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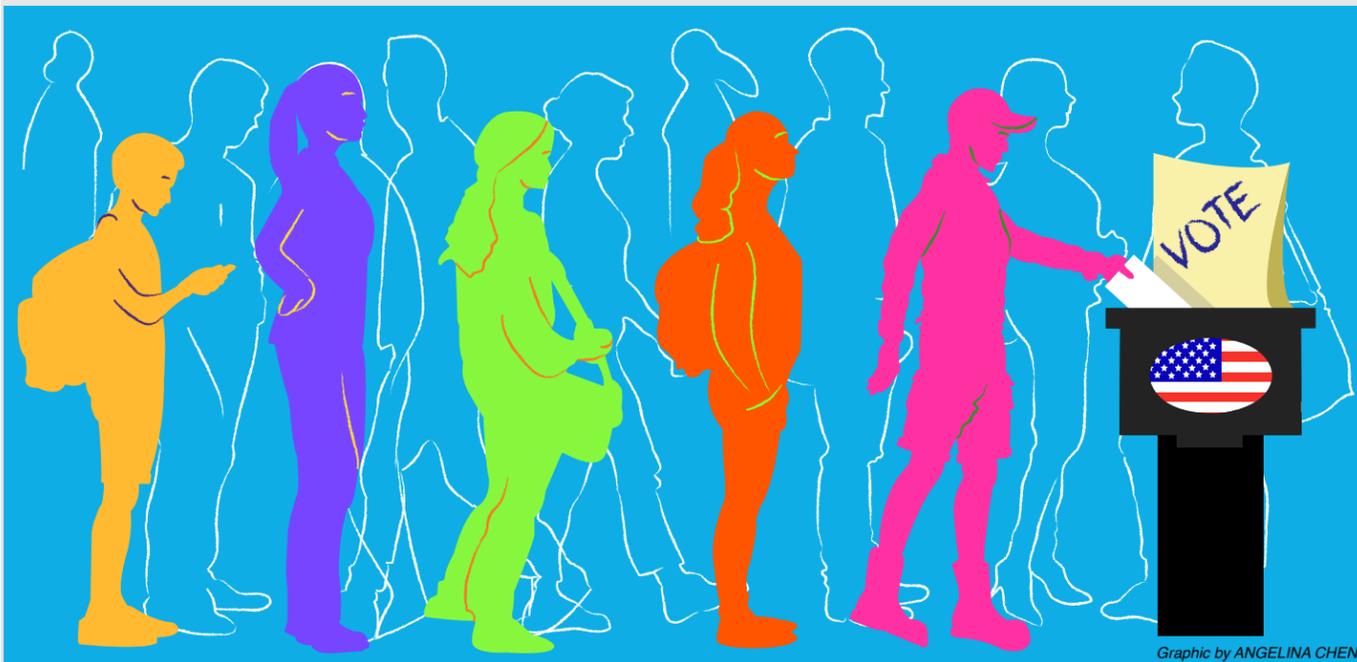
AN INDEPENDENT HIGH SCHOOL PUBLICATION

Friday, October 30, 2020

Saratoga High School Saratoga, CA

Vol. 61, No. 2

ORGANIZERS ENCOURAGE TEEN VOTE



Graphic by ANGELINA CHEN

STUDENTS, ALUMNI HOPE TO REVERSE TREND OF LOW TURNOUT IN NOVEMBER

BY Nicole Lu

On Feb. 22, Class of 2020 alumna Mitra Mokhesli felt a twinge of exhilaration as she dropped off her ballot at West Valley College. In the days prior, she had spent hours researching the candidates in the California primary elections. Only as she left the voting center did Mokhesli realize the strangeness of the situation.



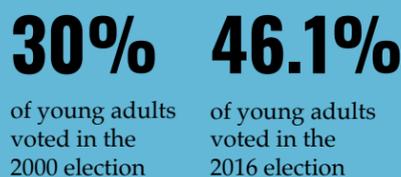
Mokhesli

"I felt excited but also odd because everyone at the voting center was a lot older than me," she said. "I felt like they were a little in-

timidated by a high schooler voting."

Like Mokhesli, many young voters have to make an adjustment to the reality and responsibility of voting, and many don't succeed. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, people ages 18 to 24 have consistently voted at lower rates than all other age groups. In the 1996 and 2000 elections, just 30 percent of young adults voted. By the 2016 election, this number had increased to 46.1 percent, but it lagged compared to citizens 65 and older, who voted at a rate of 70.9 percent.

As the U.S. presidential election on Nov. 3 draws closer, many alumni



Graphic by CHRISTINE ZHANG

and current SHS seniors have spoken out about the importance of voting. Mokhesli, now a freshman at the University of Michigan, said she plans to continue voting this fall.

>> **VOTING** on pg. 20

In-person school stirs concerns

BY Andrew Li & Shreya Rallabandi

The district has transitioned to Phase 2A of its four-phased plan for reopening that district superintendent Dr. Michael Grove outlined in July.

The plan will incrementally return students back to campus "as conditions permit."

The state's "Blueprint for a Safer Economy," released on Aug. 28, outlines a four-tiered classification of counties based on their daily new case rate and test positivity rate and provides counties with guidelines

>> **OPENING SCHOOL** on pg. 5

City council race proves competitive

BY Marisa Kingsley

The public gathered remotely to watch a candidate forum hosted by the League of Women Voters Southwest Santa Clara Valley on Sept. 29, where the six candidates running for Saratoga City Council discussed issues facing the city, including proposed changes to the Saratoga retirement community, high density housing and rising water rates.

The candidates — Kookie Fitzsimmons, Belal Aftab, Tina Walia, Doug Case, John Fitzpatrick and Renee Paquier — are running to fill Mayor Howard Miller's and Councilmember Manny Cappello's seats. The Falcon reached out to the candidates to better understand their platforms.

Kookie Fitzsimmons
Fitzsimmons, a third generation

>> **ELECTIONS** on pg. 2

togataalks

What do you think is the biggest issue in the election?

"Bettering our climate legislation and regaining international relations."



sophomore **Arnav Garg**

"The COVID-19 crisis, because it has exacerbated every other issue in the country."



senior **Aindri Patra**

Virtual class or gap year?

BY Shama Gupta & Christine Zhang

Months before beginning classes, the COVID-19 pandemic forced college freshmen to rethink their plans. For most, there were three options: Stay at home and attend college virtually, missing out on many of the social interactions that it would usually entail; move into dorms and attend virtual and hybrid classes; or take a gap year.

While only a handful of alumni from the SHS Class of 2020 decided to take a gap year, most students who considered it were discouraged either because their college

didn't permit it, or because they decided they didn't want to be a year behind all their friends.

Class of 2020 alum Felix Chen, for example, would have taken a gap semester if his college, the University of Southern California, had allowed it.

"I felt like USC's high tuition wasn't worth it for online classes," Chen said. "I could achieve the same results by taking online community college courses and transferring credits over afterwards."

Despite a petition with over 700 signa-

>> **GAP YEAR** on pg. 3

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newsbriefs

Club rules revised to accommodate remote learning

Clubs are adjusting to new rules in online learning, as laid out in a meeting hosted by activities director Matt Torrens and the ASB on Oct. 14.

At the start of the year, ASB mandated that club meetings be recorded so that there would be evidence of inappropriate conduct or other issues in case the club adviser was not present at the meeting. But with the new Los Gatos-Saratoga Union High School District Zoom accounts created on Sept. 15, students are no longer able to record Zoom meetings.

Because of this, ASB removed the requirement for meetings to be recorded, but they are hoping to meet with the district board to bring the recording feature back to student accounts.

Given the difficulties of transitioning online, ASB vice president Erica Lee said that clubs can complete a suspension form if they cannot function online. ASB will allow the club to suspend their club status until in-person schooling resumes if their request for suspension is reasonable. So far, only the English as Second Language (ESL) club has been temporarily suspended.

— Christine Zhang

New supervisor monitors returning students

In August, Allan McGurk started as the school's new campus supervisor. His job mostly involves school safety in normal times, but he is now supervising the first small group of students to return to in-person learning in what is called Phase 2A.

Students meet in the library and range from those struggling with remote learning to others who have had power outages, unreliable internet or computer problems.

McGurk's role is to ensure that COVID-19 guidelines are maintained and that they have the resources they need for learning. He also directs students to the IT person on campus to help with internet connection issues and give them headphones.

McGurk started his career in corporate real estate management before working as a football coach at Los Gatos High School. In 2015, he was diagnosed with cancer and stopped working full time. He has been free of cancer for five years.

In 2019, McGurk started part-time work as one of three campus supervisors at Los Gatos and said he realized that he loved being back at work. Afterwards, he started looking for full-time employment.

During his time at Los Gatos, McGurk heard great things about Saratoga High from assistant principal Brian Thompson, a factor that motivated him to apply for the job at SHS when it opened after former campus supervisors Mark Hernandez and Helen Jarrett left the positions in June.

"I am looking forward to meeting more students and staff and building relationships of trust and cooperation," McGurk said. "The interaction with the students has been positive, and I am looking forward to the next phases when more students return on a regular basis."

— Apurva Chakravarthy and Nicole Lu

Falcon Focus



FALCON // AVANI KONGETIRA

Construction workers remove a doorframe from the 900 wing on Oct. 20. Part of this wing will eventually become science classrooms.

picturethis



Courtesy of MALEIA FERNANDEZ

Jumping high | Junior assistant captain Patricia Huang executes her famously high toe-touch during the dance team's pom routine on Oct. 19. The team wears masks and maintains social distancing.

ELECTIONS

continued from pg. 1

Saratoga, has been volunteering for the Saratoga Planning Commission for over six years, serving as the Vice Chair from 2018 to 2019. In her 30 years of civil service, she has been the Chair of Saratoga Village Merchants Association, Chair of the Blossom Festival and Co-Chair of the Saratoga Rotary Art Show, and has served on the Saratoga Rotary Board of Directors.

Fitzsimmons said she would prioritize maintaining the city's semi-rural atmosphere by increasing communication and transparency between the local government and the community. Moreover, she also aims to promote local businesses, as Fitzsimmons owned a business in Saratoga Village for 15 years, and believes that it's the business owners who come up with the best ideas to promote them. In turn, support from the city can help businesses. The annual Car Show, for instance, was proposed by local real estate agent Tiger Teerlink.

"It may sound simple, but the best way to support the business-ness is to do business with them," Fitzsimmons said. "As a Council member, I can improve community outreach and provide incentive programs for both the merchants and the community."

Belal Aftab

Aftab, who was born and raised in Saratoga, is currently the Chair of the Traffic Safety Commission and Vice Chair of the Transbay Joint Powers Authority Citizens Advisory Committee. He also works for the financial technology company Stripe.

Aftab plans to bolster public safety initiatives amid reopening during the COVID-19 pandemic and mental health awareness, as well as creating a more candid budget to ensure fiscal responsibility. He would also prioritize public safety surrounding wildfires, traffic and policing, which would include the implementation of a Psychiatric Response Unit that enables mental health professionals to respond to emergencies. This would also introduce text alerts modeled after companies like DoorDash and UberEats.

"We have ways to track where the food is, when it's picked up, when it's at our front door, but getting communication about whether or not to evacuate was close to

impossible," Aftab said. "These tech companies create apps that are designed to be as easy to use as possible, and the government doesn't think that way."

Tina Walia

Walia, a Saratoga resident for 19 years, has served as the Planning Commissioner since 2010 and has also been the Planning Commission Chair (twice) and Vice Chair (twice). In addition to serving the community, Walia previously worked as an architect in India and the United States, as well as in business analytics and market research and believes this experience gives her a strong foundation to advocate for Saratoga.

While challenges regarding the pandemic would take immediate priority, having already worked with Saratoga's Climate Action Plan, Walia is planning to increase protection of citizens against wildfire danger. Walia would also prioritize preserving Saratoga's "small-town, low-density look" that characterizes the city.

"I want to protect our city's small-town look and charm that we all enjoy, and is sadly under threat from state laws," Walia said. "I have comprehensive experience to deal with city ordinances that we need to fortify."

Doug Case

Case, who has been a Saratoga resident for 23 years, is a retired business executive who worked for companies including Hewlett-Packard, Cisco, Sybase and Net App for 35 years. Although he has not held any government positions, Case spent three years advocating for PanCAN, or Pancreatic Cancer Action Network, on Capitol Hill, and is an active community member, including being a fundraiser lead for Second Harvest Food Bank as well as volunteering with Saratoga Federated Church.

Case would focus on promoting local businesses and attracting new ones, also ensuring community safety and security in the face of wildfires with programs such as FireWire and FireSafe. Additionally, he would focus on protecting Saratoga from up-zoning state legislation, and instead creating

housing takes the diverse population into account.

"I will work with Saratoga residents on how to bring a diversity of housing into our city," Case said. "Because for a healthy community, it's not all high tech jobs. You also have families who have kids, and they refresh the schools, and the diversity of jobs makes this community interesting and healthy."

John Fitzpatrick

Fitzpatrick, who was born and raised in Saratoga and the Central Valley, works as a consumer protection attorney. He has worked as a staff attorney at the Positive Resource Center, which provides legal assistance to senior citizens and people with disabilities, and Pro Bono Project Silicon Valley, which works with victims of domestic abuse and family law for people who are incarcerated.

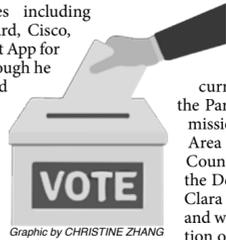
As a city council member, Fitzpatrick would aim to promote growth based on local control and sustainability, effective responses to public safety issues including drought, wildfires and crime.

"I'm independent of any political party and I will not be guided by donors, developers, lobbyists or special interests," Fitzpatrick said on his website. "Instead, I will balance the potential effects of any decision with input from all stakeholders, including residents, business owners and neighbors, along with an analysis of data."

Renee Paquier

Paquier, the Dean of the Che School of Professional Studies at West Valley College, is currently a board member of the Parks and Recreation Commission as well as the Saratoga Area Senior Coordinating Council. She has also served as the Deputy Sheriff of the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office, and works with the administration of justice West Valley College to provide social justice and equity training to officers.

If elected, Paquier would emphasize strengthening the Neighborhood Watch program to ensure community safety, making sure that all members of the city are heard and research is done when considering housing and commercial development, and maintaining high academic standards while working with the School Board to address students' mental health and success. Paquier did not answer questions posed for her in time for publication. ♦



Graphic by CHRISTINE ZHANG

Class of 2020: Zooming through online college

BY Anouk Yeh

Class of 2020 alumna Connie Liang sat in her room and hurriedly logged onto her Common Collaboration and Learning Environment (CCLE) dashboard. It was the first day of her virtual freshman year at UCLA in early October and she was scrambling to find the Zoom link to her early morning chemistry lecture.

Despite the frustration that comes with having to stay home, Patel said that virtual learning still has some silver linings, like saving money on housing and having a more palatable and relaxed learning schedule.

Liang, however, mentioned that the virtual setting has made it harder to get help outside of class. Virtual office hours have become more crowded than usual since students don't need to put in as much work to attend the office hours.

Like tens of thousands other students across the nation, Liang is attending her freshman year of college from home as a result of housing restrictions universities have put in place to combat COVID-19 on campus.

UCLA drastically reduced housing openings for students in hopes of regulating the campus population. According to UCLA's housing website, in order for students to be able to secure housing on campus, they meet the criteria which includes being houseless, residing in housing that is "not a safe or appropriate environment" and more.

Although Liang has been living at home in Saratoga, she said that it hasn't been too hard to reach out and make new friends.

"Socially, everything's very accessible online," she said. "A lot of people in my classes have reached out to me, and I've also been able to reach out to other people too."

Liang said it was easiest to make friends with people in her classes or in the same clubs she was interested in.

"Sometimes it's hard to keep in contact with people," Liang said. "There's so many people messaging back and forth and so many different group chats being created to the point where it's overwhelming."

Class of 2020 alumna Anishi Patel, who has started her virtual freshman year at the UC Berkeley, has found it harder to make friends virtually.

"It's so hard to meet new people if you don't have a group project or lab or something that you need partners for," Patel said. "Clubs and seminar-based classes help, but honestly, I'm not sure any of my online friendships will last once in-person schooling resumes."

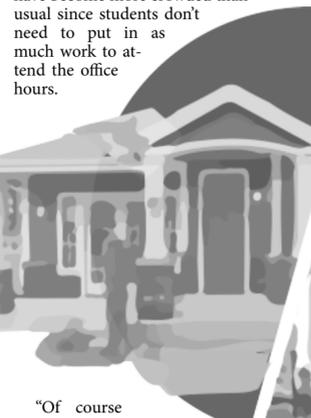
Unlike UCLA, Berkeley doesn't require students to meet a set list of qualifications in order to apply for or receive on campus housing, so Patel said around 20 percent of Berkeley's freshman class is living in dorms on campus.

She added that many Berkeley students who chose to stay home for safety — despite the lack of a real college experience — harbor "bitterness" at students who are currently living on campus and partying.

"It feels like we're doing our part to slow down COVID, but there are still people who are deciding to party and hang out with large groups of people on campus," Patel said. "It feels like a slap in the face."

Patel is also considering living in an apartment because current Berkeley dorming prices are more expensive than surrounding apartment rental prices and because the Berkeley dorms have a lot of COVID-19 regulations to follow.

"It's just that Berkeley's not the safest college town, so my parents are on the fence about me getting an apartment," Patel said. "Otherwise, it seems like a great option, and I can see why people would prefer that over the dorms right now." ♦



Graphic by SINA SALEHI

"Of course you can still ask the professor a question. But who knows how many people are in line?" Liang said. "If you were in-person you would have to make that real effort to walk into the building and walk into the office, but not now."

Liang said that, if all goes according to plan, she is planning on renting out an apartment in Los Angeles with her would-be college roommates to live in during the winter and spring quarters.

"Living someplace else would make it feel more like the beginning of college because right now it doesn't feel like it," Liang said.

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2020 alumni search for normalcy on campus

BY Andy Chen

After the Class of 2020's disappointing second-semester-senior experience last year — with the pandemic canceling highlights such as prom, senior sunset, senior trips, a normal graduation and Grad Night — many alumni have chosen to move on campus to avoid a similarly disappointing college freshman experience.

Alumnus Jeffrey Xu, who moved to Cambridge, Mass., in late August to study computer science at Harvard University, said he chose to live on campus because he felt so isolated while sheltering in place at home.

"Quarantining helped me realize how much I missed regular social interaction, so it was an easy choice to go on campus," he said. "Living on campus has allowed me to make a ton of new friends, experience the city and live a different life."

Xu described his life as a "cycle of work, play and eating." His daily schedule consists of attending online classes and studying with small, socially distant groups on weekdays and

visiting famous landmarks or viewpoints throughout the Boston area on weekends.

"There's this thrill of starting the day off not knowing what's going to happen," Xu said. "The spontaneity of being able to meet with people instantly because of how many like-minded people I'm surrounded by is just amazing."

For alumna Lucy Liang, who is studying interactive media arts at New York University, her decision to live on campus stemmed from her desire to have a normal college experience, as well as to attend in-person or hybrid classes. Liang wakes up at around 9:30 a.m., goes to online or in-person classes, studies with a rotating group of friends, "hangs out for a bit" and then goes to bed.

While Liang said she prefers living on campus because she's able to establish deeper connections with her peers and professors, she recognizes that there are some downsides. COVID-19 restrictions prevent her from eating in dining halls, accepting visitors into her dorm room and going to university facilities like the gym.

Whether through social or academic means, Xu said he is hopeful that students living on campus will be able to benefit from their normal college freshman experience.

"I miss living at home, but living on campus definitely has more pluses than minuses," Xu said. "I can't wait to see what the next few months have in store." ♦

As a result of living on campus, he's able to make in-person appointments with his professors and continuously keep himself motivated.

"The biggest benefit by far is that there's a physical reminder that school is going on," Ma said. "Initially, my decision to come on campus also had a social component, but now that I'm on campus I see that socially, it really isn't that different from being remote."

According to alumna Ashwin Ramakrishna, who studies and dorms at the University of California, Davis, professors have been supportive and lenient throughout his online college experience; many have shifted tests, assigned less homework and even canceled finals to make virtual learning easier for students.

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"Because of all the rules and restrictions, it's definitely harder to do much this year, especially to go outside and make new friends," Liang said. "The rules are definitely a good thing and necessary for our best interest, but it isn't as easy as living at home."

Liang added that the risk of contracting COVID-19 is "definitely higher" when living on campus compared to living at home, since students are more exposed to the outside world.

However, since NYU administers weekly testing to prevent the spread of the coronavirus within its student body, Liang believes that as long as students are careful and adhere to social distancing norms, COVID-19 can be contained.

Others, like alumnus Kyle Petkovic, chose to stay home and attend classes online. "I didn't feel comfortable about going to in-person classes or traveling via airplane," said Petkovic, a student at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. "Even if I was on campus, most classes would be online anyways, so I didn't think it was worth the risk."

Those who decided to live on campus face the challenges of trying to follow all the social distances rules and still try to be social.

Liang said these rules haven't helped in making more friends, but Xu has seen a bright side to them.

He said many of his peers are using Instagram and other messaging apps to randomly invite people to small social gatherings. These in turn have led to friendships.

On the other hand, alumnus Jeffrey Ma, who studies Chinese Literature at Amherst University, said he was almost solely incentivized to come on campus for educational

purposes. As a result of living on campus, he's able to make in-person appointments with his professors and continuously keep himself motivated.

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New advisory period elicits mixed reactions

BY Ethan Lin
& Allen Luo

Like most students, junior Weilin Sun has a love-hate relationship with Wednesdays in the school's online learning schedule this year. He loves that he has a day to catch up on his homework and work ahead in classes. He hates that he has to arise at 8:35 to be ready for his 9 a.m. advisory period.

The half-hour advisory period started this year as a way to educate students on a wide range of issues, from micro aggressions to issues of consent and many others. Students complete educational units on their own and then move on with their Wednesdays.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the reception to the advisory period has been mixed.

"I don't believe students have really been learning what the administration wants them to learn, as many people don't take advisory seriously," junior Amitav Rawat said. "The topics being taught are extremely

sensitive topics and having them communicated through an online module is not the best way to teach it to students."

For the school, the implementation of advisory had another purpose. By state mandate this year, teachers must have live contact with students for five days a week.

According to assistant principal Kerry Mohnik, the advisory period itself is not required by the state, but some of the state's initiatives don't fit into any singular curriculum or class, so the advisory period fulfills those needs.

"The Haert curriculum and the Epoch Curriculum were specifically chosen to meet the needs of our students and to supplement the work being done to define the new Graduate Profile that is under review," Mohnik said.

With the school now in remote learning, these modules also have to be self-explanatory and easily followed. Although the

school has tried to pick the best curricula to follow during the advisory periods, many students said they feel disengaged during it, or think the whole system could be improved.

"One way to improve it [advisory] is maybe after a certain time, all the students will go into a Zoom meeting to discuss what they learned. That way, people can get new ideas and learn from different perspectives," said junior Glenn Liang.

Other students have suggested a different way to utilize the advisory period by completely changing the content taught. Sophomore Siddharth Kamannavar thinks the school should hold a school-wide assembly during this time to discuss school events, as communication is lacking during remote learning, instead of just teaching mental health through a computer screen.

Despite negative feelings about advisory,



Mohnik

Leadership makes up for in-person spirit events

BY Jason Cheng
& Vinay Gollamudi

In a normal school year, students could be found in the quad, participating in Homecoming dances during September. This year, however, students are forced to adapt to remote school spirit activities. Although the same spirit doesn't persist in online learning, the members of the Leadership class are doing their best to emulate an in-person experience.

During remote learning, the ASB has initiated events such as a trivia night on Oct. 2, lip dubs released on Oct. 8 and 9 and several Instagram-related activities that involved students taking photos of themselves dressed in their class color or doing activities they enjoyed.

The lip dubs involved students dancing and lip-syncing, among other activities to popular songs. The clips were eventually compiled into one video for each class

which was uploaded to YouTube.

"In a normal year, it's easy to follow annual traditions and go by what we always do, but this year, planning something completely new is hard because we're moving through the dark and can't always predict what's going to work and what isn't," said ASB president Cynthia Zhang.

Zhang said the ASB is trying to centralize their communication to ensure that everyone gets the message about upcoming spirit events, such as Movember, through social media and principal Greg Louie's weekly newsletter emails.

Despite their best efforts, Leadership students face challenges in making the online events to measure up to the excitement of in-person spirit events.

"The Avatar spirit week didn't really compare to in-person events because you don't get that feeling of unity and teamwork when you're decorating for homecoming and practicing for quad day together,"

head spirit commissioner Emily Choi said. "You also don't get the excitement of quad day and being at the Homecoming football game and watching coronation during halftime. Those are some of the best memories of the year and virtual events cannot replace or equate to those."

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SPIRIT COMMISSIONER Emily Choi

Sophomore Anirudh Iyer, who took part in his class's lip dub video, acknowledged that participating in an online spirit week wasn't the same as in-person events.

some see it as a break from school.

"Advisory is a great way to break up the monotonous grind of school," junior Daniel Jiang said. "Sometimes you just need a break from the pile of assignments you have."

Although there are few actual consequences for not completing the assigned modules, administrators hope students complete the coursework. Students who do not complete it will receive a message asking if assistance is needed with connecting to the modules.

"The consequences [for not attending advisory] are simply attendance and learning-related," Mohnik said. "No one wants to punish anyone for not completing things that are good for them. It would be like punishing someone for not eating a healthy meal or taking a prescribed medication."

Currently, advisory is planned to continue through the end of this year. If the school returns to full in-person mode in the months ahead, school leaders will iron out how it will fit into the school week. ♦

M-SET outreach team members create English videos for students in rural India

BY Kaasha Minocha

Junior Sanjana Somayajula, an M-SET team member, has often used her technical skills and high-level problem solving to create robots. It turned out those skills weren't needed for the group's most recent outreach effort.

Over the summer, the M-SET outreach team sought to help Vikalp Sansthan, an organization in rural India, in hopes of encouraging STEM education in poorer countries.

Vikalp Sansthan, which members knew from a charity supported by Bombay in the Bay, aims to end gender-based violence, abolish child marriage and empower girls to continue their education to higher levels.

Usha Choudhary, the founder of the organization, said she was thrilled to hear from the M-SET team. Schools in rural villages have been closed for almost six months due to COVID-19, and most of the students there lack access to technology in their homes.

The quality of the education in the village is also low — even eighth graders don't know the English alphabet or how to write in Hindi.

Because of these challenges, Choudhary asked members of the M-SET outreach team in early August to create basic English YouTube videos instead of teaching STEM lessons. Choudhary wanted M-SET members to teach

the students simple conversational phrases such as "hello" and "how are you?"

So far, the team has created 11 videos. Somayajula and junior Mira Bugata work alongside two other members of the outreach team — juniors Kaasha and Kaaya Minocha — to create a script for each video. The four cover subjects such as greetings, weather, favorites and aspirations.

"The fact that these girls are unable to access such a powerful tool makes me appreciative of the opportunities that I have access to."

JUNIOR Sanjana Somayajula

The script's format consists of speakers saying one line in English and then one line in Hindi. At the end of the conversation, the speakers repeat the whole script in English so the students can practice pronouncing the words.

"I enjoy the format of the videos because by having the lines in English and Hindi, the students understand the meaning of the sentences," Choudhary said. "The part that is only in English is im-



Courtesy of USHA CHOUDHARY

In one of Vikalp Sansthan's learning centers, students sat in a circle to watch the M-SET outreach team's videos, which go over basic English conversations that teach subjects like greetings, weather, favorites and aspirations.

portant since the students need to practice their English."

The students watch the videos by going to one of 18 learning centers that have been set up in different villages, each of which serve 20 to 35 students. The students go there daily for three hours with a local youth fellow selected for each center. The fellows, who are in grade 12, project the videos on their smartphones and ensure that the students follow COVID-19 guidelines.

After watching the videos, the students practice together, saying the phrases while their youth fellow helps them.

Choudhary added that the

youth fellows aren't fluent in English either, so the videos inspire them to practice as well.

"We've been so impressed and motivated by the team sharing the videos," Choudhary said. "When the village students saw the videos, they were delighted."

Somayajula said she enjoys making the videos because she is doing something so simple and still making a difference for others. She added that educating these students has been a valuable experience for her because she is using her multitude of resources to help those who don't have the same opportunities as she does.

"Education is extremely pow-

erful, which is something I definitely have taken for granted," Somayajula said. "The fact that these girls are unable to access such a powerful tool makes me extremely appreciative of the opportunities that I have access to."

Kaaya has also enjoyed educating the students and is happy to help Vikalp Sansthan's mission.

"The students deserve more in terms of their education, and that's what encourages me to do these videos," Kaaya said. "From the feedback that we've received, I know the students have enough drive to continue their education. I'm hopeful that their dreams will one day become a reality." ♦

OPENING SCHOOL

continued from pg. 1

for reopening. As of Oct. 12, Santa Clara County is in the orange, or moderate, risk tier, providing further confidence in the safety of a possible hybrid return to campus.

Phase 2 is split into two parts: 2A and 2B. In phase 2A, the school is bringing back small, stable cohorts on campus, each with 14-15 students and one supervisor, amounting to a total of around 130 students and 10 teachers on campus.

The district will continue to monitor Santa Clara County's conditions and will move to phase 2B once they improve.

In phase 2B, the school will continue to bring the cohorts on campus and increase their size.

A number of teachers, including digital arts and MAP teacher Alex Hemmerich and math teacher Kelly Frangieh, have expressed interest in returning to campus to participate in this phase.

Though all students and staff can volunteer to be in a cohort, students who are disabled, learning English or require resources provided by the school have priority for participating in Phase 2.

Phase 3, a hybrid learning model, will not commence until January at the earliest, though its implementation is uncertain and controversial.

The district will enforce 11 Categories of Preparation and Protocols, a district-made list of guidelines that summarizes over 140 recommendations from agencies such as the Santa Clara County Public Health Department and the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health. Among the guidelines: Every-

one on campus will be required to wear a mask at all times, and classrooms will be set up to implement social distancing. Staff must also complete a daily health survey.

The administration did not answer questions about plans for conducting lunch or actions the school will take if a student on campus tests positive for the coronavirus in time for this publication.

Despite the health and safety precautions, students and teachers are conflicted on the school's plan.

Google Form surveys from Week 4 of remote learning asked both students and parents to rank their comfort levels with returning to in-person learning in small cohorts from 1 to 5, with 1 being not comfortable at all and 5 being very comfortable. Of the 608 student responses, just under 50 percent ranked themselves a 3 or below, and of the 906 parent responses, around 45 percent ranked themselves as a 3 or below.

Sophomore Noor Khan opposes the shift, saying that there is so much the school has to take into account when they allow students back onto campus.

Khan said she felt uneasy because when she picked up her class t-shirt from the textbook room, students were using the same pen-

cil to sign their names on a clipboard, which can spread germs.

"As much as I want to go back to school — I'd really like to see people again — I don't necessarily think it's a good idea," she said.

Senior Abhishek Patil, however, is willing to return to campus for Phase 2 and is confident he will remain healthy.

"If we go back to in-person, but our children's schools have not, what do we do?"

SPORTS TRAINER Liz Alves

"I just feel like if I can wear a mask and keep my distance, I should be fine," Patil said. "It's my senior year so I really want to go back to school."

Many teachers have expressed concerns surrounding hybrid learning. Over 55 percent of 147 teachers in the district ranked themselves as "not comfortable" with returning to school in small cohorts for in-person learning, according to a newsletter Grove sent to the district's community. Some

of their concerns pertain to the school's ability — or lack thereof — to mandate health and safety policies such as social distancing and mask-wearing on campus.

Because there are so many factors the school "cannot realistically control," Athletics Trainer and health teacher Liz Alves said, she is not confident that a return to campus will be safe.

While Alves herself is healthy, she is concerned about other teachers who are at risk. In addition, she said that many teachers are worried about their families and access to childcare.

"If we go back to in-person, but our children's schools have not, what do we do?" Alves said. "It's a lot easier to keep a child entertained in their playground while you work than to keep a child entertained in a classroom environment where they will want to wander or touch everything."

Aside from safety and childcare, teachers are also concerned about having to quarantine, substitute teaching, paid sick days, the prospect of having to switch back to remote learning and the costs of medical care.

"I think the school will try their best to promote safe behaviors, but I think it is very difficult to ensure safe behaviors," Alves said. ♦



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How do you feel about returning to in-person school?

"I don't feel that it's safe enough, and I am fairing at home just fine."



sophomore **Trevor Leung**

"I would be really excited to return to school but paranoid about the virus at the same time."



junior **Grace Hsu**

"I feel like it's time because most other states are going back, and we are behind."



senior **Juan Vintimilla**

Local Chinese Americans respond to disruptions of prospective WeChat ban

BY SelinaChen

From boba to fresh fruits to a whole raw chicken, any grocery can be ordered from the WeChat group chat “Saratoga deliver-to-the-door group purchase chat 1.”

Freshman Minh Do’s mother Grace Liu is a frequent user of the popular platform. This grocery delivery group chat became so popular that it has reached WeChat system’s maximum limit of 500 members, so several additional groups had to be created, many of which have been filled as well.

Liu said that these groups help both sellers and consumers.

“It’s almost like your personal shopper,” Liu said. “After the shelter-in-place order, it’s a very convenient way for you to get food. It’s especially important for the Chinese-American community because we have particular needs such as buying goodies during Chinese holidays.”

Group-purchasing chats are only a small fraction of what the multi-functional social media app WeChat is used for by Saratoga’s Chinese-American community. But on Aug. 6, President Donald Trump issued an executive order calling for a WeChat ban because the app “threatens to allow the Chinese Communist Party access to Americans’ personal and proprietary information.” Despite the order being temporarily halted by a judge on Sept. 19, the ban is a looming threat to Saratoga’s WeChat users.

WeChat was developed by the Chinese company Tencent Technology in 2011 and now has more than 1 billion users worldwide. Since China has banned popular

American platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp, Chinese Americans have limited options for contacting people living in mainland China — and the most popular by far is WeChat.

Junior Katherine Chen moved from Shanghai, China, to Saratoga six years ago after completing fourth grade, a difficult transition due to the lasting relationships she had already made. In China, Chen had formed close bonds with her classmates and teachers.

“Right now, WeChat is the only way for me to communicate with them,” Chen said. “Whenever I go back to Shanghai for vacation, I schedule meet-ups with my friends by texting them on WeChat.”

When President Trump’s executive order stated that WeChat would be banned on Sept. 20, Chen said she was surprised and upset.

“I was really stressed because I had to ask all two hundred of my friends and teachers for their phone number or ask them for their other social media accounts,” Chen said.

Senior Anthony Qin also said he was shocked that President Trump was taking action against WeChat, despite there being rumors about a WeChat ban for months.

Qin uses WeChat primarily for his club, Aspiring to Create English (ACE), in which members act as tutors to help foreign students with their English. ACE has numerous group chats with students in countries such as China, Japan, Indian, Germany and Australia, as well as a page on which the officers post articles about American culture and other topics of curiosity.



Qin

Teachers’ assistants adapt their online roles

BY AnjaliNuggehalli & MartinXu

talk about what I should do before we meet again.”

Unlike Nair, senior Katie Chen, a TA for math and engineering teacher Audrey Warmuth, does not have individual meetings with her teacher. Instead, she attends Warmuth’s class meetings in preparation for her assigned tasks.

Because Chen’s TA work has stayed constant throughout the semester, she does not need much guidance from Warmuth. Chen goes through each of Warmuth’s lecture videos and writes down the timestamp for example problems, so students can easily find the problems rather than having to watch the entire video.

Still, Chen wishes that she had more interactions with students who need additional help.

“Sometimes students who I’m friends with text me for help,” Chen said.

“Because I don’t know most of the people in the class, I don’t interact with as many students as I would like to.”

SENIOR Katie Chen

Despite the disappointment, Chen is satisfied with knowing that she has made Warmuth’s job easier.

“During in-person school, I liked to ask TAs to help me with my work, and I really wish I could help students more easily online,” Chen said. “But I’m still happy that I’ve been able to help Ms. Warmuth in a lot of ways.”



Nair

When the ban was announced, the ACE club took immediate precautionary measures.

“We turned off automatic app updates and background app refresh in settings because we suspect if WeChat is updated it may go away,” Qin said.

However, Qin said that being unable to use WeChat would not be a crippling blow, as ACE club is looking into alternative platforms such as Skype that are not censored in China and India.

Junior Joshua Fang has also turned to other platforms in face of the WeChat ban, downloading app after app to connect with different friend groups — Skype and QQ, to name a few.

“The problem is that different Chinese American communities switch to different platforms,” Fang said.

“Before, we were all connected through WeChat, but now there is disagreement and confusion.”

JUNIOR Joshua Fang

Fang said that one reason behind WeChat’s popularity is its money-transfer feature which, although less relevant here in the U.S., is still important. In China, people are moving away from cash and credit cards, instead preferring to use WeChat Pay for everything from shopping at malls to buying street food.

Fang said he believes that banning WeChat does not alleviate the U.S. government’s concerns. The most popular platform Chinese Americans are switching to is QQ, which is developed by Tencent, the same company that owns WeChat. In addition, WeChat users can sidestep the ban by using a VPN.

“The ban doesn’t achieve anything,” Fang said. “I think most of us WeChat users already know we are being monitored — it’s pretty widespread knowledge here. If we’re aware of the risk, and we still use it, then why should the U.S. government try to limit our use of WeChat?”

Chen said that since there are more than a billion WeChat users, the Chinese government doesn’t care as long as she doesn’t say anything outrageous.

“It’s not like they can come to your door and capture you or anything,” Chen said.

Liu said she was not especially concerned about the Chinese government’s surveillance since she doesn’t talk about politics on WeChat. In 2011, she started using WeChat for communication purposes with her friends and family, but gradually it became a mixed platform for entertainment as well.

“I would say banning WeChat has a beneficial side for me because the entertainment part in WeChat feels like a distraction to my daily life,” Liu said. “I don’t mind it being taken away.”

Liu said she doesn’t mind going back to text messaging and is curious as to why people are reacting strongly to the WeChat ban.

“The truth is, a lot of the needs the community uses WeChat for are WeChat-created needs,” Liu said. “WeChat is a new thing, and we can live without it.”

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Debate format needs modifications

As America has become more politically divided, the very principles of presidential debates as knowledgeable discussions aimed to benefit the American people have lost all meaning.

After the first presidential debate on Sept. 29, it’s safe to say that most viewers were disappointed, if not aghast. Regardless of which political party or candidate you support, the level of blatant aggression and lack of focus was very apparent in the debate.

Most of the hour and a half was taken up by listening to each candidate promote his own agenda, watching them avoid questions and wondering which statements were actually factual.

While it would be ideal to see each candidate stick to the designated rules, the only realistic solution to this problem is to have more rigid regulations.

One of the main problems with the current debate model is that candidates often don’t answer the questions. Instead of using the debate as a platform to answer questions about their policies or respond to inquiries, candidates often use the platform to attack unrelated aspects of the opponent’s campaign. Although this is an essential part of any debate, the candidates often get completely sidetracked.

The only way to address this would be to have stricter rules that prevent candidates from answering with completely unrelated topics. If a candidate were to completely avoid a question, it would be far more effective if the moderator could remind them of this and prompt a more relevant answer to the question.

Still, as seen in the last debate, candidates often completely ignore the moderator, which presents yet another issue.

If there were only a few interjections, this might be acceptable, but as we saw on Sept. 29, it was hard to even tell who was supposed to be answering questions at times. While the moderators do attempt to halt interruptions, these often yield little improvement in the discourse.



NIKA BAGHERIAN

Although this might seem harsh, the Commission on Presidential Debates’ decision to mute microphones is the only solution. This way, candidates would be given the amount of time they deserve without interruptions, and the other side would be able to respond afterward. The point of the debate is not to hear candidates talking over each other; it’s to inform the people on who they are voting for and what their policies are.

Aside from the chaos of the debates, in recent years, false information has become a greater issue, especially with the increasing availability of the Internet. Misinformation is constantly clogging our computer screens and news feeds, and a live, in-person debate should serve as a break from fake news.

But that isn’t always the case. As everyone has seen, candidates spew false information during their debates as well, denying viewers the right to truths about the issues candidates address.

One way to ensure viewers un-

derstand the facts behind debate issues would be to have unbiased fact checkers on the premises of the debate, constantly informing us of things said that may be untrue. These updates wouldn’t have to be immediate and could be off-screen or during breaks, but it would be beneficial to hear what is true and what isn’t every now and then, regardless of which side it comes from.

While some publications like The New York Times do have live fact checking during debates, these services may require subscriptions and aren’t as mainstream for debate watching. It would be far more convenient to have fact checkers as part of the

debate itself, so the fact-checking would be available to everyone watching the debate.

While the vice presidential debate on Oct. 7 proved to be more successful than the presidential one, it still involved many interruptions. It’s clear that debates in general have been carried away from what they were initially intended to be.

Few people enjoy watching a heated argument, and it is only fair to give the people what they deserve: real answers. We can hope that candidates will work toward a more successful debate, but it is time that the debates themselves evolve to accommodate an ever-changing world.

Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

Editors-in-chief Allison Hartley Kaitlyn Tsai	Opinion Editors Neeti Badve Michael Wong	Writer Kavita Sundaram
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The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 30-3 in support of this article.

You can’t control peers’ actions in quarantine

BY NeetiBadve

A key theme of this pandemic is that a lot of people have shown their true colors, and this can’t be any more pertinent than on social media.

I’ve seen people from celebrities to my peers post pictures and videos from parties, get-togethers or working out without masks or social distancing, as if there wasn’t a global pandemic occurring.

Still, it has been somewhat reassuring to know that I am not the only one bothered by these actions.

Along with these posts have come multiple comments from peers about their lack of safety and the selfishness they exhibit by behaving recklessly, and though they come with pure intentions and justified frustration, the comments do not always have the intended effects.

It is here we must ask ourselves: “How much responsibility should students take over calling out their

peers when it comes to socially distancing?”

Having a stigma around not social distancing is a good thing if the people learn from their mistakes.

There comes a point where frustration can only do so much. It’s simply not worth it.

As “cancel culture” has amassed, however, I have found that people who are shamed into realizing they are wrong are less likely to feel bad about their actions and more likely just trying to save face.

And that’s if it even works. While celebrities have been apologizing after being criticized, many within our community have

just continued living their lives with no change, and if they address the criticism, they resort to calling people “haters” or making a mockery of others’ concern.

Those who don’t address it merely begin to post their non-social distancing photos on their private accounts and stories in order to hide their actions.

At the end of the day, there comes a point where our frustration can only do so much, and it simply is not worth it to put so much time and energy into checking others’ actions. Students’ main focus should be to feel safe within their family unit and feel confident with the precautions they have been taking.

Yes, it is frustrating because these same students are the ones complaining the most about online school (oh, the irony), but being constantly upset at them will not change their behavior and will only add to the unease and anger of the ones who actually are being safe and responsible.

The only way they could even begin to learn is through some form of disciplinary action, but there are some other ways students can help.

If your friend group is not taking the pandemic seriously, let them know of the consequences of their behavior and don’t join them in places where you feel uncomfortable.

And I’m not saying you should completely abstain from a social life.

Encourage your peers to form Covid pods, which are safe units of uninfected people who do not meet anyone outside of themselves, if they are craving that social interaction. But most importantly, make sure you are taking care of yourselves and your family.

If there is anything to learn from this pandemic, it’s that the only thing we have total control over are our own actions.

So keep yourself in check, be a good example and trust that others will learn and get on board.



Printed by Folger Graphics in Hayward, Calif.

Trump's COVID-19 diagnosis is no reason to gloat

BY EdwinChen

Just before Oct. 1 at midnight, Trump tweeted that he and the first lady tested positive for COVID-19. Immediately afterward, when I opened social media, my Twitter and Instagram feed was scattered with stories celebrating the announcement, some of them writing that Trump's diagnosis was "poetic justice" and others just laughing.

Some even went so far as to wish death upon the president — an extremely inappropriate response. Nobody deserves to die from the coronavirus.

While his diagnosis is ironic considering his message on the pandemic — that it is nothing to worry about — Trump's diagnosis is nothing to celebrate. Although Trump was not being safe, he is supposed to be a role model for how to act, especially in dire situations like this.

If Trump had died from this disease, this situation would be nothing to celebrate. It would be a tragedy that holds dire consequences that we would face as a nation.

Trump's death would mean that none of the experimental treatments worked on him, which would be a significant setback. According to FiveThirtyEight, Trump received Regeneron Pharmaceuticals' cocktail of monoclonal antibodies, a treatment that has not been FDA approved yet. He also



GRAPHIC BY AVANI KONGETIRA

received Remdesivir, an antiviral drug that has been found to reduce the duration of the infection and increase survival chances, and Dexamethasone, a drug with a long list of side effects meant to reduce inflammation.

As the president, Trump had access to Walter Reed hospital, and some of the best doctors, facilities and treatments in the world. Trump dying would mean that despite his exclusive access to experimental treatments, he was still unable to survive — a grave indication of the severity of the virus.

Fortunately, the treatment seems to be working. Trump has been declared trans-

mission-free by his doctor though it's unclear if he has tested negative yet.

Trump's death would also pose another problem: the election. Trump dying would create a complicated situation when it comes to replacing a candidate close to Election Day.

According to the Denver Post, 63 million ballots have already been sent to voters. Congress would either have to delay the election or restart the voting process. The president dying would not leave us with a better president either. According to the 25th Amendment, if the president dies, then the vice president, in this case Mike Pence,

will be sworn into office. Regardless of the duration of his term, which could either last a few short months or another four to eight years, it would still leave us with potentially disastrous results.

Pence does seem to be more mentally stable than Trump - the only upshot of having Pence as president. The main problem with having Pence as president is his targeting of the LGBT community. According to the Human Rights Campaign, in the past, Pence has blocked hate crime legislation that tried to make it illegal to harm someone who is part of the LGBT community.

He also signed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act in Indiana, which, according to Indy Star, stated that the government could not infringe upon a person's ability to practice their own religion unless it had a reason for doing so.

The law faced criticism from those in the LGBT community, fearing that businesses would now legally be able to deny them service. Though Trump has not exactly been supportive of the LGBT community, Pence is likely to do more damage.

Rather than celebrating Trump's COVID-19 diagnosis, we should let it serve as a reminder to stay safe and socially distanced because anybody can catch it, even those who are typically immune from the world's problems. ♦

Celebrities should use their platforms for politics

BY ApurvaChakravarty

On Oct. 7, award-winning singer Taylor Swift tweeted about an interview she did with V Magazine's "V is for Vote" campaign on why she would be voting for Joe Biden and Kamala Harris. In the tweet, she included the magazine cover and a picture of her with a tray of "Biden Harris 2020" cookies.

The majority of the comments on her post bashed Swift for being so vocal about voting for Biden. Many stated that celebrities were arrogant narcissists and "emotional children."

Another comment stated, "I am genuine-

ly interested why anyone would care what Taylor Swift has to say about elections ... or any celebrity for that matter. Especially when they're not educated in politics, or experienced living on the breadline?"

These reactions are hardly unique. When celebrities endorse a politician or speak out about social injustice, they frequently receive a backlash, essentially being told to "stick to what they're good at," whether that be singing, acting or playing a sport.

But just because a person devotes their life to athletics or the arts doesn't mean they should swear off having political views.

Critics who knock celebrities for having

options would never think twice about lawyers, doctors or teachers expressing themselves.

Then there is the question of influence. Swift has 87.2 million followers on Twitter and 140 million followers on Instagram.

On average, her posts gain around 3 million likes. With such a big following, Swift has the ability to reach people who never follow the news or care much about critical issues such as climate change.

In truth, celebrities are just citizens like the rest of us, and we should encourage civic engagement as much as possible, not discourage people from being "too political." ♦

It only follows that celebrities should be active in encouraging people to vote. In the 2016 presidential election, 46.1 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds voted, compared to 70.9 percent of 65-year-olds and older.

Given that most celebrities' fans lie in the former age range, convincing young people to go and vote has the potential to make a huge difference in elections.

In a time where the fate of our country will be decided on Nov. 3, voting and being politically active is one of the most important things you can do as an American citizen. We can't get mad at celebrities doing their part. ♦

Climate Clock creates panic; that's the point

BY CiciXu

"7 YRS 098 DAYS 13:54:58"

The neon red digits of the massive clock in Union Square, New York, is a clear reminder that the earth is in danger and that humans need to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas that traps heat in the atmosphere. Otherwise, the global surface temperature may increase 1.5 degrees Celsius — which would be a global catastrophe causing sea level rise, extreme weather and loss of many species.

This digital countdown clock was inspired by the Carbon Clock, created by Mercator Institute on Global Commons and Climate Change (MCC). The Carbon Clock gives a countdown of the carbon dioxide emission budget — a simplified way to calculate the additional emissions that can enter the atmosphere before an increase of 1.5 degrees Celsius in global temperature. But unlike the Carbon Clock that runs on its website, the New York climate catastrophe clock is exhibited publicly in one of the busiest locations in the country, serving as a constant reminder for society of the urgency of climate change.

The clock is an effective method to pressure the public for immediate effort on mitigating climate change. Even though it does not show all of the aspects of climate change — the long-lasting impacts of rising global temperature, the science behind climate change, the already victimized people, etc. — it demonstrates that belief in climate change is necessary in American society.

By associating numbers to the often generalized concept of climate change, the 24/7

countdown makes concrete the magnitude of the issue. This is a persuasive technique to urge the general public, government and corporations to take climate change seriously as a bipartisan issue which will impact people indiscriminately as it worsens.

Given that our current federal government has discredited many climate efforts and is reluctant to actively combat climate change, small efforts like the Climate Catastrophe Clock become more significant by silently but powerfully representing those impacted by climate change and urging others to act.

As one of the most powerful nations in the world, America delivers a message to the other nations following in its footsteps.

The Trump administration withdrew the United States from the Paris Agreement in 2017, which deals with the global impacts of greenhouse gas emissions, adaptation and finance. As one of the most powerful nations in the world, America delivers a message to the other nations following in its footsteps that climate change should not be prioritized.

The desperate need from already heavily impacted island nations for support, resources and representation has been largely

ignored by the international community. Still, the Climate Clock, standing in public, reminds the world that there are people in America who acknowledge the existence and the urgency of climate change.

Some complained that the clock adds unnecessary stress to their lives in an ongoing pandemic, but ignoring climate change is not a solution. Complacency delays needed action — conducting research on the nuanced impacts of climate change, advocating and working with cities to draft more sophisticated action plans, spreading awareness and decreasing individuals' carbon footprints.

Although the rise of 1.5 degrees Celsius of global temperature might seem insignificant, research shows it can alter humans' health, livelihood, food security, access to water and economy at the same time.

Indigenous people and others who depend on monoculture — the cultivation of a single crop in an area — will be hit the hardest, as is already observed in Brazil with its drastically declining cocoa production.

Human health will be affected as unpredictable heat waves hit the city, and people living in underprivileged neighborhoods will become more prone to heat-related illness as they are challenged with less effective air circulation systems.

These are all the consequences of the climate catastrophe that the clock tracks, which will brutally exacerbate the class divisions in the world as the underprivileged will become more vulnerable and the privileged will merely use their advantages to adapt.

In addition to the complaints of ad-



GRAPHIC BY SHAMA GUPTA

ditional stress, some say big corporations and government should be targeted, not the public.

But Americans have the right to protest, vote and make their voices heard. When that voice is strong enough, it will naturally pressure the local, state and federal governments and big corporations to change in favor of the popular opinion from the public.

This clock also serves as a reminder for consumers to make more thoughtful choices about supporting companies that do little or nothing to reduce their carbon footprint.

The climate countdown clock would be useless in a nation where the people's voice does not matter, but America is different.

Here, its numbers motivate more people to join the environmental movement by reminding the public that more actions toward mitigating climate change need to be taken immediately. Time is running out. ♦

Here's why the SAT is still worth taking

BY EdwinChen

Pandemic or not, college admissions play a large role in our academic life. We have been told throughout our high school career that to experience success in this process, we need a high GPA, a solid SAT or ACT score, strong extracurricular activities and well-written essays.

But this year, with the COVID-19 pandemic ravaging the world, there are certain changes to how admissions officers will review applications, one of them being how SAT and ACT scores will be perceived.

Many students across the country will not have the opportunity to take either test because testing centers have been closed due to the pandemic. According to the College Board, about half of the testing centers that were supposed to be open on Aug. 29 were not.

Our students have an opportunity to take the SAT during these unprecedented times. Principal Greg Louie announced on Aug. 24 that seniors can take the SAT on Oct. 14, and juniors can take the PSAT on Oct. 17. The SAT will cost \$120 and the PSAT \$30.

Despite the fact that many colleges have made the test optional — and the fact that the SAT normally costs \$64.50 with essay and \$49.50 without — students ought to seize this opportunity and feel no guilt.

Some argue that being able to take the SAT at the school is a blatant example of privilege afforded to wealthy students, but the school has already offered the SAT, and students would be foolish to turn this opportunity down.

The problem is not with Saratoga High offering the tests; the problem is that all high schools ought to find ways to offer the tests to interested students in a socially distanced way.

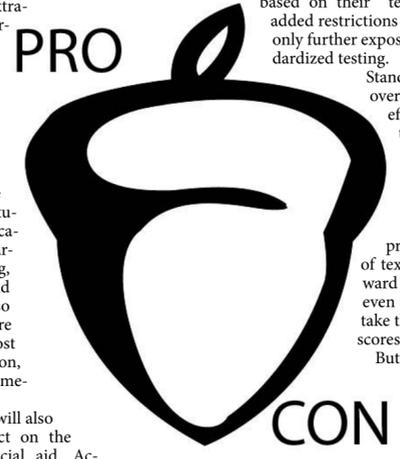
A good SAT score will only add to a student's application, even if a school is test-optional. Students can take this opportunity to improve their score or to get a score

in the first place. If they do not do well on the October SAT, they can choose not to report their scores to colleges.

Having an SAT score will help take the weight off of extracurricular activities, GPA and essays in the application process. With the pandemic still in full swing, extracurriculars during this time are especially difficult to do because there are far fewer opportunities. In short, if any of those aspects in a student's application are not particularly strong, then they should take the SAT so that their score can help boost their application, even if it is time-consuming.

SAT scores will also have an impact on the available financial aid. According to the college application website Get Schooled, many schools will still be using SAT and ACT scores to award scholarships. Sixty percent of scholarships require an SAT or ACT score to apply. SAT scores still affect merit-based scholarships, so higher scores will lead to better scholarship opportunities.

Studying for the SAT is a stressful process, and it is a test that most of us want to be over with as soon as possible. Even though colleges are not requiring SAT scores as part of the application process, students should still take a shot at the test on Oct. 14 since there is no downside in the application process. ♦



GRAPHIC BY EDWIN CHEN

BY KavitaSundaram

Taking tests has never been my forte. While I understand the importance of regular testing in schools, I've never been able to grasp the point of nationwide standardized testing.

The fact is a student's entire academic life is based on a combination of tests and other projects in school, so there's no point in judging students' intelligence once more based on their test scores. And the added restrictions of coronavirus have only further exposed the flaws of standardized testing.

Standardized tests are overly skewed to benefit those who have the time, money and resources to prepare for them. Students often spend thousands of dollars, years of preparation and piles of textbooks working toward perfect scores, and even then, they often retake the tests to get better scores.

But for less privileged students, test prep just means regular, public school education, and as a rule, these students achieve far lower scores. In essence, standardized test scores mostly track zip codes and little else.

Inequity aside, the prospects of having in-person, paper-and-pencil tests right now are iffy at best since the pandemic seems to be getting worse. According to The Los Angeles Times, California alone sees tens of thousands of new cases every week. The predicted fall and winter second wave seems to be starting in some parts of the country.

Even if in-person tests were to happen, most students haven't had the chance to

take paper-and-pencil tests in school since March, so springing the tests on students now would have them out of practice.

Not to mention, the College Board continues to set up future test dates, only to cancel many a week or less before the test would happen.

This is extremely inconvenient to the students registered for the test, who are not only stressed about completing the test before college applications, but also have spent time studying for their now-canceled exams.

These frequently canceled exams show how unprepared the College Board is to adapt to the pandemic and safely administer tests. They also create even more stress for students, who study for weeks on end for an exam that only gets repeatedly canceled.

Even before the pandemic, standardized tests have failed to accurately represent students' intellectual abilities. They test memorization of certain techniques and types of problems rather than depth of understanding. The tests are out of date, and can be cracked by repetition instead of actual comprehension.

Test takers must only learn a method of completion rather than true problem solving, evident in the number of methodized practice material available for students.

Recently, coronavirus complications have pushed multiple well-known colleges and universities, such as the University of California system, to make standardized testing optional for applicants for the Class of 2021.

Most of these universities have realized the flaws of the system, recognizing that coronavirus presents yet another hurdle for many students when it comes to standardized tests.

Now more than ever, the effectiveness of static means of evaluation such as standardized testing is far less than it has been in the past.

With the added complications that come with a global pandemic, the emphasis on holistic review should be far greater than that of an outdated and inaccurate test. ♦

Please consider centralizing college information

BY JustinGuo

For what feels like the 17th time today, I find myself back on Occidental College's website.

What am I doing? I'm not even sure. I'm trying to "research" the college, which I've quickly learned means going on their website, clicking through a handful of web pages filled with surely candid photos of various smiling students of color, getting discouraged and subsequently giving up.

I can look at a scattergram and question my self-worth after seeing that someone with a 1600 SAT score and 4.9 GPA got rejected from a school I want to apply to.

It's not just Occidental; it feels like every single college website spews the same generic information about their perpetual mission to further students' intellectual curiosities within a tight-knit, diverse community while grooming us into renowned leaders of the next generation.

Honestly, I'm amazed that they've all been able to convey very similar themes without using the exact same words.

I know that I'm not alone in this complaint; there's a widespread sense among the seniors that it feels difficult to get a comprehensive grasp on the identity, values and overall campus culture of a particular col-

lege unless you are prepared to invest in a bunch of time reading and learning everything about it.

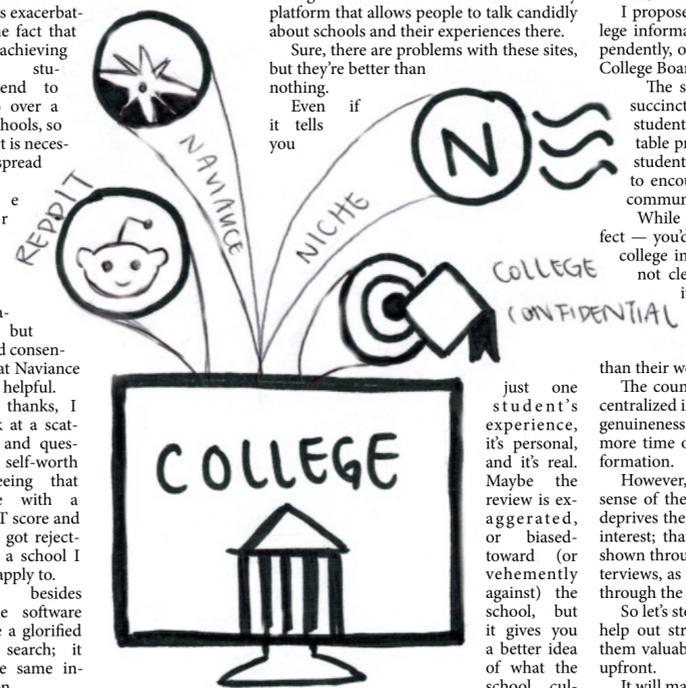
This is exacerbated by the fact that we overachieving Saratoga students tend to apply to over a dozen schools, so our effort is necessarily spread thin.

The answer to our woes is supposed to be Naviance, but the broad consensus is that Naviance isn't that helpful. Like, thanks, I can look at a scattergram and question my self-worth after seeing that someone with a 1600 SAT score and 4.9 GPA got rejected from a school I want to apply to.

But besides that, the software feels like a glorified Google search; it gives the same information. Right now, the best substi-

tutes for researching campus culture or particular college strengths are sites like Niche, College Confidential and Reddit — or any platform that allows people to talk candidly about schools and their experiences there.

Sure, there are problems with these sites, but they're better than nothing. Even if it tells you



GRAPHIC BY TIFFANY WANG

At the very least, it's a step in the right direction.

Still, we can take another step forward. I propose a centralized location for college information; it could be hosted independently, or more preferably, by a site like College Board.

The site would provide explicit and succinct information for prospective students, such as a school's most notable programs, and allow anonymous student reviews or discussion threads to encourage transparency and honest communication.

While the system obviously isn't perfect — you'd be condensing a multifaceted college into a few bullet points, and it's not clear who decides what goes on it — I still think that it's worth a shot; it's a problem that my parents can communicate the strong points of a college better than their website itself.

The counter argument is that providing centralized information would diminish the genuineness of those who would have spent more time organically looking for that information.

However, it's not as if giving students a sense of the notable strengths of a college deprives them of being able to demonstrate interest; that interest would be adequately shown through supplemental essays and interviews, as students would still have to dig through the website for additional details.

So let's stop beating around the bush and help out struggling students by providing them valuable, specific college information upfront.

It will make the overall process a lot simpler, direct, and less time consuming. ♦

Language classes should focus on speaking skills

BY Jason Cheng

The clock reads 11:40 a.m. as I tune into another session of Spanish class on Zoom, and I'm already beginning to zone out as another riveting grammar lesson awaits me — it's time to conjugate 50 verbs.

Now that many schools across the nation have transitioned to distance learning for the near future, students have seen the rise of lapses in concentration, awkward breakout rooms and the infamous Zoom fatigue.

This drastic change has hit language classes especially hard. In the past, teachers have relied on student participation in order to imprint the material into their minds, and speaking the language has immense effects on students' learning and understanding.

For Spanish classes in remote learning, however, verbal communication seems to take the backseat: Rather than emphasizing real-life applications, they seem to focus more on the intricacies of grammar.

We're fed information about conjugating verbs and memorizing vocabulary, yet it just isn't possible to truly put our new "skills" to the test.

Of course, that's not to say that grammar is unnecessary. Learning grammar allows new Spanish speakers to piece together words to form a complete sentence, but practicing through speaking out loud brings fluidity and a true understanding of the language itself.

Studying a language isn't about getting an A+ on the next test, either. When traveling to other countries, foreigners can connect to natives through spoken tongue, even if it's just a phrase or two.

Still, teachers face the challenges of gathering participation from everyone. Ghosting Zoom classes by turning off cameras has been a rampant problem already, and down the line, more and more fatigue will lead to less and less participation.

Oftentimes, teachers are forced into staring at screens of silent faces, and it's understandable that they've resorted to lectures and individual worksheets.

Forced participation for students who haven't mastered the material doesn't really go anywhere: Unmuting once or twice a period and muttering several incoherent phrases of Spanish doesn't do much for a language class.

Still, teachers should try to utilize class time for participation and group activities, leaving lectures for asynchronous work after class. Time is already of the essence, so in order to make synchronous classes worthwhile, it's important to steer students away from worksheets and promote a more interactive type of learning.

To do this, teachers can more often engage students in impromptu conversations, be it during regular classes or as assessments.

In doing so, they encourage students to practice informal conversations to build up their speech skills.

Apart from what teachers have to offer, it's ultimately up to the students to decide whether they want to make the most of their time.

Regardless, I'm sure they'd rather interact with one another instead of filling out packets of tedious work.

It takes some getting used to, especially for teachers who have had to meticulously plan classes and host synchronous meetings.

Still, the curriculum should promote an interactive environment over written work for the benefit of students and teachers alike. ♦

Teachers need to allow students to have breaks during class time

BY Audrey Mah

My head and eyes ached as I realized I had spaced out for half of my last class and not absorbed a thing.

This phenomenon has grown all the more frequent due to online schooling.

An easy fix: Give students breaks during class time.

Many teachers utilize their synchronous class time to lecture or present videos and slideshows for the whole 75 minutes.

But after more than 30-40 minutes of such classes, it's easy for students to slip into thinking that they are watching a video and not a live instruction class that can't be rewound.

Teachers themselves often let their lessons drag on for longer than students are willing to listen because they feel pressed for time and cannot see students' body language to tell when they are losing focus.

Yet, no matter how fascinating the content of a lecture may be, sitting through a 75-minute Zoom lesson is not effective if the students lose focus halfway through class.

This attention lapse is not just the usual daydreaming found in in-person school.

Paying attention on Zoom requires significantly more energy from students because they feel pressure to actively look like they are paying attention.

On Zoom, everyone in the room can see each other's video screens, which means if one person is not paying attention, everyone else can clearly see it.

Plus, having to stare intently at a computer screen for long periods throughout the day is just plain exhausting for the eyes and mind.

Sitting in the same position, hunched over a laptop for extended periods of time only adds to the weariness.

When students are unable to focus in class, they can't absorb the material, which means they are less prepared for tests or projects.

To make up for this, they will have to work on their own time to relearn the class content.

In an increasingly digitized world, students' attention spans are shorter than in previous generations.

(There's a reason Crash Course videos are always under 20 minutes — anything longer just doesn't work!)

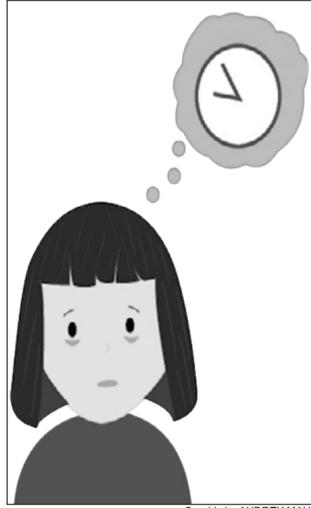
When teachers offer students a 1-2 minute break halfway through class, they let students relax for a moment and come back better able to focus.

In these breaks, students can use the restroom, stand up and stretch or grab a glass of water.

Better yet, they have the opportunity to give their eyes, posture and mind a relief from the physical and mental stress of focusing on a computer screen.

Physics teacher Kirk Davis frequently gives his students short breaks between activities, and the difference these breaks create is striking.

These precious minutes, however few

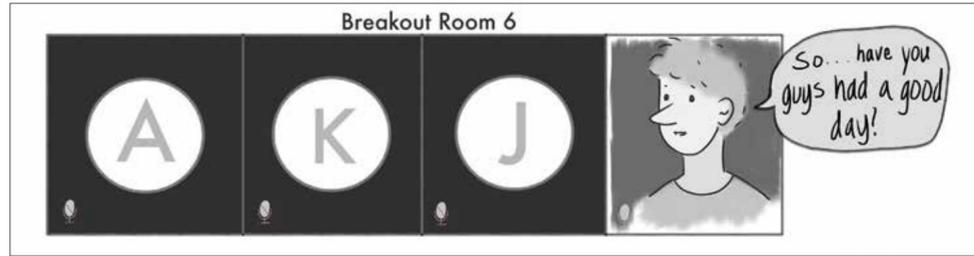


Graphic by AUDREY MAH

they are, allow students to re-energize.

For instance, I usually take the time to gather my thoughts and do a quick stretch before returning to class feeling invigorated and engaged in the class content.

Just a short breather like this can help both everyone come back refreshed and ready to complete the lesson. ♦



Graphic by JOANN ZHANG

Combating the awkwardness of breakout rooms

WHILE ZOOM BREAKOUT ROOMS ARE NOTORIOUS FOR THEIR UNCOMFORTABLE SILENCES, THERE IS A STRAIGHTFORWARD SOLUTION TO FEELING MORE AT EASE

BY Anjali Nugehalli

High school is full of awkward moments. Whether it is tripping in the middle of the quad or getting called out for being on your phone during class, every student has faced some sort of mortification in their high school journey.

This causes a chain reaction, as no one in the group will want to take initiative to lead the discussion.

You may assume that with the transition to remote learning, the chance of encountering an awkward situation would lessen.

Simply stay on mute, blend into the 30 other boxes on your screen, and you will easily remain under the radar.

But with the increasing use of Zoom breakout rooms in online classes this year, students are finding themselves in uncomfortable situations during almost every period.

While breakout rooms are indeed an effective and efficient way to encourage collaborative work, students often complain about the awkwardness of working in small groups on Zoom.

To my fellow peers, I am here to tell

you that Zoom breakout rooms will never equate to the casual, in-person conversations with classmates.

There is no way to simulate that level of comfort in an online world.

But there is a solution to dreading the stiff conversations that are seemingly inevitable in breakout rooms: Simply embrace the awkwardness.

If your go-to move in breakout rooms is to keep yourself on mute (or even turn your camera off), you are essentially handing the responsibility of carrying conversations to the other people in your group — a task that is often difficult to accomplish behind a computer screen.

This causes a chain reaction, as no one in the group will want to take initiative to lead the discussion.

As a result, your attempt to remain inconspicuous in your breakout room has led to your entire group staring at each other in silence, derailing the active academic discussions that could take place.

Instead, jump into the discussion as soon as you are put into breakout groups.

You may feel obnoxious for being the first person to talk, but trust me when I say that the rest of your group will appreciate you for it.

By starting the conversation, you have already made your peers more comfortable and they will most gladly follow along with your lead.

Your discussion does not even have to be limited to the assignment at hand; it can be

completely off topic.

Ask your peers how their week is going, what classes they are taking or what their weekend plans are — in short, anything to break the ice.

It may seem forced to ask these questions, but in a world where social interaction is so limited, I guarantee that your peers will be grateful that someone is interested in how their life is going.

Teachers should also provide extensive discussion questions for students that go beyond the surface level.

This will stimulate engaging conversations and create a friendlier environment for students to interact.

While it is sometimes uncomfortable or awkward, teachers should also pop into the breakout rooms and observe the discussions to ensure that everyone is participating in some way.

Zoom breakout rooms will never match the ease of socialization that comes with talking to people in real life.

Making an effort to stay engaged with your peers, however, will make the online learning experience so much easier to endure.

Next time you feel your discussions in breakout sessions coming to a close, I challenge you to keep your microphone and camera on.

Remember: Embrace and accept the awkwardness, and you will find that maybe Zoom breakout rooms need not be so painful after all. ♦

Study spots: venturing into the great unknown

pb
anjelly



Anjali Nugehalli

I used to group the entire school into one lump. The rusty lockers and homecoming posters merely faded into the background as I rushed from one class to another, too busy to take in my surroundings.

Now, as I'm planted at my desk for seven hours straight of school, I find myself reminiscing about the constant changes of scenery that in-person school had to offer. Instead of being glued to the same swivel chair in my room, I used to travel from doodle-covered chemistry desks to paint-splattered picnic tables in the quad, all in the span of an hour.

So in an attempt to boost my productivity and overall enthusiasm for online school, I decided to do my classes in different locations for a week.

On Monday I studied at Peet's Coffee, Tuesday at Wildwood Park, Wednesday at my friend's

house and Thursday in my backyard. (The pandemic limited my options.) In retrospect, I should have saved the coffee shop for last, as it was by far my favorite spot to study.

As long as you get there around 9 a.m. in order to get an outdoor table, Peet's Coffee boasts excellent WiFi, comfortable chairs, and yes, even free water.

While the shop is off of a busy road, I had no trouble staying focused, especially with an iced coffee to keep me awake.

I also noticed that without the distractions of my cozy bed and endless food options in my fridge, I ended up using the three hours I spent there extremely productively. Overall: 9/10

Tuesday's location was not so smooth. Wildwood Park is a great place to picnic with friends or take a nap under the Oak Trees, but is not suitable for studying. For one thing, parks don't have free WiFi, so I was restricted to electronics-free homework, which essentially does not exist in the world of online learning.

Not to mention, the park tables were covered in dried up food and

other unknown substances, so I was forced to slouch over my papers on the grass which was not the most ergonomic method to study. Overall: 5/10

Next, I ventured to my best friend's house to study at a social distance, but I should have known this was a bad idea.

We went from memorizing French irregular verbs to watching "Euphoria" and cracking up at TikToks on her phone, and I am ashamed to say that we got practically no work done. I left her house still not knowing how to conjugate irregular French verbs.)

I will definitely be back at my best friend's house soon, but this time, I'm leaving my books at home. Overall: 4/10

For my final study spot, I traveled a great distance to my backyard.

At this point, my options were limited, but I was not quite ready to return to my bland desk. Luckily, I picked a beautiful day to study outside, and I appreciated the serene surroundings as I did my work.

Studying in my backyard was also more convenient than the



other locations, as I could run into my house if I forgot an assignment or got hungry.

Aside from the questionable WiFi connection, I did not see any obvious issues with studying outside, and will definitely continue to do so on warm days. Overall: 9/10

Although some of my study spots turned out to be more distracting, I embraced the opportunity to step away from my desk at

home. It was refreshing to get a change of scenery, even if that meant transporting my laptop to different locations.

While it is difficult to replicate the bustling nature of in-person school, I would urge you to try doing online work in a new setting — moving your work space, even to another room, will boost your energy and revitalize your motivation. ♦

New iOS14 update: extremely addicting and not for anyone with no free time

chakra-
party



Apurva Chakravarthy

Rather than seeing my unremarkable apps when I unlock my phone, I now get to see interesting quotes and pictures.

I start by reading my favorite Harry Styles quote, "Treat people with kindness," and scroll past to see aesthetic pictures, cute calendars, and what song I am currently listening to.

After seeing the new iOS14 update all over TikTok and hearing all about it from my friends, I decided to take the plunge and download it myself so I could see what all the hype was about.

I knew from TikTok that I needed to download the app WidgetsSmith, which allows you to customize and design your widgets the way you want. My next step was

to decide what color scheme I wanted my phone to have.

While this may seem like an obvious choice for more decisive people, I deliberated for a while over whether I wanted pastel pink and purple, fall colors to match the season or dark green.

However, because my friend, junior Kaylie Wong, had just gotten me a pastel purple Wildflower case as a birthday present, I decided on pastel purple.

In WidgetsSmith, there are options for small, medium or large widgets. I ended up only using small and medium sized widgets because personally, I thought the large ones were too imposing.

From there, I chose one of my small widgets to be a mini-calendar, showing the date and time, and the other to be an aesthetic quote from Pinterest (if you are trying to change your home screen using widgets, Pinterest will be your best friend).

My two medium widgets were a Harry

Styles quote that said "Treat people with Kindness" and a picture of purple clouds.

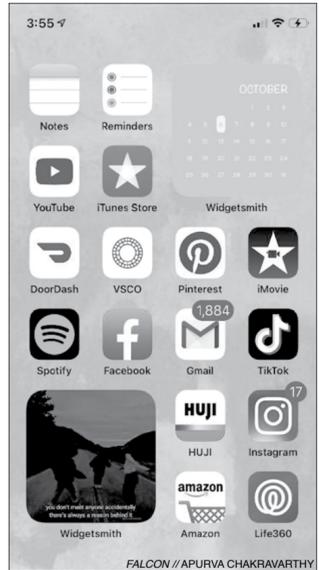
My last widget required me to download the app, Tunetrack, so I could install a widget that shows what song on Spotify I was listening to at the moment.

After getting all my widgets ready, I changed the home screen background to a light purple watercolor and started arranging my widgets the way I wanted.

I chose to have one of my medium widgets on the first page, my two small widgets on the second page and the Spotify widget and the second medium widget on the third page.

I enjoyed choosing and organizing my widgets, but I will admit that the update is very addictive and I spent far too much time on it considering the mountain of homework I still needed to do.

I give the update and the apps I used a 10/10, and recommend it to anyone who is looking to switch up their phone screen into something more aesthetically pleasing. ♦



Junior Apurva Chakravarthy adopted a new theme with the iOS14 update.

Thrifting allows for sustainable fashion, but it's not as easy as it seems

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Hannah Lee

Scanning endless aisles filled with secondhand clothing, I stared at the trivial amount of clothes I had accumulated in the past hour, consisting of a graphic tee, two flannels, a blue polo and a vintage wallet. Already worn out, I remembered my mission of achieving a vintage thrifted look that I had seen my peers pull off flawlessly before me.

Although thrifting has been around for ages, young people now are flocking to local thrift stores to create unique and affordable wardrobes in line with the new vintage-style trends spreading across social media, thanks to platforms like TikTok and YouTube.

Aside from being a way to revamp your closet, purchasing secondhand clothing

is an affordable and beneficial way to support sustainable fashion — with more and more mass-produced clothing, thrifting has allowed young adults to be more conscious about avoiding fast fashion.

After seeing a plethora of friends and influencers showing off their new looks at too-good-to-be-true prices, I decided to get out of my comfort zone and visit a thrift store on my own to see what the hype was all about.

The first store that came to mind was Goodwill. Thankfully, a Goodwill had just opened nearby, perfect to check out without driving too long. As soon as I walked into the store, I was overwhelmed by a whole spread of racks filled with vintage-style clothing. Clothes were sorted into every clothing category that could be possibly named.

I sorted through the racks slowly, checking each piece of clothing and evaluating how "thrift-able" each piece was. As I envisioned the different ways I could wear the piece, I would consider color and price.

Going into the store, I somehow thought that I would immediately pick up a flare for thrifting and discover a gold mine for my

favorite trendy clothes. Instead, I discovered shirts with outdated floral patterns, polos with suspicious stains, sweaters with loose threads and tops that showed far too much skin for my liking.

On the upside, the flannels, winter jackets and polo sections yielded decent finds. Prices ranged from around \$3 to \$15, but I steered away from anything above \$10 as I thought it would be too expensive to be from a secondhand store. I left the store with two items: a tan oversized flannel and a white woodstock band shirt. Despite being tempted to crop them in an attempt to turn them into something more trendy, I ended up keeping both items the way they were.

Both were pretty decent finds: the T-shirt was \$3 and the flannel was a whopping \$6.99, adding up to around \$10 — not the worst prices but not as cheap as people say either. I only visited Goodwill out of many chains around town, but sorting through dozens of pieces of clothing in one store alone was an exhausting process for me. I may not have had a super successful trip with my finds the first time around, but I



Countless racks of clothing are displayed at the Goodwill on Prospect Road in San Jose.

also have to consider that thrifting is eco-friendly and that not everyone can afford a name brand closet.

Although I may not be heading to thrift stores anytime soon for trendy outfits, with the right inspiration and materials, I'm sure thrifting can be a worthwhile way to buy conveniently priced clothing while reducing your carbon footprint. ♦

Untraditional Halloween Traditions

SPOOKY SEASON HABITS

Dairy not-free Halloween

BY Jason Cheng

It's that time of year again, and after years of experience, I've grown accustomed to collecting bags and buckets of candy on Halloween night, only to reluctantly pass on hundreds of Skittles bags, Milky Way bars and Hershey's kisses to my friends since I can't eat them.

The reason: a severe dairy allergy that has limited my food choices my whole life. The most minuscule drop of milk or a thin flake of cheese forces unprecedented vomit out of my pale face, so I'm better off avoiding that fiasco.

And especially due to COVID-19 this year, my already limited choices are being cut down even further.

Now, that's not to say that I'd be stuffing my face with pizza and ice cream if my allergy didn't exist — my health-conscious self would never allow that. What hits me the most is the thought of missing out.

And that's exactly what happens. After hours of trick-or-treating, my friends and I dump all our candy

into a massive pile on the floor and we sort through all the sweets. When we're done, the candy is split evenly — well, evenly for everyone else.

I'm usually left with one or two lollipops and the occasional unwanted Starburst, and at this point, my appetite has completely vanished.

To say the least, Halloween isn't a high point of my year.

But it's not just about the candy; it's the experience that matters. There's nothing like a night out with friends, knocking on strangers' doors and begging for piles of candy.

Sometimes, the idea of candy undermines the true meaning of Halloween.

We tend to associate Halloween with candy, but for all of us with unfortunate allergies, we have to look past that. It's hard enough to miss out on amazing sweets, but at least enjoy the everlasting tradition of trick-or-treating.

I think I'm better off without the candy anyway — the fun's enough for me, and that's why I just can't Reese-ist. ♦

Cue up the 'Harry Potter' marathon

BY Amanda Zhu

Halloween. Jack-O'-Lanterns, Frankenstein, vampires and ... Harry Potter?

I know, I know, the series is not Halloween-themed, but have you seen the Great Hall's Halloween decorations? Can you really blame me for associating Harry Potter with Halloween?

I will admit, I'm obsessed with Harry Potter — and I promise it's not because Harry Potter is TikTok's most recent craze.

Ever since I read the series for the first time in elementary school, I fell in love with Hogwarts and the magical world.

Years later, I've grown out of most of my elementary school fascinations, but Harry Potter is the single exception.

Every year around Halloween, I re-read all seven books and rewatch all eight movies (although I do this on multiple other occasions throughout the year as well).

It's the perfect series to binge-watch alone in my room. This year, my friends and I have been watching the movies together virtually through the screen sharing feature on Zoom.

Although my ideal Harry Potter movie marathon would have consisted of homemade butterbeer, fluffy blankets and candles, I'd say our attempt was a success under the current circumstances.

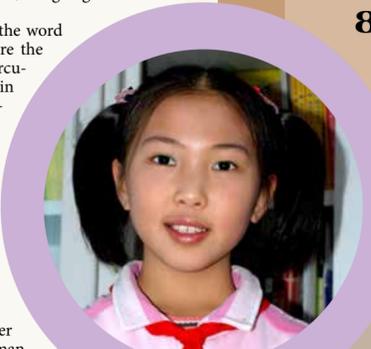
Starting Sept. 30, we watched two movies a week — every Wednesday and Friday — for a month. As soon as we began watching the films, I immediately got into the fall, spooky Halloween-esque spirit. The candles, black, pointy hats and pumpkin juice gave off Halloween vibes that made me excited for the 31st, even though

trick-or-treating isn't possible this year.

Although Harry Potter is not directly related to Halloween, the holiday is a very significant date in the series.

It's the day Harry's parents died, the day the golden trio (Harry Potter, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger) became friends, the day the Chamber of Secrets was opened and more. I've always wanted to watch all eight movies in one day, which would take just under 20 hours, but I haven't gotten the chance yet.

But who knows? With quarantine this year, I might just have enough time to relive all 20 hours of my all-time favorite series and continue the nostalgic Halloween tradition. ♦



Halloween candy: solve-for-x edition

BY Selina Chen

Halloween was a frightful day in China for my fifth grade self.

Elementary schools were meant to be a place to nurture "young successors of Communism," so the foolery of costumes was not tolerated. But my friend Jing and I had learned enough about the curious activity of trick-or-treating in our English class to embark on an adventure of our own.

On the chilly October night, I donned a witch's cape and a half-face masquerade ball mask with a ridiculous feather protruding on the side, because with our limited comprehension of the enigmatic English lecture on Halloween, we understood we had to dress up but did not realize that the costume was supposed to be, well, somewhat coherent.

Living in the city of Beijing meant there were only three or four families we knew within walking distance, and those were the only ones we dared to visit.

The last home we visited belonged to a girl named Song. We had long heard of her formidable mother who made Song the undisputedly smartest kid of our class, so we avoided it again and again until the lure of candy overcame our dread of her fearsome mother.

Knock, knock.

A petite woman opened the door and peered down at us suspiciously. Jing and I peeked into the door in equal suspicion and curiosity to see what sort of environment housed the smartest kid in class. After all, there had been many rumors of enormous stacks of practice tests Song was put through in preparation for the finals (yep, Chinese students start taking finals in first grade. Joy!).

It was a tiny apartment, with every function of a house squeezed into the space of a bedroom. Song was sitting criss-crossed on a bed, a notebook in her lap.

She spotted us and informed her mother that we were her friends.

"We are, uh, asking for candy," I said timidly.

The woman grinned like a cat who spotted its prey — or so it seemed to us — because she smoothly said, "Oh, sorry, we don't have candy. But we do have math problems."

So, I suddenly found myself on the bed, with a pencil and a piece of paper on

which a math problem was printed.

Song's mother announced that it was a competition: to see who could solve it the fastest.

Before I could wrap my head around the situation and formulate an escape, she started a timer of eight minutes. On cue, Song began writing hurriedly.

I blinked at the paper and attempted to decipher the word problem. I know that the people in the problem were the ones who were supposed to be running around a circular track, but the only thing that seemed to be going in circles was my brain as I tried to pin down the relationship between distance, rate and time.

I glanced up and saw a bewildered Jing whose face must have mirrored my own. I looked down and tentatively scribbled a few variables onto the paper. But there were too many variables for too few equations, and nothing would work out.

Minutes dragged on as I sat in the tiny prison of a room, still clad in my preposterous cape, contemplating how I would never envy Song's reputation as the smartest kid of the class again.

"I'm done," Song whispered.

Her answer was correct, of course, for her mother smiled proudly. "Explain it to your friends," the woman commanded.

"Can I not explain?" Song asked shyly.

"I tell you to explain so you will explain!" Her mother huffed, her eyes bulging like those of a tiger.

Song ducked her head and told us how the problem should be solved — words that were nonsense to my ears.

"Very good!"

Her mother's merriment was back, which also meant she was ready to continue with her master plan. She produced a large stack of even more math problems.

It was purely my survival instinct that made me squeak, "My mom will pick me up soon. We have to go!"

Jing and I fled for our lives. It was truly a frightful Halloween for two fifth graders in China. ♦

topten

TOP TEN WORST HALLOWEEN CANDIES

- 10 **Tootsie Rolls.** If they made them any bigger, I'd be happy to use them as baseball bats.
- 9 **Pixy Stixs.** I have to say, a striped tube is objectively the fanciest way to package table sugar.
- 8 **Laffy Taffies.** Why should I waste 20 minutes unwrapping a piece of playdough?
- 7 **Dots.** If you ever wanted to enjoy the sensation of eating a high-polymer gluestick without getting food poisoning, this is probably the closest you're going to get.
- 6 **Milk Duds.** The maker could not have chosen a better name: They are indeed duds.
- 5 **Red Vines.** The wannabe Twizzler.
- 4 **Candy corn.** I'll admit, the miniature traffic cones looked delicious when I first saw them; little did I know they actually tasted like traffic cones.
- 3 **Unlabeled candies.** I still have a 3-year-old one in my fridge since there's a 23.6% chance it's poisoned, but I don't feel like throwing it away.
- 2 **Black licorice.** It tastes like grape-flavored Tylenol but allegedly causes heart problems instead of curing headaches.
- 1 **Almond Joy.** If the combination of whole almonds and coconut was the company's best idea for a chocolate, imagine what the rest of their shortlist looked like. Did they have tomato and marmalade somewhere in there?

>> Atry Desai

Halloween in lockdown: blessing in disguise

BY Kavita Sundaram

My family has never been one for Halloween. My mom refused to buy cheap, disposable costumes from Party City and was strongly opposed to handing out handfuls of sugar to young kids.

Still, although the concept of "fall holiday spirit" was somewhat alien to me when I was younger, I was intrigued. So I have spent the past five or so years trying to replicate my depiction of the perfect fall.

No, this does not entail store-bought costumes, trick-or-treating or pumpkin carving (my artistic skills are abysmal).

The first essential aspect of the perfect fall is the timeless, stunning, "Harry Potter" series. Call me elementary, but I have yet to find a better movie or book that brings me back to my childhood, entertains me and gets me into the holiday spirit all at the same time.

With every "Bloody hell!" and "It's wizardium Leviosa, not leviosa," my spirits truly soar.

So with a good book in hand, it's best to grab a blanket, light your fireplace (or play

a video of one — desperate times call for desperate measures) and snuggle up with a kitty. Yes, cats are extremely important to the equation.

And, of course, there is the music. By music, I don't mean the cheesy and overplayed holiday tunes of the season like "The Monster Mash" but rather any song that one feels compelled to belt their lungs out to.

For me, it's ABBA, Adele or Queen, but frankly anything with a powerful lead vocal works fine. (Have some hot tea ready in case you lose your voice.) The holidays are a time to humiliate yourself without any second thoughts, and this is the perfect way to do so.

On top of this, like any other person, one of my favorite parts of fall is baking, as long as it's not anything pumpkin-based. I know, fall is centered on a cornucopia of pumpkin-flavored everything, but why hasn't anyone stopped to ask whether a vegetable truly belongs in dessert? Because frankly, it doesn't. It's like eating roasted vegetables for dessert — a hard no.

So stick to some tried and true desserts

like apple pie, pecan pie and my personal favorite, dark chocolate lava cake — perfect for any time of the year, no matter what Hallmark tells us.

There's nothing better than lighting a vanilla-scented candle, baking the whole day and getting rewarded with an entire pie to eat at the end of the day.

As for candy, it's definitely not something I would recommend. Trick-or-treating is fun, but I find candy to be a poor excuse of a sweet when I could just eat chocolate instead. And since I won't be trick-or-treating this year due to COVID-19 anyway, it's the perfect time to stock up on some high-quality dark chocolate and devour it throughout the season.

So this fall holiday season, since the likelihood of participating in traditional Halloween activities like trick-or-treating is low, try relaxing by baking, reading and eating chocolate — anything to get in the holiday spirit and forget about the stress of school and COVID-19. Dressing up in stereotypical costumes doesn't always live up to its reputation, and there are so many other ways to have a good time. ♦

Though RBG has passed, her ideals live on among younger demographic in pop culture

By Apurva Chakravarthy

In 1959, when 26-year-old Ruth Bader Ginsburg graduated from Columbia Law School, she had no idea that through her groundbreaking work as a Supreme Court Justice, she would be on the forefront of the fight for gender equality.

When Ginsburg passed away at age 87 from pancreatic cancer on Sept. 18, America not only lost a long-term and influential member of the Supreme Court, but also a champion for women's rights and a pop culture icon.

The Notorious R.B.G.

Ginsburg rose to fame in mainstream media in 2013 when a New York University law student, Shana Knizhnik, created the "Notorious R.B.G. Tumblr" as a nod to the famous rapper Notorious B.I.G. According to Entertainment Weekly, in an interview with The New Republic, Knizhnik described the name as a humorous juxtaposition between a large, imposing rapper and a 90-pound Jewish grandmother, and the word "notorious" was used to signify how impactful Ginsburg's career was.

By 2015, Ginsburg's popularity in pop culture was expressed through stickers and posters all over Washington stating "Can't Spell the Truth Without Ruth," according to the New York Times. Her merchandise industry, dubbed "Ginsburgiana," included greeting cards, T-shirts and even home-made Halloween costumes — for toddlers, it was Ruth Baby Ginsburg.

Following these events, Ginsburg's pop culture presence expanded. In 2015, Kate McKinnon debuted her impression of Ginsburg on "Saturday Night Live" — a "foul-mouthed rabble-rouser fond of lobbying 'Gins-burns' at opponents."

The justice's workout routine with comedian Stephen Colbert also garnered widespread attention, reaching nearly 3 million views on YouTube. In the gym of the Watergate Apartments in Washington, D.C., Ginsburg showed Colbert how she performs leg and arm exercises with her trainer Bryan and walks on the treadmill. Ginsburg, 85 years old at the time, stated that she worked out religiously.

Ginsburg's impact and legacy were chronicled in two films: "RBG," a documentary, and "On the Basis of Sex," a biopic. "RBG" covered her personal life and career, focusing on her early legal battles and how they changed the world for women. "On the Basis of Sex" portrays a young Ginsburg, a new mother and struggling attorney, as she and her husband tackle on the historic *Moritz v. Commissioner* case, which would change both the direction of her career and the way courts viewed gender discrimina-

tion.

Popular movies like "Deadpool 2" and "The Lego Movie 2" also referenced Ginsburg. "Deadpool 2" showed Ginsburg's headshot as the first applicant for the X-force, and "The Lego Movie 2" included Ginsburg as an official figurine.

The rise to fame

In 1993, then-president Bill Clinton appointed Ginsburg to the Supreme Court, making her the second woman to serve the court, following Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. Although she advocated for gender equality throughout her whole career, her birth as a pop culture icon came nearly two decades after her appointment on the Supreme Court, according to Entertainment Weekly.

According to Oyez, after graduating from Columbia Law School, Ginsburg clerked for District Judge Edmund L. Palmieri, served on the Columbia Project on International Civil Procedure and taught at both Rutgers and Columbia University. She then directed the influential Women's Rights Project of the American Civil Liberties Union during the 1970s, successfully arguing six landmark Supreme Court cases against gender discrimination. Under President Jimmy Carter, she served in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia before being appointed to the Supreme Court.

Ginsburg began gaining political fame following O'Connor's retirement in 2007. She wrote dissent memos — statements disagreeing with the majority opinion — for two major cases, and according to Entertainment Weekly, these dissents would lead the New York Times to mark her term as one "remembered as the time when Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg found her voice, and used it."

According to Entertainment Weekly, Ginsburg's launch into Tumblr and pop culture followed her dissent in *Shelby v. Holder*, a case that nullified a core provision of the Voting Rights Act that required federal preclearance to voting law changes.

Preclearance means that states have to seek the approval of the U.S. Department of Justice before changing their voting laws. This was done to reduce discrimination, increase voter turnout and ensure a fair election. According to the Wall Street Journal, the Supreme Court ruled to nullify this provision because many conservatives believed that Jim Crow discrimination, which was the reason this provision was added in 1965, no longer existed.

To this, Ginsburg wrote, "Throwing out preclearance when it has worked and is continuing to work to stop discriminatory changes is like throwing away your umbrella in a rainstorm because you are not getting



Counter-clockwise from top to bottom: After RBG passed away, people gathered outside the Supreme Court to honor her. Merchandise such as the shirt above is made to admire RBG. In the film "On the Basis of Sex," Felicity Jones portrays RBG, where she fights for equality.

we."

In light of this decision and Ginsburg's response, Knizhnik decided to start Ginsburg's Tumblr page. As her page started gaining traction as more people learned and read about her dissent memos, waves of memes and merchandise followed.

A modern hero

Because of all these influential cases, many have looked up to Ginsburg as a feminist icon and role model, including junior Jordyn Sin.

"R.B.G. was such an inspiration to me because even through the challenges she faced personally with sexism, she never stopped in her fight for gender equality," Sin said.

Ginsburg became a pillar of strength for liberals across the country following Presi-

dent Donald Trump's inauguration. In a time where many wondered about the fate of reproductive rights and other crucial gender equality issues, Ginsburg provided reassurance of those rights.

"She paved the way for so many women, especially in government, and I do not believe women would have the same opportunities we have today without her," Sin said.

Days before Ginsburg's death, she expressed a fervent wish to her granddaughter, Clara Spera, that she "not be replaced until a new president is installed," according to USA Today. Even in her suffering, she focused on making sure that future generations would live in the better world that she fought for. Her whole life, Ginsburg served as an inspiration to millions as she fought for something bigger than herself. ♦

How the lo-fi music genre became go-to study music

By Jason Cheng



Courtesy of CHILLEDDOCC

Those who enjoy early morning walks around the neighborhood or study late are all too familiar with the classic "lo-fi hip hop radio — beats to relax/study to," a viral playlist with over four million streams on Spotify.

Lo-fi is often associated with relaxation, and that's basically what it is: calm, soothing music that's easy to listen to. Yet, when audiences dig a little deeper, there's so much more to uncover about what makes this genre of music a truly special gift to our ears.

Essentially, lo-fi is all about simplicity. The most aesthetic songs really only contain two or three instruments, whether that's a guitar strumming chords or a piano scattered throughout the track.

Most of these melodic instruments have subtle pitch imperfections to convey a genuine human feeling.

with simple, live cymbals known as hi-hats. Lo-fi producers tend to add "swing" to their drums, which keeps them slightly offbeat, adding extra bounce to the whole track.

Much of what makes listeners nod their heads is the bassline, a piece of the puzzle so often overlooked when discussing music. The bass is not always upfront in a song, but it's the foundation for the chord progression, melodies and even the drums.

Without the bass, a song feels empty, and it's necessary to have something in the low end to make the song feel fuller.

These three main elements lay the groundwork for a standard lo-fi bop. What's missing, though, is textures to make the instruments and drums mesh together.

Possibly the trademark texture of lo-fi is ambience, the most prominent being the vinyl crackle. Other producers have used sounds in nature as well, incorporating chirping birds or flowing rivers in the

background to propel listeners into another dimension.

In general, this process of taking abstract sounds and blending them into tracks is known as "sampling" and applies to ambience and other aspects.

An entire melody or beat can be sampled from another source, with producers chopping up a sample and adding unique effects to fuse with their own composition.

Because of its natural and soothing vibe, lo-fi is perfect for relaxing settings, especially when I'm studying.

Playlists seamlessly transition from song to song, and the soothing tunes in the background will enhance any tranquil environment.

So the next time you're studying at home on a rainy Saturday night, plop on your headphones and snuggle into a cozy blanket as you tune into the beautiful world of lo-fi. ♦

TikTok promotes toxic body images for teens

By Hannah Lee

"If you lost some weight, you would probably be able to smile right."

This comment appeared on a video created by a 13-year-old girl whose soft palate stopped her from smiling properly. But users paid more attention to her chubby appearance than her underlying medical issue. This is one of the millions of rude comments users can find on TikTok.

Social media apps such as Instagram and Pinterest are notorious for concealing the lows that go on behind the scenes of perfect lives.

TikTok does the same, fueling unrealistic body standards and encouraging a fake-reality lifestyle.

As TikTok has gained immense popularity over the past year, many students have downloaded the app to see what the hype is about and even upload videos of their own.

Junior Sadaf Sobhani, who has amassed 12,300 followers on the app, downloaded TikTok when it was known as Musical.ly, its name until 2018. She has been shocked by the changes to the app since then.

"Back when Musical.ly first became popular, it was all about comedy and how people could relate to one another," Sobhani said. "As TikTok progresses nowadays, it's becoming more focused on certain beauty standards, which makes people second-guess their appearance."

One toxic trend circulating on TikTok involves men telling girls to exercise if they exceed a certain weight.

For instance, users on the app will post videos with messages like "For those of you that weigh under 150 [pounds], have a good night, and for those of you over 150, go work out tomorrow."

These messages are downright toxic and contribute to the idea that women should weigh a certain number, regardless of factors such as height, muscle-to-fat percentages or medical issues.

With one click into the comment sections, many users reinforce the hatred for their bodies, saying that TikTok has made them insecure about parts of themselves they hadn't thought about prior to down-

loading the app.

"That's on eating a full meal then feeling guilty and not eating the entire next day," one user commented.

"Before I downloaded TikTok I didn't even realize hip dips and masculine teeth were something I should even care about," another said. "Sucks what this app can do to us."

Body shaming has become prevalent throughout the platform, from the comment sections to videos that body-shame others.

Comment sections on videos of users with unconventional body types are replete with remarks like "How's she still alive, she looks like a skeleton" or "Stop hogging all of the food."

"If you pay attention and feel the need to match these beauty standards, anyone can fall in this loophole of comparing."

JUNIOR Sadaf Sobhani

Another toxic trend circulating on TikTok involves "what I eat in a day" videos. Users often share minimalistic and drastic diets based on things like mint gum, ice cubes and berries.

These clips perpetuate an obsession with body image and calorie counting and are detrimental to those that have recovered from or still are struggling with negative body image.

"I may have been lucky to never experience these issues solely cause of TikTok, but I know numerous people who have seen triggering videos on the 'For You' page, which leads them to potentially skip a meal or two," Sobhani said.

Freshman Rishi Vaidya originally downloaded the app to pass time but soon realized its malignant nature.

"I do think there's more content like this directed to women, but regardless of who it

targets, it has the potential to affect men and other groups of people equally," Vaidya said.

Many downloaded the app for entertainment during quarantine, but the constant exposure to little portals of seemingly picture-perfect lives makes it easy for users to compare and equate these ideals into a reality.

The algorithm plasters people who fit Eurocentric standards and have toned, picture-perfect bodies. With each scroll, it's hard for users to not pick apart their insecurities and what they have opposed to others.

"If you pay attention and feel the need to match these beauty standards, anyone can fall in this loophole of comparing," Sobhani said.

"You'll get sucked into this mindset that you have to be as pretty as popular influencers on your 'For You' page in order to gain a following."

According to documents obtained by The Intercept, an online news organization, video recommendations that users see aren't entirely randomized. Instead, TikTok moderators prevent users with certain appearances from surfacing on the "For You" page. The app profits more from displaying a specific aesthetic.

And since the app's audience is primarily under 18, the majority of the content promoted on the platform may come off as far more damaging than it seems.

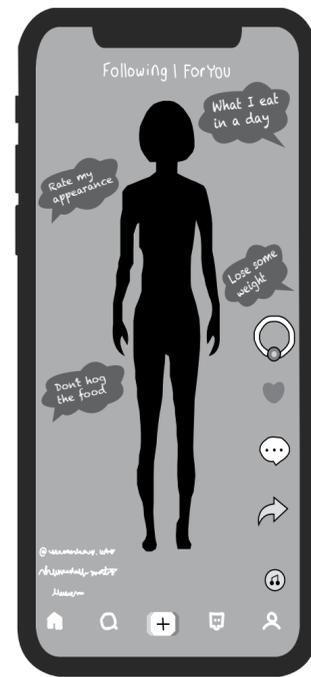
"Because most of this content stems from immaturity, there's a lot of ignorance in how it could affect others," Vaidya said.

"Trends like thinspo [compilations of thinner people for viewers use as inspiration for their bodies] and 'what I eat in a day' aren't doing any good for the app."

While TikTok has the potential to flourish, a way to solve these problems is for the app to establish consequences for this behavior.

TikTok should be more stringent on content guidelines and use "strikes" to counteract this behavior. This way, users have a lower chance of coming across damaging content.

With a step in the right direction, TikTok has partnered with the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) to redirect us-



Graphic by KAVITA SUNDARAM

ers to resources offered by the organization within the app.

Similarly, the app can push educational and self-care content to the "For You" page and filter the top videos under hashtags.

Still, users should be aware of how toxic TikTok can be if not monitored correctly. With this understanding, they should work to create a platform that is inclusive and uplifting to others.

"I cannot stress enough to people that everyone is different, everyone's body is different, and not everyone's the same," Sobhani said. "People shouldn't change themselves to fit the 'For You' page beauty standard." ♦

'Among Us' stirs contact during COVID-19

THE GAME'S POPULARITY IS NO SURPRISE GIVEN ITS TEAMWORK FEATURES AND FAMILIAR MAFIA PREMISE.

By Benjamin Li & Ethan Lin

"Among Us," a mafia-esque detective video game, has become the latest addition to a collection of viral games including Fortnite and Fall Guys over the past few years.

The game, which was released in June 2018, averaged 6.8 online players in its first six months.

It has now soared to a whopping 388,000 players at any given time, making it the third most-played game in the world and the most viewed game on Twitch, a live streaming platform.

The premise of the game surrounds a group of players on a spaceship, with each player assigned one of two roles: imposter or crewmate.

The goal of the imposter is to kill all the players on the spaceship without being discovered by the crewmates or the innocents.

On the other hand, the objective of the crewmates is to either complete all their tasks on the spaceship or successfully pin-

point the imposters and vote them out through emergency meetings.

All players are able to call an emergency meeting to discuss their ideas and possibly vote to kick someone out.

The imposter is always at a numerical disadvantage, with the number of crewmates always outnumbering the number of imposters.

As a result, an imposter gains certain advantages that allows them to kill and sabotage crewmates more easily.

This includes sabotaging the oxygen tanks on the spaceship and using vents to move across the map to start the process of eliminating crewmates without being detected.

When either imposter or crewmate comes across a dead body, they have the option to report it, with a discussion pe-

riod following the report of the dead body where players talk about who may have done the killing.

It is these discussions that are considered by many as the most fun part of the game.

As crewmates do not know the identity of other crewmates, while imposters do, these meetings often lead to hilarious contradictions among players, as the imposters attempt to lie their way past their killings, and the crewmates look to defend themselves.

To make this teamwork communication more enjoyable, many players use external voice chatting platforms such as Discord while playing the game, since the game allows for typing only through chat.

"I love being able to hang out with peo-

ple on this collaborative game because it just allows everyone to pitch in and have fun," junior Amitav Rawat said.

"I don't think I would be playing 'Among Us' if it wasn't for the communication that the game uses."

Not only does the game allow students to socialize under the current circumstances, but according to Rawat, the game is also a good distraction from all the stress from school and is an excellent way to enjoy a late Friday night with friends.

"Among Us" appeals to both the casual and competitive player with its assortment of environments to be played in, which allows for different experiences and playstyles.

Each game is unique and fast-paced with players' roles constantly switching, allowing for a simple and quick way to have fun in a short period of time.

"The game really keeps you on your toes, and provides a great source of entertainment," Rawat said. "I would say that playing 'Among Us' with my friends has been a highlight of quarantine." ♦

togatalks

What's your favorite aspect of "Among Us"?

"It's a simple game and calling out the imposter and actually being right is the best feeling."



junior **Abhiram Gudimella**

"It's a relaxed game that helps people get closer since we can't see our friends in real life."



junior **Michelle Jiang**

"I like the murder mystery aspect and getting the chance to play with a large amount of friends."



junior **Simone Karani**

Netflix thriller ‘The Devil All the Time’ disappoints

BY HannahLee

With massive fan bases spanning all across the world, popular film stars such as Tom Holland, Robert Pattinson and Bill Skarsgård captured the attention of many after news of being cast in the new Netflix thriller “The Devil All the Time.”

After weeks of anticipation from fans, Netflix dropped the new movie on Sept. 11, delivering a two-hour clutter of random cuts, shallow characters and gratuitous violence.

The movie is an adaptation of Donald Ray Pollock’s novel “The Devil All the Time.” Casting several celebrities and even having Pollock himself narrate the film for authenticity, director Antonio Campos started with a good game plan. But what he ultimately delivered was far from gratifying.

The story is set predominantly in Southern Ohio during the 1960s and begins by following the protagonist’s father, Willard Russell (Bill Skarsgård), a disturbed army veteran. A little less than midway through, the movie transitions to focus on the protagonist, Arvin Eugene Russell (Tom Holland).

Spanning from Arvin’s birth to early adulthood, the film introduces multiple stories encompassing the ceaseless misfortunes in his town. Arvin encounters a variety of psychotic and unsettling characters in his town, such as Reverend Preston Teagarden (Robert Pattinson), a hebephile (defined as a sexual attraction to pubescent aged children, usually ages 11–14), and Sheriff Boecker, a corrupt officer who bribes crime

lords to keep his name clean. Because of these characters and ongoing mishaps, Arvin ultimately devolves into a violent, religious fanatic, traumatized by great loss and insanity.

Despite the positive reviews for the novel, which obtained an 4.12 out of 5 stars on Goodreads, the film falls short of expectations and provides neither the thrill nor the mystery praised in the book.

In an interview conducted by GamesRadar+ with Campos, the movie was supposed to highlight religion and the result of transgenerational trauma from World War II. The storyline, however, felt rather shallow and cliché.

Rather than following a meaningful plot, the film is a series of events that seem to be the misfortunes of insane townspeople: crucifying a dog to spare Arvin’s mother, a spider bite leading to belief in resurrecting the dead and accidental suicide.

Additionally, the film jumps to multiple time frames, making it incredibly difficult to follow whatever plot was established in the first place. And because the plot lacks clarity, the film disappointingly lacks the mystery component.

Halfway through, the movie even shifts focus to a new plot consisting of two serial killer couples who are hardly related to Arvin.

With little character development and background, it’s difficult to empathize with them. On the upside, the accents were executed phenomenally.

Despite being from foreign countries,



Courtesy of NETFLIX

Actor Tom Holland plays Arvin Eugene Russell, the protagonist in “The Devil All the Time.”

Robert Pattinson, Tom Holland, Bill Skarsgård and many other cast members display flawless 1960s southern accents. Pattinson’s performance particularly stood out. He captured the perfect balance between the hebephilic and charismatic traits of Teagarden.

Despite Pattinson’s stellar performance, the best-written character was Eliza Scanlen’s character, Lenora Laferty. She seems to be one of the few characters given more than a one-faced reality; she goes from a sweet and naive teenage girl who is sexually objectified by her classmates and becomes a target of hebephilia.

Laferty portrays the image of a disturbed and traumatized adolescent girl who blames

herself for the calamities brought upon her, despite being the victim. As a result of feeling like a family letdown, Laferty becomes suicidal.

Despite the overall letdown of their rendition of Pollock’s book, I’d still give props to Netflix for employing a superior cast, allowing the movie to trend with little promotion. If such respected actors were replaced by lesser known actors, the film would not have garnered nearly as much attention as it did.

But unless 138 minutes of confusion and psychotic characters sounds like a fun trip, I don’t recommend “The Devil All the Time” to anyone — not even die-hard Robert Pattinson and Tom Holland fans. ♦

From China to America: Perspectives on ‘Modern Family’ evolve

BY CiciXu

“Kids, breakfast! Kids!” yelled Claire Dunphy, a stay-at-home mom played by actress Julie Bowen.

This classic opening line of the 11-season Hollywood TV show “Modern Family” gave me my first glimpse of American society.

I moved from China to the Bay Area at 13, but I started watching the show when I was 8. Back then, I could barely understand what the characters were saying, never mind understand the jokes or wrap my mind around the privilege of being able to freely pursue one’s passions. But unlike with other American TV shows, I kept watching “Modern Family” even if I could not understand 60 percent of its content.

The show embraces all of its viewers no matter their race, background, identities, privilege or (in my case back then) comprehension of the English language.

Through its characters, “Modern Family” provides a representation of the diversity of the nation and the beliefs that American people cherish.

It portrays the stories of three families linked by the large Prichett family, which includes a traditional American family, a gay couple who adopted a daughter from Vietnam and a wealthy couple, where the eldest member of the Prichett family (Jay) married a Colombian woman (Gloria) 30 years younger than he.

Through the depictions of the interac-



Courtesy of MYPOSTERCOLLECTION

Poster for “Modern Family,” a series that ended in 2020 after 11 seasons, known for the characters’ acceptance, revolves around three families as they navigate everyday situations.

tions among the characters, like Jay learning about his wife’s Colombian culture, “Modern Family” demonstrates that the American culture is not fixed, but rather changes with the additions of new cultures and people from other parts of the world.

Still, “Modern Family” does not idealize America. It keeps the complexity of interracial and inter-generational relations, in which characters like Gloria’s Colombian son Manny faces challenges with accepting his identities as both an underprivileged student of color and an American with ambitious dreams. Gloria, with her accent and the huge age gap with her husband, also faces racial and sexual discrimination.

Despite these challenges, these charac-

ters refuse to become submissive and stand up for themselves in front of their family and the public, just like how people of minority cultures are standing up for themselves and fighting for their rights and place in American society right now.

“Modern Family” also taught me about different aspects of everyday life in America. For example, many people residing in the suburban area of Los Angeles, where the show was set, live in single-story houses unlike the skyscraper apartments where I lived in China. The characters went to parties and celebrated birthdays and were free to at least try to pursue their own paths, no matter how bizarre.

What makes this show more human is

the way it avoids stereotyping their characters and scraping off the flaws in their personalities. Hailey Dunphy, played by actress Sarah Hyland, is the oldest child among her other two siblings. Although she ultimately becomes a successful fashion designer, she struggles in high school, almost does not go to college and is later expelled because of drinking at a party. I found the imperfections in these characters relatable, especially as an elementary schooler, because my teachers expected me to do everything perfectly.

When I saw the characters in “Modern Family” learn to accept their differences and thrive despite their chaotic lives, I was assured that being my true self is more important than achieving perfection.

This mindset of learning to make mistakes made adapting to life in America less daunting to me.

Self-acceptance becomes more crucial than ever in a world disturbed by an unexpected pandemic and numerous other social conflicts.

I started rewatching “Modern Family” in quarantine with my parents. Watching the characters socialize with their friends and families oddly satisfies my need for socialization. And since I am able to understand the jokes now, this show brings me so much laughter.

I will forever appreciate this legendary TV show that has accompanied me through my childhood and difficult times. ♦

Hooked: Gossip, rumors in ‘Sunset Boulevard’ provide addictive storyline

BY NikaBagherian

“Well ... Uh! Uh! Chrishell was right about you. Oh!” and then she storms off,” Christine Quinn re-enacts a confrontation she had with her ex-best friend Mary Fitzgerald, while mocking and ridiculing her for her two best friends. Mary and Chrishell who had suffered a falling out, were yet again fighting; tensions were high.

“Selling Sunset,” a Netflix reality show, surrounds The Oppenheim Group of A-list realtors who work to sell luxurious properties to and for often famous clients while navigating their own relationships. The brokerage is made up of seven agents: Christine Quinn, Davina Potratz, Mary Fitzgerald, Maya Vander, Amanza Smith, Chrishell

Stause and Heather Rae Young. The realtors work for co-owners of the brokerage, brothers Brett and Jason Oppenheim.

Like most reality television shows, “Selling Sunset” revolves around the drama between coworkers, friends and significant others. There is a lot of competition over who sells the most homes and earns the highest commission.

Within their personal lives, there are feuds between the women, like when Davina was the only person in the office who was not invited to Mary and Romain’s wedding.

“Selling Sunset” takes a deep dive into the realtors’ daily lives, touring the homes and giving showings while trying to beat out the rest of their competition and participating in petty arguments throughout their days.

In “Selling Sunset,” confrontations do not happen face to face, making it different from other reality shows. Although “Selling Sunset” lacks one-on-one altercations between the cast, it makes up for that in gossip and rumors.

I find the show even more interesting when the tension builds up and blowouts become even crazier.

My absolute favorite part of the show is seeing the beautiful houses in all of Los Angeles, which are never priced at less than a million dollars. The audience is able to appreciate the remarkable Los Angeles architecture, with its modern layouts and stunning views.

When I watched the show for the first time last year, I was blown away by the va-

riety of the aesthetics of the multi-million dollar homes, mostly modern and contemporary, but with some Spanish style homes in the valley.

Notably, the cast come from economically diverse backgrounds, ranging from Christine and her millionaire husband to Chrishell, who grew up in poverty and Amanza, who struggles to feed her kids.

The diversity in the show allows the audience to connect more to their favorite characters. The show doesn’t portray them as self-centered characters but rather humanizes them so that the average person can relate to them.

High-tension shows like this may not be up everyone’s alley, but “Selling Sunset” certainly got me hooked. ♦

school scope 17

Interactive activities prove necessary for more involvement in virtual club meetings

BY AudreyMah

As soon as sophomore Emily Lu is dismissed from her sixth period English 10 class, she has just a minute or two as a break before clicking on the link to her next commitment: the Economics Club.

In August, clubs began to convene online for the first time. The transition from in-person meetings to a virtual format has proven more difficult for some clubs than others.

Senior Shannon Ji, the National Honors Society (NHS) co-president said that a major difference between NHS meetings this year compared to last year lies in the detachment that stems from the Zoom format.

“Around 80 percent of people have their cameras shut off during the meeting,” Ji said. “This significantly affects the connections between members of the club, especially with the freshmen, who I’ve never seen in person at school.”

By keeping their camera off, it is easier for students to be disengaged from the events of the meeting, she said. Participants who leave their cameras off tend not to participate in discussions or club activities, which limits a meeting’s productivity and sense of community.

Freshman Taylor Chu said that many students see turning on their cameras during club meetings as optional. Because clubs are less formal than classes, they do not think that it is necessary for them to turn them on.

Lu, a member of both the Science Olympiad and Robotics clubs, points out that turning the camera on can be intimidating.

“It’s awkward when no one else is turning

on their camera, and you don’t want to be the only one,” Lu said. “Plus, when people don’t turn their cameras on, I know less about them, which can make the meeting uncomfortable.”

For Lu, the lack of faces in the meetings does not create the strong sense of community that she expected in-person club meetings to have.

or idea and ask members to exchange their thoughts regarding that topic.

These types of clubs have had ease in switching to a virtual format because they are still able to hold such discussions.

However, service clubs like UNICEF and NHS have found it challenging to function as a club remotely given that they can not hold drives.

made that impossible.

As clubs adapt to meetings over Zoom, many have found creative ways to increase participation.

NHS has held discussions and workshops on how to continue to develop service projects while maintaining safe practice, with many suggesting virtual workshops for younger students and product drives for people in need.

“I think that these discussions help them feel more comfortable and feel that they have a say in the club,” Ji said.

Another method to boost participation is creating interactive activities.

“We actively incorporate new activities like Kahoot!, videos, discussions, and ‘quizzes’ into each meeting to engage everyone,” Liao said.

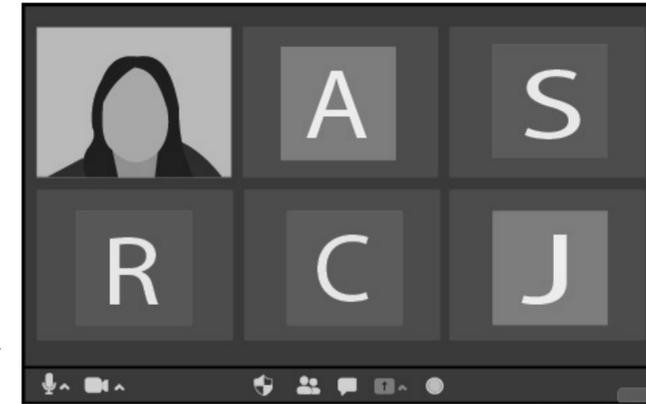
Chu finds that familiar games like trivia, Kahoot! and skribble.io have helped encourage students new to a club to participate.

Lu agreed that holding these fun, interactive activities helps participants feel more comfortable within the club.

“In Science Olympiad, we play team bonding games like Mafia in between taking tests and correcting them,” Lu said. “It’s like a break, and it gives use something to look forward to.”

At the end of the day, many club officers hope their meetings serve as an opportunity for students to connect with each other.

“While it may be harder to feel connected in a virtual format, we try to create a welcoming environment for students who may have never really experienced the campus,” Liao said. ♦



Graphic by AUDREY MAH

UNICEF president Aileen Liao, a senior, said she understands why club participants are hesitant to turn on their video screens because it is natural that members feel shy since they have never met in person.

Many clubs on campus are discussion-based, and typically present a current event

“As a service club, it’s hard to plan volunteering events during a pandemic,” Ji said.

Many service activities that would normally take place in-person have been postponed or canceled altogether. NHS had previously planned to volunteer at a local senior center, but the COVID-19 pandemic

SHSTV shifts schedule to fit virtual learning

BY BenjaminLi & AllenLuo

On a quiet Saturday night, SHSTV associate producer junior Anthony Zheng sits in front of his computer at home, painstakingly editing clips of video and audio together. As he makes his final edit, he breathes a sigh of relief, having finally finished the broadcast for the week.

For highly collaborative classes like SHSTV that rely heavily on communication, the shift to virtual learning has caused many adjustments to the regular class organization.

“SHSTV is operating a little differently because a huge part of our class is the weekly broadcast, where we go in the studio to film,” SHSTV producer Nolan Chen said. Chen also added that it was such a big change to a virtual format because “there’s a whole anchor set and technical room, which basically makes SHSTV unique from any regular film class.”

Amid all the production changes, SHSTV also has a new adviser, Alex Hemmerich, who took over the role from Joel Tarbox, who had advised the group for the past five years.

Since the start of the school year, the release date for SHSTV has changed from the usual Thursday to Monday. This allows groups of four students to plan, film and edit their stories from the Tuesday they are

assigned to Saturday. On Saturday, editors take the videos and compile them together.

The completed broadcast is then sent to Hemmerich, who uploads them to the broadcast’s YouTube channel.

Although in-studio broadcasts have been canceled, positions such as the anchor and editor remain. To decide who fills these positions, anchors are assigned on a voluntary basis and editors rotate according to a schedule.

The change to online learning has brought its fair share of challenges, one of the biggest being communication.

“It’s a lot harder to hold people accountable and communicate because not everyone is responsive on their phones, and there’s really no way to make sure people do their work on time,” Chen said.

Producers and associate producers, who oversee the team, have found the new workload to be challenging, especially as the class size increased from 14 students last year to 22 students this year. Not only has the amount of footage that needs reviewing increased, but the amount of time spent managing people has increased as well.

The shift to working from home has also resulted in the loss of the collaborative classroom environment for students. Aside from losing the ability to broadcast and film in the state-of-the-art studio on campus, students miss the ease of collaborating, sharing ideas and working together to write and re-



Courtesy of ANTHONY ZHENG

Junior SHSTV associate producer Anthony Zheng opens up Final Cut Pro at home as he puts video clips together to send to advisor Alex Hemmerich for the Oct. 5 weekly broadcast.

cord their stories. At home, many of these collaborative aspects are now gone.

“Being physically in the classroom is a lot more beneficial towards things like productivity, and it’s also a lot more social and

fun,” Zheng said.

Despite the difficulties that online learning has brought SHSTV, they have continued to move forward and produce weekly broadcasts for Saratoga students. ♦

togotalks

Do you find virtual club meetings to be effective?

“I don’t find them to be effective because they’re very easy to forget about it since it’s not at lunch.”



junior Sajiv Shah

“I think that virtual meetings are effective because officers try to make them interactive.”



senior Lauren Tan

“Meetings are somewhat effective because they discuss the same things as before COVID-19.”



junior Cheryl Wu

Working in pandemic has upsides and downsides

BY Nicole Lu & Esther Luan

Senior Joseph Maggard stood at the end of a checkout conveyor belt at Safeway, watching his coworker ring up a customer. Several feet ahead of him, the cashier wearing latex gloves scanned item after item, occasionally adjusting her mask with the side of her arm. The store was eerily quiet, the occasional sound of shoes squeaking on tile breaking the silence.

For students like Maggard, the sudden switch to a socially distanced job environment has been a significant transition.

Maggard, who began working at the Safeway on Saratoga-Sunnyvale Road in February, saw a visible shift in the dynamic at his workplace starting last spring. During the few weeks after quarantine began, the number of customers at the store dropped drastically, driving business down.

However, according to Maggard, workers were still only laid off for normal reasons, even after several months of the lockdown and the strict regulations that were implemented and enforced at his workplace.

But, he said, the situation did have upsides.

"Generally, people are considerably more pleasant and aware, which is a definite plus," he said.

Maggard is required to wear a mask at all times, and cleaning requirements and regulations have also significantly increased, he said. In addition to regular temperature checkups, there was one official public health checkup at the store in early July.

"Not everyone is so lucky to work in a place where regulations are so closely followed," Maggard said. "My hope is that everyone working right now is able to stay safe."

Although most chain retailers continue to see regular customers and employees, many local small businesses have been hit especially hard and some have shut their doors permanently.

Fortunately for senior Stef Poelmann, an assistant general manager at the Brookside Club Of Saratoga, the changes have been modest.

After two years of working as a lifeguard at the swim and tennis club, Poelmann moved into the position of member services in early 2019 and currently helps out with office tasks ranging from answering the telephone, scheduling reservations and ensuring the members are safe and comfortable,

all of which have been affected by pandemic restrictions.

While the swimming school continues to remain open, he has witnessed significant policy changes over the past few months.

"As expected, we have a lot less active members coming to the club," Poelmann said. "The ones who do come need to make reservations for either swimming or playing tennis. This was very new to everyone as we used to have a walk-in policy."

Another change is that Poelmann is required to take a temperature check, enforce the wearing of masks at the facility, and sanitize the surroundings after a family leaves. Despite the prominent physical modifications at the club, he also emphasized the noticeable shift in the atmosphere.

"While Brookside is regularly a place to socialize and congregate with friends, there can be no congregating of members of separate family units at this time," Poelmann said. "My job now is a lot about 'policing' and less about having fun with other members and colleagues."

Some student employees are faced in even tougher situations.

Due to the restrictions on small businesses, the Saratoga Federated Church Courtyard Cafe has had to place its student employees on unpaid leave. These workers include junior Michelle Jiang and seniors Justin Guo, Isaac Sun, Leslie Sun (not related) and Jessie Zhou.

"For a customer service job, it's been amazingly peaceful and understanding," said Leslie, the manager of the cafe. "Right now, a lot of us are starting to miss seeing regular customers and the peaceful atmosphere."

Isaac, who had used the job to pay for private band lessons, found himself stuck in an especially hard position when the church announced the cafe's closure in March. Though he was able to pick up a job giving private [instrument] lessons, the initial circumstance was hard for him to navigate.

"For the most part I just lost a source of income and it was kind of irritating because I had to pay for my tuba lessons using [gifted money at first]," Isaac said.

For some students, the search for a job in a quarantined world has actually proven successful.

Junior Julia Gonzalez got a job working as a Spanish tutor over the summer and has found working remotely to be effective and convenient.

"If the pandemic hadn't happened, I would have been teaching at the Spanish



FALCON // APURVA CHAKRAVARTHY



Courtesy of ISAAC SUN

From top to bottom: Safeway customers and employees have had to follow strict COVID-19 protocols in recent months, including wearing face masks and social distancing. Senior Isaac Sun gives elementary school students private lessons for the trumpet and the trombone. He makes sure to stay six feet away from the kids and wear a mask at all times during the lesson.

Ahora facility in Campbell," Gonzalez said. "It was sad not to be able to see everyone because I really am a people person and I couldn't meet the owner and the students in person. However, because of online learning, people from as close as Palo Alto and as far away as Sacramento were able to join."

During her four months tutoring middle and high school students, Gonzalez was able to connect with them and learn about their different backgrounds.

She said it was a "mind-blowing" experience despite being in a virtual environment. Student employees have seen their work

environments rapidly fluctuate during the pandemic.

However those who have managed to keep their jobs and continue working have gained a greater appreciation for the lingering normality that they still have.

"In these uncertain times, I think I am privileged to have a job," Poelmann said. "I enjoy the extra responsibilities that the pandemic has put on my work. Beyond making money, it is nice to have a job that provides you a regularity in these awkward times. It gives you a reason to leave the house and cautiously engage with other people." ♦



By Nika Bagherian & Kavita Sundaram

Virtual education: A reality students have become all too familiar with.

But while the majority of the student population has chosen to settle with an online education, others, like junior Linnea Bradley, have decided to take a different route.

After COVID-19 hit the United States, Bradley decided to leave SHS and enroll at Brentwood College School, an international preparatory boarding school in Vancouver Island, Canada, in the hopes of being able to live in a new environment, take new classes and meet people.

Known for its oceanfront campus as well as its selection of unusual classes such as entrepreneurship and pottery, according to the website, the Brentwood College School's main goal is to act as a pre-college rather than a regular high school. Bradley said that Brentwood College School appealed to her because the school offers many unique opportunities to their students such as skiing trips, kayaking, various art classes and unusual sports and courses.

The school's location was also a plus. Bradley and her family took a vacation in the area in 2018 and were taken by the welcoming people and places of Victoria.

Over the summer, her family began researching boarding schools there and decided on Brentwood College School partially because of its prime location.

"Canada has far fewer COVID-19 cases than the United States," said Bradley. "This makes it possible for me to actually have in-person school as well as try new things."

Bradley was introduced to the idea of international schooling when her family hosted an exchange student from Switzerland.

She saw the new experiences that her host student had and wanted that for herself. "I saw how [our exchange student] got to experience two completely different cultures and environments and I thought it would be really fun if I could as well," said Bradley.

Many families across the nation have also approached the idea of international boarding schools during the pandemic.

According to an article published by Yahoo News, the number of enrollments in international boarding schools has

increased on average in 2020 since international schools can provide students with in-person education and socialization opportunities. Some schools like Rugby Boarding School and St. Edward's Oxford in England have

received a record number of boarding students this year than ever in the past.

Many students have felt that in-person education was of higher quality than online education. Many working parents have also struggled to assist their children with online school and are looking to boarding schools as a way to ease the load.

"I didn't enjoy having to sit at my desk for nine hours straight and stare at a screen," Bradley said. "It made me

There are currently around 500 students enrolled at Brentwood, and Bradley lives in a dorm with 50 people. While the school is in-person, Bradley only takes classes with a select group of students and has to socially distance with students outside of her dorm group.

Each student at Brentwood lives with a roommate and a "houseparent," a teacher who oversees the dorm. Having this sort of connection with a teacher made it a lot easier for Bradley to get to know her teachers.

"In Saratoga, I hadn't gotten very close with any of my teachers," said Bradley. "So it's nice to have closer relationships with my teachers in Brentwood."

While attending an international school has been a valuable experience, Bradley does miss certain aspects of Saratoga High school like her friends and the academic rigor. Still, she said the prime location, new opportunities and people of Brentwood College School have made the year memorable. In fact, she plans to stay at Brentwood for the rest of high school.

"I love the people, and the school is so pretty," she said.

Bradley was not the only Falcon who thought about attending international school when the pandemic hit. As soon as the district halted in-person classes in March 2020, senior Audrey Tang traveled to Taiwan to spend time with her extended family.

"I decided that I would rather go to Taiwan and enjoy myself there than be cooped up at home," Tang said. "Apart from a few cases, Taiwan is generally pretty

restricted international travel restrictions, mandatory home quarantine decrees and strict public transit safety precautions. Taiwan has been hugely successful in curbing the spread of coronavirus.

During their COVID-19 peak in March, Taiwan had an average of eight new cases and seven deaths per day and seven deaths total.

Since then, Taiwan has only brought its numbers down, averaging only one new case a day as of August compared to the situation in the U.S. where 40,000 new cases a day has been common.

During her spring stay in Taiwan, Tang spent a lot of time with her family and took up painting at a local studio.

She also signed up for a virtual Barnard College creative writing course during the summer. This was a challenge as the classes were ran on Eastern Standard Time, forcing her to stay up to attend her classes at midnight.

Tang and her family had planned to stay in Asia for the entire summer if COVID-19 cases didn't decrease in the U.S., but complications with the family's travel visas led her to return to Saratoga. If Tang had decided to stay in Asia for the school year, she said she would have returned to her old school, Shanghai American School, which she attended for four years.

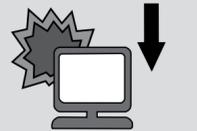
Tang says the biggest difference between SHS and her old school in Shanghai is that they are learning in-person this fall. Although her experience in Shanghai would be safer and she could go out every day to shop or hang out with friends, Tang said she is ultimately happy with her decision to return to Saratoga.

"By leaving Taiwan, I was giving up a lot of my freedom given the current climate," Tang said. "But Saratoga will forever be my home, and I knew I had to end my senior year here." ♦

Boarding school during COVID-19?

Potential Benefits

Less Screen Time



In-person classes



Potential Drawbacks

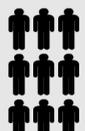
High Tuition



Starting over in a new place



Teen Unemployment During the Pandemic

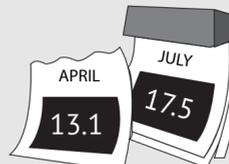


10%

The percentage of young people employed from July 2019 to July 2020.



How much youth employment in the hospitality industry dropped in 2020.



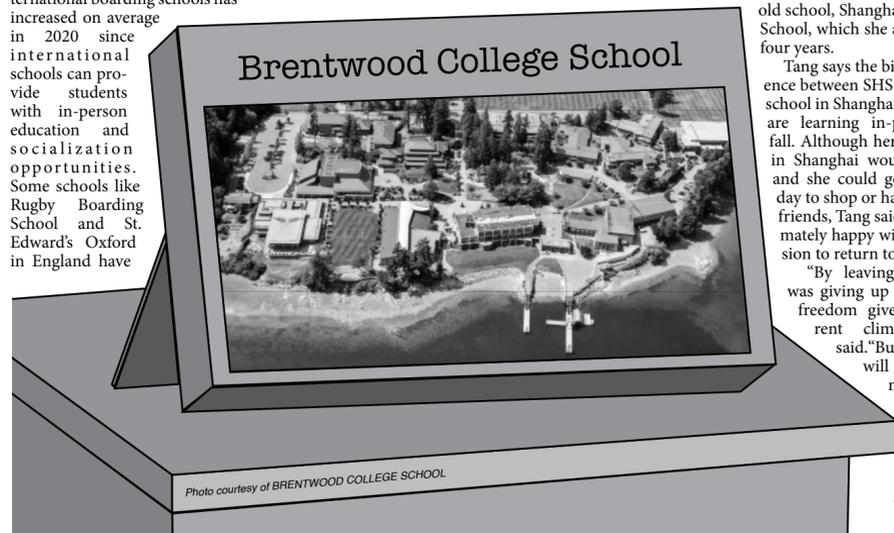
Increase in employed youth from April to July in millions.



Drop in labor participation for men and women.

All information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics

All graphics by AAFRIA THOMAS



All Graphics by ANOUK YEHL

Activists tout comprehensive consent training, sex ed

BY Apurva **Chakravarthy**

With recent MeToo movements gaining traction in Los Gatos and Saratoga High, many students and parents have called for a more comprehensive sex ed curricula as well as open discussions about consent and sexual assault.

The movement was catalyzed by a post from the Instagram account @fromsurvivorsurvivors on July 14, which was started by Los Gatos High students. The post outlined the group's goals for changes in how the schools handle sex education, arguing that the district should have a detailed and public Title IX investigation and reporting protocol.

The @metoolghs Instagram account soon followed, a page sharing Los Gatos High student's experiences with rape and sexual assault, which has posted over 190 different stories.

At the school level, @fromsurvivorsurvivors, a sexual assault and health awareness group, has demanded a comprehensive four-year sex education curriculum that focuses on healthy relationships, consent, healthy body image, sexual assault and sexual harassment. They also want schools to designate victims' advocates — staff members who would take charge of facilitating student sexual assault advocacy, awareness and recovery — and hold an annual RAINN (Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network) Day at both LGHS and SHS.

Sex-ed and sexual assault in the U.S.

These efforts run contrary to effort of the federal government's efforts under President Donald Trump.

According to The New York Times, the Trump administration has pushed abstinence-only sex education programs above all others. In 2018, his administration issued new rules for funding these sex ed programs and favored programs that emphasize abstinence.

But many critics believe that it is not feasible to solely promote abstinence without teaching safe sex practices.

Sex education classes inform students of how to practice safe sex, helps them learn how to communicate about sexual health and teaches them about unhealthy and healthy relationships.

Sexual health at Saratoga High

At Saratoga High, sex education is covered in five to eight class periods in freshman-year Health and Driver's Ed: five days introducing Planned Parenthood and two to

three days covering Speak, Girl Positive and consent discussions, according to teacher Liz Alves. These topics include STD/pregnancy awareness and prevention, human anatomy, gender and orientation, consent, sexual assault and harassment, communication, healthy relationships and human trafficking.

Alves said that a big challenge many health teachers face is making sure that their lessons are effective. She added that many students tune out because they think that health class is less important to them than other classes such as math or science.

"Many students think that they will never be in a situation where they have to worry about consent or protection," Alves said.

Because of this, Alves believes that in order for curricula to become more effective, students need to understand that any of them could be placed in these scenarios.

Alves is also a member of the recently created Culture of Consent Task Force, which consists of students and staff tackling sexual assault issues and introducing possible curriculum changes to help combat them. The task force consists of principal Greg Louie, assistant principals Brian Thompson and Kerry Mohnike, Alves, seniors Isabelle Lee and Emily Choi and junior Kaylie Wong and Apurva Chakravarthy. Lee first decided to approach the topic in May when she finally came to terms with a sexual assault experience she had during her sophomore year.

Lee said that after they proposed the idea

"It is the duty of the school to ensure the safety of their students by properly educating them on consent."

SENIOR Isabelle Lee

to the administration, Louie was immediately on board with the idea, and the group started to meet and brainstorm ideas in late July.

For Lee, a topic that was extremely important to address on the task force was the concept of mandated reporting. She said that since many students aren't aware of the laws surrounding mandatory reporting, survivors can be met with an unpleasant surprise if they have to go through a lengthy investigation process.

She also hopes to educate more students

about all types of sexual assaults, including coercion through verbal threats, manipulation and other non-physical tactics.

"Even experiences like groping are so normalized that people who have experienced it often just push it away," Lee said. "They don't want to bring it up because they feel that their experience isn't 'valid' since it wasn't as severe as rape."

The task force hopes to host awareness weeks, events and rallies once the school resumes to in-person learning. They also want to introduce peer-to-peer support groups for survivors to have a safe space to talk about their experiences.

Title IX rule changes

In recent months, the Trump administration has rolled back changes to Title IX rules, a decision that sexual health groups and task forces, including the Culture of Consent task force and @fromsurvivorsurvivors, have strongly opposed.

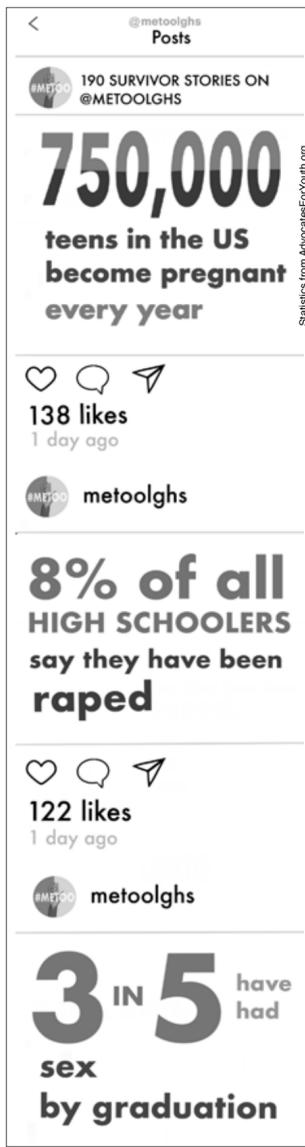
On May 6, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos enacted new regulations on Title IX, changing how schools conduct their discipline processes for sexual harassment and assault.

According to The New Yorker, one of the biggest changes is a switch in standards from "preponderance of the evidence" to "clear and convincing evidence" to determine whether an incident of sexual harassment or assault occurred. In the past, schools used the "preponderance of the evidence" standard, which meant that schools needed a greater than 50 percent chance that a claim is true. Now, schools can opt to follow the "clear and convincing evidence" standard, where schools need clear evidence of a sexual harassment or assault to proceed with next steps.

Another significant change in the regulations is that schools are now allowed to host an informal resolution, such as mediation, for sexual harassment and assault allegations as long as the accused is not an employee. Many are worried that schools might pressure students into these informal processes.

As strong opponents against these new federal regulations, the Culture of Consent Task Force and the From Survivors for Survivors team have already started preparing ways to combat these changes.

"Students will be exposed to the topics of sex education at some point in their lives, so it is the duty of the school to ensure the safety of their students by properly educating them on consent and other crucial areas of sex education," Lee said. ♦



I saw the Niners at school in July and still have not recovered

BY Neeti **Badve**

For several days in the summer I had seen my classmates make social media posts showing photos with all-world tight end George Kittle and star QB Jimmy Garoppolo under the Home of the Falcons sign in the school's parking lot. With each post, I became more frustrated after realizing I had missed another opportunity to see these iconic NFL stars.

So when my friend called me one Sunday in late July and said that 10 or so 49ers offensive players were again practicing on our very own Benny Pierce field, I got in my car and went right away.

There weren't as many onlookers as I expected: maybe only 20 or so all interspersed at various locations around the track. Everyone was surprisingly silent, all in awe that they were getting this opportunity to see players they adored this close-up for free. Everyone was respectful of their practice, with no one distracting the players or interfering in any way.

There was nothing really special about the practice itself. The players spent more time talking in their huddle and goofing around rather than actually playing, but whenever a ball was thrown, I could see the smiles on all the onlookers' faces as they realized how lucky they were to be just yards away from these stars.

I stood at the part of the track closest to the entrance because they were playing on that side of the field and tried my hardest to identify the players on the field, which was significantly harder when they weren't in football attire and didn't have jerseys. Suddenly, I started to internally freak out as I saw the very reason I came to the field in the first place: Jimmy G.

I remember whispering "Oh my god. It's Jimmy" about 50 times upon this realization since my mind was unable to process the situation I was currently in. Now, let me just say that the TV definitely does not do him justice; to my shock, he is actually more handsome in real life.

He walked with this swagger that screamed "cool but not arrogant." After practice was over, he stayed behind and picked up all the cones and equipment like any respectable team captain would. He apologized for not being able to take photos that day and not being able to sign autographs due to social distancing norms and thanked everyone for coming as he walked by.

As he passed near the fence I was standing by, I waved and said: "Good luck this season!" To my shock and utter joy he responded, "Thanks for the support! We really appreciate it."

I melted on the spot, but I gathered enough of my senses just enough to realize that I was now literally 10 feet away from wide receiver Deebo Samuel. The guy radiates coolness and confidence, and you can tell he really loves what he's doing.

He smiled the whole time he was walking by, letting us know that he cared about his fans.

When the "show" was over, spectators went out the gates and watched as players drove out of the parking lot in their custom BMWs and Mercedes-Benz.

I still have this next moment ingrained in my memory: Jimmy G sat with one hand on the steering wheel, and while he puts on his sunglasses, he smiles at me and throws up a peace sign while I wave goodbye.

If he had stayed for five seconds after that, he would've seen me jumping up and down in disbelief. Thankfully, as if this day wasn't lucky enough already, I didn't embarrass myself in front of him like that. ♦



Courtesy of THE TALISMAN

Head football coach and athletics director Tim Lugo talks to players during the 2019 Homecoming football game. The shift to online learning has allowed him to focus more on teaching, spending time with athletes and attending meetings related to COVID-19.

Lugo's job shifts with remote sports

THE ATHLETICS DIRECTOR HAS ADOPTED A MORE BEHIND-THE-SCENES ROLE AS HE FOCUSES ON FIGURING OUT THE FUTURE OF SCHOOL SPORTS

BY Apurva **Chakravarthy** & Angelina **Chen**

While a October day in a regular year would entail going to the weight room with his P.E. classes, talking to college recruiters and coaching football on the upper field at 4 p.m., athletics director and P.E. teacher Tim Lugo has adopted a much more behind-the-scenes role compared to previous years in this far-from-normal year.

Lugo's main responsibilities this year include serving on the district-wide Athletics Director Advisory Committee, which is in charge of implementing effective athletic policies and procedures, writing guidelines for athletes coming back on campus and tracking COVID-19 statistics to help decide the best path forward for the athletic department.

While season one sports are still set to start on Dec. 14 with games planned for January, college recruiting has changed significantly. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has pushed the sports contact period to Jan. 1, meaning schools can't reach out to athletes until then. Because of this, Lugo has been able to spend less time helping athletes with recruitment this semester.

When January arrives, Lugo's attention will shift to contacting recruiters and helping athletes through the college admissions process. In the meantime, he has focused on spending time with the athletes, going to athletics director meetings and teaching his P.E. classes.

Lugo has been attending district meetings for a while, but due to the pandemic the focus of meetings has shifted more to how athletics will function in the winter and spring. Lugo reviews the current coronavirus statistics and talks to district leaders to see what sports and in what forms they should occur.

Lugo said he has struggled with teaching his P.E. classes because he cannot form significant connections with students over Zoom.

"I wish I could see them and get to really know them," Lugo said. "I don't know their interests away from school, and not knowing what kids do or what things they're involved in makes it really difficult."

According to Lugo, this lack of teacher-student relationships is one of the main reasons that many students are struggling with online learning.

In fact, every six-week grading period, Lugo gets a list of all students who have

a GPA of under 2.0. Since some are athletes, Lugo uses this list to check in with the students and help them raise their grades. While this list is usually around half a page, the list he received on Sept. 25 after the first six-week grading period ended filled two whole pages.

Lugo still interacts with students on a regular basis — as the head coach of the football team, he monitors the team's on-campus workouts three times a week. Still, compared to previous years, he is not as active as a coach.

Instead, he has shifted focus from coaching to the future of the athletics department and figuring out how to bring back athletes for workouts. These guidelines, written with Los Gatos High School athletics director Ken Perrotti, have also been used by other Bay Area schools.

Virtual learning has reinforced for Lugo how much he loves the multiple parts of his normal jobs. Before the pandemic, Lugo was debating whether he wanted to go into administrative work, but being away from students has shown him that his true passion lies in working directly with students.

"The biggest thing I've learned during all this is how much I love what I do because I can't do it right now," he said. ♦

In a time of stress, the NFL's return gives something to look forward to

BY Neeti **Badve**

With 2020 looking so uncertain at times, any semblance of a routine seems like something to look forward to. For many people and me, this routine came in the form of the NFL's highly anticipated return.

Now, I don't really know what's normal about 250-pound men with helmets and pads tackling each other, but you get my point.

Nevertheless, with the arrival of the NFL, I've been feeling a newfound excitement because I know that my monotonous pattern of school and work will be broken up three days a week. I have to say, it's reassuring to know that if I'm feeling stressed or bogged down by assignments, I can turn on the TV anytime on Sunday and there will be a game going on.

The great thing about sports is that when you root for your team, you feel like you're a part of something bigger, and for that moment in time, you can distract

yourself from the chaos of life with amazing feats of athleticism.

When your team wins, you win, and it doesn't matter that all you did was sit on the sofa and cheer because you still feel that same rush of adrenaline go through your body. Even if they lose, there's a sense of comfort that comes with knowing that they lost for a reason — an anomaly in comparison to all the undesired losses that have been plaguing us this year.

Throughout the week, we're talking about fantasy points and trash talking each other's teams, and in a school year where nothing has been the same as years before, it's nice to know that some things never change.

In a way, football has made us all hopeful again.

I know that not everyone is a sports fan, but there's something great about watching people being able to do what they love and excel at. 2020 has taken away a lot from us, but I'm so glad that seeing the players I love compete on the big screen isn't one of them. ♦

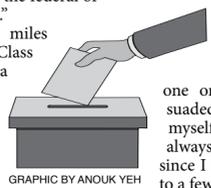
With the return of the NFL, I've felt changes in the attitudes of the people around me (which, for the time being, is

VOTING

continued from pg. 1

"There are many issues on both a local and national level that I really care about," Mokhleshi said. "When I voted in the primaries, I voted as a resident of California because I felt that was when my voice would be most valuable. For the general election, however, I am now a registered voter in Michigan because there are more local issues that will impact me, and I will have greater influence in the federal offices up for election."

Seven hundred miles away in Tennessee, Class of 2019 alumna Alex Ruemmler expressed the same sentiment. Although it was difficult navigating the voter registration process, she



GRAPHIC BY ANOUK YEH

voted for the first time last February in the Tennessee primaries, a move that was partially inspired by the individuals she saw during her time at Saratoga High. "I don't think I ever considered not voting, but having people come to SHS to pre-register to vote was a great way to encourage people who may not have other-

wise voted," Ruemmler said. "I think being on a college campus makes a person feel more obligated to vote because there's tons of pressure from peers and campus organizations to register and vote."

Some current students have already become eligible voters. Senior Irika Katiyar was filling out a ballot for the first time this November.

Katiyar credits family discussions about current events as inspiration for her to register. Katiyar said she has begun taking a greater interest in politics over the past few months.

"I don't really think there was anything or anything that persuaded me to vote except for myself," Katiyar said. "I have always wanted to vote ever since I knew I would be able to a few years ago."

Even as many eligible student voters are planning to vote this November, others are also expressing their concerns about the real value of their vote.

A few young adults, including Class of 2020 alumnus Mathew Wang, are torn between believing their vote will make a genuine difference. He expressed his concerns for something known as the para-

dox of voting: the belief that in a multitude of electors, the vote of an individual matters little and ultimately does little to influence the outcome.

"While I do know that my vote will most likely be insignificant, I plan to do the research on the candidates and vote in the hopes that my research will increase my political knowledge," Wang said. "But do I feel like I make a genuine difference? No, and I say that if you objectively look at the statistics, it's a simple fact that you don't."

Even so, Wang thinks young adults should still vote because politicians will then have more incentive to pay attention to the newer generations.

For her part, Mokhleshi approaches voting from a different perspective. During her time at UMich, she heard of the close margin in Michigan in the 2016 election and believes in the importance of her vote.

"I actually feel a greater need to vote on state and national issues," Mokhleshi said. "Michigan is a divided state and each vote really does make a difference."

Wang, who has lived in a Democratic California for most of his life and is studying at the University of California Santa Barbara, noted the political viewpoints pre-



Courtesy of ALEX RUEMMLER

Class of 2019 alumna Alex Ruemmler shows off her handmade postcards that remind people to check their voting status and know how to vote.

dominant in the state and in Saratoga in particular.

"I think it's pretty clear that Saratoga represents a biased sample of the American populace," Wang said. "I think that there's no place in America where a fully representative sample is possible."

For Ruemmler, it was rough adjusting to the strongly Republican political climate in Tennessee, a situation she faces at Vanderbilt University.

"Obviously each person is entitled to their own opinions, but I've

found that using personal anecdotes works really well to explain a certain view," Ruemmler said. "As election day grows closer, both students and alumni have begun urging friends and family to vote."

"I see so many people pointing out issues in our country, and there is only one way to truly solve them," Mokhleshi said. "Research your candidates, and vote. The current political climate in America is dysfunctional, but with higher voter turnout, we can fix it." ♦

FOOTBALL

Falcons return to past running-centered offense; team needs to rebuild after key players graduate

BY Andy Chen & Jason Cheng

Last season, the Falcons had their best season in years, reaching the Division 4 CCS quarterfinals before ultimately falling to Carmel 62-43. How the team carries this momentum into the current season remains to be seen — the Falcons will have a tough time adjusting to the loss of several key players from the Class of 2020.

Those losses include quarterback Payton Stokes, wide receiver George Bian, linebacker Talon Cisco and defensive lineman Tyler Ouchida, all first team All League players. Also lost to graduation are wide receivers Tyler Prowse and Max Muilenberg, who both placed on All-League's second team.

Still, junior wide receiver Parsa Hashemi thinks that with proper practice and extra training, the team will perform on par with last year's CCS run.

"We've lost more than we've gained; losing our senior class is going to be tough," Hashemi said. "Even so, we have a solid receiver core to replace the seniors, and I'm confident in our new quarterback, [senior]

Grant Petters, to have a breakout season — the goal is always playoffs."

Although the team has not been able to practice playing actual football because of county COVID protocols, members meet on the school field three times a week to stay fit through weight training, head coach Tim Lugo said.

At the earliest, normal practices may resume in early December, although safety concerns and the state of the coronavirus may delay the date.

In future practices, Lugo plans to incorporate passing and running drills while adhering to social distancing norms. Passing drills will be relatively easy to implement, but running drills require careful planning and use of spacing strips in place of defenders, Lugo said.

To prepare for the season, the team will shift focus from their passing to running game. While a strong passing game provided the foundation for the team's success last year, unusually rainy conditions resulting from the season's delay will make passing harder, necessitating running the ball as a more reliable option, Hashemi said.



FALCON // SELINA CHEN

Football team members lift weights on the upper field while adhering to distancing norms.

Ideally, the team's relatively strong offensive line will create openings in the opposing defense for their running backs, seniors Tyler Chaffin and Trevor Green, to sprint through.

To run the ball more while maintaining

ball fluidity, the team is shifting their offense to a "two quarterback, three receiver" style, similar to what legendary head coach Benny Pierce ran for over 35 years at the school.

"We're excited to return to our roots," Lugo said. ♦

Athletes face declining motivation due to COVID restrictions

BY Anjali Nugehalli

As he scanned the surrounding empty bleachers at Benny Pierce Field, wide receiver Parsa Hashemi couldn't help but feel exasperated. Instead of catching highlight-reel throws for touchdowns this fall, Hashemi has been limited to decidedly less glamorous activities like socially distanced dead-lifting with five of his teammates.

Although the football team resumed training in August, county regulations halted full-team practices, instead mandating cohorts of five members. The team meets three times a week to weight lift, but have not been approved to touch the ball yet.

Instead of the high-intensity football practices that he is accustomed to, Hashemi has noticed that the team has started to lose focus without the high-stakes environment of games and playoffs to shoot for in the immediate future.

"It's a little frustrating because people aren't as motivated and just joke around during practice," Hashemi said. "It's fun, but I think I can speak for everyone when I say

that it's more enjoyable to play the sport seriously."

After witnessing many of his friends burn out athletically, Hashemi understands how easy it is to lose competitiveness and drive. This trend is especially prominent in individual sports like running, where athletes lack the social aspect of the sport to keep them engaged, he said.

"It's fun, but I think I can speak for everyone when I say that it's more enjoyable to play the sport seriously."

JUNIOR Parsa Hashemi

However, Hashemi said he refuses to let anything get in the way of his individual progress. In fact, he has used quarantine as an opportunity to work even harder.

"It's easy to ask yourself, 'What am I doing this for?' but I'm just trying to see this as an opportunity to work on my game," Hashemi said. "Losing my season has forced me to reflect on how important football is to me, and I'm going to keep training hard."

Volleyball player Jordyn Sin has also maintained a high level of enthusiasm for her sport, but acknowledges the lack of motivation from many of her teammates.

Sin plays at the gold division for City Beach Volleyball, a level reserved for elite volleyball players looking to be recruited. In the past, making this team required passing arduous tryouts, but due to the coronavirus, her club admitted players onto the team without holding any open gyms.

"It was really frustrating to get that spot on the team handed to me because I wanted to work for it," Sin said. "I wanted to be surrounded by teammates who also competed to get a spot on such a high level team."

Sin noticed that because her club lowered the stakes in determining rosters, many of her teammates have stopped taking practices seriously. Even on the highest level team,

many players skipped summer practices and are not applying themselves during training.

For Sin, this lack of motivation has been exacerbated by the pressure of completing junior year school work in an online environment, which has prevented players from performing at their highest level. In the past, players were driven to work hard to improve because of frequent open gyms and recruiting events. With no such events, players no longer feel the same sense of urgency.

"You already feel drained from sitting at a desk for five hours," Sin said. "It's hard to take practice seriously when all you want to do is sleep."

Sin said she continues to push herself despite the lack of motivation around her. She also urged other athletes — whether or not their goal is to be recruited — to stay optimistic.

"High school is going to be over before you know it, and this may be the last time you're able to play your sport," Sin said. "Just remember why you started playing in the first place, and you'll find that love for your sport again." ♦

Back in the water again, players build skills and fitness

BY Stephanie Sun & Kavita Sundaram

With social distancing restrictions, a delayed season and a brand new coach, the girls' water polo team began a one-of-a-kind season on Sept. 15.

The coronavirus has pushed the season, which usually begins in August, to Dec. 14, but the team has already begun to practice during their pre-season.

Despite the strict rules, the team is still able to host practices through individual swimming drills, shooting drills and strength conditioning. Still, they are unable to work on team drills and passing due to social distancing restrictions, said senior set player Grace Stuart.

"With new sports restrictions, we've had a couple rough patches, as social distancing in a full contact sport is difficult," Stuart said.

Still, the leadership and dynamic of the team, along with the guidance of returning head coach Jerome Chung, has enabled them to have successful practices during the pandemic.

Previously, Chung coached the girls' water polo team from 2016 to 2018 and the boys' water polo team in 2019; this year, he is the head coach for both. According to Stuart, the team has reacted well to Chung's coaching style. In particular, the team has appreciated Chung's emphasis on each individual's technique and skill development. Chung is currently focusing on building a solid foundation for fundamentals such as leg drills and shooting.

"We've adjusted pretty quickly to our coach," said senior wing player Dara Krainin. "He gives us lots of feedback and helps us to improve, and I think we're all doing well."

Aside from the shift in coaching, the team has an advantage because of their many experienced players.

"It's rare to have five seniors on a team, four of which will have played for all four years," Chung said. "Every senior has their own style of leadership and creates a fun team atmosphere."

Although the team has many seniors to help guide it, fewer underclassmen have joined the team this year due to the atypical practices, so the team hopes to see an



FALCON // STEPHANIE SUN

Senior Grace Green prepares a shot during a pre-season practice, following distancing norms.

increase in athletes when registration opens on Oct. 19. With the future of upcoming games and tournaments unclear, the team is currently practicing for their winter season.

Faced with these changes, the girls' water polo team is working toward a unique but important season for the team by focusing

on building a better dynamic by working together and improving their individual skills to the best of their abilities.

"We want the team to enjoy the games they are able to play," Chung said. "Despite the pandemic, we want to give the seniors the great final season that they deserve." ♦

Lakers triumph; LeBron's legacy remains intact

BY Benjamin Li

With the Los Angeles Lakers 4-2 series victory over the Miami Heat in Game 6 of the NBA finals, the Lakers officially earned their 17th NBA title, tying the Boston Celtics for the most championships in the history of the league. Although the Heat were a formidable opponent, the Lakers' star power couldn't be stopped — superstar point guard LeBron James and forward Anthony Davis put on their best Kobe and Shaq impressions to defeat the Heat.

In Game 1, it seemed as if the Lakers already had the series in the bag, with Davis scoring 34 and James 25, far outperforming the Heat's leading scorer, shooting guard Jimmy Butler's with 23 points.

The following game went similarly; James put on an even better performance with 33 points, 9 rebounds and 9 assists. Butler came prepared in Game 3, scoring a 40 points and getting a triple-double to secure a win for the Heat. In doing so, Butler became the first player in the league to ever beat James in all three major statistical categories in a finals game.

In Game 5, NBA fans witnessed one of



Courtesy of NPR

LeBron James hugs his teammates after beating the Miami Heat 106-93, winning the finals.

the best finals games in the past five years. The match was akin to a duel between James and Butler; only in the final few minutes did Butler barely come out on top, ending the game 111-108 after Lakers' shooting guard Danny Green failed to make a wide open 3-pointer after a feed by James.

The conclusion of this year's NBA finals

has raised questions regarding James's legacy. Now that James has secured a championship in Los Angeles, his all-time league finals record is four series wins to six losses, putting him just two championships behind all-time great Michael Jordan. LeBron fans state that this championship makes James by far and away the greatest player of all time,

but others argue that other greats, such as Jordan, still have a better resume.

Many have discredited James's win with the idea that the Laker's path to the finals was "too easy."

One of the main reasons fans dismiss the Lakers' path to the finals is the lack of the eagerly anticipated Battle of LA — in which James would face the Los Angeles Clippers in an exciting and unpredictable series. With the Clippers' defeat to the Denver Nuggets, however, fans were severely disappointed, and James easily won his third round 4-1 against an exhausted Nuggets team. Still, the failure of the Clippers isn't the responsibility of James and the Lakers — ultimately, the Lakers did their jobs perfectly.

James definitely has a case for the greatest player of all time, although that debate should be saved for once he retires. Until then, it seems that James, with the best longevity out of any player ever in the league, still has a ways to go before the end of his career. NBA fans should be grateful for the time they're able to watch him play — in a few years, James will become another icon whose greatness can only be accessed through replays. ♦

Pros protest for social justice

BY Vinay Gollamudi

At an NFL preseason game in 2016, San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick sparked controversy when he decided not to stand during the pre-game national anthem. Instead, he chose to take a knee — an action later used by athletes nationwide to protest police brutality and structural racism in the country.

One thing's for sure: Athletes will continue to address social justice movements.

"I'm not looking for approval," he would later say. "I have to stand up for people that are oppressed. Even if they take football from me, I know that I stood up for what is right."

Athletes have been involved in activism for decades. In the 1960s, pioneers such as boxer

Muhammad Ali and NBA player Bill Russell risked their reputations and careers to speak up about what they believed in.

Although Kaepernick played his last NFL game in 2017, athletes continue to advocate for change. Now, NFL players are protesting differently: Players across the league have kneeled, locked arms or remained in their locker rooms during the national anthem to protest police brutality and racism.

NBA players have conducted similar protests, with commissioner Adam Silver stating in July that he will not enforce the league's rule requiring players to stand during the anthem in order to allow them to advocate on the court. Most recently, players have protested the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor as part of the larger Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement.

Despite sports leagues beginning to encourage athletes to advocate for social justice issues, some fans do not feel the same way. These fans often argue that some athletes hold question-

able views that impressionable children would not benefit from seeing. For example, NFL wide receiver Desean Jackson received backlash after spreading anti-Semitic posts in July. Jackson later apologized and said he was educating himself on the matter.

Others, however, believe that athletes are simply people with jobs, so they — just like normal citizens — are entitled to voice their opinions on various topics. In fact, because of the significantly larger platform that many athletes have, many argue that athletes should not only be allowed to use their voices, but actively encouraged to do so.

One thing's for sure: Athletes will continue to use their platforms to address and raise awareness for social justice movements, highlighting just how important these movements can be. No matter who you are — whether you're a parent or a student, whether you watch sports or not — these athletes will continue to remind you to stay up to date with these social issues that will affect the U.S. for years to come. ♦

Injuries plague NFL

BY Vinay Gollamudi

With little under seven minutes left in the first quarter of the San Francisco 49ers' Week 2 matchup against the New York Jets, star defensive lineman Nick Bosa stumbled to the ground in the middle of a pile of players. Bosa later announced that he had torn his ACL — and he would be unable to play another game this season.

The 2020-2021 NFL season began Sept. 10 amid much speculation on how the league would fare during the pandemic. After much deliberation, the NFL skipped its yearly pre-season games and shorted the offseason, a decision that seems to have contributed to an unusually high injury count.

The lack of a pre-season clearly had an impact in Week 1 of the season, especially on kickers, who missed a total of 19 out of 68 field goals — the most in an opening week since 1982. Despite this, the week went smoothly overall, as there were no COVID-19 outbreaks and the number of injuries in the league remained relatively normal.

Week 2, however, was a different story. Many notable players suffered major injuries, including Carolina Panthers running back Christian McCaffrey (high ankle sprain) and New York Giants running back Saquon Barkley (torn ACL), both of whom are regarded by many to be the two best running backs in the league.

As the season continued, the number of positive coronavirus tests popping up across the league became a more notable issue. The Week 4 matchup between the Tennessee Titans and Pittsburgh Steelers was postponed following eight positive tests on Sept. 29 — a total of 22 Titans players and team personnel eventually tested positive for the coronavirus.

On Oct. 3, New England Patriots QB Cam Newton also tested positive, postponing their Sunday matchup against the Kansas City Chiefs to Monday.

The future of the NFL season is uncertain, but despite the excessive injuries and coronavirus concerns, millions of Americans are glad to have their favorite sport back — at least for the time being. ♦

Fantasy soccer: A dawning season sparks exciting possibilities, uncertainties

BY Jason Cheng & Vinay Gollamudi

As tens of millions of Americans spend hours upon hours drafting and analyzing their fantasy football teams, the exact same situation is occurring across the Atlantic Ocean — in England, a new season of fantasy soccer is beginning.

Of course, fantasy soccer leagues exist for almost every country in Europe, but the English Premier League (EPL) holds the most prestige and is regarded as the most competitive and popular league in the world.

Fantasy soccer is unique in that there isn't a draft — rather, each player is given a price tag, and participants use their 100-pound budget to build the strongest team possible. Similar to the sport itself, there are plenty of formations to choose from, but top participants often go with a 3-5-2 or a 3-4-3, the number of defenders, midfielders and forwards, respectively.

Scoring is based on many measures from real-life performances. Goalkeepers and defenders are awarded for clean sheets or conceding fewer goals, while midfielders and

forwards provide points through goals and assists. Bonus points go to the top three performing players in every match, and players can choose a "captain" every week whose points will be doubled.

As a result, the general rule of thumb is to allocate most of your money on five or six attacking midfielders, wingers or strikers who will deliver consistent goals and assists. The rest of the team should feature so-called budget players, who are cheaper but still relatively solid.

Fantasy soccer may seem like a simple game, but it's definitely a memorable experience for all who play it.

The first players who come to mind are Manchester City's Kevin de Bruyne or Liverpool's Mohamed Salah, and while they're two of the most expensive players on the market — they cost 11.5 and 12 pounds, respectively — having a dependable captain is

key to consistency.

Players may not perform as well as participants predict, so participants are allowed one free transfer every week. You can also play a wildcard chip once throughout the season to completely reset your entire team.

What makes fantasy soccer so intriguing is its uncertainty. An injury or suspension can completely derail all your progress, especially when players return negative points or are sidelined for several weeks at once.

Heading into the 2020-21 season, there have been many notable changes from the past, mostly due to COVID-19. Without fans, home and away game advantages have practically been eliminated, and the league itself is missing key riveting rivalries between opposing players and fans.

That's not to say that this season won't be just as exciting as in previous years. Competitiveness in the EPL is at an all time high — even bottom-table teams can give the best teams a run for their money.

Fantasy soccer may seem like a simple managerial game, but with the clouds of uncertainty coming into the new Premier League season, this will definitely be a memorable experience for all who play it. ♦



FALCON // JASON CHENG

An avid fantasy soccer fan arranges his team.

Issue Highlights

“Rather than seeing my *unremarkable apps* when I unlock my phone, I now get to see *interesting quotes and pictures.*”

— reporter Apurva Chakravarthy on the iOS14 update (pg. 11)

“By leaving Taiwan, I was giving up a lot of my freedom to do as I pleased given the current climate. But Saratoga will forever be my home, and I knew I had to finish my **senior year here.**”

— senior Audrey Tang (pg. 19)

“Now, let me just say that the TV definitely does not do him justice; to my shock, he is actually **MORE HANDSOME** in real life.”

— reporter Neeti Badve on seeing Niners’ Jimmy G at SHS (pg. 21)

Yes, I am an unofficial world record holder

bendy
chendy



Andy Chen

It’s the Friday before our October four-day weekend, and while my peers are all socializing, starting their homework or taking a much needed nap, I’m hunched over a chessboard, with sweaty palms, weak knees, heavy arms and plenty of life decisions to question.

You may be asking “Who were you playing with?” — but that’s the wrong question. Instead, try asking “Why’d you spend an hour bent over a chessboard all by yourself, you loser?”

It all started with a simple bet with a good friend: If I could break a world record within a month, he would buy me boba, but

if I couldn’t, I would have to buy him boba. High stakes, I know. After a firm virtual handshake, I immediately Googled “easiest world records to beat” — it couldn’t be that hard, I thought.

But after an hour of surfing the web for a record that I could feasibly beat, I began to lose hope; there was no way I could do 152 push-ups in a minute, sit through a 94-hour straight TV marathon or — believe it or not — beat a 16.17 second record for assembling a Mr. Potato Head toy while blindfolded. I guess we all have our own talents.

I was discouraged but not defeated. I continued to sift through dozens of world records, and was nearing resignation until I finally stumbled upon something that seemed somewhat realistically beatable — a 31.55 second record for setting up a chessboard with just one hand, set on Aug. 1, 2019, by former world record holder Nakul Ramaswamy, according to Guinness World Records.

Luckily, my family owns a standard wooden chess set, so I got right to dusting it off and randomly scrambling the pieces around.

My first attempt took 44.61 seconds to complete. My second attempt of 36.23 seconds was a vast improvement — I was a mere 5 seconds short of where I needed to be.

I continued to perfect my technique and strategy, quickly realizing that the most efficient way to order all the pieces was to prioritize placing pawns down first and focus on completing one side of the board before moving to the other.

Eventually, I was able to narrow my time down to 31.77 seconds, narrowly missing the record.

From there, I knew it was just a matter of practice. An hour of mindlessly slamming chess pieces later, I was able to attain a time of 29.45 seconds — besting the world record by more than two seconds.

Checkmate.

Well, you know what I mean.

If you go on the Guinness website, however, you’ll see that Ramaswamy still holds the record for setting up a chessboard. Since breaking a world record requires official witnesses and documentation to Guinness, both of which are hard to come by during a pandemic, I was unfortunately unable to attain a certificate.

Besides, applying for a world record requires you to pay \$5 for verification — why would I pay for that when I could buy a boba instead?

As it turns out, actually breaking the record was probably easier than finding one to break in the first place.

And honestly, as a current but not validated world recorder holder, I can tell you that the entire experience wasn’t very fulfilling at all. But as long as I have bragging rights and my boba, that’s really all that really matters. ♦

Taking on the heat of cold showers

game
cheng-er



Jason Cheng

I’m not gonna lie, I probably spend my whole day looking forward to my nightly shower, and trust me when I say that I savor every single second that I spend under that stream of 100-degree water.

A hot shower isn’t a choice — it’s a lifestyle.

With that said, standing in practically boiling water for half an hour isn’t the healthiest choice ever. So in an attempt to “seek discomfort” (thanks, Yes Theory), I decided to try out cold showers for a week.

Don’t get me wrong, it’s not like I hate the cold, but the thought of substituting my favorite time of day for five minutes of suffering wasn’t exactly going to get my hopes up.

After a typical Saturday flew by, it was time for my first cold shower. I stepped into the shower and waited for the water to heat up for a good five minutes. Freezing cold water kept pouring onto my feet, and unfortunately, it wasn’t getting much warmer.

So instead of waiting any longer, I decided to just go for it.

Safe to say, I smashed my previous shower record, setting a personal best of two minutes. As I scrambled for the shampoo bottle, all I could think about was getting the heck out of there. My towel was the saving grace, as I huddled inside of its warmth, shivering as ice-cold water dripped down my skin.

To say the least, my “experiment” didn’t go so well. Yes, I saved 28 minutes of my time. Was it worth it? No.

The next day, I tried a different approach. After a nice session of mask-protected, socially distant football with the boys, I entered the shower, hot and sweaty from the exercise.

I desperately needed a refreshing cooldown. And this time, the cold actually felt surprisingly...good. All the muck and heat that had built up throughout the day was washed away in a matter of minutes.

This satisfaction didn’t last very long. The very next day was a repetition of Saturday: suffering and agony. Something needed to be done.

What if, I thought, I showered in the morning? I definitely wouldn’t mind a wake-up call for my lifeless corpse for second period, and it couldn’t get much worse than Saturday.

To my surprise, it worked. I felt a

shock as the first drop of water plopped onto my back, and it was as if I’d been revitalized. I finished my cold shower feeling better than ever, wide awake and ready for what Tuesday had to offer.

And so it went: Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. I was slowly but surely getting used to this cycle of discomfort to satisfaction, and every time I went in anticipating regret, I came out feeling the exact opposite way.

As much as I want to, I’m not going to sugarcoat the ending of this near-perfect transformation.

As soon as I realized that the week was over, I went straight back to my classic 30-minute hot shower, and I gotta tell you, that was the most satisfying shower experience ever.

That isn’t to say my cold shower experiment was a complete failure. It certainly did bring some change of scenery to my bland quarantine lifestyle, and it was such a great way to kickstart my early weekday mornings.

Would I recommend cold showers to anyone? Sure, go for it — maybe your experience will be completely different from mine.

As of now, though, you’ll have to excuse me; I’ve got a hot shower with my name on it waiting for me, so if you’re looking to talk about it, I’ll see you in about 30 minutes. ♦

topten

THINGS TO DRESS UP AS THIS HALLOWEEN

- 10 **Instagram infographics.** Dress as 2020’s breakout social media star.
- 9 **Nothing.** The PSAT is two days before Halloween — why are you even thinking about a costume?
- 8 **Draco Malfoy.** His recent wave of TikToks is carrying 2020 on its back.
- 7 **A black cat.** A good, basic costume for some semblance of normalcy.
- 6 **Hand sanitizer and face mask.** The iconic couples costume of 2020.
- 5 **An “Among Us” character.** It’s hip and has a built-in face mask.
- 4 **All-orange bodysuit.** Are you the SF sky? The commander-in-chief? This costume will keep everyone guessing.
- 3 **A healthcare worker.** Forget Superman; they’re the real superheroes.
- 2 **A clown.** If you don’t have the white face paint, you can also dress up as your local voting abstainer.
- 1 **A silent Zoom breakout room.** A true terror to behold.

— Anouk Yeh