Beyoncé, Latin pop and popular R&B, a combination that is sure to be a crowd-pleaser.

Along with an appealing mix of genres, the choreography includes complicated formations and visuals.

"We always love to perform in front of an audience," said Meier. "I'm really excited to show off our dance because we put a lot of effort into it."

Sophomores Grace Hsu and Jordyn Shyh choreographed the class finale, working to integrate the theme of "Lemonade Mouth" into the dance. To do this, they're using two of the movie's most popular songs, "Determinate" and "Here We Go" in their music.

"We've already edited the music, and it sounds amazing," Hsu said. "We're really motivated to make our sophomore class proud."

Besides the dances, the class skit is also a significant part of their quad day. Overseeing the skit is sophomore class president Alex Yang, whose job is to guarantee that everything ties together.

To ensure that the skit reaches its full potential, Yang published a post on the class Facebook page, where sophomores could provide input on what they wanted to see in the skit.

The skit will align with the plot of "Lemonade Mouth," a Disney Channel movie revolving around a student band that is created in detention.

The band, Lemonade Mouth, then goes on to gain popularity throughout their school, eventually becoming famous.

"Our skit has greatly improved from last year," Yang said. "There's a lot of nice roasts, and it's a lot better than the other classes."

Organizers said the sophomore class has come together to produce a performance intertwined with different genres of music, hilarious roasts and advanced choreography.

"Homecoming preparation has really bonded the sophomore class together," Hsu said. "It's really benefited my high school experience and I know our performances are going to look amazing on quad day." ♦

Complex dances counters low freshman participation

by Anjali Nuggeshalli & Kavita Sundaram

The freshmen held their quad day this past Tuesday and performed five dances: partner, all girls, all boys, stunt and the finale.

Their theme was based on the 2012 Disney movie "Radio Rebel," which follows the story of a shy high school senior Tara Adams, who takes on an alter ego as a pod-cast DJ titled "Radio Rebel," unbeknownst to her classmates.

The freshman skit was comprised of five lead roles: Tara, Stacy, Gavin, Gavin's sister and the Principal, who were played by Elsa Blom, Arlan Visser, Ethan Kung, Allison Tan and Dino Pezzi, respectively.

One regret that freshman class president Mason Wang had about the skit is not starting run-throughs earlier; the freshmen hadn't had a single skit practice until the Sept. 21, three days be-

fore their quad day performance.

"We've spent a lot of time on the dances and getting those arranged," Wang said. "In the future we would want to start skit practices earlier, because we were really pressed for time as Homecoming week approached."

The freshman team decided to allocate around 10 minutes of their 25-minute quad day to their skit, and dedicated the remaining 15 minutes to their dances; they called the dances the highlight of their performance.

"I think the dances were in a really good place," Tan said. "I feel that the boys dance was the strongest because it started all the energy and got the audience excited."

The dances had their first practices on the weekend of Aug. 30 and held weekly practices up until their quad day.

An area that the freshmen struggled with was in setting up their decorations, which consist-

ed of three boomboxes, several 2000s-themed cardboard cutouts and a multitude of CDs that they had hung from the rafters of the cafeteria canopy.

Tan attributed the struggles to a typical lack of participation; at their first decoration session, which was hosted at Wang's house, only four people attended. Despite the slow start, however, the class was able to finalize their decorations on move-in weekend, when around 40 freshmen showed up.

Despite having over 60 students initially sign up for quad day, Tan said that many freshmen dropped out, which made it a little harder for the coordinators.

Wang agreed that participation could have been better, but is content with how the entire event turned out in the end. Looking ahead to next year, Wang feels confident that there will be more participation and the team will do a better job with organization.



TALISMAN // DANIEL NING

Freshman homecoming princess Nadine Cobourn dances in the All Girls' Dance on Sept. 24. The class struggled with enthusiasm for decorations.

"We didn't have that clear of an idea as to what was going on in decoration or skit," Wang said. "Next year we'll have a better idea of how things are going on and we'll focus on getting the word out in decoration or skit," Wang said. "Next year we'll have a better idea quickly to improve overall participation." ♦

Rally count reduced to meet instructional minutes

by Alex Wang

Decked out in red, blue, white and green, hundreds of students jumped up and down on the bleachers, cheering for their respective classes. Streamers lined the gym and balloons floated in the air while music blasted from the speakers — the atmosphere was buzzing with energy.

In the center of the gym, students knocked each other down with hamster balls and licked Nutella off plastic wrap to try to win games for their class. Rally Fridays like the one on Sept. 20 are always major events.

But, this year, there will only be three rallies instead of four as in recent years. These rallies will come before school dances, including the one before Homecoming this past week, one before Winter Formal in December and

one in March before Spring Fling.

The reason: rallies don't count toward instructional minutes and the commission was trying to preserve the annual Lip Dub as a school event, according to senior head commissioner Risa Carter.

Senior Ashvin Maheshwar said he isn't thrilled, calling rallies "one of the best parts of the year." He added: "If I screwed up a test or something, I would just go to the rally and have fun."

Besides having to reduce the number of rallies in the year, the rally commission has also scrapped the traditional Powerball game, where teams of two try to score rubber balls into trash cans before they get their flags pulled.

"Unfortunately, we had to take away this game because it caused stress and fights to break out," Carter said.

Nonetheless, the commission-

ers they are still working hard to prepare for rallies, making sure to make the most out of each one. For the Homecoming rally, they chose the theme of "The Office," creating a promo video and costumes revolving around the popular show.

The commission also introduced new games like Skin the Snake to replace the Powerball game, playing a video with the game's rules during the rally. A promotional video for the upcoming Homecoming football game, edited by senior Nakul Nagaraj, was also played during the rally.

The rally commission seemed to achieve its goal of a safer but still enjoyable rally. There were no issues this time with fighting or crossing too far into the middle of the gym. However, the rally did end much earlier than rallies in the past, and with the loss of the highly popular and competitive Pow-



COURTESY OF THE TALISMAN

Seniors and juniors play the new Rally Game "Skin the Snake" debuted on the Homecoming rally on Sept. 20.

erball, some students felt it wasn't what previous ones had been. "The most recent rally could have been even better," Mahesh-

war said. "Some of the games were a bit dull at times, but the football video was really great and there was a lot of hype." ♦

togatalks

What do you think about the Homecoming themes this year?

"The only one I know is 'High School Musical' because they are a bit obscure."



senior Brian Zhu

"We got the worst one ['Teen Beach Movie']. It's the only one I've never seen before."



junior Akshar Sarvesh

"I've never actually seen them but I still think it's fun to experience what it was like back then."



sophomore Alex Yang

Alumnus discovers true interest, praises Caltech's robust computer science major

by Preston Fu
& Viraj Reddi

Class of 2017 alumnus Albert Tseng was astonished when he sat down with renowned computer scientists Eric Schmidt, Steven Wolfram and Stuart Feldman at various dinners organized by Caltech's Computing and Mathematical Sciences program. This was yet another example of the opportunities and expertise Caltech has offered him in his college journey.

Tseng, now a junior at the highly competitive university in Pasadena, said he truly developed his interest in computer science through competitive programming in high school. He felt it flowed naturally from the math contests he had participated in earlier on. However, he noted that the programming competition problems had little breadth; competitors were tested on their abilities to utilize existing methods to solve problems rather than innovating.

Computer science has expanded significantly in recent years, especially in terms of artificial intelligence and robotics. "Now that I'm in college, there's a much wider variety of classes and research opportunities,"

he said. "I find that there's always something new and interesting to learn."

Although Tseng enjoys the wide range of course offerings, he has zoned in deeply on one particular subfield that differs greatly from his high school programming experience: non-deterministic algorithms, a blossoming field frequently associated with artificial intelligence and machine learning.

"I tend to enjoy tasks that involve optimization problems, such as machine learning and network theory," Tseng said. "The fun part is using approximation to solve otherwise difficult problems."

The knowledge he gained through Caltech has come into play at the various companies Tseng interned at over the past two summers. He saw that finding internships and connections was not particularly difficult.

Tseng interned at Addepar, a finan-

cial technology company, and Facebook. He heard of Addepar through high school friends and applied for Facebook after its representatives appeared at the Caltech career fair. In general, he felt that students must be competitive both academically and socially in order to succeed.

"Soft skills and time management are as important as hard technical skills," Tseng said.

As an alumnus, Tseng has a few words of advice for aspiring computer science majors.

"You should have a good idea of each school's computer science program's strengths and weaknesses — number of students, ease of finding resources, applied vs. theoretical courses — and other aspects of the school," he said.

"For internships, most people have three summers, so you should select courses that position yourself competitively when finding internships."

Tseng also noted that while he has developed significantly due to his college education, he couldn't have done it without the courses he took during high school.

"The more analytical STEM classes at Saratoga are useful," he said, "but students shouldn't be afraid to take more advanced classes like Linear Algebra and Differential Equations when they're a junior or senior."

Caltech's courses are far more rigorous than most students are accustomed to, and Tseng encourages prospective students to prepare beforehand by taking related and relevant courses.

Aside from attending school and interning, he sees the benefits of being at a small university because he receives more individualized attention.

Tseng is still unsure about what direction the future holds for him, but he's confident he'll find the right path in his remaining two years at Caltech.

"School has definitely allowed me to learn more and explore deeply, and interning has given me a perspective on how different types of companies operate," Tseng said. "CS is a large and expanding field, and it's exciting to explore it." ♦

A Major Choice



AN OCCASIONAL SERIES

Speech and debate: Revamping the club for a promising year



Courtesy of Neil Shah

Seniors Siva Sambasivam, Ashwin Ramakrishna, Adhit Sankaran and Ronak Pai place at the Robert Garcia Invitational at St. Francis High School on Sept. 7 to Sept. 8.

by Serena Li
& Kavitha Sundaram

Over the summer, the speech and debate team went through major changes in coaching, including a turnover in the head coach and two speech coaches.

Those changes, including the appointment of English teacher Erick Rector as head coach and English teacher Matt Granoff and outside consultant Steve Clemmons as assistant coaches, were unexpected, but the dozens of students in the program and its student leaders say they are determined to make the season the best one yet.

This year's club treasurer, senior Surbhi Bhat, has made a primary focus of the club to have more organized practices.

"We are aware that every student has a conflict," Bhat said. "So we are trying to create a schedule that allows each student to get the proper help they need."

Club co-president, senior Adhit Sankaran, said that except for a few changes in the curriculum, the practice will have a similar system to last year.

One new aspect of the club, implemented in the hopes of ensuring productivity, requires captains to have a plan coming into each meeting. This will help keep students on track and focused.

Sophomore speech captain Nandini Desai hopes that the changes in the club this year and the increase in members will help them do better in local tournaments.

"I hope we do well at Coast Forensic

League tournaments so we can make a name for Saratoga," Desai said.

Another change regarding practices is that more experienced members will be separated from newer members so students can work at their own pace and with others of the same caliber.

"Students who want to improve will have resources available to them, and they can always ask for help," Sankaran said.

The club is also working closely with parent boosters and the new coaches to create a more appealing program that will influence students to actively participate in the club throughout the year.

"A lot of kids last year showed up to the first month of practices and never showed up again, so this year we are trying to create a stronger program," Bhat said.

This year, the club has already had a taste of success in Robert Garcia Invitational, a debate tournament. In public forum debate, four teams placed in the top 16, and Sankaran won best speaker.

Last year's speech and debate team also had complications with the lack of transparency from parents regarding the changes in the coaching staff.

"A lot of the time, I was not aware of the changes that were made at the parent level," Bhat said.

For parents and students alike, Bhat suggested that the club should be more united.

"I want to work toward making the club more inclusive for all people," Bhat said. "As a school, we are one team. It's important that we feel united." ♦

Teaching assistants decline by half due to less students



Courtesy of Sanmati Nakil

Senior TAs Sanmati Nakil and Elaine Wang wash test tubes for chemistry teacher Janny Cahatol on Sept. 19. Their roles as TAs include preparing labs and grading homework.

by Rohan Kumar
& Selena Liu

Every Red Day, senior Eric Che attends AP Chemistry. But unlike others in the class, he doesn't have to worry about learning about stoichiometry or electron configurations anymore. Instead, he grades papers, sets up labs and helps chemistry teacher Janny Cahatol, using his knowledge from having taken the class last year.

Among the 1,350 students enrolled at SHS, 77 students are either academic tutors or school service helpers this year, according to registrar Robert Wise. Teaching assistants are typically seniors who have taken a teacher's class before and assist those teachers in small tasks and errands such as taking attendance, routine grading and setting up activities.

Recently, the number of students enrolled in a school service class has been declining significantly with no clear cause. According to Wise, 6 percent of students are enrolled in "helper" classes, which is half the number it was two years ago.

"The data is telling us it is declining," Wise said, "but there's no clear reason why to me: the sign-up process is unchanged, the credit awarded is unchanged, the grading is unchanged and the need for help is unchanged, perhaps even growing."

Senior Elizabeth Ding, a TA for math teacher PJ Yim, attributes this decline to the possibility that students, especially seniors, may want to take a heavier course load in their final year, leaving no time in

their schedule to participate in school service.

"Some students prefer to take seven classes instead of having one period of TA responsibilities," Ding said. "People might want to load up on more academically-rigorous courses."

Che said he chose to be a TA because he wanted more things to do during his senior year.

"I didn't really have anything to do, and I wanted to see what being a TA was like," Che said. "I saw last year's TA, and it looked kind of fun."

Although Che said that many students become TAs in order to get a better letter of recommendation from their teacher, he personally did not.

In addition, several students agree that being a TA is not a stressful experience, especially given that much of the class period is free time for them.

"The time I spend doing my responsibilities as a TA is around 45 minutes," said senior Olivia Leger, a TA for social sciences teacher Hana Chen. "It's mostly just grading and checking attendance and making sure everybody is there. After that, she just lets me have my free time."

Ultimately, Ding said that being a TA is a worthwhile experience.

"You can also get a behind-the-scenes look at teaching and all the work that comes with it," Ding said. "But I think the main benefit of being TA is that you can get to know a teacher out of an academic setting." ♦

FOURTH PERIOD

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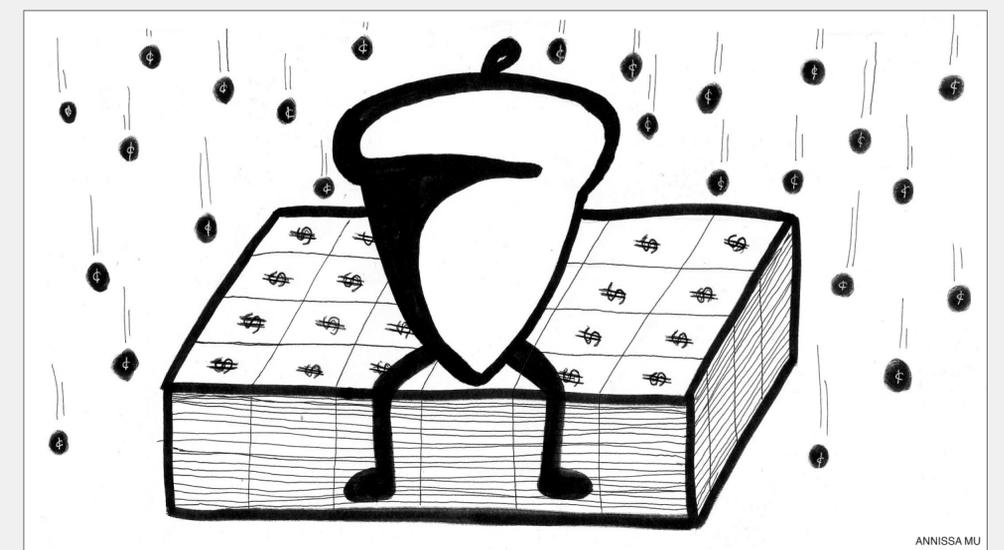
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ANNISSA MU

Only College Board gains from earlier AP registration deadline

Making decisions with limited information is not a good idea. It's not a good idea when buying a computer or when deciding which summer program to attend. It's also bad when deciding whether to take a \$110 test whose results will be sent to all the colleges you're applying to.

This year, the College Board decided to move the AP registration deadline for schools from March to November, implementing a \$40 late registration or cancellation fee. In order to meet these new regulations, Saratoga High opened priority AP registration from Sept. 16-27 and charged \$110 per test. After Nov. 12, to compensate for College Board late fees, the administration is charging \$150 for registration and is providing a \$70 partial refund for cancellations. There will be no registration changes allowed after March 6.

The main problem with the new system is that students will be incentivized to not cancel a test, even if they do not feel prepared. In essence, College Board is setting thousands of students up for failure.

College Board provided a rationale for their decision: they claimed that in schools with fall registration, "students are more engaged and less likely to give up — meaning they are more likely to earn a score that will translate to college credit."

The considerate College Board also kindly provided some statistics to prove their point. Or did they?

Comparing the test results of students that piloted the new system during 2017-2018 to those of students using the normal registration system, College Board wrote, "We saw an increase in scores of 3 or higher across multiple groups. Moving the time of registration made a difference across the board, but it had the strongest effect for students who are traditionally underrepresented in AP"

But that's only half of the

story. While the number of passing scores among low-income students increased by 20 percent, the number of failing scores among the same demographic increased by 44 percent. Therefore, in reality, the overall pass rate decreased from 39.7 to 35.7 percent between 2017 and 2018 according to Total Registration. So, essentially, more students are taking the test, only to fail in the end.

For low-income students, backing out of a \$110 investment with only a 64 percent refund is extremely difficult. So, the total number of students that end up taking the exam increases, including students that are simply not ready. In fact, Total Registration found that the failure rate of additional low-income exams under the new registration system was 76.4 percent.

Additionally, most classes get harder as the year goes on. A student can perform excellently during first semester, but might not understand the concepts presented during second semester or be able to keep up with the increasing workload. If forced to sign up before even half the content on the AP test is covered, students may be forced to take a test that they simply aren't ready for.

Take AP Chemistry, for example. The exam covers topics ranging from stoichiometry to thermodynamics. With such diversity within a course, a student may be able to understand intermolecular forces extremely well and feel ready to take the exam, only to struggle with equilibrium later on during the year.

The change by itself provides little value, since students generally go into an AP class with an initial idea of whether they want to take the AP test or not. If they do, then they will be equally engaged regardless of whether they are officially registered with College Board. However, the key word to underline here is "idea," since students can easily change

their mind as they get further into the class.

Also, giving up is not a bad thing and should not be discouraged by late fees: if a student is struggling, not taking the test is a better idea than taking the test and failing. Oftentimes, students won't know whether or not they are struggling until much later on in the curriculum. With the new system, students have to make a decision after covering only a tiny portion of the total material.

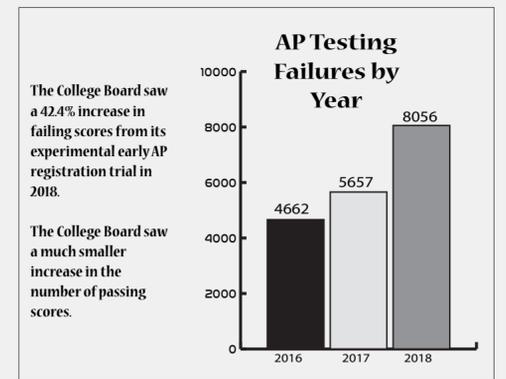
One last thing to consider are the seniors who are applying to colleges. Under the previous deadline, students who apply early to colleges will know which APs their college accepts by March and only need to sign up for tests that will earn them college credit.

With the new system, seniors have to sign up for APs that the

college they are going to might not even accept, earning College Board more revenue without a valid reason.

The additional revenue that College Board is earning is significant. Considering that 3,924 more students took AP exams in 2018, the pilot year, than in 2017 and assuming that each test costs \$100, that is an additional \$400,000. And that's without even considering late fees, cancellations, and course materials that the College Board sells to schools.

Ultimately, the new system simply drags more students into taking tests that they are not ready for or perhaps don't even want, while providing no inherent benefits in terms of college readiness. The only true beneficiary of the new policy is the College Board, which is sure to add millions more in profits. ♦



GRAPHIC BY OLIVER YE

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Navigating through generational clashes in my immigrant family

BY NeetiBadve

Though my grandparents have lived in the U.S. for more than 25 years, which is much longer than I have been alive, they essentially live with the same ideals and beliefs that they left India with.

My grandma wears her mangalsutra — a black and gold necklace traditionally worn by women in order to signify their married status — every day. Once a couple is married, the custom in Hindu culture is for the groom to tie the necklace around his wife's neck as a symbol of eternal bondage.

My mother, on the other hand, wears her mangalsutra only on religious occasions, preferring other necklaces or jewelry in her day-to-day life.

necklace? It may seem silly, but that one black and gold necklace is a representation of most immigrant family dynamics: the grandparents sticking to old customs and tradition, the parents breaking away a bit as they attempt to fit into a new society and the children growing up with an entirely different perspective from their elders.

With all these dramatically different outlooks, clashes are bound to occur, but we second- and third-generation immigrants have to differentiate between traditions to accept and traditions to reject or modify.

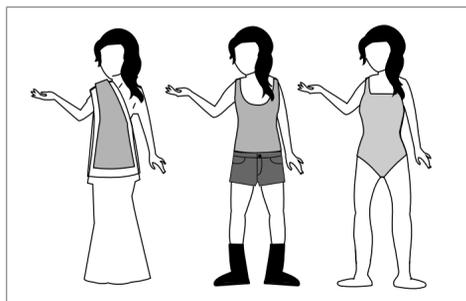
When I started swimming years ago, my entire family hated how much darker I became from spending so many hours in the sun. Their thinking: Being fair-skinned is considered more beautiful in India. My mom and grandma would give me face packs with yogurt or honey or turmeric, and I used them to make my family happy; however, at some point, I had to make them realize that nothing they were going to do would actually make my tan go away.

To my grandma, the mangalsutra represents love, auspiciousness and goodwill.

But to my 28-year-old sister, who is getting married in December, the mangalsutra serves as a religious token, only to be worn on her wedding day and other events requiring Hindu customs.

Though my sister and I both respect the mangalsutra for its religious value, both of us agree that it is outdated to think of a married woman as a possession of her husband. And honestly, a ring is much more convenient.

But why do I care so much about a mere



citizens only experience the traditional customs of our ancestors in small bits and pieces whenever we get the opportunity to travel.

At the end of the day, I know my grandma is just doing what she thinks is best for me and attempting to pass down values like humility, which she holds dear.

What I have realized over the years is that I have to pick and choose which cultural battles to fight.

Sometimes, I do have to put my foot down because I don't think it makes sense to fast the entire day. By contrast, for my grandma — someone who has been immersed in these customs her whole life — even the thought of possibly questioning these beliefs is inconceivable.

I believe in the same emphasis on humility as her, but the ways we choose to carry out these values are not always on the same wavelength.

And that's OK because like most immigrant kids, I am just trying to forge my own path — with one foot in the past and one foot in the future. ♦

Restrictions on underclassman courses hinder further academic advancement

BY PrestonFu

In the information it puts out to the community, the school often says it offers a wide variety of courses that cater to each student's interests and needs. This isn't as true as it should be, especially for younger students.

Like many other schools in the Bay Area, the school is highly competitive, whether it be standardized test scores; club, class officer and ASB leadership positions; GPA; or college placement.

Despite this commonality among schools in the area, Saratoga High is one of the few high-performing schools that limit students in their advanced course selection to such a great extent.

At Monta Vista, for instance, freshmen are allowed to take AP Environmental Science, and sophomores are allowed to take AP Physics I. Almost every other nearby school allows juniors to take AP Language and Composition, unlike here where it is a seniors-only course. To meet the needs of its students, the school should loosen its restrictions on entering advanced classes.

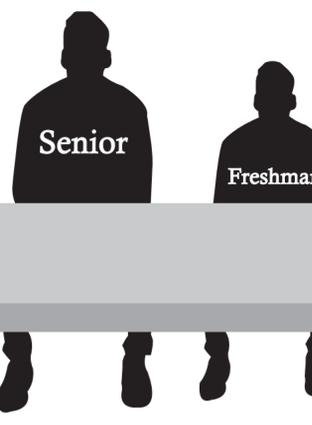
With more than 99 percent of students at the school planning on pursuing higher education according to Saratoga High's School Profile, it is logical that many students, including underclassmen, are already aware of their interests or of the major they would like to pursue in college.

Students may want a challenge in a vastly different subject so as to skip required courses in college and focus on subjects they are more interested in.

Or, perhaps they are just one of many

competitive students trying to boost their GPA. Students seeking a more fulfilling education should not be barred from taking the courses they need to achieve their goals.

In fact, some higher-level courses have prerequisites created for the sole purpose of limiting underclassmen. For instance, it doesn't make sense that in order to do well in AP Physics 2, students need a solid understanding of either redox reactions from Chemistry or "1984" from English 10.



Some students, myself included, have greatly benefited from the ability to skip courses.

Since I plan on majoring in math or a related field in college, it was fortunate that Redwood Middle School and Saratoga High let me take the math courses I did. However,

many science and humanities students don't have these advanced options.

Of course, it should be acknowledged that some classes are intended specifically for students of certain grade levels. For example, sophomores shouldn't be allowed to take English 11, but if they can demonstrate proficiency in the necessary skills, should be allowed into courses like AP English Language and Composition. Hopefully, these students will interpret their participation in the course as a challenge, an opportunity to enhance their learning.

One potential issue that may arise with this change is the vast difference between freshmen and seniors regarding maturity and behavior during class. But this isn't always an issue.

Speaking as a sophomore who takes math courses alongside seniors, I have found it generally true that younger students adjust their behavior to that of the typical student in a class. As a result, the maturity level in higher-level courses would still be sufficient for the class to function properly.

Preventing students who are ready to take college-level courses from pursuing their passion serves no real purpose. The school community needs to reconsider the way that prerequisites are set up to allow freshmen and sophomores to take classes that more closely align with their goals.

And as for upperclassmen who complain about being surrounded by younger students, they must acknowledge that school is about learning, even for students younger than themselves. ♦

3 strategies for improving the student center

BY VirraajReddi

Juniors and seniors still remember the former 800 building as a block of classrooms from earlier in their high school experience. But to newer students, it was nothing more than a mass of wood planks and construction noises for months in the past year.

In April, the green fences and construction equipment gave way to a shining, glass-covered student center. Since its opening, the center has been a hit with the student body.

As one of the most popular buildings on campus, it's the home of the Leadership class, a frequent place to relax and a go-to place to complete homework. Its central location and open design make it one of the easiest buildings on campus to access, and especially with the new tutorial schedule, having a building dedicated to student interaction is incredibly useful.

As great as the student center is, though, there's still untapped potential and room for improvement. In particular, the center could improve by adding computers, opening up conference rooms and expanding after-school use.

Introducing computers into the student center could help increase student productivity. Especially considering that the library recently removed 20 computers, reinstalling some in a different location could provide another reason for students to use the student center.

Significant portions of schoolwork are assigned online, and students need a way to access the internet. The student center is marketed as a place for students to complete homework, but to live up to that goal, it must have computers.

Another upgrade would be to open up the underused conference rooms during school hours. There's no explanation for why they're consistently closed during this time, and preventing students from using such a valuable resource — especially for group projects or club meetings where a secluded, quiet room is necessary — is a shame.

It makes sense that the school is skeptical of opening up an academic area to be misused as a social room, but completely closing off the area isn't a solution. A middle ground needs to be found between completely closing the conference rooms off and opening them to be social areas.

Furthermore, the accessibility of the student center could provide student organizations a place to convene after school. Competition-based clubs such as speech and debate and Science Olympiad often hold practices in teachers' rooms, which can lead to unwanted disruptions.

The student center is consistently open, and its group-work focused layout makes it ideal for clubs and organizations. It's unclear why more clubs don't take advantage of its availability, especially considering it's an improved alternative to classrooms.

But to fully maximize use of the student center after school, it should remain open longer than its current closing time of 5 p.m. One hour is simply not enough time for student organizations to take advantage of its features.

Through its first three months, the student center has shown its value. But with just a few key improvements, it could be even more useful and fulfill its full potential. ♦

Socratic method can hinder student learning and make the classroom environment exasperating

by LihShoshani

As students crowd around the teacher's desk, time passes and the period ends, yet the line never shortens. Many students don't get the chance to have their questions answered while the teacher works one-on-one with a student, trying to use the Socratic method to teach them how to solve a problem.

Many students don't have the chance to ask questions and get a clear answer.

It seems this method is a technique many teachers have attempted to adopt this year.

The Socratic method is a style of questioning where the teacher asks leading questions to help students understand the material. If students have questions, teachers won't give them the answer or explain the problem step by step, but rather, they'll try to let students figure it out themselves to truly understand the subject.

This method, rooted in the teachings of Socrates during 400 B.C., was used to clarify the concepts of good and justice and to help examine beliefs.

However, the method often fails when implemented in a modern classroom setting in tough subjects like science. Many students don't have the chance to ask questions and get a clear answer. This can be tiring for students who continue to misunderstand the question, or when the method prevents teachers from sharing all of their knowledge with the students.

The Socratic method can be rather frustrating to students who want a yes-or-no to make sure they did a problem correctly, not a question back from the teacher.

When teachers repeatedly question students, it can be irritating to seek clarification and not understand how to get to the answer. When surrounded by classmates, it can be embarrassing to continue to misinterpret the teacher's questions, which — in this case — are doing more harm than helping students understand the subject.

Furthermore, this technique

takes too long to be effective in an hour and a half class period. During English class, it may be better to have the teacher explain a line from Shakespeare than to have students wrestle with it on their own and not understand the work they're covering. Without enough knowledge, these "self-discovery" lesson plans go in circles with not much actually learned.

At its best, the Socratic method does grant students more independence and gives them a chance to form new opinions. It teaches them not to take things at face value and to find out for themselves whether or not they agree with others' opinions. In the right circumstances, students can understand and explore certain topics in great depth.

Still, an overcrowded classroom might not be the best place to implement this time-consuming strategy. The Socratic method is often inefficient and frustrating, and teachers should recognize these problems and modify their techniques, not try to recreate a cumbersome, slow process that merely serves to impede actual learning. ♦



Increasing instructional minutes improves academics

BY JeanetteZhou

When the new tutorial policy was announced in August, I was confused. Both my older brother and sister had the old tutorial system at Saratoga High, and they graduated without any problems. Why the change?

While I first thought that the concern over the extra minutes seemed pointless, my research brought me to the conclusion that not only should students not whine the more structured tutorial, we should welcome it.

Saratoga High is part of the Los Gatos-Saratoga Union High School District, which must follow the rules set by the California Department of Education (CDE). According to the CDE, students are required to attend 180 days of school and a total of 64,800 minutes for all four years of high school.

Both my older brother and sister had the old tutorial system, and they graduated without any problems.

Surprisingly, this only applies to California. Throughout the U.S., high school instructional minute policies vary from 75,600 minutes to 19,800 minutes a year, with some states — including New York, West Virginia and Mississippi — not having a minimum.

With such large variety in instructional-minute minimums, I wanted to find a reason California had an instructional-minute minimum so far above the average.

I stumbled upon a large-scale, comprehensive study posted on

PubMed Central (PMC), which contains files from the U.S. National Library of Medicine and National Institute of Health, provides a strong argument for increased instructional minutes.

The study was conducted over a randomized trial of 90 schools in Denmark and included a total of 1,931 fourth graders. Over the course of 16 weeks, the schools increased their instructional minutes by three hours weekly. The results found that the increase in instructional minutes improved student learning, even without a set curriculum.

While the data in Denmark may not translate perfectly here, this study is one of the only large-scale comprehensive studies on instructional minutes that is currently available.

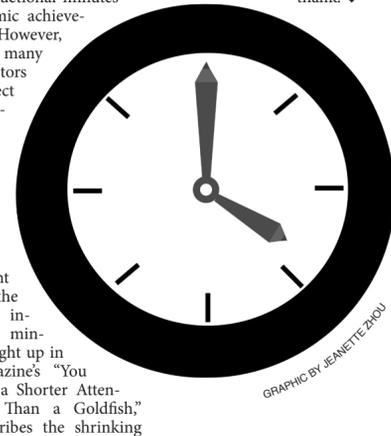
If one were to attempt to use data from the United States, such as the average 2017 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) mathematics assessment score, there would be practically no correlation between instructional minutes and academic achievement. However, there are many other factors that affect student performance among the differing states, so this finding is relatively inconclusive.

One point against the efficacy of instructional minutes is brought up in Time Magazine's "You Now Have a Shorter Attention Span Than a Goldfish," which describes the shrinking

attention span of younger generations. This argument can be rebutted by the PMC article, which took into account factors like willpower and found that when accompanied by a teaching plan, increased instructional time actually decreased behavioral problems associated with lack of attention.

So students, stop complaining. Thirty extra minutes of more structured instructional time can only help to increase academic performance. Instead of spending tutorial checking social media, we should be using the time to do homework and talking with teachers. In fact, I would argue that Saratoga High should extend the school day by increasing each period to 100 minutes, instead of 90, in order to boost academic performance.

While it might be a pain to have to stay at school for longer, in 10 years, when you are smarter than your brother and sister, maybe you'll have those extra academic minutes to thank. ♦



Teachers should leverage TAs' talents

BY HowardTang

It's the first day of school, and a teacher tells her assistant, "I forgot to bring some work for you to do, so you get to stare at your belly button for 80 minutes."

It's the first period of the day, and they have no homework to occupy themselves, no social media to burn time because they forgot their electronics at home and absolutely nothing to do.

Instead, they spend time sleeping in class that day.

It doesn't happen in every case, but too often the time of a teacher's assistant is essentially wasted.

Teacher's assistants are part of the school service system. They can pick any teacher to TA for after looking job descriptions.

Many upperclassmen also get their positions the previous year by talking to the teacher they want to TA for, usually a teacher writing their college recommendation letter. The system, however, is slowly getting worse.

Previously, there could be no more than one TA assigned to a teacher each period and no more than two TAs in total for any teacher. However, several TAs this year were placed in pairs for the same teacher in the same period.

Although this can increase efficiency, depending on the collaboration of the TAs, and can also make the work distribution between the two more fair, it also makes it hard for teachers to effectively assign work for the TAs to do, as the teacher must wait another full cycle of two school days if they forget about something.

This year has also seen the introduction of TAs for teachers during their prep periods, where there are no students in the classroom. In this situation, TAs that are looking to get to know the teacher better and have better material in their recommendation letters, there are

no chances to demonstrate leadership, skill improvement (unless grading papers is a valued skill), motivation or anything in that vein.

University TAs act more like tutors, helping students learn the material taught and often teaching small sections of the class, in addition to the typical TA tasks of grading tests and homework.

On the other hand, TAs at Saratoga do whatever the teacher wants them to do. This does not maximize the use of the students' talents and is not necessarily the best for them. In the binder of job descriptions for TAs, a few teachers write that they only require TAs to "have fun" in their classroom. How is this even helpful to anyone?

TAs do not have small brains; please don't treat them as office monkeys.

The busy work teachers assigned to TAs allow teachers to spend time on more important tasks like grading essays or fixing errors in their presentations. However, from personal experience, most of the busywork can be completed in a fraction of a period. Thus, TAs can finish the busy work in the time teachers spend teaching new material and work on more meaningful tasks at other times.

Teachers should start using their TAs to develop the learning environment of the classroom, allowing them to help students during work-times or labs so that help is readily available, instead of just using them to grade papers, enter grades or look at belly buttons.

At the very least, return the TA system to the state it was in last year, so that no pair of TAs will work for the same teacher during a prep period. ♦

To advance, Democratic candidates should appeal to minority voters without straying too far left

BY Sandhya Sundaram

On Sept. 12, the leading 10 candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination took the stage at Texas Southern University in Houston for the third Democratic debate. Among the issues discussed were health care, immigration, gun control, Afghanistan, education and institutionalized racism.

In order to be able to challenge President Donald Trump after nomination, the Democratic nominee must be able to compromise on some issues and appeal to minority voters — specifically black and Hispanic people. Historically, gaining minority votes has given candidates an edge. After the primaries, compromise has also helped gain the votes of those who are undecided, independent or unsure.

The night started off with discussion on health care. Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders' Medicare for all plan is divisive across party lines for taking away people's choice to remain with current health care providers.

In the debate, South Bend, Ind., mayor Pete Buttigieg brought up the concern that Sanders' plan takes away the trust in the people to make their own informed decisions.

Many Americans, especially moderates, will never be able to agree with Socialist principles like those that Sanders espouses.

Candidates later debated the merits of gun control measures. The month of August left 53 dead due to shootings in Odessa,

Texas; Dayton, Ohio; and El Paso. During the debate, Beto O'Rourke, the former Texas congressman, vehemently asserted, "Hell yes, we're going to take your AR-15, your AK-47, and we're not going to allow it to be used against your fellow Americans anymore," after the shooting in his hometown of El Paso.

While this was a powerful statement that resulted in applause, the reality is that much of the population, including gun owners, will never support such measures and will fight to keep their guns and vote.

Immigration was the large concern of the night, prompted by Castro and moderators. When asked by moderator Jorge Ramos about his history of deporting 3 million people during the Obama presidency, former vice president Joe Biden responded by saying that it was Obama's administration, not his.

Biden has been criticized for taking credit for the better parts of the Obama administration, while denying full involvement in the more negative aspects.

Nevertheless, Biden still leads in polls. But Americans will continue to be skeptical and question him for his age and the 76-year-old's ability to deny responsibility.

On the topic of institutionalized racism and mass incarceration, moderators pressed Harris and Klobuchar for their track records of not doing enough to combat racism in the criminal justice system.

While Harris and other candidates like Buttigieg support reparations, Harris' past

and Buttigieg's struggle to appeal to black voters may come to haunt them.

Biden was questioned on a previous statement he had made in 1975, when he said, "I don't feel responsible for the sins of my father and grandfather, I feel responsible for what the situation is today, for the sins of my own generation, and I'll be damned if I feel responsible to pay for what happened 300 years ago."

Once primaries are over, compromise will help gain the votes of those who are undecided, independent or unsure.

In his response, Biden tried to absolve himself of responsibility and made a random remark about how lower income families should turn on record players to educate their kids.

He was asked about the need to mend the legacy of slavery on black communities and responded with a long response that ended up confusing and concerning people. Although he has historically appealed to black voters, Biden's record and his inability to take full responsibility during the debate has let down some supporters and may hurt him in the long run.

An underdog candidate who has gained a lot of publicity for his novel ideas, Yang elicited shock and laughter from the crowd and other candidates in his opening statement when he revealed his plan to give 10 families \$1,000 to improve their lives and make the country better.

Families must sign up on his website, and 10 will be chosen based on how they would spend the money.

The idea may not be super impactful, with only \$10,000 being spent in total, but its concept of having people — rather

than corporations — fund causes is unique and laudable. Currently ranking third among the candidates, Harris stuck with repeatedly attacking Trump during the debate; for example, calling him someone who "conducts trade policy by tweet," when asked about her own trade policy.

While her memorable lines resonated with the crowd, she did not elaborate on her policy as much as she should have, instead focusing on being a crowd-pleaser.

As for the Democratic nomination, it looks as if it is most likely between Biden and Warren at this point. After the debate, Warren announced her tax plan, calling for the uber wealthy to only pay a tax of two cents for every dollar after earning \$50 million.

Although she is not as much of a moderate as Biden and supports Medicare for All, she is trending upwards, and her clearly articulated plans have resonated with many Americans. With the trend of discussions about immigration, reparations, and criminal justice, it is clear that the minority votes will matter a lot.

To earn the Democratic nomination, candidates must better appeal to the Latinx and black communities, while not straying too far to the left in future debates and policies. ♦



Biden



Warren



Sanders



Harris



Buttigieg

SOURCE: WIKIPEDIA



Quest for defined abs successful due to popular YouTube tutorial

Jen Z loves Kaviar
Kavita Sundaram and Jeanette Zhou

Nowadays, there seems to be so much focus on body image and the "perfect body," one with an hourglass figure and tiny waist. From YouTube videos to wikiHow articles, it is easy to find thousands of videos and workouts advertising quick ways to attain such a body.

One of the most popular "quick abs" videos is the 10-minute ab routine of one of Instagram's most famous models, Alexis Ren. Ren, with her much-sought-after small waist and chiseled frame, has racked up 13.2 million followers.

Her workout video has over 17 million views, and with Ren saying she performs it every morning to keep her beautifully toned abs, we, as out-of-season rowers, set out to try it ourselves for a week and uncover the truth.

The exercise itself is barely 10 minutes long and requires no equipment; we had no problem completing the workout for an entire week, even when it was late at night, and we had piles of homework and dishes to do.

As for difficulty level, the workout isn't too challenging. The video has 20 moderately difficult exercises that run nonstop, including sit ups, planks and heel touches; after all, who doesn't love a solid plank?

Each exercise lasts only 30 seconds, and it is easy enough to take a quick break when switching between exercises or to simply pause the video (of course, she never takes such breaks).

Did it work? After our weeklong experiment, we did see a slight difference, but it was just a tiny bit more definition of our abs and nothing else.

Along with the physical results, though, we did notice that we were getting stronger — or at least strong enough to complete the entire routine without taking any breaks in the middle.

Initially, it was difficult to follow through the entire routine without rest because we got fatigued easily.

Initially, it was difficult to follow through the entire routine without rest because we got fatigued easily, even though the exercises themselves were easy to complete and didn't leave us sore.

Neither of us has a six pack just yet, but who knows? After several weeks, we could maybe achieve something like Ren's toned abs.

We might not be motivated enough to stick it out for more than a week, but those who can will definitely be satisfied with their results. ♦

Victoria's Secret workout regime promises hot girl summer body

Ama(Sze)ing chicken Wings
Kevin Sze and Alex Wang

When the lovely Lifestyle editors suggested working out like Victoria's Secret models, we jumped at the opportunity. After all, we had always wanted six-pack abs and Victoria's Secret models were the embodiment of physical fitness. Even though hot girl summer just ended, it's never too early to get a summer bod. Right?

A quick search led us to a Harper's Bazaar article titled "How to Work Out like a Victoria's Secret Model at the Gym." The workout consists of nine exercises, mainly focusing on legs and glutes with a little bit of upper-body work. Unfortunately, there were no exercises that hit our abs or arms, so our dreams of attaining Zac Efron-like physiques were dashed.

Alex: The workout began relatively easily, but it ramped up with the sled pushes and battle ropes. It had been a while since I played football, so I was not in the best of shape. Apparently, playing pickup basketball once a week during the summer was not enough conditioning.

Kevin: The glute walks weren't much of an issue for me. The weird black noodles that Alex claimed were

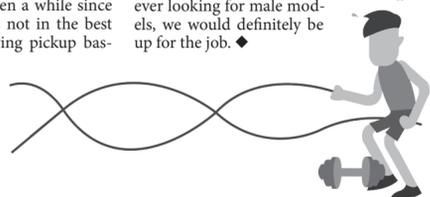
"battle ropes" were definitely more of a challenge. I couldn't get the coordination down, and I drew some funny glances from other gym members.

The box jumps, however, were quite embarrassing. My 24-inch vertical paled in comparison to the lady doing box jumps beside me. I said "Hi" and was going to ask her for her number, but she hit me with the "I have a boyfriend already."

Alex: To finish up, we did landmine deadlifts and hopped on the air bike. It was tiring and we broke a good sweat. After the workout, my glutes were very sore for the next couple of days. I had never hit those muscles from so many angles before. I would imagine Kevin felt the same because golf is not the most physically active sport.

Kevin: Alex is incorrect. I'm a 6'7" 200-pound machine. Just kidding. My glutes got hit pretty hard. It's OK, no pain no gain.

In the end, the workout was challenging but rewarding. We didn't gain any weight because it was just one day, but if we stuck with it we definitely could've seen some results. If Victoria's Secret is ever looking for male models, we would definitely be up for the job. ♦



A vision of the future: Saratoga's downtown needs new infrastructure to accommodate younger crowd

BY Edwin Chen & JunLee

One day, the two of us decided to hang out after school with a couple friends.

We met up at the back parking lot and walked to downtown, only to realize that there were few places we would actually be willing to spend our time in. We found the numerous sit-in restaurants pocketbook crushing and unappealing, especially for just a quick bite. None of the stores interested us. The one piece of green space, Wildwood Park, didn't have any sports structures where we could play basketball or any other game.

So, we instead decided to go to Cupertino Main Street where we grabbed some Meet Fresh and T4 egg puffs.

Compared to the lively downtown Los Gatos and Mainstreet Cupertino, downtown Saratoga is a disappointment, offering fewer modern features, relatively smaller buildings and pricier food.

In other words, it's not a great place for teenagers or, frankly, most people under 40 to spend their time in. How can Downtown improve? Ultimately, it is important for downtown Saratoga to modernize in order to appeal to more residents and to draw in newer, younger customers for the local economy.

Here are three ways to improve the downtown: introduce more fast food places, rework the one nearby green space and support more contemporary businesses.

One of the major differences between Saratoga and other downtowns is that our

downtown has no fast food. Most restaurants are sit-down, local restaurants offering cultural cuisines including Italian and Thai dishes. Fancy restaurants like La Fondue price one main dish at \$150, and other restaurants in downtown are just as expensive. It's hard to eat there with only a \$20 in your pocket.

Meanwhile, downtown Los Gatos has a Super Duper Burger, Pizza My Heart, Mainstreet Burgers and more, all of which are viable and relatively affordable lunch options for teens. Like the restaurants, businesses downtown also cater to older generations. There is an antiques store, a recording studio, a boutique and a florist, very few of which appeal to millennials. Los Gatos, on the other hand, has an Apple store and a Lamborghini dealership. Downtown Saratoga needs shops that millennials are actually interested in, such as brand-name clothing or electronics stores.

Moreover, most stores in downtown Saratoga close before 9 p.m. High schoolers often hang out past that time. Meanwhile, all stores in Cupertino Main Street close at 11 p.m. The closing time for stores should be extended; this way, the Downtown has the capability of holding more customers and visitors, which will eventually bring more people.

Because Downtown is mostly businesses, there isn't a place where adolescents people can run around or hang out with their friends. Wildwood Park is by far considered the best place to hang out in downtown, but even then, the park lacks any sports spaces and cries out for some kind of recreational



Downtown Saratoga opens with remnants of the historic Saratoga village, including a memorial arch in Blaney Plaza; a singular Starbucks store is the only fast food option.

area like a basketball court, a baseball field or a field with a soccer or football goal post.

The easiest option would be a small basketball court, which would attract people of all ages who may want to have a quick game of pick up.

In comparison to other downtowns, downtown Saratoga lacks the necessary infrastructure for it to become an attractive place for teens and young adults to enjoy. Currently, most of the businesses and res-

taurants appeal to the older population, but it is unfair that downtown seems to only belong to the middle aged and elderly, since it is a space shared by all residents of Saratoga.

Downtown should be a place where all people of different ages, can visit, rest or spend time meaningfully.

The problems with downtown Saratoga are nothing new. But if even a couple of these ideas became reality, more teens would go downtown and more would follow. ♦

VSCO girl style-change more difficult than anticipated

I sank the turtles
Krithi Sankar

At 8:17 a.m. on a groggy Sunday morning, I rushed to my friend's, junior Bela Chauhan's, house so we could thrift in Goodwill Cupertino for specific clothing pieces and accessories. Our mission? To become VSCO girls for the upcoming school week.

What is a VSCO girl you may ask? According to Urban Dictionary, a VSCO girl is defined as "a Tumblr girl of 2019," meaning VSCO girls are the new trendy way to describe a basic teenage girl. Common VSCO girl items include tube tops, jean shorts, scrunchies, puka shell necklaces, Hydroflasks, Carmex and the list goes on.

Because we only had half an hour to spare, we rummaged through the aisles of used clothing to find the perfect vintage oversized tees and denim bottoms.

Though the Goodwill inventory was disappointing at best, we each managed to find a few items that fit our definition of a VSCO girl.

Once I came home though, it was like my seemingly "perfect" VSCO girl items were now a waste of 17 dollars. The pieces — a black crop top, a pair of denim overalls, an

oversized black and white striped shirt and a pink corduroy skirt — didn't suit the VSCO girl stereotype.

At this point, I had to reach out to the most basic girls I knew. My friends (shout out to senior Maya Gonder, senior Sarah Tucker, senior Sejal Sripadanna, senior Selina Yang and junior Shauna Zahabi) lent me nearly everything I needed for the next five days.

So Sunday evening I planned out my week's outfits and hoped everything would work out according to plan.

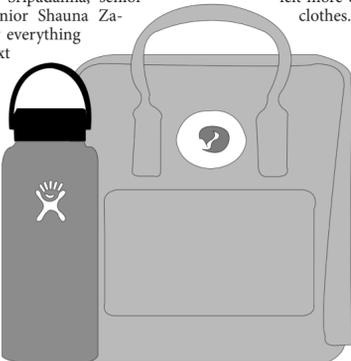
My first day started off with frantically studying for my physics quiz during second period while simultaneously putting on my outfit for the day. The VSCO outfit of the day was a pair of Forever 21 denim overalls from Goodwill, an oversized/ripped white T-shirt, a shell bracelet, a black and white plaid scrunchie with worn-out brown Birkenstocks and Gonder's blue Fjall Rancken backpack. Along with my other VSCO girl items, I carried my Hydroflask in hand

as I power-walked through the school entrance.

Throughout the school day, my peers would give me strange looks or do a double take because my outfit was so out of character, but as the day progressed, I felt more comfortable in my clothes.

On Tuesday, I wore a yellow tube top with ripped jeans, a Guess necklace, a shell bracelet and the Kanken. As I walked into AP Gov, I was showered in compliments on the new look, which was an unexpected reaction on my part, mainly because I was extremely self-conscious of the fit of the tube top.

Wednesday's outfit by far was the most comfortable of all the VSCO girl outfits. I wore an oversized USC T-shirt, Nike pros, a Guess necklace, a shell bracelet, black and orange scrunchies and Birkenstocks. Usually, I would be terrified of looking like I'm



not wearing any pants, but the loose nature of the tee and the fit of the Nike Pros provided the feeling of a dress.

Thursday was my second and final tube top day as I wore a white tube top, jeans, a hole punch belt, a Puka shell necklace, a navy blue scrunchie and Birkenstocks with white Nike crew socks to top it all off.

I definitely struggled with basic tasks such as bending down to grab my backpack and raising my hand in class, but with my newly-gained experience with tube tops I got through the day relatively unscathed.

By the time Friday rolled around, I was exhausted by the amount of effort it took to be basic.

By this point I had nearly given up and my outfit reflected that; I wore a black crop top, ripped jeans, a hole punch belt, a Guess necklace, a shell bracelet, a black scrunchie and Birkenstocks with black Nike crew socks.

There was little to no trouble getting through the day, since this outfit was the closest to my normal wardrobe, but the outfit definitely looked more emo than VSCO.

Overall, the VSCO girl week was challenging, to say the least, but I was surprisingly excited to broaden my narrow view of fashion.

I was much more conscious of what I was wearing throughout the week, but I wouldn't wear the majority of the VSCO girl clothes I wore that week, with the exception of the oversized tee with the biker shorts. ♦

Repeatedly rewatching "The Office"

BY Lih-Shoshani

In a month, you can fly around the world 24 times. In 30 days, junior Nina Dertorossian can watch all nine seasons of "The Office," which originally ran from 2005 to 2013.

Dertorossian enjoys the unorthodox plot and humor of the show that inspired NBC hits like "Parks and Rec." The show's setting is simulated to look like an actual documentary, following everyday lives of office employees in Scranton, Pennsylvania. The awkward pauses when the manager of the branch and Dertorossian's favorite character, Michael Scott, says something strange, or when an

event out of the ordinary occurs, add to the appeal of the show.

The show stands out to her because "characters are going to fall in love, get hit by cars, lose loved ones and love life."

Dertorossian says she feels connected and invested in both the characters and the interesting storyline. Sometimes, instead of focusing on her schoolwork, she'll watch "The Office," and wait for Michael Scott to appear on her screen.

Her favorite episode is "Niagara" in season six, where her

favorite couple, Jim and Pam, get married. The wedding takes place at Niagara Falls, with the bride and groom deciding to get married on a boat before going to their wedding ceremony with their family and coworkers.

"Every time I watch it, I can't believe what amazing actors they both are," Dertorossian said. "They have such a deep connection that when I watch the episode I get goosebumps. They look so in love, but they're just actors; they aren't together and that shocks me."

While she doesn't enjoy season

eight as much as others because it doesn't include Michael Scott — an essential character to the show — Dertorossian is committed to finishing all nine seasons from start to finish every time.

She's rewatched the show multiple times since eighth grade and has gotten into trouble with her mom for spending 16 hours a day on Netflix. As her binge cycle continues, Dertorossian waits for the next time she has a spare 64,414 minutes to watch all of the episodes of "The Office" again.

"Watching a show with such a realistic cast stands out to me," she said. "It makes me so happy to know what lives they live and the differences they'll make." ♦



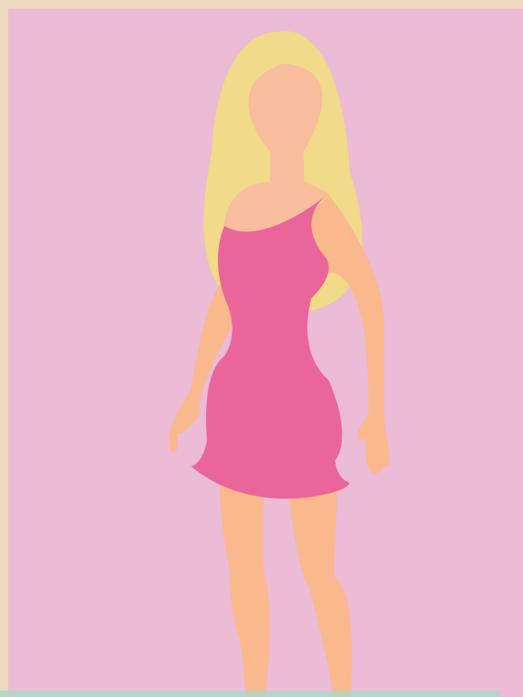
Dertorossian



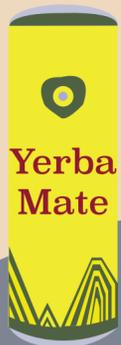
My Strange Addiction



ON THIS EPISODE... reporters reveal their own and other people's strange addictions.



This caffeinated drink wakes you up better than your mom



sandh-
yerba



Sandhya Sundaram

In a six-week summer program, I lived in a frat house along with 27 other high schoolers. With so much to talk to and not enough time, we were up all night and typically slept under five hours each day. I repeated this routine each day of the six weeks. People who know this have frequently inquired as to how I am still breathing and how I survived the summer.

The answer is Yerba Mate. This South American drink was first introduced to me in Spanish class ju-

nior year, when Señora Marks described mate as a cultural practice in Argentina. The original drink is made from infused mate leaves and can be consumed hot or cold, much like tea, and is typically passed around and shared.

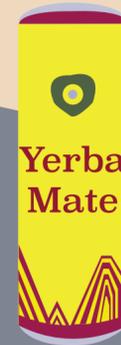
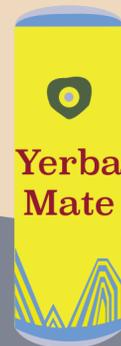
With enticing flavors like Bluephoria, Passionfruit, and Pomegranate, Yerba Mates are available in most Safeways and 7/11s. The best flavor is Original, but Bluephoria is a distant second. Although similar to tea, Yerba Mate is in fact made of a different type of leaf.

Unlike many energy drinks, the packaging doesn't make you feel like you are buying a sketchy product that might be revealed to cause cancer in the near future. In fact, it makes me think that I am putting something healthy and natural into my body even if that isn't the case. And the best part? The drink can

have up to 140 milligrams of caffeine — the same amount of caffeine as three cups of coffee!

With all of these benefits, I was completely hooked. Every morning this summer, running on only a handful of hours of sleep, I would grab a Yerba Mate at 7/11 and chug it during my seminar. As a result, I was able to pursue this seemingly unsustainable lifestyle for six weeks. While this may not be sustainable for the entirety of the academic year, it works for shorter time periods that require the maximum grind.

So this year if you need something to power you up, whether during finals week or college apps, consider Yerba Mate. If you sleep five hours a night, you're probably adding years to your lifespan by just being awake. I promise, you'll feel invigorated. ♦



Binging Barbie movies serves as a form of self-care

barb-
yee
girl



Samantha Yee

Which sounds more relaxing: mentally untangling the Reddit-thread analyses of any old blockbuster film or turning your brain off completely to binge movies with a pink glitter aesthetic that overcompensates for how bad they are?

During our sophomore year, my friends and I watched "Barbie: A Fashion Fairytale" in the name of boredom and irony. We weren't fully prepared for the onslaught of commercialized friendship and overly poppy musical numbers that the movie brought us. And we definitely

weren't prepared to not stop watching Barbie movies.

We began getting together to solely watch Barbie movies, and after a year, we had exhausted about 36 DVDs of 2000s-era-and-beyond princess/fairy/mermaid Barbie sagas, each a different version of the titular heroine saving the day with a couple of ditzy friends and irritatingly high-pitched animal pals.

We became addicted to the comicality of winding down after a long week of trying to be academically intelligent with a spree of pink and sparkly nonsense.

What started as a joke quickly became a big part of our lives. We indulged in Barbie conspiracy theories. We know that the production company Mattel re-used the same song in two Barbie movies about princesses, that Barbie's sisters are more likely

her daughters and that the worst movie in existence — which happens to also be my personal favorite — is "The Barbie Diaries," which we still reference to this day. We may as well start a Barbie fanfiction account while we're ahead.

We often ask ourselves, why now, when we're pessimistic, tired high school students, do we consume shameful amounts of Barbie?

Maybe deep down, we live vicariously through Barbie's perfect adventures, forgetting the pressure to study for hours, and instead just believing in the power of friendship and glitter.

Or, maybe it's because it's just funny how Barbie's hair is animated so that it swivels on her scalp whenever she moves.

Either way, we don't plan to give up our addiction anytime soon. ♦

How do you defeat boredom while developing your mind?

LISTEN TO PODCASTS FOR HEARTBREAKING STORIES, TERRIFYING MYSTERIES AND HILARIOUS ANTICS SURE TO EXCEED THE DIVERSE EXPECTATIONS OF ANY AUDIENCE

BY AnissaMu

Teens binge-watch Netflix and spend hours on YouTube and social media. They don't do podcasts — or at least that's the popular perception.

When people who have never tried exploring the world of podcasts think of them, they might imagine their grandmother or grandfather sitting in their rocking chair, listening to another older person go on and on in a monotone about politics, history or classical music. Clearly, most people don't realize how diverse and exciting podcasts can be.

That's why I compiled a guide to my favorite podcasts, hand-selected to meet any entertainment preference, in hopes that more people my age will open their arms to this wonderful medium.

The first podcast I would like to introduce is a great example of the vivid imagery that can be conveyed with just words. If you like stories of the mysterious and spooky, similar to hit shows like "Stranger Things" or "Gravity Falls," listen to "Welcome to Night Vale." The podcast is in the style of a community radio station of a fictitious town called Night Vale. Similar to "Gravity Falls," Night Vale and its citizens are characterized as incredibly strange and abnormal but are written off by the radio host as the most normal and mundane.

However, "Welcome to Night Vale" is not a narrative story, which may be a turnoff for some people. For those who love mystery and plot, I suggest the podcast "Big Data." This podcast is made from the perspective of two news reporters investigating a robbery that eventually leads to the end of the

internet. Hilarious and enthralling, "Big Data" is the perfect podcast for anyone who likes crime and heist stories. It's a little like the movie "Catch Me If You Can," except instead of magicians, it's hackers.

Podcasts are a diverse and versatile form of entertainment, containing so many different genres and personalities.

Speaking of crime, what about crime fighting? A great fictional crime-fighting podcast to listen to is "The Penumbra." My favorite arc is the story following a cynical yet brilliant private eye on the planet Mars named Juno Steel. While "Big Data" and "Welcome to Night Vale" focus more on suspenseful mysteries rather than story, "The Penumbra" follows a more typical narrative format that includes more character development and a mostly linear plotline.

The biggest appeal of the adventures of Juno Steel is the blood pumping action scenes accompanied by Juno Steel's hilarious dry wit. We also love a good tragic Juno Steel backstory to pull our heartstrings.

Moving on from fictional podcasts, I would be remiss not to mention the absolute classic that is "This American Life," a journalistic short story and essay podcast exploring the lives of different Americans. Despite releasing its first episode in the 1990s, "This American Life" has a consistent 2.2 million listeners, thanks to the many in-

teresting stories it tells.

For example, who could forget the Chinese immigrant who was contained in a shelter because no authority figure would believe she was an adult? Who could stray away from the experiences of the football player who was terrified of being touched?

If someone were to take one of the individual stories from "This American Life" and pour an immaculate amount of investigation and production into it, they would get my personal favorite journalistic and true crime podcast: "Dr. Death."

"Dr. Death" is the story of Christopher Dunstch, a neurosurgeon who ruined 33 patients in surgery, and covers how the medical system failed to stop him. Full of gut-dropping twists and turns and haunting testimonies from several close sources, "Dr. Death," is just like a page-turning book, impossible to put down.

Podcasts are a diverse and versatile form of entertainment, containing so many different genres and personalities. However, the strength of all podcasts are their voices. Voices breathe life and interest into what could be boring or hard to communicate.

I can't imagine "Welcome to Nightvale" or "Big Data" without the over-the-top voice acting that brings out the wonderfully insane personalities of their characters. And I can't imagine hearing about the random stories of real-life people without the hysterical laughter of the hosts from "This American Life" or the perfect dramatization and calm narration in "Dr. Death."

Because of this, podcasts are just as, if not more, valuable than any other book or television show and should be bingeable entertainment for young and old alike. ♦

TOP 5 picks



GRAPHICS BY KAVITA SUNDARAM, SANDHYA SUNDARAM AND SAMANTHA YEE

Netflix hurts streaming platforms by cancelling classic television shows

BY SelenaLiu

Over the years, Netflix has lost or canceled many of its most popular shows, from "How I Met Your Mother" to "Orange is the New Black." Even though the removal of these shows did not result in an overall loss in subscribers for Netflix, the recently announced cancellations of popular classics "Friends" and "The Office," which are set to retire from the platform in 2020, will hurt the platform's prospects.

According to Tom's Guide, a technology review company, while Netflix has long claimed the title of most popular streaming service, companies such as Disney, Apple, NBC and AT&T have also started releasing their own competing streaming platforms. NBC's NBCUniversal and Disney's WarnerMedia have consequently decided to claim "The Office" and "Friends" for their respective platforms.

This is a huge hit to Netflix, according to Tara Law from TIME Magazine.

"While Netflix has long been the best-known streaming service, other companies are encroaching on the company's territory," Law wrote. "Older content which Netflix acquired from other companies is rated more highly than original Netflix content."

Law backs this claim with statistics from industry analyst firm Ampere Analysis: compared to new Netflix Original shows, which receive an average viewer rating of 77, older classics like "Friends" receive a higher average rating of 82.

Knowing this, Netflix has forked over \$100 million to WarnerMedia to keep "Friends" on its platform for the rest of 2019, according to The New York Times.

To increase their appeal to viewers and give themselves a competitive edge in the streaming industry before these shows inevitably leave, the company has expanded on its Netflix Original content, introducing new movies like "The Perfect Date" and the third season of Original series "13 Reasons Why."

However, these efforts have largely proved ineffective. Even though the company has spent \$13 billion — about 85 percent of their new spending — on producing Originals, according to David Trainer from Forbes the company has reported its lowest yearly subscriber growth numbers in three years, and its first domestic subscriber loss since 2011.

Companies such as Disney, Apple, NBC and AT&T have also started releasing their own streaming platforms.

Trainer reports that Netflix's revenue growth from subscribers is now even slower than expenditure growth and that licensed content like "Friends" and "The Office" garner a majority of subscriber views.

Netflix's future is compromised if they don't draw more subscribers after the loss of this content. For now, it might be best to enjoy Netflix while its major licensed content is still here, because in another few years, Netflix itself might be facing termination. ♦

Movie remakes utilize the same story for more money

BY SofiaJones

Nowadays, it feels as if only live-action remakes of classic Disney movies are coming out instead of original content.

Disney has now released 13 live-action remakes. "Mulan," coming out in March 2020, will be the 14th.

There are also many more announced for the future, such as "Lady and the Tramp," "Cruella" and "The Little Mermaid."

As more and more remakes come out, Disney receives more criticism for being unoriginal and ruining the source material.

In an attempt to be inventive and creative, some remakes put a twist on a classic story, such as "Dumbo," in which the live-action version focuses more on the lives of the humans who imprisoned Dumbo rather than the long-beloved tale of the elephant's woes.

As Disney seemingly runs out of ideas, it attempts to pull easy money out of old, nostalgic classics. Regardless of how little effort is put into staying true to the essence and charm of their original movies, Disney knows that live action films will draw a large audience from those who want to relive the movies they loved as a kid.

Since cartoons are stigmatized as kids-only, transforming classics into live-action formats draws in a large crowd of diverse ages — kids watch for the fun plot and adults watch for the familiar story being portrayed in a more socially acceptable for-

mat for older viewers.

Because there is a low chance of a remake flopping in the box office, live-action remakes are a more preferable business move than a riskier original movie. Even "Dumbo," which is considered by many

general watchers to be a failure among remakes, pulled in almost \$400 million.

In some cases, the transition to live-action makes sense. When a story is centered around humans, it can be interesting to see the story's characters transformed into real people.

For example, although both "Cinderella" and "Aladdin" have supernatural elements, the setting still feels mostly realistic and is captured well by live-action.

But as evidenced by the most recent remake "The Lion King," there isn't truly a "live" aspect, due to the film's cast being all animals. Because the characters are all photorealistic CGI, "The Lion King" is essentially another animated movie, but not as good. The attempt at animated realism for the animals doesn't quite take, which downplays strong emotional scenes such as Mufasa's death.

Disney isn't likely to stop these bankable remakes anytime soon. In order for a remake to be successful, heart and soul must be put into maintaining the essence of a film, rather than settling for a soulless cash-grab. Unless a CGI lion is the star of the film. In which case, maybe reconsider making the film at all. ♦



SOURCE: IMDB



Paul McCartney is dead, theorists say

BY NeetiBadve

Sir Paul McCartney did not write "Let It Be" or "Hey Jude," nor did he go on to have five children or form the band "Wings." A look-alike did all of that for him.

Or so some conspiracy-crazed Beatles fans think.

The "Paul is dead" hoax is an age-old theory claiming Paul McCartney actually died in November 1966 and was secretly replaced by a look-alike named Billy Shears.

The gist of the story is that after an argument during a Beatles recording session on Nov. 9, 1966, McCartney sped off in his car only to crash, decapitating himself in the process. The UK security service MI5 then advised the band to find a replacement to avoid the inevitable hysteria that would follow if news of his death leaked.

However, at 77 years old today, McCartney is very much alive, so what caused thousands of people worldwide to believe this conspiracy?

Though it sounds insane, for two months in the fall of 1969, as the Beatles released their last album "Abbey Road," college students across the United States obsessed over discovering hidden messages in Beatles album covers and song lyrics that pointed toward the death of McCartney, for which rumors had been circulating years prior.

The reality is that on Jan. 7, 1967, McCartney's car crashed, and consequently, a few newspapers reported he had died. However, it was McCartney's friend who crashed the car. Nobody was injured, and McCartney was not even inside.

The Beatles found these 1967 reports so outrageous that they decided to make fun of them in their songs, the same lyrics that conspiracy theorists pointed to as evidence of McCartney's death.

These hardcore theorists need look no

further than the Beatles' May 1967 album "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band."

The album cover itself fueled the "Paul is dead" theory with the Beatles creating alter egos after announcing their retirement from live performance.

A character named Billy Shears was created for Ringo Starr, the band's drummer, and as it was the only new persona named in the album, future conspiracy theorists believed it to be the name of McCartney's replacement.

In the album's final song "A Day in the Life," fellow band member John Lennon sings, "He blew his mind out in a car," which theorists believe is a reference to McCartney's decapitation during the 1966 car accident but is actually referencing the death of Guinness heir Tara Browne, a friend of the Beatles.

In the last line of "Strawberry Fields Forever," Lennon nonsensically murmurs "cranberry sauce." Such out-of-the-blue phrases were characteristic of Lennon, who disliked being taken too seriously; however, many believers argued that the line in fact says "I buried Paul."

Theorists had gone so far as to play songs backwards in order to find clues. Apparently when the Beatles' "Revolution 9" is played backwards, John Lennon can be heard repeating "Turn me on, dead man," which again many think speaks of McCartney.

McCartney's reaction to the theories has been mixed over the years, sometimes joking about it and other times understandably getting annoyed.

Nevertheless, when asked about the rumors as they first attracted global attention, McCartney told Life Magazine, "Perhaps the rumor started because I haven't been much in the press lately. I was switched on for ten years and I never switched off. Now I am switching off whenever I can." ♦

Alienstock festival is a replacement for Area 51 raid

BY BillYuan

As is the case with most Facebook events, the Storming of Area 51 began as a joke, intended to rouse viewers with its absurdity and the "they can't stop us all" philosophy. However, as the event began to pick up steam, it became apparent that the Area 51 Raid had evolved past a simple joke.

In just a few days, millions of users RSVP'd to the Facebook event, saying that they were going to storm the highly classified military base located in Southern Nevada. The event was originally created and posted on Facebook by Matty Roberts, a video game streamer known as SmyleeKun. The plans were simple: On Sept. 20, the participants were to go to Area 51.

Users on social media platforms such as Facebook and Reddit made memes on the subject. Many of these showed Area 51 raiders going home with something unattainable, something the government might want to hide from civilians. They joked that it may have been Windows 9 or hand sani-

tizer that kills 100 percent of germs.

Though there were countless posts surrounding the Area 51 raid, many people don't know about the history of the military facility.

Area 51 is known for being a highly classified Air Force facility located in Southern Nevada, most likely where experimental aircraft and weapons technologies are tested.

With public information about the military base being scarce, Area 51 has been a frequent subject of conspiracy theories, many of which claim that the facility houses aliens.

Area 51 has a history dotted with secrecy. It wasn't confirmed to be a military base by the government until 2013. Until then, it was said to have been used as a military training site during WWII, and even to this day, the government won't say exactly what happens there.

The alien conspiracy goes back to the 1950s, when there was an increase of UFO sightings around the same time the American U-2 spy plane was being tested. It was also bolstered by claims from American

China faked climate change, everybody

BY RohanKumar

In 2017, the U.S. was responsible for 6.5 billion metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions, approximately 15 percent of the global total. But according to President Trump, we have no role in climate change. Obviously.

On Nov. 6, 2012, Trump tweeted, "The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive."

Looking at the comments, it's clear that there are a lot of people who find the statement outrageous. Take, for example, the comment by Keelingover, "@realDonaldTrump...YOU WHAT??? Are you mad. oh yes, yes you are."

However, some actually believe Trump's outlandish theory, including influential lawmakers.

Senator James Inhofe of Oklahoma, who ironically chaired the United States Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, said in 2003, "Wake up, America. With all the hysteria, all the fear, all the phony science, could it be that man-made global warming is the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people? I believe it is."

When Trump hints that global warming is bogus, it hits home with his core base of followers, many of whom believe his every word, especially his constant attacks against the media.

According to The New Yorker, Trump has tweeted about the fake news 150 times since 2017. In fact, he attacked the media

over Twitter eight times on a single day in response to the media's portrayal of his reaction to Hurricane Maria, which devastated Puerto Rico.

Although not directly related to climate change, it's ultimately this repeated of questioning the media and scientific truths that gives Trump's crazy conspiracy theories traction.

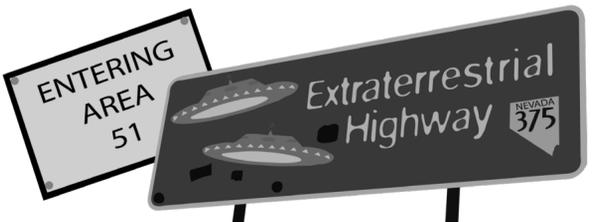
In fact, Trump's rhetoric supports questioning commonly held and scientifically proven beliefs to the point where a TIME magazine article titled "Why So Many People Believe in Conspiracy Theories," although not explicitly naming Trump, has a video embedded in the middle.

From a practical viewpoint, it seems unlikely that an educated person could believe such a conspiracy. But based on episodes of "Trump supporters say the darndest things" on YouTube, many people genuinely believe that the media and science are fake, and that the Chinese actually generated the climate change that threatens to destroy the global economy.

Ultimately, it is social media that facilitates Trump's conspiracy theories. False information can spread rapidly. Fake research and biased media provide these theories with even more legitimacy.

Twitter allows him to quickly reach millions of people, and the theories only spread from there despite their obvious falseness.

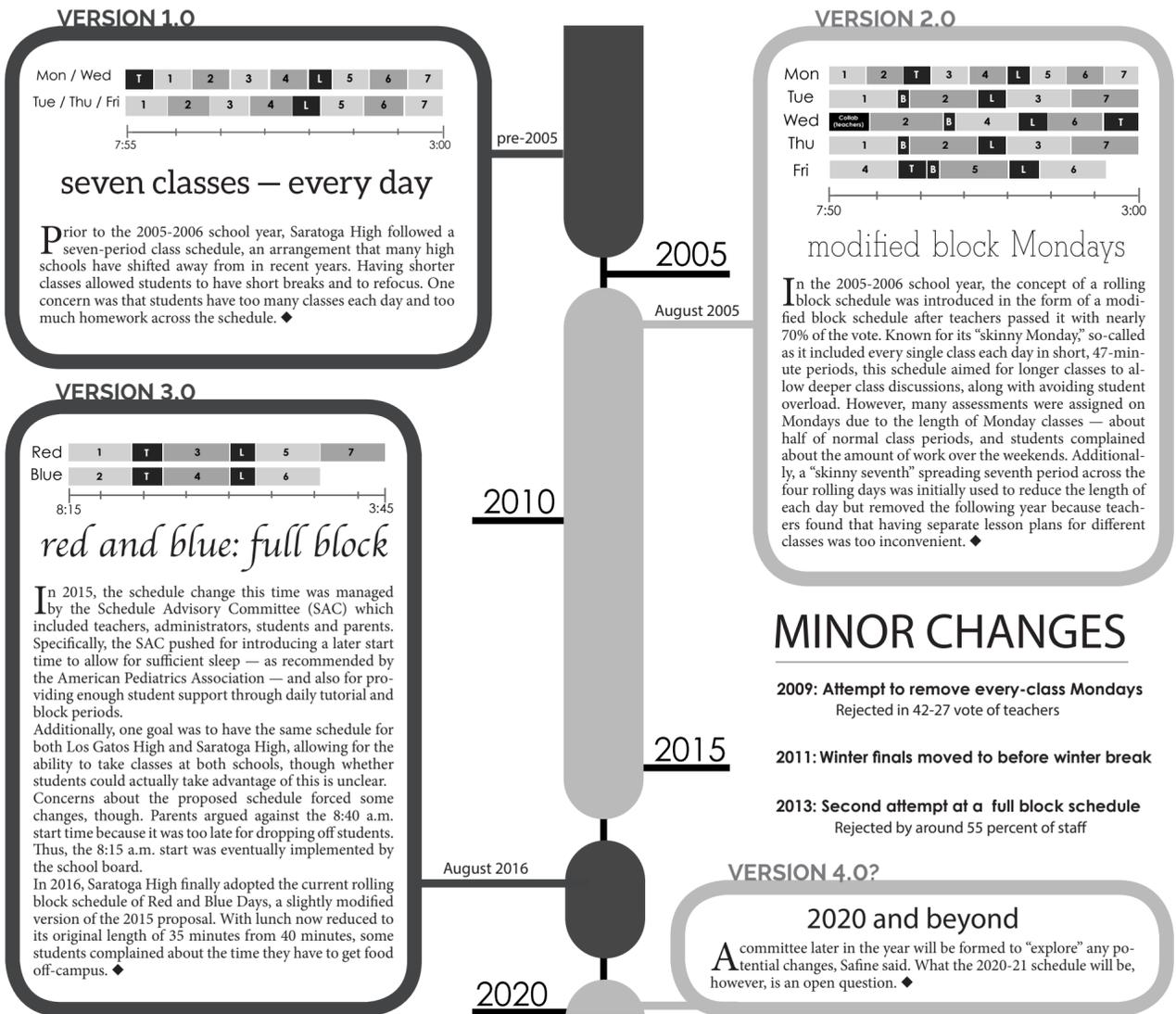
Trump's rhetoric serves as a good reminder that as consumers of media, we should all be careful with what we believe and take what we see online with a grain of salt. ♦



ALL GRAPHICS BY LIHI SHOSHANI AND SANDHYA SUNDARAM

SCHEDULE SHIFTS

THE SCHOOL DAY HAS EVOLVED IN THE PAST TWO DECADES



STORY AND GRAPHICS BY MICHAEL WONG

Soundings staff partners with creative writing class

By Aaria Thomas & Samantha Yee

A handful of journalism students have selected writing and artwork for the school’s art and literary magazine since 1986. However, following the revival of the creative writing class, a team of creative writing students will advise Soundings staffers and help select pieces for publication in the magazine.

In 2017, Creative Writing was taught by English 10 teacher Sarah Thermond. During this time period, there was also a partnership between Soundings and Creative Writing.

In those years the Creative Writing class was focused on learning skills and techniques for writing.

According to Thermond, the creative writing class was mostly involved in the selection process for Soundings. They dedicated a week for reading and voting on submissions.

The Soundings team, comprised of several seasoned journalism student editors, is tasked with collecting submissions, choosing pieces of writing and artwork and designing the magazine.

According to this year’s Soundings editor senior Anishi Patel, any student submit writing and artwork to the magazine. The

writing submissions will be read anonymously by editors and the creative writing class, and the pieces that garner enough votes from both the editors and creative writing students will be featured in the magazine.

Creative writing students will also help Soundings editors proofread and lightly edit accepted pieces. Once submissions have been worked through, the Soundings editors will design the magazine. This year, four journalism students will be editors for the fall issue. Aside from Patel, seniors Mathew Luo and Alex Wang, and junior Manasi Garg are on the Soundings staff.

“Soundings’ editing team is much smaller this year, so the workload during the layout design period will fall heavier on our shoulders,” Patel said. “This is the first time we are trying this, and as with anything new, you don’t know what challenges will pop up.”

The creative writing class consists of students from all grades. Throughout the year, the class will cover topics including memoir, fiction, poetry, satire and graphic novel writing.

“[The creative writing class] can be differentiated to different students’ entering skill level, but has lessons that are applicable to all kinds of creative writing, such as how do you write concretely, how do you bring something to life and what different strategies for doing that are,” creative writing teacher Amy Keys said.

Creative writing students have the opportunity to submit as many of the pieces that they write for the class as they would like to Soundings, but the pieces will still be read anonymously and voted on by the editors

and the class. In addition to submitting writing, creative writing students will assist the Soundings editors in editing selected pieces. According to Keys, the class plans to help edit

for the fall online edition during the week after Thanksgiving and for the spring print issue the week after spring break.

“I think [this process] will really help because Soundings is just kind of really coming together in the fumes of whatever time students have left over to pull it together,” Keys said.

Since Patel is the only member of the Soundings staff that is also in the creative writing class, it is her responsibility to facilitate the collaboration between the two.

Patel will act as a liaison between the two groups, and relay information about the creative writing students’ votes and edits back to the editing team, as well as head the magazine’s layout design.

Soundings’ collaboration with the creative writing class will not only help in the process of choosing submissions and putting the magazine together, but it will also allow different voices and perspectives to be included.

“I noticed that most of the people [in the creative writing class] don’t know each other, because we are all from different areas of the school and we are all interested in different programs,” creative writing student senior Alena Jarrett said. “I think Soundings will be able to have a better variety of voices from the school because they’ll get input from different types of people.” ♦



December 2018 issue



Prisha Samdarshi: Financial literacy course

By Christine Zhang

Fourth graders busted around the room on their last day of summer school as senior Prisha Samdarshi watched them. The students excitedly visited their peers’ mini-businesses, trading all the money they had earned throughout their financial literacy course in exchange for prizes to take home.

Samdarshi recently earned the Girl Scout Gold Award for her partnership with Sacred Heart Community Service, a nonprofit organization that offers services to underprivileged families around the Bay Area. From June 24 to July 24, she taught financial literacy to underserved children at Sacred Heart School.

Samdarshi began her Gold Award project in 2017, when she started to fill out reports and submit the proposal and timeline for

her idea. She said the approval process took about three months.

In 2018, Samdarshi faced the bulk of her project’s planning alongside the academic stress of her junior year.

“It was really hard to manage school and all of this work,” Samdarshi said. “At the beginning of junior year from June to December, I didn’t do a lot on the project, so from January to June, I had to do so much because I procrastinated on my timeline.”

Throughout her junior year, Samdarshi researched financial literacy and created a curriculum for her class. She wrote and illustrated a book titled “Money Managers” for use in the course, and lastly, she drew up a lesson plan for the summer.

To keep the fourth graders immersed, Samdarshi modeled the class into a simulation.

The students earned money for following the rules and lost money for misbehavior; created mini-businesses and paid for others’ products with debit and credit

According to Girl Scouts of the USA, the Gold Award is the most prestigious honor offered to Girl Scouts in high schools across the world, with less than 6 percent of Girl Scouts receiving the award each year. Girls must come up with a sustainable solution to a community problem.

GOING FOR GOLD



Sanya Kwatra: Garden at local preschool

By Vicky Bai & Christine Zhang

As Sanya Kwatra, then a junior, stood in front of the broken-down garden in Saratoga Community Preschool last April, tools and supplies in hand, she realized that her extensive planning had paid off. Her project to rebuild the garden at the school was almost finished.

Kwatra, who has been a Girl Scout for 12 years, renovated the garden and made plans for a sandbox at Saratoga Community Preschool to earn her Girl Scout Gold Award. The current senior planned the project throughout her sophomore and junior year. She did the majority of the physical work in rebuilding the garden last spring break.

To renovate the garden, she built a wood structure at the entrance of the garden and taught the preschoolers how to plant and maintain the garden.

Kwatra chose the project because she had worked together with senior Prisha Samdarshi to repaint a mural at the preschool for their joint Silver Award in middle school, and during that time, one of the faculty members had talked to them about how the garden was in need of repair.

“My troop has done a lot of projects with that preschool, so we knew the principal already,” Kwatra said. “I also knew that the garden was in bad condition, so I thought it would be good to rebuild, since so many kids from here go to that preschool.”

The approval process for Kwatra’s project took nearly eight months. She was required to obtain city approval for her plan and also had to ask the city for donations for her tools and supplies.

Her father taught her how to use the tools, and she then relayed the skills to four



Courtesy of SANYA KWATRA

The garden at Saratoga Community preschool, renovated by senior Sanya Kwatra, would later be filled with plants by students.

of her friends, who helped her rebuild the garden. Kwatra was also in regular contact with the principal of the preschool, Marianne Swan.

“I helped decide which plants would go where in the garden,” Kwatra said. “I didn’t teach the kids myself — I just talked to the principal about where to best put the plants, and I helped the teachers make a lesson plan to teach the kids basic gardening.”

Despite having only a week during spring break, Kwatra said that the total hours to do the actual labor was around 60 or 70. She officially received the Gold Award during the summer. Through her project, Kwatra said that she learned many lessons.

“I’ve never done something with my hands, so that was cool,” Kwatra said. “I had to lead the team, and talking with so many adults was not normal.”

Kwatra said she does not have any concrete plans to expand on her work in the near future. Since the Gold Award is structured so that the community service projects can move forward by themselves, Kwatra hopes that Swan and others at the school can work with the kids and city maintenance to keep the garden in its spruced up condition. ♦

cards; used bank accounts and checks; and paid taxes, among other activities.

“The enrichment class is supposed to be fun,” Samdarshi said. “I know financial literacy doesn’t seem like a really interesting

topic for kids, so I had to form activities that would engage them.”

She was motivated to teach financial literacy to these children because her own interest in economics was fueled by the Junior Achievement program at Argonaut Elementary School. Junior Achievement is a global nonprofit organization that educates youth about entrepreneurship.

In local elementary schools such as Argonaut and Foothill, parent volunteers partner with the program to give students their first taste of finance. Samdarshi wanted to provide the same opportunity to underprivileged children.

“Financial literacy is a really important topic that is not taught in school, and I wanted to give the kids the same experience I had through Junior Achievement,” she said. “I wanted to be able to at least introduce mon-

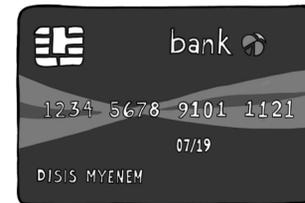
ey management to them at a young age.” Looking back, Samdarshi said her leadership and communication skills grew significantly as a result of her project.

“It was a lot of leadership on my part, which is definitely different from what I’ve encountered before,” Samdarshi said. “I was treated like an adult, and I took on the responsibility of preparing and organizing things. There was really no adult helping me with anything unless I approached them first.”

Samdarshi said that she does not

have any concrete plans to expand on her work in the near future. She has given all her resources, including her book and lesson plan, to Sacred Heart, in the hope that new teachers in following summers will be able to make use of her materials to teach financial literacy in the future.

“Financial literacy gets very important when you’re older, and it’s hard if you don’t have any background knowledge,” Samdarshi said. “I don’t expect the kids to remember everything, but at least they’ll have a starting point as to how to manage their money.” ♦



Courtesy of PRISHA SAMDARSHI
Senior Prisha Samdarshi included illustrations, like this credit card, in her financial literacy book, “Money Managers.”



Armina Maya: App

APPLICATION HELPS THE HOMELESS LOCATE FOOD AND SHELTER THROUGH WEST VALLEY COMMUNITY SERVICES

By Vicky Bai & Aaria Thomas

After taking a summer programming course for Girls Who Code in her sophomore year, current senior Armina Maya had the idea of creating an app that helps the homeless in order to earn her Gold Award as a Girl Scout.

Maya, a member of Girl Scout Troop 61657, began coding the app for West Valley Community Services.

Two years later, the final product helps homeless people see what food is available in the pantries of organizations dedicated to helping them as well as what beds are open at shelters.

Maya is in the process of getting it approved by Apple and Google, after which it will be available for download on the App Store and Google Play.

As a first grader, Maya joined the Girl Scouts in an effort to make friends at her new school, Argonaut Elementary.

“Throughout middle school, as my troop took part in more journeys and became more actively involved, we bonded with each other. In executing community service projects with my friends, I got more invested in Girl Scouts,” Maya said. In her years as a Girl Scout, Maya has won a few awards including the Bronze

Award in elementary school and the Silver Award with her troop in her sophomore year.

For her app, Maya worked with West Valley Community Services, a nonprofit organization that helps low income families get back on their feet.

She began working on the project the summer after her sophomore year, and spent a total of 80 hours designing and developing it.

Maya learned a lot about coding in the process of the work.

Maya said she will continue to update and change the app as needed, and as a member of the school Women in STEM club, she hopes to hand the project off to younger students once she graduates.

In addition to learning coding through the project, Maya said she improved her communication skills, especially when reaching out to professionals for help.

“We’re in Silicon Valley, and there’s so much technology around. We focus on advancing technology, but we aren’t helping the homeless,” Maya said. “I just want to bring that together and use the knowledge I have to help.” ♦



HEALTH • HOME • HEART

West Valley Community Services



NO ONE IS SAFE

RISE OF NEARBY SHOOTINGS CHANGES ATTITUDES AND INTENSIFIES FEAR

GRAPHIC BY CHRISTINE ZHANG

by Aaria Thomas & Bill Yuan

Freshman Thea Fernandes was in Dallas, Texas, for a national fencing competition in the summer of 2016. After finishing her event and staying at the convention center where the competition was taking place to watch some of the other matches, Fernandes was walking a short distance from the convention center to her hotel. As she entered her hotel room, a Breaking News alert appeared on the TV.

To her shock, a mass shooting had taken place outside the convention center minutes after Fernandes walked past it.

"It was right outside where I was walking," Fernandes said. "The craziest part of that whole thing was I realized that there were still people in that building, like my friends."

Fernandes and all her friends made it out safely from the convention center, and were unharmed by the shooting, but it was an alarming reminder that almost no one is safe from the threat of gun violence in the U.S., which, according to the

Small Arms Survey, has about 120 guns per 100 citizens.

Mass shootings are now daily and sometimes twice-daily events. According to Gun Violence Archives, there have been close to 300 mass shootings since Jan 1. This averages out to about 1.2 shootings per day in the U.S.

The Gun Violence Archives defines a mass shooting as a shooting in which at least four people were injured or killed. This number does not include the shooter if they are killed in the incident.

In August alone, there were three headline-grabbing mass shootings. In El Paso, Texas, a gunman opened fire at a shopping center, killing 22 and injuring over two dozen. In Dayton, Ohio, nine people were shot and killed by a gunman wearing body armor at a popular nightlife area. Days later, another seven people were killed by a shooter in Texas in the area between Midland and Odessa.

Another reason some might not feel as disturbed by shootings is that the frequency of mass shootings in the U.S. desensitizes people to their true gruesomeness.

"People watching the news aren't as affected as they were

when shootings weren't so common," sophomore Kaaya Minocha said in a message to The Falcon. "That's the problem: People have started to believe that shootings are normal." Minocha is an active member of the group March for Our Lives, and they sprinted almost three blocks, trying to put as much distance as possible between themselves and the festival.



MASS SHOOTINGS IN THE U.S. SINCE SANDY HOOK IN 2012
GRAPHIC BY NEETI BADVE

a group that formed following the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

A group of students who survived the shooting in Parkland started March For Our Lives, organizing the first march and inspiring sister marches to take place all over the country.

On July 28, on the third and last day of the Gilroy Garlic Festival, a shooter opened fire on the crowd, killing three and injuring around 21 people.

Serenity Caas, a junior at San Benito High School, was at the festival when

the shooting occurred. She and some friends had been working in Gourmet Alley, the part of the festival where food was sold, but decided to roam around the park instead. They had just made it to the parking lot when they heard the shots.

"We didn't know what the sounds were until we saw people running to their cars," Caas told The Falcon. "We ran to Gilroy High School."

By then, law enforcement had shown up and began putting on bullet-proof vests. This tipped Caas and her friends off that a shooting was happening,

and they sprinted almost three blocks, trying to put as much distance as possible between themselves and the festival.

Gilroy — only 37 miles away — is significantly closer to Saratoga than many of the other recent shootings. It's the sort

of event hundreds of Bay Area families go to almost each year. "It was really scary to see a festival that I used to go to every year be the site of a major shooting," SHS senior Lauren Hansen said. "It really put some things into perspective, knowing that no area or place is safe from someone with a gun and a plan."

For survivors of shootings, reminders and anniversaries of the event may provoke grief and a sense of futility to stop future shootings.

One father, Jeremy Richman, whose daughter was killed in the Sandy Hook shooting in Connecticut on Dec. 12, 2012, attempted to ensure other families did not experience the same loss. Though he channeled his grief into researching brain abnormalities that could lead to violent behavior at the Avielle foundation, Richman

may not have been able to deal with his own pain anymore. In March, he took his own life.

In addition to grief, mass shootings can instill a certain fear within those affected.

Kaylan Wells, a senior at San Benito High School who was also at the Gilroy Garlic Festival,

found the experience to be very traumatizing. "Ever since the shooting happened, I've almost become paranoid," Wells said. "Whenever I enter a building, I scope it out. I find all the exits, fire extinguishers and places to hide. It's a habit now."

Fernandes, the fencer, said she went to the Great Mall a few weeks ago with her family and heard two pops from burglars smashing glass. At first she did not think it was a shooting, but then she saw people around her looking nervous and beginning to evacuate out of fear of another shooting. She said that moment reminded her of her experience in Dallas.

"Everything for me in Dallas kind of came back," Fernandes said. "Maybe I am going to be the one who gets shot, maybe something's going to happen to my dad or my mom, or maybe something's going to happen to that little kid in front of me. I didn't know what was going to happen next."

The growing normalcy of mass shootings in the U.S. has created a sense of fear for its citizens. The risk of being in another mass shooting can overshadow everything else, including ordinary life.

Caas said her mother won't allow her to volunteer at the Gilroy Garlic Festival anymore. "My friends and I would always go together, so it's heartbreaking to know that some of our privileges are getting taken away from us because of fear," she said.

Others are reacting to the shootings with stronger calls for reform. The Never Again movement created by students in Parkland, for instance, was inspired by the deadly shooting at their high school.

There is often a spike in anti-gun activism in areas close to mass shootings. The activism also has a correlation to the recency and magnitude of the shooting.

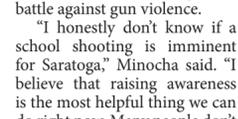
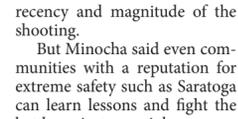
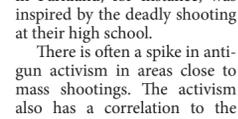
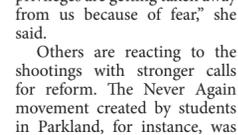
But Minocha said even communities with a reputation for extreme safety such as Saratoga can learn lessons and fight the battle against gun violence.

"I honestly don't know if a school shooting is imminent for Saratoga," Minocha said. "I believe that raising awareness is the most helpful thing we can do right now. Many people don't believe that guns are a problem, but they are." ♦

Statistics from VOX.COM

GRAPHIC BY NEETI BADVE

BY THE NUMBERS



Statistics from VOX.COM

GRAPHIC BY NEETI BADVE

togotalks

What are your thoughts on the shooting at Gilroy Garlic Festival?

"Knowing that a shooting happened in Gilroy is scary. It's hard to ignore when it's really close by."



junior Dora Hu

"I am shocked that this tragedy occurred and mad that nothing is being done to fix it."



senior Alexander Pan

"My church pastor knew many of the people in the Gilroy shooting, and he was affected a lot."



junior Wilson Fung

Reduced-waste lifestyles gain popularity

by Rohan Kumar & Cic Xu

We are now operating in overshoot.

On July 29, the world passed Earth Overshoot Day. Humanity's resource consumption after the first seven months of 2019 exceeded the amount of resources Earth can regenerate in one entire year. Three days earlier than last year, July 29 was the earliest Earth Overshoot Day to date, according to the Global Footprint Network.

But not only are we living on a resource budget that would require 1.75 Earths to sustain, we are also trashing the environment as we dispose of the waste from the use, or misuse, of these resources.

According to Green Choices, waste disposal releases toxins, wastes precious resources and contributes significant amounts of methane, a greenhouse gas, to the atmosphere. And even though 75 percent of America's waste is recyclable, Americans recycle only 30 percent of it.

Many people have decided to do their part to diminish the impact of waste disposal by adjusting their lifestyles to reduce their ecological footprint. A practice environmentalists commonly advocate for is a zero-waste lifestyle.

Treehugger, a popular sustainability blog, outlines several lifestyle choices people can make to reduce their waste significantly. For example, old kitchen sponges and toothbrushes can be repurposed for cleaning bathrooms, and bamboo and hemp brushes can be used for cleaning and composted when no

longer needed.

Two women from Victoria, British Columbia, Katelin Leblond and Tara Smith-Arnisdorf, swapped out their trash cans for 2-liter glass jars, reusing and composting to the extent that they were able to fit a year's waste in a single jar. They took the top 10 items they could not live without, such as hair elastics, batteries, mustard, and makeup, and replaced each with a reusable alternative, according to an article by Treehugger. Using items for multiple purposes and avoiding buying new products whenever possible allowed the two to produce minimal waste.

According to Trash Is For Tossers (TIFF), a blog written by a New York environmentalist that follows a zero-waste lifestyle, the most basic goal of zero-waste living is to keep waste completely out of landfills. Although rarely achieved in practice, it involves raising awareness about the importance of clean habits such as recycling and reusing resources. A common problem that prevents people from achieving zero waste is not realizing what can be recycled.

For example, over half a million pounds of crayons are thrown away each year. According to Family Handyman, these crayons

never biodegrade, filling landfills with "waxy sludge." Instead, crayons can be sent to the Crayon Initiative for melting and remanufacturing.

Other commonly reusable items are shingles, prescription drugs, wine corks, sports equipment, toothbrushes, CDs and more.

In addition to learning about recycling, adapting a vigilant mindset is important to reducing waste,

Green Team president Winston Liu said.

"When you are about to throw something away, always think about whether you can reuse it," said Liu,

a junior. "At the very least, is there anything you are throwing away that could possibly be beneficial for you to keep for later use? If you continuously think about that, it will eventually cut down your waste, and then it becomes possible to reach zero-waste."

The Green Team is taking on an active role in raising awareness about plastic pollution.

The group's engraving booth during August's Falcon Fest schedule pickup event provided students a place to personalize their water bottles, encouraging them to reuse. Over the past few years, the club has hosted speaker panels, coordinated Earth Day activities and added labels to recycling bins in order to encourage proper recycling.

Teachers also have encouraged green lifestyles. Each year AP Environmental Science and biology teacher Kristen Thomson has her students look at ecological footprint websites to see their impact on the environment. A person's ecological footprint is the total resources required for their level of consumption and waste disposal.

Websites such as the Global

Footprint Network provide short quizzes that result in a personal Earth Overshoot Day. It also tells users the number of Earths required to sustain the world if everyone lived in a similar manner.

"The reason I had my students do it was to build awareness of our daily habits," Thomson said. "It's not necessarily designed to make anyone feel bad about it. It's just for learning to appreciate what we have and question whether we

need everything."

A key takeaway Thomson wanted students to have was to be able to compare their footprint to other people in the world.

In developed areas, the personal Earth Overshoot Days are often significantly earlier than the actual Earth Overshoot Day, indicating that many people in underprivileged regions live off fewer natural resources.

"I think that aiming to produce as little waste as possible is ideal, but given its difficulty I don't think people should feel bad if they try their best and at times are unable to," Thomson said.

Another advocate of living a greener lifestyle is girls' cross country coach Danny Moon. After learning more about the impacts of recycling, Moon said that he has decided to decrease the team's plastic use by asking runners to bring their own reusable water bottles.

"I used to bring plastic water bottles every year — 30 cases of water for cross country," Moon said. "There are 24 bottles in a case, and that's a lot of bottles.

require significantly less plastic than individual bottles for the same amount of water to fill students' water bottles. An article by the Sierra Club explains that four 8-ounce containers would use 60 percent more plastic than a single 32-ounce container with the same diameter-to-height ratio.

Reducing the use of plastic bottles is one of several ways to avoid plastic waste. Others include using beeswax or candles instead of air fresheners, using masking tape instead of Scotch tape, avoiding synthetic clothing and using old newspaper or other scratch paper to pick up dog waste.

Even with the efforts of environmentally conscious groups and individuals to raise awareness about recycling, Liu said that individual action is necessary for change to occur.

"Becoming green is not a one day thing," Liu said. "You don't have to convert to it immediately, but every little bit helps." ♦

Courtesy of WASTELANDREBEL.COM

ALL GRAPHICS BY NEETI BADVE AND CHRISTINE ZHANG

Tips to reduce plastic use:

- Buy a reusable straw
- Use boxes, not bottles
- Reuse bags when shopping
- Avoid buying frozen foods
- Stop chewing gum
- Store food using reusable containers
- Make your own fruit juice and cleaning products

Information from GREENEDUCATION-FOUNDATION.ORG

Focusing on vision: a 20/20 look at nearsightedness

Type of Vision Correction	Years of Vision Correction	Prescription Degree
20% Night-time contacts	17% 0 years	23% 0-0.99
23% Day-time contacts	16% 1-3 years	18% 1-1.99
42% Glasses	19% 4-6 years	15% 2-2.99
15% No vision correction	36% 7-9 years	14% 3-3.99
	6% 4-4.99	17% 4-4.99
	36% 7-9 years	6% 5-5.99
	12% 10+ years	5% 6-6.99
		2% 7-7.99



GIRLS' CROSS COUNTRY

Four freshmen rank among top seven for first meet

BY Nicole Lu
& Cicixu

Every day, after most students have gone home, members of the girls' cross country team can be found heading out for their daily runs with the sun unforgivingly beating down on their backs. Despite losing accomplished runners such as Elizabeth Kardach, Isabella Tan and Siena Parsons to graduation last spring, new additions and a rise in sophomore participation have brought hope to the team.

Last year, there were 45 girls on the team. This year, a total of 53 girls have joined with a return rate of 78.9 percent of last year's runners coming back for another season. Among the new runners is an increase in promising freshmen runners, as well as a significantly higher sophomore attendance.

"It's a good mix, and like I say anybody can be varsity; it doesn't have to be a senior necessarily, so it's really exciting," coach Danny Moon said. "We've got some freshmen looking real good and sophomores looking good."

The girls' first meet was 2.1 miles at Lynbrook High School on Sept. 10. Four out of the eight freshmen on the team are in the top seven ranks, which is the benchmark for varsity.

Among the varsity ranks after the first meet are freshman Elsa Blom, Allison Tan, Isha Goswami and Elizabeth Stoiber; sophomore Amoli Vanavadiya, junior Jessie Zhou, and senior Sanjana Reddy. Blom placed first in the team overall with a time of 13:52.5, with Zhou and Stoiber following close behind (14:04.3 and 14:41.3 respectively).

The race also yielded many PRs, with specific individuals chopping off even four or five minutes from their times the previous year.

These promising results have boosted team morale and determination among the runners this year.

"I think this year we have a great team who really puts in the effort not only for themselves but as a team," said Zhou, a team captain. "We have a lot of new members who really stand out, and I think they definitely improved our team."

Zhou also noted an increase in team spirit, which may be partly due to the higher number of attendances this year.

"Everyone gets along well and motivates one another so that they can improve not only themselves but their teammates as well," Zhou said. "This makes me really excited for the season because we have a lot of really fast additions to the team and also a very positive mindset, and I know this will

make our team do even better than in previous years."

In order to build up stamina for lengthier courses, Moon tries to increase the girls' mileage each day during practice so new runners can grow accustomed to the idea of running hillier, longer meets. For now, the girls run between two to three miles in practice, but the mileage will be increased to four to five miles by midseason.

"Each workout will vary depending on our cross country meet dates, track workout, hill workouts, and long runs," Moon said.

The rearranging of this year's cross country courses make the meets more challenging. This year, the team is scheduled to run three Crystal Springs courses and two Baylands courses — which are the harder trails to run — compared to only two Crystal Springs and one Baylands last year.

According to Moon, these are especially difficult for runners because of the variety of hills presented throughout the courses. While Lynbrook is a relatively flat run, Crystal Springs is known for its hilly, rough terrain. Baylands, on the other hand, has four 12 feet "dragon hills" which are known for their slopes.

"I think both courses have their own challenges, but from what I have been see-

ing on Norton and hill repeats, the hills are going to be really tough on people," senior captain Tricia Jain said. "I think that doing each course at least once will help athletes get an understanding of how to pace themselves and get through the race. Both meets are also of an 'I hate it' or 'I love it' dichotomy, so I am hoping the courses have good first impressions on the new members."

In addition, there is no Early Bird Invitational in Toro Park for the varsity runners like there was last year, presumably because of the tough hill the athletes had to face. The Central Coast State Championships (CCS) will be held this year in Crystal Springs instead of Toro Park.

Despite the fact that the warm weather and harder trails pose potential problems, Moon has positive predictions for the remainder of the season.

Above all, he prioritizes personal records and growth for the girls rather than their ranks in meets.

"Every meet is a new challenge for the athlete, and it's a new record for the athlete," Moon said. "If they've run it before they have a chance for a personal record and, through the year they'll get personal records. That's what we really scope for, is to see that at the end of the year we have a personal record for everybody." ♦

GIRLS' GOLF

Falcons defeat Gunn with No. 1 player Lin's record-breaking score 3 under par

BY Andrew Lee
& Amanda Zhu

Stepping away from hole nine at the Saratoga Country Club, No. 1 golfer senior Alice Lin finished the day with a score of 31, 3 under par.

Coach Dave Gragnola said it was the lowest score he has witnessed during his eight years as the girls' coach.

With Lin's score, the Falcons defeated the Gunn High School Titans 214-222 on Sept. 16, bringing their record to 2-0.

"I was pretty surprised that we won because we needed everyone to play well in order to win," No. 3 golfer senior Sally Kim said. "After that match, I'm pretty confident in our team."

Earlier on Sept. 9, senior No. 5 golfer Nikita Pawar tapped in her ball into the hole with a smooth stroke of her putter on the par three ninth-hole at the Saratoga Coun-

try Club, which was crucial.

In her first match ever, Pawar's 45 proved significant as it helped Saratoga overcome a five-stroke deficit and beat Mountain View 212-216.

In addition to Pawar's solid performance, No. 2 golfer junior Jane Loo led the team with a 38.

One of the biggest challenges this season will be overcoming the loss of former captain and No. 1 player Janelle Jin to graduation.

After leading the team all four of her years at Saratoga, Jin is continuing golf at Amherst University.

No. 4 golfer sophomore Savannah Lin thinks the team's success will rely on depth and hard work. Lin said that the team was practicing hard, but they definitely need to improve in order to have a chance to make CCS.

"We are trying to get the new members

of the travel team accustomed to competition by playing with them on the golf course," Lin said.

An integral part of the team has been Gragnola, who emphasizes player improvement as one of his priorities and stresses the importance of drills and course management.

"We've been working on our bunker shots and a lot of short game stuff with (coach Gragnola)," Loo said. "He's also taken some of the players on the course in order to teach us strategy, so we can score lower."

With all that preparation, Loo and the rest of the team are looking forward to key matches against rivals Los Gatos at home on Sept. 30, and historically strong Palo Alto away Oct. 1.

Due to printing deadlines, the Falcon was unable to cover the Sept. 24 match against Los Gatos in this print issue. ♦

BOYS' WATER POLO

Coach Chung uses rigorous training to improve players

BY Jonathan Li

The boys' varsity water polo team failed to qualify for CCS last year after finishing 4-10. This year, however, the team has managed to start strong, having won 11-5 against Half Moon Bay on Aug. 28, 16-8 against Monta Vista on Sept. 12, 9-5 against Lynbrook on Sept. 17 and 13-9 against Milpitas on Sept. 19. They lost 15-14 to Santa Clara on Sept. 10 in a breathtakingly close overtime match.

Although there have been several valuable additions to the varsity team, including sophomores Kendal Jarvis, Byron Jin, Chris Wu and Jaime Fernandez de Ponte, members of the team gave a lot of credit for their early success to their new head coach, Jerome Chung.

Before coaching here, Chung coached the Lynbrook High School freshman boys' water polo

team, varsity boys' water polo team and JV and varsity girls' water polo teams for 15 years, during which Lynbrook won several league championships. Chung also coaches at NorCal, a club water polo team, and has coached at DACA and West Valley, where his teams qualified for the Junior Olympics and placed among the top 100 teams in the U.S. three years in a row.

"The team was very balanced and willing to work hard."

SOPHOMORE Marcus Kuo

In 2016, Chung began coaching the SHS girls' varsity water polo team and helped them finish first in the El Camino league last year,

and then proceeded to Division 2 CCS, falling to Menlo Park High School in the championships.

Chung began coaching the boys' team this season.

"I hope to create an exciting environment for the boys as well as a program the parents will continue to support," Chung said.

The change he brought was exciting — Chung implemented more rigorous training and started conditioning practices in early August, nearly a month before the season started. Every day, athletes would have to run a mile, swim nearly two miles and do a multitude of other exercises, including pushups and squats.

"It was exhausting," sophomore Daniel Jiang said. "Water polo is an extremely aggressive sport, so coach was pushing us to our limits all the time."

Though physically demanding, Chung's strict training regimens



Courtesy of Tallman

Senior goalie Nima Aminzadeh blocks a shot from the opposing Half Moon Bay team on Aug. 28. The Falcons ended up winning 11-5.

paid off so far.

"The team was very balanced and willing to work hard [last year]," sophomore Marcus Kuo said. He said the difference this year has been Chung's skilled coaching.

Senior sprinter Grant Chen said Chung's style is effective but not the easiest.

"For the team, it's a good thing," Chen said. "He does the decision-making for you, but it produces results." ♦



Courtesy of NOW AND FOREVER STUDIOS

Senior Alice Lin swings at Saratoga Country Club against Gunn on Sept. 16.

FOOTBALL

continued from pg. 1

had pummeled their opponents, winning 44-0 against Oak Grove; 56-21 against Leland; and 35-8 against San Benito. Adding to the momentum for Los Gatos, the Falcons lost 48-7, 49-20 and 49-7 in the past three years; in fact, the last time the Falcons beat the Wildcats was in 2010.

In the end, the sheer star power of the Wildcats was too much for the Falcons: Highlighting the Wildcats roster were senior offensive lineman Andres Dewerk, a 6-7, 300-pound USC commit, junior linebacker Will Schweitzer, who has offers from schools such as Duke and Cal, and star senior wide receivers Gian Lagemann and Adam Garwood.

However, Bian said that the team prepared for Los Gatos just like any other week.

"Even though it was more exciting practicing during the week before LG, we still were dedicated to the details like in the past," Bian said.

The Falcons were able to take an early lead and kept it for much of the first half. Stokes connected on a short 5-yard touchdown pass to Bian to make the score 7-0 following an extra point. The Wildcats swiftly answered with a 42-yard rushing touchdown to tie the score. An inability to stop the run as well as poor tackling hurt the Falcons all game.

Still, the offense kept the pressure on. After marching down the field, Stokes hit Bian with a 12-yard touchdown. The Wildcats responded, showing strength both on the ground and through the air with an 11-yard passing touchdown to Lagemann. The score

was 14-14 a minute into the second quarter.

This back-and-forth match continued, as Bian caught a 38-yard touchdown from Stokes to put the Falcons up 21-14, but the Wildcats responded with a Garwood rushing touchdown. This time, though, Los Gatos elected to go for a two-point conversion, and Garwood punched it in. The Falcons offense stalled in the red zone on the next drive, so they settled for a field goal to lead 24-22. As Los Gatos made their way downfield at the end of the second quarter, the Falcons stopped their Hail Mary attempt, as time ran out.

However, senior defensive lineman Tyler Ouchida was flagged for a penalty, so the Wildcats received another play. This time, the Falcons secondary let Lagemann slip through as he caught a pass in the endzone. With another two-point conversion, the Wildcats led 30-24 at halftime.

The Falcons regained momentum at the start of the third quarter. On the kickoff, they managed to recover an onside kick, and then make their way downfield for a Stokes rushing touchdown, pulling ahead 31-30. Los Gatos answered with another touchdown and another two-point conversion.

In the fourth quarter, the Falcons offense stalled, as they punted and the Wildcats punched in another touchdown to make the score 45-31. A rushing touchdown by the Falcons' junior running back Tyler Chaffin brought them within seven, but yet again, Los Gatos scored and extended their lead back to 14, 52-38. With under 3 minutes to go, the Falcons tried to make a comeback, but an interception by Stokes dashed their chances. Despite the heartbreaking loss, the team managed to escape the battle injury-free and is looking to replicate its high level



FALCON // JUN LEE

Junior Luke Edwards blocks LG players while QB Payton Stokes hands off the ball.

of play for the rest of the season.

Said Bian: "Los Gatos is a top-100 team in the state and playing that close of a game gave us the motivation to finish the season strong."

On the road against Piedmont Hills on Sept. 13, the Falcons dominated 51-34. Although the offense started off slow, they found their rhythm never trailed after scoring a touchdown at the end of the first quarter to make it 10-7. Stokes ended the night with 23-33 passing with 332 yards and four touchdowns and the team put up 218 yards and three touchdowns on the ground.

The high-octane Falcons offense has improved from past years.

Most notably, the Falcons have been able

to effectively run the ball this year behind the efforts of Chaffin and senior running back Hayden Cranz, Yeilding said.

"[The improved run game] really helped us out Friday night against Los Gatos," Yeilding said, "and it's going to help us for the rest of the season."

With such dominant offensive play, the Falcons are in position to be atop the league standings and make a CCS playoff push.

"We hope to win out the rest of the season and to win the championship in CCS this year if everyone on our team stays healthy," Bian said. "No one we play the rest of this year will be nearly as good as LG was, so we are confident in our ability to make a deep playoff run." ♦

BOYS' CROSS COUNTRY

Runners amp up through long runs, weightlifting

BY Nicole Lu
& Xinran Xu

Five hundred miles and countless hours of weight room training later, the boys on the cross country team are running with hopeful ambitions and high morale.

The team was fortunate enough to not have lost any of their core members to graduation, and speedy sophomore Harrison Dance, as well as other accomplished runners, have returned to the team for another season. Given the especially strong lineup this year, the team is aiming to qualify for the California State Championships; this is the first time they have entertained this chance in four years.

"So far in the season, I feel pretty solid about the team," senior captain Shivam Verma said.

In fact, they are on track to reach their goal. The varsity team claimed third place during a meet on Sept. 7 at the Stevenson Relay Invitational, in which 16 other teams, including Lynbrook and Archbishop Mitty

High School, competed in.

Dance, junior Niyanth Rao, and seniors Verma, Kole Tippetts, and Jonathan Zhao represented the varsity team, each running 1.6 miles in this 8-mile race. Verma and Dance ran times of approximately 7:49; Rao ran 8:35, and Zhao and Tippetts both ran times of 8:55 for an estimated total of 42:16.

"If you really want to put in the work, it will eventually pay off."



SENIOR Jonathan Zhao

Varsity meets at Half Moon Bay High School for the Oct. 5 Artichoke Invitational and the annual Mt. SAC Invitational at Mt. San Antonio College on Oct. 19 looming

ahead, the team has been putting more emphasis on building chemistry and working on their aerobic capacity. In addition, the team will compete at Crystal Springs for the Oct. 8 league meet, which is a mandatory competition for the entire team.

Some of the primary factors that led to their success at the Stevenson Invitational compared to previous years was their new mindset and intense physical regimen.

In order to train for these courses, the team runs anywhere from 50 to 60 miles every week, even in the blistering heat, which is intended to build endurance for the tough meets that the team will have to run later in the year.

The boys begin practice with a half-mile jog and various stretches before heading off on various Saratoga trails.

In order to build up speed, varsity usually drives off to Rancho San Antonio or Fremont Older Space to train. After their two-hour workouts, the boys head to the weight room twice per week, where they stay until 6:30 p.m.

"Conditioning is kind of necessary. If you really want to put in the work, it will eventually pay off," Zhao said.

Running is just one aspect of the cross country experience. In order to further encourage friendships and communication among the runners, Verma and fellow captain Tippetts also plan on hosting team get-togethers throughout the season such as potlucks and game nights. This team bonding has helped cultivate unity in an otherwise intense and competitive environment.

"Practices are really rowdy, [but there hasn't been much fooling around]," Tippetts said. "Everyone cares a lot about the team and about how we're eventually going to end up. I think it'll definitely work itself out by the time we get done this season."

Both captains say they are heading in the right direction.

"I'm really excited for the team we have right now," Verma said. "It's been the strongest it's ever been since I've come here, and I think we have a really good shot at making and performing well at states this year." ♦

GIRLS' VOLLEYBALL

Member bonding and strengthening remains priority

BY Serena Li
& Joann Zhang

Junior Berry Bailey tracked a pass from sophomore Jordyn Sin before delivering a forceful spike to the Prospect High School players on the other side of the net, who were unable to receive it. This successful play was one of many in the game against Prospect on Sept. 9, when the Falcons emerged with a 3-1 victory.

The girls' volleyball team has been on a tear as of late: they beat Milpitas in a 3-0 win on Sept. 17. Earlier, they won 3-0 against Fremont High on Sept. 12, beat Prospect 3-1 on Sept. 9 and bested Scotts Valley High 3-2 on Sept. 5.

Despite losing three seniors, the Falcons are 3-0 in league and 5-5 overall. Players attribute their success to the team's strong trust and connection with one another.

Bailey, who primarily plays as a middle, wants the team to be a family on and off the court. She hopes that the team can encourage one another and maintain the supportive team dynamic.

"In some sports, we're connected when we're playing, but the minute we get out of a game, we're suddenly strangers," Bailey said. "Everyone has strengths and weaknesses, we just want to lift each other up."

Additionally, the team aims to continue with their strong offense from last season.

Despite the team boasting players like Bailey and junior Ria Purisai, coach Steve Chiou wants to strengthen junior and sophomore offense when current seniors graduate. Senior Lauren Hansen and Sin are also key parts of the team's defense.

"We're super excited for the season to continue," Sin said. "It's always super fun, and we make the most of it." ♦



FALCON // JOANN ZHANG

Juniors Berry Bailey and Danielle Moon warm up on the gym volleyball court with freshman Lisa Fung and junior Hermione Bossolina.

Taking a shot at playing competitive dodgeball

throw-han
good

Rohan Kumar

I'm not a very athletic guy. Me playing football would look like a somewhat bony chicken trying to make it past a bunch of massive guys all bent on tackling it to the ground. So if I can't play football, or really any of the other common sports like soccer or baseball, what do I do?

Well, it turns out, there are some weird sports out there that might be more geared to non-athletes like me.

Brand-name colleges, like UC Berkeley and Stanford, have quidditch teams. It turns out there's even a World Wife Carrying Championship; the name is more literal than you might think.

I decided to try out one of these unconventional sports: competitive dodgeball. It turns out there's a lot of rules for this sport on the National Dodgeball League (NDL) website.

I then gathered some of my friends — juniors Enoch Luk, Oliver Ye and Christine Zhang and senior Brandon Wang — to play dodgeball in the Small Gym. Unfortunately, since few people shared my deep passion for dodgeball, I was able to muster just five participants. Aoki, from whom I borrowed the dodgeballs, also did not have regulation-sized balls; NDL regulations state that 4 Blockers, or 8.5-inch-diameter balls, and 2 Stingers, or 5-inch-diameter balls, should be used.

I decided not to get caught up in the technicalities. Dodgeballers have to do what they have to do.

But I decided not to get caught up in the technicalities. Dodgeballers have to do what they have to do.

We set up the six dodgeballs on the midline and split up into teams. The rules were simple: Players start behind the end line and rush for the balls in the center. They then have to bring the balls 10 feet

away from the midline before the throwing can commence. The first team to eliminate the other wins.

I called "Ready. Set. Go!" and we all ran to get the balls. As I backed away from the midline, I was surprised to find a dodgeball in my hands. Maybe this was my sport after all.

I noticed that Oliver did not have a ball, so I wound up, ready to show the world my undiscovered talents. But when I threw it, all my hopes literally flew away. The ball went so high it almost got our team a three-pointer. Unfortunately, we weren't playing basketball.

Tragically, in competitive dodgeball, you can't hit someone by sheer luck. In P.E., I just randomly threw the ball, and usually, there was someone there to get hit by it. This time, my two teammates, sadly, were not interested in being my meat shield, and the six balls were too few for me to waste on inaccurate potshots.

I got pegged by two balls pretty quickly after throwing mine, and soon, the rest of my team was eliminated. In the following round, I tried to team up with Oliver, who had performed well in the first round, in order to get carried to a victory, but unfortunately that didn't work either.

My hopes of finding my dream sport were dwindling. I had to win at least one match. Thankfully, Oliver offered to be a referee so we could have a two vs. two match.

I paired up with Enoch, and after a few minutes of me trying to look like I was contributing to the team effort and occasionally dodging the stray balls that came my way, we won.

We were about to leave the gym when teacher Kirk Davis showed up. We now had a perfect three vs. three.

For our final round of the day, I paired up with Enoch and Christine, since Davis wanted to test his skills against Enoch, who had managed to carry me to victory somehow.

The addition of Davis changed the game dynamic significantly. After an intense battle, a couple defensive (but ineffective) somersaults by Davis and some well-placed snipes from Oliver, Davis's team pulled ahead and won.

We finally decided to call it quits after 30 minutes of hard dodgeballing. We were quite literally sweating, and we'd all had a ton of fun, even Davis. ♦

Cheer alumna returns to coach smaller team

By JoannZhang
& JeanetteZhou

"G! O! Go, Falcons, go! G! O! Go, Falcons go!" the cheer team shouted, punctuating each word with a sharp clap. As they practiced in the dance room, new coach Chelsea Miller wove between the formation of girls, correcting the way the girls were pronouncing their "O"s.

"I don't want to hear any of this—" she pronounced the "O" in a drawing, singsongy tone. The team laughed and started over, with a new emphasis on their "O"s.

"You can't make the team improve until everyone improves."



SENIOR Monica Lubyansky

A 2013 Saratoga alumna Miller, nicknamed "Coach Chels," took over leadership of the cheer team this summer after previous coach Monica Davis' departure. With eight years of experience from cheering in high school and dancing in college, Miller has been a hit with the girls and a contrast to their experience last year. This year, they say they're enjoying improved organization and a caring atmosphere.

Currently, the cheer team has around 12 members, compared to 24 last year — a dip in participation some members of the team

attributed to frustration with last year's experience.

In addition, for the first time in six years, Miller will be taking the team to cheer competitions. The cheer team stopped competing in 2013, but this year, Miller hopes to take the team all the way to USA Spirit Nationals in Disneyland.

"I'm definitely looking forward to competition this year," cheer captain senior Monica Lubyansky said. "We really want to go [to Disneyland] and we just want to place."

Because the cheer team this year is smaller than in past years, one of the team's main goals is to develop close-knit relationships.

"I'm really excited because it is a smaller group which means we can reform the team how we want, so that means that we are taking a different approach," Miller said.

Miller has reached out to the dance and football teams and set up bonding activities such as secret gift-giving systems to improve the team's connection with other prominent athletic groups on campus.

Additionally, in order to better establish close-knit relationships within the team, members have started to participate in more frequent bonding activities, Lubyansky said. Positive chemistry outside of the team is reflected during performances, so the cheer team sees this as a constructive change.

"We want to get along, so we have team bonding every month now, such as dinner at someone's house or at a restaurant," Lubyansky said. "You're only as strong as your weakest link. You can't make the team improve until everyone improves." ♦

GIRLS' TENNIS

Singles players help to edge past Los Altos 4-3

By AndrewLee
& AmandaZhu

No. 2 doubles players senior Sanya Kwatra and junior Aindri Patra bent low, shuffling in anticipation for the match point serve from their Los Altos opponents on Sept. 12.

Glancing over to see the scores of their teammates, Kwatra and Patra noticed a rare occurrence: All four singles players had already won their matches while the two other doubles teams struggled.

The Falcons were able to scrape past Los Altos 4-3, with all their victories coming from the top four players. No. 2 singles player Varsha Horantur helped secure this victory in a nail-biting tiebreaker, where she emerged victorious with a score of 12-10.

"This match was interesting in the way that while all of our doubles teams were defeated, our singles players came in and clutched the win," Kwatra said. "Usually it's the opposite: The doubles teams are the ones to guarantee solid wins."

So far, the girls' tennis team has defeated Homestead 5-2 on Sept. 5 but lost to their longtime rival Monta Vista 5-2 on Sept. 10. The girls are scheduled to play 14 more league matches to round out their season.

Many returning players are already experienced with playing in higher positions, having been moved up spots in the 2018 season to compensate for four of the team's top players — No. 1 singles senior Rini Vasan, No. 2 singles junior Monica Stratakos, No. 3 singles junior Annissa Mu and No. 4 singles Horantur — who were out for parts of the season last year due to injuries.

In addition to Vasan graduating, the previous No. 3 singles player senior Annissa Mu is no longer playing on the team.

As a result, Stratakos is stepping up to lead as No. 1 singles, with Horantur and junior Alyssa Pinai moving up to play No. 2 and 3 singles respectively. Junior Juhi Patel has taken up the mantle of No. 4 singles to round out the top four.

For doubles, seniors Katie Lam and Vivian Lin have moved up to play No. 1. Sophomores Naisha Agarwal, Peixuan He and Jocelyn Li are currently being rotated to play No. 3.

According to Pinai, the singles lineup this year has been strong, but the doubles teams have struggled to win at times.

"The doubles teams constitute the heart of the team," Kwatra said. "Normally, singles matches are a coin toss, so we need a solid doubles lineup in order to perform consistently — we need to work on that right now."

Unlike previous years, the team did not participate in the annual California Tennis Classic invitational.

According to Pinai, the team hasn't been able to compete with its full lineup during the few most recent tournaments, due to both conflicting student commitments and injuries that have plagued the team.

As a result, coach Florin Marica did not see the competition as a worthwhile investment for the team this year.

Keeping their fingers crossed to keep as many healthy players on the court as possible, the girls are hoping for more focus and commitment throughout the regular season, Pinai said.

"I think our main focus now is to place higher in CCS," Kwatra said. "Having our strongest players back on the court is definitely a positive, and we are definitely striving to make sure we perform better without the setbacks of last season." ♦

Extreme skier Bharadhwaj shreds double blacks

By AnjaliNuggehalli

Sophomore Arjun Bharadhwaj took a deep breath as he peered down Gunbarrel run at Heavenly Ski Resort in South Lake Tahoe. Deemed a double black slope, the most difficult level of slopes, the run was especially icy and ungroomed — a deadly combination that only elite skiers would dare to attempt.

Bharadhwaj wasn't fazed. He had been shredding such slopes for years.

"When I'm high up on that mountain, I'm all alone," Bharadhwaj said. "But in a weird way, that isolation really calms me down."

A skier since age 3, Bharadhwaj has learned many of his skills from his father, Gannesh Bharadhwaj, a veteran skier. Through years of dedicated practice, Bharadhwaj has become an elite skier who has conquered some of the most difficult slopes in California.

"My dad introduced me to skiing when I was really young, and I just fell in love with the sport," said Bharadhwaj. "The adrenaline rush of skiing down a slope with snow-covered mountains surrounding you — it's a feeling like no other."

Bharadhwaj is aware that the thrill of these slopes comes with significant risk. He witnessed this firsthand last winter at Kirkwood Resort in South Lake Tahoe during a snowstorm.

As Bharadhwaj and his father raced down a run at the end of the day, his father fell several feet into ungroomed snow, collided into a wall of ice and sustained multiple fractures to his arm. He required emergency surgery at a local hospital and then went through an extensive recovery. Even so, Bharadhwaj's father was back to tackling double blacks as soon as he was able to.

"My dad got injured and didn't stop," said Bharadhwaj. "He showed me that if you really love something, you have to persevere and stick with it. The risk is worth it."

In order to reduce the risk of injuries, Bharadhwaj goes through the same rituals prior to difficult runs to stay calm.

"I take three deep breaths and tell myself that everything happens for a reason, and I'm strong enough to get through anything," he said.

Although Bharadhwaj has no plans to become a professional skier, he intends to continue doing the sport for as long as he can. He has already conquered formidable slopes such as the "The Wall" in Kirkwood, which is ranked No. 1 on the list of the steepest ski runs in Tahoe.

He has also participated in high-level skiing competitions, including the Gunbarrel 25, a one-mile run in which skiers have six hours to complete a formidable 25 laps around a double-black mogul run.

"I just had to keep going with no breaks," said Bharadhwaj. "To this day, the Gunbar-



COURTESY OF ARJUN BHARADHWAJ

Sophomore Bharadhwaj wearing ski gear at Heavenly's Gunbarrel 25 competition.

rel competition was the hardest thing I've done in my life."

This intense competition is just the start for Bharadhwaj. In the next few years, he plans on conquering Corbet's Couloir in Wyoming, the hardest ski slope in the U.S.

Bharadhwaj knows that he's pushing the limits with extreme skiing, but accepts the

risks.

"I've never felt such a love and passion for anything else. The sport has also taught me so many life lessons, like how to be patient and survey my surroundings," Bharadhwaj said. "The lessons I've learned while skiing have really made me the determined person I am today." ♦

Player to coach: student leads NJB team to victory

By VirajReddi

Just moments before the National Junior Basketball (NJB) championship game began this past summer, sophomore Ishaan Bhandari — the coach — stood in front of his team of third and fourth graders, motivating his players with one last message before tipoff.

"We have the potential to be the best in our division," Bhandari said. "We just have to trust each other and try our best."

Bhandari's team won the game by 11 points, cementing them as the 2019 summer champions of their NJB division.

Bhandari's leadership was inspired by his own experiences under JV basketball coach Brandon Farelas, who coached Bhandari for three years. Farelas ingrained in Bhandari his love for basketball and motivated him to coach.

Bhandari met Farelas in seventh grade, when Farelas coached Bhandari's Top Flight Elite Basketball team for two years. In Bhandari's freshman year, Farelas joined the school's JV basketball staff as an assistant coach.

"I've always looked up to him and loved how passionate he was about the game of basketball," Bhandari said. "I've seen how much it meant for him to see improvement from kids that he was coaching."

Farelas taught him many of the drills Bhandari still practices, including defensive slide drills, free throw practice and passing exercises.

Three years later, Bhandari continues to fall back onto Farelas's methodical drilling to keep himself in basketball shape.

As part of the JV basketball team, Bhandari also played under head coach Devin Southerland. Southerland tweaked Bhandari's game, refining his skills and all-around game.

With the combination of Farelas's foundation and Southerland's adjustments, Bhandari's game improved tremendously. Southerland believes that with Bhandari's hard work ethic, the change will be ongoing. "Ishaan has been improving since day one as a freshman, and will continue to," Southerland said.

As for his decision to coach, Bhandari

said he wanted to provide the same level of guidance that he received from his coaches.

Bhandari said he has adopted a similar coaching style to Farelas, running many of the same drills and exercises. Bhandari also picked up on his JV coach's positive mindset, being sure to keep in mind the negative impact of some other coaches who didn't let him play confidently on the court.

Now, having gone through the coaching experience himself, Bhandari recognizes the importance of prioritizing positivity over a winning-at-all-costs mentality.

This mindset of focusing on the positives has played a large role in shaping Bhandari into a better leader, especially as he slowly garnered his players' trust and confidence over the course of the season.

"I like to play the players who give the most effort and enjoy the game," Bhandari said. "I encourage them to try their best on the court and not worry about how they do."

Despite Bhandari's leadership, his team started the NJB season with an 0-3 record, losing each game by a three-point margin. The close losses frustrated Bhandari's players, who would frequently let emotions loose.

"One of the kids would throw their arms up if they got called for a foul," Bhandari said. "I would tell them not to worry about the refs, giving me déjà vu from my previous years playing with Brandon."

The third loss was the turning point for Bhandari's team. They won the next four games, and their success carried over to the championship game.

By the season's end, Bhandari felt far more empathetic toward his own coaches' approaches and experiences.

"I see why my coaches actually want to coach when they're pretty much not being paid at all," he said. "It's because they love basketball and want to share it with me and my teammates."

Bhandari plans to coach again in the fall. "This summer has really transformed my perspective of basketball," Bhandari said. "Not only in terms of wanting to continue playing, but also for me to spread my knowledge to the younger generation." ♦

Unconventional Sports



Ostrich Racing

Ostrich racing is what it sounds like; people race while riding ostriches. They can be ridden similarly to horses using saddles, but are said to be harder to manage.



Chess Boxing

Chess boxing is a combination between the cranial game of chess and the physical sport of boxing. Competitors play in alternating rounds of chess and boxing.



Underwater Hockey

Underwater hockey, or Octopush, is a sport in which players compete to maneuver a puck across the bottom of a swimming pool by boosting it with a stick called a "pusher".

GRAPHIC BY PRESTON FU AND BILL YUAN

snapshots



FALCON // HOWARD TANG



FALCON // JUN LEE



FALCON // JUN LEE



FALCON // ANGELINA CHEN

Junior Neeti Badve buys a snack from the vending machine in the Student Center.

Teachers huddle together and raise their arms in the finale dance of the Teacher's Quad Day on Sept. 23. Their theme was Camp Rock.

Football player Hunter Hawley covers his face in disappointment after the Falcons lose to Los Gatos on Sept. 20.

Seniors Payton Stokes and Alena Jarrett hype up the crowd at the Homcoming Rally on Sept. 20.

Finding the best campus bathrooms

Two reporters take way too much time out of their day to walk around campus and rate bathrooms

Bui bui,
I leen to guo

Eileen Bui and Justin Guo

Which of the school's bathrooms are the best? Are there any to outright avoid?

Those were the questions Eileen and I set out to answer recently (not the highest form of journalism but useful, right?). Excluding the bathrooms located in the gym, music building and near the track, we counted eight total bathrooms near the classrooms. The four boys' restrooms are found in the 000, 300, 600 and 900 wings, while the four girls' restrooms are in the old band complex, 000, 300 and 600 wings.

We judged them by three criteria: cleanliness, bathroom appliances and ambiance.

Cleanliness

Justin: Cleanliness is obviously a necessity for any bathroom, school or otherwise. Thankfully, though, none of the bathrooms at Saratoga are outright disgusting.

Eileen: I have to disagree. Over the course of two years, I've found a variety of extremely confusing and hurl-worthy objects in the girls' bathrooms. Just last week, I walked into the 300 wing bathroom and found a sink filled with hair. WHY? Where did the hair come from?

Justin: OK, fine, I can't pretend like I haven't had my share of disgusting bathroom incidents. I can't exactly pinpoint a specific culprit, but sometimes I walk into the bathroom and there's just ... liquid all over the floor. Every time it happens, I have to tiptoe my way to the toilet like some knockoff ballerina, being sure to avoid what I pray is water on the floor. Other than that, though, I think the bathrooms are pretty clean and well maintained.

Eileen: That's debatable; the feminine hygiene products inexplicably stuck to the girls' bathroom mirrors speak for themselves. We'll agree to disagree.

Bathroom fixtures and amenities

Justin: My biggest complaint? The push-down faucet handles that spew water for a timed interval. I guess you could argue that

they're meant to conserve water, but can someone please explain to me why some bathrooms have push-down handles and others have regular ones? I don't get it.

Eileen: My standards for bathroom fixtures are pretty low: All I ask is that they work. But I simply cannot get past the dysfunctionality of the hand dryers. The sole purpose of washing your hands is to rid them of bacteria, but upon drying them, bacteria is all I can see growing out of the hand dryers.

Justin: Hey, I'll give the bathrooms some credit. The 900 wing bathroom has a newer hand dryer model, where you don't have to press a button with your damp, recently cleaned hands to start the drying process. The bathroom in the math quad also has a shelf next to the hand dryer, so you can ... uh ... wait, why is there a shelf there? That doesn't make sense.

Eileen: Speaking of not making any sense, let's talk about every single one of the pad and tampon dispensers on this campus. They are literally NEVER stocked.

Ambiance

Justin: Give us a chance to explain ourselves here: Ambiance is important for a bathroom. Why do people prefer using the bathrooms in their homes rather than at school? The simple answer is familiarity, but another reason is because school bathrooms aren't welcoming. They just don't give off those vibes, you know?

Eileen: Yeah, and you know which bathroom epitomizes bad ambiance? The one in the 000 wing, by far. The entrance door gives me goosebumps every time I hear it slam behind me; it's SO ridiculously loud. The bathroom is also excruciatingly cold, and one of the mirrors have just been replaced with a soap dispenser. Bad vibes, I'm telling you.

Justin: For me, it's the smell. Everyone knows what I'm talking about. I guess it makes sense that bathrooms smell bad, but is there just no ventilation going on?

The best bathrooms

Eileen: In my professional opinion, the best girls' bathroom is the 600 wing bathroom. There's nothing special about it —

which is what makes it so good. Everything actually works and isn't disgusting.

Justin: After all of this, I think the best boys' bathroom would have to be the one in the 000 wing. The bathroom has the good faucet handles where you can control how much water comes out, is clean for the most part, and as an added bonus, is pretty close to the quad. ♦

topten

WAYS TO EXPRESS
SCHOOL SPIRIT AT RALLIES

- 10 **Wear the wrong color.** Relive your glory days as a freshman, your sad days as a suffermore or your even sadder days as a junior.
- 9 **Pop in an AirPods for ear protection.** How can you appreciate the cacophony if your eardrums are blown out?
- 8 **Cheer Mr. Torrens on when he "Skrt Skrts" with the kids.** Can we borrow his Thug Life glasses?
- 7 **Take off your shirt, Magic Mike style.** Freddy the Falcon loves your 7-pack.
- 6 **Skip leg day.** Getting up and sitting down over and over is basically squats.
- 5 **Tell your friends you wish you weren't there.** Wait, who are you talking to?
- 4 **Watch the teachers and admins not want to be there.** Even GLouie is PRobably overwhelmed.
- 3 **Savor the mic feedback.** Nothing like an audio malfunction to remind you you aren't screaming loud enough.
- 2 **Leave before the end.** You don't want to participate in the weird end-of-rally "[insert grade level] POWER!" ritual.
- 1 **Chant "Go home, freshmen!" as loud as you can.** It's advice from your elders, not an insult.

>> Mathew Luo and Howard Tang



GRAPHIC BY BILL YUAN