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HEALTHY KIDS SURVEY REVEALS UNHEALTHY PATTERNS

WORLD CAFE SEEKS TO IMPROVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

BY Ethan Lin & Allen Luo

The recently released results of the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) have shown some responses that are concerning to school staff members and parents.

Students took the survey last March and were asked about mental health, substance abuse and school safety among other topics.

Among other concerning findings were that of about 1,164 students surveyed, around 33 said they had attempted suicide, 196 seriously considered suicide and 56 made a plan for suicide. Additionally, 232 students had used nicotine or marijuana and 267 had used a form of drugs or tobacco in the 12 months prior to the survey.

>> SURVEY on pg. 4



Assistant principal Matt Torrens discusses implicati survey results with parents at the World Cafe on Nov. 20.

FALCON // ANGELINA CHEN

Roaring 20s theme brings fancier aesthetic to formal

BY Apurva Chakravarthy & Allison Hartley

At 8 p.m. on Dec. 7, hundreds of formally dressed students will walk into the gym transformed to resemble the Roaring '20s.

The dance commission chose the theme for its gold and black aesthetic and to acknowledge the kick of the new decade with the party-era feel of the '20s.

This year, the commission wanted to explore the fancier themes that are usually reserved for proms instead of the typical winter-related themes.

"I think it's super cute," senior Vivian Lin said. "I remember that it was the theme for my sister's junior prom a couple years ago,

but this is a really great theme to reuse."

The commission has also implemented changes based on feedback about decorating, music and food they received from last year's formal, which was held in the Large Gym for the first time in several years for financial reasons.

Tickets were initially sold for \$40 to seniors with ASB and \$50 for seniors without ASB on Nov. 12. The following day, ticket sales opened to all students and increased by \$5 and will continue to increase every consecutive week.

The prices have increased from last year, when prices for students without ASB opened at \$45 for the first week, as opposed to the price for non-senior students without

ASB that started at \$55 this year.

While many students always wish that ticket prices could be lower, they said they understand that the commission tries its best to keep prices as low as possible.

"I never really favor the ticket prices, as I'm sure not many people do, but the prices don't affect my decision when I want go to school dances," Lin said.

The commission expects roughly spend a total of \$16,000 on food and decorations and have 450 to 500 students attending.

With the funds earned by this year's formal, the commission is on track to move to an off-campus venue next year. Each dance has a separate budget, and the commission has decided to move money from

the Homecoming account to the formal account. This way, Wang said, the commission can spend more on formal.

Still, the hope for an off-campus venue next year is also contingent on a big profit from ticket sales.

"Off campus will definitely be doable if we sell enough tickets," Wang said, "and that's why everyone should come to the dance!"

Sophomore Ben Bray, who plans to attend, does not have any major changes he would like to see from last year.

"The theme sounds really fun," Bray said. "I'm really excited for formal; it's a really great night to just hang out with your friends." ♦

'Sense and Sensibility' garners positive reviews

BY Marisa Kingsley & Jessica Wang

On Nov. 16, the fall play, "Sense and Sensibility," had its opening night in the McAfee Center. Five minutes before the start of the performance, cast members dressed in early 19th century English costumes burst through the stage doors into the house, chatting excitedly in English accents, much to the surprise and delight of the audience.

The production opened with 150 people attending opening night, a slightly larger turnout than previous years. The cast staged its final performance on Nov. 23 and put on a total of four shows.

The play opened with a chorus, comprised of a variety of "gossips," that provided the audience with the Dashwood family's background.

The set consisted of simple, movable pieces, contributing to smoother transitions and drawing focus to the characters and their interactions.

Based on Jane Austen's novel of the same name, the story centers on the elder Dashwood daughters, Elinor and Marianne, and their romantic interests. The two daughters are complements of each other — Elinor being the more mature and reserved of the two, while Marianne is spontaneous and

>> DRAMA on pg. 5

JV football numbers fall; fewer participate in sports

BY Andy Chen

The varsity football team enjoyed a largely successful season, going 8-2, making it to the first round of Division IV CCS and almost always playing well, even when they lost to opponents such as Los Gatos.

While focusing on varsity's success, many students and parents may not have noticed the major problems affecting the JV team. While coach Bryan Mazzone's team ended the season 1-7, his team faced an even bigger issue: It had only 19 players.

Looking at yearbook team photos in the past decade illustrates the drop in participation for the JV squad. In 2012, the team numbered 55, but numbers fell to 37 players in 2013 and 2014, 41 players in 2015,

39 players in 2016, 33 players in 2017 and 2018, and 27 players in 2019.

The fall of 2019 marked the first team where the numbers dropped below 20 — an especially low number considering 11 players are on both offense and defense, meaning most of the team has to play the whole game.

"We've done a really good job over the years of retaining our guys," Lugo said. "This is the first year where we didn't get a lot of people back from last season."

Due to low numbers, the JV team was forced to forfeit during the second half of a game against Silver Creek on Sept. 6, their third game of the season. The team ended

>> FOOTBALL TRENDS on pg. 23



newsbriefs

Career Day to make its return after five years

Career Day is returning to campus on March 2-3, the first time the event has been held since 2015. In January, students will take a survey ranking career presentation choices and be placed in a career presentation each day based on their responses. The event is planned by parent co-chairs Beth Kingsley and Parul Samdarshi with assistant principals Brian Safine, Kerry Mohnike and guidance secretary Kathy Sheridan.

"We are thrilled to be able to bring back Career Day," Kingsley said. "We think that it will provide students with a dynamic and tangible experience that [connects] their academic pursuits and professional endeavors in the future."

Kingsley estimates there will be about 45 professionals per day in various careers. The Career Day team is looking for volunteer speakers now.

— Oliver Ye

Lip Dub to be earlier this year, holiday-themed

This year, the Lip Dub will be moved from its usual time during the spring to Dec. 6.

According to senior rally commissioner Risa Carter, Lip Dub will be replacing the December rally in order to meet instructional minute requirements. The change was made because a rally would cut into the minutes needed to complete the school year on time.

This year's Lip Dub will be holiday-themed and will feature a mixture of holiday songs and mainstream popular music. Preparations are well underway for the event.

"We have gotten the songs, we have posted sign-ups for the participants and we have mapped out how it's going to be," senior rally commissioner Mihir Bettadapur said. "So our next steps are going to be making flyers, announcing everything and making decorations."

While the changes will ensure extra days don't need to be added to the school year, benefiting students, many have mixed feelings about the dropping of the December rally.

— Jackson Green and Allen Luo

60 years of The Falcon

From the archives: For its 60th year The Falcon is presenting a series of stories reflecting on some of the most interesting moments of the school's history. This week's story is about the band and color guard playing in the 2012 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade:

Seven years ago, on Nov. 22, the marching band and Color Guard performed in the 86th annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade in New York City. The band was one out of 11 selected nationwide over a year before and the only one from California to take part in the event that year.

The highlight of the parade was the final segment at Herald Square, consisting of a performance of Vince Oliver's "American Overture," an arrangement commissioned by the school. It was performed in front of the Macy's store for a televised audience of about 50 million viewers. Leading up to the performance, the band practiced their drill and sequences on a tarp with the Macy's star in order to imitate the conditions of the actual parade successfully.

An entourage of over 400 Saratoga students, led by directors Michael Boitz and Jonathan Pwu, traveled to New York City for a six-day trip that included seeing sights, attending Broadway shows and going on a dinner cruise to wrap up the trip. Preparations for the performance began on Nov. 3 after the end of field show season, two weeks before the band had to leave for New York. ♦

This account is a summary of two stories that appeared in the June 9, 2011, and Nov. 30, 2012, print editions of the Falcon, respectively. The 2011 story was written by Ashley Tang and the 2012 one was written by McKenna Galvin and Michelle Shu. The original stories can be found at saratogafalcon.org.

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FALCON // ANGLEUNA CHEN

POETRY PARTY | Poet Mighty Mike McGee speaks during lunch in Amy Key's Room 006 on Nov. 20 for poetry club, reading some of his works and offering artistic insight to club members.

Teachers develop digital methods to speed up tutorial check-in policy

by Ethan Lin & Oliver Ye

The new tutorial policy has forced students to go through the hectic process of signing in and out of classrooms, which often takes away from students' tutorial time.

To get around this, several teachers have implemented more efficient sign-in procedure to increase students' productivity.

In September, Physics and Introduction to Business teacher Kirk Davis tested a scanner system similar to the one used by the cafeteria.

Instead of students signing

in and out manually, students scanned their ID cards, and the data was automatically recorded in an online database.



Yim

This system drastically reduced lines and was appreciated by many students.

"From the way I saw others using it, the system looked pretty effective," senior Joanna Wang said. "It would definitely make the process a lot easier and faster."

While the barcode scanner system was only piloted, Davis envisions seeing scanners or QR codes in every classroom.

Similarly, math teacher PJ Yim

uses a Google Forms as a check in system, which allows him to rapidly access student sign-in and sign-out information.

In addition, since students often approach him for help during tutorial, digitizing the sign-in process allows Yim to help students in the order in which they signed in.

Across the district, four other sign-in methods were piloted, Traci Bonde, the instructional technology director for the Los Gatos Saratoga Union School District, explained.

According to Bonde, all of the pilot programs have been successful, and Saratoga's leadership team will discuss an implementation plan that will be shared out within the next few months. ♦

Relay for Life and Turkey Trot merge

by Allen Luo & Harshini Velchamy

The Turkey Trot, an annual event organized by ASB, has combined with the Relay for Life club for a walkathon that is taking place today during lunch in an effort to increase interest and to fundraise towards a cure for cancer.

For the past few years, the school has held so-called November events that sought to get students lowering stress through exercise, games and movement. In its place this year is a two-day celebration that ASB planned.

"We do too much around here," assistant principal Matt Torrens said. "November before was crazy busy with different activities, so we are trying to consolidate into those two days."

This year, the November festivities were condensed into the Monday and Tuesday during the week of Thanksgiving Break to in-

clude the Turkey Trot, a raffle and food trucks.

Turkey Trot is a 35-minute jog-a-thon during lunch Tuesday, where students, staff and parents alike are invited to walk around the track.

Each lap walked was tracked, and once a certain threshold is reached, prizes — including free pizza — are scheduled to be distributed.

The ASB partnered with Relay for Life, an organization that raises money for cancer, to organize the event in order to increase student participation for both of the school activities.

This year was the third consecutive year that ASB has hosted the Relay for Life.

The Turkey Trot began from the administration's goal to help students be more active.

Three years ago, in order to encourage student participation, the school reached out to teachers to

help them in the effort.

"Each department had a different activity throughout the month of November, and on the week of Thanksgiving break, we had this walk around the track," Torrens said.

Aside from the Turkey Trot, ASB has also planned many more festivities for the days before Thanksgiving break.

The Monday of break included activities during lunch and games set up in the quad, and there was closed campus for both days during lunch.

Tuesday features the Turkey Trot along with a raffle, and two to three food trucks serving lunch.

"We want to raise awareness and have as many people as possible, because we will also have raffles and everything," said junior Aliza Zaman, advertising lead for Relay for Life. "I just hope everybody can come out and support us." ♦

togotalks

How do you think tutorial check in can be better?

"I think making it electronic would make it a lot easier for us to use."



sophomore Nicole Lu

"It would be more efficient if there was a way to scan ID cards instead of writing it out."



senior Nikita Pawar

MAP Seniors draft, produce Capstone projects

by Anna Novoselov

While most class projects last only a few weeks, the Media Arts Program senior Capstone project spans the entire year, requiring students to integrate what they've learned throughout their MAP experience.

"We've spent three years in the MAP program doing all the different films they tell us to do," senior Natalie Tarbox said. "We've explored lots of different genres, and I think the MAP teachers want us to express our own genres and explore different areas, which leads to personal growth."

She will play the lead role in her group's horror rom-com, which tells the story of a girl who accidentally kills her brother and then falls in love with a burglar who breaks into her house as she is hiding the body.

Along with Natalie, her group consists of seniors Matilda Hickman-Smith, Veda Sethuramen, Sarah Smalls and Ranna Zahabi. Smalls's brother, senior Chris Smalls, will play the love interest while senior Gordon Schwabe will play the brother.

For the first three weeks of the project, the group brainstormed ideas but "nothing was clicking," Natalie said. But when the proposal of a rom-com with a horror twist came up, the group members all approved of it and ideas began rolling off immediately.

"We knew we wanted to combine comedy and horror," Natalie said. "We were just thinking: wouldn't it be super funny if you took something like 'Home Alone' and added in an element of a love story and made it dark? We wanted to do something no one had ever tried before."

The capstone project began with choosing their groups of two to five people in August and will conclude with a final judging in April when students will present their final projects and discuss what they learned from the process.

The first semester focuses more on planning, such as writing and approving the script, while the second semester is production-based, including shooting and editing. In total, there are 11 project groups and 53 students in MAP 12.

Although MAP students spend a significant portion of the year working on their capstone projects, there are also daily curricular projects that align with history and English classes.

The most common option for the project is a 10-minute fiction film, but students can also complete a service project or documentary.

While working on the project, students have a lot of creative freedom, which gives them the ability to explore their interests

and strengthen skills that they would like to build a solid foundation for, such as editing.

"Students receive the benefit of being able to sink their teeth into something and having a sustained effort."

MEDIA ARTS TEACHER Joel Tarbox

Students are responsible for planning the project and producing it and do not receive much guidance for when, where or how to film. But they do have "deliverables" that include a story pitch, outlines, storyboards, script drafts and rough cuts of the films.

"Ultimately, we want to see each project succeed to the best of the team's ability," Media Arts Teacher Joel Tarbox said.

Smalls said the project has already improved her screenwriting and taught her the steps to begin major projects. She loves that the project gives students so much freedom.

"It gives us an opportunity to explore our creativity with few limitations," she said. "It also forces us to be independent, which is especially important for college."

She encourages people to stay in MAP in order to have the chance to work on a project that is completely theirs.

"Teams have to use all of the freedoms, supports, and resources to make something of value," Mr. Tarbox said. "Students receive the benefit of really being able to sink their teeth into something and having a sustained effort."

He said that while students learn or sharpen skills such as writing, video editing, animation, audio integration and design, they also improve soft skills like collaboration and project management.

He acknowledged that students may struggle to balance the different perspectives of group members and stay motivated to see the project to fruition.

An effort of this magnitude inevitably results in students learning to "compromise, pick up the slack, and stick with something they're tired of," he said.

While Natalie said that her group has had some difficulties balancing between spins on the basic idea of the film, all the members are passionate about the project.

"The best part is the team aspect," she said. "I'm working with people I love to work with while the new perspectives are hard, they are super helpful and are the reason why we have such a cool idea." ♦

S&D team collects bids in recent travel tournaments

by Harshini Velchamy & Anouk Yeh

In recent weeks, members of the speech and debate team have qualified for national tournaments by competing at events across the country.

On Nov. 11, the public forum team of seniors Ashwin Ramakrishnan and Siva Sambasivam went to The Minneapolis Debate Tournament in Apple Valley, Minnesota.

There, they competed against 145 teams across the nation and placed fourth, earning themselves a bid to go to the Gold Tournament of Champions (TOC). Competitors need at least two bids to qualify for TOC and this

was Ramakrishnan and Sambasivam's second bid.

Freshman Anav Garg, a Lincoln Douglas debater, also went to the tournament but didn't break to elimination rounds. Even so Garg saw many benefits from going to the tournament.



Sankaran

"I had the opportunity to see a variety of debate styles from around the country and how to execute the best strategies that are being used by the best debaters around the U.S."

On Nov. 14, three members of the speech team flew to Las Vegas to compete at the Golden Desert Speech and Debate National Individual Events Tourna-

ment of Champions (NIETOC) Qualifiers.

Members of the speech and debate team have qualified for national tournaments by competing at events across the country.

At the Golden Desert tournament, sophomore Anouk Yeh placed sixth in Program Oral Interpretation, earning a bid for NIETOC.

Competitors need at least two bids to

qualify for NIETOC.

After the successful travel tournaments, the team closed out the two weeks with the Coast Forensic League (CFL) speech tournament on Nov. 17.

At CFL, sophomores Joann Zhang and Kai Doemling placed 11th in Duo Interpretation, sophomore Harshini Velchamy placed 14th in Original Oratory, and junior Audrey Lee placed 15th in National Extemporaneous Speaking.

Looking to second semester, team president Adhit Sankaran is optimistic about the club's chances of improving in the competitive season.

"The year is off to a great start," Sankaran said, "and the club looks forward to an even more successful competitive season." ♦

Students invest in mock competitions

by Apurva Chakravarthy & Tiffany Wang

Two activities on campus this semester — one by a club and one within class — have students studying stocks and making bets on which ones will increase in price.

Both the Youth Economics Initiative and Kirk Abe's AP Government and Economics class use stock market simulations to teach teams what it's like to invest in businesses where the outcome is not certain. The competitions teach teams how to take risks and analyze markets to make the most strategic decisions.

The Youth Economics Initiative club, previously known as the Economics Club, has joined the Knowledge @ Wharton High School (KWHS) investment competition. In the contest, teams of four to seven develop an investment strategy within 10 weeks to create a stock market portfolio that emphasizes both long-term gains and short-term investments.

At the five-week mark, each team needs to send in a mid-project review of their strategy, and at 10 weeks, each team will need to submit a final project report of seven to 13 pages.

Junior Henry Weng, the club's president, said that as of Nov. 8, his team was placed 35th out of about 800 teams nationally. They're researching companies and looking at indicators and graphs to direct their purchases of a stock.

Another participant, sophomore Dhruv Singh, said he primarily looks at the third quarter (July, August, and September) earnings for each company to make bets on how

it will perform. He describes himself as a risk taker when it comes to placing bets during the simulation.

"Recently I invested in Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, and they did well in quarter three, so I ended up with \$5,000 in profit," Singh said.

While based on the same principles, the goal of Abe's competition is a little different. While the KWHS competition focuses purely on developing a strong strategy, Abe's competition also focuses on coming out with the most money. The grand prize for the winning team is a lunch with Abe.

Senior Jolyn Tran is participating in the competition with seniors Alex Wang and Kevin Sze. Their team strategy is to "try to go for companies that are dipping more, and [they] hope that they'll have a better incline later on."

However, Tran's strategy comes with many risks. The market is constantly fluctuating, and Tran said they have to constantly think about the market's instability when making their decisions.

Because of the project, Tran and her team learned that investing is hard and stressful and that even stable businesses can have fluctuating stocks.

Both competitions have taught their participants how to take risks and keep up with economics around the globe. Regardless of if the teams win or not, they will come out with valuable skills to take with them for the rest of their lives.

"I've definitely become more invested in current events that are happening, and seeing how they affect the stock market," Weng said. ♦

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SURVEY

continued from pg. 1

CHKS is part of a larger nationwide attempt to assess students on various topics, ranging from health to school safety.

"It is the largest, most comprehensive effort in the nation to regularly assess students, staff and parents to provide key data on school climate and safety, learning supports and barriers, stakeholder engagement, youth development, health and well-being," assistant principal Kerry Mohnike said.

Feelings of sadness to the point of stopping usual activities increased by about 25 percent in juniors

According to CalSCHLS, the official website for the CHKS, the survey includes a core body that consists of five main sections: student connectedness; learning engagement and attendance; school climate, culture and conditions; school safety; physical and mental wellbeing and student supports.

The survey is administered to students in elementary school, middle school and high school. Mohnike said that the high school version is comprised of a core module that is standardized for every survey, and optional, additional sections focused on one or two more topics.

These optional sections were chosen by schools that conducted the survey to add to the core of the survey to better suit their student body and receive the best results possible. These choices could be from modules, including school climate, social-emotional and physical health, substance use and other risk factors.

The Los Gatos Saratoga High School District opted to choose topics comprising of alcohol, drugs, safety and violence and social-emotional health.

The purpose of the survey was to gather data that would promote better relationships among students and teachers and indirectly boost academic and behavioral morale, Mohnike said.

Since the survey was last administered by the district a decade ago, there has been a substantial increase in measurements of depression and suicidal thoughts.

Feelings of sadness to the point of stopping usual activities increased by about 25

percent in juniors, but freshman numbers only increased by only about 4 percent.

Suicidal thoughts among juniors increased by about 30 percent, while suicidal thoughts actually decreased in freshmen by roughly 10 percent.

To some teachers, these results are directly correlated to academic pressure that students experience at school.

"I am alarmed by these numbers," Spanish teacher Bret Yeilding said. "I would say the number one factor for that is academic stress. It comes from a lot of different areas, some of it self-imposed."

Currently, the administration is looking into ways of addressing the problems the survey underscored.

Over the last seven years, multiple new additions have been implemented to help students with their stress and anxiety, including the tutoring and student centers as well as a new mental health-focused wellness facility for CASSY (Citizen Assistance and Support System).

"If we can create a campus environment that is emotionally safe for students six to eight hours a day, that would be a third or a quarter of their day, we might be able to help support students who are in need of help and be more of an influence," principal Greg Louie said.

The administration has also looked into a more interactive approach in aiding students. For example, last year, the week-long Breaking Down the Walls program was added to unify and empower students on campus to create a more positive and supportive culture. Speak Up for Change Week and the Just be Kind Assembly were also products of this approach.

Students, parents and staff discussed the results at the recent World Cafe, hosted on Nov. 20 in the school library. The event was set up by administrators to reflect on student health, connectedness and sense of purpose.

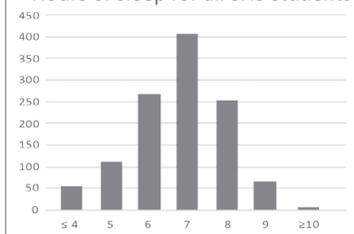
Those who attended were split up into table groups, each with at least one or two parents, one student and one teacher, to encourage discussion among different attendees about topics being asked.

Groups were then scrambled after each discussion. The questions centered around possible solutions to problems posed from the survey.

"Our hope is at the end of the night, we can have a canvas of ideas and connections for certain issues that we can take steps toward accomplishing in the future," Mohnike said while leading the activity.

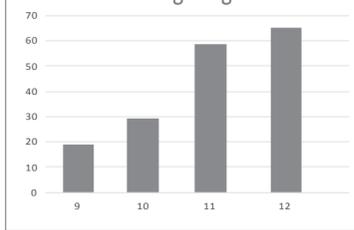
Many of the topics centered around health, including how stress affects the

Hours of sleep for all SHS students



The following data was obtained from the California Healthy Kids Survey administered by SHS in the spring of 2019, showing a trend that highlights 7 hours as the average amount of sleep.

Students using drugs or alcohol



The survey shows a trend that highlights a greater number of students exposed to drugs and alcohol in 12th grade throughout the 12 months before the survey was administered.

mental wellbeing of students and what the school can do to alleviate some of it.

The discussion also touched on some other results that were not health-based. In the survey, 114 students who stated that they do not have a purpose to their life.

This statistic may seem unimportant in comparison to topics such as suicide and drug abuse, but assistant principal Brian Safine said that this lack of motivation is likely a significant cause of depression.

Attendees also discussed the importance of student connections and how to promote them. Teachers discussed the results of the survey during an early-November faculty meeting.

Yeilding said the school has dealt with these kinds of problems for years and won't completely solve them. But he noted, "What I'm looking for is a good place for kids to go when they are feeling these things, but we could do better." ♦

falconfigures

195 Students who have considered attempting suicide

116 Students who have used nicotine or a nicotine substitute

267 Students who have used alcohol or another drug in the past 12 months

114 Students who feel that they have no purpose in their life

WASC accreditation process now well underway

by Anna Novoselov

Most of the time, students, teachers, administrators, support staff and parents hold distinct yet interdependent roles in the working of a school.

But during the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) accreditation process — which happens every few years at schools — students, teachers, support staff, administrators, and parents collaborate on a single task: evaluating the school and offering input into what can be improved. The process at SHS began last spring with multiple meetings involving dozens of contributors and has continued during six morning collaboration periods this semester.

The school has received maximum-length six-year accreditations in the past due to very positive reviews and hopes to do so again this time. Each accreditation involves compiling a 300 to 400 page document that includes a chapter describing each of the five focus areas — mission and governance; curriculum; instruction; assessment; and school culture and personal growth — as well as chapters for the school profile, a progress report detailing steps taken since the last WASC visit, and a schoolwide plan for the school's next steps for improvement.

In the spring, a group of visiting teachers and administrators will evaluate the report and determine whether the school should be accredited.

"[The process] is an opportunity for us to stop and reflect on the work that we do to try to improve it and learn from each other —

from our students, parents, colleagues and administrators — about how we can make Saratoga the best school it can possibly be," said English teacher Amy Keys, who is the school's WASC coordinator this year along with assistant principal Kerry Mohnike.

Each focus area has a team of 25 to 35 people composed of students, parents and faculty. The teams have collected evidence by designing and giving surveys, observing teachers in their classrooms, interviewing students both individually and in panels and trying to assess the daily functioning of the school. Students and parents volunteered to be in these groups.

"The student groups have done an excellent job reviewing the surveys and creating a list of school strengths and areas of needed growth," Mohnike said. "Those lists are used in conjunction with the parent and focus group surveys to get a fuller picture of where we are as a school and to help frame the direction we want to head. Student voice in this process is critical and highly valued."

Other topics that the study considers include facilities and safety, tutorial effectiveness, academic integrity, transparency and communication, collaboration time, course availability and selection, student health and happiness, as well as connections to life, career or ongoing education beyond high school.

Senior Jolyn Tran, who is part of the student portion of the instruction focus group,

decided to participate in the accreditation process because she wanted to work with teachers outside of a classroom setting. Her focus group discusses how the skills students learn at school help them transition into college and the adult world as well as how the instruction students receive in classrooms applies to their lives.

Tran said that she enjoys getting an "inside view" into how teachers craft their curriculum and decide on classroom activities.

"I used to think that teachers just taught us what needs to be taught for the AP test or for exams, but they are trying to provide the best curriculum they think will help their students succeed," she said.

Tran said that hearing many different perspectives from parents, teachers, and other students while assessing the school has helped her become more open-minded while stating her ideas during meetings taught her to be more outspoken.

"The teachers respected my opinions and allowed me to gain the confidence I need to speak out more," she said.

Tran hopes that this WASC cycle will bring more attention to mental health. While the school's decision to move CASSY to the center of campus has decreased the stigma surrounding mental health, she said that there is more work that needs to be done in that area.

Mohnike said that the school will use the produced report to decide what areas to

focus on for improvement in the next few years.

"We have currently created a master list of areas of strength and areas of needed growth that we will use to set priorities and create an action plan around for the coming school year," Mohnike said.

This action plan is in the process of being completed in the next few weeks and will seek to reflect the needs and voices of the students and faculty. A WASC visiting team consisting of six to eight people made up of teachers and administrators from different schools will visit the school from March 22-25, read the report, assess the school and facilitate the creation of the action plan.

According to Mohnike, the WASC accreditation is required to certify schools as an official high school diploma granting institution and to designate school units as valid for college admissions to the Accreditation Board and the California Department of Education.

Even though the California Department of Education mandates that schools undergo the WASC accreditation process, Keys said that the people involved try to make it a key part of the school's growth as a school.

"It's really not just about the production of the report," Keys said. "It's a required task, but we try to turn it into something that lets us stop and take stock. If you don't stop and reflect, you might keep on making the same mistakes or you'll run headlong into something, thinking that this is what we have to do, without having examined the evidence and the data." ♦



Tran

DRAMA

continued from pg. 1

idealistic. The two are juxtaposed to represent the title of the novel, "sense" and "sensitivity" respectively.

The first act was generally fast paced and lighthearted, with playful interactions among characters. The end of the act provided a more serious transition into the second, more dramatic, act, where relationships complicate and familial conflicts over inheritance and marriage are revealed.

Drama teacher and director Sarah Thermond said that the audience responded well to the performance and were invested in the varying plotlines.

"There were a lot of people really buying into the social dynamics of all of the characters and enjoying how funny and twisted and cliffhanger-y some of it is," Thermond said.

The adaptation presented Thermond with the unique challenge of finding a balance between what scenes she wanted to portray more realistically compared to others where she could take a more surreal or comedic approach. Additionally, the dispersed "gossip scenes" including many actors on stage as well as the many set changes required much of the cast and crew to be "on their game" constantly.

"Our crew and our cast together really learned the focus and the kind of gracefulness it takes to make that [scene changes] smoother," Thermond said.

Senior Hanna Fu, who attended the

opening night performance, praised senior Emilie Prillwitz's performance as the practical and responsible Elinor Dashwood.

"Her tone was very light and energetic, which I felt really fit the character," she said. "And her delivery was consistent throughout the whole performance."

Thermond attributes the success of the production to the "genuine enthusiasm" and professionalism of the cast and crew, despite the scheduling challenges presented during rehearsal.

"There was a really good amount of enthusiasm about telling the story and the different characters," Thermond said. "There was a genuine excitement to share that with other people."

After the first weekend of shows, Thermond continued to work with the cast to improve vocal technique. She emphasized the importance of delivery since the production was largely based on dialogue.

"[Vocal technique is a priority] with Jane Austen and Shakespeare and all of those plays that are very much about what everyone is saying about everyone else," she said.

As weeks of rehearsals came to a close, Thermond saw how the cast had gained invaluable skills in incorporating the nuances of dialogue into their performance and flexibility in portraying scenes more realistically or adding their own flair to their performance.

"Being able to go back-and-forth between [realistic and comedic performances] makes actors more versatile and gives them a bigger toolbox of artistic skills," Thermond said. ♦



Senior Marly Feigin and junior Christopher Linney, playing Fanny and John Dashwood respectively, rehearse a scene from Act I of the fall play, "Sense and Sensibility," on Nov. 14.

Alumna pursues design at USC's Iovine and Young

by Brandon Wang & Oliver Ye

The faces of five mathematicians — Euclid, Leibniz, Mandelbrot, Euler and Gauss — span the width of the wall facing the math quad, accompanied by equations and diagrams against a background of beautiful swirls and bright pops of color.

The process of creating the striking mural was not an easy one. It took a large team of students dozens of hours and three months to finish it in January 2015.

Lilian Zeng, a 2018 grad who attends the University of Southern California, managed the creation of the mural, one of many projects she worked on in high school that allowed her to develop a passion in design.

She said the most challenging part of creating the mural was directing a group of students and telling them what to paint; she ended up creating a digital design and projecting it onto the wall so that students who weren't particularly proficient could get started.

Following in Zeng's footsteps, many other student groups approached her and sought guidance in creating their own murals, including Media Arts Program projects and the murals on the science wing.

"I saw the gray walls of our campus transform into stunning visual pieces dedicated to various clubs and organizations," Zeng said. "Each piece is artistically powerful, but their true value lies in the conversations they facilitate."

Today, Zeng continues to pursue her interest in design and applicable art at USC. In addition to being the design editor for the Daily Trojan, USC's student-run newspaper, Zeng also studies at the prestigious Iovine and Young Academy (IYA), an interdisciplinary program that merges design, tech and business.

At IYA, Zeng interacts with a cohort of 24 other students, taking all of her core academy classes with them, meaning that they see each other every day and are constantly working on group projects.

"This promotes a really unique ability to learn what each person's strengths and weaknesses are, as well as your own, and

helps you decide what kind of areas you want to focus more on," Zeng said.

This interaction with a diverse and driven group of individuals has led to the creation of various design projects, such as Pepper, an online platform that organizes USC's campus events according to users' interests.

Zeng remembers always being interested in art and recalls sketching and painting still-life from a young age.

Zeng's first experience with graphic design was making a promotion flyer for the freshman class, but because she didn't even know how to use Adobe studios, she ended up creating the flyer in Google Slides.

Later, while participating in yearbook and becoming its editor-in-chief senior year, she got much more interested in design and gained deep skills in programs like Illustrator, Photoshop and InDesign.

She said that she particularly enjoys design, as opposed to pure art, since it appeals to her interest in engineering and is more practical.

She also aligns more closely to the UX, or user experience, aspects of design, rather than the UI, or user interface, side, focusing more on "business needs" and "engineering capabilities."

"While I love art and design, I see it as a tool to create beautiful products and a skill that I can employ on whatever I'm working on," Zeng said, "rather than the sole thing I am interested in."

This past summer, Zeng worked for Blizzard Entertainment on designing web pages for the Overwatch Nintendo Switch and LEGO Bastion Challenge announcements. Both of these projects involved working with other companies, which meant having to work within stricter design constraints, Zeng said.

Zeng said that she has found her IYA experience positive. She especially enjoys the entrepreneurial focus of the program, especially because IYA itself is still only five years old, and its synthesis of multiple disciplines.

"When I was deciding where to go for college, I was trying to choose between art programs at some schools, business at others and engineering at others," Zeng said. "And I realized, why choose?" ♦

Dance plans showcase with teacher participants

by Manasi Garg & Tiffany Wang

With the end of the football season, the dance team is now focused on preparing for their upcoming competition season in January.

On Nov. 16, they held a full team dress rehearsal to run through every single one of their dances to make sure that they are prepared.

Planning for competitions started early in the year: All of their dances are choreographed in September and early October, senior dance captain Lillian Wang said. Now, they are more focused on just polishing the dances.

Because they are now required to fundraise on their own, the dance team has decided to put on a "Dancing with the Staff" show.

The show was suggested by head coach, Maleia Fernandez, who participated in a similar showcase when she was in high school.

Dance team members will split up into pairs, and each pair will choose a teacher to dance with.

Each pair choreographs a 30 to 45 second dance to any song of their choice, and they will show off all of the dances during a showcase on Dec. 11 after school in the large gym, according to sophomore Kaylie

Wong.

Teachers and administrative members, including assistant principal Matt Torrens, science teachers Lisa Cochrum and Jennifer Lee and English teachers Amy Keys and Erick Rector, will be featured during the show.

"I'm very excited," Keys said. "I think it's going to be very funny, and I hope to learn a lot."

"It's always fun to see your teachers dance. It will also feel like Homecoming quad day all over again."

SOPHOMORE Kaylie Wong

The team is also planning to showcase a few of their football or competition dances during the performance. It will be good practice for them to perform in front of others, Wong said.

All of the members in dance team hope it will be a success.

"It's always fun to see your teachers dance," Wong said. "It will also feel like Homecoming quad day all over again." ♦

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FIFTH PERIOD STAFF POLICY

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Fixation on grades undermines quality of Socratic discussions

Students sit in a circle and are engaged in a serious discussion. Just as a classmate gets to the heart of making her point, someone from across the circle of chairs interrupts. "Yeah, I think—" she begins. The interrupted girl stops talking, her eyes silently saying, "Are you really doing this?" Yet the rude interrupter takes the initial pause as a cue to proceed and launches into her point without an ounce of self-consciousness.

In Socratic seminars, used in some history classes and many English classes, students are encouraged to work through ideas together by thinking aloud and posing questions to each other. To encourage participation, students are often graded on the quantity of contributions. Everybody tacitly knows to speak at least once, but the quality of responses is where the lines blur. To earn points, students often resort to reading prepared responses or repeating ideas, to some peers' and teachers' irritation. Even worse is what happens in seminars graded by quantity of contributions, not quality: Any difference in the value of each response holds little value. The idea becomes to just blurt something out — anything at any moment will do.

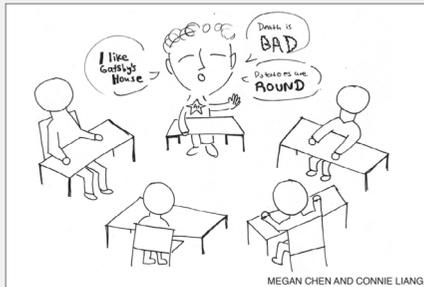
Similarly, while some teachers warn against dominating the conversation or interrupting others, social courtesies too often fly out the window when students perceive that a major grade will be determined by a one-shot performance in a Socratic.

The consequence is not just a few moments of awkward

tension but a considerable hindrance to the purpose of the seminar — to share insights and deepen students' understanding of what they're studying. If a student abruptly diverts the conversation from a topic when ideas are still new and adapting to one another, that student has prematurely killed the ideas that are just beginning to take form. Without the thorough, organic discourse, the conversation is at risk of puttering through a series of topics, skimming only the surface and not getting to the meat of substantive discussion that could occur.

To protect the sanctity of the discussion, the courtesy component of the graded Socratic should weigh more than the quality or quantity of contributions to the discussion. Not only would this discourage students from speaking for the sake of being heard, but students will be more conscious of how their contributions are fitting into the dynamic of the discussion and be more inclined to listen critically.

After all, concerns for one's grade seem to act as a better motivator than anything else. Ideally, students should not need to be driven by a desire to make a certain grade to participate fully in the Socratic seminar. This means ungraded or lightly graded Socratic seminars create a lower-stakes, reduced-stress environment where students can grapple with concepts without feeling self-conscious or tense as they



hold their breath, ready to burst forth with an idea as soon as the speaker seems to be done. Rather than being perceived as a major assignment, low-stakes Socratic function as a longer class discussion forum without teacher guidance.

Another good option to have Socratic seminars in which the entire class earns the same grade. This way, rather than competing for time to talk, students encourage each other to participate, creating an environment in which students support each other's success. Confident speakers are incentivized to leave space for

shyer students who have trouble asserting themselves during the discussion.

None of this would be necessary if students gain teachers' trust through consistent, self-motivated participation. Students should see the Socratic seminars as an opportunity to listen to peers' insight, not a make-or-break in-class assignment. Perhaps, then, the Socratic seminar will be an activity that most students will look forward to — one that more closely resembles an organic, civil discussion than a poorly moderated primary debate. ♦

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The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 31-1 in support of this article.

Just Learn It: How student involvement could improve selection of yearly theme

by Benjamin Li & Sina Salehi

Under former principal Paul Robinson, the annual school theme, as cliché as it usually was, normally conveyed a positive message for the school. These included TOGather, RISE UP and Strength in Numbers, and while they always made a few students cringe or were completely ignored when inserted at the end of his speeches or emails, they were basically harmless and inoffensive.

But what the student body received this year for a theme was far from a gentle encouragement or punny catchphrase. In fact, it was

slightly controversial. Instead of the usual cheesy and positive pun, we got "Just Learn It."

How could the phrase be misinterpreted?

That Calculus concept you still don't understand after hours of studying? Just Learn It. That AP Euro unit on the age of reformation you're beginning to really hate? Just Learn It. Comment vous appelez-vous en Français?

Just Learn It. In a school culture that's already so focused on academics, this type of message isn't really what most

students want to hear.

Some concepts are challenging to grasp, and even harder to explain, and most of us already sacrifice much of our free-time for academic-related activities, so the last thing students want is the school board shoving this slogan in our faces.

Now it's obvious that new principal Greg Louie had no malintent in choosing this slogan. In an email sent at the beginning of the year, he stated that the meaning behind the slogan ties in closely with perseverance and work ethic.

However, these ideas are simply not being expressed in Just Learn It. This miscommunication is

rooted in a process that is flawed and susceptible to failure.

Since neither the ASB nor any student input appears to be involved in the process of choosing the slogan, it does not properly consider the mood and feelings of the student body. If there are no students involved, then the slogan will never actually be what the student consensus believes the school should represent.

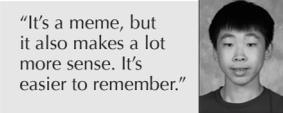
Although this year's slogan may have missed the mark in terms of how it has been perceived, involving students in the selection of future themes would likely solve these problems and produce better slogans. ♦

togetalks

How do you feel about this year's theme, "Just Learn It?"



senior Connor Oaklander



sophomore Henrik Zhang

Replacing ACT section scores problematic

by Benjamin Li & Alan Zu

The ACT commission recently announced that students are will be allowed not only to retake sections of the ACT, but also to replace their lower section scores with their best scores. This change was meant to alleviate some of the stress on students for test taking by allowing them to try one section of the test at a time.

This enables students to essentially take the ACT up to four times. Each time, they can focus on one particular section — among them are reading, grammar, math and science. Having pieced it all together, they can superscore for optimal results.

This means that even if students perform poorly on certain sections, they can still

achieve a perfect 36 by combining several test attempts, which takes much less time than students who can score a 36 in one sitting. This detracts from the original implications and achievement of getting the highest score.

Although at first this may seem beneficial for students, it actually takes away from the meaning of the ACT as a whole. If colleges become accustomed to seeing artificially high ACT scores from a larger group of students, true gradations among achievement will be muddled.

Admissions officers in turn will simply adjust for this inflation of scores. Perhaps for the first couple of years, such a policy would benefit students. In the long run, however, nothing will have changed: Average ACT scores will be higher, but so will

colleges' expectations for ACT scores. This leaves the fundamental problem in students trying to more easily impress colleges with a higher score still unresolved.

The new ACT changes also benefit well-off families at the expense of lower-income households. As standardized testing has come under increasing fire for being less and less meritocratic, the ACT adopting the new policies will only worsen criticisms.

Before taking the ACT, students must first pay an entrance fee of \$49.50. While this amount of money may seem trivial to some, there are many households that are not able to afford this fee multiple times, let alone four times to maximize each section's score in the ACT. While an ACT fee waiver does exist, students who apply for the waiver can only use it twice.

When deciding who gets in and who is rejected, colleges take many aspects of a student's application into account. If a student underperforms, or is simply unlucky during the ACT, that score may be the factor that pushes colleges to deny a particular student. In this new system, it's more likely that students will be able to present what may amount to false credentials to admissions committees.

The changes to the ACT hinder both students and colleges, only serving to create a bigger difference between affluent and underprivileged households.

In order to preserve fairness and truly demonstrate a test-taker's academic ability, the ACT should undo its changes and prevent score inflation. Don't fix what isn't broken. ♦



Demonstrated interest should not be a factor

by Anna Novoselov

Scrolling through the school specific portals in Common App, I see the same questions repeated multiple times: "How have you engaged with [insert college name here] or how have you learned about [insert college name here]?"

Students can choose among options, sometimes even as many as 10, to indicate how they have interacted with the school, such as by signing up for an official college campus tour, attending presentations hosted by college admissions representatives, emailing questions, receiving informational booklets through the mail or sitting in on a webinar.

Demonstrated interest, however, does not represent a student's merit or ability to succeed in a college environment.

Students already stress over meeting application deadlines, acquiring recommendation letters and writing college essays; the pressure to demonstrate interest is yet another burden for the students to deal with.

Instead of considering the number of times applicants have expressed interest in a school, college admissions representatives should base their decision solely on the students' accomplishments and personal character.

According to the National Association for Admission Counseling's 2016 admission trend survey, 71.3 percent of schools placed limited to considerable importance on demonstrated interest.

The 2012 version of the report also concluded that between 2004 and 2011, the percent of colleges reporting demonstrated interest as "considerably important" increased by 16 percent.

This trend may be correlated with the rise in the average number of colleges that students apply to, according to Inside Higher Ed.

With the increased competitiveness of admissions, many students feel the pressure to apply to more than seven schools, with some students even applying to upwards of 15.

Anxious about enrolling enough students, colleges (especially lower-ranked ones) fear accepting students that will simply turn away the offer of admittance.

They may even reject exceptional students with top grades and test scores if they feel that they are simply a last resort for a student who will likely choose to attend a higher-ranked school.

Consequently, demonstrated interest can mean the difference between getting waitlisted and accepted.

Since much of the information provided in official college presentations can be acquired through the colleges' websites or Google searches, which are less time-consuming, going to the presentations solely to demonstrate interest is a waste of time. Besides that, some students may have commitments that conflict with the schedules of college events in their area.

Furthermore, demonstrated interest inherently favors the middle class and wealthy who have the financial resources to travel and who are able to take time off work to accompany their children on college visits.

Attending a college tour and sitting in on classes is often considered as the best way to show interest in a college; however, many families may not have the time or money to visit nearby schools, much less schools across the nation.

Travel costs of visiting colleges should not be underestimated; the combination of flights, hotels, meals and miscellaneous expenses is a sizable sum that many families simply cannot afford, perpetuating a systemic disadvantage within the applicant pool.

While college tours certainly help students get a better picture of the school and decide if the college "feels right," visiting is more useful after students have actually been accepted to colleges and are deciding between options.

Just completing an application should be a sufficient metric of interest; if a student has taken hours of time to acquire recommendations, write supplemental essays and complete the application, they have clearly proven enough interest in a school.

Colleges should limit their consideration and tracking of demonstrated interest because the number of times and ways students directly interact with a school doesn't truly represent whether or not they will enroll if accepted. ♦

Underclassmen, don't go to college presentations

by Kaitlyn Tsai

Walking into the Trimble conference room in the main office to listen to a college presentation, I was surprised to see a few sophomores seated in the back of the room. When I attended another presentation at lunch in the MAP Annex that day, once again, I spotted a small cluster of sophomores.

Frankly, those encounters depressed me a little more than my chances of attending those colleges did.

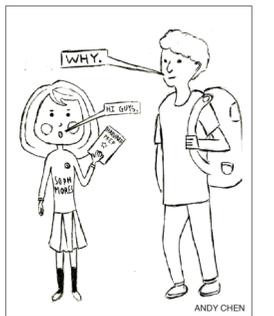
Why underclassmen feel the need to listen to these college presentations bewilders me. Regardless of whether they think they know their intended majors, freshmen and sophomores frequently change their paths as they continue to encounter new experiences throughout high school and explore what they enjoy and what they don't. College students often change their academic paths in their first two years, so for high school underclassmen to "declare their majors" is even more absurd.

This renders attending college presentations useless for underclassmen; the visits function as a way for students to find out if certain schools fit their wants, so why attend them if they don't even know their wants?

The fact that some underclassmen, still years away from having to worry about college admissions, feel the need to attend these presentations also demonstrates the extent of college obsession at our school. Rather than spending their tutorials or lunches chiseling away at schoolwork or taking the time to relax, they choose to spend 35 minutes of their time listening to a presentation, most likely with the hopes of "getting ahead" of their peers in the college admissions mania.

This isn't to say that underclassmen should disregard their plans or dismiss college as unimportant, but caring so much about college in the early stages of their high school careers is similar to neglecting to enjoy sunny weather in the process of worrying about the rain forecasted for the week after next.

Given that attending these presentations simply wastes the underclassmen's time and fuels a sense of competition that already permeates our school's culture, the administration should restrict presentation



attendance to upperclassmen. Not only can the school then ensure that there is enough space for upperclassmen to attend these visits, but such a policy would fit the school's goal of lowering academic pressure.

Contrary to how it may seem, restricting attendance to upperclassmen does not completely prevent underclassmen from learning about the schools they may want to attend.

If a freshman or sophomore really wanted to learn more about a university, he or she could simply peruse the school's website for general background information. This task takes significantly less time than the 35 minutes an underclassman would otherwise waste at a presentation where upperclassmen would ask questions about admissions, something still several years away from sophomores and freshmen.

Still, at the end of the day, college is simply a pit stop in a student's life, and the school should encourage this mentality, especially among underclassmen. Rather than spending their time fretting about admissions or attending college presentations, underclassmen should focus on enjoying the less stressful years of high school while they can and use that time to instead explore new activities that could help them determine their interests and target schools when they finally reach that bridge. ♦



Left to Right: Virginia Governor Ralph Northam, Alabama Governor Kay Ivey, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, former Congresswoman Katie Hill, and former Senator Al Franken

Courtesy of ABC News, Government of Virginia, New York Times, Times Magazine, White House

Political scandals reveal double standards

THE RESURFACE OF TRUDEAU'S BLACK FACE PHOTOS FROM 2001 REFLECTS HYPOCRISY IN PARTISAN POLITICS

By Anouk Yeh

On Sept. 19, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made international headlines when TIME Magazine published a photo of him donning blackface at a 2001 "Arabian Nights"-themed Halloween party. Soon after the first photo was published, other images of Trudeau in blackface surfaced on the internet.

In total, Trudeau was documented wearing blackface on three separate occasions. The news of the questionable behavior sparked many feelings of shock and outrage. Trudeau was met with angry protesters and bombarded with many people globally calling for him to resign.

At around the same time the Trudeau scandal broke, Republican Alabama governor Kay Ivey was also exposed for wearing blackface while participating in a racist skit in high school.

Although Ivey did receive similar criticism, none of the media coverage on her blackface scandal was as scathing as Trudeau's.

For instance, most articles covering Ivey's blackface scandal focused on her apologizing for her actions, whereas for the Trudeau scandal, the same news outlets mainly focused on his character and how the scandal contradicts his policies and character (e.g., the Washington Post and The New York Times).

This disparity between the media portrayals and reactions of the public and press is an alarming one — but certainly not un-

expected. Politicians who strive for higher standards of social reform are often placed under more intense scrutiny and are usually followed by a more "politically correct" audience.

Ever since being elected in 2013, Trudeau has been proudly progressive, often talking about protecting and prioritizing Canada's racial and gender diversity.

Ivey's overt actions, however, didn't seem as much of a surprise or act of hypocrisy as Trudeau's.

Therefore, his blackface scandal was not only highly offensive, but also an unwelcome hint that his entire political agenda based on diversity might have been little more than a facade.

This in turn angered many who previously supported him for his seemingly genuine interest in promoting diversity and equity. Many Canadians ended up feeling cheated by Trudeau's dual persona.

Even on a macrocosmic scale, Trudeau's actions were alarmingly hypocritical. Many have long idealized Canada as a haven of a country that's free of prejudices and strife.

For instance, during the 2016 U.S. elections, the internet became flooded with memes of U.S. citizens planning to im-

migrate to Canada if Donald Trump were elected, treating Canada like it was fully exempt from racism.

With Trudeau being Canada's figurehead, his actions not only clashed with his own self-proclaimed tenets, but also with the world's generalized perception of Canada. Governor Ivey, on the other hand, is a different story. In her eight years as state governor, Ivey has been staunchly conservative and at times an opponent of diversity.

In 2017, Ivey signed the Alabama Memorial Preservation Act, an act that required local governments to obtain state permission before removing or renaming historical monuments or statues.

Although her signing legislation that would preserve racist monuments can't and shouldn't be used as the sole indicator of her personal agenda or beliefs, it shows where her priorities lie.

Ivey's overt actions, however, didn't seem as much of a surprise or act of hypocrisy as Trudeau's.

Another reason for the disparity in media attention and backlash is the simple fact that Trudeau is the figurehead of an entire country, while Ivey only leads a state.

With a higher title, there is always more susceptibility to backlash. In other words, the higher up one is, the farther down one can fall.

This double standard narrative is not anything unique. In fact, it's something that has been long embedded in partisan American politics and a possible factor as to why progressive candidates are more susceptible

to resignation.

Take former Minnesota Senator Al Franken, for example. Franken resigned in 2017 amid accusations of sexual harassment. Just recently, democratic California congresswoman Katie Hill also resigned over allegations of her having an affair with a staffer on her congressional campaign.

Compare these quick resignations to the almost nonexistent ones from the Republican party.

In early May of this year, Virginia Governor Ralph Northam admitted to being one of the men donning blackface in a racist photograph from around 35 years ago. Despite protests and global calls for resignation, Northam stayed put, and the scandal is now all but forgotten.

This difference in partisan resignation probability is damaging to the Democratic party. A party soft in the face of scandal is a fragile one.

Even though there seems to be justification for the double standards that Trudeau faced after his scandal, this should not be the case.

All public servants should be held to a similar level of accountability — basic human decency.

Although double standards have been long ingrained in politics (race, gender, political affiliation), we can begin to dispel this phenomenon by realizing that there is no social hierarchy to public service.

Only then, can we hold every politician equally accountable for their actions — whether conservative or liberal. ♦

Classes should include political discussions

By Brandon Wang

In an increasingly politicized climate, it may be appealing to suppress debate in schools in order to maintain a sense of purity. These arguments generally base themselves on the need to preserve an ideal "learning environment" for students or a fear that political discussion in schools will cross the line into indoctrination.

However, as society grows more political, so must schools increase efforts to prepare students to meet the demands of the era rather than cover from them. Because the purpose of schools is to educate the next generation, education must evolve as times change. For example, Saratoga High has changed its curriculum by adding whole programs and classes that didn't exist in years prior — among them, engineering, computer science, Chinese and Media Arts. Reacting to real-life incidents and societal changes, school leaders also updated cyberbullying and dress code policies. So too it should be with politics in unprecedented times. While the divorce of politics from the classroom is often justified by a need to shield students from polarizing issues until they graduate, these well-meaning intentions do not necessitate labeling politics a taboo. Although parents similarly protect students from drugs and alcohol, this does not prevent the school from having a health class for freshmen. In both cases, education is the path to a better, more informed life.

In fact, the polarization of the current

political climate creates even more necessity to discuss politics in school so that students are better able to think critically for themselves about controversial issues and identify what is truth vs. what is misleading propaganda. Fear of discussing politics in the classroom often comes from those who fear the inculcation of a liberal bias by left-leaning teachers.

In the hands of a skilled teacher, however, students would be able to analyze the merits of multiple viewpoints and decide for themselves which ones align more closely with their values. For this to happen, teachers must be encouraged to research the multiple sides and prepare them for classroom debate rather than shut them out of the classroom altogether.

By easing the stigma around political discussion, especially when relevant to classes (such as impeachment and trade policy as it relates to the Constitution and to mercantilism), the community would better prepare its students to become more politically literate in the world and beyond. And who knows, they might even become lifelong voters and engaged citizens. ♦

Keep political views out of classroom discourse

By Apurva Chakravarthy

Given the current political climate, discussions and discourse on politics is almost inescapable, even in classroom settings. Incorporating current events would not fit well in classes for two main reasons: the lack of space and relevance in curricula for such discussions and political biases coming into play during discussions. The main reason that such discussions wouldn't be beneficial lies in the fact that curriculums are lengthy and will often times

not have the capacity for such conversations to be held and that teacher biases will often come into play and can hinder students from forming independent opinions of their own. It is a commonly accepted fact that teachers should not express their political views to their students to make sure that no student with differing opinions feels uncomfortable in their class. However, effective discussions will almost inevitably have opinions injected into the point they are trying to make due to the nature of these discussions. Many teachers intend to conduct non-partisan discussions, but it's likely that their own

prejudices will show. Some teachers don't even try at all to hide their political opinions. In discussing recent events, it is admittedly hard for anyone to be able to keep what they feel about such sensitive topics quiet when they participate in a discussion. However, in voicing their opinions, teachers often upset many students (and parents as well), potentially making the classroom a tense and uncomfortable place.

Then there's the problem that for most history classes (at least for freshmen and sophomores), the political discussions that people are pressuring teachers to hold in their classes hold no real relevance to what they are learning. And as for American history-centered classes, such as U.S. History and Government and Economics, it may be useful to try and draw connections between current events to the material being taught at the time. However, the jam-packed nature of these curriculums make using class time for such discussions a burden to the teachers. Currently, most history classes have a strict and lengthy curriculum to follow, and adding new material with no real relevance to what the class is about doesn't work. With all of this in mind, I believe that the best way to avoid all the disadvantages of talking about politics in classes while still keeping students informed about the world is for teachers to encourage students to familiarize themselves with current events by finding multiple different news outlets to corroborate the facts so that they can develop opinions for themselves. ♦



GRAPHIC BY MEGAN CHEN AND NITYA MARGAMUJALI

Phone-free areas too restrictive

By Esther Luan & Anna Novoselov

At the start of every school day, students from San Mateo High School are required to place their phones into pouches designed by the company Yondr, which lock magnetically in designated phone-free areas for the entirety of the day.

This policy came in response to studies citing that phones reduce attention and memory in schools, such as a joint study by the University of Alabama, University of Arkansas and University of Nebraska. Other schools across the country are also beginning to implement stricter policies to discourage students from relying on their smartphones — for instance, by requiring students to carry Yondr pouches.

San Mateo's administrators hoped this change would initiate a behavioral shift on campus, encouraging face-to-face communication among students and promoting emotional health.

While this rule has received positive feedback from some teachers, parents and students, restricting phone use to this extent is an overreach on the part of the school's leadership. Instead of locking the phones up, administrators should allow students

to use their phones for academic purposes, such as using the internet to look up information to complete an assignment or answer a question, or in situations when quick communication is needed.

A better option is to restrict phone use during class time, but not during breaks, passing and lunch.

Instead of setting strict rules, parents and administrators should encourage responsible phone use.

In addition, phones can be used in classrooms for online learning games like Kahoot! and platforms where students can share ideas. They can be used to quickly access the internet or to look up instructions for an assignment that is posted online.

Individual teachers should have the freedom to decide the phone policy in their classrooms. For instance, some teachers may require students to put their phones in pouches at the front of the classroom while others may request that students keep them

inside backpacks unless they're needed for a classroom activity.

Instead of buying phone pouches, schools should use their funds to support programs necessary for students' development. San Mateo High School's phone-free policy cost \$20,000 for the year, but this money could have been used to supplement sports, music programs and clubs, which help students explore their interests and develop crucial life skills like responsibility, time management and teamwork.

The reaction of the school administrators is understandable, but they should discourage distractions from phones without overstepping boundaries and micromanaging students' personal property. It doesn't solve the root of the problem either: the addiction to technology.

Instead of setting strict rules, parents and administrators should encourage responsible phone use by promoting in-person activities and by presenting ways for students to balance their online lives with their real lives, such as powering their phones off at certain times of the day.

They should help students develop a healthier relationship with technology, where they see it as a tool rather than a source of constant entertainment. ♦

Vaping policies should be stepped up

By Sandhya Sundaram

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, as of Nov. 21, there have been 47 deaths and 2,290 incidents of reported lung conditions caused by vaping and e-cigarettes since June.

Experts have been trying to learn more about the puzzling disease, referring to it as an "epidemic." This has prompted concern and anger in parents, schools, and families.

A greater focus must be placed on the health of students by educating them about the recent illnesses.

Products used by students include from JUULs, knockoff vaporizers and cannabis pens. While JUUL Labs was forced to remove many of its flavored pods, many teens are still victims to vaping, unaware of the chemical compounds and carcinogens within these products and how they can remain in the lungs and deteriorate them.

Since vaping is a relatively new method of delivering nicotine, originating 15 years ago, there has not been enough time or studies to completely comprehend the potential long-term hazards. As they did with smoking in previous generations, now, many teens may be inclined to try vaping without fully understanding the negative effects.

Schools must take action to prevent vaping by giving students proper information in ways that appeal to teenagers. Perhaps having talks put together by other high schoolers who have quit JUULing or been affected by their own JUULing or that of their family members or friends could send the message better than administrators. Punishments and consequences are no longer effective.

The new policy of administration referring students caught vaping to counselors instead of implementing an immediate punishment is a step in the right direction. However, more should be done in educating students and parents.

Having separate informational nights for vaping awareness attracts a certain crowd of parents — those who are somewhat educated and concerned about vaping. Incorporating these kinds of presentations into events that draw more parents, such as the annual parent nights for each grade or Back to School Night, would ensure that more can be informed, including those who are unaware.

The school has recently been placing posters in restrooms that state the harms of vaping, but most students are unlikely to give them a long enough glance. More effective would be a PowerPoints delivered by teachers or mandatory videos to accurately and fully inform students.

Although most students know vaping is unhealthy, they may not be aware of recent news and specific effects. While the school can help, it is also up to students to make smarter choices. Many knockoff devices have been linked to the vaping illnesses, so students must be more careful of the sources

of their products. And with recent bans on real products, fakes are widely in circulation.

A greater focus must be placed on the health of students by educating them about the recent illnesses and deaths, and providing them a path to quitting addictive habits. This can be done by placing a greater emphasis on the dangers of vaping in freshman Health classes and potentially as early as middle school. Vaping awareness could be introduced in middle school Health classes, since it is the most common drug compared to the others that are discussed in the curriculum.

With the decline of cigarette smoking over the past decade, health class curriculums should shift their focus accordingly. With vaping and specifically student JUULing on the rise, greater time and resources must be allocated combat those trends.

Part of CASSY could be to help students who are addicted and show them options to a healthier lifestyle. And while to some degree, this service already exists, the school needs better publicize it and encourage students that are struggling to actually utilize it.

Overall, if the focus shifts from excessively monitoring students to helping them, perhaps students will be more open minded. Monitoring and punishments just leads to students finding different times and locations to vape and doesn't address the root of the problem.

Similar to the opioid crisis, tactics to address this epidemic must continue to shift from a punishment model to education and rehabilitation. ♦

Moving winter formal to January will de-stress event

By Tiffany Wang

My friends and I started thinking about winter formal at the start of November, only a little more than a month after Homecoming; many of us started looking for dresses in October.

Earlier in the semester, we had enjoyed both the back-to school and Homecoming dances. As sophomores, we have had the chance to attend three dances during first semester.

Not so with second semester, which has two proms but no school-wide dances. Due to the lack of participation in previous all-grade dances such as the Spring Fling and end-of-the-year dance, the school offers just junior and senior prom as the only second-

semester dances.

Underclassmen rarely attend either one. That means that for half the student population, there is nearly a seven-month stretch without an option dance.

Another option would be to have another dance only for underclassmen, but that might be more expensive for ASB.

So what's the best solution? Push winter formal from early December to January. Other schools such as Lynbrook have their formal in the middle of January.

Not only would this be less stressful for the dance

commission, but it would also spread out dances throughout the school year instead of having all three all-grade dances in quick succession during the first semester.

For dance commission especially, they start planning the back to school dance over the summer.

Right after school starts, they start Homecoming plans. Immediately after, they start winter formal preparations.

Especially since many students are getting used to the new school year and their harder classes in the first semester, it can be stressful not only for the members of dance commission



GRAPHIC BY MEGAN CHEN

Teachers: Show SHSTV

By Andy Chen & Esther Luan

Walk around the hallways during third and fourth periods most Thursdays and Fridays, and most teachers are playing SHSTV on their screen, but some don't bother to play the broadcast at all, and they should be required to do so.

This neglect shows disrespect toward those students who put effort into actually making these broadcasts.

While some teachers may feel that playing SHSTV broadcasts cuts into their class time and activities, the school already allocates 5 extra minutes to third- and fourth-period classes dedicated to announcements and weekly broadcasts by SHSTV. This means teachers' curriculum shouldn't even be impacted by showing the broadcast.

Students can also be impacted by teachers not showing these broadcasts. SHSTV broadcasts are an entertaining and informative way for students and teachers to gain insight into different events happening around campus and connect with their peers.

More importantly, students may miss important announcements regarding upcoming events that they otherwise would have seen. After all, morning PA announcements aren't played on days when SHSTV is supposed to be shown.

Broadcast students dedicate hours of class and free time into drafting, recording and editing the shows. When teachers choose not to show the broadcasts, they send the message that this part of the school doesn't matter, and this is especially tragic at a time when the leader of the country devalues all journalists and calls them the "enemy of the people." Especially these days, teachers should set a better example.

"I understand the point of view that SHSTV takes away from instructional minutes," said senior Ryan Le, an anchor on the broadcast, "but if teachers knew how much work all the students put in, I think they would value showing it more."

While SHSTV may not be a teacher's highest priority when class material is more urgent, they should still make an effort to accommodate these broadcasts within their schedule and make the statement that students' efforts — whether in the arts, athletics or media — are important and worthy of attention. ♦

in planning for these dances but also for students in making plans to attend the events.

Having formal in December adds to the burden of worry, anxiety and stress put on students as finals are on the horizon and grades are getting finalized. For seniors, many college applications are also due in early January.

The added stress of planning what to wear, dates and pre-formal parties would only make students less inclined to go; thus moving it could even stand to increase ticket sales.

In short, moving winter formal to January would be more convenient for everyone involved and would catapult second semester to a strong start. ♦

Revisiting Animal Jam: a game of social inequality

by EstherLuan

As I maneuvered my character, Spooky StinkyPaw, through Jamaa Township, the center of trade and activity in Animal Jam, the severely pixelated brick streets hit me with a wave of nostalgia. Players went in and out of shops as different animals performed repetitive dance moves in the center of the Jamaa square, sending a variety of chat notifications: "trade me fairly," "rare spikes on trade list" and "party at my den!"

When Animal Jam was launched in 2010 by National Geographic and WildWorks, my parents viewed it as a zoology learning tool rather than a video game and were perfectly fine with me spending hours upon hours online playing it — not their brightest decision. While Animal Jam is full of zoology facts and features, my friends and I really didn't use it for learning purposes. After many years, I finally decided to make a return to Animal Jam just to see what I'd missed. Players control in-game characters such as seals, tigers, bunnies or wolves that they can customize and use to interact with other players, basically Club Penguin but with more animals and zoology.

I immediately noticed that there are considerably more things to do in the game including making jammer walls, which are basically mini blogs and hosting parties rather than just attending. There were also many, many different clothing and den items.

However, I couldn't access any of these features because they all required a membership. In fact, a lot of things that used to be free for all players (such as gifting items to other players) were now restricted to members only. Not the best update, as I'm sure everyone whose parents won't get them a membership agrees.

Just then, a dramatically dressed diva tiger caught my attention with the overhead chat bubble inviting me to "party at my den!" It had been years since I'd attended an Animal Jam party, so I clicked on the player profile, selected "visit den" and vanished from the township square.

I was transported to the middle of a gigantic pink castle, decorated with matching sparkly pink furniture.

In the garden, there were tables of virtual punch lined up on either side of the gazebo, and players messaged back and forth with their animals seated at classy booths.

I tried to make friends with some of the players, but my attempts at conversation kept being dodged. They even rejected my friend requests! I was being so nice to them, too. The only plausible conclusion I reached was that I wasn't rare enough.

You see, in Animal Jam, your worth is determined by how many rare items you have, such as those only sold in the beta version of the game. You could trade these "rares" and "betas" for other items; they were basically a social status symbol.

When I'd initially played the game back in 2015, my older brother passed his old beta account to me. His account was filled with rare and beta items, so I didn't even have to work to achieve in-game clout.

It soon became clear that if I was to get anywhere in this replay of Animal Jam, I had to become a rarer jammer. Occasionally, you meet a person who has a rare item purely out of luck.

Then you convince them that what they have is complete trash and whatever you have is priceless. Then make the trade, unfriend and disappear forever.

Sounds cruel, but kids online aren't really the nicest people. I attempted this strat-

egy many times with Spooky StinkyPaw's charms, but I had really bad luck and made little to no progress. I was getting pretty tired of it, and the game began to seem a bit pointless.

Without the cool items I had possessed when I used to play, nobody wanted to talk to me, a newbie jammer. Anyhow, I wasn't even really sure what items were considered rare anymore. At last, I decided that my journey in Animal Jam had come to an end.

Or did it? A few weeks ago, NatGeo announced a new version of Animal Jam, Feral, that is scheduled to be publicly released in 2020. Feral is meant for a teenage audience, specifically the generation of kids that grew up with Animal Jam.

All I can say is that my old friends who obsessed over Animal Jam with me were ecstatic. This announcement revived old Google Hangouts group chats that have been buried for years.

Whether or not Feral will live up to my more mature gaming standards is still to be revealed. I think I can safely say, though, that Animal Jam's materialistic societal standards are not to my liking. I'll stick to my gamepigeon for now. ♦



GRAPHIC BY JAYNE ZHOU

New free Club Penguin game falls short of original

by HarshiniVelchamy

The never-ending pizza orders moved along the conveyor belt while I struggled to simultaneously place five shrimp and a thin layer of pizza sauce on the pale crust on my screen without getting a finger cramp. My favorite game in Club Penguin, Pizzatron 3000, though I loved it so much, brought me so much pain.

Club Penguin was a multiplayer virtual game where players could design a penguin as their avatar, collect coins, and play minigames.

Club Penguin was my life. Club Penguin was my light through the dark tunnel known as third grade.

I remember begging my parents for months to get me a Club Penguin membership so I could get hair for my penguins. I now realize that my priorities were quite obscure in elementary school, but that didn't change the feeling of utter heartbreak I felt after Disney announced that it was shutting down Club Penguin for good in 2017.

Naturally, like millions of other devoted penguins around the world, I logged onto my favorite server, Zipline, once more. I played one more game of Pizzatron 3000 and fed our puffles for one last time.

It was one of the most emotional days of my life until the game got rebooted during the October of that year.

Like any loyal fan, I went to explore the new web server. Completely run and developed by fans of the original server, Club

Penguin, now known as Club Penguin Rewritten, imitated almost exactly the game loved by millions.

But there was a huge twist to it: The membership I wanted for Christmas for three years in a row was FREE.

Seconds after I heard that it was free, I made a new avatar (a lime green one, in case you were wondering). I named it Shrek and bought every wig a penguin could wear. I bought an orange puffle (since you could only get red and blue puffles if you weren't a member) and named it Tangerine. I even attempted to buy a mansion igloo, until I realized I spent all my coins on wigs.

In the beginning, I played every game that I had loved for years, such as Puffle Rescue and Sled Racing. Sadly, no one accepted my friend requests, but it's fine.

It was a blast; the first 30 minutes I played it for were the most fun I had in years. The happiness that Club Penguin brought me was actually quite disturbing.

Surprisingly enough, after the initial adrenaline had worn off, I realized that the same benefits I once would've given my left limb for lost all of their appeal. Honestly, the very idea of a penguin with hair is actually frightening, and I loved my puffle no matter what color it was.

As I've grown up, the allure of the on-line game has dissipated, not just because of the updates, but also because of my shifted mind-set. The simple joys that once made my day seven years ago are now rendered trivial. ♦

Papa's Games require laser intense focus

by AnnaNovoselov

Frantically, I loaded salmon and cream cheese fillings onto the rice, wrapped it up in a nori sheet and then drizzled duck sauce over the top, accidentally spraying some droplets on the table. Having already prepared the boba milk tea drink, I quickly cut the sushi roll, stuck the order form to the tray and waited nervously, anticipating the customer's critique of my performance.

Wanting to revisit one of my favorite early-elementary school online games: the Papa's food preparation series, (which I can shamelessly admit that I was slightly addicted to) I had searched up the different versions available.

In each game, the player tries to quickly prepare a food item through a series of repetitive motions, such as clicking at a certain time or placing toppings in specified places.

The Papa games all follow a practically identical storyline: a character is unexpectedly hired for a job after experiencing an incident that results in him or her desperately needing money.

They also have the same basic structure of four stations — taking a customer's order (first station), completing the individual steps to prepare the food/drink (second, third and fourth stations) and then serving it to the customer. Many of the rounds also feature minigames afterward (like mini races, hamburger stacking and baseball batting) for which you can receive prizes.

Although choosing between the 13 different games, including Papa's Freezeria, Papa's Burgeria and Papa's CupCakeria was agonizingly difficult, I ultimately chose Papa's Sushiria due to my passionate love

for sushi.

I remember trying to make sushi at home for my family during my sophomore year.

Somehow the sauce had turned into a solid mass in the pan and the fillings had oozed out of the nori.

It started off well. I was about to abandon college apps and become a professional sushi chef when tragedy struck.

My shop got more and more crowded as I leveled up; the increased number of customers brought me desperation and overwhelming stress.

I thought that Papa's Sushiria would be a relaxing break from schoolwork, but it was an endeavor that required intense concentration, mental willpower, finger dexterity and time management.

I had to press buttons at exactly the right time and spread toppings evenly because apparently every single sushi piece had to be identical down to the amount of carrot inside (which doesn't make sense since who even puts carrots in sushi?)

Playing that game sucked up valuable time from my first and second-grade self — time that I could have spent playing with toys or finding a cure for cancer.

However, I likely learned critical life skills like keeping track of multiple tasks at once and carefully following directions.

Also, I am much better at making tacos than I am at making sushi, so maybe I have to thank Papa's TacoMia for that.

While I will not continue playing Papa's games due to their unoriginality and repetitiveness, I'm honored to say that I was once a loyal follower who had advanced up the ranks in many of the [insert name]s. Papa ... I hope I made you proud. ♦

K-pop training deters auditioners

by EstherLuan & TiffanyWang

In the past, Korean entertainment companies, in search of foreign potential K-pop (a popular style of music originating in South Korea) idols, have hosted auditions around the world. These global auditions have come to California multiple times, in locations such as Los Angeles and the Bay Area, at which there are many willing participants.

However, not many of these participants seriously consider a career as a K-pop idol, not only due to the lack of success in the field, but the extra scrutiny that comes with being "foreign," or non-Korean.

In March, a senior girl, who has asked to stay anonymous, auditioned spontaneously for Stone Music Entertainment, a company with well-known artists such as Chungha and AOA.

"My friend wanted to audition, and I had a free afternoon, so why not, I thought," she said.

The audition, which lasted less than two minutes, comprised of her showing off a dance that she had learned from YouTube. She danced to a panel of two representatives from the company and two translators.

"While I was dancing, the judges were so stone-faced," she said. "They had no expression at all, it was so scary."

Right after the audition, the judges asked her why she wanted to become an idol and if she wanted to go to Korea, but she said she only did the audition for fun. Even if she made it past all the stages, she recalled, she admitted she would not have pursued a career as a K-pop star.

This senior girl is not alone in her sentiments of dreaming of becoming an idol without actually pursuing the career due to the implications of becoming a K-pop idol. For an aspiring K-pop artist, there are countless pitfalls along the way, and the

chance of real success is extremely low.

Long-time fans with insight in the industry's culture are well acquainted with seeing the image of glory and stardom that idol life displays; however, the reality is far from glamorous, warding off many who would otherwise consider the career.

K-pop trainees undergo grueling training before they are even considered for debut, which is never guaranteed. Idols and trainees must sign long-term contracts, aptly nicknamed "slave contracts," as they re-

K-pop stars are constantly scrutinized and judged by the Korean public, especially the online Korean community, colloquially known as "netizens." Netizens are notorious for being especially vicious, often hypocritical in their comments, and extremely hard to please. This mercilessness may result from projection of strict Asian culture ideals on a relatively new and fast-changing industry; moreover, many idols' careers have been jeopardized by the internet's amplification of a careless mistake or comment.

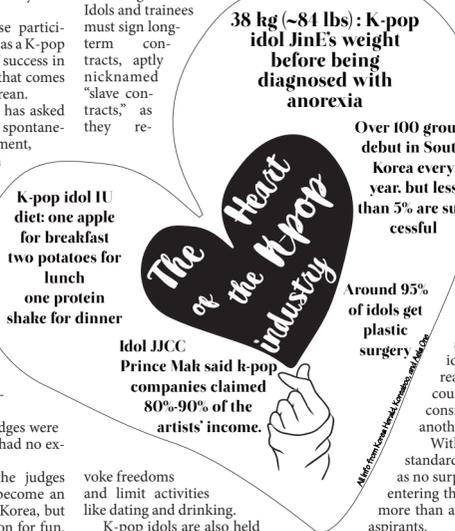
It's an even longer and more arduous path for foreigners who seek to succeed in the industry. Foreign idols and trainees are often treated as inferiors and given less consideration for debut.

In fact, only 1 percent of active idols are foreign — the vast majority of whom are also East Asian, demonstrating the extreme bias against non-Koreans. Even idols who are ethnically Korean but have lived in other countries before debuting are considered a mix of Korean and another race.

With all of these overwhelming standards and prejudices, it comes as no surprise that the idea of actually entering the K-pop industry can be no more than a far-fetched dream for most aspirants.

While the senior girl who went to the audition continues to enjoy K-pop as a music genre and culture, the harsh idol life is not for her, she decided.

"I think it really depends on how big of a dream it is," she said. "If it's your ultimate life goal, then go for it. But if it's just a day thought or a fantasy, then I'd think it through first." ♦



JOKER: stunning but shallow

by BenjaminLi & AllenLuo



Scenes such as the violent clown mobs and the hysterical, maniacal protagonist have led to criticism of the recently released film "Joker." Starring Joaquin Phoenix as failed comedian Arthur Fleck, who suffers from a serious mental health issue, the movie follows his descent into madness on the streets of Gotham City for an action-packed two hours.

Fleck's story starts with him living with his mother in their shabby apartment, working as a clown twirling a sign outside a store in order to financially support himself along with his mother. Fleck is a former patient at a psychiatric facility who suffers from a condition that causes him to break into uncontrollable fits of laughter at seemingly random times.

Fleck idolizes comedian and TV host Murray Franklin, and has the dream of going into comedy. However, after being beaten up by a group of thugs one day, Fleck turns toward a path of violence instead of pursuing this dream.

With stunning cinematography, "Joker" deftly engages its audience in a heart-stopping thriller that is sure to have

them on the edge of their seats with suspense. The movie's premise offers an intriguing story and the action-filled areas of the film are well executed. "Joker" also references many other movies, most notably producer Martin Scorsese's "The King of Comedy."

However, the movie is lacking in several areas. First, Phoenix's portrayal of Fleck is slightly over-the-top and unrealistic, unintentionally making a mockery of everyone who has ever been bullied or excluded.

Other sections also are unbelievable at times, and some feel forced and dull. Specifically, Fleck's murders of three businessmen in the subway is unlikely in a real-life scenario, and his actions that cause a massive wave of protests from citizens is also implausible.

In addition, the audience is left to their own devices to figure out what is real in the movie and what Fleck's hallucinations create, which causes confusion. Critics seem to be split into the two extremes about the movie. On one side, critics from Rolling Stone praised the film as "simply stupendous," while the Associated Press called it a "misjudged attempt to marry the madness of a disturbed individual to today's violent and clownish times."

When looking at the movie as a whole, it could be conceived as an interesting work that explores the dark nature of modern society.

Regardless of its flaws, "Joker" is a must-watch for comic-crazy fans who love to explore the backstory of every character. But if you are looking for an uplifting superhero movie, it would probably be better to wait for upcoming movies such as "Wonder Woman," or "Black Widow." ♦

Program adds film training at Howard U.

by EmilieZhou

After a long day of lectures and classwork, excited Howard University students filed into one of the Amazon Studios' buildings, prepared to learn more about the ins and outs of the entertainment and film industry.

According to Forbes Magazine, Howard University, a university located in Washington, D.C., that historically attracts many African American students, announced last month that it has partnered with Amazon Studios to create Howard Entertainment.

The program, set to launch in January, is designed to help increase diversity in the media industry by offering a variety of opportunities to African-American students and students from other marginalized communities.

"The vision of Howard Entertainment is to offer a one-of-a-kind experience for students interested in all aspects of entertainment, from project green-lighting, to PR and marketing, to entertainment law and finance," said Howard University President Wayne A. I. Frederick in a press release.

The program provides an immersive two-semester experience in Los Angeles, where students can take academic courses during the spring semester and then participate in hands-on work with Amazon employees and other industry professionals during the summer semester. The program will be open to upperclassman and graduate students at Howard University and students must go through a competitive interview process to apply.

According to Variety magazine, Amazon Studios' headquarters is located in Santa Monica, so having the program in Los Angeles will allow students to have more frequent opportunities to network within the industry. In Los Angeles, students will also be able to meet Amazon's industry partners.

Not only will the program allow students to meet certain graduation requirements, but it will also give students the opportunity to develop new skills required for pursuing a career in the entertainment industry.

For Amazon, "supporting aspiring entertainment leaders" through Howard Entertainment will help ensure that there are a variety of "diverse perspectives and experiences" being shared. Head of Amazon Studios Jennifer Salke said to NBC News.

"This program is all about intentionality — being intentional about increasing and preparing the next generation of African American, Latinx and Native American storytellers, casts, crew, and executives working on these projects," Amazon Studio's Global Head of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Latasha Gillespie said.

Given Howard University's "proven track record" of developing notable actors, comedians and musicians, this collaboration will allow the school to "have an even greater impact" on the industry, Frederick said. For example, some famous actors who have attended Howard University include Chadwick Boseman, who recently starred in "Black Panther" and Taraji P. Henson, who starred in "Hidden Figures" in 2016.

As the entertainment industry continues to grow, other companies and schools should also seek to create similar programs. Even though there have been efforts in increasing diversity in the industry, creating more programs like Howard Entertainment will open more doors for minorities.

According to senior Ritika Kuppam, who is planning on studying majors that incorporate aspects of media, this program will positively impact the industry and students.

"I think this program will be extremely impactful," Kuppam said. "It's very unfortunate that minorities are severely disadvantaged in the film industry, and programs like this will help establish more quality when it comes to entertainment education." ♦

ALL GRAPHICS BY NITYA MARIMUTHU



PG&E for all of the fires and blackouts

BY Manasi Garg

This is a note of heartfelt gratitude to the good people of the Pacific Gas and Electric Company for shutting off the power to hundreds of thousands of people in the Bay Area three times this past month with little rhyme or reason.

Look, I get it and even kind of appreciate that you're trying to protect us from fires by stopping electricity from flowing through YOUR faulty infrastructure. (That is why you're bankrupt now, isn't it?) But make it make sense.

If my house has no power, then the place three houses down should also have no power. I should not have to finish math homework by lantern light like a Pilgrim while I watch my neighbors next door host an appetizers-only dinner party where people eat cubes of cheese off of sticks.

Tell me again how cutting the power of half the

houses on a street while leaving the other half on prevents fires. If running electricity near mountainous regions really is a fire hazard, maybe consider fixing your power lines or selling them to city governments to repair themselves. Maybe then you'll stop accidentally setting parts of Northern California on fire each fall.

Because as much as I love it when private companies monopolize an essential utility without any accountability, it just might be time to admit defeat, PG&E.

Still, I have to extend my sincerest thanks to your corporation for providing a sense of adventure in my life that I have never experienced before.

The rush of adrenaline I get when my power suddenly shuts off and I'm halfway done with my English Socratic seminar prep that's due the next day is unparalleled to any other thrill I have felt.

And luckily, washing my hair in ice cold water means that I'll catch a cold bad enough to warrant a

sick day from school, giving me ample time to catch up on my schoolwork! (AKA, spend six hours rewatching "Gossip Girl.")

Plus, having no Wi-Fi humbles me: Being forced to leave the comfort of my own home for the nearest fly-infested cafe with low bandwidth really provides me with character-developing insights into the tough, tough life of the modern American teen.

Oh, and that whole setting California on fire thing? If anything, you've made my decision easier: In the future, I will not be raising my family in the United States.

And I get to experience all of this joy and personal growth in my life because of you, PG&E. So thank you. Because you represent what the holidays really are — weekends spent around the dining room table ranting angrily about corrupt corporations, useless politicians and humanity's inevitable demise via climate change. All as we citizens sit in the dark. Literally. ♦

Harvard hoodie for making me smart

BY Kaitlyn Tsai

It's 11:59 p.m. I'm hunched at my desk, desperately trying to make sense of the numbers and variables floating before my half-lidded eyes. Exhausted, I slam my textbook shut and toss my pile of scratch paper in the recycling bin.

At this point, I'm convinced that all I'm learning from Calculus BC is that I'm a lot worse at algebra than I thought. But am I accepting the L that I am about to take on the test tomorrow?

No. Absolutely not. I'm preparing for battle, armed not just with my knowledge of differentiation and L'Hôpital's rule, but also my trusty Harvard hoodie.

I purchased the hoodie the summer before my freshman year while my parents took my older sister and me to visit colleges. Because I bought the hoodie from Harvard's

souvenir shop, I figured its authenticity would bring me pieces of Harvard-intellectual good luck — and for the most part, it hasn't disappointed.

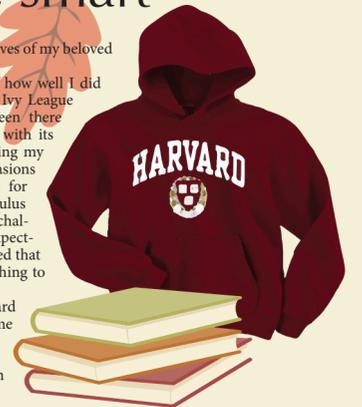
My well-worn, maroon friend has carried me through numerous academic challenges since freshman year. Fifty point in-class essay? Turns out that prompt wasn't so hard because I was wearing my Harvard hoodie. Math final? My hoodie let me solve every problem smoothly — with time for checking my work! AP exams? Didn't even need that extra practice from Barron's because — you guessed it — I was wearing my lucky hoodie.

Admittedly, my Harvard hoodie hasn't always granted me the best of luck. There was that Chemistry quiz where I mixed up oxidation and reduction and wanted nothing more than to curl up inside my hoodie and disappear. And of course, there was also that Precalculus test that left me wiping

away tears on the sleeves of my beloved hoodie.

Still, regardless of how well I did on those exams, my Ivy League friend has always been there for me, blessing me with its good luck or absorbing my tears on the rare occasions that it didn't. (And for the record, that Calculus exam posed less of a challenge to me than I expected, and I am convinced that my studying had nothing to do with it.)

Thank you, Harvard hoodie, for guiding me through the darkest hours of high school and shining a light on my academic path. ♦



Mom and Dad for 'teaching' me how to drive

BY Shama Gupta

Thank you, Mom, for getting over your fear of being in the car with me, and for teaching me how to "keep everyone alive when I'm driving." Witnessing you being uncomfortable in the passenger seat has been a blast so far.

Thank you for telling me to change lanes and for looking at my blindspot at the same time I do, before finally turning back to me and telling me that I didn't check my blindspot. I know that moms don't really have eyes on the back of their heads, but I didn't expect this!

Anyway, I seriously think it's a safety hazard that you choose to text while I'm trying to drive. I know going places is a lot more fun for you since I started "driving," but if you don't help me get better now, I'm going to fail my driving test (on Dec. 20 — if you don't see me driving spring 2020, don't ask me why — I probably failed).

But most of all, thanks for all the iconic things you say to me while I drive. Here are some of my favorite ones:

"When are you going to get the 'student driver' sticker? You're annoying everyone on the road!" It's been more than six months, Mom. I'm really sorry, but I procrastinated

that one so long that I don't think I need it anymore.

"Hold the wheel tighter. If you hold it this flimsy during the test, the instructor will fail you on the spot! And you think that you're stronger than me..." OK, I will admit I was being careless that one time, but hey, I'm most definitely still stronger than you.

"WHY is your reaction time so slow? I didn't put you in sports as a kid for this." Mom, I'm pretty sure I have a good reaction time. Maybe this is because of your reaction time in noticing my reaction time. So don't worry, all the rides to sports practices weren't for nothing.

These are great, but what's a "thank you for teaching me how to drive" letter if I don't mention Dad? So thank you, Dad, for roasting my height. I think I'm the average height for my age, but I guess average isn't good enough.

After I adjust the seat he's sat in, he says "Shama, you're SO close to the wheel. Why are you so short? You need to drink more water and eat more and grow taller." And to this, I honestly have no response.

Thank you for knowing how to get anywhere. Your sense of direction is crazy good. But I find your directions

hard to follow when you tell me to drive on the left lane, only to say that I need to take a right just before the intersection.

Thank you for telling me to slow down when I'm going 28 in a 25. Of course, this doesn't apply when I drive with my sister, who thinks my seat positioning makes it hard for me to step on the accelerator (seriously). But, I heard that our neighbor got a speeding ticket for going 30 in a 25, so I'll take your advice seriously on this one.

In all seriousness, thank you guys for teaching me how to drive. I know that you guys are both doing it so I'll be able to drive away from home and into the real world, but I'm learning so that I can drive right back to you.

And Mom, don't worry. I know I didn't inherit your and Dad's sense of direction, but the GPS will guide me when I'm lost. ♦



Spotify for having playlists for every occasion

BY Shreya Kulkarni

Whenever my parents see me listening to music while doing homework, they tell me that I would be a lot more efficient if I turned the music off. Personally, I don't agree with this mentality because listening to music cancels out the other noises around me, helping me focus on my work. Also, it makes completing homework assignments a lot more enjoyable.

Music is a very important part of my life, and I can't imagine living without it. I am especially thankful for Spotify premium because it makes cre-

ating playlists for different occasions easy. Also, Spotify is really good at recommending new music for me based on my playlists.

I also love using the playlists they already have created for different occasions. For example, their Workout Beats playlist is really good because it includes many well-known pop songs with the sole purpose of giving me the energy to finish a particularly difficult workout.

Spotify is also there for me when I need music to jam out to on my way to school. I created a separate driving playlist on Spotify with my favorite songs



to sing along to. Without music on the way to school, I would probably end up falling asleep, since I am definitely not a morning person. Also, I love listening to throwback hits when driving with my friends.

I don't think a single day this year has passed where I haven't listened to music. Listening to music has also become a much larger part of my routine since I started using Spotify. Thank you Spotify, for being there for me these past four years of high school. ♦



ALL GRAPHICS BY JESSICA WANG AND EMILIE ZHOU

Finessing formal: an expert guide to success

megalo

Megan Chen

As someone who has never been in a relationship that's lasted longer than three days, my experience with formal season has always been rough. The dilemma of whether or not to even go, how to find a date or what to wear is enough to make anyone's head hurt. Fortunately, these past few years has made me an expert in formal.

First is the question of deciding whether or not to go. As a senior, I've only missed my freshman year formal, and I regret not going. Formal has the highest attendance of all school dances, and the food and activities make it worth it. Most people decide to go based on whether or not they'll have a

date, because they don't want to go "stag," or alone. However, if all of their friends are, they might as well go and it'll likely be just as memorable. Plus, the process will be good preparation for prom. Unless they truly don't enjoy dances, or none of their friends are going, I would encourage every student to attend.

Student A recruits Student B to do a background check on their target, Student C.

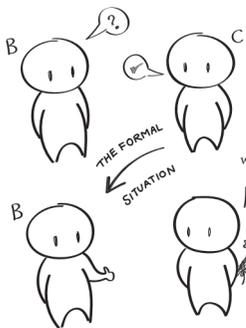
For those who would like to go with a date, the next step is arguably the most difficult. When formal season approaches, the school becomes a battleground, where every single (haha, get it) student competes for a date. The halls are filled with whispers of who wants

to go with who, and students rush to claim a date before everyone is taken.

Of course, the easiest way to snatch a date is just to ask the person directly. But for those of us who don't have the courage to do that, an easier, more common way exists. Student A recruits Student B to do a background check on their target, Student C. Are they going to formal? Do they have a date? And finally, would they go with Student A?

Another viable method is to ask a friend from another school. Not only would it be less embarrassing if you were rejected, but you would help the school earn more money if they do agree to come.

The outfit is often just as difficult to figure out. Unlike prom, the color choices should stay relatively holiday-themed, like black, red, green, white, etc. For girls, it often entails weeks of dress shopping, from online



It's also essential to bring a change of shoes if you choose to wear heels, or you will undoubtedly follow in my footsteps and be forced to go barefoot on the dance floor.

For all students, it's best to order an outfit at least two weeks before formal, so that they have time to find a new one if it doesn't fit, and to try it on with different styles of hair, shoes and accessories.

Although my advice is foolproof, what's most important is that you enjoy your time. If finding a date or your outfit truly makes you uncomfortable, you don't have to do it.

And if you just don't want to spend that money on formal, my final tip is to get a VR headset and FaceTime a friend at the dance; you'll get all the fun with absolutely none of the dreadful work. ♦

stores like Lulu's, Lucy in the Sky and Windsor, to department stores like Macy's and Nordstrom. It can often drive them insane; last year I was so frustrated I contemplated wearing a trash bag as a dress.

How to escape from your family like a pro

cala-mari

Marisa Kingsley

It's almost December, and the holidays are upon us — lounging around a house that smells of baking cookies, watching bad Hallmark movies, studying for agonizing finals, burning Yankee candles and enduring cumbersome family debates. Almost every year without fail, my winter break is spent at home with extended family. Typically, only my paternal grandparents stay with us, but last year my house became the hub for all my mom's relatives during the holidays.

Don't get me wrong, I love my family, but my holiday break is a time for me to evade people from the comfort of my own home. After applying the last of my brain power on finals, I no longer have the strength to repress my social ineptitude. Couple that with half a dozen more family members in the house — I knew it was going to get cringy.

Since my uncle and aunts have different interests, the house is quiet during the day, aside from my grandma watching golf games on TV.

However, this all changes when we sit down for dinner.

During the holidays, my family makes liberal use of our wine cellar. This usually results in nothing more than certain relatives laughing too much at their own jokes. My older sister and I find ourselves trapped listening to our relatives talk about their embarrassing teenage escapades. Additionally, they continuously try to coerce us to talk about our love lives when we desperately just want to eat our Christmas leftovers in stilted silence.

I'm sure many people have similar experiences. Although we love our families, sometimes they don't understand certain boundaries that we have. So as the holiday season dawns upon us and we spend more time with them, here are some tips to keep in mind.

While none of these tips are foolproof, they're worth a shot if you're really in need of an escape from your family this holiday season.

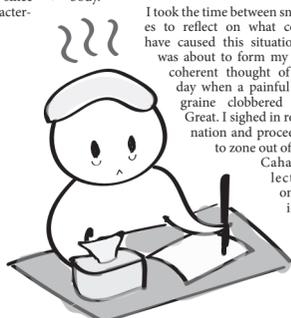
The first one is quite obvious, but it's one of the most effective — physically leave the room. Parents bragging about your sibling to your relatives? Grandparents asking about your (nonexistent) romantic partner? Leave the room. Although this may work in the short term, it's not the most discreet, so exercise it at your own risk.

Another option is to make plans in advance with friends. Hit two birds with one stone and go out with a friend who's also looking for an escape; that way, you two can instead be judged in public together for avoiding "valuable family bonding time."

You may also consider making plans with family that will receive little to no enthusiasm. I've found that hikes are usually not popular, especially since it's still hot in the middle of December (thanks global warming).

If you can't leave the house, perhaps volunteering to do help with chores such as cooking or laundry. That way, you'll most likely be secluded to one area of the house and lessen your chance of awkward encounters with relatives.

But, if you're really out of options, you can always tough it out and cringe later. Who knows, maybe you can reflect upon your experiences for a college essay since admissions officers love good character-building experiences. ♦



Being sick elicits deep, if groggy, thoughts

olive garden

Oliver Ye

I woke up to the sound of my obnoxious blaring alarm, feeling nauseous. My head was clanging, as if someone had hit me with a hammer, and my eyes were itchy. Again? This was the third time that I had felt sick since school began less than two months ago.

Perhaps I had gotten the flu? If I had the flu, at least I wouldn't have to go to school. The thermometer beeped apathetically. 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit.

Allergies? But it was the middle of fall. It wasn't even supposed to be allergy season! A cold? No way.

I was miffed. I felt terrible but because I didn't have a fever or flu, I had to go to school.

The entirety of Ms. Daly's first-period lecture on the relationship between settlers of the 13 colonies and Native Americans was punctuated by my sneezes (all 17 of them).

Why couldn't my immune system just get its act together? My immune system is supposed to be an almighty barrier against pathogenic invaders. Instead, it was more like a flimsy traffic cone, sitting idly as torrents of infectious invaders rushed into my body.

I took the time between sneezes to reflect on what could have caused this situation. I was about to form my first coherent thought of the day when a painful migraine dlobbered me. Great. I sighed in resignation and proceeded to zone out of Ms. Cahatol's lecture on net ionic

equations in an attempt to avoid using any brainpower. My attempt to conserve my energy failed, as Ms. Cahatol proceeded to expose me in front of the entire class, loudly asking if I thought her lecture was boring.

When I finally collapsed onto my bed later that day, my mind drifted off and I started thinking about philosophical questions. What is the purpose of life? What was the point of Ms. Cahatol's lecture? And most importantly, why am I perpetually sick? That one had me stumped.

I literally could not place it, but I did realize that every time I had gotten sick, I slept very late the day before.

After asking around, it seemed that many of my friends were also getting sick because they were sleeping later due to the higher workloads and high levels of stress.

Because simply feeling sick isn't much of an excuse to skip school, and also because no one wants to fall behind, students have to find a way to cope with sickness somehow.

Many students choose to simply "push through it" by starting their days with a coffee for a kick of energy that they hope will last throughout the day (it doesn't); however, this is just a short-term solution for feeling sick, since feeling weak or sick is a symptom that your body's internal defenses are not properly defending against viruses or germs.

This often leads to a negative cycle — students don't take the time to fully recover and as a result they aren't able to make that much progress on homework — which leads to more homework and feeling worse.

There aren't any cure-all methods, but as a result of all of the times that I had gotten sick, I've learned a couple of tricks to help myself recover quickly and feel better.

First, I drink a lot of orange juice or water. Flooding my body with liquid essentially helps it regenerate after it has been trampled by invading germs and pathogens.

Second, I take a lot of naps. I don't see in staying up and clawing my way through two math questions in 45 minutes when I could be sleeping and recovering.

But most importantly, I make sure to wake up early instead of sleeping later, since all staying up late does is drain on my concentration and make me feel worse.

Unfortunately, I don't see any way to curb my chronic procrastination, so I suppose that I'll have to suffer bouts of illness throughout my junior year. ♦

ALL GRAPHICS BY JESSICA WANG

SO YOU WANT TO BE A SUB?

HOW SUBS QUALIFY TO LEAD ABSENT TEACHERS' CLASSES

By Allison Hartley

1. Take the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST) and obtain a valid California teaching credential from the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) or a 30-day sub permit. By the way, you must have a college degree, too.
2. Apply to be a substitute teacher for the Los Gatos-Saratoga district via the Edjoin website.
3. Once registered and approved after background checking, check Frontline listings, voicemail and email religiously to get the jump on available sub positions.
4. Arrive at Saratoga High and collect keys and attendance from school secretary Pola Michelle. Alas or someone else in the office. Teachers usually leave sub plans in their classes or on the Frontline site.
5. At minimum, take roll at the start of the period. Then follow the sub plans. Most teachers want subs to leave a note at the end of the day summarizing what happened in each period. Some subs are retired teachers and can keep the class moving forward with actual lessons.
6. A full day of subbing pays \$175.

Substitute teachers for the Los Gatos-Saratoga district can apply through the EdJoin website, a job listing site for educators. Beyond the usual resume and reference requirements, potential substitute teachers must possess either a valid California teaching credential via the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) or a 30-day sub permit. The CTC administers the permit with some basic skill requirements and scores from the California Basic Educational Skills

FROM THE SUB-LIME TO THE RIDICULOUS: SUB AND STUDENTS RECOUNT MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES IN THE CLASSROOM

1. ALON KELLER
Substitute for history teacher Todd Dwyer's class for three months last spring. I was able to establish some rapport with my students and that was really nice because it felt less like being a substitute and more like being a teacher of record. Now, as I'm back for this school year for a few days at a time, I see familiar faces from the 9th graders who are now sophomores, and they say, "Hey Mr. Keller, how's it going?" and that's really good. It's nice to just keep my face around and run into

2. JUNIOR ELYSE HULME
On her favorite substitute teacher. I've had John so many times, and he's just such a familiar face. He's just nice to the class and I always have a good experience when he's the sub. I think we kind of recognize each other, so we're not strangers. When I walk into the classroom and I see that John is the sub, I'm happy because there are subs that aren't the best, but I know that John is always great.

3. SENIOR BIKRANT DAS SHARMA
On a sub for chemistry teacher Kathy Nakamatsu's class last year. We were supposed to watch a documentary on nuclear fission and its application to nuclear bombs, reactors, power sources, etc. But the sub was super passionate about nuclear fission and spent at least 45 minutes teaching us how to get the uranium, stuff for the reactor, etc. Then he taught us the bomb making process. It was pretty complicated stuff, so [the class] was kind of confused.

GRAPHIC BY KAITLYN TSAI

P-Rob returns as service learning coordinator

By Allison Hartley

Students may be surprised to see recently retired principal Paul Robinson greeting students and staff during the school day this fall, but P-Rob's sporadic cameos on campus are part of his new position as service learning coordinator.

Robinson stepped in as coordinator this fall after the school's former coordinator, Tim Galleher, started working full-time for Valley Christian High School at the end of the 2018-19 school year.

Robinson, who said he did not want to see the program disappear, volunteered to take it over with "all of this free time" in his retirement.

The service learning program, which began with a district grant in 2013, facilitates student and staff involvement in volunteer projects. During the holidays, the program arranges the annual Family Giving Tree drive, where students purchase gifts described by gift tags for children in need and place the presents under the tree in the office. The program also works with teachers, initiating service learning into the curriculum. For example, the AP Environmental Science class works with Galleher to create student-run service projects; last year, 120 students from the class volunteered a total of 500 hours.

As the service learning coordinator, Robinson will serve as the liaison between organizations and the school, corresponding with each group to schedule events and recruit volunteers.

Although service learning projects happen less often early in the school year, Robinson said they tend to build up in the spring semester.

Some organizations, Robinson said, require a lot of back and forth correspondence, causing slight delays in committing to a date and organizing supplies for the project.

"I think my blood pressure dropped 80 points, but I love being here."



EX-PRINCIPAL Paul Robinson

Non-profit groups must sometimes pay special care to organizing dates for when their supplies — such as raw food materials, bags and bins — will be available. Others must coordinate based on seasonal need. During the holidays, groups often receive more volunteers than they need, whereas during other parts of the year, they lack adequate help.

With organizations that the school has traditionally worked with, the communication is more streamlined and efficient.

"When all of our students and teachers get involved in the program, organizations know that these are really great folks coming down, that they're going to work hard and that they're going to be kind," Robinson

conducted by the district office. The open position, which usually results from a planned absence of a few weeks to months, due to situations like maternity leave or health-related issues, is posted on EdJoin rather than Frontline.

"The result of this process? Periods, weeks and months spent with new — or familiar — faces who connect with students, become familiar presences on campus and, in some cases, remind students of memorable experiences in the classroom. ♦

Robinson said the program has grown from less than 150 volunteers in 2013 to nearly 600 to 700 student participants today.

"We're very, very blessed in this area, and there are a lot of privileges that we have that a lot of folks don't have," Robinson said. "For our students, our staff and me, being able to work in different environments where people are not so privileged and gaining empathy for the situations that they're in creates stronger ties to our world."

Service, he said, also unites communities for their common goal. He remembered a project in San Diego that he was part of before coming to Saratoga, in which 1,600 students and over 400 family groups packaged over 1 million meals over the course of a three-day weekend, working together in groups of six. Student groups like sports teams and clubs banded together with people in the community, and their collective work impacted communities in Tanzania and the Philippines and Haitian families affected by Hurricane Gustav in 2008.

"We did it out in a parking lot and had all the materials out there and people just came and worked hard," Robinson said. "Lots of loud music, lots of complaints from our neighbors, but that's okay. We were doing a good thing."

He also said volunteers can use this understanding to offer their help in closing the gap current reality and what they want the world to be.

Beyond getting a good handle on his new position, Robinson hopes to bring school-

Should juniors respect the senior parking lot?

by Nitya Marimuthu
& Jayne Zhao

Since she got her driver's license last year, senior Mia Gunderson has looked forward to parking in the coveted "senior spots," the first two rows of the parking lot in front of the gym. As she arrived at school this year, finally having this chance, she noticed that several spots had already been taken, but not by seniors. Instead, she saw many juniors "skrrting" around in their flashy cars, such as BMWs and Teslas taking spots.

Almost all juniors and seniors who drive to school understand the unspoken parking lot rules. The juniors park in the lot by the football field, nicknamed "Africa" for its distance from the school, while the seniors park in the middle lot located in front of the gym lobby. The junior lot contains around 150 spots while the senior lot contains 250 spots.

The divide between the "senior lot" and "junior lot" has been ongoing for more than 10 years, according to campus supervisor Mark Hernandez. At some point, when Hernandez began working at the school, "seniors only" was even painted on the curbs to designate the best parking

spots for seniors. But that school-sponsored tradition went away, and all that remains today is white paint covering over those words.

However, the idea of claiming spots for different grades hasn't always existed at the school. Although no one is quite sure when this tradition started, it was not around during the 1990s, when attendance secretary Mandy Armes attended the school. During that time, the spots were first come, first serve, she said.

Word of this parking tradition spreads through grades in different ways. Most students seem to hear the "rule" from siblings or friends, while others hear it firsthand from annoyed seniors.

Junior Tyler Chu said that his older friends explained the difference between the two areas when he was a freshman, although he wrongly thought the senior privilege also included particular spaces. Chu said he might still park in the senior lot when he is able to drive. He said he will have some slight concern about receiving backlash, but he is not too worried.

Junior Allison Ha admits to parking in the senior lot, but only in the last few rows. She said the juniors are not necessarily restricted to parking in the far back

of the lot, but she agrees with the senior lot "rule" because she understands that the seniors waited their turn to park in the senior lot.

Students seem to hear the "rule" from siblings or friends, while others hear it firsthand from annoyed seniors.

"The juniors don't necessarily need to park in Africa, they should just park in the back two rows of the middle parking lot," Ha said. "However, when I am a senior I don't want juniors parking in the senior lot either."

Another junior girl, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said she also parks in the last few rows of the senior lot and feels that all spaces are fair game. She said that she will continue to park in the senior lot, despite having minor concerns over the seniors getting angry at her.

"I get the hierarchy, but it's really not that big of a deal," Hernandez said. "You just got to park where there's parking." ♦

they try to remain in the last few rows, many seniors observe some juniors wandering closer to the more coveted spots, blurring the old, established line between the seniors and juniors.

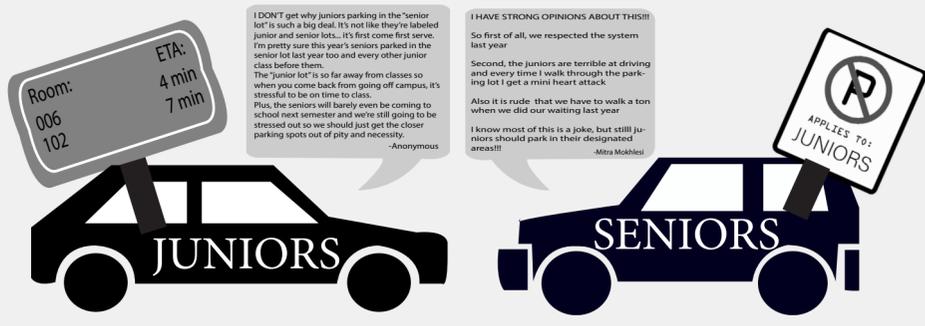
"Last year I used to come way later, but now if I don't come [at 7:55] I can't find any parking," senior Simrita Advani said. "It's supposed to be a 'senior lot' and 'junior lot,' not what's happening now."

Contrary to the recent complaints from seniors, Hernandez said that the senior lot does not seem to be more occupied by juniors than usual. He also said that the lots fluctuate in how full they are depending on class sizes.

Hernandez added that he does not enforce the separation of the junior and senior lots. He believes that the tradition does not reflect real life, where people have to come early to get a good parking spot. He believes the seniors should come earlier if they want the front parking spots.

Although Hernandez understands the high school dynamic between classes, he said that the seniors need to move past their complaints.

"I get the hierarchy, but it's really not that big of a deal," Hernandez said. "You just got to park where there's parking." ♦



English books chosen based on standards

by Esther Luan
& Oliver Ye

While all sophomore English classes last year learned about propaganda and political persuasion techniques, not all teachers opted to use the same books for the unit.

Some classes read "All Quiet on the Western Front," while others read "1984." This decision boils down to teacher preference: as long as the same skills are being taught, English teachers say.

English teacher Sarah Thermond said she chose "All Quiet" because she had previously prepared the materials for it. "I've only taught '1984' once before — since I was out for most of that unit on medical leave last year, I went with the book that I had the most ready-to-go resources for," she said.

While Thermond's decision was different from some of the other English 10 classes, both "1984" and "All Quiet on the Western Front" emphasize some similar themes.

Similarly, in the English 10 unit on identity, some classes read "The Namesake," others read "The Joy Luck Club," while still others, like Thermond's, are split into small groups, each reading a different one.

"The idea is that all three of those books are a similar level of difficulty, have similar themes, and all of them will lend themselves to major writing projects," Thermond explained. "I can choose as long as the book that the teacher is covering fits with the overall topic and the standard assignments."

In fact, English teachers sometimes drop texts entirely in favor of more relevant, educational or interesting material. For example, English 11 Honors teachers Amy Keys and Natasha Ritchie decided to replace "The

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" by Mark Twain with "Beloved" by Toni Morrison five years ago. The reason: It was a richer book thematically and a better fit for an Honors class unit on slavery.

Switching books isn't always easy, however. It means spending money on new books, and budgets are limited. At Saratoga High, departments operate on a book buying cycle that rotates every few years, making large, sudden changes in the curriculum difficult.

For example, a few years ago, the English department wanted to add "The Kite Runner," "Joy Luck Club" and "The Namesake," which resonated with the student population at Saratoga because of their cultural connections, Ritchie said. Luckily, it was the English department's rotation at the time, so they were able to get all the books approved and purchased by the board — had it been one year later, the English department would have needed to wait around four years for the cycle to repeat.

In addition, the English department must ensure that there is a steady progression between grade levels.

Each year of English hones particular skills that develop upon those established the previous year, Ritchie said. For example, freshmen synthesize from more accessible sources like short stories and are introduced to basic analysis with simple plays like "Cyrano de Bergerac." As sophomores, students analyze more difficult works, like "Lord of the Flies" and "Julius Caesar," from which they learn to pull from different sources to look at motifs and symbols.

"The close reading we focused on helps me a lot this year with understanding the material we read," said junior Wilson Fung.

In English 11 Honors, students read harder material such as "Beloved" and "Hamlet," while also gaining more advanced close reading skills, such as analyzing how authors use writing techniques to evoke emotions in readers and convey a message.

The English department also makes modifications to the curriculum depending on whether the class is honors or regular. For example, the English 11 Honors class reads "Beloved" while the regular class reads "Kindred."

"Beloved" is an amazing book, and it's incredibly difficult, given the level of rigor and depth," Ritchie said. "That said, I think 'Kindred,' which basically uses time travel as its medium, has essentially all of the same themes but the text itself is less challenging, less dense."

Depending on whether they take regular English 12, AP Language and Composition or AP Literature, seniors will branch out and utilize their foundations in English to discuss philosophy or analyze rhetoric in books like "Macbeth" and "A Doll's House."

While English teachers hope to expose students to a breadth of perspectives and writing styles, Thermond said that most of English teachers ultimately approach their curriculum in terms of the writing, reading and speaking skills they want their students to have and design their courses around them.

"Core curriculum is important, but [teachers] focus more on having core skills," Ritchie said. "For instance, every English 10 teacher has to teach a book that they can teach close reading with. Whether it's '1984' or 'All Quiet on the Western Front,' [they] need to have a text that fits the skill they want the students to acquire." ♦

in-depth

Having far-away relatives strains family bonds

by Kaitlyn Tsai

Laughter rings from Alena Jarrett's phone as she talks to her cousins. Although she speaks English to them, their replies come in Indonesian. Both parties have Google Translate open.

For students like Jarrett, physical distance from relatives poses a significant challenge in staying connected. Her mother's side of the family come from England while her father's side of the family is from Indonesia.

According to a study from the U.S. National Library of Medicine, proximity is the strongest indicator of contact between relatives and relates closely with "higher quality of ties and more assistance."

A survey from the American Association of Retired Persons said approximately 33 percent of people say distance negatively affected their relationships with family.

Even though the language barrier between Jarrett and her relatives living in Bali, Indonesia, hinders their communication, the 8,504 miles in between poses an even greater challenge. She has met them only once because of the expensive flights, many of which exceed \$1,000 and take 24 hours.

"I desperately want to see them, but it's really hard to," Jarrett said.

To bridge the distance, Jarrett calls the Indonesian side of her family — her two grandparents, 10 aunts and approximately 20 cousins — on birthdays and trades postcards with them. Still, she said the language barrier and distance makes them more like acquaintances than family.

"It's really weird knowing there's an entire part of your family in another country that you know relatively little about," Jarrett said.

To stay in touch with her relatives in England, Jarrett Facetimes them several times a month. However, her primary form of communication is through packages and postcards.

"My family always says it's really nice to receive mail, so we've always made sure to do that," Jarrett said. "They'll send clothes or food that I miss from England for ones they want from here. My cousins are learning to read and write in English, so I'll send them things like when to eat or what to watch on TV escalate into arguments sometimes."

Other students, like junior Juan Vintimilla, believe distance has little impact on their relationships with relatives and that their adjustment periods takes less time than Jarrett's.

Vintimilla, who moved from Colombia in sixth grade, regularly contacts his relatives via Facebook and visits them every summer for a week.

"When I first see them, I'm not as close to them as I was before, but after a bit, we go back to being where we were with our original connections to each other," Vintimilla said.

He added that since his family mostly celebrated U.S. holidays even when they lived in Colombia, he does not face a problem with holidays and family gatherings.

For his part, senior Shiv Gupta said technology helps with his relationship to relatives in India. Despite being a third-generation Indian-American, Gupta communicates with his cousins, aunts and uncles almost daily through phone calls and WhatsApp in a mixture of English, Hindi and Punjabi.

"WhatsApp is the biggest thing," Gupta said. "There are around 10 WhatsApp groups of different group chats, different categories of cousins, aunts, uncles, relationships with relatives and that their adjustment periods takes less time than Jarrett's."

Other students, like junior Juan Vintimilla, believe distance has little impact on their relationships with relatives and that their adjustment periods takes less time than Jarrett's.

Although traditional Indian holidays, like Diwali, typically involve large family gatherings, Gupta said he and his overseas relatives compensate for their distance by sharing pictures of their individual celebrations in their group chats and using phone calls to wish each other well. In the U.S., Gupta and his immediate family celebrate with family friends.

Jarrett, however, who communicates with and sees her relatives less frequently, admitted that living away from most of her family often makes her feel disconnected from them.

"You feel a lot more alone," Jarrett said. "When I see my friends here have random family outings or Thanksgiving with their families, I wish that because it's just me and my mom here."

Despite their differing relationships with their overseas relatives, Jarrett, Vintimilla and Gupta agree that distance ultimately makes the time they get to spend with their families more special.

"Face-to-face interaction obviously doesn't happen as much because it costs a lot of time and money to see your relatives," Gupta said. "But the positive is that when you do get to see each other, your interactions become a lot more meaningful precisely because you don't see each other on a day-to-day basis." ♦

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Other students, like junior Juan Vintimilla, believe distance has little impact on their relationships with relatives and that their adjustment periods takes less time than Jarrett's.



Junior regrets not connecting with grandfather, mourns death

by Nitya Marimuthu

It was a Sunday in February last year around 4 p.m. when I found out some of the saddest news I had ever received. The sun slanted into the room, completing the lazy afternoon Sunday feeling.

I was sitting on the couch when my mom's phone rang. I knew that my grandfather's health was worsening; the news I dreaded could come at any moment.

I watched as my mom picked up the phone, talking in the polite tone reserved for relatives. A fear gripped me, coiling itself around my heart. I watched her face drop.

All I could feel was an explosion of emotions as I registered that I would never see my grandfather again.

I feared for my father, who was on a plane to visit my family in Madurai, India. Who would probably find out the news about his father in an airport millions of miles away.

As my mother wrapped her arms around me in an attempt to hold me together, I began to cry. I cried out of sadness, but mostly out of shame. I cried out of the shame of knowing that I hadn't fully appreciated the time I had with my grandpa when I visited my relatives in India a couple weeks prior to hearing the news.

My grandfather, P. Marimuthu, was a professor of electrical engineering in India, and he had two sons. He was a shorter man with a slight stature and skinny frame.

My parents found out about my grandfather's prostate cancer in 2009. He underwent treatment for years and was cared for

by my aunt and uncle, but by 2018, they gave the call that we should visit soon. He passed away a week after we visited at the age of 79.

When I visited my family in India shortly before his death, I entered a familiar room upstairs — the room that, as a child, I would enter to take biscuits from my grandparents.

The room was different from before, not because of how it looked, but because of the thickness of the air surrounding me. It was dark, with the curtains drawn shut. The fan's whirring was the only sound, and the smell of disinfectant penetrated the air.

My grandfather lay among blankets, looking thin and frail. He had lost a lot of weight and was awake for very short periods of time. I could tell he hated being bedridden and dependent on others.

I knew that I was expected to liven the sad, bleak room. Although I knew no one was expecting me to perform miracles, I was not even able to bring some sort of light into the dark room. I just sat in the room, feeling

uncomfortable at seeing him in such a fragile state. I was used to my grandfather as the independent, studious man, not someone with such a fragile hold on life.

I could not think of a way to lessen his misery from his illness. I wished I was older; I wished I was younger. I was 15 — an age where I understood the situation, but did not know how to act. If I'd been a couple years older, maybe I would've had some extra wisdom. If I was 5-years-old, I could've flashed a big smile and created a miracle.

Instead, I just sat there, wishing to be somewhere else because it hurt me to see my grandfather weak. Like my father, he was a constant supportive presence. He didn't feel the need to make himself the center of attention, but he always showed his affection by gifting presents and playing cards with me.

Due to cultural differences, bonding with my grandparents was sometimes hard. Part of this was the language gap — my grandparents spoke enough English to carry a con-

versation, but they preferred Tamil, which I can't speak. I also didn't visit India often, and even when I did, the difference in dynamics between elders and children caused me to hold back. In India, it is a norm for kids to stay quiet out of respect.

I sat there in silence, day after day. When my grandfather called for me, I hurried upstairs, saying one or two words, like "I'm here." Only on the last day when my mother read to him did I realize that I could have found ways to be truly present with him.

That trip and the experience of hearing the news were two of the most difficult moments of my life. There were days after my grandfather's passing when part of me believed I could fly to India and he would be there, sitting in his chair as always. There were days where it hit me that he was gone; I felt the most sadness and regret those days.

I regret not spending more time with him while he was alive. I was young, and I did not get to know him well enough. As I grow older, my father shares stories about my grandfather — his impact, his mannerisms and his passions. I had more in common with him than I knew.

Recently, my father shared that my grandfather had encouraged him to major in international relations in India. He wanted my father to be a diplomat. I wish that I could talk to my grandfather about politics today, since I am really interested in that field. I wish I had asked questions that prompted stories about his life. I wish I had not asked the same surface level questions.

Most of all, I wish I had gotten to know him better while I could. ♦



trying new traditions

Manasi Garg

Thanksgiving at my family's house means our plates are loaded with traditional American food like turkey and gravy next to Indian food like daal chawal and sabji. Then, we all cram into one room to announce what we're thankful for and gorge ourselves with food. Later, the adults, fueled with adult beverages, karaoke to old Bollywood songs, while the kids dance and talk until 2 a.m.

While most people celebrate Thanksgiving with relatives, my blood family lives 8,000 miles away in India. So for the past few years, we've spent Thanksgiving with our family friends—my parents' various college friends from India who, like my parents, immigrated to the U.S. and eventually settled down in the Bay Area. My parents have other friends of different ethnicities, but finding people like themselves who had grown up with similar childhoods and had kids our age provided a source of solidarity and comfort in a foreign country. They became our family away from family.

Although my family preserves our native culture by celebrating holidays like Diwali and Holi, we've also adopted American holidays like Thanksgiving and Halloween.

But it wasn't always like this. For the first 12 years of my life, our family didn't celebrate Thanksgiving. It was just another American holiday with no relevance. One year we bought a tiny rotisserie chicken from Safeway (it was the participation trophy of Thanksgiving meals). Another year, we spent a cold, miserable winter at the Grand Canyon in a hotel room and most years we just forgot about it entirely.

But as we and our family friends got older and life overtook our schedules, we began to see each other less often. Everyone traveled over summer and winter breaks, but Thanksgiving—which to me had just been a nice excuse to sleep in for a few days—was the only time all our friends were at home.

So in 2014, we decided to host a real Thanksgiving party. Now, every year my family and I wake up bright and early, turn on some holiday music and spend all day in the kitchen. And my dad, who had never even seen a turkey until he came to the U.S. for grad school 30 years ago, cleans, seasons and roasts a 12-pound turkey every year with the expertise of Gordon Ramsay. In the evening, our friends show up laden with Indian food and endless desserts.

And honestly, most of the adults don't know why we eat turkey on Thanksgiving or the gruesome history. But it's not the U.S. we're celebrating. It's the good life our families have made in a new country despite cultural barriers.

But our community in the US doesn't just consist of our parents' old friends. Ironically, while we celebrate Thanksgiving, the most American holiday ever, with other Indian immigrant families, every year for Diwali my family and I light firecrackers and share sweets with our neighbors, an Indian family, an elderly Caucasian couple and a Chinese family who recently came to the U.S.

Our Chinese neighbors always bring Chinese desserts and we provide Indian snacks. We light candles and set them up around our house together and give some to our neighbors, enjoying each other's company.

Being immersed in a variety of cultures can sometimes feel like the ultimate balancing act. I've had identity crises and worried about whether I'm "American enough" or "Indian enough," as if I could just split my sense of self and heritage in two categories. But the beautiful thing about growing up in such a multicultural society is that we don't have to do that. We can embrace both, keeping our ancestral roots alive while adopting holidays from the country we call home.

GRAPHIC BY MEGAN CHEN AND SINA SALEHI

Working mothers evaluate parenthood

By Anouk Yeh

When the bell signaling the end of the school day rings, chemistry teacher Kathy Nakamatsu's work is far from done. After hours of explaining chemistry principles to rowdy sophomores and grading tests and labs, Nakamatsu goes home to take care of her 3-year-old son.

"I give out a lot of energy during the day, and when I come home, I have to interact with my son who's very energetic," she said. "[Being a working mom] is very hard and very tiring."

Like many working mothers in the U.S., Nakamatsu struggles to balance her work and home life.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, over 70 percent of mothers in the

United States are in the workforce — almost a 30 percent increase from the 1960s. One reason for this spike in working mothers is that household expenses have greatly increased since the 1960s, and now two working parents are required in order

curricular schedules.

The implications of being a working mom don't just end at an unconventional family structure.

Juggling a full-time job and taking care of children may cause working moms to struggle with guilt and self-doubt. For Nakamatsu, part of that guilt stems from an internalized stereotype of what the "perfect mother" looks like.

From the beginning, Nakamatsu was

who now works as a business systems analyst at a Sunnyvale consulting company, since she had to take multiple classes and different certifications to get back up to speed.

But she said that the memories she created and the bond she formed with her children during her time as a stay home mom were well worth it.

"I have made so many amazing memories with my two daughters and I love [those memories]," she said.

Many mothers view staying at home and working to be two completely different experiences of motherhood.

But sophomore Shriyan Potluri, whose mom works full time at an IT company, said that he doesn't think that his relationship with her child, Nakamatsu realized that the relationship he would have had with her if she stayed at home.

"I give a lot of credit to stay-at-home moms, but I couldn't do it," she said. "It's so isolating to be alone without adults to talk to."

But, Potluri acknowledged that he wasn't able to spend as much time as he would like with his mom, for she was often at work. Because of this, he tries to cherish every moment that he has with her.

Nakamatsu does the same when she gets to spend more time with her son over the summer. Throughout her journey, she has realized that motherhood looks different for every person — it's just a matter of fact of finding what works best for each individual.

"I remember early on, struggling with this idea of 'why can't I be a stay home mom, what's wrong with me?'" she said.

Like Nakamatsu, Frangieh also experienced many moments of self-doubt being a working mom. In the beginning, when her kids were sick or misbehaving at day-care, she felt the urge to be with them.

Lakshmi Gupta, a former stay-at-home mom of junior Shama Gupta, rejoined the workforce after taking some time off. As a working mom, she said she has felt "sad and guilty" for not spending enough time with her two daughters, and for things like picking them up late from school due to responsibilities at work.

Gupta stopped working after her youngest daughter, Shama, was born and her family moved to India. Afterwards, she stayed as a stay-at-home for 10 years until Shama reached the fourth grade.

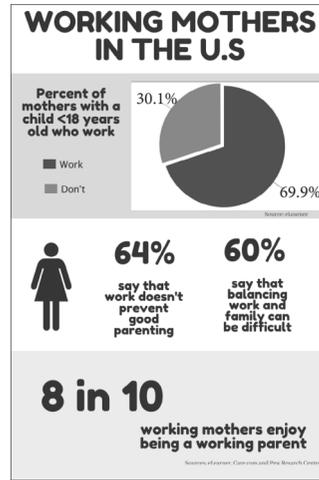
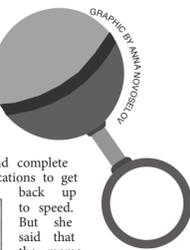
Transitioning back to work was not an easy feat for Gupta,



Chemistry teacher Kathy Nakamatsu takes a selfie with her 3-year-old son.



Junior Shama Gupta enjoys spending time with her mother, Lakshmi Gupta.



for a family to get by financially.

Math teacher Kelly Frangieh, who is a mother of two, said this is especially true in pricey Silicon Valley, where the median home price amounts to a whopping \$1.6 million — almost seven times that of the national median.

"It's such an expensive place to live that few people can do it with a mom staying at home or a dad staying at home," she said.

Ever since she was young, Frangieh envisioned herself to be a working mom due to her strong passion for teaching.

Frangieh said that being a working mom has caused her family dynamic to greatly differ from that of the stereotypical 1960s traditional family — where the mother only cooks and takes care of the kids and the father only goes to work. In order to ensure that home responsibilities were met and their kids were taken care of, both parents' roles had to change. For instance, Frangieh's husband cooks dinner every night, while Frangieh focuses on managing her children's school and extra-

curricular schedules.

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The Falcon profiled 3 lesser known downtown Saratoga shops that each have unique histories and identities.

The Barn Owl: gifts & knick-knacks

The Barn Owl, a small antique store specializing in jewelry, books and gifts, opened in 2012 and is run by store owner Leslee Warwick. Most of the gifts, like home decor, jewelry, seashells and garden decor, are unique knick-knacks from trade and gift shows that Warwick goes to in Las Vegas and Atlanta.

The store has its origins in Cambria, CA, when Warwick's daughter opened a doggy daycare and gift shop in 2010. After Warwick's daughter closed the store in 2011, Warwick chose to sell solely gifts and moved the shop to Saratoga.

Although Warwick thinks of the store as a family business, she believes that her kids and grandkids would not want the store after she retires. Warwick is there 6 days a week, 10 to 12 hours a day, and is exhausted by closing time.

While a second worker would

ease some of the workload off Warwick's shoulders, the store cannot afford one despite Warwick not taking a salary. After her daughter left the business seven years ago, the store has been working to pay off the debt accumulated by the previous location in Cambria.

"It's a hard situation, because you get close to paying [the debts] off, and then you have to order more new items," said Warwick, but she hopes that increased advertising will attract more customers.

Warwick also recently decided to sell Dole Whips, a pineapple-flavored frozen dessert popularized by Disneyland, for \$4 after a trip there with her grandson.

The store is in the back of a small plaza in the middle of downtown, which prevents it from getting much foot traffic; instead, most of its customers are repeats who have been

coming to the store for many years.

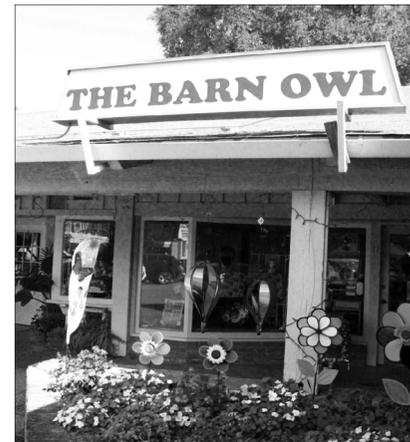
However, Warwick said she would not move the store anywhere else and knew this was the place for her "when [she] walked into the space; [she] could just see it."

She said that Saratoga "fits with the store's charm and that her shop is "not designed for a mall."

Another challenge threatening the survival of The Barn Owl is the increased prevalence of technology.

"Not too many teens [come] because they're all ordering on Amazon," Warwick said. She said that even her family is guilty of it, and that fewer people come in to shop than eight years ago when the store was started.

Despite these challenges, Warwick loves to work at The Barn Owl. "My goal is just to make people happy. I want to find the right things for the right people," she said.



The Barn Owl sells knick-knacks from trade and gift shows.

The Echo Shop: cheap clothing

The Echo shop offers cheap, cute clothing and is managed completely by volunteers, who, according to Echo Shop board member Betty Chen, are there "purely for the love of the trade."

Started by the women of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, the store opened in 1961. The Echo Shop accepts donations of clothing, shoes, and other accessories and sells them.

The profits of the store go directly to charitable organizations such as the Animal Care Center of San Jose, Our Daily Bread and Next Door, an organization to combat domestic violence.

Local non-profits write proposals to the board of the Echo Shop, who then determines if they fit with the Echo Shop's mission of helping local organizations grow in the county. In 2015-2016, the Echo Shop

donated a total of \$76,000.

Chen said that many of the shop's customers are visitors, teenagers and loyal repeat customers. Chen said that some people even come in saying "I'm third generation Echo Shop!"

Clothing at the store is cheap and good-quality and appeals to a variety of tastes. Jeans can be bought for as low as \$6, and shirts can be found for under \$2.

Chen encourages people to make quick, frequent stops, as volunteers bring out new stock often because the small size of the store restricts them from showing all their items at once.

The boutique also has an open house twice a year, once in the spring and once in the fall, when they bring out a lot of their new material; in the weeks prior to the Open House, the entire shop is 50% off.

Many Saratoga students have

also gone in The Echo Shop before to check out what the store has to offer. Sophomore Shivali Kattumadam has bought many clothes at the store before.

"The Echo Shop is one of my favorite places in downtown," she said. "It's a place where you spend a lot of time there to truly find something you love."

The store is always looking for new volunteers and encourages anyone interested to apply as a cashier or for organizing clothes.

Currently, there are more than 100 volunteers, and volunteers must commit to at least 3 hours a month.

Chen said that volunteering at the Echo Shop introduced her to life-long friends and taught her how to take things slow and not overwork herself.

"We have a really great community," Chen said. "It's so supportive." ◆



Over two years, The Echo Shop donated \$76,000 to local charities.

Book-Go-Round: donated used books

Hidden in the front of Oak Street to the left of downtown, lies the Book-Go-Round, which is the "best kept secret in Saratoga," according to store manager Kristin Gragnola. The store is part of the Friends of the Saratoga Library, a community library support group comprised of approximately 750 members. Previously the Saratoga library, the store became a used bookstore in 1972.

When the library moved to its current location, the shop started selling donated books with the proceeds going directly to the Saratoga Library. People make donations to the store by dropping off books directly to the store or to the Saratoga Library.

With the constant flow of new arrivals, many customers stop in at least once a month to see what they can find. Their purchases, along with other ac-

tivities put on by the bookstore, fund Saratoga Library programs such as craft activities for children, PSAT practice tests, Introduction to Tai Chi and many others. Every year, the store donates \$140,000 to the Library.

The Book-Go-Round is highly regarded by the community as a reliable and welcoming bookstore.

"[The Book-Go-Round] is a place where people can donate books as they finish reading them or are cleaning out their homes," said Gragnola. "We found that as the Marie Kondo book about tidying up became popular, our donations rose significantly!"

The store has many different genres of books to offer, including science fiction, research, foreign language, and fantasy. Book prices range from 50 cents to over \$15 for the larger books. The average settles at an affordable

\$1.50 per book. Apart from books, the store also sells CDs, DVDs, bookmarks, postcards, and other small knickknacks. Friends of the Saratoga Library is a place where one must come to be ready to stay for a while. Even famous retired actress Olivia De Havilland took interest in the store before, according to Gragnola.

After almost 50 years, the store is still going strong due to the constant stream of active volunteers, who work as many 2 1/2 hour shifts as they would like per month. There are around 150 volunteers who put in over 1,000 volunteer hours every month, and the store is always looking for more.

Overall, the store is a place customers can spend hours in. Whether or not they end up buying a book or not, they will surely have a great time discovering one of Saratoga's oldest treasures. ◆



Book-Go-Round sends \$140,000 to the library annually.

—All reporting by Angelina Chen and Apurva Chakravarty

BOYS' CROSS COUNTRY

Dance and Verma to run at state championship meet

By Nitya Marimuthu

Sophomore Harry Dance knew he was not supposed to look back at his competition as he ran in the Division III CCS cross country race at Crystal Springs on Nov. 16. His coach, Ian Tippett, had told him he should look forward and keep running. Part way through the race, Dance took the lead and followed his coach's advice all the way to a first-place finish, outpacing the 75 other competitors with a time of 15:47.41 over the 2.95 mile long course. The runner who placed second, Elliot Daniels from Prospect High School, ran a time of 16:07:06, finishing almost exactly 30 seconds after Dance. "I knew it was going to be a tough race," Dance said. "There were a few guys in there who I thought would beat me, and they didn't. So when I looked back, I was just happy that I won by about 20 seconds."

As a result of the win, Dance will race at the state cross country championship meet along with his teammate, senior Shivam Verma, who placed third with a time of 16:14.29. That race will take place Nov. 30 in at Woodward Park in Fresno, a 5000 meters (3.11 miles) long course that is much flatter than notoriously hilly Crystal Springs. The SHS boys' team placed fifth out of the nine teams, missing the cutoff for the state meet by seven points (about 11 runner's places or around 15 seconds, according to Verma).

Dance's goal for the state race is to run a 15:50 or place in the top 15 in Division III. Last year, there were 204 runners who ran in the DIII race. To adapt to this increased number of runners, Verma said he will have to change his pacing style by running much quicker in the beginning to avoid getting

stuck behind the many runners.

"I could get caught back really easily and then the race could be over from the start," Verma said. "So I'm going to have to run a lot faster in the beginning and I have to hope that I just don't die out in the end."

Dance added that he might try to scout out some of the runners and see where his time fits in. He said he tries not to rely on this information to figure out his pacing, but he finds it helpful to know which runners he should be surrounded by. In addition, Coach Tippett has modified their training style to prepare for the state meet. Verma said the runs are shorter now and are more focused on keeping the two in shape rather than pushing them so their "legs feel more fresh" for the upcoming race.

"At this point we aren't going to get any faster, it's just about staying healthy," Verma said. ♦



Courtesy of IAN TIPPETT
Senior Shivam Verma and sophomore Harry Dance lead the pack at Crystal Springs.

EXPERIENCED BOYS' BASKETBALL TEAM EXPECTS STRONG LEAGUE FINISH

Head Coach: Patrick Judge
2018-2019 record: 6-6 in the SCVAL league, 16-10 overall
2018-2019 recap: The Falcons made it to Division III CCS, but were eliminated in the quarter-final round by Hillsdale High School.

Key additions: Sophomore Som Teymouri, juniors Antony Zhuk and Justin Guo

Key Matchups: Los Gatos, Fremont

Star players: Seniors power forward Leo Cao and shooting guard Siva Sambasivam, juniors small forward Cameron King and point guard Tyler Chu

League: El Camino (lower)
Key Losses: Small forward Kyle Yu, shooting guard Hanlin Sun

Prognosis: With six returning players this year, the team is looking forward to the upcoming season.

Coming off of a 6-6 record last year in the SCVAL, players

are looking to improve their record and hopefully make a deeper CCS run.

Half of the team is composed of returning varsity players, but the team lost two stars to graduation, Kyle Yu and Hanlin Sun, who carried the scoring load and were regarded as the leaders of the team.

Although only two seniors are present on the team this year, the returning junior class is confident that their experience and passion will get them through the season.

"We're short on seniors this year, but I'm confident that many of the juniors will be able to step up because they also played varsity last year," junior small forward Cameron King said.

This year, the team welcomed freshman Mason Wang, sophomore Christian Li and Som Teymouri, as well as juniors Justin Guo, Ashwin Sarathy, Isaac Sun

and Antony Zhuk.

With these strong new additions, the team is in promising shape and ready for the upcoming season. While many are still adjusting to the quicker pace of varsity, they will benefit the team with fresh talent.

"Even though we are young, we have more experience because we have a lot of returning players," junior point guard Tyler Chu said. "All of us played last year, so transitioning from practice speed to game speed will not be an issue."

The team is also planning on having more team bonding events such as team beach workouts to create a more tight knit team and increase the trust within the group.

Without many players who are able to play the traditional center position, the Falcon offense and defense have evolved to fit a smaller team.



FALCON / ANGELINA CHEN
Senior shooting guard Siva Sambasivam launches a three pointer against Aptos on Nov. 21. The Falcons fell to the Mariners 62-42.

"We don't have that many big men this year, just Giulio," said Li. "So we have to use our outside shooters more."

With the changes in lineup and playstyle, the team is looking

forward to the upcoming season. "I think we will have a really good season," said Chu, "and hopefully win the league title!" ♦

— Benjamin Li and Tiffany Wang

BOYS' WATER POLO

Falcons outclassed by first seed Stevenson, fall 16-4 in quarterfinals

By Ethan Lin & Alan Zu

The boys' water polo team's season ended in a first-round 16-4 loss to No. 1 seeded Stevenson High School at Santa Cruz High School during the first round of CCS on Nov. 8.

"Our defense was terrible. Everyone gave up because the other team was way better than us, and they only tried to get goals," senior goalie Nima Aminzadeh said. "We gave up after the first quarter because everyone was just like 'screw this.'"

"To be honest, I wasn't expecting much in CCS. It's an achievement we made it there."

SENIOR Bryan Chu

Stevenson's defense and offense overpowered the Falcons, keeping them from scoring until

the end of the third quarter, when sophomore field player Jonathan Li managed to sneak a near-side goal during an ejection to beat the buzzer. Even though the team did not advance in CCS, many players like senior Brian Chu were thrilled at how well they did.

"To be honest, I wasn't expecting much in CCS. It's already an achievement we made it there," Chu said.

Their main accomplishment was to finish as co-champions of the El Camino League along with Santa Clara. The last time the team received a banner and qualified for CCS was in 2013.

Adding to the positives for the year, sophomore Marcus Kuo was voted as the all-league most valuable field player, and seniors Eng Kva, Bryan Chu and Aminzadeh made the league first-team.

At the end of their league season, the team defeated Milpitas 14-8 and Cupertino 5-4 in the quarterfinals and semifinals, respectively, of the league tournament; however, to the team's disappointment, they lost to Santa

Clara 8-4 in the finals.

Because the team won more games during the season than Santa Clara, the Falcons also qualified for CCS despite the tournament result.

Sophomore field player Jaime Fernandez da Ponte's tie-breaking goal with 10 seconds left on the clock in the match against Cupertino secured the team's spot in the CCS playoffs.

However, the team felt dissatisfied with the last league game against Santa Clara.

"We should have won against Santa Clara," Aminzadeh said. "A lot of times we messed up."

The Falcons will remain in the lower El Camino league for next year's season.

Despite their end-of-season losses, the team came out of the season confident having improved under the guidance of Coach Jerome Chung and gained a better team dynamic.

"The season has been really good," Chu said. "All the seniors left last year, and with the new coach coming in, it certainly exceeded my expectations." ♦

GIRLS' TENNIS

Palo Alto ousts Falcons in CCS quarterfinals

By Jayne Zhou

With key players No. 1 singles senior Monica Stratakos and No. 4 singles junior Juhli Patel injured, the girls' tennis team was not at full strength as they faced the best teams in the area during CCS this month, but they still managed to eke out an impressive victory.

On Nov. 13, the Falcons faced off against a favored Mountain View team, whom they had lost to twice during the regular season and came out on top with a 4-3 victory. It was a huge feat for the team, considering Stratakos had an ankle injury

Patel had a knee injury. "Juhli played through her knee injury in the deciding match against Mountain View," doubles player senior Sanya Kwatra said. "We had three points and she allowed us to win."

Two days later they faced fourth-seeded Palo Alto in the quarterfinals, the same round they made it to last year. This was despite not being seeded this year,

meaning they were not projected to make it far in CCS and barely qualified toward the end of the season.

"Not being seeded in CCS was kind of surprising," singles one junior Alyssa Pinal said. "Playing in the first round made us tired for when we had to play the better teams."

Additionally, with multiple players sidelined, the team forfeited one match and ended up being soundly beaten by Palo Alto 7-0. They went 1-1 vs. the Vikings in the regular season.

In the opening round, the team beat Santa Catalina by a margin of 7-0 — "the biggest blowout this season," said Stratakos.

Despite making it to the quarterfinals, they had higher hopes for themselves at the beginning of the season.

"We made it to the same place we were last year despite the players sitting out for injuries, so I hope the team can continue to play this well next year," Kwatra said. ♦



Kwatra



GRAPHIC BY NITYA MARIMUTHU AND TIFFANY WANG

NEW STRATEGY INTRODUCED FOR GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Head coach: Danny Wallace
2018-2019 season record: 15-12
2018-2019 season recap: Although injuries forced many players to sit out throughout the season, the team advanced to the CCS Division III semifinals, where they fell to Aptos for the second year in a row.

Key Matchups: Palo Alto High School, Los Gatos High School and Lynbrook High School

Star players: Junior point guard Jane Loo, senior guard Anika Prasad

Key Losses: Forwards Rachel Bakke, Kirsten Kruka and Kitty Huang and guard

Hanna Zahabi (to graduation)
League: De Anza (upper)

Prognosis: Last season, the team struggled with numerous injuries, including junior point guard Jane Loo and senior guard Anika Prasad, but the players remained determined and made it to CCS semifinals.

"We learned to work through it, which made us even stronger and close-knit as a team," senior guard Hanna Zahabi said.

Since the team lost four key players to graduation last year, players including

Loo and Prasad will have to lead the team forward on their previous years' momentum. Both provide a powerful defense and aggressive offense for the team.

Zahabi hopes that the girls will be able to build a strong bond together and learn to trust each other.

"They began practicing over the summer and are already playing together cohesively. To take advantage of the players' strengths — such as speed and quick ball movements — head coach Danny Wallace is introducing a new

offense strategy, which involves a rapid transition and speedy ball movements.

The team will frequently scrimmage during practices to get used to the new drill while still doing drills to improve their shooting, passing and confidence.

Zahabi thinks the team can compete against almost any team as long as they remain dedicated and focused.

"I'm hopeful because I know we're going to improve a lot over the course of the season and make the most of it," Zahabi said. ♦

— Anna Novoslov and Harshini Velchamy



Zahabi

RETURNING WRESTLERS SET SIGHTS ON CCS

Head coach: Taylor Wilson
2018-2019 season record: 0-4

2018-2019 season recap: The team struggled with participation in the beginning of the season; after recruiting more players, the team consisted of mostly newcomers, showed steady improvement over the course of the season, performing well during the last meet but falling just short of winning.

Key Additions: None

Key Matchups: Half Moon Bay, Milpitas

Star players: Junior Hunter Hawley

Key losses: Victor Chen, Carolyn Ma, Leon Dang, Ryan Busse (to graduation)
League: Santa Clara Valley Athletic League (SCVAL)

Prognosis: The wrestling team had a large influx of newer, talented members last year, who have mostly all returned for this season.

Due to this more experienced lineup, coach Taylor Wilson expects the Falcons to do well compared to others in their respective divisions using the practice and experience gained last season.

On a surface level, the wrestling team's 0-4 record during the 2018-2019 season implies a lack of skill; however, the exact opposite is true. The team, which is expected to turn out 30 members, performed strongly for a team consisting of 80 percent rookie wrestlers.

They exceeded expectations in various close matches against Homestead and Los Altos. According to Wilson, who has taken over for former head coach Kirk Abe's, the team looks especially strong this year, and with enough practice, he foresees them easily making CCS.

To accomplish this, Wilson is introducing a lifting coach who will help the team

on blue days.

As for normal practices, he plans to continue building on cardio but mainly focus on "more technical, on the mat [skills], as that's really where members get the most experience."

"I have a young team, so our success is really banking on the younger guys making some leaps and bounds."

COACH Taylor Wilson

The team's first league match will be held on Jan. 9 at Milpitas, but practice

meets will also be held starting in the first week of December. In February, the team will play in several tournaments, including their league finals, which determines whether or not they make CCS.

Ultimately, Wilson thinks that the team's success relies on the talent and experience of last year's members, including star wrestler Hunter Hawley, who individually qualified for CCS last year, and he is excited to see how far the team will come this upcoming season.

"I have a young team, so [our success] is really banking on the younger guys making some leaps and bounds," Wilson said. "I'm not really teaching them how to walk or how to crawl anymore. They now need to get their legs under them and put in the work if they're going to get somewhere." ♦

— Andy Chen

ADDITION OF SOPHOMORE KEY FOR BOYS' SOCCER TEAM

Coach: Chris Stott
2018-2019 season record: 0-18-1

2018-2019 league record: 0-12-1
2018-2019 season recap: The team struggled immensely after losing 18 seniors to graduation and consequently moved down a league.

Key addition: sophomore midfielder Etienne Casanova

Key Matchup: Los Gatos

Star players: seniors striker Joe Bruun-Jensen, winger Brian Wu, center-back Nick Joe

Key losses: striker Owen Keogh, center-back AJ Lee (to graduation)

League: El Camino League

Prognosis: Despite struggling through the 2018 season, the team feels confident for the coming season, due to the addition of new players and the large group of returning, experienced players.

Although the team lost striker Owen Keogh and center-back AJ Lee to graduation, the team feels the overall team skill has

increased. "I think all of the sophomores we added to the team this year are very skilled," Nameley, sophomore midfielder Etienne Casanova, a player who has experience playing soccer on a national level.

Casanova initially played for the U.S. Soccer Development Academy, which didn't allow students to play for school teams; to make players fully committed to their club teams.

Now, he plays in the National Premier League I, which allows players to join school teams.

Wu said he thinks that the team has the potential to make CCS this year, and the league change will further the team's performance.

"I feel confident about the season," Wu said. "I think moving down will help, and the new additions will help a lot with the way we play and moving around the ball a lot." ♦

— Andrew Li and Alan Zu



Casanova

GIRLS' SOCCER SEEKS REPLACEMENTS FOR CRITICAL PLAYERS

Head coach: Ben Maxwell
2018-2019 season record: 4-3-4

2018-2019 season recap: The team advanced to the first round of CCS.

Key Additions: freshman forward/midfielder Gabby Golko, junior midfielder Jasmin Reddy

Key Matchups: Mountain View, Palo Alto, Los Gatos

Star Players: seniors forward Ananya Krishnan and goalie Adrienne Chan

Key Losses: center defender Sasha Pickard and forward Jennah Al-Eshwami (to graduation), junior center defender Michelle Lim

League: De Anza Division

Prognosis: Coming off a successful 2018-19 season, the team's head coach Ben Maxwell and senior striker Ananya Krishnan look to replicate the focused, committed

and driven environment that the team thrived off of last season.

After losing both of their center defenders (2019 alumna Sasha Pickard to graduation and junior Michelle Lim to club team commitments), the team's biggest challenge this season will be to maintain a strong defensive line.

"We don't have any center backs right now, which is a challenge," four-year varsity striker Krishnan said. "We're definitely looking for defenders at tryouts this year."

The team had 43 players try out this year — a number far larger than the past few years, but still fewer than the other schools in the De Anza Division.

The team is mostly freshmen and sophomores, but the large numbers may allow for larger reserves on both the JV and varsity level. In previous years, the small ro-

sters have limited varsity to only have three to four substitutes at a time, compared to schools like Los Gatos, who had nearly 11 substitutes on some of their previous teams.

"We had a group of girls that were willing to work hard and push themselves no matter who we played," Krishnan said. "We used the same mentality in a game whether we played Fremont or Mountain View, so we're looking to get a similar group of girls that want to outwork every other person on the field."

The team will have to overcome the odds to qualify for CCS again, but will not rule out the possibility — the girls proved themselves and the community wrong last year and still hope to defy expectations.

Their first game will be in a pre-season tournament called the Firebird Classic, where they will play teams outside of the De Anza League. Their first league game is at home on Dec. 10 against Christopher High School. ♦

— Shama Gupta

Chow overcomes coordination difficulties, earns place on the track and football field

by Shama Gupta

At age 5, junior Darwin Chow was diagnosed with learning disabilities and issues affecting his hand-eye coordination and general motor skills.

Even so, Chow began playing soccer and baseball at age 8 — and struggled. “I always got tired really quick,” he said. “I had trouble seeing the ball, and a lot of things were hard. I still remember back in PE, I would get 20-minute mile times.”

Prior to middle school, he quit playing sports because of the difficulties.

But through attending countless hours of physical therapy, a program he graduated from during his freshman year, Chow built enough confidence in himself to get back onto the field. Today, Chow plays varsity football and runs track for the school's teams, but he needed multiple extra prac-

tices and physical therapy sessions to get where he is today. Above all, though, Chow credits his coaches and the friendly environment at the school as the reason for his increased confidence.

“The coaches would always include me in at least a few special plays, and it just really meant a lot to me because I wasn't very good my freshman year,” he said about the JV football coaches.

Due to the extensive support of coaches and his teammates, Chow believes that he wouldn't have been able to improve this drastically without them.

Defensive coordinator Bret Yeilding, who oversees Chow's practices and games, said that Chow is an integral part of the team's play on the field and in his spirit.

“Like a lot of kids, being a part of some-

thing is good for him,” Yeilding said. “I think being a part of football really helps him; it's a big part of his identity.”

Receiver junior Fabian Alvarado called him the hype man of the team. “He's always willing to step up and hype people up before the games,” Alvarado said. “He has a great work ethic and has never let the team down.”

As a football player, Chow has attended a series of lengthy and intensive offseason training sessions, due to his hopes of becoming the most powerful defensive end that he can be.

“We can see the improvement in him every day,” said Yeilding. “He's worked really hard to overcome his learning difference, which is his special awareness, and it's much better now than it used to be.”

Yeilding is happy that Chow found football and said that “football has been good for him, just as he's been good for football.”

Currently, Chow plays for SHS as the defensive end, and also runs track and field. As for track and field, Chow feels like it is his best bet for a sport that he can excel in, as it doesn't require excessive motor skills. “I guess that's why I started doing track,” he said, “because there is no ball in it.”

As a 100- and 200-meter sprinter as well as a long jumper, he hopes to improve his running form and start.

With intense practice and an optimistic mind-set, Chow has been able to make the ultimate comeback, proving to himself he deserves the progress he was able to make.

“When I first started track, I could barely run in a straight line,” he said. “By the end of my freshman year I could run the 400. So yeah, I am proud of myself.” ♦



Chow

Athletes utilize new tech to train better

by Brandon Wang

Over the past decades, professional athletes have embraced new technologies to gain an advantage over their opponents and better hone their skills. As these technologies have improved, they have also gained popularity, reaching college and even high school athletes.

For some high school athletes, this new technology has provided invaluable insight into how to fine-tune their game, pinpointing specific areas of weakness.

Senior golfer Kevin Sze, for instance, uses his coach's TrackMan, which costs upwards of \$30,000 and is also used in baseball and football.

The TrackMan, a portable, radar-based device that can be placed right behind the practice tee-off area, provides Sze with a wealth of specialized statistics such as his launch angle, spin rate and how aligned his swing is with the path of the ball as well as more basic measurements like carry distance and roll.

“Using the numbers the TrackMan gives me, I'm able to really diagnose my mistakes,” Sze said. “From there, I know what I need to work on, and then I work on it.”

Tippetts's heart rate monitor helps him ensure proper form, which is critical for running fast.

Boys' cross country co-captain senior Kole Tippetts said that he has begun to use an advanced Garmin heart-rate monitor, a band that is worn around the chest that records a variety of measurements, including heart rate, cadence, stride length and up-and-down movement.

In addition, other runners on the boys' cross country team have used more basic heart-rate-monitors that only record heart rate.

Cross country runs are done in a specific zone of exertion. For example, longer-distance runs are done in a lower zone, while shorter runs are done in a higher zone. The heart rate monitor, Tippetts said, gives runners an accurate measurement of exertion.

Tippetts's heart rate monitor helps him ensure proper form, which is critical for running fast. For example, Tippetts said that the heart rate monitor can alert runners of excessive up-and-down movement, which can indicate insufficient knee lifting.

In addition to the heart rate monitor, Tip-

petts said that the cross country team uses a device called a Theragun that contains a piston that massages and loosens muscles after a run. Tippetts said that since the device's adoption two years ago, the team has used it in place of rollers when doing sprint-based workouts.

“During our sprint workouts, it's really hard to roll in between [sprints] because you don't get much time,” Tippetts said. “You can't roll out [for] half an hour in between those or else you'll lose the gain that you get out of sprinting over and over again.”

By using the Theragun instead, the team is able to go on more runs, as well as much longer ones than before.

“[The Theragun] has allowed us to run eight mile runs every day instead of five mile runs every day,” Tippetts said. “That's a lot, especially for training.”

Meanwhile, junior Dylan Li, who plays for the Mountain View Volleyball Club, said that his team uses an app to keep track of in-game stats such as passes, kills and blocks.

The app, iStatVball 2, provides coaches with a breadth of information, storing player kill rates, pass rates and serving percentages. In addition, the app also tracks pass quality on a scale from zero to three. Li's team especially focuses on the quality of returns, and strives to maintain an average of 2.3 every tournament.

However, they also use other features of the app to check the quality of their defense and attack.

“It gives you an overall sense of who's doing well and who's doing bad, and what areas we need to improve on, like if our defense is really bad or our offense is not really effective,” Li said.

Junior Jane Loo said that the girls' basketball team also uses an app, Hudl, to assist with team scouting and compiling highlight reels. The team records a game on an iPad, and then the company analyzes the game and provides both statistics and highlight clips, Loo said.

According to Hudl's website, the analysis is completed in under 24 hours.

Not only does Hudl provide highlight clips, but it also sends clips to college coaches, which helps with recruiting, Loo said. Although Hudl costs the team over \$1,000 annually, Loo said it can be invaluable in helping to record other teams' games and to scout for game strategy. This is especially helpful during the league season, when teams play each other twice and reviewing statistics from the first game can give an edge in the second, Loo said.

“It's pretty expensive,” Loo said, “but it's really good knowing your stats and knowing your opponents and their stats.” ♦

topten WAYS TO BEGIN RUNNING ON YOUR OWN

Want to run on your own but don't know how? Here are some tips from girls' cross country coach, Danny Moon. Coach Moon, now 72, has been running since 1962 and has run 12 marathons.

- 1 Shoes.** Get a pair of shoes that feel good and fit your foot. They don't have to be expensive, but they should have cushion and support.
- 2 Start slow.** Walk half a lap, jog half. Then when you're ready, walk one lap and jog two. Keep adding.
- 3 Take rest days.** Work out five days a week. Take two days off for recovery.
- 4 Mix in hard workouts and light workouts.** Go easy after a hard workout. Do not do two hard workouts in a row.
- 5 Add some speed work.** Speed work is short distance, rapid running. One speed work per week is really good; it creates leg speed which is good for sprints and marathons.
- 6 Find somebody to run with or find a group to run with.**
- 7 Pick races that challenge you.** According to how much you train, that's how far you run. Choose races that fit your goals and race with a group. If you want to experience parts of the US, race there.
- 8 If you feel any twinges or grabs or pulls, slow down.** If they are still there, slow down, stop and recover. Take a day or two and then start up and recover.
- 9 The main goal is to stay healthy.** Stay healthy no matter what. It is OK to miss a day if you are sick or injured.
- 10 Appreciate the joy of running — the high of running and the freedom that it brings.**

ALL GRAPHICS BY NITYA MARIMUTHU

FOOTBALL TRENDS

continued from pg. 1

up playing 8-minute quarters instead of 10-minute quarters for the remainder of the season as players were getting too tired, said sophomore Parsa Hashemi, who started the season as a receiver and safety on JV but later moved to varsity.

“Everyone was just throwing their bodies out there,” Hashemi said. “It was tiring for everyone, so our coaches decided to just cut it down, but it was harder to get things done [in just seven minutes].”

According to Lugo, the JV team normally aims to have 30 to 40 players, since around five freshmen usually quit after playing for a year due to new opportunities and conflicts with academics. However, the team was unsuccessful in meeting its recruiting goal this season. Lugo said that a significant number of potential players have been “unwilling to take the time commitment, not enjoying the sport, or just not enjoying the physicality of it.”

Additionally, he suspects that some potential players may have been disheartened by the JV team's struggles during the past few seasons, prompting them to either play other sports or transfer to schools with traditionally better performing teams.



Hashemi

boys from, for example, Homestead, whose student population numbers over 2,800, Lugo said.

Nor is this problem not unique to Saratoga High — other schools in the area have also been struggling with lower levels of participation as well. Monta Vista, with a school population of about 2,350, was even forced to drop its frosh-soph team this year, when only 12 players tried out.

“It's a demographic issue of the schools in our area,” Lugo said. “Up in the northern peninsula, South San Francisco, El Camino Area; they're all struggling with kids, so it's not just us.”

This issue of declining sports participation generally is becoming common in wealthier suburbs of the Bay Area, where many parents here often put a larger emphasis on academics compared to parents in many other parts of the country. Additionally, many local parents are reluctant to let their children play football due to fears regarding safety and life-altering injuries, including concussions.

Typical of athletes who aren't playing football these days is sophomore Weilin Sun.

He played intramural football in middle school and loves watching the sport on TV, but he opted not to play in consultation with his family.

“My dad was all, trust me, it's not worth it because of safety,” Sun said, “and I realized he was kind of right — if football was any safer, I probably would have played.”

To combat the problem of low numbers, the school has talked about turning the JV team into a freshman-only team next year and pushing sophomores to varsity, although no one is currently prepared to act on this idea.

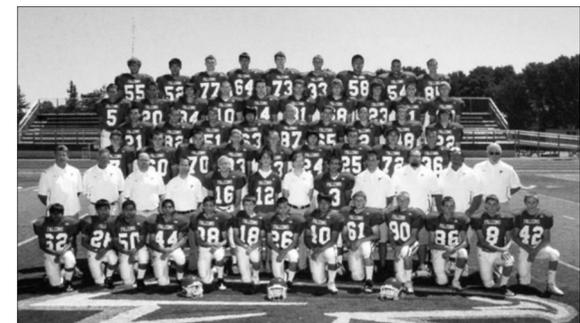
If they were to put this plan in motion, Lugo hopes that the JV team would end up more accessible for newcomers who aren't yet confident in their abilities, and he hopes that parents worried about safety would let their child play at this less intense level. In the meantime, Lugo has decided to send a half dozen varsity players to share their experiences at Redwood Middle School in hopes of attracting more players in the lower grades.

The school is even considering lowering the number of summer practices. However, Lugo feels this is unviable because compared to other school's teams that practice six times a week during the summer, Saratoga's JV and varsity teams only practice 14



Top: The 2019 JV football team had 19 players and an overall season record of 1-7. They played 8-minute quarters instead of 10-minute quarters.

Bottom: The 2011 JV football team was 53 players strong with an overall record of 7-3.



Photos courtesy of the Falconian

times total in the summer, and so cutting this number even more would greatly underprepared upcoming players.

“We try to let kids be kids and families be families,” he said, “but some people still think that's too much of a time commitment.”

In a worst-case scenario, if trends continue, the school could potentially dissolve the JV team altogether and move newcomers straight to varsity. In turn, Bian thinks a varsity-only program would remain at a constant 25-30 members in the following seasons.

For Lugo, what is happening with football also reflects a decrease in participation for sports and physical activities as a whole among teens. Over the past few years, the school has seen a significant drop in participation for sports across the board, with the girls' tennis, girls' golf, and boys' and girls'

cross country teams being most recently affected. According to registrar Robert Wise, schoolwide participation in sports peaked in 2013, during which 381 students participated in fall sports, but this number has trickled down to just 265 students this year.

On a national level, high school participation in traditional 11-man football has fallen more than 10 percent since 2009, according to a recent story in *The New York Times*.

Ultimately, there may not be a lot that Lugo or the school can do to reverse the trend of declining participation in football and sports generally.

“We're dealing with a community that is very technology orientated, and most [students] didn't grow up playing sports at all,” Lugo said, “so we're seeing a reduction in kids playing not just football, but sports in general.” ♦

FOOTBALL

Stokes shines, but Falcons fall to Carmel in CCS

by Leo Cao
& Siva Sambasivam

After one of the better seasons in recent memory, the Falcons finished first in the lower El Camino league with an overall 8-2 record and earned a trip to the Division 4 CCS playoffs, but their high-powered offense couldn't bail them out in their quarterfinal round matchup vs. Carmel at Monterey Peninsula College on Nov. 15.

The Falcons, seeded No. 6, lost to the No. 3 Padres 62-43.

The Padres exploded offensively early, scoring a touchdown on a 73-yard quarterback sneak three plays into the game. They stayed committed to the run and scored five touchdowns on the ground in total.

The Falcons stayed in the game during the first few quarters, only trailing by three points at halftime. However, second-half lapses, including giving up a fourth-down conversion combined with two fourth-quarter turnovers, effectively sealed the game for the Padres.

Still, the Falcons ended the season proud of what they had accomplished this year.

“We left it all out there,” said senior wide receiver George Bian, who ended his football career as one of the school's top wide receivers statistically. “We may have come up short in the end, but overall we had a very

good season.”

Senior quarterback Payton Stokes put the team on his back for the first three quarters, and although he had two interceptions in crunch time, he had a final stat line for the ages.

Stokes threw for 470 yards and three touchdowns, while also rushing for 205 yards and adding two more touchdowns on the ground. As terrific as Stokes was, these kinds of performances have become the norm for him during this year. Stokes led CCS in virtually every passing category, completing 67 percent of his passes for 3,020 yards and 36 touchdowns. Perhaps more impressively, Stokes did this all after battling through a hip condition that began last year.

After his junior season, Stokes learned he suffered from osteoid osteoma, a bone tumor in his left hip that he worried would keep him from playing his senior season. However, a procedure performed by Stanford University doctors helped him Stokes return for his season.

As a result, Stokes was able to put together one of the best seasons ever for a Falcon quarterback. He earned All-League Honors — but he was not the only one from SHS to receive this award. The Falcons boasted seven others on the first team and four more on the second team.

The players who made the top squad in-



Senior quarterback Payton Stokes rushes with the ball in the game against the Carmel Padres in pursuit on Nov. 15. The Falcons lost 62-43, ending their CCS playoff run. Stokes threw for 470 yards and rushed for 205 yards that night.

Courtesy of Mike Seifert

cluded Bian, senior linebacker Talon Sisco, senior defensive linemen Tyler Ouchida and seniors running back Tyler Chaffin-Price and wide receiver Kelly Huesby and offensive linemen juniors Karan Vazarini and Luke Edwards. Second-team honorees were senior wide receivers Tyler Prowse and Max Mullenberg and juniors offensive lineman Richard Hernandez and linebacker Nathan Murthy.

In addition to leading the league in the number of All-League selections, the Falcons also topped the board in the number of non-seniors to earn honors. Bian thinks that

the success of the juniors on the team this year will be instrumental in ensuring continuity and success for the team next year, especially with the small size of this year's JV team.

“We are going to have a lot of returners for next year that have experience playing at the varsity level, especially with our offensive line, which is probably the most important unit,” Bian said. “While losing Stokes will probably hurt, I think [junior quarterback] Grant Petters will fill in well and we'll be able to rely heavily on our running game as well with Chaffin-Price.” ♦

snapshots



FALCON // ANGELINA CHEN



FALCON // ANGELINA CHEN



FALCON // ANGELINA CHEN



Courtesy of Now and Forever Studios

Junior Helena Lee drops off a gift for the annual Giving Tree, hosted by the junior class office.

Senior Emilie Prillwitz, junior Stephen Ludwig and senior Marley Feigin rehearse for the fall play "Sense and Sensibility" on Nov. 21.

Junior Jessie Zhou runs at CCS Finals on Nov. 16, placing 16th.

The Falcons' defense lines up to rush into the backfield for a sack during the senior night game against Lynbrook on Nov. 1.

Why turkeys should be an endangered species

turkey has f-allen



Allen Chen

Thanksgiving. Every year, families gather to celebrate this fall holiday. As the color orange starts to seep into every corner of life, good vibes run high and grudges are erased by fall leaves and pumpkins.

Oh yeah, and they also eat an entire bird, for some reason.

They say that turkeys dread the coming of Thanksgiving, because they are scared of

being eaten. But they really shouldn't fear us; rather, we are the true victims of the holiday, being forced to eat inedible strands of fiber called "meat" but more suited to knitting instead.

Like, whose idea was it to make people eat these things? They taste the same way that losing your inner child feels.

It goes beyond Thanksgiving, too. The existence of turkey as a species is a blight on our world. People who campaign against geese are overlooking the actual worst bird in existence.

The only benefit of hunting turkey for Thanksgiving is to cull their numbers every year. We should burn their corpses completely instead of burning them halfway and

then subjecting our taste buds to it. Additionally, we could use them as fertilizer for crops. The point is that eating turkey just seems like an unnecessarily uncomfortable way of getting rid of the meat.

Over the past decades, as turkey populations have increased, the amount of sadness in the world has probably gone up as well. The line of causation is pretty obvious. Consider this: Would you rather have turkeys or maintain humanity's joy? Yeah, that's what we thought.

Also, picture this: You are going about your day, coffee in hand, just trying to get your grades up. Suddenly, a turkey drops down from the ceiling and begins to beat you with a baseball bat. As you lie bruised

and bleeding on the ground, you gasp, "Why?" The turkey responds, "because I hate you," before continuing to hit you, now with a crowbar.

This is something that could hypothetically happen to hundreds of students just like you, every day.

Turkey shouldn't be eaten during Thanksgiving not only because they taste bad, but because the species itself is reprehensible and doesn't deserve the attention.

Now that Thanksgiving is rolling around, you may want to consider banishing turkey from your kitchen. If this makes your table feel a little too empty, you can replace it with a pile of sandpaper, or maybe firewood. It would probably taste better. ♦

I got the horses in the back (page)

Yehawww



Anouk Yeh

"Horse girl." "Yehaw." "Neighhhh." These are all phrases that have been mercilessly pelted at me ever since I started riding horses.

My journey as a "horse girl" (using the phrase in an act of reclamation) began one fateful day in fourth grade when my mom decided to let me take a trail ride at Garrod Farms. The entire trail ride lasted 45 minutes and I got to ride a sweet, old horse named Jack.

Although we ended up getting rained on during the trail and although Jack walked as slow as a snail — describing his gait as a "walk" is a euphemistic stretch, 10-year-old me immediately fell in love with the idea of horseback riding. Ever since then, I have been pummeled with all sorts of aforementioned comments.

Although being labeled as a "horse girl" sure dampens the morale, the thing that bothers me the most is not the nicknames, but rather the immediate assumption that people make when I mention horseback riding — namely, that it's easy.

In reality, riding is hard work. I mean, what other sport requires you to steer a 1,200 pound animal between your legs, while looking like you belong on the cover of Southern Living? What other sport

requires you to constantly dance the fine line between a regular afternoon practice and a trip to the ER, while still staying sane? Suffice to say, riding isn't just one smooth yehaw. No, the sport is more like three choppy and juxtaposed yEeHAaWs strung together. As evidence, here are some of the most challenging riding moments I have faced.

The Indy incident

This entire incident happened on a normal Tuesday after school practice at the barn. I was warming up on Indy, a black and white mare, when something caught her eye.

To this day I still don't know what it was, but it sent her full-speed cantering straight into the safety of a hedge on the outskirts of the arena.

Because of the height and makeup of the hedge, all that ended up sticking out from the leaves was my head. I had no choice but to spend the next 10 minutes patiently sitting in the hedge, waiting for my trainer to come find me in my infantile state. Yeah, not a good look.

The Stanford escapade

This incident happened at Stanford University's Red Barn. It was the end of my first ever practice with the Stanford Interscholastic Equestrian Association (IEA) team and everything was going smoothly. We were getting ready to put the horses back into their stalls, when all of a sudden, the unthinkable happened.

Somehow, the horse I was grooming had broken free from the cross ties he was attached to. Within seconds, he was making his way down the barn aisles and out into the abyss of the Stanford campus.

Long story short, it took over half an hour, half of the Stanford college team, and an ungodly large number of horse treats to coax him back into his stall. Needless to say, I made a stellar first impression on my teammates and the Stanford staff.

These two examples are only a peek into how challenging horseback riding is.

So, yes, feel free to neigh at me in the hallways, I can handle your botched parody of equine bioacoustics, but please don't assume horseback riding is easy. ♦



GRAPHIC BY LEO CAO

topten

TOP 10 WAYS TO BE THANKFUL

- 10 Give people free hugs.**
Just make sure to ask for consent first.
- 9 Just do it.**
Through the wise words of Nike (and maybe Mr. Louie too).
- 8 Tell your teachers how grateful you are for them.**
Maybe next time you open Canvas, your grade might be a bit higher. :)
- 7 Subscribe to the Falcon.**
Show your gratitude by supporting Saratoga's bright beacon of truth and real news.
- 6 Scold anyone who's not feeling grateful around you.**
Ingratitude anywhere is a threat to gratitude everywhere.
- 5 Help PG&E combat fire season.**
Show the company some gratitude by alleviating their workload — completely cut off your power lines!
- 4 Blast Christmas music.**
No better way of honoring Thanksgiving than using it as a doormat holiday!
- 3 Eat a whole Thanksgiving dinner.**
By yourself. Show your tastebuds your appreciation.
- 2 Flex your parents' Teslas.**
Are you truly thankful for something if you don't show it off?
- 1 Be glad you don't have college apps**
Unless you're a senior: sad face.

- Tiffany Wang and Anouk Yeh