



Grassroots band receives the key to San Jose.



Junior recalls experiences with poorly run clubs.



Students voice opinions on athlete advocacy.

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Robotics bridges age gaps

BY Andy Chen & Kaasha Minocha

Just after their school day ended recently, fourth and fifth graders from Argonaut Elementary moved to sit around different tables in a classroom, and all of them began working on improving a specific part of the lego robot they had been working on. Off to the side, senior Katherine Peng weaved in and out of groups, encouraging and helping them.

Two years ago, alumnus Bassil Shama, who served as the M-SET robotics club president in 2017-2018, organized a volunteering opportunity to mentor fourth and fifth graders from Argonaut on how to build and code basic robots as a way to further the club's outreach program.

Organization for the program has continued to evolve since its inception. This year, meetings are held on Wednesdays and Fridays, and each consists of four volunteers from the school's Mechanical Science and Engineering Team (M-SET) spreading STEM at Argonaut through the creation of various kinds of robots. M-SET tries to have one lead volunteer out of the four present for each session as well as non-lead volunteers. The non-lead volunteers rotate every session and sign up for the two-hour sessions.

The mentoring program is organized into two sections: competitive, which is part of First Lego League (FLL), and non-competitive, which is part of FLL junior. Both sections have an average class size of 20 students, and are free for the kids to attend.

The competitive class, made up of fourth and fifth graders, focuses on creating reliable robots that can compete in the FLL competition. While in the FLL junior class, consisting of only third graders, concentrates on teaching important concepts in preparation for the advanced class.

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FUNDING FALLS FLAT



PAPER-FREE FALCON FEST ADDS TO SOME PROGRAMS' DIFFICULTIES

BY Apurva Chakravarthy, Angelina Chen, Brandon Wang & Oliver Ye

The school's attempt to go paperless during the annual Falcon Fest registration process in August came with an unexpected price tag for programs across campus: decreased do-

nations. This is on top of state laws that prohibit public schools from charging parents for their children's participation in activities such as sports and asks schools to seek donations instead.

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Effort to curb vaping stepped up

BY Marisa Kingsley & Tiffany Wang

Upon entering bathrooms this year, students are noticing changes two major changes to discourage vaping: doors that are left propped open all day and new posters about the negative effects of vaping taped onto the walls and bathroom stall doors.

"The posters are just a reminder to students about their choices," assistant principal Kerry Mohnike said. "It doesn't always dissuade students, but if they're alone they're more likely to think about it."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there have been more than 800 cases of people hospitalized or dying because of vaping so far this year.

Nicotine-fortified liquids commonly used in vaping products are alcohol-based, while Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) — a chemical derived from marijuana — causes "lipoid pneumonia," an illness in the lungs that is leading to many of the ailments. The use of THC oils is cited in many cases of severe lung illnesses, including 21 cases in San Francisco alone, according to press reports.

As vaping becomes an escalating problem and more teens falling ill because of it nationally, school officials here have also ramped up their campaign against it, including policy changes and increased awareness efforts.

In the past, if students were caught vaping, they would likely receive a five-day suspension, Mohnike said. This year, however, when a student is caught the first time using a product containing THC, students can choose to attend a 10-week counseling program. The program, provided by Adolescent Counseling Services, seeks to help teens curb their addiction through individual, group and family therapy sessions.

Additionally, the administration decided

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Industry experts guide SHSTV to new levels

BY Benjamin Li & Allen Luo

Once a week, the SHSTV broadcast replaces the usual PA announcements on Thursday or Friday. Perhaps because of its short duration, most students don't recognize the amount of work put in to create a broadcast, from hunting down stories or to editing the final video.

Since the addition of SHSTV as a class nine years ago, it has been a student-run program with one adviser in charge (first Tony Palma and then Joel Tarbox for the past five years). But this year, the SHSTV program has undergone major changes by

partnering with the KMVT TV 15 professionals in Mountain View. This partnership has brought Bobby Chastain and Daniel Negrete in to lend a hand to the SHSTV staff as guest instructors. Tarbox is the teacher in charge, but they're doing much of the day-to-day work guiding the 18 students in the class forward.

The goal of the partnership is to help students with their work — writing stories or helping the staff with edits — and to also bring students some insights into professional broadcasting.

"One thing the teachers bring is an

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String ensemble featured in 'Timeless' band show

BY Esther Luan

This year's marching band show, "Timeless," conducted by drum majors junior Isaac Sun and seniors Alexander Mah, Sean Ryan and Joshua Yoon, represents the evolution of music through time. It includes a string quartet to portray classical music, as well as a saxophone quartet to represent more modern sounds, band director Jason Shiuan said.

The string quartet includes two violinists, juniors Avyay Koorapaty and junior Nikhil Nair; one violist, junior Panithi Kachinthorn; and one cellist, sophomore Maddie Jin. They are members of the

school's most advanced string ensemble, Saratoga Strings.

Last Saturday, the band performed in its first official competition, Cupertino Tournament of Bands at Cupertino High School. The band swept three of four of the major awards, winning first place for Field Show Sweepstakes (overall field show performance), first place for General Effect and tying with Homestead to win first for Best Marching.

During the show, the quartet performs a solo-esque movement at the beginning, then play a more supporting role as the

>> **MARCHING BAND** on pg. 2



newsbriefs

Language clubs plan to create multicultural mural

This year, French Club has been leading an ongoing multi-club effort to plan and create a multicultural mural near the World Language Lab, club co-president and senior Rosa Golchin said.

Golchin said that club officers floated the idea of creating a mural at an early French Club meeting. After French Club adviser and French teacher Elaine Haggerty told club members that former principal Paul Robinson had envisioned having a multicultural mural, the club expanded the project to include the Spanish and Chinese Clubs.

So far, the clubs' officers have met to discuss the design of the mural, which will go in front of Spanish teacher Sarah Voorhees's room, Room 601. In addition, each club has curated a collection of images that they would like to see on the mural, according to Golchin.

"In the coming weeks, we will combine our visions for the mural into a sketch, seek administrator approval and gather materials," Golchin said.

— Brandon Wang

School helps students through power outage

On Tuesday, Oct. 8, the last day of the extended October break weekend, many students received a message from Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) detailing the possibility of a systematic loss of power for up to 800,000 customers in the region because of increasing wildfire concerns.

Some hoped this meant they would have another day off. But this hope was quelled after just a few hours, as Jane Marashian, the executive assistant to superintendent Mike Grove, released an email describing the district's plan in case of a blackout. If the school was to experience power failure, students would only be sent home if temperatures reached dangerous levels, which administrators did not foresee.

As hopes for another day off subsided, students gradually began face the annoying reality.

"I was hoping to have a fun five day weekend," said sophomore Bora Alaybeyi, whose house lost power.

As a result of the power shutoff, students like Alaybeyi found it difficult to complete assignments reliant on computers or Wi-Fi. The school opened the student center and library for students after school. Those affected were encouraged to stay until 10 p.m. to "work on their homework, collaborate as needed, and connect to the Wi-Fi," and many students did decide to do so.

Ultimately, Alaybeyi said the school handled the shutoff well. The school's facilities being open to students was especially useful to him, as he was still able to complete his work despite the blackout.

"Even though the blackout is kind of inconvenient, I don't think a lot changed for me," Alaybeyi said. "I normally stay in the library for one hour after anyways; I'm grateful that [the school] let us stay longer."

— Andy Chen

60 years of The Falcon

From the archives: For its 60th year The Falcon has decided to look at interesting moments of the school's history. This week's story is about reactions to a 1985 undercover cop drug bust:

On March 21, 1985, seven students were arrested during second period for selling or arranging to sell marijuana or cocaine.

Two former students were also arrested and caught by an unnamed undercover sheriff's deputy who posed as a student since the beginning of second semester.

At approximately the same time that the Saratoga High students were apprehended, 17 students at Los Gatos High were also taken into custody on drug charges of a separate investigation. Similar operations were also conducted at LGHS in 1979 and 1994.

The San Jose Mercury News and KRON covered the busts, which produced a largely negative effect among students.

Because students were not warned in advance, they felt the operation damaged trust. For his part, principal Tod Likins justified the undercover operation as necessary to an ongoing process to curb the sale of narcotics on campus.

This account is a summary of a story that appeared as a special insert in the edition of The Falcon that was distributed on March 22, 1985. The original story was written by Bill Pratt and can be found at saratogafalcon.org.

picturethis



Bake Sale | Freshman Avani Gupta and senior Nicole Wong watch as sophomore Grace Hsu sells baked goods at a football game against Gunn on Oct. 11 to fundraise for the dance team.

FALCON / ANGELINA CHEN

MARCHING BAND

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performance continues and the saxophone ensemble takes the lead melody.

"The string instruments are kind of old and classical, so they start the whole show," Shiuian said. "[The genre of music] then evolves, and a saxophone quartet takes over as a different voice. At the end they kind of combine to show that even though they are old versus new, they still work well when they come together."

The school's marching band has featured string players in shows before. In 2014, the show "Sacred Geometry" included a string trio feature; however, the string musicians stood at the front of the field for the entire performance. In contrast, the quartet is stationed on platforms that move around the field throughout the show, Jin said.

For the string players themselves, it is a new experience working with the marching band in this way. Jin, who was a member of the school's winter guard last season, said that it has been a novel and enjoyable experience for her to

play the cello with the band.

"It's really cool to watch the performance from a different point of view," Jin said. "I've never played a cello on a field before."

Koorapaty, the first violinist of the quartet, played flute in the marching band during his freshman and sophomore years.

"There's a lot of new things about playing as a featured ensemble," he said, "but there's also some difficult things we're working on." The main issue, Koorapaty said, is matching tempo with the band.

Members of the band are trained by teachers and band practice to prioritize strict and consistent tempo, Shiuian said. In contrast, string players, play more expressive repertoire and have more freedom in timing.

Another challenge is playing while on the moving platforms: learning to play from different places on the field.

"It's challenging because they have get used to listening and timing out their playing differently," Shiuian said.

The quartet must also accommodate the delay between playing and mic feedback, Shiuian said.

Rather than attending every marching band practice, which often focus on the band's choreography, the quartet members rehearse individually without supervision.

Because the string quartet doesn't have to do any marching, Shiuian said, it's often unnecessary for them to attend rehearsals.

Despite these small complications and adjustments, the inclusion of a string quartet has been a great learning experience for members of the band, Shiuian said.

The band will be participating in regional competitions every weekend for the upcoming three weeks. They will be at Dublin High School for the Irish Guard Invitational on Oct. 19, followed by the Foothill Band Review at Foothill High School on Oct. 26. Then they will head south to Fresno State University for the Fresno Sierra Cup on Nov. 2, wrapping up the competitive season.

"We're very fortunate here, because the string program is so strong," Shiuian said. "That's not true for all schools. For string players to be part of the show is a really unique opportunity to collaborate across genres." ♦

'SHS Confessions' renamed

by Tiffany Wang

On Sept. 30, avid fans of the Facebook page formerly known as "shsconfessions" realized that the page had been taken down. Many were confused as to why it was gone while others worried that it would be gone forever.

The page, with over 200 followers and 3,600 posts, had a logo of a poorly drawing rendition of a falcon, similar to the Atlanta Falcons (and the school's) logo.

Earlier that week, there was a Facebook post circulating around where someone said "Due to academic and social reasons, I will be passing away. I apologize for any inconveniences this may cause."

It was clear to the moderators of the page and many others who viewed the post that it was a joke.

However, a few people were concerned it was real and notified the school's administrative team (principal Greg Louie and assistant principals Kerry Mohnike, Brian Safine and Matt Torrens).

The moderators were brought into the office and had a discussion with administrators. When the administration realized that the Facebook page was using the

school's logo and name without consent, they told the moderators to "cease and desist" using the page because they didn't want the school to be liable in case something bad happens.

"[The page] is not something that I want to represent the school."

PRINCIPAL Greg Louie

According to Louie, if the page uses the school's logo or name, it sends the wrong message that it is moderated by staff or approved by the school itself.

"It's not something that I want to represent the school unless [the school] is directly affiliated with it," Louie said.

He asked the moderators to shut down the page, but suggested they could relaunch it if the moderators worked with CASSY, an administrator or a staff adviser.

The moderators decided they didn't want to shut down the page.

Instead, they decided they rebrand it as "toga confessions" and change its logo so it will not be linked to the school. It returned on Oct. 2.

"I think we declined because accepting the offer would defeat the purpose of the page," said one of the moderators, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "Also, working with the administration would deter people from posting on the page."

The original purpose of the page was to create an anonymous environment where people could say things they otherwise couldn't when they were in the presence of a staff member.

"We had a discussion and came to an agreement on how we should change the guidelines on how we post, to not have something bad happen," one of the moderators said.

Now two of the moderators will review every confession before it is posted, they said. They want to make sure there is no hate speech or anything that could lead to harm for students.

"We are working more carefully to make the page better and more beneficial for everyone," the moderator said. ♦

FUNDING

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According to principal Greg Louie, the switch to an online registration system was in part due to environmental concerns. In the past, Falcon Fest packets contained tens of flyers and forms, leading to immense paper waste.

The administration also hoped that families would have an easier time in accessing forms on the school website and donations on the school's web store.

However, the school has rethought its decision and will mail out paper copies of all the forms to families this month in an attempt to increase donations to various programs, Louie said.

Programs on campus have been affected in different ways by the trend of falling donations in recent times.

Athletics:

Inadequate donations can result in sports canceling team dinners, buses and team apparel, athletic director Tim Lugo said. In addition, the cost for coaches, transportation and officials are being handed to directly teams instead of being covered by overall donations, he said. Lugo said that the athletics program continues to need much more support from parents.

Music:

So far, the music program has only had to make minor cuts because of funding shortfalls, such as holding fewer performances and sending the marching band to fewer competitions.

Music director Michael Boitz credits to the strength and organization of the Music Boosters for the program's continued overall financial health.

Without the Booster program, which provides resources for everything from clinics to instruments to repairs, Boitz said, the music program would no longer be a "performance program" but simply a "regular classroom."

MAP:

The MAP Booster program has seen con-

tributions fall despite efforts to a decreased recommended donation, said MAP Booster board member Arati Nagaraj.

MAP coordinator English teacher Suzanne Herzman said that the program also relies heavily on contributions in order to fund its many field trips, including the junior year Los Angeles trip and the senior year capstone trip. If contributions were to run too low, Herzman said, MAP would be forced to go on "lite" versions of field trips rather than give students a full experience.

Drama:

The smaller Saratoga Theater Arts (STA) Booster group has also faced a decline in donations, but surpluses carried over from previous years allowed the group to continue activities as normal, according to drama Teacher Sarah Thermond.

Thermond said that STA continued passing out paper forms at events like Back to School Night and the fall play parent meeting, the STA still didn't get as much funding as previous years. STA has been forced to ask itself if this decline is temporary or "an indication of a trend that would require [STA] to budget differently," Thermond said.

ASB has witnessed a decline of 215 fewer ASB Packages sold this year as sales have from dropped from 980 to 765 Packages.

ASB:

Money shortfalls have affected the ASB, which has witnessed a drop in ASB package sales from 980 to 765 this year in part due to a website glitch. As soon as the sales for the packages went live, the website crashed and families could not buy them online, which drove sales further down, activities secretary Anna Ybarra said.

ASB Treasurer Rohan Rao said that most of the ASB's funds come from the package, and so ASB has had to cut costs. Reductions

"DOWN"

"KIND OF FALLING DONATIONS"

"drop in ASB package sales"

"'LITE' VERSIONS OF FIELD TRIPS"

"fewer performances"

"prohibit public schools from charging parents"

"canceling team dinners"

"school has rethought its decision"

"prohibit public schools from charging parents"

"canceling team dinners"

GRAPHIC BY TIFFANY WANG

in off-campus dances such as winter formal and proms are among the consequences.

In the future, the school plans on making the ASB package cheaper by removing some unpopular items such as the water bottle and backpack, Rao said.

Journalism:

Lower demand for ASB Packages, which include a pre-ordered yearbook, have created a challenge in deciding how many yearbooks to order from the printing company, said journalism adviser Mike Tyler said. There has also been decreased participation in the Falcon newspaper's PTSO-affiliated subscriptions, Tyler said, from 500 in a typical year to just over 200 this year. The PTSO has said this dropoff was because of the change to a paperless Falcon Fest.

Speech and Debate:

The club has seen a steady decline in donations that might cause the coaches to cut a few programs, according to head coach Erick Rector. Another alternative is cutting travel tournaments from the program. Currently, the funding goes to paying coaches' salaries and fees for league tournaments.

salaries and fees for league tournaments.

Other solutions on the horizon?

Jana Marashian, executive assistant to superintendent Mike Grove, said bond and parcel tax measures have been implemented to increase shortfalls in funds in the past. Typically, bonds are used for construction and facilities, while parcel taxes are used to "keep class sizes down," Marashian said.

However, district funds are not being used to supplement the student-centered programs at Saratoga High and only provide minimal support, Marashian said.

Instead, the district intends that programs rely on fundraising and donations.

Boitz said that he hoped that the district could provide more support to programs navigating the challenges presented by lower donations and one-time difficulties such as a more paperless registration system.

"We need to get the school district and the communities both Los Gatos and Saratoga on the same trail of momentum to help build that awareness in the community," Boitz said. "Only then is it only going to get better for everybody." ♦



English teacher and MAP coordinator
Suzanne Herzman

"We definitely want to make sure that everybody knows no one will be denied the opportunity to participate due to lack of ability to contribute. On the other hand, for the families that can contribute, it's an important message to know that the trip still costs money and we can't do them if we don't collect the funds."



Athletics director
Tim Lugo

"The reality is that we pay for things or kids will have to do more fundraising. And the more time they spend fundraising, parents are going to be upset that they aren't studying ... I'm hoping that each sport can continue, but at some time, if sports can't pay for their own existence, I don't know what we are going to do."



Music director
Michael Boitz

"Without the booster organization, we'd have the three directors, but we wouldn't have any clinicians. We wouldn't have a marching band. We wouldn't have a bell choir. We wouldn't have a musical. We wouldn't have most of the things we have. Would be limited to the exact same mechanism as a math class would be."

Two new math club advisers reform club policies

by Benjamin Li & Oliver Ye

After math teacher Andrew Shoemaker left for a new job in the San Diego area in June, the role of math club adviser was left open.

Now taking the reins of the popular club are math teachers Savita Agrawal and PJ Yim, who previously held the role before Shoemaker. While the two are keeping the main structure of lunch club meetings the same, they are planning on bringing back after-school sessions.

During lunch, the club will host exams such as the California Math League (CaML) and provide challenge problems. Since CaML is a monthly exam, club officers will be reviewing previous weeks' tests every other lunch meeting, going over solutions in depth and answering any questions club

members may have.

Yim has also created a Canvas classroom for the Math Club, in hopes of streamlining the score distribution process for test takers. Since Canvas has the ability to automatically post pre-created messages, Yim prefers Canvas to Facebook for group communication.

"It makes announcements easier, I could communicate easier, and there's a calendar where I can also put all the important dates and the agenda," Yim said.

While Facebook will still be used, communication through that platform will be for quick announcements and reminders.

In addition, students will be able to see their test scores on Canvas after they are graded.

The lunchtime meetings, held in Agrawal's room, will be primarily geared at preparing members for the American Math Competition (AMC) in the spring, the largest event that the math club hosts. While lunchtime tests will be open to all students, since certain math tournaments such as the Berkeley Math Tournament, Caltech Harvey Mudd Math Competition and the Stanford Math Tournament only allow a couple of students per school to attend.



Yim

Additionally, attendance for club lunch and after school meetings will be taken in order to limit the number of test takers for the AMC 10/12 B this year. The AMC 10/12 A will be open to all who are interested, but since Saratoga High must also accommodate for the 70 plus high school members, in addition

to 30-40 students from Redwood Middle School who take the test annually, the math club has decided to limit the number of test takers to only those who are truly interested, club president Jeffrey Xu said.

After-school meetings will be held on Blue Bay Fridays, and will run from 2:10 to 3:45 p.m. in Yim's room.

During these meetings, officers will present novel ways to tackle problems and introduce interesting problem solving strategies. The after-school meetings will be open to all who wish to attend, but Yim expects to see a different population of attendees since the topics covered after school will be different than that covered during lunch.

"I'd like this to be more like a math circle kind of deal where you can study and others help you out," Yim said. "It should be fairly fluid; I don't want this to be rigid because it's not a classroom." ♦

ROBOTICS

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Both sections have an average class size of 20 students, and are free for the kids to attend.

The competitive class, made up of fourth and fifth graders, focuses on creating reliable robots that can compete in the FLL competition. While in the FLL junior class, consisting of only third graders, concentrates on teaching important concepts in preparation for the advanced class.

The competitive class has two FLL teams, each with 10 students. Additionally, there are six parent volunteers who spread out to supervise the 40 total kids.

Last year, there was no competitive team, and the only students involved were fourth and fifth graders. Meetings happened once a week and scrimmages would rarely occur. This year, by contrast, the meetings are held twice a week and competitions are more frequent. Senior Krishna Minocha, who serves as the lead mentor for the program, described how she and the students have benefited throughout the experience so far.

"I'm very glad to be able to do this work," Minocha said. "I'm excited that I get to teach them and make an impact on them at such a young age, because I feel like especially with things like women in STEM, it comes with a young age of being able to make sure that they have equal respect starting in elementary school."

Minocha said that mentoring at Argonaut has provided numerous benefits to M-SET members, as they are utilizing skills learned in robotics and applying them in their community. To provide support, Minocha either sits down with the students and takes them through concepts step by step or gives them relevant examples from when she was part of FLL. Additionally, she has them draw out their ideas and then go



Sophomore Shreyas Rana helps fourth and fifth grade students learn the basics of robotics with legos at Argonaut Elementary as part of the FLL mentoring program.

over them with her.

For her, the goal of the program is to expose kids to FLL and get them interested in STEM as well as to correct gender imbalance starting at a young age.

A difficulty that Minocha and her peers initially struggled with was not getting enough volunteers from within M-SET. Now, by implementing a SignUpGenius form, they are receiving a lot more support from M-SET members. Peng is another robotics mentor who has been positively influenced by working with the students.

From a leadership standpoint, the volunteer project has helped Peng with organization, time management regarding the children, and keeping notice of what everyone is doing so she knows when to go

over and help as well as when to interact with them.

In addition to organization, Peng mentioned how explaining and showing students how a certain concept applies also reinforces her own understanding of the topic.

"I need to make sure I understand physics and general concepts that I've learned throughout robotics because it's like how the old saying goes: 'you never truly understand something until you can explain it to someone else,'" Peng said. "I feel like this mentoring is a great example, where I can make sure I really understand something before getting it across to the students."

Argonaut principal Karen Van Putten has also seen the benefits of the mentoring

program.

"It's sort of a dream come true, because of my connection to the high school, having taught English there," Van Putten said. "I always thought that would be some of the best kinds of mentoring, whether robotics or other types of mentorship."

So far, Van Putten said that the partnership between Saratoga High and Argonaut has been a really positive experience. In terms of technical details, she depends on the high school students, and parents also need to be involved because of cases regarding student safety and classroom management.

Van Putten explained how she has to remind her kids that just because it's an older kid, they still earn the respect of being their coach. She thinks that once they understand that, they really value the coaching and understand that these are real high school robotics team members building big robots, so there is a lot of street credibility there.

Van Putten added that the students and parents may not know the rewards or benefits until several months, or even years later, when the third, fourth and fifth graders will move on to SHS and participate as a robotics team member.

Van Putten said that these are the "seeds" that are being "planted" right now from the high school, and that is the exciting part.

"We know that what the high school students are doing right now with our kids are inspiring them in ways that we just cannot express. I think the other benefits are that the high school students are walking away each day, for the most part feeling like, 'hey I've just done something pretty cool with my community,'" she said.

She has walked in and just observed the interactions between the M-SET students and the Argonaut students.

"There is just a natural joy and excitement of teaching and learning, from the high school kids and the little kids," Van Putten said. "That's the best part." ♦

SHSTV

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incredible industry experience," Tarbox said. "These guys are doing it, they do broadcast, and they have a lot of technical expertise that exceeds what I know. So bringing in people who have current broadcast experience is really refreshing for a class like this."

Tarbox pointed to their strong technical

skills as being especially helpful.

Along with the expertise the guest instructors provide, students also benefit from just watching them work, Tarbox said. Be it picking up new tricks around the complicated broadcasting equipment or learning new methods for completing a task, students have greatly increased their technical knowledge and skills.

"Mr. Chastain and Mr. Negrete are both really helpful," sophomore Christian Li said.

"They show us stuff we didn't know and help us around the technical things, too. They also help us a lot when we need to finalize our stories."

This opinion was also shared by other crews personnel.

"They bring a whole new level of technical expertise when it comes to any equipment we use," said senior Connor Oaklander, the producer for the show.

With the additional help of the two new

guest instructors, the quality of the SHSTV broadcasts are expected to greatly improve in the next few months. Many aspects of the broadcast are undergoing changes, ranging from the technical side to more general things like how the class is being run.

"In the coming months we will be making changes to how we run," Oaklander said. "I'm pretty excited to see where we can take this and where their expertise from the industry can bring us." ♦

AP Stats looks at biases

by Andy Chen
& Allen Luo

Over the course of the past few weeks, it's probably impossible to have missed the multitude of students conducting experiments for a project in for AP Statistics teacher Jennifer Mantle's classes.

This annual fall project requires Mantle's students to gather data by pulling out and interviewing random peers from other classes. This year, Mantle is teaching three periods of AP Statistics, so about 100 students participated.

The project's purpose is to have students investigate how the results of a survey can be affected by the interviewer's own biases. The three parts of the project consist of: a proposal, the actual experiment, in which students go around and interview different people, and a final analysis and presentation about the results.

Pairs of students have to come up with

their own questions to ask, with each pair trying to elicit response bias from their interviewees. This bias is found by analyzing the responses of different people who are asked versions of the same question, with a different delivery. For students, the chance to not around sit in class and instead go out and interview people was a refreshing change from the usual routine.

The project also serves to give students valuable experience that they can apply in the outside world. For Mantle, the biggest takeaway from the project is that data should not be taken at face value, but rather examined to make sure that it truly is correct.

"I'm trying to instill the idea that data is everywhere and that we are exposed to so much data and statistics, but much of it is wrong or misleading," Mantle said. "I want my students to leave my class feeling confident in questioning data and data sources with a keen eye." ♦

VAPING

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to keep the bathroom doors open during school hours to discourage vaping.

According to Mohnike, the student's perception that "everyone vapes" isn't accurate. However, the administration believes that the number of students at the school who vape — while far from a majority — is still alarming.

The school's anti-vaping campaign centers around the appeal to students' intellect to get to the root of the issue, instead of simply discouraging the use of vape products on campus.

"It doesn't do any good for the administrators to wag their fingers at students and say 'don't do that,'" Mohnike said.

While many students think the school should increase education efforts, they don't see the posters as an effective means of it.

Junior Amy Munson, who has noticed the anti-vaping posters, said that while they're "not a bad idea," they are easy to ignore, especially if a student is already vap-

ing. Instead, she believes that allocated lessons would be a better option.

"Planned lessons designate time for people to hear about the negative sides of JUULing and make more people pay attention to it," Munson said. "That doesn't mean [students] will all pay attention, but it's more effective than a poster."

Besides putting up posters, the school has more plans to further push the anti-vaping campaign, including the possibility of airing anti-vaping commercials on SHS TV, according to Mohnike.

The administration and PTSO are also planning on having the school's resource officer, Deputy Russell Davis, give another presentation to parents.

"They hope to educate parents on recognizing vape products and navigate the peer pressure associated with it. But the ultimate decision about whether to vape still rests with each individual."

"Hopefully someone will read the posters and it will help," Mohnike said. "We live in a society that has internet access, and we learn information quickly, so I think the history of JUULing will be short-lived." ♦

togotalks

Do you think the new vaping signs are effective?

"No, because kids are already used to seeing anti-vaping ads everywhere."



senior Jonathan Zhao

"I think it's effective because I smell less vapes now."



senior Timothy Yoon

"I don't even notice the signs because they blend in with the wall."



junior Stefan Meier

CBI Program builds life skills for students

by Allison Hartley
& Emilie Zhou

Room 401 isn't packed with the 30 or more students that sometimes inhabit other classrooms on campus. And it's for a good reason.

This is one of the classrooms where students in the school's Community-Based Instruction program learn academic concepts as well as master important life skills under more personalized guidance from special education teacher Lisa McCahill, volunteer Kelly Anderson and resource aide Daniel Marble.

According to McCahill, students in the CBI program typically have moderate to high needs and teaching them to become independent is the main goal of the program.

"We accommodate them and modify things for them," she said, "but our goal for each individual student is for them to be as independent as possible within their ability."

There are a total of 27 students, three teachers (McCahill, Courtney Crase-Delp and Kimarrette Bou) and seven resource aides in CBI.

While the teachers lead instruction and organize individualized plans for the students, the aides help implement the accommodations and modifications within the classroom and during transitions, breaks and lunch.

Aides also help supervise students and guide them through daily classroom activities.

For Sherman, he has grown as a result of his experience.

"You have to go into it knowing that it's not always going to be an easy task, teaching them new things and getting them to do what they know how to do," Sherman said.

According to McCahill, the goal for the CBI students' four years at the school is to be able to generalize the life skills learned in the classroom and in the community.

After graduating high school, these students will often move on to a post-secondary program at West Valley and receive district services until they are 22.

It's important for the students to learn to be independent in the community; one of the best outcomes after leaving the district is for students to be directly hired for a job, McCahill said.

"Our role as teachers is to push them and challenge them," McCahill said. "It can be as simple as asking to go to the bathroom or staying with the group or possess writing or reading or math needs where they utilize these skills so they can do things and make decisions by themselves."



Freshmen James Cathbertson and DJ Dix participate in a group activity as part of the CBI program in their classroom on Oct. 15.

they're actually making decisions on their own."

Senior Jack Sherman is a mainstream student who began doing school service with the program with McCahill's students as a helper in his sophomore year. He describes himself as a "very patient" person, a virtue that has lent him success in working with students.

While CBI is part of the special education department, its courses are different from the academic resource classes, which are included in the department but generally include students who attend mostly general education classes.

The CBI program also has its own classes for students, including classes which teach different life skills, knowing one's body, health, cooking, and basic academic courses.

All of the classes "have a spin where they're based on meaningful topics" to further help students develop independence, McCahill said.

For example, math lessons teach students how to make purchases, and social studies classes will focus on both past and current events with a spotlight on how issues might relate to students in a practical way.

In addition, the students also get the opportunity to go into the community every Friday. For these trips, the 27 students in the program are divided into three groups of 8-10.

Each group goes to a different location and they then rotate locations the following Friday.

Not only are these outings fun for the students, but they also allow students to practice the skills that they've been learning throughout the week.

For instance, one group will go to a restaurant to practice talking to a server and calculating a tip, while another group will

walk to Saratoga downtown to practice street skills and how to make a purchase at one of the restaurants.

Some vendors in the community may try to accommodate students by offering to help with payment.

However, McCahill said the most important thing about community trips is independence; students in the CBI program are treated just the same as the rest of students on campus and don't receive special hand-

outs.

For junior Tanvi Singh, one of her favorite experiences in the CBI program has been going to Westgate, since she enjoys looking through the different shops and spending time with her friends.

"I think it is a lot of fun for the special ed because we get to pay our money on our own, and the ones who are more independent can go off and find things," Singh said. "[It's useful for students to go] because it will help you do math with counting money and subtracting budgets and remembering how much you save and how much you earned."

In addition, many CBI students also take electives and participate in extracurricular activities.

"You have to go into it knowing that it's not always going to be an easy task, teaching them new things and getting them to do what they know how to do," Sherman said.

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TEACHING AIDE Jack Sherman

For example, Singh is currently taking choir and drama and has been part of the school plays including "The Sound of Music." Singh has performed as a party guest and a townsperon.

Although she isn't acting in the fall play this year, she is excited to be helping as part of the tech crew.

"I loved performing," Singh said. "That was my first time [in a play but] I didn't feel so nervous. I like performing on stages and I usually sing all the time."

Resource aide Lisa McCann, who has been working in the program for 16 years, said she has had numerous memorable experiences when working with the students.

"The students are always giving me favorite moments," McCann said. "Just the things they say are so funny that they don't realize how funny they are. When they learn something or they suddenly catch onto something, it's also very exciting and rewarding." ♦

Speech and debate team off to a successful start

by Anouk Yeh
& Harshini Velchamy

The speech and debate team is taking on tough competition and faring well during early-season tournaments.

This past week, the team competed in the Presentation Voices Invitational. The Voices Invitational is a highly prestigious debate tournament that draws many out-of-state competitors.

Senior Ashwin Ramakrishna, who competed at the Voices Invitational, said the tournament hosted many strong opponents from places like New York, Minnesota and Los Angeles.

Top Saratoga High competitors included Ramakrishna and senior Siva Sambasivam, who broke to the quarterfinals round, placing 6th in varsity public forum, and seniors Adhit Sankaran and Ronak Pai, who broke to top 32 teams in the same event. Senior Ujjwal Krishnamurthi broke to top 64 debaters in Lincoln Douglass.

In addition to the team's success at the actual tournament, the school was also able to send a partnership to the prestigious Round Robin, a two-day, mini tournament after the regular competition with only the best teams invited. Seniors Siva Sambasivam and Adhit Sankaran, partnered for the Round Robin, and placed 3rd after going undefeated in the preliminary rounds.

Considering the team's track record of success, their success at Presentation and the Round Robin was not an unanticipated one. Two weeks earlier, the team traveled to Milpitas to compete at the Stephen Stewart Invitational. There, the team also saw success.

In speech, Saratoga took three top three placings, with senior Sammy Sullivan placing second in Varsity International Extemporaneous Speaking, sophomore Anouk Yeh placing second in Varsity Program Oral Interpretation and sophomores Joann Zhang and Arnab Shah placing third in Varsity Duo Interpretation.

Sophomore Seina Chen and senior Surbhi Bhat both placed fifth in Varsity Dramatic Interpretation and Varsity Program Oral Interpretation respectively. Sophomore Shivali Kattumadam placed seventh in Varsity Domestic Extemporaneous Speaking, while sophomore Vignav Ramesh placed eleventh in Varsity Original Oratory.

The debate team also saw success at Stephen Stewart. Sankaran and Pai placed second in varsity public forum, while Sambasivam and sophomore Ayaan Haque broke to the quarterfinal round. Additionally, Sambasivam was the fifth speaker in the tournament and Sankaran was the eighth. In JV Public Forum, freshmen Stuti Agrawal and Anushka Sankaran broke to semi-finals, which Sankaran being the third speaker.

Although a good portion of the current team is fairly new, the

"Although we didn't have many underclassmen break, they all competed against very difficult competition and worked really hard to do as well as possible," he said.

With their early high level of achievement, Ramakrishna believes that the season has a lot more in store for the team.

"We've had a lot of early success in the season, but it seems like the best is yet to come," he said. ♦

>> **bigidea**

Speech and debate lately

What tournaments has the speech and debate team attended so far this year?
The Falcons have gone to the Yale Invitational in Connecticut, the Stephen Stewart Invitational at Milpitas High School, the Voices Invitational at Presentation High School.

What are the best finishes the team has had at these tournaments?
Seniors Siva Sambasivam and Adhit Sankaran semi-finalist at the Voices Round Robin, and the team saw three top-3 finishes at the Stephen Stewart Invitational.

After their recent success how does the team stack up to the rest of the nation?
Siva Sambasivam / Ashwin Ramakrishna are ranked 21st and Adhit Sankaran / Ronak Pai are ranked 58th.

FIFTH PERIOD STAFF POLICY

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

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Reforming of Homecoming court elections necessary to reflect spirit

Although Homecoming court supposedly recognizes respected students who embody school spirit, the reality is different: It is a popularity contest — some even campaign for themselves. Worse yet, many students sometimes end up voting for other students as a joke.

While there are a fair number of students voted on the court honorably, part of the Homecoming court each year always seems to be comprised of students who have been voted for as a kind of “meme candidate.” This comes at the cost of another student’s reputation and self-esteem.



In the past three years, attempts to get such candidates voted have occurred. Such candidates often recognize that they’re being voted as a joke, and do not appreciate the unsolicited attention. One such attempt resulted in the nomination being declined while another resulted in the successfully elected candidate turning down the position.

Another reason the current online voting method isn’t working is that some students have started campaigning for a spot on Homecoming court by begging their friends to vote for them, and even posting on their Instagram stories.

There have been instances where various students have taken their friends’ phones and voted for themselves.

Of course, campaigning for Homecoming court defeats the purpose of the celebration in the first place. While individuals

who display exemplary behavior such as selflessness and kindness are usually popular, the converse may not always be true.

In an attempt to curb this behavior, the leadership class even added a phrase on their Facebook post this year, explaining that the Homecoming court is “not a popularity contest.” Ironically, this statement implies that there are a significant number of students who do believe that the court is a popularity contest.

The school can do whatever it wants to try and stop this behavior with Facebook posts, but their strategies most likely will not work. A mere Facebook post is unlikely to have tangible impact on students who are driven to band together and discuss their votes prior to actually voting.

This isn’t to say that the school should just completely get rid of an election, but rather try to change the overly negative result that stems from giving students time to discuss their votes.

Holding elections at the beginning of tutorial and having students take five minutes to select a couple of names on the spot would solve the problems of people campaigning for a position

as well as “joke” voting. In other words, the Homecoming vote would work best if it were given without prior warning. This way students would be given neither the opportunity to campaign nor the opportunity to discuss their votes.

With these reforms, the vote for Homecoming court would be more likely to include truly spirited individuals. ♦

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The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 24-8 in support of this article.

Admins overreach in stifling ‘confessions’

By Manasi Garg & Nitya Marimuthu

“Confession #3578: Due to academic and social reasons, I will be passing away. I apologize for any inconveniences this may cause.”

This was the post that caused administrators to ask moderators to take down the popular Facebook page “toga confessions” (formerly known as “shs confessions”) for two days on Sept. 30. In turn, students across campus wondered what had happened.

According to one of the page’s moderators, administrators told them to “cease and desist” the site — that is, to shut it down and not restart it. In an initial meeting, the moderators said the administration asked them not to publicly share the reason for the shutdown, basically ensuring that the administrators did not get blamed for any discontent among the student body.

In a later meeting, administrators allowed the moderators to re-start the page under the condition that they removed the school’s falcon logo from the profile and re-named the page “shs confessions” to something that could not be directly associated with the school. Ultimately, the moderators settled on “togaconfessions.”

Despite their good intentions, the administration misused their

authority to exert control over an off-campus, student-run page.

Some of the administrators’ concerns may have arisen from the usage of the school’s logo as the profile picture and name made the page a liability to the school; however, the name neither “shs” nor “Saratoga” nor the Falcon logo can be trademarked, and nowhere on the page does the page claim to be officially sponsored or school-moderated. Rather, the name “shs confessions” was used as an indicator that the page had been created for and by students attending Saratoga High. This naming of the page is consistent with the “confessions” pages of other high schools and universities.

Administrators’ concerns could have been addressed with the simple addition of a statement in the bio saying the page is run by Saratoga students and is not affiliated with the school. In this context, issuing an effective cease-and-desist command was an extreme choice when simpler solutions were available.

Online speech happening during personal time cannot be equated with in-class or on-campus speech. School officials do not interfere with what students say and do in their time outside of school — for example, in a coffee shop or a park — so there is no reason to try to control student speech just

because it is digital.

To address concerns that the page will be used as a vehicle for cyberbullying, moderators regulate which confessions are posted and do not release anything explicitly targeting a specific person. In any case, if such a post was published, it is not the school that is liable; rather, it is the moderators and anyone suspected to have submitted the original confession based on past actions who would be held accountable.

Administrators also had concerns statements students were making on the page alluding to serious topics such as sexual assault and self-harm. Although these topics are worrisome, taking down the page does not confront these more deeper topics. While people may not get the professional help they require on the confessions page, they are at least able to reach out to others through the page.

Additionally, there are few or no negative effects of anonymously sharing personal struggles or opinions. Such confessions about personal histories of violence or mental illness may provide a sense of catharsis for the student in the way a diary entry might. These posts also often receive an outpouring of support from students who provide advice and words of encouragement.

It is understandable that ad-

ministrators are concerned about posts regarding self-harm, violence, abuse or bullying.

However, unless the confession explicitly states that an act of violence or something equally worrisome is happening or will happen on school grounds, it is not up to the school to directly interfere; rather, it is up to law enforcement. Even if school authorities attempted to intervene, confessions are anonymous, so there isn’t necessarily a way to trace who posted what.

The post that got the site taken down seemed to be intended as a joke. Compared to some of the other, deeper posts, this one reflected students’ tendencies to likely joke about wanting death (a problem that obviously reflects upon the deeper culture of the school rather than the site). Taking down the site did not help the person who posted this, nor did it suddenly remedy the school’s culture of unstable mental health.

If the administration felt concern over the effects of the site, they should have fostered an open dialogue with moderators in order to come to an agreement over how to better manage the page. While we agree that their concerns were reasonable, we do not feel their reaction helped the site to progress into one of more safety and consideration. ♦

Lynbrook justified in firing Brock Turner case judge

By Esther Luan & Nitya Marimuthu

On March 30, 2016, judge Aaron Persky sentenced Stanford athlete Brock Turner to an astonishing six months in jail for sexually assaulting an unconscious 22-year-old woman.

Despite two witnesses and a suggested sentence of six years in jail for the crime, Turner served only three months before getting let out on parole. Two years later, on June 5, 2018, Persky was recalled by incensed voters.

In early September, more than three years after the incident and a year after Persky lost his job, he was hired as a JV tennis coach at Lynbrook High School.

Following initial community outrage, Lynbrook administrators at first justified their decision to hire Persky, stating in a press release that the former judge was a “highly qualified applicant, having attended several tennis coaching clinics for youth and holds a high rating from the United States Tennis Association.”

Lynbrook also emphasized its previous unawareness of Persky’s involvement in Turner’s case, stating that they had only found out the week before. (Never mind the

appalling ignorance this shows of important current events.)

Within a week, Persky was fired by the Fremont Union High School District in an effort to maintain an “effective, safe and positive environment for all students,” the school district said in a public statement.

This decision brings up the question of whether a person can be separated from their past actions and reputation. In most cases, we would strive to separate someone’s history from their current actions, but this is not universal. Like most moral dilemmas, it is a mistake to create a single rule that can be followed in every case.

Persky’s case proves to be one of the unique ones. Not only did he not commit the crime himself, but sexual assault proves to be a much more subjectively defined subject.

Since there is usually no solid evidence to a sexual assault crime other than eyewitness and victim testimonies, it is much more influenced by the values of the judge and the justice system.

That being said, should Persky’s past ac-

tions affect his future, especially when he did not commit a crime?

The difficulty with answering this question lies in the implications that forgiving Persky’s past would entail. While it is compelling to forgive Persky and follow the standard forgiveness procedure, the repercussions are too great to let him off the hook without making a statement about his past actions.



GRAPHIC BY ANDY CHEN

Sexual assault is one of the most underprosecuted, and consequently, underreported crimes. According to RAINN, out of every 1,000 sexual assaults, only 230 will be reported, and 995 out of the 1,000 perpetrators will walk free.

Persky’s decision as a judge plays a large part in the continued stigmatization against reporting sexual assaults. By giving Turner a light sentence, he set forward a precedent for the treatment of sexual assault cases by apathetically handling a serious crime.

Persky might not have committed a crime himself, but he let an evident offender off with a light sentence, showing that he did not weigh Turner’s actions as criminal

enough for a larger sentence.

After facing backlash for his light sentence, Persky justified his ruling by saying that a longer “prison sentence would have a severe impact on [Turner]. I think he will not be a danger to others.” Persky’s light sentence affected more than just the victim of the crime, whose life had been torn to shreds by Turner; his sentence added to the already extensive stigma associated with reporting sexual assault in colleges.

If Persky is hired as a high school coach after making such a detrimental error to the system of judging sexual assault, what does that say about the “crime” of sexual assault? If Persky does not face consequences, who is to say that the next judge making an egregious decision will?

At the end of the day, Fremont Union High School District’s decision to fire Persky made a statement about the importance of valuing sexual assault victims.

Although we try to forgive and forget, a person’s past has to be taken into account in all hiring decisions. Given the significant consequences of his appalling judgment, Persky’s past actions should affect his future. He may deserve a second chance among his friends and family, but not as a high school tennis coach. ♦

Kamala Harris: not who she claims to be

By Anouk Yeh

On Jan. 21, Sen. Kamala Harris announced the beginning of her 2020 presidential elections. As a proud Californian (yay perfect weather and avocado toast!), I was excited to see Harris join the presidential race.

Harris entered my awareness in late 2018 during the Brett Kavanaugh hearings. After her intense and well-crafted cross examination of the then Supreme Court nominee, I became intrigued by her quick-wit and charisma and decided to learn more about her.

Harris was elected to the Senate in 2016. Previously, she served as California attorney general from 2011 to 2017 and before that, she was the San Francisco district attorney from 2004 to 2010. A large part of her candidacy appeal is attributed to her self-described nature as a “progressive prosecutor,” described by Quartz Website to be a prosecutor who strives to enact criminal justice reforms and, more or less, her identity.

Harris is the third female senator to represent California and the first of either Jamaican or Indian heritage.

Harris has used this to her advantage, consistently arguing that her identity would help her better advocate for traditionally marginalized groups in the U.S.

Although I was initially intrigued by what Harris’s candidacy symbolizes — progressive-but-not-overly-radical potential first female person of color (POC) president, a short dive into her record as California’s attorney general left me confused — her past record serving California seemed completely oxymoronic to her current political views. As a Californian, I find it almost laughable comparing her rhetoric on the campaign trail to her record serving in-state.

For starters, despite being a self-proclaimed “progressive prosecutor,” Harris has had a long history of championing legislation that disproportionately affects low-income families and people of color.

Most infamously, she supported legislation that would allow schools to sue and jail parents whose children have been “habitually truant,” despite concerns that it would disproportionately target low-income families.

During her time as attorney general,

Harris also refused to support amendments to reduce the impact of the Three Strikes Law in California. This legislation required second-time felony offenders to serve double the regular term provided for the crime and for third time and beyond offenders to serve at least 25 years in prison.

Harris supported keeping the original law, despite concerns that it would perpetuate mass incarceration and findings showing that it disproportionately targets Hispanic and African American Communities. Research by the Open Society Foundation found that the Three Strikes Law caused African American to be incarcerated 12 times as much as their white counterparts.

In addition to sponsoring legislation that actually hurt Californian minorities, Harris has also been notorious for vacillating between different stances on issues like incarceration rates.

Although she claims that she’s in favor of lowering incarceration rates, she abstained on taking a stance of the citizen’s ap-

proved Proposition 47 that would decrease some minor felonies to misdemeanors, resulting in the resentencing of 10,000 Californian inmates. In addition, she has also been notorious for upholding wrongful convictions and unjust prosecutions.

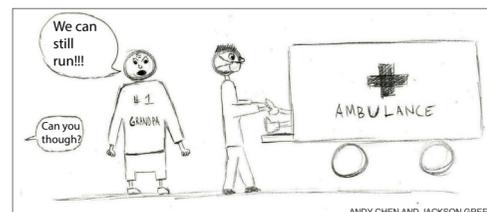
Most infamously, in 2010, her prosecution team wrongfully sentenced rapper Jamal Trulove to 50 years in prison for the murder of Seu

Kuika.

Trulove’s conviction ended up being overturned in March of 2019, when an appeals court found out that the witness had been compensated by Harris’s prosecution team to testify.

Although we cannot ignore the positives that Harris accomplished during her tenure as SF’s district attorney and California’s attorney general, such as creating an implicit bias training series and helping fix severe rape kit backlogs, we have to recognize that Harris’s past patterns of supporting legislation specifically targeting minority groups and the clear disconnect between her beliefs and her actions are not simply past blunders that can be dismissed, but a likely preview for her future leadership.

In a polarized and politically frantic time as this, we need a candidate that doesn’t just talk the talk, but whose actions also follow through. ♦



ANDY CHEN AND JACKSON GREEN

Presidency should have age maximum

By Anna Novoselov

Earlier this month, 78-year-old Vermont Senator and 2020 Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders was hospitalized after experiencing a heart attack near Las Vegas. Yet a few days later, he was back on the campaign trail claiming that he is in perfect condition, despite many speculations about his declining physical and mental health due to old age.

Many other frontliners in the race are also in their 70s — such as former Vice President Joe Biden (76), Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren (70) and President Donald Trump (73). Like Sanders, their age may hinder them from exhibiting the focus and quick decision-making demanded of the president, which is one of the most influential positions in the United States and perhaps even the world.

Given the obvious impairments that come with aging, there should be a maximum age limit of about 65 to run for president, since mental decline begins to accelerate after this age, even though it begins as early as at 45-years-old, according to British Medical Journal. The official who holds the presidency should be able to perform at the peak of his or her abilities and be able to make rational decisions while handling the stress that comes with the position.

Besides that, studies done by Emory prove that aging results in a cognitive decline, such as a poorer memory and diminished verbal capabilities. While problem solving and intelligence doesn’t decline with time, processing speed, the ability to multi-task and the ability to apply new ways of thinking to issues may diminish.

Old age also brings with it a myriad of health complications, such as reduced functioning of senses, like a loss of hear-

ing, and an increase in the risk of developing conditions such as heart disease, cancer and Alzheimer’s. Although life expectancy is gradually increasing, the average life expectancy for white males was about 76 years old in 2017, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which is older than some of the current candidates would be when leaving office in early 2025.

The oldest president to date is Ronald Reagan, who left his second term in office at 77 and reportedly experienced cognitive declines that may have impacted his ability to run the Oval Office.

In fact, he was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s five years after the end of his presidency. A recent study by Arizona State University found that as he aged, his speeches included an increased use of nonspecific nouns, repetitive words and the word “thing,” which could have been signs of early onset dementia. If Sanders was elected, he would leave the presidency at 83 years old, if Trump or Biden were elected, they would almost be in their 80s.

Many journalists, such as senior Politico.com media writer Jack Shafer, pointed out Biden’s stumbling over words, somewhat slow responses and minor memory lapses during the September Democratic Presidential Primary Debate. Others attribute part of Trump’s spread of false information, obsessiveness and inability to filter thoughts to declining mental function.

While older candidates may bring the wisdom and experience that comes with their age, voters should consider whether they would truly be able to run the country effectively and make reasonable decisions that affect millions of individuals. Since there is a minimum age for running for president — 35 — it makes sense to have a maximum age too. ♦



Courtesy of KAMALAHARRIS.ORG

Learning opportunities exist outside of classrooms

BY EstherLuan

In the eyes of many high schoolers, field trips stand for a bygone era — the three years of middle school marked more with fun than with learning, but by high school they seem somewhat obtuse and unnecessary.

While field trips may not be necessary or helpful for every high school class, they continue to provide unparalleled learning and bonding opportunities that are hard to recreate without taking students outside a traditional classroom setting.

When the monotony of lessons and assessments becomes unbearable, teachers often turn to field trips as an outlet for student stress and to help them regain interest in the class. Field trips allow for a refreshed perspective of the subject and renewed vigor for learning and exploration.

Furthermore, by experiencing and viewing real-world applications of concepts they've learned in class, students can better internalize and apply what they've learned from the course and gain insight beyond merely the information they are given. Whether it be viewing European historical art pieces at the Legion of Honor in AP European History or cleaning polluted shores in AP Environmental Science, field trips are a memorable way to put into context material learned in class.

In fact, a study from the U.S. Travel Association found that 89 percent of youth said educational trips had a positive, lasting impact on their education and career, stimulating their intellectual curiosity for the subject.

Non-academic focused field trips are integral to enhancing students' education, especially in group-oriented classes, because they bring students together and facilitate bonding. For instance, during the annual Media Arts Program ropes course field trip for sophomores, students work together through a variety of obstacles, leading to better mutual understanding and develop-

ment of essential teamwork skills. On campus, such activities would not have been possible.

The social aspect of field trips is also vital. Not only do field trips emphasize the importance of community in success, but they also lead to better compatibility among students in teamwork-based classes.

Critics of field trips often point out how time consuming they are. While they are an



GRAPHIC BY MEGAN CHEN

investment of class time, the experience of attending them far outweighs the cost of another monotonous lesson. Attendance, while highly encouraged, is not mandatory, and students can choose to opt out of field trips if necessary; however, the vast majority of teachers often plan assessments and important classes around field trips, which only occur once or twice a year.

Thus, field trips largely provide a relatively relaxing day for students to socialize and re-engage in learning. The school should continue to provide field trip opportunities when instrumental as to better students' social and educational learning. Field trips provide priceless benefits for students' personal and social growth that cannot easily be achieved by other means. ♦

Costs of field trips generally outweigh student benefits

BY AndyChen

Although field trips can be fun, outside-the-classroom experiences for middle schoolers, most no longer provide anything new to the learning experience in high school.

As such, a good number of field trips should be cut from the school's curriculum because they not only are ineffective, but

also require too much money and teacher effort to justify the meager educational returns.

student exposure to this unique style of learning from within the classroom.

This is not to say that all field trips are ineffective. There are a few exceptions that absolutely should not be removed from the school's curriculum. For example, the Media Arts Program's junior trip to Los Angeles as well as Redwood Middle School band's trip to Disneyland are great, once-in-a-lifetime opportunities that can't be experienced in a classroom.

It's also worth noting that significant field trips, like the previous MAP example, often have more social rather than educational aspects. In MAP's case, this social aspect is an intended part of the experience, but the socializing for most one-day field trips detracts from any real learning.

Field trips can also require a sizable amount of money to fund transportation, lodging and admission fees. This money should, whenever possible, be used by the school for more relevant purposes, like funding for facilities and sports.

This is especially important this year, as fundraising and donation efforts have been going down drastically, which is impacting a lot of sports and music programs like water polo and band.

Organizing field trips is also an extraordinary investment for teachers, who often act alone or in a small group to get them planned.

As part of the greater restrictions on fundraising implemented last year, teachers are now required to "ask for donations" instead of requesting direct payment for field trips, furthering their burden.

To resolve these problems, the school should cut most ineffective, single-day field trips in favor of larger, once-in-a-lifetime field trips.

At the very least, big trips do provide value to the educational system. In place of smaller field trips, the school should focus on implementing cost effective learning opportunities within the school, such as speaker assemblies or bigger in-class projects. ♦

Law starting school later will not improve teenagers' lives

BY AllenLuo & AlanZu

California legislators recently passed a bill that was signed into law by the Gov. Gavin Newsom on Oct. 14, pushing back start times for both high schools and middle schools. Middle schools are required to start after 8 a.m. and high schools are required to start class at 8:30 a.m. or later starting in 2022.

Supporters of the law claim that it will not only help students sleep more but also be more productive and have better mental

health.

Because students are more awake and productive from 9 to 10 a.m., supporters argue that the current school start has a 45-minute gap when students are not productive. They argue that students can be more productive early by having schools start later.

These arguments ignore the way teens really live their lives.

Regardless of the shift in school schedule, teens will still spend the same amount of time to complete homework and other activities.

Sports will take the same amount of time, regardless of the schedule shifting. Student athletes need to practice a certain amount of time each day, often two hours or more. Pushing school start times back would also have to push sports end times back, making students arrive home much later.

Other activities also cannot shorten their time commitments: Robotics needs enough time to prototype and assemble their robot, drama needs enough time to rehearse for the play and paint the background and the marching band needs enough time to practice together to prepare for competitions.

Shifting the school schedule back won't cut away time for other activities; instead, it will just move extracurriculars back later in the day — and keep students up later at night.

The result is students sleeping in later than they originally would, perhaps causing more sleep loss than if the bill wasn't passed. At the very least, they won't be getting more sleep.

Legislators should have better things to do than mandate school start times. If they really want to help teens, they should tackle issues such as reducing homework loads. ♦

Seniors should maintain integrity in their college essays

BY AnnaNovoselov

Looking over the red suggestions covering the rough draft of one of my UC personal insight questions, I grimaced: I sounded like a self-congratulatory middle-aged man. The writing flowed eloquently, weaving complex words in intricate sentence structures while maintaining a clear and consistent structure. It sounded mature. It sounded insightful. But it just wasn't me.

Hoping to receive feedback on my most important essays, like the common app personal statement and the UC personal insight questions, I called a college tutor recommended by my mother's friend, who offered to edit a couple paragraphs I had written to illustrate his services. I agreed and emailed him a preliminary draft of a UC essay.

In the PDF he sent back to me, he highlighted my need for better organization and a clearer response to the prompt, so I revised

my essay taking that into consideration. Besides that, he included possible topic sentences for each paragraph and added specific phrases inside the text.

But I didn't want someone else to write my essays for me. I want colleges to accept me rather than a posed version compiled by someone else. As a result, I chose not to accept most of the revisions.

Writing the personal insight questions is arguably the most challenging part of college applications. The essays often require a style of narrative writing not emphasized in many schools. Students struggle to compel readers with vivid details without overdoing the flair as well as to attain a balance between staying humble and bragging, all the while adhering to the often limiting word counts.

The essays are one of the only components of college applications that allow admissions officers to personally connect with

students. They showcase the applicants' thought processes, illustrate their passions and convey significant life experiences, helping colleges distinguish between individuals who may have similar GPAs, SAT/ACT scores and extracurriculars.

According to HuffPost, the weight placed on college essays differs among institutions, but most admissions officers perform a holistic review of the entire application, with the essays composing a critical part of the whole. When asked how important they are, most reviewers say that "it depends" or that "it's complicated." Many also say that the essays are their favorite parts of an application.

While glowing essays alone won't help a mediocre student get into Ivy League schools, they can certainly boost an application. Thus, it makes sense why anxious students revise them over and over again, trying to attain perfection.

I began working with a different col-

lege essay tutor, who offers me suggestions for how to improve and general comments, pointing out clichés and moments where I sounds "like a college informational brochure" or a "dramatic romance novel author." Lessons are a conversation rather than a series of instructions.

Afterward, I revise my essays independently. Every sentence is my own and I decide how to structure my writing and what specific elements to emphasize. While they may not be perfect, at least they are my own voice.

Although college essays can certainly be stressful, students from families who are able to afford counseling should maintain integrity and submit their own writing, rather than something written and polished by experienced adults.

The joy of being accepted to a college — or the pain of being rejected — would be more genuine as a result. ♦

Queens Pumpkin Patch: fun for fall



FALCON BY ANOUK YEH

Reporters visit the different attractions offered at the annual pumpkin patch on Saratoga Avenue, including the new paddle boats (top), the pumpkins displayed for sale (bottom left) and the petting zoo (bottom right).

dumb and dumber

Apurva Chakravarthy & Anouk Yeh

Every year throughout the first week of September, the empty lot across from Inter Real Estate Services on Saratoga Avenue transforms into a beautifully decorated pumpkin patch. Filled with enough activities to warrant many hours spent there, the Saratoga's Queens Pumpkin Patch has a lot more to offer than just pumpkins.

The pumpkin patch is split into different sections, including a petting zoo, a water games zone, a crafts and concessions booth and the actual pumpkin patch.

At first arrival, there weren't many people there. It is important to note that we went on Monday afternoon, and Saturdays and Sundays will likely be a lot more crowded. However, while teenagers might feel a little out-of-place amid the many families there, the activities offered are perfectly suited for any age level to enjoy.

After much consideration, we decided to hit the petting zoo first. The zoo was filled with many adorable farm animals, including bunnies, goats, rabbits and chicks. All the animals seemed well taken-care of and were all surprisingly friendly.

There, we were able to have a nice conversation with Shelley Williams, a worker at the patch. Williams is originally from Oregon, but came down to California with her two children to work at the patch. Williams told us that the animals would all be up for adoption after the season.

Admission to the zoo was free and it overall guarantees a good time, especially for animal lovers. The only downside to the experience was Pepper, a sweet bunny, got a little excited and ended up peeing on Anouk.

After hanging out with the animals, we spent some time at the water game stations. The two main games were the hamster balls

and the paddle boats, which both cost \$8 for 10 minutes of playtime.

We were feeling adventurous (and spend-thrifty), so we decided to pay and take a spin on the paddle boats. Although the pool for the paddle boats wasn't very large, we still ended up having a lot of fun racing from one end of the four yard pool to the other.

Although the high price for only 10 minutes was a downside, overall it was great and we loved chatting with the workers.

After our time on the paddle boats, we decided to retire to the concessions booth. The booth had a nice array of classic carnival snacks, including popcorn and cotton candy. We decided to go old-school with one of our snacks and buy a stick of cotton candy, while for the next one we stuck to a sweet familiarity and bought an ice cream bar. Both snacks tasted fairly good and were decently priced.

After letting our stomachs recover from the bombardment of sugary concessions, we decided to walk around the actual pumpkin patch. The patch had an impressive variety of pumpkins to choose from, everything from traditional smooth orange pumpkins to twisty and freckled gourds. The prices of the pumpkins were fairly reasonable, ranging from \$2 to \$35. The wide variety ensures that any prospective pumpkin buyer will take home a pumpkin they love.

After we finished surveying the pumpkins, we walked back to the concessions area to rate the experience overall. The score ended up being a 4.5 out of five Falcons, the only negative factor being the high cost of the games. We left the pumpkin patch, with our craving for fall festivities satisfied and wallets emptied.

In order to enjoy the patch like we did, one must go through the full experience step by step. Start with the petting zoo, and then cool off with a water game. Then, buy a snack from the concessions stand. Finally, end your magical experience by picking up a pumpkin or two.

Overall, we enjoyed all the activities that the patch has to offer. We would recommend this to anyone who is looking to spend an afternoon filled with fall fun. ♦

7 Leaves Cafe worth trying, despite location

brallen chwang

Allen Chen & Brandon Wang



Deep in the heart of car dealership country, the employees of 7 Leaves Cafe ply their trade to ambient electro-swing and the chatter of college students.

Given the high demand for milk tea in the area, more tea shops are always welcome. We headed out to San Jose to determine if 7 Leaves is worthy of joining T-Pumps and TeaSpoon in the S-Tier of Saratoga tea places.

Yeah, it is. The atmosphere was cozy and the drinks were well made and not too expensive, and the regular and large size prices of around \$4 and \$5 match typical tea shops in the area. But this would be a very short story if we just left it at that, so we will elaborate.

Having not gone before, we had no idea what to get, and the whole seven minutes we spent in the line was not enough for us to decide. We ordered a Taro Milk Tea and a Mung Bean Milk Tea, which arrived very quickly.

Drinking the purple Taro Milk Tea felt (as drinking taro drinks often feel), a bit like being suffocated. In comparison to the taro milk teas of other stores it was surprisingly bearable. Despite being a very heavy drink, it didn't feel overwhelming

even in a large cup. The balance between the starchy taste of the taro and the more delicate flavor of the tea gave the drink an interesting depth.

The Mung Bean Milk Tea, on the other hand, was a very unique item that came as a strikingly bright and verdant color. In terms of taste, it also stood out from other milk teas, incorporating the earthiness of mung bean. However, it suffered from also incorporating the tendency of boiled mung beans to form a powdery sludge that coalesced at the bottom of the cup. It's definitely a drink worth trying exactly once.

Unfortunately, we did not get coffee, their signature item, a failure that prompted a second visit. This was solely for the sake of journalistic integrity, and not because we just wanted drinks.

The House Coffee, at \$3.95 for a regular and \$4.70 for a large, is easily the best item that we tried, and that's coming from two people that honestly don't even like coffee all that much. It is definitely more of a frappuccino than a cappuccino, so if you like your coffee as black as the gaping void in your soul, you probably won't be a fan. But, if you're looking for a sweeter, less nihilistic drink, this is the one for you.

Do beware, though, of the overwhelming amount of ice and salt cream on top. The coffee disappears within minutes, leaving what looked, as observed by senior and expert coffee connoisseur Alvin Liu, like some diced potatoes. For a more bearable ice-to-coffee ratio, get the large.

We also picked up the Thai Milk Tea while we were there (journalistic integrity, again). In terms of taste, it was strong, having the signature combination of multiple flavors that makes a good Thai Milk Tea, but it was a bit too thick without ice. If you plan to get this drink, grab a cup of water as well, or just accept that sometimes you need to have ice in your drinks.

The service was very fast; we got two Thai teas and a House Coffee in two minutes or so. However, the shop is small and not accustomed to dealing with large crowds: even 10 people was enough to cause a long line to form. One can only imagine the nightmare that is peak hour.

More importantly, the lighting, cups, succulents, furniture and even the ever-present Gandhi quote "be the change you wish to see" are all photogenic enough for Instagram.

For the avid money-spender, 7 Leaves also offers macarons and customized Hydro Flasks. We, being broke high schoolers, were unable to sample either of these two items; our journalistic integrity was not strong enough for them.

Perhaps the worst part about this tea shop is the location. It is 20 minutes or so down Saratoga Avenue, much farther away from school than a lot of its competitors. Also, being across the street from a casino and surrounded by car dealerships, the atmosphere of impulsive capitalism is a little soul-crushing.

Still, we give it a solid four out of five Falcons. ♦



GRAPHIC BY JESSICA WANG



FALCON // JESSICA WANG

Jonathan Zhao: experimenting with accessories

By Brandon Wang

Fashion can evoke many images, ranging from high-end department stores with \$1,000 outfits to meticulous contemplation late at night or in the early mornings selecting the perfect combination of clothes from a whole closet of options.

For senior Jonathan Zhao, though, fashion is a lot more down-to-earth. Outfits need to be comfortable, not too ostentatious and, most importantly, a means for him to express himself aside from just looking good.

"If you're hanging out with friends, you can start experimenting," Zhao said. "It's fun and it's creative and you get to express yourself. As long as it isn't too over the top and as long as it isn't bland, it's fine."

But for a long time, Zhao admits he did not care too much about style.

It was only last winter, after he had watched some fashion videos on YouTube and got interested in them that he had a realization: "If I start wearing clothes that look good, that'll just make me look a lot better."

While at school, Zhao tends to stick to humbler outfits that do not "stand out too much," and he especially enjoys wearing Adidas clothing, which is both common and comfortable.

Besides Adidas, Zhao also wears a lot of Nike clothing.

ing. He also owns some pieces from more expensive brands such as shoes from Guess and belts from Gucci and Louis Vuitton but does not wear those much, since "it's too much of a flex."

Zhao's style involves more than just clothes. He follows trends in shoes and other more minor parts of a wardrobe.

"Hats, belts, shoes, stuff like those are the customizable stuff that you change everyday," Zhao said. "That's how you can truly express yourself: through like those small things, and it's really nice."

Personally, Zhao said that he likes wearing accessories that are thinner and that stand out less, because they are "still a flex" but not "out there." For example, he said he would not wear a belt with a giant buckle.

Zhao also dyed his hair over the summer, something he has wanted to do for a long time. The eventual catalyst for him was his friends wanting to dye their hair as well.

However, Zhao ran into many difficulties with maintaining his new hairstyle. For one, dyeing is expensive, and especially so since Zhao and his friends did not dye their hair themselves.

Adding to the difficulty is his participation in cross country, which means he washes his hair frequently, which prevents him from recoloring his hair.

In general, Zhao said, his style is greatly influenced by his friends, especially fellow senior Alex Taylor, and athletes and other celebrities on social media.

Looking forward, Zhao said that he expects to continue to "go with the flow."

"Of course," Zhao said, "fashion's going to change in the future, so I'm probably not going to stick with that. Who knows? I might just try something new and different." ♦



Courtesy of ALEX TAYLOR

Alex Taylor: sustainable fall fashion

By Megan Chen & Andy Chen

Despite spending under \$5 for each article of clothing he wears, senior Alex Taylor manages to rock his unique outfits with more flair than most others. With a majority of his clothes coming from thrift shops like Savers, which he especially recommends, Taylor works to modify and match different outfits until he deems them worthy of wearing.

Taylor first experienced the joys of thrifting the summer after his freshman year, while shopping with his sister. Since then, his experiences have continued to inspire him to "make a statement" through his unique sense of fashion.

"Thrifting isn't just easy on the wallet; Taylor likes that it's sustainable, as opposed to what he refers to as fast fashion "deathtraps." Fast fashion franchises like H&M, Zara and Urban Outfitters have a fashion show every week, with new styles and looks. Taylor dislikes that these companies use so many resources and charge so little for their products.

"It's insane," Taylor said. "Do you know how much actually goes into making a T-shirt? It took me four weeks to learn how to make a T-shirt and I still don't quite have it yet."

With thrifting, Taylor can also find expensive, name-brand clothes for amazing deals.

"I found the shirt I'm wearing right now at a thrift store for \$17. When I checked the tag and it said Yves St. Laurent, I cried. This is probably worth like \$300, but I got it for \$17," Taylor said.

While he has a lot of

clothes, Taylor tends to stick to pieces that are under \$5. He tends to prioritize different styles during the seasons, as in the fall, he usually favors duller, earthy colors, while in the summer, he favors vibrant colors.

"My essentials include all my pants, yes, all my pants are essentials," Taylor said. "I'm not a huge fan of ripped jeans, but I do love contrast stitching and patchwork."

Although he tries to make a bold statement sometimes, Taylor also tries to keep his clothing items simple. At the time of his interview, his outfit consisted of a creme, oversized button-up shirt with, despite its lack of pattern, a pair of Dockers pants, a belt and Air Jordans with red and white laces.

"The outfit I'm wearing right now makes a simple, loud statement," Taylor said. "It's clearly too big for me, so in a way it's loud. I also love these Dockers pants because they have a little pleat down the side, and it just looks so cute."

Taylor encourages those trying to find a sense of fashion to shop at thrift stores like Savers, Buffalo Exchange and Bows and Arrows. Physical stores are a little inconvenient to go to, so Taylor mostly shops online using Depop, an online shopping app targeting people in the fashion community.

"I also go to Nordstrom Rack a lot, a surprising amount, just looking for garbage," Taylor said.

Style is an essential part of Taylor's life, and he admits that he devotes at least 20 minutes every morning putting on an outfit together, regardless of whether he gets to school on time.

"I love having a cheap outfit that looks fire, looks amazing and just [makes me feel] like a whole new person," he said. "It's like a costume. Every day, you're a different person, dressing up as a different side of your personality." ♦



FALCON // JESSICA WANG

THE STUDENT STYLE OCTOBER SHOWCASES INDIVIDUALITY ISSUE

Nicole Chen: pieces inspired by designers

By Tiffany Wang

Senior Nicole Chen, who currently attends the district's Middle College program at West Valley College, enjoys the 30 minutes to an hour she spends getting ready every day for school. She loves to carefully pick out her outfits and do her makeup each morning.

To her, clothing is an "object for the body" and also a way of looking at the world, however absurd it may be.

"Clothes are a way to personally express myself," she said. "They represent my attitude for the day."

Initially, Chen said she became interested in fashion because it gave her more confidence and security. Soon, she started further exploring the industry, intrigued by the glamour of it and its abundance of styles to explore.

She loves to follow fashion designers such as Alexander McQueen, who used to design for Givenchy, and Rei Kawakubo, the founder of Comme des Garçons, because they all viewed fashion through an artistic and philosophical perspective. Her favorite brands, including Comme des Garçons and Maison Margiela, inspire her to create outfits of similar styles, but not as expensive.

"I think my style is more edgy and unique because I love combining different elements, and I don't usually follow trends," she said.

Hence, she gets her clothes from all over the place, including vintage stores, Urban Outfitters and Zara. In addition, most of her clothes are usually oversized and unisex. She also wears a lot of black, as she believes that black will never go out of style.

This summer, Chen furthered her love for fashion by learning how to create clothing for herself. She attended a three-week course called "Fashion: Construction and Sewing" at the Parsons School of Art and Design. During the last week of the course, she was required to design a portfolio and create one original piece from it for her final project.

"I got my inspiration from the trash on the streets in New York City," she said. "I was concerned about the environmental impact of so much litter, so I made a jacket that mimicked the look of a trash bag."

For the project, she was required to create everything from scratch, whether it was sketching the designs by hand or buying specific types of fabric. Because her piece was about trash, she tried to use as little waste as possible while creating her it.

The whole process took about four to five days, from designing the collection to picking materials and sewing everything together.

"It was very challenging and I barely got any sleep, but finishing it was very satisfying," she said.

The result was a cross between a shirt and jacket. One side was white and had a big pocket resembling a trash bag. The other side was black and accented with grey tweed fabric on the collar and sleeves.

At the program, Chen was able to learn many sewing and designing skills and connect with others who also share the same passion as her.

"I discovered how much I love doing anything for fashion despite the pain and challenges," she said.

In the future, Chen plans to pursue fashion design as a career. She wants to explore everything about it, including fashion design and photography.

"I'm never tired of learning more about this field of art and design," she said. ♦



Courtesy of NICOLE CHEN

Nicole Chen with her top that she designed at Parsons last summer.

Jacqueline Lo: confidence in statement

By Marisa Kingsley

Senior Jacqueline Lo's fashion profile isn't easy to categorize. She might grab her dad's gray sweater and pair it with a belt from her mom. Whatever she does, it seems to work.

Lo's interest in fashion began freshman year, when she realized that she could wear clothing to express her confidence in a novel way. She shifted her wardrobe from "all black" to include more varied, colorful pieces.

"For me it's a way of expressing my confidence because I used to feel really uncomfortable in just short sleeves," Lo said. "When I put on a nice outfit that I feel really good about, I come to school feeling better than normal."

Lo often finds the most inspiring pieces to not be from her own closet — but from her family.

She doesn't go out and shop for clothes often, and finds that wearing her family's clothes offers her a variety of ensembles without the added money or time.

Not only does she wear clothes from her older sister and mom, but she also utilizes her dad and grandparents' clothes as well. Her grandparents' blazers are some of her statement pieces.

Lo's favorites are her dad's oversized blazers and sweaters. Although the blazers are often the ones her dad no longer wears, Lo said that they look "much more upscale" than anything she can

buy with her own money.

Additionally, she believes that oversized clothes are much more functional and easy to pull off compared to tighter-fitting pieces.

"Even when [the clothes] don't initially fit right, a good belt makes everything look more put together," Lo said.

Lo doesn't give any certain label to her style; instead, she wears whatever pieces make her feel most confident and comfortable, but also allow her to be original. Although she often wears her family members' clothes, Lo considers her style to be a blend of theirs.

Frequently, Lo pairs one of her parents' more formal pieces — such as a blazer or belt — and dresses it down with jeans or sneakers, which allows her to feel more comfortable while maintaining some formality.

Ultimately, she doesn't see much of a difference between her own style and the style of her peers. But she admits that she does stand out sometimes because of her mix-and-match approach.

"At the end of the day, I feel like I took a tiny step out of my comfort zone, [which] makes me feel more confident about myself," Lo said. ♦



ALL GRAPHICS BY JESSICA WANG AND EMILIE ZHOU

entertainment

The Saratoga Falcon
October 18, 2019

Indian gurus impart life lessons and skills

In a performance last year called Nartana Mallika, senior Siyona Suresh, who was wearing a rich purple and orange skirt style dress embroidered with a silk gold border, tapped her feet on the wooden floor while her bells jingled. She concentrated on keeping her upper torso fixed and legs bent out. The pleats of her dress opened out beautifully like a fan while she performed various movements.

To the casual observer, the dance looked effortless. It wasn't. It was the result of nine years of studying and intensive work learning Bharatanatyam and Mohiniyattam, two traditional Indian classical dances, from her dance guru (teacher), Bindu Prasad. Dance, Suresh says, has helped her stay physically fit and happy and has taught her discipline and perseverance.

One of the things that makes Suresh enjoy dance so much is her relationship with her guru, who do everything they can to help their students reach their goals.

"My guru is extremely driven and a perfectionist," Suresh said. "She has hundreds of students but is still able to treat every one of her students like they are her own children. I greatly admire that about her."

Suresh also attends workshops by other gurus from India, including the respected Madurai R. Muralidharan and Dr. Neena Prasad. Suresh also earned a junior degree in dance by taking a test with a university in India that is affiliated with the Silicon Andhra University in the U.S.

Without dance, Suresh said she would not be the same person. She plans to continue to dance through college because it's a part of her identity.

Her dance career also includes experiences that have taught her perseverance and discipline. For example, for multiple performances, in order to rehearse, Suresh had to wake up at 5 a.m. Her dance school did a show called Nartana Mallika that raised funds for the flooding in Kerala, India. She performed seven dances for the production

and was extremely busy with rehearsals. "We had rehearsal one weekday night at the studio that had started at around 5 p.m., and we danced until about 1 a.m.," Suresh said. "I had tests the next day to study for and homework to do, but at that moment, I forgot about all of it, and it was amazing that even though we were all very tired from dancing for hours, we were all present in the moment doing something we loved together."

After years of learning, Suresh plans to do her arangetram, a debut on-stage performance, guided by her guru. Many Indian classical dance forms perform an arangetram following years of training. Typically, an arangetram lasts around three hours. To perform for such a stretch with few breaks, dancers must have extremely good stamina, concentration, and focus.

In the U.S., the cost to plan and organize an arangetram can range from \$20,000 to \$40,000.

It is usually paid for by the student or their family. Suresh plans to do her arangetram in late May, and her parents will be flying in an orchestra from India. The cost of hers will be roughly \$30,000.

"Though the process has just started, she can already tell it will be very difficult. The experience of planning an arangetram has been very new and at some points stressful," Suresh said. "Additionally, finding time to be able to practice and gain stamina during this stressful first semester with college applications has been a challenge as well."

Though this task might be extremely difficult, she knows after years of lessons that dance has shaped her into a much more confident and graceful person. ♦ — by Shama Gupta & Kaasha Mimocha



Suresh

Chinese styles proliferate

Dressed in brilliant red, sophomore Kristina Meier leapt, the fabric of her costume billowing around her during her solo performance, "Moonlight Valentine." The Chinese dance, which earned her seventh place in the Showstopper regional dance competition in San Mateo last year, told a story of Chinese culture.

Meier began learning traditional Chinese dance when she was 8 years old. Although Meier had already trained in American dance for four years, Meier's mother wanted her to try something new and sent Meier to a Chinese studio.

Having learned dance for 11 years, Meier regularly participates in a variety of regional and national competitions, like the Kids Artistic Revenue (KAR) competition and the In10sity Dance competition. Last year, she even traveled to San Francisco for the international Star USA competition, placing third in her age group. For Chinese New Year, Meier also performed in a theater in San Francisco, which was broadcast in China.

Still, for her accomplishing these feats was no walk in the park. Meier, who estimates that she trains for hours most days, said she has come across several physical and mental roadblocks through her movements that resemble galloping, an allusion to the Mongols.

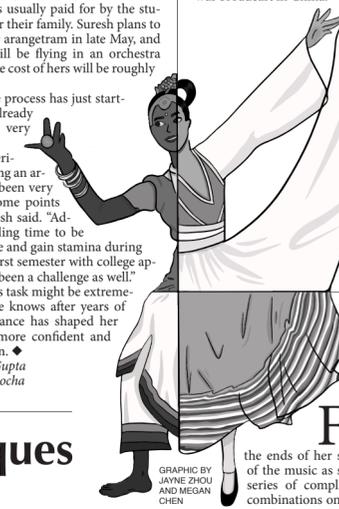
"Doing Chinese dance really helps me learn about different Chinese customs and traditions," Meier said. "Each dance has a different story, and it's cool to be able to tell a story or a Chinese myth through dance."

"Moonlight Valentine" told the tragic story of a fox goddess who fell in love with an immortal man. Bringing these stories to life gives Meier room for creativity while uniting her with Chinese culture, she said.

"Being able to learn these types of traditional dances in a way helps me learn the history behind each of them and gives me a better understanding of Chinese culture," Meier said. ♦ — by Kaitlyn Tsai



Meier



GRAPHIC BY JAYNE ZHOU AND MEGAN CHEN

Mexican Folklore connects dancers

Freshman Magdalena Mendoza said that the most complicated part of performing folklore is keeping track of all the different dance styles that pertain to different regions in Mexico.

"It's super stressful when you also need to remember sets for different regions," Mendoza said. "Right now, I have a show in November and I have to remember three regions' [dance styles]. Each of these regions has about three to four songs."

Despite the challenges, Mendoza has already proved herself to be highly skilled for her age, due to her early start in the art form.

When she goes to folklore dance conventions, she is usually paired into dance groups above her age level.

"I have never danced [at the convention] with people my age because I am advanced for my age. Sometimes [people] ask me if I am 18 or 17 when I am only a 14-year-old dancing with the adults," she said.

She explained that folklore has also helped her connect with a lot of people from the same cultural background — people she would not have met otherwise. One of her most memorable performances occurred when she first got to perform with folklore dancers from different states and different countries.

Although her folklore team only dances at performances as of right now, Mendoza is hoping to expand her folklore experience from just performative to also competitive.

"I love dancing because it's a part of my culture, and my teammates are like my second family," she said. "I want to share this beautiful culture through dance." ♦ — by Shama Gupta & Anouk Yeh

Last April, Mendoza traveled to Fresno to perform alongside folklore dancers from around the world. Folklore is a traditional style of Mexican dance. It involves intricate footwork, cultural music and brightly colored Jalisco dresses.

"[It's a type of] traditional Mexican dance that de-emphasizes folk techniques and focuses more on ballet characteristics — pointed toes and exaggerated movements," Mendoza said.

Mendoza started dancing folklore at a young age and has now been dancing for a decade.

Currently, she trains and performs as the youngest member of the folklore dance group "Grupo Viva mi Tierra," which is based in downtown San Jose. The group performs four to five times a month at different local and state-wide conventions or festivals.

Through their shows, the group aims to educate audiences about "the great multicultural diversity that Mexicans have," according to the group's Facebook page.



Mendoza

Avoid the third season of '13 Reasons Why'

by Leo Cao

Season 3 of Netflix's "13 Reasons Why" attempts to move on from the content of Jay Asher's novel. This effort is a failure.

The first season of the series tells the story of Hannah Baker (played by Katherine Langford), a 16-year-old girl who commits suicide. She leaves behind a set of 13 cassette tapes for the 13 classmates that she blames for her death. Many argue that the first season glorified and promoted simple explanations of suicidal behavior, such as the quick and clean scene depicting Hannah cutting herself with a razor blade, which critics faulted for glorifying the act.

Too often the show starts in a compelling direction and then immediately veers off into a lazy portrayal of serious issues.

Season 2 tries to move away from the controversy surrounding the depiction of suicide, but it fails. It continues to explore the difficult truths and real issues that teenagers face, such as the protagonist Clay's (played by Dylan Minnette) oxycodone addiction.

Season 3 is less controversial. It steers away from a romanticized depiction of suicide. But it insists on exploring serious real-life topics, such as Tyler's (played by Devin Druid) threatened shooting spree at a school dance, in extreme detail, while failing to adequately research the topics.

The latest season is essentially a murder mystery. Hannah's rapist, a rich sociopath named Bryce Walker (played by Justin Prentice) is dead. He was a serial rapist and many of the main characters wanted him dead, including the protagonist Clay (played by

Dylan Minnette) who developed a crush on Hannah when she was alive. Due to this, Clay becomes a suspect for Bryce's murder. In order to prove his own innocence, he has to find the real killer.

This sounds like a potentially interesting storyline — it is unique and allows the audience to root for the murderer.

As promising as it is, however, the season ends up being extremely slow paced, filled with repetitive scenes of sad teenagers crying about problems such as drug addiction, deported parents and college scholarships. The episodes essentially rotate among these.

There are very brief moments that remind the audience why portraying teenagers' real problems can pay off. One episode shows the process that Bryce's ex-girlfriend goes through to get an abortion. The procedure included going to a pregnancy crisis center to help her pay for the procedure, running into protestors outside the clinic and returning to the center after a mandatory two-day waiting period. The process of abortion is rarely depicted on television and is worth laying out in detail.

Too often the show starts in a compelling direction and then immediately veers off into a lazy portrayal of serious issues.

For example, the series develops the storyline of Tyler, the school shooter, emphasizing how he was raped and pushed to his limit by bullying. This follows a common myth about the profile of a school shooter, and contains no factual basis. In real life, shooters are made up of many types of profiles. They don't have to be outcasts; even the Columbine shooters had an active circle of friends.

The lackadaisical depiction of controversial issues makes the plot unpleasant and even dangerous, giving teens an inaccurate perception of the issues. In fact, there is little reason for the show to exist anymore. The "13 Reasons Why" storyline has been exhausted, and there is nowhere left for it to go. Sadly, it will be back for a final season next year. ♦

VR to take off in planes

by Oliver Ye

From providing complimentary blankets to installing screen TVs to providing free Wi-Fi, airline companies are constantly seeking to streamline and enhance the experience of their passengers. With the improvement and increased use of Virtual Reality headsets and apps, airline companies, such as Iberia and British Airways, are testing VR headsets as a way to entertain the passengers or ease the discomfort that often comes with flying.

The headsets, designed by Inflight VR, debuted Feb. 18 on Iberia routes between Madrid, New York and Tel Aviv, and enabled viewers to experience two and three-dimensional content.

According to an interview Forbes magazine conducted with Nikolas Jaeger, the founder and managing director of Inflight VR, the virtual reality system that British Airways is testing, the new system has the potential to "change the air passenger experience as a part of the in-flight entertainment program."

"The viewer is no longer a mere observer, but can take a stroll in the city he or she will be visiting, or simply relax before arriving at the destination," said Jaeger.

Similarly, Alaska Airlines paired up with SkyLights, another VR inflight system, to provide the trial as a new form of entertainment for its first-class customers.

In contrast to the focus on entertainment, British Airways is marketing its VR headsets as calming, explaining that the headsets would come with a "select range of therapeutic programs, including guided meditation and sound therapy specifically designed for customers who have a fear of flying."

In addition to being a novel experience for fliers, the VR headsets are also significantly lighter and more energy efficient

than seat-back TVs, which may save airlines fuel and energy.

All of this is great, in theory, but in order for VR technology to be successfully implemented on flights, there are a series of daunting hurdles that must be overcome.

For example, airlines must figure out how to store the bulky headsets on flights. In addition, since the headsets have a lifespan of approximately 4 hours, utilizing VR may prove to be an impractical plan for transcontinental flights. Especially given the short battery life of the VR headsets, the problem of charging may be especially challenging.

In addition, another potential challenge is dealing with broken headsets. If the staff come across a defective headset, they can just throw it out. They can't do this with costly \$200 VR headsets.

At first glance, it seems completely impractical to use Virtual Reality on airplanes — it combines the potentially nauseating experience of flying with another nauseating experience that is also bulky, clumsy, jolting every time the airplane hits a pocket of turbulence. For this reason, SkyLights is currently only offering fixed view movies in 2D and 3D, while they are developing solutions to combat nausea. However, 95 percent of passengers who tried the SkyLights headset said they were satisfied; in fact, over half of testers said they would consider buying a SkyLights device for personal use outside the aircraft.

It seems difficult to imagine a future in which an airplane would be filled with individuals with VR devices strapped to their foreheads; for now, I can only imagine a horde of overexcited children wildly flailing their arms everywhere while attempting to protect their virtual castle from make-believe dragons. ♦



Ethiopian techniques evoke nostalgia

Eight years ago, when senior Berdie Bailey was 9 years old, she moved from Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, to Saratoga. While she misses her birthplace, she connects to her roots through Ethiopian dance.

"It's from my hometown so every time I do it, I feel like I'm awake and having fun and enjoying it," she said.

Bailey learned many moves from her friends in Ethiopia and every time she dances, she remembers the fun memories that they shared. She remembers playing soccer outside with them, running around and laughing and of course, dancing together.

When Bailey first moved to America, she took lessons from a friend for a year, but stopped when she began focusing more on sports and other commitments.

Now, she enjoys dancing at home with friends, coming up with her own moves and watching Ethiopian dance videos and copying the motions. She said that dancing helps her relax and loosen up, since she dances simply for fun.

Although she doesn't take lessons from a professional or perform, she does occasionally post videos of her dancing to her Instagram account: ethio_20.

She doesn't have a specific schedule or a theme; besides that, she also posts pictures

of her and her siblings. Bailey turns on Ethiopian music "whenever she feels like it." She enjoys that most of the music is lively and upbeat.

"It makes you move your body a lot," she said. "When you listen to the music you just want to move and start dancing."

She dances two or more times a week, or when she wants to unwind. "There's no certain way you dance or certain way you don't," she said. "It's whatever you make it. You have fun with it."

Ethiopian dance has many different styles such as Eskista, Bailey's favorite, which is characterized by rolling and bouncing the shoulders and moving the neck side to side. Another style, Tigrigna, involves moving around in a circular pattern slowly.

While Bailey draws inspiration from these styles, she also incorporates motions that she comes up with herself.

She said she doesn't feel any expectations for herself when she dances; she simply has fun with the movements. Dancing serves as an outlet for whatever she's feeling whether it be sadness, excitement or anger.

"When I dance, I don't need to think about my problems," she said. "I just get lost in the music and the movement. Dancing for me is like freedom." ♦ — by Anna Novoselov



Bailey

San Jose's Tigres Del Norte honored by community

by Marisa Kingsley

On Sept. 13, Sam Liccardo, mayor of San Jose, CA, gifted the key to the city — one of the city's highest honors and token of gratitude — to local band Tigres Del Norte (Tigers of the North) for their support of organizations including the Services, Immigrant Rights and Education Network (SI-REN), and longtime advocacy for the rights of immigrants.

At the ceremony, councilwoman Magdalena Carrasco was one of many who praised the band.

"These brothers and musicians are the epitome of success, and to us here in San Jose, they are our hometown heroes," Carrasco said.

Los Tigres Del Norte is made up of brothers Jorge Hernández (lead vocals, accordion), Hernán Hernández (bass, vocals), Eduardo Hernández (accordion, saxophone, bass, vocals), Luis Hernández (bajo quinto, vocals) and their cousin Oscar Lara (drums). Together, they've been creating norteño music — a genre originating from Northern Mexico — for over 40 years, selling over 40 million albums worldwide.

Considered to be Mexico's version of the Beatles, they have recorded over 500 songs on 60 albums

and accumulated many awards, including the Latin Recording Academy's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2007, seven Grammys and a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

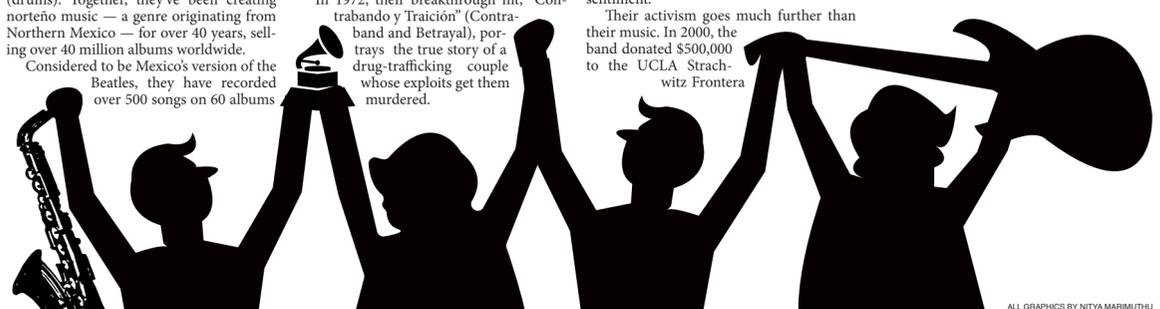
Their success did not come easily, however. The band faced a plethora of obstacles as they fought for recognition.

The band took up residence in the east San Jose in 1967, initially making music as a means to earn money for their family in their hometown of Rosa Morada, Sinaloa, MX, after their father could no longer work.

The band was only recognized locally until the 1970s. However, that quickly changed once they became the first band signed to Fama Records, a label conceived by Art Walker, who heard the band on a live radio presentation recorded in San Jose.

Under Walker's guidance, the band developed a modern, more electric sound, along with a refined approach to songwriting which highlighted the social motifs that were common to Mexican-Americans.

In 1972, their breakthrough hit, "Contrabando y Traición" (Contraband and Betrayal), portrays the true story of a drug-trafficking couple whose exploits get them murdered.



ALL GRAPHICS BY NITYA MARIMUTHU

JUNIOR NEEYA DEVANAGONDI: her comedian uncle reflects on his relationship with fame

by Anna Novoselov & Harshini Velchamy

Lilly Singh, also known as IISuperwoman11, held up a peace sign while saying hi to Neeya Devanagondi in a prerecorded video in 2017 as Devanagondi stared at the screen, stunned that her uncle, Indian comedian Tammy Bhat had collaborated with someone so famous.

The next year, Devanagondi had the privilege of talking to Indian comedian Hasan Minhaj over the phone when her uncle was visiting her family.

Devanagondi said she felt really lucky, since she is a huge fan of Minhaj and a close follower of his work.

"I was so excited," Devanagondi said. "I didn't know what to say. It wasn't like I wanted to talk to him because I knew that he was famous; I was a huge fan of his work beforehand."

But even though her uncle is well known, Devanagondi said that he remains humble and hasn't let his fame go to his head.

While Bhat is not internationally famous, he is an influential figure in the Indian comedy industry and has partnered with Netflix and interacted with many celebrities like Minhaj and Singh. Bhat also met former First Lady and New York Senator Hillary Clinton at a UN conference and several Bollywood stars, with whom he had brief, casual conversations.

Bhat, now 32, said that when he was new to fame in his early 20s, he felt pressured to impress people more famous than him. Now, he has a "healthier relationship with

fame" and feels indifferent, instead preferring to spend time with his close friends who aren't famous.

"I think there is an element of performance that is always on when you interact with famous people, especially in a public setting," Bhat said in an email interview. "Largely due to the constant scrutiny, I find myself not being entirely honest around famous people."

Bhat began his career by co-founding the podcast "All India Bakshod" in 2012, which became a comedy group in 2013 and a creative agency in 2015. His rise to fame began when he started writing jokes on Twitter and hosting open mic nights.

But his popularity skyrocketed when he began posting comedy sketches and parodies on his YouTube channel in January 2012, enabling him to reach a wider audience. Currently, his channel has 3.58 million subscribers and more than 422 million views.

Reflecting on his rise to fame, Bhat said he didn't face many difficulties. However, after he gained recognition, media attention has proven overwhelming at times.

"Being constantly scrutinized for every action or word you speak was very challenging since a part of being a comedian is constantly experimenting with your audience, and sometimes your experiment could fail," Bhat said. "Most people have bad days at work, but a bad day for a comedian means being lynched mobbed online for making a tasteless joke."

Bhat added that he has an unhealthy relationship with validation from others, which

he only realized after gaining fame.

"Finding deeper meaning in life becomes a challenge when your life revolves around being a public figure and having an opinion on everything," he said. "You start to believe that the universe revolves around you — but in actuality, it doesn't."

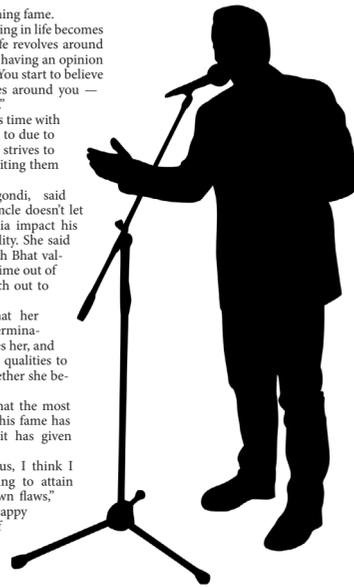
While Bhat spends less time with his relatives than he used to due to a busy work schedule, he strives to maintain ties through visiting them as often as possible.

His niece, Devanagondi, said that she likes how her uncle doesn't let the pressure of the media impact his "down-to-earth" personality. She said she appreciates how much Bhat values his family and takes time out of his busy schedule to reach out to them.

Devanagondi said that her uncle's work ethic, determination and ambition inspires her, and she hopes to apply those qualities to her life, regardless of whether she becomes famous.

Bhat, however, said that the most consequential impact of his fame has been the introspection it has given him.

"If I was never famous, I think I would be too busy trying to attain fame to recognize my own flaws," he said. "In a way, I'm happy that I had this phase of life. I think I now know that there is more to life than just fame." ♦



SOPHOMORE ETHAN COTTA: his pianist mother balances career and family life with children

by Benjamin Li & Ethan Lin

It's not always easy being the son of a well-known, talented musician, but there are also rich rewards that other children would never have.

That has been the experience of sophomore Ethan Cotta, whose mother, well-known pianist Tamami Honma, has worked to balance the heavy demands of her own professional career with the raising of her four children.

Cotta remembers one time several years ago when the family lived in London and he saw her sacrifices first hand. As the din of 1998 London traffic raged outside a studio, softer than it was during the day but still audible at 1 a.m., Honma was playing "Mazurka in B Flat Major" for her upcoming Chopin album. Honma felt exhausted but recognized how important such opportunities are for her career.



Cotta

Honma's passion for music started at the age of 3 when her own mother introduced her to the violin. Her mother was a piano teacher, so a year after learning the violin, Honma took up the piano as well.

Honma said she fell in love with the instrument right away, dropping the violin to focus solely on piano. Her mother was impressed with her dedication, especially for the effort she put into competitions.

Honma moved from Japan to Utah at age 6 and began to realize that she wanted to pursue music as a career. She quickly moved through the classical realm, attending the Manhattan School of Music in New York. She later received her masters at the Royal

College of Music in London and made the decision to stay and teach there for the next 10 years.

However, teaching did not suit Honma as well as she hoped. Her son, Ethan, had just been born, and her responsibility as a mother conflicted with the rigorous schedule of a college professor. Additionally, Honma felt that London was not the most friendly place to raise a family.

"I thought, 'This is not where I want my kids to grow up,'" Honma said. "They have a high rate of teen pregnancy and a drinking culture. People thought a fun thing to do on Fridays was getting so drunk they threw up."

Honma soon moved back to America, where she busied herself with both her career and the task of raising her children.

However, her professional life still conflicted with her responsibilities as a mother, and the frequent trips to Europe for concerts drastically reduced her time with family.

With hopes of closing the distance between music and family, Honma began to localize her job, teaching at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

"I started building stuff around here, so I could be more family centered," Honma said. "You'll see from my records that my concerts have been more and more centralized around the Bay Area."

Because of her newfound proximity to her family, Honma could integrate music into her household of four children: Ethan, Samuel, Amy, and Matthew. Cotta, the oldest, and his three siblings each play a dif-

ferent string instrument, but all have some experience with the piano.

"I was sometimes asked to fill in for percussionists, and there were times when I had to bring Ethan along," Honma said. "I would say, 'Hey Ethan, want to play the bass drum?' and bring him out to these performances."

Cotta took the opportunities to learn and improve, rapidly honing his skills. During the weekend of Oct. 10, Cotta performed Shostakovich's "Violin Concerto No. 1" with the Saratoga Symphony. This event, organized by Honma, has further exposed Cotta to the professional world of music.

Cotta's mother has always influenced his music career. Not only did his mother get him to play the violin at a young age, but she also personally oversees his training.



ALL GRAPHICS BY KAITLYN TSAI

THE EVOLUTION OF STANDARDIZED TESTS

The SAT and ACT have changed drastically since the 1900s.

The SAT and ACT are infamous among the high school community — dreaded 4-hour long tests with countless bubbles to fill and an essay that results in a single numerical result with implications lying with college admissions. How did these tests become what they are today?

College entrance tests vary widely per school, and it is difficult to determine which college is harder to get into relative to others. A group of "elite" colleges, including Columbia, Cornell, Vassar, Barnard, Brown and New York University join together to create a College Board and administer a standardized test.

Carl Brigham, a psychologist who helped develop aptitude tests for the U.S. Army during World War I, aids in the creation of a "Scholastic Aptitude Test," abbreviated SAT, which is used in conjunction with the standardized test administered by the College Board. The SAT is a test of aptitude for learning rather than of knowledge, consisting of nine tests — arithmetical problems, number series, definitions, classification, artificial language, antonyms, analogies, logical inference and paragraph reading. The test is 315 questions and lasts for 97 minutes, a time of approximately 20 seconds per question.

The SAT slowly gains acceptance in the high school community but never takes off because of the high registration fee and lack of awareness. Only 10,000 students take the test in 1940. However, various bills like the G.I. Bill, which grants cash assistance to veterans who are applying to college, raise interest in college and thus the number of SAT-takers. In addition, the Educational Testing Service administers the SAT to high schoolers in 1951; those who score high enough get deferred from the Korean War Draft, further raising recognition of the SAT.

The ACT is created by Ted McCarrel and E. F. Lindquist as an achievement test that measures academic preparation for college, not just intelligence. The number of students taking the SAT exceeds 800,000, roughly ten times the number of those who took the test in 1951. Approximately 300,000 students take the ACT.

In response to the growing popularity of the ACT, the College Board changes the name of the SAT from the "Scholastic Aptitude Test" to the "Scholastic Assessment Test." The test is divided into two parts: the "SAT I: Reasoning" exam tests for aptitude, while the "SAT II: Subject" test focuses on academic achievement.

The SAT drops the vocabulary section and the essay becomes optional. Scoring for the test changes to a scale out of 1600 for the sake of testing knowledge "students will use consistently in college and beyond."

Supported by some yet hated by others, the SAT and ACT have grown to become an integral part of the high school experience for better or for worse.

STORY BY OLIVER YE

Backs of ID cards now have hotlines

by Nitya Marimuthu & Brandon Wang

After a new state law (Senate Bill 972) was passed in September 2018, student identification cards are required to have the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and the Crisis Text Line printed on them starting on July 1, 2019.

As a result, the school has replaced the backs of the IDs, which previously contained the Red and Blue Day schedule, with the necessary resources. The school website plans to also have the lines and additional resources accessible.

Assembly member Anthony J. Portantino wrote the law in hopes of fostering "an open dialogue about suicide and to help prevent these horrific tragedies," according to Portantino's website.

The analysis of the bill states the finer details on the need for the accessibility to the suicide hotline, especially for teenagers. In an April 2016 report, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported an increase in the national suicide rate by 24 percent between 1999 and 2014, from 10.5 deaths per 100,000 to 13.0.

The CDC and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration also conducted a survey of the Santa Clara

County and found that Palo Alto and Morgan Hills have seen the highest rates of suicide for people between the ages of 10 and 24.

In addition, the new law aims to provide help to those suffering from depression,

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (24 hour)
1-800-273-TALK (8255)

24-hour Suicide & Crisis Line (Santa Clara County)
1-855-278-4204

Crisis Text Line
Text "CONNECT" to 741741

anxiety and other mental illnesses. Statistics from the American Academy of Pediatrics show that at least 90 percent of teens who commit suicide suffer from mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, drug or alcohol abuse or behavioral problems. This clear correlation between mental health issues and suicide makes preventative action imperative.

The law also aims to lessen the stigma against using helplines, such as the Crisis Text Line and the National Suicide Preven-

tion Lifeline. Those who use the helplines sometimes don't know what to expect out of the resource, and calling them can be daunting.

"The value of the helplines lies in their 24/7 availability. Students often fall into crises at times where a counselor might not be physically available, assistant principal Kerry Mohnike said. "These crises happen at 10 at night and I in the morning or when people are really feeling down," she said. "So this is a way to say, 'I have this on the back of my ID card; at least there's a number there.'"

In the end, the bill aims to take action against a growing crisis. For Portantino, the chance of preventing just one suicide was reason enough to pass this bill.

"As a father and a legislator, the safety of our children continues to be a priority," Portantino said on his website. "If one life can be saved through this bill then all of our efforts will have been worth it."

Students generally welcomed this change to the ID cards. Despite having uncertainties about the efficacy, freshman Allison Tan said the addition is "thoughtful" and called it a positive step to reaching out to those who struggle with mental health issues.

"I'm not sure that too many people will use it," Tan said. "But I think people will see it as a reminder that they're not alone." ♦

Hidden hero and weekend warrior battles school's maintenance repairs

by Allison Hartley

Around 7 a.m., maintenance worker Robert Delfino arrives at the SHS maintenance office from his home in San Jose. Before work orders beckon him over the walkie-talkie, he slowly wakes up by sipping his coffee in front of the computer and reads the newspaper. At 8 a.m., he begins rolling down the hall in a golf cart, good-naturedly dodging students who clog the hallway.

Delfino, who is also the weekend maintenance supervisor, has worked at the school for 10 years, completing various work orders around campus at the direction of maintenance supervisor Brian Moran on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. On the weekends, he takes on the role of supervising a crew of jailed inmates doing community service for crimes they've committed — usually convicted drunk drivers from the Santa Clara County. This program is coordinated in conjunction with the sheriff department's work program.

"Students probably think that magically, on Mondays, the campus is cleaned up, but it's the inmates that are cleaning up on the weekend, and they do a heck of a job," Delfino said. "Without that program, we would be buried in garbage and leaves."

While small groups of inmates complete tasks like emptying and refreshing the garbage cans with new liners, weeding the grounds and leaf-blowing debris into piles, Delfino reassigns and buses them throughout campus. In between, he organizes supplies with people who rent campus facilities, completes basic maintenance repair jobs and helps with stage set-up in the McAfee Center.

"My job is to make sure that all of the event-runners are happy and have everything they need," Delfino said. "They feed us pretty well when they're here, too. We will work for food."

During the work week, students often see Delfino coasting through the halls on a golf cart, which he uses to carry tools and supplies. When students ask him how fast the cart can drive, Delfino jokes that "it would be a lot more fun if it was on a golf course."

With 40 acres of school property to take care of and only two full-time maintenance workers (along with two groundskeepers and seven custodians), Delfino said the school keeps them hopping, especially with more "interesting" tasks such as climbing on the roofs to replace air conditioner filters or removing and unclogging urinals.

"We stay busy, and like I always say: They



Maintenance worker Bob Delfino sets up plastic barriers on the track as he helps with preparing the lower field for the upcoming football game against Gunn on Friday, Oct. 11.

break it, we fix it," Delfino said. Delfino, a Daly City native, moved to Sunnyvale when he was 10, shortly after one of his brothers passed away. He went to elementary, middle and high schools within streets of each other and graduated from Peterson High School in Sunnyvale.

As the oldest of five brothers, Delfino was the "designated babysitter" of the family. Always somewhat handy, he would often fix bikes and putter with everyday machines, even fashioning a mini-bike out of lawnmower parts.

Before working for SHS, Delfino was self-employed and worked with one of his brothers in tree maintenance service. In 2008, a friend called to ask if he could fill a temporary six-week position in maintenance while the colleague underwent knee surgery. Six weeks turned into six months when Delfino's predecessor also received medical attention for his heart. Soon after, Delfino committed to the change and was hired permanently for the weekend crew.

Delfino has stayed on the staff now 11 years later. "After I turned 50 years old, it was getting harder to climb the trees and do what I had to do, so when this came along it was almost like a Godsend," Delfino said. "I used to have calloused hands, but now I tell everyone I have 'girl hands' because I don't have to work as hard as I did then," he jokingly added.

Delfino said he enjoys the excitement of the campus, and he almost wishes that he had begun working at SHS 20 years before. "Things work out, and I am very happy to have gotten this job," Delfino said. "I feel

like I'm in high school again." Whenever he becomes momentarily frustrated with students — for example, when they walk into bathrooms under repair — Delfino said he reflects back to when he was a teenager to keep his cool.

"The kids here are great; they're very respectful," Delfino said. "This is a great school, and I wish I could have gone to school here."

Delfino was married for 20 years but has been divorced for 15 years and lives alone in San Jose. His son David Joseph Delfino, 32, lives in Texas and has encouraged Delfino to move there, but he prefers to make the occasional trip, saying that if he had grandchildren he would visit more often.

Delfino is at or beyond retirement age but said he plans to stay in the Bay Area "until they put him in the ground" since he enjoys the Bay Area, where all of his friends and most of his family live. Although the school golf cart is convenient for moving tools and equipment, Delfino prefers the golf green over the campus halls.

When he is not golfing or taking care of his two motorcycles, a Harley-Davidson and a Yamaha, Delfino enjoys bowling and indoor go-karting at K-1 Speed in Santa Clara, which he recommends, describing the experience as "terrifying, but always a kick." Sometimes he even snags a date, but he said those "are few and far between."

Until he retires, Delfino is content with his daily life maintaining the campus.

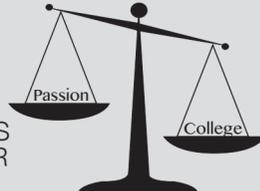
"I see the kids are here seven days a week, and I know they love it here; I enjoy seeing that," Delfino said. "Watching them do what they do keeps me energized, for sure." ♦

ALL GRAPHICS BY KAITLYN TSAI



CASE STUDY

JUNIOR REFLECTS ON MOCK TRIAL, EXAMINES TREND OF CLUBS USED AS COLLEGE FODDER



k8 out of 8



Kaitlyn Tsai

Two years ago, I squeezed my way through a sea of elbows and backpacks to the mock trial table at Club Day. Although none of my friends signed up with me, I typed in my contact information without a second thought, eager for some exposure to the field of law (and hopefully an opportunity for my confused freshman self to determine what I wanted to do in life).

As one of the only three freshmen on the team and one of the lowest-scoring members in competitions, I didn't plan to apply for an officer position once the season ended. But when I thought of how much I had learned and bonded with other team members during the competition season, I decided to fill out an application. Somehow, I talked my way through an interview and landed a position as club secretary, the single sophomore officer working alongside six upperclassmen, five of whom were seniors.

Initially, my naiveté clouded my judgment and convinced me that the seniors would nurture the club to its full potential despite the loss of our attorney-coaches several months prior. Within the first two weeks of the new season, they proved me wrong.

Deciding the organization of mock trial

To address our loss of professional coaching, club adviser Matt Torrens gave us three options: join practices with West Valley's mock trial team, which had already started preparing for the competition; continue participating in scrimmages and the county competition, coaching the members ourselves; or turn mock trial into an experience club in which officers would teach members about mock trial, run simulated trials of the previous year's case and organize educational activities.

Clubs are just clubs— not items on your college app checklist, but organizations that bring students together.

None of us wanted to join practices with West Valley because they likely had all their roles filled, which would only render our members a burden. Besides, practicing with West Valley meant having to accommodate their schedules — an effort and commitment that would likely have resulted in students dropping out of the club.

The junior officer and I wanted the seniors to tackle the second option: coach the members ourselves. Challenging other schools, we reasoned, they take the wrong members from feeling cheated of the competitions they had expected when signing up. Coaching new members wouldn't be too difficult — the team was already largely self-

run, with attorney-coaches merely offering further advice — and would also give officers opportunities for growth and developing stronger leadership skills.

However, four of the five seniors, disagreed and their viewpoint prevailed. They argued that coaching would place extra stress on the officers, some of whom apparently did not prioritize mock trial.

If we followed the third option and turned the club into an experience club, both members and officers would have more fun; besides, they added, they wanted the club to focus on learning rather than competitions.



Though I didn't verbalize my thoughts, a hunch told me that the seniors, busy with college applications, had simply chosen the option that would require the least amount of work. This being their last year at Saratoga High, what did it matter to them how the club turned out anyway?

"Let's not break ourselves to get participation for next year," one senior officer had said — right in front of the junior and me. "Next year isn't our problem; it's up to those in officer positions next year."

The lack of true commitment to clubs

Although we officers reached a compromise to try to scrimmage in January, that indifference was the attitude that tainted the club from then on. Ultimately, it resulted in a lack of engagement from other members and our failure to even host a full run-through of the case we studied, never mind participate in scrimmages.

This "next year isn't our problem" mindset reflected how the seniors likely applied for officer positions in order to pad their college applications and add another activity to their checklists. Quite frankly, this seems the most common reason to join clubs. Throughout the years, numerous clubs have risen and fallen due to their officers' and members' lack of true commitment.

Numerous officers even advertise their clubs with "officer positions open!" because they know students want leadership positions for their college applications.

While such strategies work for increasing club membership, they take the wrong approach. Incentivizing others to join a club out of a desire for leadership positions rather than out of genuine interest defeats the purpose of clubs.

This lack of genuine interest underscores the situation that mock trial faced. Because we lost several experienced members who dropped the club when they didn't obtain officer positions, and because so many of our officers didn't care enough to shoulder the responsibilities necessary to keep the club thriving, mock trial almost completely collapsed by the end of the season.

The indifferent, college-centered attitudes toward clubs also perpetuate the competitive, "toxic" environment that so many students at Saratoga High complain about — which is ironic, given that clubs should act as a means of relieving stress, exploring one's passions and bonding with peers who share similar interests.

However, many students treat them as just another item to place on their college resumes, and sometimes, out of desperation to embellish their applications, even sacrifice relationships with friends or fellow club members for the sake of obtaining leadership positions.

A renewal of genuine interest in clubs

Before starting or joining a club or applying for an officer position, students should seriously contemplate their motives for doing so.

Clubs are just clubs — not items on your college application checklist that you completely discard once you're a senior, but rather organizations that bring together students who share common interests.

Throughout the years, numerous clubs have risen and fallen due to officers' lack of true commitment.

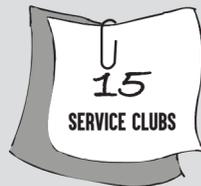
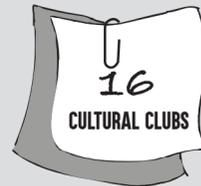
At the end of the day, college is simply one small stop in life.

It's foolish to allow your obsession with attending a certain school prevent you from truly appreciating what could be invaluable and enjoyable high school experiences.

As for me, I'm fighting alongside my fellow officers to keep mock trial alive, and I'm loving every stressful, difficult step we take. Realistically, we'll probably skip the county competition again this year as well because we almost couldn't secure a new club adviser, never mind an attorney-coach. But we're still aiming for scrimmages, still aiming to pass on our experiences and knowledge of mock trial to new members.

We're using this year to prepare for next year — hunting for an attorney-coach, teaching new members objections and rules of the court, running simulated trials and hopefully scrimmaging against other schools.

I don't care if officers need to spend time outside of school practicing and preparing presentations in order to coach new members; I don't care how much work we'll have to put into keeping them engaged. Being able to bond with our members, fuel their interest in law and provide them with the best experiences we can matters the most to me — as it should for all club officers. ♦



togatalks

Do people join clubs out of true interest, for officer positions or for both?

"It's easier to create a smaller club just for college, but larger, more intense clubs require more dedication."



junior Aindri Patra

"Both, because I think people join clubs based on what they want to pursue in college."



senior Vivian Lin

"I've heard people explicitly talk about joining clubs just to get an officer position."



junior Wilson Fung

ALL GRAPHICS BY MANASI GAR



sportsbriefs

Despite high hopes, injuries hurt tennis team

With senior Monica Stratakos, the No. 1 singles player, out with an ankle injury recently, most of the team has been moved up a spot to compensate. Junior Alyssa Pinai, for instance, has been playing No. 1 singles.

The team's current record is 5-4. In order to qualify for CCS, the team must place in the top two teams of the league. Earlier this season, they were in second place; however, Stratakos' injury has contributed to several losses that have dropped them to second to last. Among recent losses were ones to Cupertino and Palo Alto.

To bring themselves back into contention, the team must work harder during practice, senior doubles player Sanya Kwatra said.

Another player, junior Juhli Patel, has injured her knee but continues to play No. 3 singles.

"Usually we're one of the better teams around campus, and we really hope to keep it that way," Stratakos said.

Due to printing deadlines, the Falcon was unable to cover the matches against Mountain View on Oct. 15 and Los Gatos game on Oct. 17.

— Jayne Zhou

Volleyball team maintains winning record

The crowd roared as junior Hermione Bossolina took on the role of libero and helped lead the Falcons varsity team to victory 3-2 during their home game versus Milpitas on Oct. 8.

After senior captain and libero Lauren Hansen pulled her hamstring in the middle of the game, all hope seemed to be lost. Hansen's substitute for libero, Jordyn Sin, was also on the sidelines due to a back injury. Finally, as the set score reached 2-2, setter Bossolina stood in for Hansen and played well for them to snatch a win.

The victory gave them a league record of 6-4. The team started the season with issues finding a coach and trying to make up for the loss of key players to graduation, but nearing the heart of their league season, they have maintained a successful record. As the season comes to a close, the team hopes to win in its final two games against Cupertino and Fremont.

The team has endured a barrage of mid-season injuries, including hitter Ria Purisai with a minor concussion, defensive specialist Sin with a back injury, Hansen with a leg injury, and middle blocker Berry Bailey with an ankle injury. Senior captain Gurnet Jandu has faith that the team will play well despite the obstacles that have stumbled upon in the past few months.

"Going through all these injuries and still fighting through the games is really hard," Jandu said. "But we've pushed through it and all of us had fun at the end of the day. We grew a lot as a team and learned from each other through all the ups and downs."

— Harshini Velchamy

GIRLS' GOLF Team ekes out victories

by Shama Gupta

After winning their matches against Los Altos High School, Gunn High School and Los Gatos High School last week, the girls' golf team is second place in the De Anza Division, with a record of 7-1.

The team expects to make the league tournaments. They have won every match in the league other than one against Palo Alto.

Still, they don't anticipate making CCS as a team since winning matches during elimination rounds of leagues will be a challenge.

Although the team has only lost to Palo Alto so far this season, No. 1 player Alice Lin said that they were "lucky to win" on multiple occasions.

Lin also said that many teammates and coaches of other teams are surprised at their positive outcomes despite some weak performances.

"If we didn't make one of our

putts, or if Gunn made one more putt, we would not have won," she said. "We're barely winning, but we're still winning, and we're happy about that."

Sophomore No. 3 player Jane Loo said that they "should not be winning" with the scores they have gotten for more than half of their matches.

Loo said that just before the game, coach Dave Gragnola helped them set goals both tactically and numerically. Gragnola asked his top four players to aim for a score of 41; some achieved this goal, and others even scored lower (in golf, a lower score is better).

So far, the team's matches against Los Altos have been their most successful ones, winning by a margin of 40 to 50 strokes each time.

Although the team has managed to win the majority of their matches, Loo and Lin anticipate it being very difficult to win matches against higher level teams during



Courtesy of Now and Forever Studios

Sophomore Savannah Lin swings from a bunker in a match against Gunn. The Falcons won, scoring 214 to 222.

the league tournament. The team played Palo Alto again on Oct. 14, and Mountain View on Tuesday, Oct. 15. ♦

GIRLS' CROSS COUNTRY

Freshmen glimpse promising future after Crystal Springs

by Angelina Chen & Anouk Yeh

On Oct. 8, the girls' cross country team powered through the hilly 2.95-mile course in Belmont at the Crystal Springs meet that hosted over 10 teams, with many members achieving personal records.

"This one was more hilly, and it seemed like there was a lot more people too," sophomore runner Isabella Lee said. "It was a little intimidating, but the weather was nice, so it wasn't as hard as I thought it would be."

Freshman runner Elsa Blom described the inclined start as being crowded and dusty, which impaired runners' vision. This meet was more challenging than the previous races, which were both

predominantly flat courses.

Lee emphasized that although the entire team did well, the freshman runners stood out, though none placed in the top five.

One of these high-performing freshmen was Blom, who took the third fastest Saratoga runner at the meet behind junior Jessie Zhou and sophomore Amoli Vanavadiya. Blom attributes her fast time at Crystal Springs to the numerous hill-specific workouts the team did the week before and to her positive mindset during the run.

"I keep trying my best because I feel good every time I put all my effort into a run," Blom said.

Blom's goal for future runs is to beat her previous record of 21:41.6.

Blom described how she pays close attention to staying healthy

after every run by rolling out her muscles to prevent injuries and ease soreness. She also believes that the recent hot weather has increased the necessity of staying "hydrated and healthy."

Senior Julia Hoffman said the team's performance at Crystal Springs was a good example of runners' dedicated mindset, explaining that the team is back to practicing hard and focusing on training for their next meet at Lynbrook on Oct. 31.

Even after such a difficult meet at Crystal Springs, the girls are ready to push themselves further. Meets like these help fuel the girls' passion for running.

"I'm looking forward to spending time with all the people on the team and running at practice with them," Blom said. ♦

BOYS' CROSS COUNTRY

Falcons will travel to Los Angeles for meet

by Nitya Marimuthu & Sina Salehi

As senior Shivam Verma reached the final corner of the course at Baylands park in Sunnyvale on Sept. 24, he began to sprint as teammate sophomore Harrison Dance ran close behind him. The two boys raced together across the field, crossing the finish line in the sweltering heat of the late afternoon with a meager gap of a 0.5 seconds between their times.

Verma ended in third place with a time of 16:41.3 while Dance finished in fourth place with a time of 16:41.8.

Placing among the top ten has become common for the boys' cross country team. At the Half Moon Bay Ar-

tchoke Invitational on Oct. 5, Dance came in second in the 2.3 mile varsity race. The team landed in third place out of the 36 teams competing, with Dance, Verma and junior Niyanth Rao driving the team's success.

The team's most recent race was at Crystal Springs in Belmont on Oct. 8, where Dance placed fifth in the varsity race, with a time of 16:00.3, while Verma placed seventh with a time of 16:20.2. Dance's pace was 5:25 per mile, giving him a PR on the 2.95 mile-long race.

The team placed sixth overall behind top competition such as Los Altos, Monta Vista and Palo Alto. This is slightly lower than

they hope to place at the Central Coast Section final, where they need to place in the top two in order to move on to their ultimate goal of states. The top two runners for the Varsity team as of now are Dance and Verma, and they will need to beat Los Altos top runner Adam Sage as well as other strong runners.

Dance felt that the team had performed much better at the second official meet of the season at Crystal Springs.

"It was really hot at Baylands, [the first meet of the year] and the conditions were definitely better [at Crystal Springs]," Dance said. "We definitely improved from our performance."



Dance



Courtesy of Alan Dance

Cross country runners Shivam Verma and Harrison Dance lead the pack in a meet at Crystal Springs on Oct. 8. The two placed seventh and fifth, with times of 16:20 and 16:00, respectively.

Despite their improvement in times, the team also struggled from a loss of key runners due to injury: sophomore Sina Salehi was out due to a calf injury and Rao was recovering from multiple

stitches in the leg. The varsity team's next meet will be the Mt. Sac Invitational in Los Angeles on Oct. 19. Their next league meet will be on Oct. 22 at Baylands Park. ♦

FOOTBALL

Loss to Gunn slows Falcons' forward momentum

by LeoCao
& SivaSambasivam

Junior wide receiver Kelly Huesby chest-bumped senior quarterback Payton Stokes after he hauled in a touchdown reception in the second quarter, tying the game at 7-7 against the Gunn Titans last Friday night.

This would be the closest the Falcons got to leading in the home league game, with the Titans scoring 21 unanswered points in the third quarter and putting the game out of reach for the Falcons. The Falcon offense managed only 163 passing yards, the lowest of the season, and despite scoring two rushing touchdowns, the running game failed to gain much traction until late in the game. The final score was 35-21.

"It was not a particularly hard matchup, but we made too many mistakes on offense," senior wide receiver George Bian said. He pointed to the three turnovers the team had

as something to correct in upcoming games.

The defense struggled to get needed stops during the game. On a third-and-15 in the third quarter, the Titans ran a simple draw play up the middle and ended up gaining 20 yards, a key moment in a drive that led to a touchdown.

"There were a lot of missed assignments during that game," senior defensive end Tyler Ouchida said. "We need to stay focused throughout the entire game and work on our communication."

Although the loss was disappointing, it has not soured the season for the Falcons. After a convincing 42-27 away win at Monta Vista on Oct. 4 and a 56-35 Homecoming win against Homestead on Sept. 27, the squad is 5-2 overall and 2-1 in the El Camino division. They are in a three-way tie for first in league with Homestead and Los Altos.

"We are constantly improving." The team has stayed relatively healthy, and they are hoping to win out on their way to making CCS. "I'm happy with our performance against

both Homestead and Monta Vista," Bian said. "Both of those games were close up until the fourth quarter, when we were able to pull away. I think that shows a lot about our team to be able to win games in the fourth quarter like that."

The Falcons have three games left in the regular season, matchups against 3-4 Los Altos on Oct. 25, 1-5 Lynbrook on Nov. 1, and 2-4 Cupertino on Nov. 8.

"They are looking to continue to build on the offensive efficiency and aggressive defense that has helped them win so many games this year."

"I think we should have a strong finish to the season because we have built up a lot of momentum from all of our wins," Ouchida said. "There is a lot of positive energy and we are constantly improving."

The team has stayed relatively healthy, and they are hoping to win out on their way to making CCS. ◆



Junior Ryan Gilligan looks on the field while playing Gunn at home on Oct. 11.

"We are going to dominate during these final three games and ride the momentum into CCS to hopefully make a deep run and even win it all," Bian said. ◆

Stokes ranks among top 10 quarterbacks in Bay Area

by IsaacLe
& AndrewLi

Senior Payton Stokes has started the first half of his senior campaign strong, further building his resume as a top Bay Area quarterback.

This year, through his first seven games, Stokes has thrown for 2,149 yards, completing 65.4 percent of his passes. He is averaging 307.4 yards per game, and his efficient play has led to only three interceptions so far.

This year, according to MaxPreps, Stokes has a top-notch 125.9 QB passer rating. These impressive stats tell only part of the story.

Stokes' journey to being an elite quarterback began in eighth grade, when he joined his first Pop Warner team.

Stokes started high school football on the JV team during his freshman year, and was promoted to the starting quarterback of the JV team as a sophomore.

He eventually became the starting quarterback for varsity during his junior year, leading the team to a 6-5 overall record and a 5-1 league record, tying for first in the El Camino league.

Playing on the quicker and more aggressive varsity level in his junior and senior years has presented many challenges for him like size differences, but he has adapted.

"I didn't do too well in the beginning of my junior year, and at the last part of junior year I was catching on and doing well, so that turned into this year," Stokes said. This year has been even more successful for Stokes and the team, as the Falcons are currently 5-2 overall with a 2-1 league record. His success has gained him some local honors.

This August, the San Francisco Chronicle recently ranked Stokes as the eighth best quarterback in the Bay Area.

In the past, this list has also included no-

table former Bay Area quarterbacks such as Tom Brady and Jared Goff.

Stokes has also drawn praise for his advanced knowledge of the game.

"Payton is running a college air raid scheme which is no different than the ones you see on TV on Saturdays, so his level of understanding a passing scheme is better than most," head coach Tim Lugo said.

The "air raid" tactic Lugo described involves a heavy emphasis on passing.

In order to keep his arm in shape and improve his accuracy to have maximal success in carrying out the air raid strategy, Stokes has attended throwing camps and trains with coaches in the offseason.

"Payton's talent on the field is obvious to everyone but it's his leadership and his ability to bring the team together that are his greatest attributes," Lugo said. "He is big on the team bonding aspect and has the guys

hang out at his house at the pool or will organize a trip to the beach."

While college recruitment is on his radar, Stokes does not have any colleges in mind, and his main goal is to lead the football team to a CCS championship.

He is undersized for a D1 quarterback at 6 foot, but height is not the gamebreaker it used to be with shorter quarterbacks such as 6-foot-tall Drew Brees being an all-time great.

During Saratoga's Homecoming football game against Homestead High School on Sept. 27, Stokes threw for 423 yards and four touchdowns in a 56-35 win.

Additionally, Stokes led the team to a victory at Monta Vista on Oct. 4, where he rushed for a 63 yard touchdown and passed for 260 yards in a 42-27 victory. Stokes hopes to continue his success in a game at home against Los Altos on Oct. 25.

"I hope to play football in college, but my main goal this year is to win and have fun," Stokes said. ◆



Stokes

BOYS' WATER POLO

Coach's strategies pay off; Falcons go on win streak

PHYSICAL CONDITIONING ADDS TO TEAM'S READINESS

by EthanLin
& AlanZu

Bouncing back from two losses at the start of the season, the boys' varsity water polo team is now on a seven-game winning streak as of Oct. 12, currently ranking first in the De Anza League. Led by new head coach Jerome Chung, the boys are looking to advance far in CCS.

Chung has brought many changes to the team, including new play strategies and training exercises.

"Not only are his strategies working well against other teams, his personality and passion for water polo is what differentiates him from our previous coaches," senior field player Eng Kwa said.

Chung is no stranger to coaching water polo having led the girls' water polo team to an undefeated league record last year. With Chung leading the team by creating strategic plays, the team has seen great success, and their practices have increased in volume and intensity.

"The new coach yells a lot more than the previous coach, but he's a good coach," senior goalie Nima Aminzadeh said. "The strategies and plays are working out somewhat. They are working better than last year, where we had no plays and did whatever we wanted."

Nonetheless, Aminzadeh said that there is still room for improvement. The team started the season with tough losses against

Santa Clara and Harker. The match against Santa Clara went into a sudden death thriller with the team just falling short of the win, 15-14. "We struggled against Santa Clara, but that was because it was our first game, and we were getting used to being a team," Kwa said.

The team proceeded to defeat Fremont, Monta Vista, and Lynbrook on Oct. 1, Oct. 3, and Oct. 8. The scores were 11-8, 11-5, and 13-9. Recently, the team won by a huge margin against Milpitas on Oct. 10, winning 17-8.

"Our team chemistry is pretty good, and we definitely have a lot of potential."

SENIOR Eng Kwa

Despite the outcomes of the first two games of the season, the team has been improving, and the young majority of the team has quickly adapted to the quick pace and aggressive nature of varsity water polo.

"Some of our team is young, so they are not as experienced and still have room to grow," Kwa said. "However, our team chemistry is pretty good, and we definitely have a lot of potential."

The team is also improving because of having more physical conditioning during



Junior goalie Dylan Overby looks to pass to a teammate against Lynbrook on Oct. 8.

practices. "One difference this year in goalie training is we do weight-belts, so that's more leg work during practice," Aminzadeh said. "It actually helps a lot, because my legs are stronger now, so it's easier to block shots."

However, the team still needs improvement, specifically in defending against other teams.

During the game against Lynbrook, the team's defensive line would sometimes break down due to miscommunication or wrong player rotation.

"I can partially depend on my teammates

to defend, but not all the way, because they still can't shot block," Aminzadeh said. "That is where we need improvement."

The team has also been practicing "how to make a move" against defending players when on offense. Previously, team players would be stuck, unable to get past a defender and losing the ball in a turnover.

The team has improved their defensive plays, implementing and testing a new strategy, which led to a 17-8 win against Milpitas on Oct. 10. ◆

Due to printing deadlines, the Falcon could not cover the Oct. 17 game.

"SHUT UP AND PLAY"

SHOULD ATHLETES USE SOCIAL PLATFORMS TO ADVOCATE FOR SOCIAL PROGRESS?

by ApurvaChakravarthy
& AnoukYeh

In July, the U.S. women's soccer team made national headlines for taking home their fourth world cup win. On top of garnering attention for their win, the team also gained widespread media attention for their strong — and very public — distaste for the current president.

The controversy started when star forward Megan Rapinoe said in an interview that if they won, she "wasn't going to the f---ing White House."

President Trump responded to the comment, tweeting, "Megan should never disrespect our Country, the White House, or our Flag, especially since so much has been done for her & the team."

The controversy started when star forward Megan Rapinoe said that she "wasn't going to the f---ing White House."

The team has stood together through all of it, firmly backing Rapinoe for her decision not to go to the White House.

Rapinoe is not the only athlete who has used her platform to amplify her political views. In 2016, the San Francisco 49ers' then quarterback, Colin Kaepernick decided to kneel during the National Anthem in protest of the alarmingly high rates of police brutality in the U.S., sparking nationwide controversy.

While these two incidents aren't the first times athletes have expressed their political views openly, they have helped to resurrect a nationwide conversation about whether professional athletes should just "shut up and play" — a term popularized in the February 2018, when Fox News reporter Laura Ingraham attacked LeBron James for vocalizing his dissatisfaction with the current administration by telling him to "shut up and dribble!"

Although such incidents have only recently exploded into the national spotlight, athletes

have been using their platform to spread their political opinions for decades.

One of the earliest recorded instances of athlete activism was in 1906, when Irish athlete and Olympic triple jumper Peter O'Connor was forced to compete for Britain in the Olympic Games. O'Connor protested bias against Ireland in the competition when the only judge, American Matthew Halpin, presented the gold medal to the American athlete. When the British flag was erected as he was being honored for his silver medal in the long jump, O'Connor scaled the flagpole, holding up a flag that said "Erin go Bragh," meaning "Ireland forever," expressing his allegiance to Ireland.

Although there was no outspoken controversy about this action, O'Connor would go on to never compete in an Olympic game again and his actions would be regarded as one of Ireland's most historic sporting-event protests.

Student athletes here have varied opinions on athlete advocacy; some individuals believe that athletes should try to keep their sport and political views separate, but others encourage athletes speaking out.

Senior Ananya Krishnan, a forward on the varsity soccer team, said that while athletes have every right to voice their political beliefs, they should mainly focus on athletics.

Krishnan's two favorite soccer players are the national women's soccer team players Alex Morgan and Rose Lavelle, whom she greatly admires for their skill also the way they quietly handled the incident with the White House. "They're super big role models for me because [ever since] the U.S. women's soccer team got a lot of attention over the summer, the two of them showed that you don't have to talk a lot to succeed," she explained.

She has greater respect for players like Morgan and Lavelle who focus more on the game, as opposed to players who were more vocal like Rapinoe. She believes that there is a fine line between making yourself known as an athlete and making yourself known purely for your political views.

"Over the summer, she stepped over [that line] a couple times," said Krishnan. Sophomore Kendal Jarvis, who plays water polo, said he likes athletes who avoid politics.

"If you were going to watch a football game, it shouldn't have anything to do with politics," he said. He believes



Megan Rapinoe celebrates a goal during the FIFA Women's World Cup in France, which took place from June 7 to July 7, 2019. USA beat the Netherlands in the finals.



Colin Kaepernick kneels for the national anthem in 2016.



Michael Phelps shakes the hand of a young boy at a Swim 4 Kids event. Phelps has won a 28 medals in Olympic swim.

that sports are meant to bring people together and that adding politics, as polarizing as it is in today's time, would inevitably do the opposite.

He added that it wasn't an athlete's political activism that gained his respect but rather their character and personality that did.

Jarvis's all-time favorite athlete 28-time Olympic gold medalist swimmer Michael Phelps, who he admires because of his resilient character and hard work ethic.

As a child, Phelps had been diagnosed with ADHD and used the pool as a way to exert all of his energy and feel in control. For Phelps, the pool was a place where he truly felt at home. He hopes that many other students with ADHD and other learning disabilities can find solace in the water as well.

The Michael Phelps Foundation has also introduced more than 15,000 children to swimming through different organizations.

Jarvis was impressed by Phelps leveraging his fame to help others and make an impact, instead of voicing his political views.

Junior Cameron King, who plays basketball, said that he wouldn't mind his favorite athletes voicing their political opinions unless it was disruptive to game play.

"At the end of the day, I'm impartial," he said. "I'm respectful of them saying their beliefs, as long as it doesn't affect the game."

However, sophomore Kaaya Minocha, a cross country runner, said that while skill and character are important components in an athlete, how vocal an athlete is in spreading social justice ideas should be equally important.

"Athletes should be using their platforms to spread their beliefs because not that many people can do so," Minocha said.

Minocha admires her favorite athletes, tennis player Serena Williams and gymnast and martial artist Jessie Graff, because of their vocal support

for women's rights and equality in sports. Sophomore Kate Dinucci, a competitor on the color guard team, also agrees that while she "admires a good player, it takes so much more for athletes to stand up for what they believe in."

"I admire a good player; it takes so much more for athletes to stand up for what they believe in."

SOPHOMORE Kate Dinucci

Dinucci's all time favorite athlete is Aaron Rodgers, whom she admires not only because he's an "amazing quarterback," but also because of his activism within the NFL.

Rodgers is the star player for the Green Bay Packers, who has been a long-time advocate for "The Enough Project," a non-profit dedicated to "end[ing] genocide and crimes against humanity."

Rodgers reflected on why he decided to join the Enough Project by saying in a Politico Magazine Interview, "I remember sitting on the bus after we won [the 2011 Super Bowl] in Dallas and thinking to myself, 'I'm on top of the world.'" However, Rodgers still felt like he wasn't content, asking himself, "Is this it? Is there more to life than this?" And the answer was resoundingly "yes."

Dinucci said that it is athletes who not only possess good skills, but who are also politically vocal and utilize their platform to stimulate social change, are the ones that she looks up to the most.

"I think anyone who has the platform to speak out should, but for a lot of these guys it means giving up their dream job and also a lot of money," she said. "I really admire putting your whole career on the line for speaking up in what you believe in." ◆

ALL GRAPHICS BY TIFFANY WANG

>> snapshots



ALL PHOTOS BY ANGELINA CHEN

Homecoming king and queen seniors George Bian and Jolyn Tran pose for a photo during halftime of the game against Homestead on Sept. 27.

Sophomore Chris Wu scans the pool, searching for an open shoot or a teammate to pass to against Milpitas on Oct. 10.

Senior Alex Mah performs the baritone saxophone during halftime of a football game against Gunn on Oct. 11.

The Falcon defensive line prepares to rush the quarterback as the Gunn Titans snap the ball.

Senior considers joining the Yang Gang

thinking
harder



Allen Chen

Originally, this story was supposed to be an opinion story about signing up for the Freedom Dividend raffle. This was going to be a soaring epic about the process of signing up for a chance to get \$1,000 a month, and realizing myself as a person in the pro-

cess. I was going to get really deep: "Maybe the real Freedom Dividend was the friends we made along the way".

Unfortunately, the raffle deadline passed a few days ago, and the story got moved to the back page. Fortunately, I am pretty experienced with haggling out upcoming due dates. I hopped onto the Andrew Yang campaign website and immediately slid into the chatbot's DMs.

"Hi, just wanted to start by saying thanks for your time. I had some internet issues, so I couldn't turn in my application for the Freedom Dividend raffle on time. Could I

possibly turn in the assignment now, maybe for half credit (\$500?) or something? Sorry I couldn't catch you during tutorial. I appreciate it, Allen Chen."

Mr. Yang and his underlings never got back to me for some reason. I decided to switch gears. Searching through his website, I noticed an artist collaboration section. Recalling something my mom told me about making more political art, I decided to contribute a piece. I got a piece of binder paper and drew Mr. Yang's face with some Expo Markers I found on the ground. Then, I scanned it into a computer and did some

light cleaning in Photoshop.

Now that I have contributed somewhat to the Yang campaign, I think I have successfully replaced the premise of signing up for the Freedom Dividend raffle. Also, I now have the high ground to tell my friends to participate in politics.

Although I don't have \$1,000 a month or the grand saga I was trying to write, the fulfillment of having spent 5 minutes submitting artwork to Andrew Yang's website more than compensates the disappointment. From now on, I am proud to be an active member of American politics. ♦

Sorry for flexing my parents' two Teslas; it's all I know how to do

Jeff-
flex



Jeffrey Xu

Vroom, vroom. Just kidding. My Tesla doesn't even make that sound because of its silent instant transmission. Just kidding again. I don't even own a Tesla.

Normally, I drive a 2014 Acura MDX, which is still a nice car, but obviously, it's no Tesla.

Anyway, I drove my mom's white Tesla to school a couple of times, just to see how it felt. Big mistake.

It wasn't to flex or anything. I just really enjoy the smooth acceleration, the feeling of going from 0 to 40 mph in under 2 seconds and the huge LED screen with built in GPS and vehicle distance detection.

Soon after, my friends began calling me a "massive flexer," which is totally untrue. I mean, just because I happen to occasionally drive my mom's Tesla and my dad's other blue Tesla does not mean I'm intentionally trying to flaunt it to other students at school. I just really enjoy the ride!

And it just so happens that the one time I go off for lunch in the Tesla, I run into 40 people I know at Safeway. Now they've seen me in the Tesla and just assume that I'm a massive flexer.

But who would've thought that unintentionally flexing my mom's Tesla would lead to so much humiliation!

Every time the topic of cars or parking comes up, the first thing I hear is, "Jeffrey Xu loves flexing his white Tesla!"

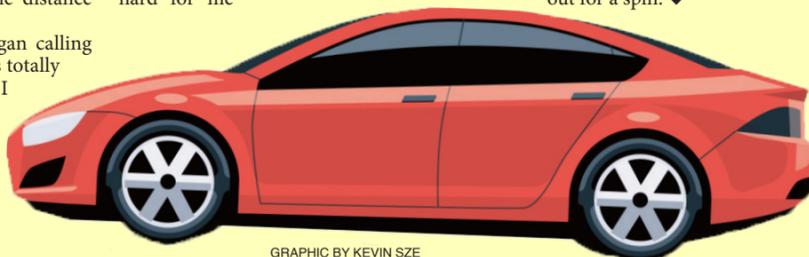
The clowning becomes especially bad during newspaper. As editor-in-chief, I do my best to be a respectable leader to my staff, especially the first-year chickadees. However, with all my roasting, it's hard for me

to maintain that reputation.

At this point, I've pretty much accepted that I can't be an authoritarian leader. Rather, my staff sees me as the friendly EIC they can clown, but at least they see me as someone they can easily talk to and ask for help from. And honestly, I could be doing a lot worse.

But who would've thought that unintentionally flexing my mom's Tesla would lead to so much humiliation! I just really hope people understand that I am a truly humble human being at heart. Never in my life have I been accused of such flexing and ignorance.

It was just such an unfortunate coincidence! However, I have learned my lesson. I suppose my best course of action now is to keep lowkey, stay away from my parents' Teslas for a hot minute and exude a more obvious aura of humility. But every once in a while, I can't help but want to take one of those Tesla bad boys out for a spin. ♦



GRAPHIC BY KEVIN SZE

topten

TOP 10 WAYS TO BECOME A NATIONAL MERIT SEMIFINALIST

- 10 Just learn it.**
Enjoy the process; it's more important than the result.
- 9 Cram the night before.**
Less sleep means more adrenaline. (Please don't quote us on this.)
- 8 Ask a senior for advice.**
After all, 51 of them qualified for it, right?
- 7 Prepare extra batteries.**
Your calculator might die during the test, just like your brain.
- 6 Bring a snack.**
Distract your competition with food to lower the cutoff score.
- 5 Yodel.**
Channel last year's test and assert your dominance like a true loon.
- 4 Don't cheat.**
It's not funny, just like this top 10.
- 3 Take a nap during the test.**
Catch up on sleep to be more alert.
- 2 Read the Falcon.**
Stay informed!
- 1 Move to Wyoming.**
If you can't raise your score, just lower the bar of qualification (Wyoming's cutoff was 10 points lower this year).

- Jeffrey Ma and Brandon Wang