



Reporter looks forward to 2021 after a year of loss in 2020.



Ceramists maintain artistic experiences in online learning.



Boys' basketball coach balances coaching with real estate job.



THE saratoga falcon

AN INDEPENDENT HIGH SCHOOL PUBLICATION

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Saratoga High School Saratoga, CA

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School hires new staff for second semester

BY AndyChen & EthanLin

The school has hired three new long-term substitute teachers this semester as well as a staff member who will hold the dual role of campus supervisor and health clerk.

The three teachers hired as second-semester substitutes are choir director Beth Nitzan, marine biology teacher Kelly Heuschkel and chemistry teacher Roberta Love. The school also hired a new campus supervisor and health clerk named Nasim Afnani.

Beth Nitzan, choir director

First-semester choir sub Kristina Nakagawa received widespread praise for the

work she did, but has moved on to a new position. A substitute for the choir position became necessary after teacher Andrew Ford went on leave last spring after being arrested for a sexual assault allegation from 2004-2006.

Nitzan will serve as choir director until the end of the school year. Whether she'll remain onboard will be determined later, principal Greg Louie said.

Nitzan studied music at Pomona College and finished her master's in choral conducting at San Jose State University (SJSU) last May. Before coming to SHS, she taught middle school and high school choir in Sacramento as well as classes at SJSU while fin-

>> **NEW STAFF** on pg. 3

History Bowl team places second at virtual nationals

BY VinayGollamudi & HowardShu

A varsity History Bowl team placed second in the National History Bowl tournament held online in early December. The team consisted of sophomore Siddharth Kamanavar, juniors Bora Alaybeyi and Dhruv Singh and seniors Winston Liu and Nirmik Tambe.

Last February, they defeated over 10 other teams to win a regional competition held at SHS to advance to nationals.

After that, they started preparing for nationals, which was originally scheduled for April. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, it was postponed until December.

When it finally came time for the national competition, the team made it all the way to the finals and took second place, losing 260-200 to Adlai Stevenson High School from Illinois.

"We were pretty proud about it because we weren't expecting to place that high originally," Alaybeyi said.

In the preliminary rounds, the team went

8-2 to get the seventh seed out of 50 teams, higher than their expectations.

In the semifinals, they anticipated a loss against Hunter College High School from New York but shocked themselves when they won 280-250.

Nationals during this past season was much different than previous years, as it was held remotely using Google Meet and a buzzer system.

During matches, two teams were given around 40 pyramidal-style questions one at a time. Each question contained five to six lines, each with a clue that teams needed to use to identify a certain historical event, cause or movement. The clues got progressively more obvious, and the last clue was generally a near giveaway.

Whichever team buzzes first gets to answer, and if they get it right, they get 10 points. If a team answers wrong, they do not get any points and cannot buzz again for that question. This normally gives the other team 10 easy points.

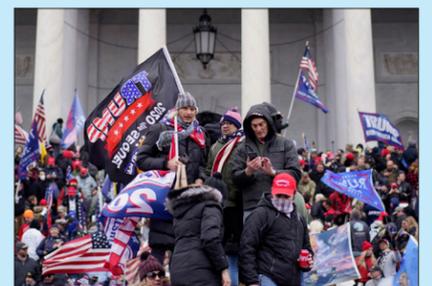
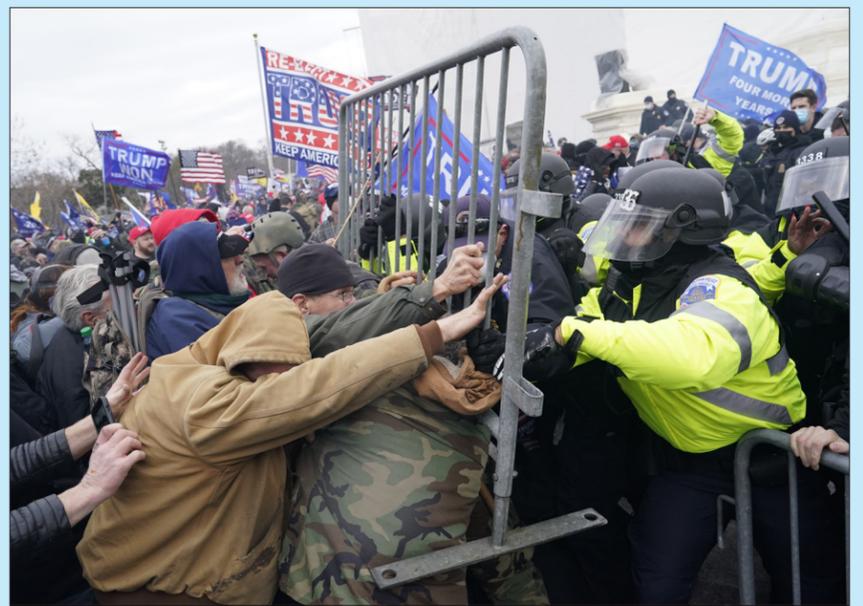
In the fourth quarter, teams can actually

>> **HISTORY BOWL** on pg. 5



Alaybeyi

HISTORY IN THE PRESENT



Courtesy of TRIBUNE MEDIA

Rioters stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 to protest the outcome of the 2020 election.

HISTORY TEACHERS RESPOND TO CAPITOL INSURRECTION WITH CLASS DISCUSSIONS

BY NicoleLu & AnoukYeh

Following the Jan. 6 raid on the Capitol building, many history teachers, in an effort to help students understand the situation in terms of historical context, took the initiative to incorporate the attack into their lesson plans.

The night of the attack, principal Greg

Louie sent an email to history teachers, encouraging them to help their students unpack the day's events.

"[As history teachers], we have political knowledge that we've studied on a professional level, so if longer deliberation was going to happen, it should probably happen in the history

>> **CAPITOL** on pg. 3

Minority students step out from the shadows

BY AnoukYeh

Editor's note: Melissa and Amy are pseudonyms used to protect the identities of two sources.

In 2009, author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie coined the phrase "single story" during her TED talk "The danger of a single story," which described the oversimplified assumptions that people hold.

Saratoga High School boasts a 98 percent graduation rate, students who exceed the

state academic standard and many inclusivity-focused clubs and task forces. On all fronts, it seems like the perfect, progressive, high-achieving, all-American high school.

The school's "single story" is one of healthy, competitive success and unwavering inclusivity. But that narrative wavers when the experiences of minority students on campus are taken into account.

Here are a few of their stories.

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newsbriefs

ASB hosts online Speak Up For Change week

Speak Up for Change was held on the week of Jan. 18 with the theme of "Unity in Community: Hand in Hand" and the goal of encouraging students and staff to ask for help when they need it.

On Jan. 19, ASB invited Dean Whellams — who led the event "Breaking Down the Walls" in 2019 — to lead a Zoom webinar for parents about how to better support their children.

The following day, seniors Josephine Chou and Wilson Fung and sophomore Samika Agarwal, as well as teachers Mike Davey, Matthew Torrens and Katherine Nakamatsu, shared their experiences in a video on the SHSTV YouTube channel and ASB's Instagram account.

On Thursday, Whellams hosted another webinar, "Reaching Out: Why and How," which was open to all students. The webinars were restricted to 500 participants and were also posted on YouTube. Throughout the week, clubs hosted activities relating to strengthening relationships and reaching out for support.

Senior Neeya Devanagondi, who is in Davey's AP Government class, said it was impactful to hear about his experiences.

"When I'm in class, I don't perceive him as someone who experiences hardships," she said "Watching the video really reminded me how everyone has their own hardships and their own story."

— Avani Kongetira, Lihi Shoshani, and Kavita Sundaram

2020 Falcon to receive CSPA Crown Award

The staff for last year's Saratoga Falcon has been selected as a finalist for the 2021 Columbia Scholastic Press Association (CSPA) Crown Awards for high school print news. A panel of advisers and professional judges will announce whether The Falcon has received the Gold or Silver distinction at an online conference in March.

Out of 849 publications reviewed by a panel of former advisers and editors, a total of 15 schools were selected in the print category. Among local high schools, Harker's Winged Post also received a distinction for its print news, while Monta Vista's El Estoque and Palo Alto's The Campanile were named finalists under the hybrid category that considers both its print and digital work.

This is the second accolade given to the publication led by former editors-in-chief Connie Liang, Anishi Patel, Ananya Vadlakonda and Jeffrey Xu. The Falcon also received the National Scholastic Press Association's Pacemaker finalist in November, one of 60 newspapers in the nation to receive it.

Established in 1925, the CSPA is an association owned and operated by Columbia University that unites student editors and faculty advisers who produce student newspapers, magazines, yearbooks and online media. The Crown Awards are the highest honors given by CSPA to recognize student prints or digital mediums for their overall excellence.

The Falcon has received several Gold and Silver Crowns in the print and hybrid news categories.

— Michael Wong

Falcon Focus



Junior Nithya Koneru holds up a sign for the GirlUp club's drive-through donation drive for masks and blankets on Jan. 22. The items will go to Georgia Travis Women's Shelter.

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FALCON // SELINA CHEN

Construction | Work progresses in the 900s wing. The building was first built decades ago and is now being renovated to meet current safety standards in electricity, plumbing, siding and brickwork.

Many local establishments contend with less business

by Selina Chen

Walking down the streets of Saratoga, it is not uncommon to see once-lively stores now have their lights off and blinds drawn. Occasionally, a sign with some variant of "WE ARE OPEN" is draped across a store's front door.

Ten months into the pandemic, many Saratoga businesses have accepted the drastic drop in sales as the new reality and continue to struggle for their survival. Still, a few local establishments have seen a surprising increase in business.

Reed Animal Hospital, where class of 2006 alumna Katie Reed works as a hospital manager, has seen an increase in business.

"Strangely, the animal hospital is a lot busier," Reed said. "We think that's probably because people are at home with their pets a lot more, so they have been noticing problems they wouldn't see had they been at work."

Veterinarians are doing double and triple bookings in their days to fit in all appointments, she said.

"Companies like Amazon are pocketing a lot of money while local businesses are shutting down."

BOUTIQUE OWNER Esther Chang

Initially, the veterinarians were not near the front of the rollout plan for COVID-19 vaccines, even though their jobs require working with the public. Many veterinarians signed petitions to express their concerns. On Jan. 8, she received the good news that veterinarians and their staff were added to Phase 1A of vaccine distribution, which includes health care personnel and long-term care facility residents.

The nearby Saratoga Veterinary Hospital declined to comment but did say they have been busy in recent months.

However, booming businesses are the exception right now.

Gautam Agrawal, who works

at Argonaut Dental, said they are operating at 20 to 30 percent capacity, using one or two of the four dental operatories.

"We are barely able to take out the cost of this infrastructure," he said. "In fact, our two neighbors — a gym and a learning center — are gone. It's difficult to sustain financially, so surviving is what we do."

Agrawal said telemedicine is not an option for his dental clinic because if patients have problems in their mouth, they need to show up and receive treatment. He can't merely prescribe medicine to be picked up at nearby pharmacies, he said.

In contrast, the family-owned optical boutique Specs Optical is avidly exploring online avenues. In a virtual fitting, customers receive a consultation and the store mails them frames to try on, said owner Esther Chang. Even so, her business is down about 25 percent.

"Companies like Amazon are pocketing a lot of money while local businesses left and right are shutting down," Chang said. "So it's really important to support local businesses that have a community presence. I hope people will gain some confidence in the small retailers that are still here."

Brian Corral, an instructor at Art Hub Academy, which has seen a 50 percent decrease in business, also hopes customers can have more faith in the good intentions of small businesses.

"I hope people understand that we don't want customers to get sick either," Corral said. "On a personal level, our customers are friends, while on a business level, repeat customers are essential and aren't coming back if they're sick."

At a time when keeping a business alive is a struggle, starting one anew is a different story.

Canvy Bui, owner of the boba shop Tea Lyfe, ran her business in San Jose for six years before deciding to expand to downtown Saratoga in late 2019. Before her plan could get rolling, the pandemic outbreak shut everything down and put her in a quandary.

"In April, I told myself that now's the time to give up if I wanted to," Bui said. "Or it's also the time to do it — to fully open and

operate."

In the end, she hit the ground running and opened the boba shop by August. Bui said it suffered through a rocky start, and there were days when nobody would walk in. Luckily, many of her old customers from San Jose are still supporting Tea Lyfe.

"Even though we are starting something new here, there's still hope for us," she said. "We can't be locked up forever."

Patrick Ruper, whose boutique wine shop Uncorked has seen a 30 percent drop in business, said that wineries rely on social gatherings such as corporate events and weddings.

"In April, I told myself that now's the time to give up if I wanted to. Or it's also the time to fully open and operate."

TEA LYFE OWNER Canvy Bui

Another industry hit hard by the pandemic is the hospitality industry.

The Inn at Saratoga (affiliated with the Hilton Worldwide) saw a bit of business during wildfire season in August as they accommodated firefighters and displaced evacuees. Now, they are advertising for customers to book rooms as personal offices for work, said an employee who works in the management and prefers to remain anonymous.

Similarly, the Saratoga Oaks Lodge saw a drastic decrease in bookings. In fact, out of its 24 rooms, only one to two are occupied in a week, said one employee who asked to go by his first name of Mike.

Mike partially attributes the loss of business for the hotels to the closing of wineries and vineyards, the major tourist attractions in Saratoga.

"We're hanging in there," said Mike, "and we're looking forward to the day when everything gets back to some semblance of normalcy." ♦

NEW STAFF

continued from pg. 1

-ishing her master's degree.

"She's an expert — an ace in the hole," Louie said. "She's been teaching choir for a number of years and came highly recommended and actually recruited by our band teachers. The fact that we have such a prestigious music program and that she's been able to come and continue to support that is a blessing."

Nitzan currently teaches two periods of choir and said she has appreciated support from her students and colleagues.

"Everyone has been so kind and welcoming even though we're virtual at the moment," she said. "My students have really helped me get going in class and had such positive attitudes."

Nitzan said she is excited to teach at Saratoga High.

"I grew up in the Bay Area, and I'm happy to be working in the community again," she said.

Nasim Afnani, campus supervisor and temporary health clerk

In an effort to maximize student safety amid the pandemic, the school has hired Afnani as campus supervisor and temporary health clerk.

As health clerk, Afnani administers treatment for student injuries while maintaining a safe environment. She will play a crucial role as sports and robotics cohorts return to campus, and her job will only grow more important as the school starts the transition back to in-person education.

Prior to her employment at SHS, Afnani served as a clerical and health aide substitute at the San Jose Unified School District.

"We needed a temporary health clerk who was willing to put themselves in harm's way in order to serve our students should something happen — a sprained ankle, cramps or even COVID symptoms," Louie said. "Based on her experience, we found that she was the best for the job."

Roberta Love, chemistry teacher & Kelly Heuschkel, marine biology teacher

Following chemistry teacher Jill McCrystal's retirement last semester, Love now teaches McCrystal's three periods of chemistry while Heuschkel teaches her single period of marine biology.

Although McCrystal is formally retired, she is still working with Love and Heuschkel on curriculum to ensure a smooth transition for both teachers and students.

"Everyone has been wonderful and very welcoming: students, families, fellow teachers and all the admin team," Love said. "I'm looking forward to spending more time with everyone and getting to know each other more."

In the past, Love taught physics, chemistry and algebra at Futures Academy in Cupertino and received her master's degree

in chemistry from the University of Ferrara in Italy.

Heuschkel graduated from UC Davis with a bachelor's degree in physiology and attended business school at Sacramento State, where she attained a degree in accounting. After serving as a certified public accountant for multiple years, she decided to pursue a career in education, working as a substitute teacher at a middle school in San Jose and teaching biology at Independence High School during the 2020 fall semester.

Now, in addition to teaching at Saratoga, Love and Heuschkel are in the process of formally training at the SJSU Teacher's Program, which is an opportunity for them to develop as teachers by working with the school's relatively veteran teachers.

"If we're talking about an ideal environment to learn how to be a teacher, they get to do it here," Louie said. "There's an opportunity for them to collaborate with and learn from the experts we have in our departments, and at the same time for them to cut their teeth by having their own classes and teaching with our students."

"Everyone has been wonderful and very welcoming: students, families, fellow teachers and all the admin team."

TEACHER Roberta Love

Students still getting high-quality education despite changes

According to Louie, although switching staff during the middle of the year is not ideal, the school is doing its best to mitigate its negative impact on students.

"In an ideal situation, you have the same teacher the entire year, and that teacher gets to know the students and grows with them," Louie said. "But sometimes, situations come up that we can't plan for, so we as teachers and as an admin team have to do our best to accommodate that."

As such, teachers like McCrystal are working with their temporary replacements to mitigate the effects of the transition by providing advice, schedules and curriculum.

"With that being said, long-term subs are obviously able to tinker with the curriculum and make it work," Louie said. "They're not just robotically following their counterpart's processes."

Despite the change, Louie said the collaboration between teachers and support from students will ultimately best serve students given the circumstances.

"Being able to find highly qualified teachers in the middle of a school year isn't the easiest thing in the world," he said. "And I think that we've managed to strike gold three times." ♦

New technical theater class introduced to SHS

by Apurva Chakravarthy & Anjali Nuggeshalli

out to many of his connections to recruit additional staff members.

"I've been using the fact that we're online to reach out to people via Zoom that I wouldn't get to meet with," Ringsted said. "I've talked with many of my professional connections, and I have a full coaching staff ready."

Another unusual aspect of this course is that it is open to students at both Saratoga and Los Gatos High School. Because technical theater will be run during eighth period on Blue Days, it allows

Los Gatos students to make the commute to campus when in-person learning resumes.

Los Gatos already offers a tech program, so Ringsted plans to make several different levels of

the course so that more experienced students can begin at Tech 2 or Tech 3, the highest level being Tech 4 Honors.

Having taught a similar class at Leigh High School, Ringsted is well versed in the world of technical theater.

Ringsted's goal for the class is to make it a "career-orientated" class. He hopes that after taking the class for four years, his students should be able to get a job with a technician's union, making \$30 to \$40 an hour.

"Students will be able to take the course for one year and get their performing arts credit," Ringsted said. "But if they're really passionate about it, they can do it for four years, become a tech director or leader in the department of their choice,

then go out and make a career out of it."

Prior to this course, Brotzman, former drama department head Sarah Thermond and volunteer students and parents would put together plays and musicals.

Now, however, Ringsted plans to have an entire team of students creating the production.

"In previous shows, volunteers would just learn on the fly and try their best it happen," Ringsted said. "With the technical theatre class, there's going to be a carpentry crew building sets, an audio crew doing sound mixing, a costume crew learning how to make outfits from scratch — if a student has a passion, I'll help them find a way to use it."

Ringsted has high hopes for the class, specifically because he doesn't see any preexisting classes that are similar to technical the-

ater.

While the Media Arts Program and performing arts programs have hundreds of students, the school lacks some other hands-on classes such as woodshop, fashion design and metalworking.

Ringsted emphasized that the technical theater class will be the perfect place for students to "learn these skills when they couldn't anywhere else."

Although Ringsted is sure that technical theater will be an invaluable addition to the school's course options, he emphasized the only way for the program to succeed is if students sign up.

"If students don't enroll, this class can't happen," Ringsted said. "If you have a passion, I will help you find a way to use it. If you don't have a passion yet, I will help you find it. It's the perfect place." ♦

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CAPITOL

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classroom," said AP U.S. History teacher Faith Daly.

U.S. Government teachers also restructured their classes to focus more on current events in the days after the attack. Following the insurrection, senior Winston Liu, a student in history teacher Mike Davey's AP Government class, noticed and appreciated the longer time dedicated to discussing recent issues.

"He's very good at keeping us informed and constantly shares reputable articles about events occurring every week," Liu said. "When going over examples of certain aspects of political science, Davey relates recent events to his definitions and explanations, connecting us to what happens and helping give us a stake in the importance of American government."

Both Daly and history teacher Margarita Morelle created a period-long, discussion-based lesson in their AP U.S. History classes devoted to exploring the historical precedence for the storming and helping students unpack their emotions surrounding the event.

"[We structured] the lesson like a discussion because the goal wasn't to preach how one should think about it," Daly said. "The goal was to help [students] figure out how they think about it in a quiet space without things thundering at them."

In an attempt to cultivate a space where students could freely express their opinions, Daly and Morelle decided to carry out the lesson on PearDeck, where students could type out their thoughts without feeling pressured to share their opinions with the class.

At the beginning of the lesson, Daly and Morelle focused on helping students process their feelings, asking questions like "What emotions do you have surrounding this event?" and "What words do you associate with what happened?"

Afterwards, the teachers began connecting the situation to historic parallels, pointing out the insurrection's similarity to historical events such as Bacon's Rebellion in 1676, the Nullification Crisis of 1832 and the Election of 1860.

Junior Bella Lin, who is in Daly's APUSH class, called the lesson "really meaningful" and said it helped her organize her thoughts regarding the capitol

raid.

"I was feeling shocked and mad about the insurrection, but the lesson definitely helped me process my emotions," Lin said. "I was able to take a step back and think about why something like this is happening, and discussing it in class really helped."

Lin added that Daly's lesson also helped her understand the historical significance of certain politicians' stances toward the insurrection.

Halfway through the lesson, Daly played a video of Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) condemning the capitol insurrection and pointed out the significance of Graham's position as senator of South Carolina — the state that had initiated the secession that led to the Civil War.

"Since we learned about South Carolina's history of rebellion in APUSH, it was easy for us to understand why the senator had such opinions about the insurrections, and I thought this connection was really fascinating," Lin said.

Students in Morelle's classes enjoyed the anonymity and safe space cultivated by the PearDeck discussion as well, and their discussion led many students to take away new insights on the situation.

"Her approach was very considerate and educational," junior Emma Chu said.

Chu said that Morelle went out of her way to stress to students that this type of political violence was abnormal and that students should not normalize it.

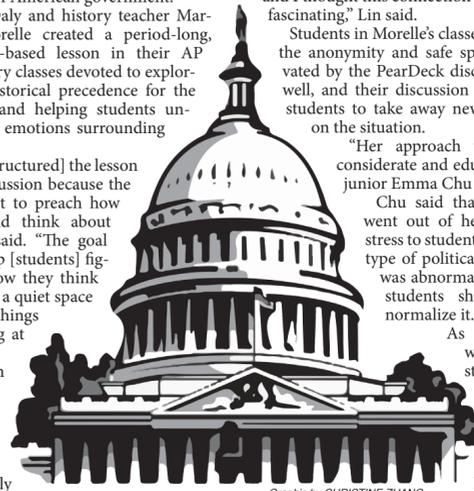
As someone who was still reeling from the attack, Chu found the PearDeck a beneficial

way of expressing her thoughts and feelings.

"The situation definitely shouldn't have happened, but it's important to look at all perspectives to determine why an event of this magnitude occurred and to address the growing division between Republicans and Democrats that is breeding more violence and hate," she said.

Daly said that she could tell that her lesson plan discussion was engaging for the students because "class participation in that lesson was the highest it's been all year." She added that she had multiple students hang back and thank her for centering the class's lesson on the insurrection.

"I was really happy for those students who were so touched that they felt the need to do that, and I'm so incredibly grateful that so many of my students trusted me," Daly said. ♦



Graphic by CHRISTINE ZHANG

Young speech and debaters gain experience in tournament organized and run by team

BY Anouk Yeh

It has been the usual dilemma. The speech and debate team is, once again, short of funding this year.

Among the ways the team tried to combat the budget deficit: virtually hunting down members who haven't paid the asked-for donation, doing a fruit fundraiser and creating a communal team PayPal.

In late October, junior Harshini Velchamy, the team's vice president of speech, came up with an idea for raising money: hosting a virtual speech and debate tournament for middle and elementary schoolers.

Although the idea was promising, running a tournament turned out to be difficult. "I told them, if you want to do it, sure. But you have to run it yourselves," said English teacher Erick Rector, who advises the team.

Velchamy took on the role of lead orga-

nizer of the tournament.

"My main job was being the Saratoga representative on the backend of the tournament," she said. "I handled the Saratoga High judges, and I did a lot of advertising for the tournament and wrote the invitation and schedule."

Additionally, she helped come up with the name of the tournament: Hyde Invitational, named after former assistant principal Karen Hyde, who had been a large champion of the school's speech and debate team.

Velchamy said that while the team's original intention was just to host a quick tournament to fundraise, it quickly blossomed into something more.

"It started off being about funding, but while we were organizing the tournament and contacting other schools, we also re-

alized how big of a deal this would be for middle and elementary school students," Velchamy said. "They don't get as many opportunities to compete in a real tournament."

Overall, there were over 80 elementary and middle school competitors at the tournament on the weekend of December 19-20.

Sophomore Alexandria Pak, a member of the speech and debate team, judged for the tournament on Saturday. She was assigned to judge two rounds of Impromptu Speaking and one round of SPAR (spontaneous argumentation) debate.

"I was able to see a bunch of people trying out new things and presenting different types of speeches than I usually see in high school," Pak said.

As a speech competitor who only does platform and interpretative speech, Pak said

the hardest part of judging at the tournament was having to learn the rules for the events she was assigned to judge on the spot.

Despite this, Pak said she had a fun time judging at the tournament — especially during the impromptu rounds.

"I think the elementary impromptu speeches were some of my favorites to judge," Pak said. "They had such different outlooks and points than a lot of the people in high school speech."

Although the club has not finished calculating the total proceeds from the tournament, Velchamy said that the tournament was highly successful both in terms of monetary gain and community impact.

"After realizing the tournament's positive impact on the elementary and middle schoolers, we decided that we would make this an annual tournament to continue supporting elementary and middle school programs," she said. ♦



Velchamy

Music director Boitz returns from parental leave

BY Audrey Mah

At the start of the spring semester, music director Michael Boitz returned to teaching after taking a paternity leave for the first semester. Boitz's two children, fraternal twins Anthony and Thomas, were born this past August.

"We were trying to have one baby, and — surprise! — we have twins," Boitz said. "It has been a pretty wild ride."

Due to the pandemic, the music department's biennial summer concert tour was canceled, but Boitz used the extra time to prepare his house for the babies.

"What I learned is that no matter how much preparation you do ahead of time, it's

not going to be enough," Boitz said.

For Boitz, taking a leave of absence was a new experience. Boitz, who teaches the orchestra classes and has been at the school for 23 years, said this was the first break in his career and was glad to have taken the time off to be at home with the babies.

"I want to spend as much quality time with the babies as possible so that I'm continuing to watch as they learn and grow every day," Boitz said. "They giggle and laugh so hard with me now, so when I get home and I start playing with them and making faces, they're just giggling and giggling."

But his children have also kept him very busy, and having twins has made new fatherhood even more challenging.

"I've just been non-stop on the go. They're twin boys and they're awesome, but they're rarely on the same cycle," Boitz said. "While one wakes up because he needs a diaper change, the other one is sleeping, then that one falls asleep and the other one wakes up and is hungry."

Although Boitz has a nanny to take care of the twins during the day, he finds it difficult to concentrate when working from his house.

To prepare a room for his children, Boitz sacrificed his home office and now uses his dining room table as a makeshift workspace.

"I can hear everything from that room," Boitz said. "It's become hard not to pay attention to what's going on in the rest of the

house."

Most days, Boitz works from his office on the second floor of the music building on campus.

Only Boitz and fellow music director Jason Shiuan frequent the building, so it is a quiet and COVID-safe space to work.

Boitz said that while the absence of live performances this year has made it difficult to measure students' progress, he wants to make sure his students feel like they are on a trajectory and improving, regardless of their level of playing.

"I wanted to take this time to be home with the babies and it was worthwhile, but I really, really missed working with the high school kids," Boitz said. ♦

Students create alternative to on-campus medical clubs

BY Shaan Sridhar

Last year, sophomore Mahati Kotamraju attended a meeting of Future Doctors of America (FDA), one of the two medical-related clubs on campus (the other is Global Health Club). She came to the classroom, excited to learn something new, only to watch a YouTube video and be excused 15 minutes later.

"I didn't get what I needed from the clubs," Kotamraju said. "I felt like the medical clubs on campus were disorganized and didn't follow a proper pattern. They jumped around from topic to topic and didn't really offer students a proper view of the topic."

This year, Kotamraju decided to create her own medical group. She called it Toga Medical.

Since the school already has two medical clubs, which each have dozens of members, ASB denied Toga Medical's application to be an on-campus club. This meant Toga Medical has become an independent club with no official ties to the school.

The other officers of the club include sophomore Ojas Somani, vice president; junior Ishanya Hebbalae, secretary; and sophomore Aarav Badani, treasurer. The group held its first meetings in October and is off to a successful start with membership at 15 to 17 students.

"I think our success outside of school, without the help of ASB, shows how essential we are to students," Somani said. "We're going to try to reapply to ASB because of their resources and outlets for advertisement. This time, we probably will be successful."

Kotamraju is hoping to be approved by ASB before the school moves back to in-person learning so that Toga Medical can host meetings on-campus.

Kotamraju said the biggest difference between Toga Medical and other medical clubs on campus is its structured schedule.

Toga Medical picks one specialty, or medical topic, per month.

Throughout the month, the group hosts meetings, activities and talks from guest speakers that all center around that same topic.

Kotamraju says this helps students get a comprehensive understanding of each specialty.

Unlike the other medical clubs, which have staff advisers, Toga Medical has a medical adviser, Dr. Anh-Quan Nguyen, an interventional cardiologist at Kaiser Permanente. Nguyen is also a mentor for Saratoga's M-SET Robotics team, which is how Kotamraju met him.

"The fact that we have unlimited access to doctors through Dr. Nguyen also sets us apart," Kotamraju said. "We're guaranteed one doctor per month."

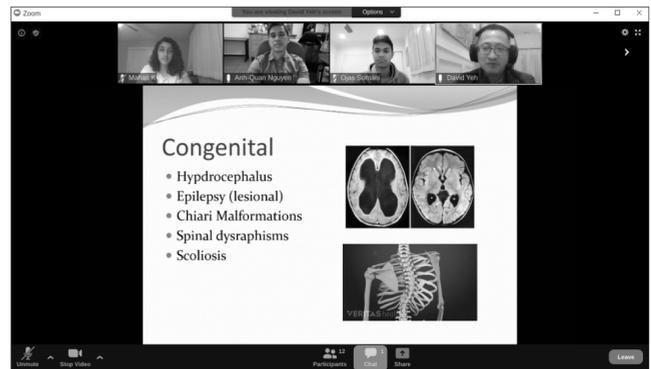
Nguyen also provides input on the group's curriculum and sets up the Zoom meetings.

Toga Medical meets once a week, usually at 4:30 p.m. or 7 p.m. on Wednesdays. Each hour-long meeting starts with an introductory activity before moving to a lecture or professional speaker, which takes up the bulk of the meeting.

Junior Rhneea Mehta, a member of the group, said she would recommend the club to those interested in medicine.

"Toga Medical has been pretty helpful," Mehta said. "I learned a lot about neuroscience and also what doctors do because they had a speaker series. The group has taught me a lot about things I didn't know."

In November, or "Neuro-November" as Kotamraju called it, the group explored optical illusions. Lectures included Troxler's



Courtesy of MAHATI KOTAMRAJU

Guest speaker Dr. David Yeh presents a slideshow about neuroscience to Toga Medical.

effect on the brain, and speakers included Dr. Helly Lin, who works in the pharmaceutical industry, and Dr. David Yeh, a neurosurgeon.

Hebbalae said hosting doctors is a top goal.

"A medical professional can give you first-hand experience about their profession that most textbooks cannot," Hebbalae said.

Kotamraju said that she's received messages from members saying that the group has opened their eyes to specialties they didn't like before. For Kotamraju, it's a full-circle moment.

"The main reason I created Toga Medical was to create a curriculum and follow a path that would give our members a proper understanding of the different specialties in the medical field," Kotamraju said. "Hearing from our current members that we have achieved our goal feels wonderful. I'm excited to see what the future holds." ♦

Scaled-back classes may lead to learning deficits

BY Martin Xu
& Mina Yeap

During the transition to online learning, class time has been cut from 95 minutes to 75 minutes every class, not to mention that students lose one class day every two weeks because classes meet a total of four times instead of five.

This paired with the difficulty in testing, both teachers and students know less is occurring in this new format.

History teacher Jerry Sheehy is one of the many teachers who had to cut out traditional in-person projects and adjust tests from their curriculum.

"There are some activities that just don't translate from the classroom to remote learning," he said. "In general, it takes longer to learn materials online mode, so some things have to be cut out in the interest of time."

While breakout rooms are helpful for small group work, it's just not the same as the dynamic nature of collaborating in a real classroom.

"There are some activities that just don't translate from the classroom to remote learning."

HISTORY TEACHER Jerry Sheehy

"I feel like breakout rooms are either hit or miss," Yang said. "Some groups are fine and actually help me with learning the materials but others don't talk or even turn off their camera. It's a waste of time if no one collaborates together."

Science teacher Cheryl Lenz also had to reduce the information taught during online learning for the sake of time, cutting out roughly 90 percent of hands-on labs and 10 to 15 percent of course content for her

AP Biology classes

"In AP Biology, my students usually spend 4-5 months growing plants, and we can't do that remotely," Lenz said. "In my Chemistry Honors class, my students have not had the hands-on lab experiences required to do the more complex labs for AP Chemistry, or even AP Biology."

Due to these curriculum cuts, some students, like sophomore Kexin Yang, fear that they may be unprepared for more rigorous classes in the future.

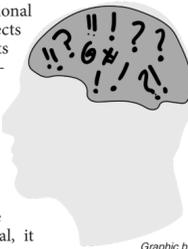
"My chemistry teacher told us that we did not have to memorize certain information that students in the past had to," Yang said. "I just don't feel like I'm learning as much." Turns out, Yang is not the only one that feels this way. According to a McKinsey Research Paper, students across the U.S. started school in the fall about three months behind where we would expect them to be in mathematics. It concluded that students are likely to lose five to nine months of learning in mathematics by the end of this school year.

The learning loss students have faced this school year may be attributed not only to the materials cut from the curriculum but also to the trouble students encounter when trying to focus on online class. Sophomore Tony Guo said that he struggles to pay attention in his classes because of the lack of supervision he has online.

"I often question myself and search for answers online right after a class to double-check my grasp on the materials that I just learned," Guo said. "I don't feel like I'm prepared for the next school year."

Although students feel like they're learning less, Sheehy is optimistic that students will be able to readjust to the old class format when they return to in-person schooling.

"I think the students are doing a great job under difficult circumstances," he says. "They are resilient and will bounce back and meet expectations in the future when things return to normal." ♦



Graphic by SINA SALEHI

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HISTORY BOWL

continued from pg. 1

get 30, 20 or 10 points on a question depending on how early they say the answer.

History Bowl teams from SHS have consistently qualified for nationals in the last few years, but this past season was particu-

larly special since the team earned the best placement in nationals since the school's victory in 2015.

The team will continue spending hours per week reading Wikipedia articles and past History Bowl questions to prepare for competitions, as they have done in the 2020 season.

Many of the team members also take part in Quiz Bowl, a similar activity that encom-

Students' opinions split on hybrid school plans

BY Ethan Lin
& Allen Luo

After moving into Phase 2 of remote learning in the fall, the district had begun to plan for the transition into phase 3 — hybrid schooling — as they anticipate COVID-19 measures slowly lifting. But due to Santa Clara County moving back into the purple tier last November, these plans have been delayed, and when the school can proceed with its transition remains unclear.

Phase 3 hybrid learning entails some students attending in-person school on an alternating, part-time schedule, while the rest remain at home for remote learning. Those in the former would be set into permanent cohorts that would be allowed on campus for school on specified days. For example, some students would attend on Monday and Tuesday, while others would attend on Thursday and Friday. The prospect of returning to school in Phase 3 has raised mixed opinions among students.

The decision to return is voluntary and students have the option to opt out. Most are hesitant about such a move and would only consider it if the risk of contracting the virus is decreased.

"If the right measures are taken, I will feel comfortable going to school," junior Glenn Liang said. "However, I realize that something is always going to go wrong. Some people don't like to follow instructions, and the rest of us will have to suffer the consequences. Currently, I'm not comfortable going back."

"I think hybrid will be less effective because there would be just so many things going on."

SOPHOMORE Trevor Leung

This sentiment is shared among many others. Sophomore Trevor Leung also expressed concerns about maintaining a safe student environment and suggested requiring all students take a COVID-19 vaccine or having students attend school

through small cohorts to minimize the risk of widespread contamination.

Currently, the timeline for the deployment of vaccines is unclear, but public health officials have indicated the possibility that the school staff will have access to vaccines as early as February, while the vaccine would be available to the general public (including students) as early as late May or early June.

However, according to district superintendent Mike Grove, the state has yet to release any further information. Still others are less accepting of these risk prevention methods.

Sophomore Siddarth Kamannavar said any instance of COVID-19 in California would be enough for him to refuse to attend.

Concerns about the effectiveness of a hybrid model have also been raised, as the rotation of students to and from school may cause more issues as teachers manage both in-class and online learning.

"I think hybrid will be less effective because there would just be so many things going on at once," Liang said. "In addition, things can't be as interactive because there are just too many rules that we have to follow if we're in person."

Still, hybrid schooling may not be completely ineffective. For some classes, teachers feel that being in-person will be more beneficial than being online.

"I think the hybrid model would be beneficial for AP Physics — I could do live demonstrations and students could see the lab materials in person," said AP Physics and Principles of Engineering teacher Matthew Welander. "But I don't think it would work well for the Principles of Engineering class. We start our programming and robotics units soon, and this requires the daily use of materials."

Despite the many measures required before hybrid schooling can come to fruition and students can feel safe, the prospect of returning to in-person school is a hope that many share.

"Even though it would be a hybrid system, it would still have a school atmosphere," Liang said. "I miss the sound of bells signaling the start and end of each period, the groups of friends hanging out at different places, and the ability to talk to a face and not a computer screen." ♦



Graphic by VINAY GOLLAMUDI

MAP raises \$25,000 with DoorDash fundraiser

BY Shama Gupta
& Christine Zhang

From Dec. 18 to Jan. 1, the Media Arts Program Boosters organization raised \$25,000 through a fundraiser with DoorDash.

Boosters president Sandi Payne was able to spearhead the effort through her husband, who works as the chief operating officer of the company.

"DoorDash, through this whole year of COVID-19, has been working hard [to support] restaurants, first responders, schools and communities all over the country to try to help bridge the gap and help whenever they can," Payne said. "They had been talking about 'doing community projects and giving back,' so the timing was perfect. MAP

was the first and pilot project for them."

The MAP Boosters group is using fundraiser to help alleviate the financial pressures that COVID-19 put on the program. They plan to put the money toward upcoming tech upgrades that happen every three to four years.

"MAP, by virtue of what it is, is an expensive program," Payne said. "There is so

"I immediately heard from DoorDash that they very graciously decided to raise our cap to \$25,000."

PARENT Sandi Payne

much technology involved — regular hardware and software upgrades, microphones, voice over equipment, cameras, tip pods, booms and more."

MAP originally agreed to a \$5,000 cap over a two-week period with DoorDash. They planned that the MAP would receive 20 percent of the purchase amount on any order over \$20 in the South Bay Area using the promo code "SHSMAP." In total, 14,000 orders were placed using the code.

The fundraiser began on Dec. 17, one day before the scheduled start date of Dec. 18, to "work out any kinks," said Payne.

"That night alone, we did over \$500 in our donation amount," she said. "Within three days, we were already at \$1,200. I immediately heard from DoorDash that they very graciously decided to raise our cap to

\$25,000. This was above and beyond our expectations and our agreement."

While many community members helped advertise for the fundraiser through platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Next-Door and group chats, Payne attributed much of its success to board members Rehana Chaudhry and Vidya Malik, who leveraged their personal and professional networks to promote the fundraiser.

Payne was thrilled with the outcome of the fundraiser.

"When we started out, we were happy to raise any amount for the program," she said. "We originally agreed upon \$5,000, which far exceeded the amount [we had earned from any single fundraiser to date]. To raise \$25,000 at one time is still mind-blowing to us!" ♦

Zoom COO works to improve pandemic communication

BY Tara Natarajan

For many people, the coronavirus pandemic has been a period of turmoil. As entire cities locked down, cases ran rampant and unemployment rates climbed. Collective mental health deteriorated due to increased stress and isolation.

One of the only threads holding society together during this pandemic has been Zoom, a teleconferencing app originally designed to be a workplace substitute. Now a far more versatile entity, everyone from teachers to funeral directors to pastors uses it regularly.

For Aparna Bawa, the chief operations officer at Zoom, the pandemic has proven to be both a complex challenge and an opportunity to give back to the world.

Bawa, who lives in Saratoga, manages numerous teams responsible for different company operations. Throughout the pandemic, she has worked long hours from home, handling immense company growth while keeping her own stress under control.

According to Bawa, before COVID-19, the number of daily participants on the platform hovered around 10 million, most of whom used the app for workplace collaboration.

Then the pandemic hit. By the end of April, there were around 300 million daily meeting participants.

At that point, Bawa had been with the company for over two years. After graduating from Harvard Law School in 2002, she began her career working at the prestigious law firm Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati as a corporate and securities attorney and then worked at Lehman Brothers and Deutsche Bank as an investment banker.

After six years in the investment banking world, she joined Inphi, the first of three companies she worked for before arriving at Zoom. Following two years as the head of Legal and Corporate development, during which she led Inphi's initial public offering, she spent four and a half years at Nimble Storage, where she played a significant part in their initial public offering as well.

Bawa then moved on to the e-commerce company Magento, facilitating its billion-dollar acquisition by Adobe after only a year

in the company. In late 2018, she joined and led Zoom's legal team and was an instrumental part of the company going public in 2019. In May, she was promoted to COO, and has held that position since.

"I make sure all the trains run on time," Bawa said. "My job is to make sure that company strategies are successfully carried out."

Bawa manages the security, privacy, legal and trust and safety teams; human resources and government relations. When management proposes new business strategies, Bawa ensures they are implemented and carried out timely and efficiently.

The exponential growth in usage was completely unexpected. In the past nine months, Zoom reached its highest level of activity, over 300 million daily participants.

To handle this growth, the company began hiring more people; about 40 percent of the employees, Bawa estimated, will have never been to a Zoom office because they were hired during the pandemic.

To Bawa, Zoom's role in the pandemic, and consequently her role in the company, has become an important way to give back to society.

"To be able to provide some sense of continuity is a real privilege," Bawa said. "Quite frankly, it is an obligation, because we have this service that can be used to benefit lives during a time of crisis. Obviously, business has done well because more people are using Zoom, but the first priority is to use this to help society and humanity as much as we can."

A typical workday for Bawa begins at around 8 a.m. She works until 4 p.m., taking calls and brainstorming new ways to streamline operations and work more efficiently, before walking her dog as an opportunity to get some exercise and fresh air.

She resumes work until her dinner at 6 p.m., after which she continues working till 10 p.m., when she unwinds for an hour before going to bed. And that "pretty much repeats, every single day," she said.

"I do miss talking to people; working from home feels a little cooped up and there's no socialization like there would normally be," Bawa said. "Sometimes I find

myself working from 8 in the morning to 10 p.m. and I haven't even left the house all day. Your kids are at home, you're working, just trying to juggle all these important responsibilities can be so stressful."

The experience for Bawa is easier because she is already acquainted with her colleagues. There is a "sense of familiarity" that makes it easier to communicate and work with her colleagues.

Still, Bawa's workload has grown. In order to handle this, she uses "work-life prioritization," a vision of time management that she prefers over the typical "work-life balance."

"I think the word 'balance' assumes that these two things are equal when they really aren't," she said. "At some points in your life, work is important, and at some points, there are other things that are important and work takes a backseat."

Bawa said the pandemic is a clear example of when work that is so crucial to millions of people needs to take priority. Whether that means longer workdays or more difficult projects to tackle, her time and energy are spent on her work.

"Zoom has such a huge privilege to provide this essential service to so many people who are in need, so right now, I need to spend more time on work, and I don't mind that," Bawa said. "I have an opportunity to serve a greater cause, and I want to make sure I put in enough time and effort making it worthwhile."

Firsthand experiences have fueled Bawa's devotion to her work. When the pandemic began, she paused sessions with her personal fitness trainer.

But like many other business owners, her trainer began offering sessions over Zoom, allowing Bawa to resume her workouts while giving her trainer a livelihood. Bawa's two sons, aged 11 and 8, also take piano lessons and attend school through the platform.

"If I could use one word to describe this whole thing, it would be chaotic," Bawa said.

There have always been challenges, especially in the early months of lockdowns. Security breaches, technical glitches, Zoom

bombing and network issues were overwhelming, but working from home and using the platform themselves gave Zoom employees a new perspective on how to optimize the service.

"All of a sudden, we were the ones using Zoom for work and school and social gatherings, and that has been such a valuable asset," Bawa explained. "We got to experience the platform the way our users did, for work, and now we could make improvements and fix any errors. We became our own clients."

"I have an opportunity to serve a greater cause, and I want to make sure I put in enough time and effort making it worthwhile"

ZOOM COO Aparna Bawa



Bawa

When she graduated from law school, Bawa said she knew early on that she "liked the business side of things." Now, Bawa is able to live out that vision in a company that is transforming entire industries.

Zoom has aided a cultural shift that is going to change the way that society views communication, Bawa said. Working from home will continue after the pandemic; companies will no longer feel the need to hire regionally or spend huge amounts on in-person campuses if employees can work over Zoom. Telehealth will become the new norm. Colleges and schools may become more accessible over video conferencing.

Despite the chaos and stress, Bawa has remained resilient and found ways to take control of the immense changes that have taken place. She feels optimistic about what the future holds both for herself and for the company.

"I'm fortunate," Bawa said. "I'm gainfully employed, healthy, with a safe family and I'm not facing challenges most Americans are right now. The world is changing fast for so many people and I'm fortunate enough to be a part of that." ♦

Teachers experiment with different Zoom camera policies

BY Andy Chen
& Audrey Mah

Enter any teacher's online Zoom class this year, and you'll see some students looking up and moving the way they would in a physical classroom — they have their cameras on.

Other students appear as symbols, initials or black boxes — they have their cameras off, often to the chagrin of their teachers.

From slowing Wi-Fi connection to creating concerns for privacy, use of the Zoom camera function has been controversial in virtual classrooms.

There is no schoolwide policy regarding camera use, and teachers have done everything from making it a strict requirement to a mere preference.

For social studies teacher Kirk Abe, making sure students keep their cameras on during the class period is a key to replicating an in-person experience.

In his classes, having cameras on is mandatory, and he asks students to message him at the beginning of each class if they have technical issues that prevent them from turning their cameras on. He finds that being able to see his students helps guide his teaching.

"Little things like nods or facial expressions are so helpful in the situation we are in now," Abe said. "The visual aspect of actually seeing your students helps in so many ways such as determining if students are connecting with the lesson."

On the other hand, while math teacher Jennifer Mantle would prefer students to have their cameras on, she doesn't require them to do so, recognizing that students

may have anxiety about how they look or may not want to show their living space.

Mantle also uses students' facial expressions to gauge how well they understand concepts and problems, but she said this is much more difficult when "they are just a name or whatever they have chosen for their Zoom icon."

Mantle also feels that students keeping their cameras on helps create a sense of community and familiarity within the class.

But for students like junior Paula Nguyen, persistent technical difficulties make it hard to comply with her teachers' camera policies.

Nguyen's laptop camera has been broken since early September and only functions for intervals of less than a minute each. Because of this, Nguyen attends all of her classes without her camera on and said she has subsequently lost points in her participation grade.

Although Nguyen has access to an iPad and phone that both support Zoom and have working cameras, she points out that using these devices for classes is often impractical.

"For classes like AP Art History and APUSH where we have to see small details or read text from the Zoom window, the iPad or phone screen is too small," Nguyen said.

Rather than penalizing students who cannot keep their cameras on, science teacher Kristen Thomson has instituted a new policy this semester: Students who consistently turn their cameras on during class can earn extra credit points.

"I wanted a way to show my appreciation to those students," Thomson said. "It has really made teaching all the more fun and ef-



Graphic by AUDREY MAH

fective."

At the end of first semester, Thomson asked her students to fill out a reflection survey and found that the majority wanted her to mandate all students to keep their camera on for the whole class period.

Thomson said she encourages students with stable network connections to turn on their cameras to create a better learning environment socially and emotionally. Although Thomson does not press her students to keep their cameras on during regular class days, everyone is required to have their cameras on and angled at their faces or hands for test days.

"I miss seeing students every day, and [students having their cameras on] makes teaching more bearable," Thomson said. ♦

Thomson added that for students planning to ask for a letter of recommendation, it is even more important that they make an effort to keep their cameras on during class.

"If I can't picture your face when I see our name, I don't see how I can write a good letter of recommendation for you," Thomson said.

Last semester, a significant number of students in Thomson's classes opted to have their cameras on.

"I would be able to recognize most students by their faces, which is saying a lot during remote learning," Thomson said. "Since we're all in our own houses, creating as much of a 'normal' classroom environment is huge. It is much easier and nicer to see faces versus blank screens for a class." ♦

FIRST PERIOD

STAFF POLICY

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

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The Saratoga Falcon welcomes all signed letters of opinion, which are subject to editing for length, accuracy and grammar. Please send them to neeti.badve@saratogafalcon.org. For ad information, phone (408) 867-3411, ext. 222.

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Vaccinate teachers before reopening

With the beginning of the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccines and an end to the pandemic in sight, many schools have started preparing for the eventual return back to in-person school. Numerous people, including President Joe Biden, have urged the country to allow teachers to be one of the first to receive the vaccine so that schools can reopen.

Still, much of this decision remains up to individual school districts. With this, schools now must determine whether they should require teachers and other staff to receive the vaccine before returning.

But the answer is obvious: It is essential that school employees receive the vaccine before returning to in-person schooling to ensure the safest environment possible, for both themselves and their students.

The idea of teachers being required to be vaccinated before working is not radical. Currently, teachers are required to get a tuberculosis vaccine once every four years. It would not be out of the ordinary to require teachers to get a COVID-19 vaccine.

In general, teachers are at more of a risk for severe COVID-19 symptoms because of their age. According to the Center for Disease Control, the chances of adults aged 30 years and older being hospitalized from COVID-19 are at least double the chances for those aged 18 to 29, and the chances for death are at least four times greater.

Many students may not show any symptoms if they have COVID-19. Since teachers will be in contact with multiple groups of students for all their classes, they will be at an even higher risk of contracting the virus without even knowing it.

This could contribute to another outbreak, and lockdown



JOANN ZHANG

procedures would have to resume. Requiring teachers to have taken the vaccine would greatly minimize the chances of an outbreak occurring within the school community.

Even with this, many misconceptions about life after vaccines have been construed. Even after teachers are vaccinated, masks and social distancing will likely still be enforced until hospital and transmission rates are much lower. If we go back to in-person this August, we are likely going to have a school set-up similar to the one that juniors and seniors saw during the PSAT and SAT.

In addition, it still takes a few weeks to provide immunity after the second dose of the vaccine has been administered. Therefore, planning for teachers to take the vaccine over the summer will ensure that they are safe

and immune by the time school starts in August.

Ultimately, a requirement like this would also provide a sense of security for teachers, students and parents alike, making the transition from online to in-person school easier. Taking the vaccine is essentially the only certain way to ensure that there is little to no risk of contracting the virus, as other methods, such as mandatory testing every few weeks, are physically and finan-

cially less viable.

This pandemic has been happening for nearly a year now, and it is safe to say that almost all Americans are ready to return to normalcy. That normalcy begins with opening schools back up for students to learn at their full potential.

For the safety of all people, it is imperative that all teachers and other school staff be required to take the COVID-19 vaccine before returning. ♦

Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

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The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 33-0 in support of this article.

Advisory period needs student interactions

BY Ethan Lin

Every Wednesday, students crawl out of bed to make the mandatory 9 a.m. advisory period. Many click their way through the assigned HAERT module for the day, and the articles and videos about mental health flash before their eyes, barely read as the students try to finish as quickly as possible.

They seem like just another assignment to complete on a day dedicated to asynchronous work.

Although the HAERT program provides useful information to help students learn how to cope with stress and other mental health issues, students do not digest the information and instead view the assigned modules as yet more schoolwork.

HAERT modules are ineffective in helping students actively deal

with stress due to the nature of the program.

With a similar display screen to Canvas, HAERT Modules add more stress to students. There are readings, videos, quizzes and cumulative assessments, all of which mimic the formula of daily school and make them seem like just another assignment to complete on a day dedicated to asynchronous work.

Despite the benefits that would come with internalizing the information from HAERT and the well-intentioned administration, many students feel that the time they would spend actively reading the information in the modules could be better spent doing other work.

With the website constantly lagging due to traffic from students logging on at the same time, even more time is spent completing these modules, and students become even more frustrated with them in the process. For this reason, some students choose to not do the modules at all — a decision that does not have any consequences besides looking clueless on an exit ticket.

To help students' well-being

during remote learning, the administration should adopt a different approach by inviting the teachers who host advisory to play a more active role in teaching students about mental health.

Before each advisory, teachers would receive a video regarding a mental health issue that they would then play for students during the advisory period. These videos could even be based off the HAERT modules themselves, so the district would not have to find a new curriculum altogether. To engage students, they could host brief discussions with students about the video, going off of certain discussion topics that they choose.

For example, teachers could discuss different ways to apply the TIPP skills of calming down in a student's actual life and could run through mindful exercises with students instead of students mere-

ly scanning them online.

This way, students not only have to pay attention to the video the teachers are sharing, but they can show teachers that they have understood the information shown. This interactive environment ingrains the skills the modules talk about much more deeply in the students' minds, and they actually receive the mental and emotional benefits the administrators want them to receive.

Although the current advisory curriculum provides useful information about mental health and other key issues, it fails to actively engage students, thus making them unsuccessful. This is not to say that the HAERT modules are unhelpful for all students, but having more interactive formats would be more effective for the goal the administration is trying to achieve in these trying times. ♦



Graphic by ATREY DESAI

Prioritize vaccinating essential workers and social distance from hypocritical politicians

BY Anouk Yeh

On Christmas Eve, I sat quarantined in my room, watching a rerun news broadcast of Mike Pence receiving the COVID-19 vaccine six days prior on Dec. 18.

Although Pence's vaccination was part of a national plan to bolster public confidence in receiving the vaccine, as I watched the broadcast, I found myself getting angry at the fact that he — someone who had played an integral role in denying the severity of the COVID-19 disease — was getting access to the vaccine before the majority of essential workers across the nation were able to.

Three days earlier, my mother, who is an essential worker, found out that one of her co-worker's sons had contracted COVID-19.

My mother works as a full-time caregiver to neurodivergent adults. Although the care center she works for closed in late March due to COVID-19 restriction laws, her work has still remained largely in-person, with her clients now relying on her for in-house assistance.

Every other weekday, she wakes up at 8 a.m. and drives to her client's house to take care of her. On her off-days, her co-worker takes over the job.

This all changed after her co-worker's son tested positive.

After finding out that the co-worker was at-risk from her son, all of the client's family members moved out of the house as a safety precaution, leaving the client, who now also had a high possibility of COVID-19 contraction, alone in the home.

This change caused the client to go from needing only 8 daily hours of caretaking to needing 24 hours each day. Additionally, my mom was informed that even if someone in her three-person work bubble (her co-worker or her client) were to contract the disease, she still would have had to keep on working in-person with the disease-carrying coworker or client because it wouldn't be safe for anyone else to enter the bubble and take care of the client.

As soon as my mom found out about

her work arrangement, my family began self-quarantining for a week. Although her situation was nowhere as dire as that of actual frontline healthcare workers, my mom told us all to get used to on and off self-quarantining, because she, as a caretaker, would only be able to receive the vaccine after 550,000 other workers in Santa Clara County.

The fact that a politician like Pence was able to receive the vaccine months before people like my mother, an essential worker,

In early September, while many non-essential Californian businesses were forced to shut down and all citizens were being told to shelter in place, a maskless Pelosi was photographed leisurely getting her hair done at an illegally-open salon.

When confronted by the media, Pelosi avoided taking responsibility for actions, calling the entire situation a "set-up" and denying her knowledge of San Francisco's shutdown — despite the fact that the county's lockdown guidelines were all a mere

inner circle.

Due to the efficacy of the treatment, Trump sustained a relatively speedy recovery (long-term effects aside) — and promptly used his recovery as another way to downplay the effects of the virus.

Instances like these in the pandemic have made it clearer than ever that socio-political visibility and prestige has become an all-powerful trump card.

Six days after Christmas, my mother's coworker was finally able to get tested for COVID-19 and ended up testing negative, ensuring that she had not been infected by her son and putting my mother, her client and the client's family at ease. But not every essential worker's story has a happy ending like hers.

In order to truly care for the vulnerable frontline workers who have been cleaning up the national government's failure to combat the pandemic early-on, the nation needs to start holding politicians accountable for their actions.

Despite this, the importance of using well-known political figures to boost the public's confidence in the vaccine cannot be overlooked.

While it's easier to find non-hypocritical picks for figureheads in the Democratic party, such as Bernie Sanders or Alexandria Ocasio Cortez (who has already been vaccinated), it's harder to find non-hypocritical picks from the Republican party.

The Republican party's staunch deny-and-downplay approach to the virus makes it hard for the national government to maintain its integrity in selecting vaccination candidates, which is highly problematic because, as of right now, the far-right is one of the most prominent groups that need convincing of the vaccine's legitimacy.

To combat this, the government should look to non-political figureheads who are universally loved by people on both sides of the political spectrum. Celebrities like Taylor Swift and Oprah Winfrey and sports stars like LeBron James and Michael Jordan may be a good start. ♦

Google search away.

The fact that these two were chosen to be some of the first people in the nation to receive the vaccine is frustrating, but no longer surprising. A foreshadowing of this phenomenon was President Donald Trump's COVID-19 treatment.

Despite months of denying the existence of the COVID-19 disease and underplaying its effects, as soon as Trump contracted the disease, he was immediately treated with monoclonal antibodies, an effective yet largely inaccessible antibody treatment that had only been available for Trump and his

reveals the classism embedded in our nation: while rich and influential politicians are able to act recklessly in the pandemic with the knowledge that they'll always have a healthcare safety net, essential workers are being left behind.

Another example of this phenomenon is Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi. On the same day as Pence's vaccination, Pelosi also received the COVID-19 vaccine.

Although on the opposite end of the political spectrum, Pelosi, like Pence, was accused of hypocrisy after one high-profile incident.



Graphic by ANGELINA CHEN

Trump should have been Time's Person of the Year

BY Shaan Sridhar

If you ask someone what they think of 2020, there's a very high chance it's not going to be good. There's also a high chance that person will mention the pandemic, racial justice movement, California wildfires or election fraud conspiracy.

If 2020 was characterized by so many chaotic and often horrible events, the most news-making person of the year should probably reflect that. Time Magazine seems to think otherwise.

Time selected president-elect Joe Biden and vice president-elect Kamala Harris together as the Person of the Year, but they were mere supporting actors in the main show. The lead role was held by President Trump and, by any news standards, he should have been the Person of the Year.

After Biden and Harris were selected, there was a social media uproar. Although some defended the decision, others argued that healthcare workers or leaders of the Black Lives Matter movement deserved it. But most of these people forgot about the purpose of the Person of the Year distinction.

The Person of the Year is not an award or achievement; it's a recognition of the person who, according to the TIME website, "most affected the news and our lives, for good or ill, and embodied what was important about the year."

Other winners include Franklin D. Roosevelt, Mahatma Gandhi and Albert Einstein, but they also include villains like Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin and Ayatollah Khomeini. This is because newsmakers can be good or bad.

Health care workers saved countless lives, BLM spread racial injustice awareness to millions and president-elect Biden defeated one of the most divisive and dangerous presidents in history. Still, none of those people or groups had as much impact as Trump; regardless of how you regard Trump's impact, it was the most of any person or group.

Think about the pandemic. Doctors and nurses toiled in ICUs, but President Trump's comments about the virus disappearing soon, injecting bleach into bodies to kill it and bashing lockdowns and mask-wearing graced headlines for months. Trump and his Republican allies also became the subject of many news stories for their stimulus negotiations and unwillingness to approve an expensive bill.

Think about the Black Lives Matter movement. Although the movement spread racial awareness to millions, Trump opposed supporters, gave a platform to the Antifa conspiracy and refused to condemn white supremacists. His stance on the movement generated as much news as the movement itself.

Think about the election. Joe Biden and



Previous Time Magazine Persons of the Year include Vladimir Putin and Adolf Hitler.

Kamala Harris won a record-breaking race. But Trump is the one who claimed the election was fraudulent, repeated baseless claims during debates and held massive rallies during a pandemic. Trump was also the subject of an impeachment scandal (remember that back in January and February?). Even though Biden and Harris made headlines throughout their campaign, Trump did as well, if not more.

Lastly, think about international issues. 2020 began with Trump ordering the drone strike on Qasem Soleimani, an Iranian military officer, prompting the press to theorize about a potential World War III. Trump ne-

gotiated treaties between Israel and multiple Arab nations, a first in Middle Eastern politics. The president's actions echoed around all corners of the globe after he withdrew from the World Health Organization and signed a peace agreement with the Taliban.

TIME Magazine has a history of naming every president-elect as their Person of the Year. But becoming a president doesn't equate to being the most influential.

Rather, TIME needs to name the most impactful and newsworthy individual as Person of the Year. And in 2020, that person, like it or not, was President Donald J. Trump. ♦

Same problems to solve in the new year

BY Avani Kongetira

Every time a new year arrives, there are cries of "new year, new me" as people garner excitement for a fresh start. But while the world heaved a sigh of relief as an objectively awful 2020 ended, the dawn of a new year does not mean the end of our problems.

The pandemic has not magically disappeared. The U.S. continues to hit records for the most cases in one day, and its death toll is nearing 400,000.

The vaccines are hopeful, but they are not being distributed efficiently. The requirements for eligibility to be inoculated are too restrictive; as a result, millions of doses sit unused in freezers.

As long as coronavirus is still a major threat, we cannot return to school. Students and staff are still in quarantine, watching as long-awaited events get canceled one after another.

Of course, there are still reasons for celebration. Democrats have control of both the House and the Senate, and President-elect Joe Biden's victory has been confirmed (again and again). The United States government is returning to normalcy after a four year period of chaos.

But President Trump's exit from the White House does not mean we will be seeing the last of him. His wide influence will be a cancer for years to come.

On Jan. 6, the country experienced what can only be described as an attempted coup, the incitement of which can be attributed to our own president. He managed to drive thousands of people to invade a national building on the basis of the lie that the election was stolen from him.

Even though Trump has been banned from major social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook for his continued calls to violence, his primary forms of communication, his lies have already taken root in his supporters' minds. They have welcomed this dishonesty with open arms and have no plans to stop fighting the result of the election.

Systemic racism is another issue that will not simply vanish with the dawn of a new year. Black and brown people continue to face police brutality and have not received justice for their mistreatment.

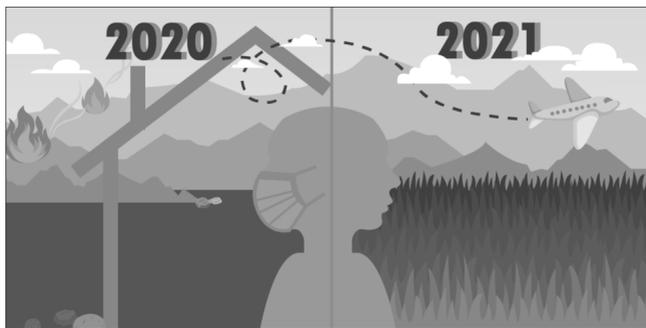
Even the slightest prejudices against Black people can have dramatic impacts, explaining why they disproportionately serve in lower paying jobs, such as manufacturing, and are then disproportionately

exposed to coronavirus.

Until decades-long practices such as police brutality and the War on Drugs are eradicated, Black people will continue to suffer, and the end of 2020 is not going to change that.

Climate change has also rapidly worsened over the past decade, with the ice melting and glaciers retreating in the Arctic, as well as destructive wildfires in California.

2020 was the hottest year on record. Even with lower carbon emissions due to



Graphic by CHRISTINA CHANG

the pandemic, climate change is accelerating while an increased global dependence on single-use, disposable items pollutes the environment. Not to mention the dip in carbon emissions will not be sustainable when the pandemic is over, meaning we are still going to have to come up with ways to reduce climate change.

The beginning of a new year does not mean a new beginning. If we allow ourselves to become complacent, there is no reason to believe 2021 will stray from 2020's unfortunate trends.

The harsh reality is that nothing will improve unless we change our ways. That means wearing a mask, avoiding gatherings and following social distancing protocols, as well as reducing one's ecological footprint by reusing and recycling, reducing meat consumption and switching to more sustainable sources of energy.

Taking the pandemic seriously, minimizing the impact that our actions have on the environment and working towards a more racially-equitable society are undoubtedly hard work. But only when we persist in these efforts will we see the progress that we hope 2021 will bring. ♦

2021 can only get better

BECAUSE 2020 WAS A YEAR OF LOSS, WE WILL BE STRONGER IN 2021 AS WE LEARN FROM THE PAST

BY Martin Xu

Dear 2021,

I don't know what you have in store for us or what kind of challenges you'll bring, but there is a lot of expectation and hope for you to be a better year than your predecessor.

Last March 13, I remember hearing my second-period teacher say in-person school may be canceled for the rest of the semester. Similar claims, varying in confidence, followed for the rest of the day.

continue to loom on the horizon. Rampant wildfires need to stop, and we need to start being better to our planet.

I hope to have a less stuffy year than in 2020.

While the entire year without masks is out of the question, I hope to have at least a part of 2021 where mask-wearing is no longer essential.

Several countries around the world, from Australia to Taiwan, have already contained the COVID-19 outbreaks, and people are living life just as they would a normal year.

I hope more people start to realize the seriousness of the pandemic and follow stay-at-home orders until the virus is contained either by quarantining or COVID-19 vaccines.

This year, the phrase "new year, new me" applies to the U.S. as well. Based on the election results, we're set for a transition of power on Jan. 20, and a lot is about to change.

Although recent events surrounding the capital building and talks about impeachment has been detrimental to our hopes for this year, let's hope it will not set the mood for the rest of the year. A transition of power is due which may bring new hope into the nation so divided. I'm looking forward to what President-elect Joe Biden will do to help our nation in this time.

One of those plans I'm optimistic about is the plan to help Americans end this pandemic and revive communities back to normalcy. This includes everything from eliminating the cost barriers for COVID-19 treatment to providing unemployment insurance.

Overall, his plans seem very beneficial to the people and I believe they can bring the country back on track.

I look forward to a time where I can finally travel back to China, my home country, to visit family members and reminisce about the memories I've had there.

2020 has been a year of loss: Many people have lost their homes, their jobs, the people they admire and even their loved ones.

We will be stronger going into 2021. For the sake of people's lives, let's learn from our mistakes in 2020 and each do our part to end this pandemic together. And from there, we can seek to heal our nation and do the activities we look forward to later in 2021. ♦

A flawed gift: Spotify Wrapped's execution disappoints

BY Jason Cheng

We're finally into the new year, and Spotify recently blessed us with 2020's version of Spotify Wrapped, the app's summary of each individual's music taste in the past year.

But Spotify Wrapped doesn't actually represent the whole year; it's released on Dec. 1, meaning that there's still a whole month of festive music to look forward to. It's almost like December just never crossed the developers' minds, making statistics like listening minutes inaccurate for an entire year's worth of listening.

Some of the "top songs" also seem a bit off. A song that had only really lasted two months in my playlist somehow snuck into my top five — weird.

I did some researching on statsforspotify.com, and as I expected, that exact song was nowhere to be seen in my top tracks of the last six months. Surely, a song that I'd overplayed so long ago for a small time frame shouldn't be included into my top songs of the year.

Don't get me wrong — I love the idea of Spotify Wrapped, and it's a great recap of the year's music. Still, some of the execution isn't quite there yet.

Understandably, it's hard to analyze statistics for listening through such a long period of time, but for me, what makes a song stand out is its listenability without sounding "overplayed." Consistency is key with a "top" song, as continuous streaming shows that I'll never get tired of it.

As such, top tracks on Spotify Wrapped should ideally be based on both streaming frequency and how many different days the song was played. A song truly worthy of the No. 1 spot on my list should stand out to me for the whole year, not just a month or two.

This brings up to another point: how is streaming frequency actually calculated? It seems as if playing several seconds of a song and then immediately skipping it still counts as a stream, as numerous songs that have been left to rot in my playlists reappear in my Spotify Wrapped.

Streaming frequency is such an integral part of Spotify Wrapped, and it's one of the only quantitative measurements that can dictate your top songs or even your top artists.

Still, deciding a top artist is much more complicated than just a single song. Top artists shouldn't be based purely on streams; otherwise, one-hit-wonders would be flooding the top artist pages and artists with

one overplayed song would sky-rocket up the rankings.

What really makes a No. 1 artist is how many of his or her songs I've listened to and their respective streaming frequencies. Spotify should take into account how many of an artist's songs a user has actually listened to consistently, as well as how often they've listened to that artist within the whole year.

What would also be helpful is a month-by-month analysis of my listening to explore how my music taste developed throughout the year. A whole year is just too long for only five tracks and artists to make the cut, and a timeline going through the months would be a great addition.

For those who scratched the surface of many different genres especially, a timeline would be a perfect music taste journey for the end of the year. Oftentimes, my favorite genres bar graph is just a cluster of random genres out of left field, and this doesn't provide a true perspective for what type of music I listen to.

2020's Spotify Wrapped left a lot to be desired, but then again, it's probably impossible for a machine to truly understand the complexity of your mind and beliefs. And that's something we should all be thankful for. ♦

FALCON // JASON CHENG

Jason Cheng's Spotify Wrapped lists the songs, artists and genre he listened to most as well as total minutes listened in 2020.

California needs to address its tech exodus

BY Shaan Sridhar

California is known for many things, ranging from national parks like Yosemite to economic hubs like Silicon Valley. But one of the most defining characteristics of the Golden State is its diversity and inclusiveness.

According to WalletHub, California boasts the second-most racial and ethnic diversity, the most linguistic diversity, the fourth-most industry diversity and the second-most education diversity.

Despite this, many people have been leaving the state. 653,000 people left California in 2019, but only 480,000 moved to California — net negative movement of 173,00 people, a trend that has continued for the past decade, according to the Orange County Register. Oracle and HP, two iconic Californian companies, are moving to Texas; Elon Musk, who recently moved to Texas, is also threatening to move Tesla and SpaceX there.

If California is so inclusive and welcoming, why are so many people leaving? The answer is simple: economic policies.

If California wants to remain the socially progressive place it is, it must reverse its extreme anti-business policies; if it doesn't, the state will lose its most defining quality.

California is one of the biggest business centers of America, home to many companies including Apple, Gap and the Walt Disney Company. On its own, California is the fifth largest economy in the world.

But its taxes are the highest in the nation, up to 54 percent in income tax for the top income bracket. According to the Tax Foundation, California collects 8.7 percent in sales tax, the eighth highest in the nation.

A decrease in state and local tax deductions from President Donald Trump's tax code has also increased the tax burden on Californians.

An analysis by the financial services firm Waterfront found that half of stock-owning Californians under the age of 40 plan to move to another state because of California's high taxes. The most popular destination is Texas, which has no state income tax.

California also has some of the most regulations in the country. The state is home to statewide rent control, which some economists argue is the cause of California's housing crisis.

Musk cited California's regulation as one of the main reasons he left the state, saying, "the best thing that [Californian] government can do is just get out of the way."

If the state continues to push forward with these policies, people will continue to leave en masse. Jobs will be lost, Silicon Valley will no longer be the tech capital of the world and California will lose its powerful economic status.

California has long been the economic powerhouse of America, and it's not a quality the state wants to lose. California's economics status is the reason there are so many people of different backgrounds in the state.

The economic opportunities in California attract people from many different backgrounds, which breeds more diversity as immigrants from other states and other countries, like Mexico and China, move to the state. If California continues down the road of business-killing economic policies, a large portion of our workforce will leave along with California's business.

California must recognize the exodus as a threat to the state and reverse detrimental economic policies. Actions like reducing taxes to the national average and decreasing overregulation by repealing laws like rent control would all help alleviate the outflow of people. Otherwise, the state risks disabling its economic engine and changing California forever. ♦

Delivery services fall short of claims

BY Kavita Sundaram

In the time of a pandemic, ordering takeout from any restaurant has never been easier. After pressing a few buttons, punching in the payment and waiting a few minutes, steaming hot food will arrive at the doorstep. It's a simple process that ensures safety, comfort and success for all parties involved.

Unfortunately, this process often isn't the win-win solution it seems to be for consumers and restaurants.

While some offer their own delivery and takeout services, over 70 percent do so through third-party providers, such as GrubHub, DoorDash and UberEats.

These providers work together with the restaurant to offer delivery services for a stipend or a commission.

While this seems like a mutually beneficial process, the costs that come with these providers often outweigh the benefits they provide chipping away at the profit margins of small businesses and creating a more difficult business environment.

The commissions that popular delivery services take from restaurants can range anywhere from 15 percent of the cost to a whopping 30 percent. This is a commission that is taken from every individual delivery, adding up to a huge chunk of most restaurants' profits.

With the pandemic in full rage, over 53 percent of restaurants are currently relying

on third-party services to provide deliveries to their customers. Out of these restaurants, 70 to 80 percent of the total sales are made from deliveries through third-party services, according to The Guardian. As the article points out, the average American restaurant's profit margins are a meager 8 to 10 percent, so with delivery services taking anywhere from 10-30 percent of the total, little or no profit remains for the restaurant.

In fact, these companies often take such large amounts from existing businesses that city governments have taken action to support the businesses. Both San Francisco

and Seattle have implemented laws pushing a 15 percent cap on commissions that delivery services take from restaurants.

On top of failing to commit to their promise of supporting restaurants, third-party delivery services can also be detrimental for customers.

To create larger profits, these companies often hike up the prices of regular items, creating over-priced goods for customers.

The Washington Post cites an example where GrubHub increased a restaurant bill of \$376.54 by nearly 300 percent, sim-

ply to cover the costs of delivery and labor. The resulting bill was a jaw-dropping \$1,042.63. While this example may be extreme, it doesn't detract from the fact that customers of third-party delivery apps often overpay for what they buy.

Third party delivery services often end up being a worse deal for the consumer, restaurant, and even the drivers. Known as "Dashers" in DoorDash, drivers in delivery companies get a higher hourly wage than restaurant drivers, yet they somehow end up making less money. Because restaurants treat their delivery workers as full-time employees, these workers often get reimbursed for the costs they spend on deliveries.

Alternatively, drivers in delivery companies are not reimbursed for any costs, and ultimately make less.

With all of these issues, customers should turn to in-house delivery services that are part

of the restaurants, or even just do curbside pickup. When restaurants offer their own delivery services, it's smart to use them, and for restaurants that are close by, it is often easier and more efficient to pick up the food.

Third-party delivery services are not inherently evil: They were built off a smart idea but have been poorly executed.

There are instances where they can have mutually beneficial relationships with restaurants, but in most cases, ethical consumers would do well to seek other alternatives. ♦



Graphic by KAVITA SUNDARAM

Grind culture has gone too far

BY Aaria Thomas

As I sit on the couch in my living room with my Kindle in my lap reading for pleasure, I feel a pang of guilt. The reason: I'm not doing my homework. The Kindle sits open while I debate internally on my choice to take a break and read.

I try to tell myself I deserve a break after studying for hours as justification for not jumping straight into a pile of homework. But in the back of my mind, a little voice says, "No breaks, how can I sit and relax while there's all that work to do?"

In the end, I close my Kindle and turn to the remaining assignments waiting for me, preparing for the next few long hours of work.

According to Lewis Nathaniel's piece on medium.com, "grind culture," also known as hustle culture, is a culture of striving for achievement where that achievement is measured in the large number of hours worked.

That has a familiar ring for most Saratoga High School students. They take a multitude of AP and honors classes, stacking hours of homework on top of multiple extracurricular activities.

With grind culture, the validation and feeling of success comes from the quantity of work done. When walking down the halls or hanging around in a classroom during normal school, it is almost impossible not to hear people comparing and stating how many hours they studied and did homework for the night before. Even with my friends at lunch, we often discussed the long hours we spent studying yesterday as we pulled out our binders to get another session in.

This culture is not good for many students' mental health. Thrive Global says grind culture and the sheer amount of work it encourages causes people immense stress and creates a mentality that stress is a badge of honor.

The workloads for our classes and activities can be a lot, requiring hours of effort and practice that feeds into the type of validation the culture provides. Continuously putting in that amount of work day after day for a whole semester or a whole year can make students' stress increase and make them feel tired and overworked.

Toward the end of each semester when the work hours increase for finals, classes require more time to study and prepare for the upcoming tests. In the weeks leading up to finals and during finals, I have found myself feeling burned out and overworked so much it feels impossible to study anymore.

And yet I have kept studying and working because I felt I had not put in enough hours to feel satisfied in how much I prepared for the finals. Every time I took a break and stopped studying for another activity, I felt guilty and restless I was not still working.

This restlessness and guilt is another side effect of grind culture.

The importance this mindset puts on continuously working for hours on end can make taking a break, even for 5 minutes, feel wrong. It highlights the toxicity of this culture and how it puts taking care of your body and health on the back burner.

To avoid falling into the trap of feeling guilty about not working, I have started focusing on the actual work I am doing rather than the amount of time I spend doing it. This helps me move away from the mindset of success be-

ing tied to how long I did homework for and I can instead focus on making sure I do the work well and base my success on how much I actually learned.

I also divide up all the homework I am given from my classes so I only have three to four assignments per day. This helps me train myself into doing the needed work but also taking necessary breaks for self care.

After a few weeks of this, I was able to sit and read after finishing homework without feeling guilty about not doing anything.

Grind culture can create a toxic and unhealthy mindset for most teens. Instead, we should all learn to feel proud of the amount of work and quality of work we already do and prioritize taking care of ourselves. That way, we don't become burned out and unhappy in only the second decade of our lives. ♦



Graphic by AARIA THOMAS

Siblings climb Himalayas for their second time

BY Cici Xu

At 18,519 feet, sophomore Maithili Kulkarni and her brother, senior Omkar Kulkarni, along with their parents, uncle, and a cousin, held on to each other at the peak of the Kala Patthar mountain.

It was winter break and the family's second time climbing the Himalayas, but they decided to take it slow due to the lack of rigorous exercise beforehand.

Rather than taking high elevation pills and rushing through the journey in 10 days, Maithili and Omkar walked six to 10 hours per day from lodge to lodge to allow their bodies to naturally adapt to the high elevation. Their climb lasted 17 days, from Dec. 19 to Jan. 4.

Even with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the family insisted on continuing their journey while following COVID-19 guidelines throughout the hike such as wearing masks and social distancing.

The family took the same route as they did in their first Himalayas journey, which was in winter of 2018. The hike officially started at Lukla, a town they reached from a flight from Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. From there, they hiked to the famous Mount Everest base camp, which is the starting point for people who plan to summit the world's highest peak.

After three days of staying in the village of Gorakshap at the base camp, the family hiked back down to the Tenzing Hillary Airport.

"I was so proud of myself," Maithili said.

"I don't think I felt that proud of myself in a long time."

During the hike, Maithili and Omkar marveled at the breathtaking views.

"The landscape transitions are really cool," Omkar said. "At the bottom, we're following the river, and we're following the valley up. There's trees and there's greenery, as well as forests. But as we go gradually higher and higher, at around 13,000 14,000 feet, there's none of that there's only planes and shrubs. Then we go higher. There's basically nothing alive. We're walking over large boulders and ice."

Still, both Omkar and Maithili agreed it was the people of the Sherpa culture, a Tibetan ethnic group native to Nepal and the Himalayas region, that stood out.

Having virtually no crime in their villages, the owners of the lodges always welcomed and embraced the family with their local cuisines.

"It was funny that these people who have summited Everest eight times were cooking us noodles and serving us food," Maithili said. "Everybody there is so good-hearted, and they truly want to take care of you."

Omkar and Maithili encourage others to go to the Himalayas as the hikes don't always not require rigorous training or advanced gear such as oxygen tanks (while climbing the highest peaks there almost always do).

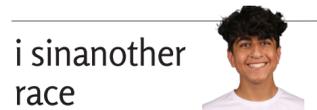
"Whenever people hear about climbing the Himalayas, they always look at us with wide eyes saying, 'Are you crazy?' And maybe we are, but we had a really good time," said Maithili. ♦



Courtesy of OMKAR KULKARNI

Counterclockwise from top to bottom: The Kulkarnis hike on boulders. Omkar on the way to Tengboche from the Namche village. Omkar & Maithili pose at Everest Base Camp stone.

AncestryDNA test: insightful but questionable



Sina Salehi

In the midst of lockdown, seemingly random questions and arguments have become commonplace among friends and family. Upon seeing an ad for 50 percent off an AncestryDNA kit on Black Friday, I couldn't resist wanting to know more about my genetic makeup.

I'd been curious about my genealogy since I heard stories about my parents' ancestors, ranging from how my great-grandmother escaped Azerbaijan after a Russian invasion a century ago to details about my grandfather having spoken Turkish rather than Farsi as a first language.

Since it's a little hard to get answers from someone who's been dead for at least half

a century, the second-best option was obvious: spitting into a tube (or rubbing the inside of my cheek) and having my saliva analyzed for the answers I was looking for.

I chose to use AncestryDNA because I found a better deal on Black Friday — and, to a lesser degree, because of their differentiation between Persians and other Middle Eastern groups, such as Turks and Arabs.

After sending my sample in and waiting 6 weeks, my results arrived. Some areas proved unsurprising, with Persian and Turkish/Caucasian being the largest part of my background, at 88 and 8 percent, respectively. Middle Eastern stood at 3 percent, and to my surprise, I was also 1 percent Northern Asian, centering around Mongolia.

Since other people in my family took 23andme tests, a 23andme promotion gave me the opportunity to test an additional sample for free shortly after I received my AncestryDNA results. I was intrigued by comparing the two results, so I took the test and waited.

Surprisingly, the results varied considerably and were much more diverse than the AncestryDNA results. They measured percentages to the nearest 10th and told me I am over 97.3 percent "Iranian, Caucasian and Mesopotamian," and in lower amounts, "broadly Western Asian and North African" two groups that AncestryDNA didn't detect.

Russian and trace amounts of Indian and Central Asian were also present in my DNA. My Mongolian DNA was the only one that was consistent between both companies at 1 percent. Such differences were surprising, considering the accuracy of a company relies on more tests being administered and AncestryDNA has administered 15 million tests total while 23andme has given 10 million tests.

The likeliest explanation for such differing results was either a difference in the customer base of each company or the methods used in determining genetic groups. Or maybe I brushed my teeth at different times before each test.

For those looking to find out more about their backgrounds, I'd recommend choosing which brand to use based on what you prioritize in learning about your genetics. Those looking for a more elaborate health report may opt for 23andme, as they examine your DNA for traits such as athleticism, taste (bitter or sweet) or how likely you are to be afraid of heights and public speaking. For an additional price, upfront or added on, you can unlock health reports for genetic diseases or disorders that DNA may predict.

Nevertheless, the experience is similar no matter which company you choose. Learning about your past can be an interesting and surprising endeavor, and for those who may not have a detailed family record or history, as was my case, it certainly helps one reconnect with their past.

So go ahead with spitting, sitting and seeing your results. The story of who you always thought you were might get a little updating. ♦

Winter break at home brings unexpected joys



Amanda Zhu

Going on vacation during school breaks is overrated. Trust me, I once thought that it would be impossible to enjoy my winter break unless I was hanging out with my family halfway across the world.

But turns out, staying at home can be just as fun. My family and I spent most of our time together, especially since my brother had recently come back from college.

Every night, we had a movie night where we watched one to two movies of varying

genres.

We watched countless horror movies alongside "Soul," "Mud" and others.

As we approached the holiday season, my family spent an afternoon together putting up Christmas decorations, from a Christmas tree to a light-up Santa at our front door.

Two days before Christmas, we all baked together and made walnut cookies.

We did end up using almost all the butter we had in the house, but, if I do say so myself, the end product was worth it.

On the night of Christmas Eve, my family and I decorated gingerbread cookies together.

We ended up running out of frosting

before we could finish decorating all of our cookies, but it was still a really good bonding experience.

On New Years, we took a day trip to Santa Cruz and visited

the Natural Bridges State Beach with the Monarch Trail and Panther Beach. On our way home, we stopped by Starbucks and bought our dog, Teddy, his first Puppuccino.

The day after, we drove to Sanborn

County Park and hiked six miles on the trails. My family and I were able to talk for the entire time and had conversations about, well, virtually everything. Hiking ended up becoming a weekly tradition of sorts for us, and we now go on hikes every weekend together.

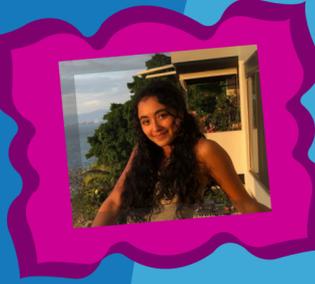
Later that night, my parents taught my brother and me how to play mahjong, which, surprisingly, is not as hard as it looks. We played for the entire evening, and since that day, we've played together a couple more times.

Despite not being able to travel or visit our extended family, I was still able to enjoy myself and try many new things.

The TLDR: You can enjoy winter break from the comfort of your own home as much as on a beach in the Bahamas. ♦



Graphic by AMANDA ZHU

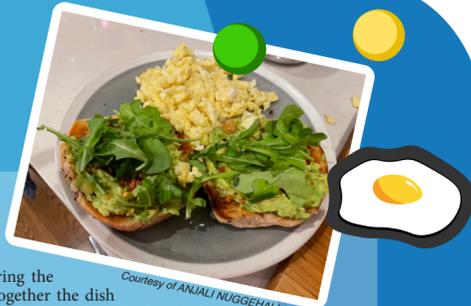


Lemon Zest
www.lemonzest.org

Quarantine Eats



Trying LA-worthy foods



Becoming a food blogger through Lemon Zest

BY Kavita Sundaram

I've always enjoyed cooking, but recently, cooking has become more of a challenge that I force myself to take on. Whether it's coming up with recipes from scratch, trying to create healthy foods out of otherwise unhealthy dishes or coming up with desserts to satisfy my family's sweet tooth (or lack thereof), anything is a welcome possibility.

I even started a food blog called Lemon Zest to keep track of my culinary journey, and yes — I've become a "Foodstagrammer."

I first started my food blog earlier this year in June when I baked a chocolate tart for my older sister's birthday. It wasn't the most complicated recipe in the world, but even I was surprised by the level of detail my messy and unartistic self was able to create.

After baking the tart, I created a basic website, wrote my first recipe and published it. It wasn't fancy or anything mind-blowing, but it was a start. From there, I continued to create more recipes and make more food, posting more blogs along the way and gaining more readers.

I've continued to challenge myself to make unique recipes like crepe cakes and vegan ice cream and grow my following to more than just my family — which now, it thankfully is.

What used to be me lazily baking chocolate chip cookies in my kitchen for the hundredth time has become a mess of cook-

ing homemade recipes while simultaneously trying to take pictures and videos of everything I do. (I've had my phone fall into piles of flour many times.)

Cooking and writing are two things I always find myself doing, so the combination really is the perfect outlet during quarantine.

So for anyone out there looking to get cooking or find new recipes, do it! The only thing left to do is start. ♦



Recipe Plans



PSA to boba lovers: Make it yourself

BY Apurva Chakravarthy

In the beginning of the pandemic, my mom lived in understandable fear of the pandemic. She would not let my family order DoorDash or even buy anything from Amazon for nearly two months.

She loosened up on the Amazon shopping (thank God) after about a month, but it was only after I took my AP exams in May that she let me DoorDash the boba order I swear by: an original milk tea with boba and mango or lychee jelly with no ice and 50% sugar. If you know me, you know boba is to me what water is to other people. Because of this, the idea that I would have to go two months without my favorite drink in the world was a little disconcerting.

So, I went to YouTube and found a few good tutorials on how to make the all-important drink. After a few test runs, I think I have perfected my recipe.

Obviously, the most important ingredient is the boba itself. Based on YouTube recommendations, I ordered the WuFuYuan Store Tapioca Pearl- Black Sugar Flavor from Amazon. This

variety is easy and quick to make, the perfect choice for any first-time boba makers.

Having procured all my ingredients, I started by heating some water and soaking three green tea bags in the water for about 20 minutes. Afterward, I immediately put the container in the fridge so the tea could chill in time.

Then, I got to work making the actual boba, which was not very hard because the exact procedure is outlined on the back of the package. I boiled some water, poured in the uncooked tapioca pearls, then covered the pot and let it cook until it was the texture I wanted.

After this is the most important part: creating your simple syrup. I boiled equal parts sugar and water and then added the solution to both the boba and my tea.

With all these steps completed, I was ready to assemble the drink. I added my boba into a cup, then my tea and I topped it off with a little bit of milk because boba is not boba if it is not milk tea.

The process took around 30 minutes as opposed to around a 20-minute trip to go to my nearest boba store, but I would say the extra 10 minutes is worth it.

In retrospect, I'd say my boba-making experience rated a 10/10: Boba tastes even better when you know you've made it yourself. ♦



BY Anjali Nuggehalli

I never considered my food choices to be bland until I started watching YouTube. LA influencers would vlog their "What I Eat in a Day," consisting of chia seed puddings and homemade poke bowls. Staring at my third bowl of cereal — that is, my dinner — as I watched these videos, I knew it was time for me to rejuvenate my extremely boring diet.

Even as I formed this goal in my head, I knew that completely shifting to a sophisticated palate was completely unrealistic. As a junior, I find my "lunch breaks" are just an opportunity to work on assignments due the next period. I have maybe 15 minutes to grab a quick meal before heading back to my desk.

I decided to attempt one of the most popular "LA trendy foods" that was also feasible for a high schooler with subpar cooking skills: avocado toast. With its healthy ingredients, accessibility and Pinterest aesthetic, avocado toast is every influencer's superfood.

To attempt my own avocado toast, I first grabbed some wheat bread because white bread might as well be poison in LA. Then I grabbed a ripe avocado, some lemon juice, salt, pepper, olive oil and arugula.

Because I was heading to soccer practice that evening, I also decided to scramble some eggs for extra protein while I struggled to find lemon juice in my overflowing fridge. From slathering the mashed avocado onto the toast, layering on greens and season-

ing and preparing the eggs, putting together the dish was pretty straightforward. Still, the final product offered a far greater variety of food than my typical milk and Cheerios. When I finally finished putting together my dish, I was pleasantly surprised at the aesthetic appeal of my toast.

Yes, it wasn't adorned with herbs and edible flowers the way I had seen on YouTube, but it was far more artistic than anything I had made in the past. My avocado toast also tasted absolutely delicious, with a mouth-watering blend of fresh lemon and salty seasoning.

I was expecting my experiment with preparing my own LA-worthy foods to be a one-time occurrence before reverting back to my cereal days. Instead, making avocado toast has encouraged me to diversify my food choices on a daily basis. I find it surprisingly enjoyable to rummage through my cabinets to throw together a dish that I can call my own creation.

Some of my new favorite creative meals are banana and almond butter sandwiches, vegetarian sausage and spinach stir-frys and yogurt parfaits. While I will never lose my love for cereal, making my own unique dishes has inspired me to take the time to appreciate the food I'm eating and the journey it took to bring it to the table. ♦



- What I Eat In A Day...
- chia seed pudding
 - poke bowl
 - avocado toast ✓
 - banana almond sandwiches ✓
 - yogurt parfait ✓

Curry dumplings: a family classic

BY Howard Shu

Curry dumplings are my family's unique dish that we make several times a year, typically during family get-togethers. After rounds of inspiration, my mother came up with the recipe seven years ago.

Inspiration for ingredients in the dumpling wrappers came to her eight years ago from her friend's cookie recipe. She said she also liked the fillings of curry dumplings from the supermarket, so she decided to create a recipe that included most of the ingredients in those fillings.

After perfecting the recipe through trial and error, she created the beautiful, golden dumplings with soft and buttery skin and delicious curry-flavored filling. Several years later, they continue to please our family and guests.

For Thanksgiving, I decided to try and make some curry dumplings with my mom. We planned on making around 30 dumplings, so we started by getting out two cups of flour, eight tablespoons of butter and eight ounces of cream cheese for the dough.

After melting the butter, we mixed all the ingredients together for 20 minutes, then wrapped up the mixture and placed it in the refrigerator for 30 minutes to make it more rigid.

For the filling of the dumplings, we stirred one pound of ground beef, one big onion and 80 grams of curry paste together.

Then came the interesting part: using the dough and fillings to fold the dumplings. This required skill that I did not have.

The struggle was real for me. Most of my mom's dumplings looked delightful, with the

Ingredients for 30 curry dumplings

- 2 cups of flour
- 8 tablespoons of butter
- 8 ounces of cream cheese
- 1 pound of ground beef
- 1 big onion
- 80 grams of curry paste

Directions:

1. Melt the butter
2. Mix the flour, melted butter and cream cheese for 20 minutes
3. Wrap up the mixture and place it in the refrigerator for 30 minutes to finish making the dough
4. Chop up the onion
5. Stir-fry the ground beef, the onion and curry paste to make the fillings
6. Create flat circles of dough about the size of your palm
7. Put some fillings on the center of each of the pieces of dough so that the fillings cover about 1/4 of the area on the surface
8. Fold up the pieces of dough with the fillings in the center and pinch the edges together
9. Spread beaten eggs on the outside of each dumpling
10. Place the dumplings in the oven for 15 minutes at 385 degrees
11. Spread beaten eggs on the dumplings again
12. Place the dumplings back in the oven for 5-10 minutes

BY AnjaliNuggehalli & CicXu

“Build a prom for everyone! Show them all it can be done!” Emma, played by actress Jo Ellen Pellman, sings while proudly looking at her date Alyssa, played by new star actress Ariana DeBose.

The couple dances and sings in an “inclusive prom” — a celebration earned through Emma and Alyssa’s courage in claiming ownership of their true selves.

“The Prom,” a newly streamed musical and comedy on Netflix, shines light on the LGBTQ+ community while challenging outdated cultural beliefs and highlighting the need for society to move forward, truly embracing American ideals of equality.

The musical aims to bring awareness to the global issue of LGBTQ+ inclusion as it depicts the story of Emma, a teenage girl in Indiana, who struggles to fit into her highly conservative town. After her high school’s prom is canceled, due to the PTA refusing to allow a lesbian couple into the dance, a group of Broadway stars team up with Emma to build an inclusive prom.

But the musical’s 57 percent on rotten tomatoes reveals its underlying problems. While some audiences praise the musical for its over-the-top style and promising message, some find the musical and the representation of certain populations offensive.

The musical never fails to keep its audience engaged with its glittery costumes and a grandiose cast, including actresses Meryl Streep and Nicole Kidman, actor Andrew Rannells and actor and comedian James Corden.

Moreover, the film creates a sense of unity when the actors dance uniformly, which adds relatability and allows the audience to experience the joyful atmosphere.

The intriguing glamour, however, is too fragile to cover up the musical’s flaws. Even though the message behind “The Prom” attempts to empower the LGBTQ+ community, the execution of the musical is unrealistic, oversimplified and superficial.

For example, in the musical number of “Love Thy Neighbor,” Broadway star Trent Oliver persuades a group of conservative teenagers to support members of the LG-BTQ+ community.

This scene came with heavy criticism, especially from the Christian community. The premise of the song questions why homosexuality is considered sinful, when one primary lesson of the Bible is to “love thy neighbor.” Many Christians argue the musical number takes the verses of the Bible out of context and misleads the audience.

The entire conservative community also shifts toward acceptance after a Broadway star preaches that “love conquers all” through musical numbers.



Emma and her prom date, Alyssa, dance with their peers in the inclusive prom put on by their high school after the students fought to allow a lesbian couple to attend the prom.

While it is heartwarming to watch Emma gain acceptance from her peers, it is also unrealistic to assume people’s viewpoints can be altered so easily.

That said, “The Prom” is a cute, fun and relaxing movie to watch on the weekend.

The musical does shine light on the LG-BTQ+ community and why acceptance is so important, but the reality of being part of the LGBTQ+ community in a highly conservative town has been vastly distorted to fit the dramatic style of the musical.

‘TSD’: alarming insights

BY StephanieSun

“A magician shows you a card trick and says, ‘Pick a card, any card.’ What you don’t realize was that they’ve done a set-up, so you pick the card they want you to pick. And that’s how Facebook works.”

This explanation of how much control social media has on information is just one of multiple eye-opening lines from Jeff Orlowski’s recent Netflix documentary “The Social Dilemma.”

The hour-and-a-half piece delves into the complexities of social media and presents a compelling warning about the exploitation and addiction social media users face, especially teens.

The documentary opens with introductions of the interviewees: former employees at various tech companies, from Tristan Harris, once a design ethicist for Google, to Tim Kendall, a past executive at Facebook and ex-president of Pinterest.

The interviewees discuss a wide range of topics, presenting both hypothetical scenarios and experiences they had at the tech companies they worked for. For example, Kendall described how employees worked on user engagement in Facebook by tweaking different algorithms.

Between the interview scenes, Orlowski directs a dramatized portrayal of a typical suburban family. Two teens are depicted as victims of the companies’ algorithms, with the youngest daughter struggling with body image and the teenage son falling into radical, logic-straining conspiracy theories.

Although I found the acting and plot unrealistic at times, including a scene where the daughter smashes a Kitchen Safe in order to get her phone back, they do draw attention to how addictive social media can be.

With all of its information, “The Social Dilemma” prompted me to evaluate my own experiences online, especially when it covered the depth and specificity of targeted information. In a chilling montage narrated by interviews, the documentary explains how search results differ by location and how people have entirely different “facts” and “realities” based on what the algorithm gives them.

The documentary proceeds to relate this to modern political polarization, blaming it on multifaceted algorithms and their “rabbit holes” of information.

Another key detail that stood out to me was that pausing on a photo or video for

even a few seconds longer could drastically alter what I would see on my feed, as compared to someone who may have scrolled faster. I was alarmed at how extensive algorithms actually were and how far companies would go to maintain user attention.

After watching “The Social Dilemma,” I began to pay closer attention to my online activity, and I felt more aware of what I was viewing and how I had gotten there.

The documentary was both insightful and relevant, especially with my increasing screen time and use of social media platforms. As someone who has had mostly positive experiences with social media, it



Graphic by SINA SALEHI

was intriguing to see how the algorithm knew what I wanted to see. It also concerned me to think that what I was seeing could be specifically tailored to fit me, and perhaps not reality.

After watching “The Social Dilemma,” I realized I needed to stop feeding so much of my attention to the algorithm, which is designed to capture and hold my attention. I also decided that using my phone less would be healthier for both my mental and physical health. I may not stop using social media completely, but my screen time has decreased a little ever since watching.

To anyone who uses social media, “The Social Dilemma” is a must-watch documentary that will certainly leave viewers contemplating the reality of what they see on their screens.

New year, new ‘You’

BY HannahLee

Given how popular the initial seasons were, it’s no surprise that the psychological thriller “You” is set to return this year for a third season.

The Netflix series is an adaptation of Caroline Kepnes’ book series of the same title and follows protagonist Joe Goldberg, a New York bookkeeper turned serial killer, who has problematic approaches to his love life, to say the least.

In Season 2, after Joe moved to LA for a fresh start in a relationship, Love Quinn, an aspiring chef, served as Joe’s object of obsession.



Graphic by SINA SALEHI

After COVID-19 brought all filming to a halt, the show is planning to kick off filming in February. Though there is no official release date, TVLine announced season three will consist of 10 episodes. The original co-creators Sara Gamble and Greg Berlanti will also be returning as producers.

Netflix has also announced a new lineup of actors and actresses that will be joining its existing cast.

These characters could either make or break this show, with 12 confirmed new cast members and little setup from season two’s finale.

According to Entertainment Weekly, these additions include former “Vampire Diaries” star Michaela McManus, who will play Natalie — Joe’s neighbor and the “subject of his growing fascination” — and

Shalita Grant, who will play Love.

Returning cast members include Badgley and Victoria Pedretti, who also played Love Quinn in season two, keeping expectations high as their scary-accurate portrayals freed many out.

It’ll be interesting to see manipulative and psychotic characters interact with each other. The new and original cast members may band together and have their own club of lovesick psychopaths, or they could end up as total enemies attempting to destroy one another the entire season. It’d be interesting to see a little bit of both.

Although there is little information on the third season’s official release date, Kepnes’ third novel, “You Love Me,” will hit shelves on April 6.

In “You Love Me,” Joe Goldberg returns and is expected to start a family away from the city and away from Love. Joe will then meet a local librarian, Mary Kay Dimarco, and win her over “the old-fashioned way,” as the description of the book writes. Over time, they’ll both provide comfort for one another in their sleepy town — a completely different take from the setting of busy New York in the previous season.

Although many avid “You” viewers were quite sure that Joe had completely cut ties with Love, seeing that she is a returning cast member in Season 3, we hope to see more of her and her family in future episodes.

Although both previous seasons closely followed the original novels, in the Season 2 finale, the producers of the show altered the book’s ending and left the audience with a jaw-dropping character reveal: Love is just as much of a lovesick psychopath as Joe is.

One of the executive producers, Gamble, confirmed this, saying that Season 2 finale is exactly how they wanted to set Joe and Love up for the upcoming season. Joe and Love are not soulmates; rather, Joe is afraid of her toward the end.

Season three seems to have more material exploration by allowing both of the characters to be each other’s archnemesis, rather than allies. But a couple consisting of psychopath serial killers, doesn’t seem too bad either.

Wherever the writers of Season 3 take the story line next, they clearly have their ways to play around with the audience’s hearts, and Netflix no doubt has another hit show to add to their lists. In the meantime, Kepnes plans to keep working on future novels in her series, hinting that “You” Seasons 3 is not yet the end.

Cousins utilize household items to transform their backyard into fun outdoor movie theater

BY ShaanSridhar

It was a chilly August evening, and the aroma of popcorn drifted from inside my cousin’s house. After clicking a few buttons on my computer, a projector lit up and boomed my display onto a makeshift screen.

My cousins and I sat in soft chairs, pulled our blankets over ourselves and got our food ready. We were all ready to watch “Bill & Ted Face the Music,” the first movie we had seen together after months of theaters being closed.

For us, movie theaters weren’t just a place to watch a movie; they were an experience. And it’s difficult to match the experience of a true movie theater: Most TV screens aren’t very large, and drive-in movie theaters have terrible sound quality.

So we decided to create our own theater. I am a diehard movie fanatic. My older cousin, a senior at Los Gatos High, is my partner in my love for all things Hollywood, Marvel, Netflix and more. We, along with my two other cousins, a sophomore at Los Gatos High and a 7th-grader at Fisher Middle School, have seen almost every notable movie theater. With the pandemic, we lost one of our favorite activities to do together.

Over the summer, my cousins, who are



Sitting socially distanced in a backyard, teenagers watch a movie on a projector.

also my neighbors, and I built an outdoor movie theater in their backyard. All it took was a projector, speaker, an HDMI cable and some leftover items from the garage.

A prerequisite for any outdoor movie theater is some open space. My backyard is full of trees and plants, but my cousins have a more wide open yard.

Once you find a location, you can start building the projector screen. For my screen, I took leftover wood from my garage and fashioned together a 16-by-9-foot wooden frame.

My cousins draped a white California King bed sheet over one side of the frame and secured it using duck tape. To keep the frame standing, we simply leaned it against the exterior of their house.

48 hours in the strange and beautiful world of Nextdoor

BY AnoukYeh

In 2019, The New York Times released a story that followed millennial and baby boomer journalists as they explored the then new and sensational Gen Z social media platform, TikTok.

Due to the story’s success, I thought it’d be exciting to repeat it and, on behalf of Gen Z, forge into unknown boomer social media territory. After rejecting Facebook as an idea, I settled on every mom’s favorite app, Nextdoor.

Although its cheerful green and white branding markets the app as the opposite of exciting, 48 hours on the app proved that it would be just as strange and entertaining as a Gen Z app.

Boasting over 27 million active users and 236,000 defined neighborhoods, Nextdoor is a neighborhood networking platform created for “trusted connections and the exchange of helpful information.”

With an audience of mainly middle-aged adults and senior citizens, its platform works like a simplified Reddit, allowing audience members to make discussion posts in select neighborhoods or specific topic sections. Although users can’t “follow” each other, they’re able to send direct messages.

Although I had created an account a year ago (also for a newspaper endeavor), I didn’t check the app regularly; however, as soon as I logged in, my account’s notification bell was immediately flooded with alerts. In the spirit of creating community, the app is designed to notify you with a weekly briefing of all the top posts made in your neighborhood.

Clicking onto this week’s briefing, I found the top post of the week, containing over 400 smiley and heart reactions.

The post was a heartfelt, open thank-you letter that a user wrote to the anonymous stranger who had returned her dropped

sheep ornament on the side of this road.

My exploration was off to a wholesome start.

I continued scrolling down my briefs to find a picture of a large bird crossing the street. The caption above the picture read, “What are these? Please identify.”

The answers did not disappoint. While some commenters suggested that the birds could be turkey fowls, others were quick to debunk the suggestion, knowledgeably citing annual Bay Area turkey migration patterns and turkey altitudinal preferences as evidence.

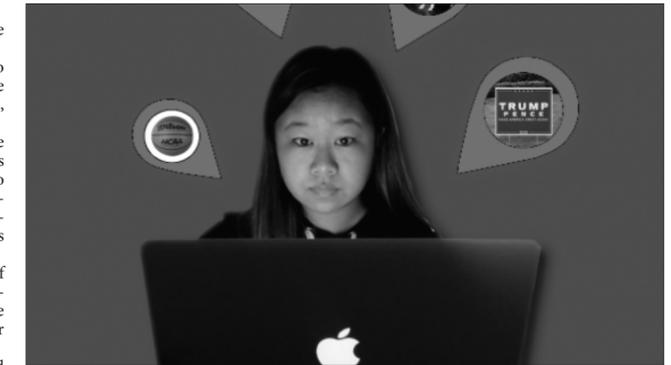
Other commenters took the liberty of responding in dad joke fashion (unsurprising as the majority of user demographics are parents), commenting “an Italian dinner” or “Just look at the eyes. Definitely lemurs.”

After reading through the comments and chuckling at the occasional joke, I clicked out of the post feeling more confident than ever about my knowledge on the turkeys, or *Meleagris gallopavo* (their scientific name, as I had learned from the comments).

All the posts I saw initially were well intentioned and friendly. Since angry disagreements and vicious comments are, unfortunately, a staple of Gen Z social media culture, I was curious to see if arguments ever marred the perpetually optimistic boomer bubble of Nextdoor.

Coming from a place of strong generational nationalism, I decided that it couldn’t be that Gen Z was just more prone to virtual arguments and polarization, so I decided to do some digging on posts that were most likely to be discourse-charged — political posts.

I scrolled down to my late October briefs, when talk about the election was in full swing. Sure enough, the top post of that week was semi-political. A neighbor alleged that their Trump 2020 yard sign had been stolen in the middle of the night by a group



FALCON // ANOUK YEH

of perceived teenage girls.

The comment section under this post was a divided one.

While some neighbors condemned the teens’ alleged actions, other neighbors defended the stealing of the yard sign, stating that the teens were simply “taking out the trash.”

Others quickly shot back, suggesting the author of the post to place rat traps on his signs to either hurt or catch the “thieves” who tried to take the signs again.

After spending 30 minutes wading through all the comments, it became clear that despite its peaceful, sleepy front, Nextdoor, too, was not safe from the malicious clutches of political polarization and inflamed keyboard warfare.

Following that revelation, I let myself indulge in the spicy comment sections of a few more controversial posts before closing out my exploration session for the night.

As I was about to leave Nextdoor, a final post caught my eye.

With the screen and projector set up, all we needed was to get comfortable. My cousins brought some chairs and popcorn from their house, and I brought blankets and snacks. With those final touches, we had successfully created a functional movie theater with a large screen and comfy seats for my family and I to use while enjoying movie snacks.

This setup makes a perfect night out for you and your friends or a fun movie night with your family. Better yet, it’s very easy to take down and put back together.

All you need to do is move the equipment into your storage area, and then move it back outside when you’re ready.

My cousins and I have used the setup at their house nearly every other week. We’ve seen numerous films including “Trial of the Chicago 7,” “Borat: Subsequent Moviefilm” and “Mulan.” Before quarantine, we would have seen these films at our local AMC. Now, we see them in our own makeshift theater.

While I can’t wait for real theaters to open again, the fact is that it won’t be happening anytime soon. But that doesn’t mean you can’t enjoy the theatrical experience at home. All it takes is a DIY outdoor movie theater to bring back the movie magic.

togatalks

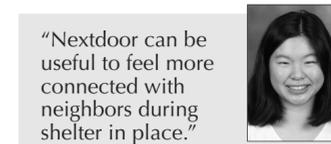
What are your thoughts on Nextdoor?



freshman Anu Thakur



junior Nikhil Kapasi



junior Allison Lim

“Nextdoor helps to notify neighbors, but it can often get negative and a bit political.”

“It’s nice to see people offer baked goods, and it’s great to see a community being built.”

“Nextdoor can be useful to feel more connected with neighbors during shelter in place.”

Welander adjusts lessons for online classes

BY Benjamin Li
& Allen Luo

While sitting at his desk on a recent Sunday evening, junior Anthony Zheng rubbed his eyes, straining to determine which hash mark the end of a metal rod landed on in the lab video, something that would have easily been done in-person. In the video, physics teacher Matthew Welander's voice echoed as he described the effects that a hanging mass had on the system's moment of inertia.

Such difficulties with online learning are common in science classes, which have been challenged to convert hands-on curricula such as labs into a virtual format.

Welander has faced many of the struggles common among STEM teachers: an inability to set up labs and check in on students doing them.

Previous labs and projects have instead been turned into simulations or cut out of the curriculum entirely.

Despite the challenges posed by the shift to online learning, Welander's students said he has come up with creative and effective ways to help their understanding.

One such example is the rotational dynamics lab, in which students were supposed to use two different equations to estimate the rotational inertia of a spinning rod with masses attached.

Instead of doing the lab with equipment and recording their own data, students watched a video of Welander doing the experiment and then copied the information shown.

"It's a lot harder to demonstrate how to connect components together when students have to view my demonstrations through a webcam or document camera, as opposed to being able to pick up the object

in their hands and inspect it up close," Welander said.

Students also find it frustrating that online learning has prevented them from gaining hands-on experience with certain concepts.

"I do not like doing the labs online," Zheng said. "You're watching someone else do it, and it's basically like notes."

In addition to losing guidance on labs, students and teachers alike have struggled with communication online. Without in-person support, students may fall behind without being able to ask questions as a result of the schedule's shorter periods: 75 minutes compared to the previous 90 and meeting one time fewer every two weeks.

Because students either don't have time to ask questions or are less comfortable doing so online, they often have to send emails or wait until office hours.

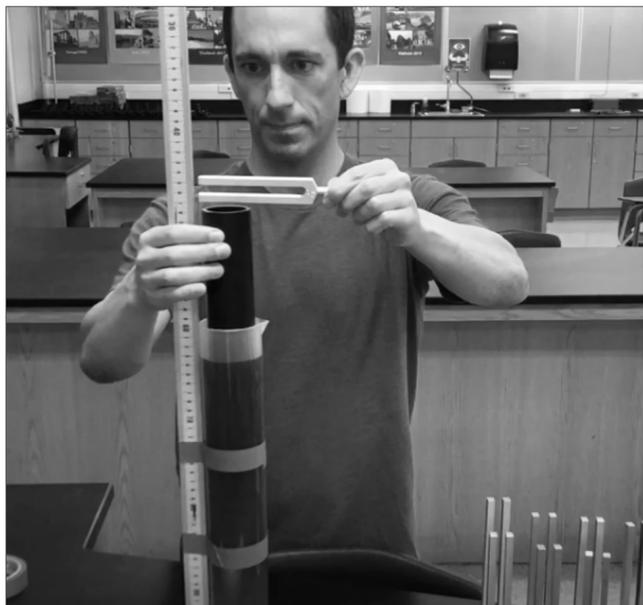
With hours or even days before a student receives the help they need, they may struggle to complete the homework or have a gap in their understanding of a concept.

Despite these enormous challenges, Welander has found ways to give his students as much support as possible. These methods include online workbooks, videos and even Canvas discussions where students can share resources they have found.

"Physics online hasn't been as bad as I expected, mainly because of tools like AP Classroom and the MIT Workbook, both of which Mr. Welander provides," junior Soorya Kuppam said. "The class itself is very difficult, and online school alleviates a bit of the stress. I think that with online school, we're given a lot of time to process what we know."

AP Classroom is available on the College Board website and has chapter reviews and AP questions for students to practice. The MIT workbook has many conceptual problems that help develop a student's understanding of the topic.

Currently, Welander's biggest concern is the upcoming robotics/programming unit in his Principles of Engineering course. Usually, students work in pairs to build and program their own robot, as only 16 sets of material are available, but virtual learn-



Courtesy of MATTHEW WELANDER

Physics teacher Matthew Welander demonstrated the procedure for a lab to his students on a YouTube video. Students watched the video and took measurements from Welander's lab since the pandemic prevented them from going to school and completing the lab themselves.

ing means he'll have to take a different approach. Welander said he could split the students into two groups, with one working on simulator activities and the other building robots. After a few weeks, they would switch.

"I really don't know how the logistics would work out, or if it's even a good idea to have students working on completely different projects at the same time, both of which would probably require a lot of help from me," Welander said.

Welander has also contemplated having the students work in pairs, with each

student doing one half of the work. One student would do the programming section, and one would do the building, and after they have finished, the students would switch roles and finish the project.

Despite the challenges posed by the shift to online learning, Welander's students said he has come up with creative and effective ways to help their students understand their material.

"I feel like Welander is doing a great job given the circumstances," Zheng said. "If we go back to in-person school next semester, I feel like he will do an even better job." ♦

Teachers use more new technology in class

THROUGH APPS LIKE PEARDECK, EDPUZZLE, KAMI AND KAHOOT, STUDENT ENGAGEMENT INCREASES IN CLASS

BY Andy Chen
& Avani Kongetira

After debriefing an assigned reading, history teacher Faith Daly split students into breakout rooms to begin annotating a 10-page document using a notation program called Kami.

Some students pump their fists while others groan, but by the end of class, all have completed their assignment.

In virtual learning, while teachers are still using technology from in-person learning like Google Slides, they are now relying more on new technologies like Pear Deck, an interactive, teacher-controlled slideshow, Kami, an online annotation tool and Equat.io, a mathematics equation formatter to simulate an in-person environment and keep students engaged.

Notability, a note-taking and annotation app, is engineering and AP Physics teacher Matthew Welander's go-to tool.

He mainly utilizes it as a virtual whiteboard to present lecture summaries and draw out example problems.

By using the Notability app, he's able to superimpose diagrams and write explanations over his notes with the touch of a button.

"Even though we aren't in person, I am still able to walk through the steps of solving problems, demonstrate physics principles with videos and simulations and give students the opportunity to work together in small groups to tackle challenging problems," Welander said. "I can't imagine how we could have continued our class without using these technologies."

Spanish teacher Sarah Voorhees has also increased the use of technology within her classroom. Previously, Voorhees used Quizlet, Gimkit, Quizizz, Flipgrid and Kahoot to make lessons more fun and oftentimes competitive for students.



Daly

In addition to these, she now relies on Pear Deck and AP Classroom to maintain engagement and hold students accountable for understanding concepts.

Voorhees especially appreciates Pear Deck, which allows students to follow along with teachers' lessons through a slideshow and respond to various prompts along the way.

Through Pear Deck, Voorhees is able to gauge whether students understand specific concepts and make sure students are participating.

Despite her implementation of various technologies, Voorhees admitted that many inevitable complications arise due to teaching in a virtual environment.

For language teachers in particular, a virtual classroom makes teaching certain parts of the curriculum extremely difficult.

For example, while teachers can teach grammar and cultural activities over Zoom, it is hard to coordinate students actually practicing the language and learning how to pronounce certain words properly.

Voorhees has found that certain technologies — especially Google Translate — have harmed student's understanding of the curriculum.

She explains that because of this, she finds it hard to gauge how much her students are learning and getting from the class.

"I do feel like my students are learning concepts during remote learning, but I feel like I'm only teaching them about the language and not really teaching them how to use the language, like I would be doing in face-to-face learning," Voorhees said. "We don't know how much they really know."

For Welander, his issues are very different to Voorhees'.

Unlike Voorhees who worries that Zoom isn't helping to actually teach students the language, Welander's problem lies in the way that Zoom classes cannot mimic the experi-

ence that comes with in-person school.

In such a lab-based STEM classes, not being able to perform certain demonstrations or labs as a whole group affects the class heavily.

"The big challenge is that we are still having to communicate through our screens," Welander said. "No video or online simulation can ever compare to completing an actual laboratory experiment in person."

According to Welander, there are some problems that technology can't solve.

Most significantly, he found that students are much less likely to ask questions while

"I can't imagine how we could have continued our classes without using these technologies."

TEACHER Matthew Welander

learning in an online environment.

He explains this by saying the number of questions he receives during classes and office hours pale in comparison to last year. Even as Welander tries to fix this problem by implementing assignments like graded discussions on Canvas, he still is unable to recreate the discussions and questions he had in in-person online.

Despite these obstacles, Welander is grateful for the various technologies he's adopted into his curriculum and how they've allowed him to somewhat recreate his in-person class during the pandemic.

"I think SHS overall has been incredibly successful in the move to online learning," he said. "My biggest concern with my students is their physical and emotional health — the academic part seems to be working out pretty well." ♦

Different Types of Technology Explained



allows students to answer questions on a teacher's lecture presentations



allows students to answer questions on grammar videos in language classes

Kami

allows students to annotate and comment on documents and articles

Kahoot!

allows students to review material for tests in a fun and competitive way

Graphic by APURVA CHAKRAVARTHY

Ceramists maintain their artistic experiences online

BY Allen Luo
& Anjali Nugehalli

Junior Henrik Zhang sat in his backyard one day this fall with a table during his sixth period, forming clay into the shape of a Halloween-themed candy corn pot.

Beside him was his laptop, displaying Zoom as he followed ceramics teacher Diana Vanry's demonstration.

Materials like paintbrushes, paint and potter ribs lay on his other side.

For ceramics students like Henrik, this procedure has become routine.

Since the beginning of virtual learning, hands-on classes like ceramics and engineering have undergone massive changes.

In the case of ceramics, students received tools (potter's rib, fettling knife, loop tools), paints and paintbrushes during Falcon Fest in August.

With these materials, they follow along with Vanry's instructions during class to complete their pieces. Vanry also posts instructions on Canvas if students fall behind.

After finishing the clay base, students drop off their work at the school to be baked in the kiln and also pick up more clay if needed.

Once their pieces are ready, students bring their clay home, paint them then bring them to school for a final round of baking.

Students turn in a picture of their finished product for grading on Canvas. As of now, projects have included tiny pots, leaves, feathers and owls.

"The drop-off process is pretty fun because you get to see a somewhat finished product," Henrik said. "It's also pretty fast as we can just pull up straight to the ceramics room in a car, so it takes only about five minutes."

Despite Vanry's best efforts, taking ceramics online is still vastly different online compared to in-person.

Henrik said that taking the course virtually is "really hard" because of having to manage the clay by himself on top of a lack of in-person help from Vanry.

While senior Tyler Chu also faces the

difficulty of not being able to get live in-person help from Vanry, he said the general flow of the class remains similar to what it would be like in-person.

"Even though Ms. Vanry can't walk around the class to fix our technique, we're doing the same projects that we would be doing in class," Tyler said. "But instead of having classmates to talk to, we get to play music or Netflix in the background as we work."

Tyler added that the grading for ceramics consists of in-class participation and the projects.

The participation is primarily consists of angling the camera so that Vanry can see them working.

The grading of the final product is done when the students drop their work off at school.

"Despite the class being online, I really have enjoyed taking ceramics, especially during the stress of senior year," Tyler said. "After sitting at a desk all day, it's really refreshing to



Graphic by AARIA THOMAS

be able to do something more hands-on." ♦

BY Andy Chen
& Cici Xu

In August, head of maintenance Paul Weir welcomed back the majority of his maintenance staff. They were hopeful of a quick return to campus for students and prepared to make classrooms safer.

Weir noted that while a lack of students on campus has made completing maintenance work somewhat more efficient in recent months, the coronavirus situation thrust additional responsibilities on them.

Because of the pandemic, however, the custodians use special equipment and disinfectant to wipe down surfaces every hour.

To prepare for future in-person learning, the district created new strict requirements for the maintenance staff to follow: more clean air in classrooms, a better filtration system and new sanitization procedures.

The maintenance staff sanitizes all classrooms and bathrooms currently used by teachers and plans to extend sanitization to all classrooms once students are allowed on campus.

The intensified sanitizing process for classrooms involves first sanitizing all high-touch areas such as light switches and door-knobs. Then, the maintenance staff uses an

electrostatic spray to clean surfaces like the underside of a desk. After leaving the room wet with disinfectant for around 10 minutes, the staff leaves a sticker on the door to indicate that the room has been sanitized and is safe for teachers to enter.

"Teachers who show up at that door know that this room has been sanitized," Weir said. "We have some very seasoned, excellent teachers who are in a higher risk zone because of their age. If we want to open our schools, I think that teachers need to feel safe, and it's something we've been focusing on."

The maintenance staff also conducts thorough sanitizations in the restrooms. Before the pandemic, the maintenance staff checked and cleaned the restrooms twice a day to make sure that they were clean for student use.

Because of the pandemic, however, the custodians use special equipment and disinfectant to wipe down surfaces every hour.

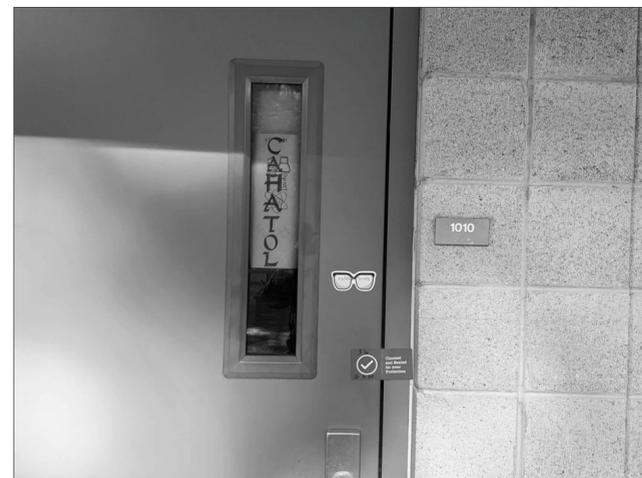
When students return to campus, students will be assigned specified bathrooms to mitigate possible spread of the coronavirus and allow for contact tracing.

In addition to maintaining facilities, workers are using this time to get ahead on previously planned projects.

Their main priority has been correcting all the issues pointed out by the annual Facilities Inspection Tool (FIT) in April, like defects like stained ceilings, missing tiles and broken light switches.

Other projects include putting some plastic barriers in high traffic areas to prevent close contact among students.

They have also installed more effective



FALCON // CICI XU

A blue sticker certifies that science teacher Janny Cahatol's room has been fully sanitized.

heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems to increase airflow in classrooms.

They are also putting a door leading to the nurse's office in the administration building so that students who are sick don't actually have to enter there to get tested.

Even with all the preparations, Weir said the situation remains uncertain as he does not think "anybody has the handbook and the playbook" for how to keep a workplace completely safe during a pandemic.

Despite the uncertainty, Weir is looking forward to seeing many more students return some time in second semester and is ensuring that students will feel safe.

"I need the regular routine of the students back," he said. "When the students are there, that is a huge driver for us — it's fun serving the students and staff. We're really looking forward to the students coming back, so long as it's a safe environment for them and for us." ♦

togotalks

What is your favorite part of ceramics this year?

"The projects you create are 100% your own since Ms. Vanry isn't able to physically help."



senior Alyssa Pinai

"My favorite part was making pieces and putting pretty glaze on them after they were fired."



junior Amarangana Tyagi

"I have freedom to experiment with the clay and projects and time to develop myself."



senior Eunseo Ryu

BURSTING THE BUBBLE

Campus Minority Students Speak Out

MINORITIES

continued from pg. 1

Race and ethnicity

Growing up as one of the only Black students in the Saratoga community, sophomore Nadine Cobourn, who is half Ethiopian and half white, said she still remembers an uncomfortable experience she had in middle school.

"At Redwood [Middle School], people thought it was OK to say the N-word, and it was very hard for me to educate people on it, because they wouldn't listen," Cobourn said. "With me being the only person that would educate them, I would get out-numbered by everyone else."

Cobourn said that although the use of the N-word used to be prevalent in middle school, now at Saratoga High, the use of the word and other forms of overt racism have been traded for covert racism.

The school has 60 percent Asian population (according to the school's profile). On campus, Black students account for less than 1 percent of the school demographic.

"[My experience] is very different in the sense that no one can relate to my personal heritage, culture and everything that happens at home with my family," she said.

Cobourn said that outside of her immediate friend group, she has found a lack of racial inclusiveness.

She believes the lack of a wide range of racial diversity affects the students' perception of different cultures and races.

"I don't necessarily blame the students because when you live in a society that teaches you just about yourself, it's kind of hard to gravitate away from that," Cobourn said. "But it is hard when people are unaware of the somewhat offensive comments they make."

Despite this, Cobourn says most students are "actually very good-hearted."

Confrontations lead to distress

Melissa, a minority student on campus, told The Falcon about her experiences with racism.

During her freshman year, one of her friends, who was white, started harassing her after their friendship had a falling-out. Although the conflict originated as normal drama among friends,

Melissa said the harassment eventually reached a point where it had become a "non-stop situation," so she and a friend decided to approach the administration.

That's when she said things went even further downhill.

In the multiple times when Melissa decided to talk to a counselor about the issue, she said she felt like her experiences and complaints were not fully heard. In fact, she felt like her harasser received more empathy and support than she did.

"I felt like they gave that person more rights and support because of their race and their parent's connections to the school," Melissa said.

One afternoon during the fall of 2019, as Melissa was leaving the school after sports practice, she said she was confronted by her harasser and the student's mother.

"I heard [the student] talking to her mom about me, and the mom asked, 'Do you want me to turn back and yell at her?'" Melissa said. "Her daughter was basically holding her back."

Melissa said she quickly turned around and walked away, keeping her head down the entire time.

Although the nature of the harassment was not racial, Melissa believes the reason the harassment had become non-stop was because of race, saying the student who bothered her has been notorious for circulating anti-immigrant beliefs on her social media accounts.

She believes the lack of a wide range of racial diversity affects the students' perception of different cultures and races.

gate and deal with each case based on the merits and what we can uncover.

The student's mental, physical and emotional safety is the most important thing to us. Unfortunately, we are unable to share our actions and consequences based on any investigation because of privacy rights."

Academic stereotypes

Another issue for underrepresented minorities on campus are the many stereotypes that surround academics.

"No one has directly said it to me, but some people will consider the Black community to be less intelligent, so they don't expect me to be in those higher classes," Cobourn said. "It kind of makes me feel bad because it's like people are questioning my intelligence."

Even when she is participating in honors classes, Cobourn said it's still an uphill battle to be seen and respected.

"Again, no one has ever treated me like I was completely dumb, but I wouldn't ever be the first person [the teachers] would ask a question to, and I wouldn't ever be considered smart in those classes," Cobourn said.

Cobourn said she's been able to prove herself by always answering questions and participating in class.

Even then, she said she wishes Asian American students would be more thoughtful about the experiences of students in different races and be more careful with the language they use when referring to others' intelligence.

"A lot of times when I try to tell people about different things that are offensive, they might not fully understand it and decide not to get educated on it," Cobourn explained. "But it'd be nice if everyone could be more socially welcoming and accepting of others, so I wouldn't be treated as a minority."

Gender identity and sexuality

School dances have always been a source of stress for junior Koharu Miyoshi.

As someone who identifies as non-binary and bisexual, Miyoshi said the school's heteronormative

culture is "especially prevalent" during events like dances, where most attendees expect couples to be straight.

Miyoshi, who uses they/them pronouns, is a part of the school's LGBTQ community. Although the school has an active Gay-Straight Alliance club, Miyoshi said most of the LGBTQ students on campus find community in "smaller, more close knit groups" instead of a school-wide organization.

"It's more like: 'Oh, you know, my other friend turned out to be LGBTQ, and then their friend turned out to be LGBTQ,'" Miyoshi said. "Then you end up sticking together like that."

Miyoshi said although their close group of friends was supportive after they came out, they still had to deal with other forms of social repercussions, such as the reactions of their parents.

Although their parents are now accepting of their identity, their parents have told Miyoshi that they would prefer if Miyoshi could

take back their "coming out."

"It's partially because my parents are protective," Miyoshi said. "They're like, 'Oh, but you're already of a minority ethnicity. And top of that, you're LGBT? That's not going to work out for you.'"

In addition to their parents' reactions, Miyoshi also received a lot of questions from their friends' parents after they started to present themselves as non-binary.

"I have had a lot of people ask me, 'Hey, my parents are wondering if you're LGBT?'" Miyoshi said. "It's always kind of odd, like, why would they need to know that?"

While in some cases, the questions have stemmed from curiosity, in other cases, the questions have been ill-intentioned.

Some friends have told Miyoshi that their parents don't want them

to "hang out with 'people like me,'" Miyoshi said.

Amy, a sophomore who came out as non-binary during late October and uses they/them pronouns, had a similar experience.

"For the most part, people are accepting of [others coming out], but there are almost always a couple people who will try to avoid you after knowing about your sexuality/gender identity," Amy said.

But Amy said after they came out as bisexual, they have been subjected to "a lot of" bullying and homophobic slurs from class-

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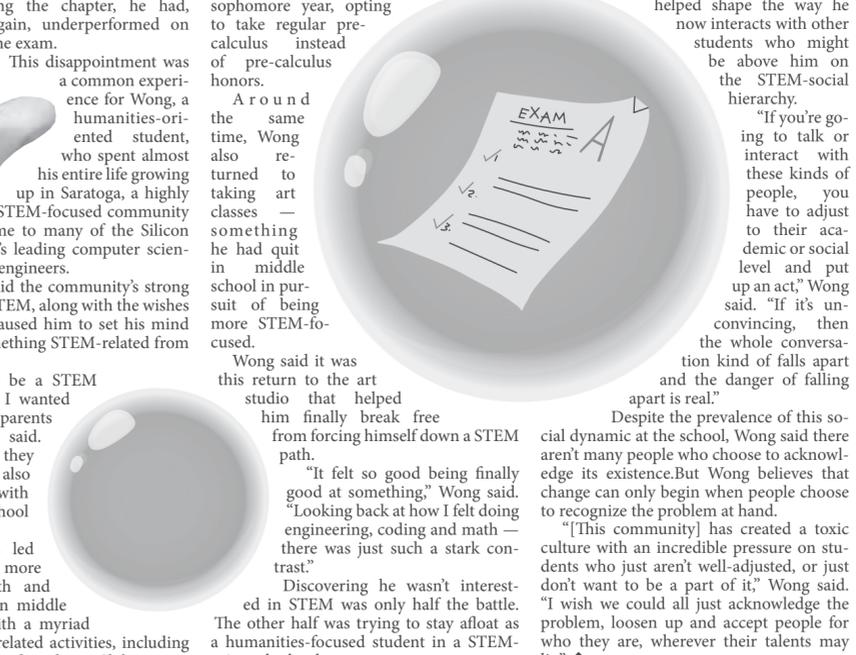
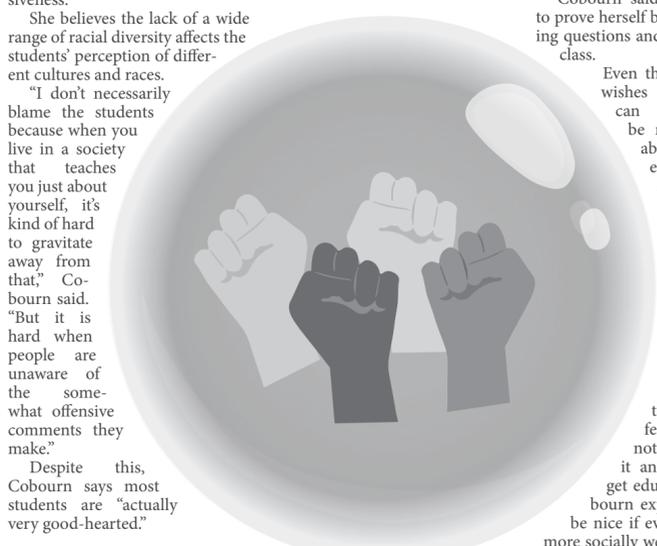
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While in some cases, the questions have stemmed from curiosity, in other cases, the questions have been ill-intentioned.

Some friends have told Miyoshi that their parents don't want them





ShaanSridhar @saratogafalcon.org



CAN YOU SPOT FAKE NEWS?

Show this thread 21 17 111

By Shaan Sridhar

Sophomore Mahati Kotamraju stared at a news headline on her screen: "Amy Coney Barrett is a member of a religious group that was an inspiration for the Handmaid's Tale." She was taking a fake news quiz, and she was supposed to determine whether the statement was fake or real. She gave the headline serious thought, debating out loud whether it could be true.

Kotamraju said it was true. She was wrong. Barrett is a member of the Christian religious group People of Praise, which referred to its female members' advisers as "handmaids" before changing the title to "female leaders." Despite this coincidence, there is no evidence of a connection between the People of Praise and "The Handmaid's Tale."

The original fake story spread in October 2020 through viral TikToks and tabloid magazines and is one of many fake news stories that have gained mainstream attention, highlighting how increasingly common fake news has become.

Factors ranging from hyper-partisanship to increased social media use have contributed to the rise of fake news. According to a Pew Research Center study, most Americans say fake news is a "very big problem in the country today," more so than major issues like climate change, racism and immigration.

Fake news often spreads through social media, which puts younger generations at a greater risk of falling victim to misleading or made-up headlines.

The Falcon created a 10-question quiz about fake news and asked five interviewed students to take the quiz. The first half of the quiz asked students to identify if a given headline was "true" or "false." The second half asked students to rate different news sources as "reliable" or "unreliable."

All five students received low results, together averaging a 6/10.

The students were able to accurately identify lesser-known fake headlines, such as whether Vice President Mike Pence supported gay conversion therapy, but were unable to identify widely spread stories, such as whether California's recent wildfires have been caused in part by forest mismanagement.

The results show what experts say is the most obvious danger of fake news: its potential to influence most people's opinions and

biases.

"I've read stories where I've definitely made a few major judgments," Kotamraju said. "The idea that stories like that could be made up and affect my opinions so much — it's crazy."

Pew Research Center points out another side-effect of the increase of fake news: distrust toward facts and the media.

The Pew study laid out how fake news affects people's news habits. While 88 percent of those who "closely follow politics," fact-check stories, only 68 percent of less politically aware people — the majority of Americans — do. At least 54 percent of people are likely to block off certain opinions and news outlets as a result of fake news, and 31 percent of people have reduced the amount of news they consume overall.

The Pew study claims that behavior like this is harmful because when people read less news, they become less politically aware; less politically aware people, in turn, are more likely to spread fake news. This feedback loop then contributes to an uninformed voter.

base.

Although freshman Samik Pattanayak said that fake news hasn't caused him to consume less news, he does fact-check more often.

"I read a decent amount of news, and I don't think it's changed because of fake news," Pattanayak said. "I do fact-check more often now to make sure it's actually true."

The rise of fake news has largely been made possible due to social media, but the Pew study found that there is not one group or person that shares the responsibility for it. Senior Nikhil Nair says that fake news isn't a new problem.

"Sensationalism and disinformation in news reporting has been around for a long time," Nair said. "But the reason these stories actually become fake news is because they are spread by people who agree with their conclusions." Conversely, sophomore Allison Tan doesn't blame ordinary people for fake news. Tan says the rise in fake news is due to one person.

"I associate fake news with President Trump," Tan said. "He loves to throw that word around."

Fake news is everywhere and students are especially vulnerable to it and its dangerous effects, but there are methods to identify and avoid it.

FactCheck.org, an organization that fact-checks numerous stories, has multiple ways to identify and avoid fake news, such as checking the source of the news, identifying conflicts of interest and reading stories in full rather than only the headlines. Snopes.com and PolitiFact.com post fact-checks for some of the most viral claims and the Associated Press sends a weekly email rounding up the week's biggest fake news stories.

Junior Bora Alaybeyi also has an easy way to verify stories.

"I usually consume news with the knowledge of its potential bias," Alaybeyi said. "If it's something really important or it has data, then I double check it [on the internet] to see more about it."

Fake news is most certainly a major problem and while its dangers pose a threat to America's signature freedom of information, Tan says it's nothing different from everyday problems.

"If you hear something that a friend tells you, you need to look at how that person was raised," Tan said. "You shouldn't take things for face value; you need to do your research. The same goes for the news." ♦

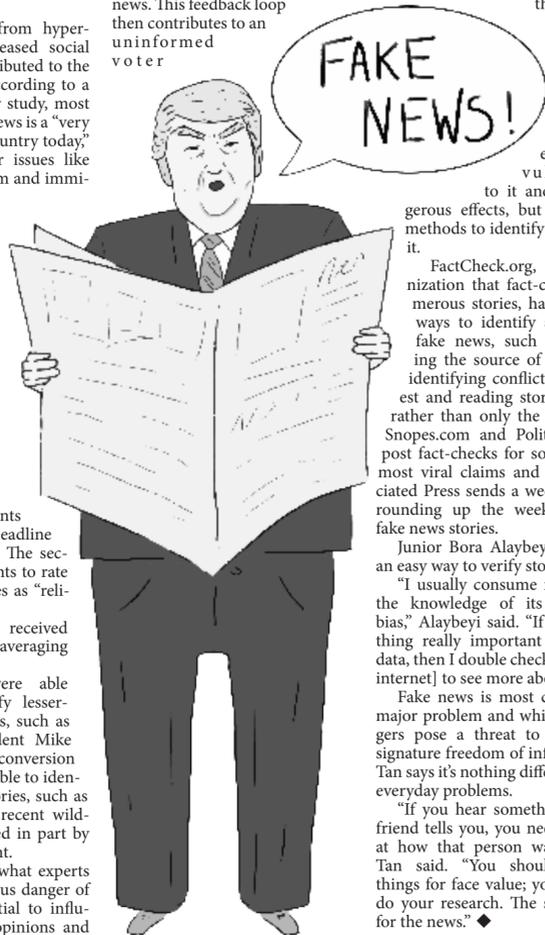
FAKE NEWS QUIZ

Are these headlines REAL or FAKE

1. "AMY CONEY BARRETT IS A MEMBER OF A RELIGIOUS GROUP THAT WAS AN INSPIRATION FOR THE HANDMAID'S TALE"
2. "JOE BIDEN'S WEBSITE CALLS AOC'S GREEN NEW DEAL A FRAMEWORK FOR CLIMATE CHANGE"
3. "TIKTOK US IS OWNED BY ORACLE"
4. "VICE PRESIDENT PENCE SUPPORTS GAY CONVERSION THERAPY"
5. "MISMANAGEMENT OF CALIFORNIA'S FORESTS HAS CONTRIBUTED TO RECENT FIRES"

1. Fake 2. Real 3. Fake 4. Fake 5. Real

All graphics by JOANN ZHANG



COVID-19 severely affects recruitment for Class of 2022

By Apurva Chakravarthy

When junior Lauren Yarrington wants to play soccer competitively beyond high school, she never imagined how the COVID-19 pandemic would throw hurdle after hurdle in her way.

For instance, Yarrington has had to resort to sending emails and highlight videos directly to coaches since scouts cannot come to games that aren't being played right now. Despite this, she remains hopeful that the team will be able to resume games in the months ahead and her visibility can increase.

Yarrington started playing soccer when she was 5 and began playing competitively when she was 7 for De Anza Force. While she always considered playing for a college, it was never a sincere effort until just a few years ago.

"It wasn't until recently when I really felt that I wanted to pursue college soccer seriously," Yarrington said. "I really enjoyed playing high school soccer, and I wanted that same experience in college."

Two other juniors, Parsa Hashemi and Etienne Casanova, share Yarrington's frustrations about not being able to go through a normal recruiting process.

Hashemi, who is looking to get recruited for football, started playing on the school's JV football team during his freshman year and reached varsity as a sophomore.

Although he plays as wide receiver and safety, he decided to focus on kicking to have a better chance at playing college football, perhaps even highly competitive

Division 1. Currently, he has attended a few camps where he has met coaches from schools like Cal Poly, Chapman and other smaller schools.

He said that one of the main setbacks of the process was not being able to play games, which translated into not being able to create film.

Casanova said that without games, he's been unable to represent his improvement as a player to coaches.

"It sucks because I've made big strides to my level recently, and I have no film of me playing in games to show that improvement," Casanova said.

Casanova, who began playing when he was 3, has played on the nation's highest level of youth soccer — the U.S. Soccer Development Academy — and was selected twice to represent that league in Spain.

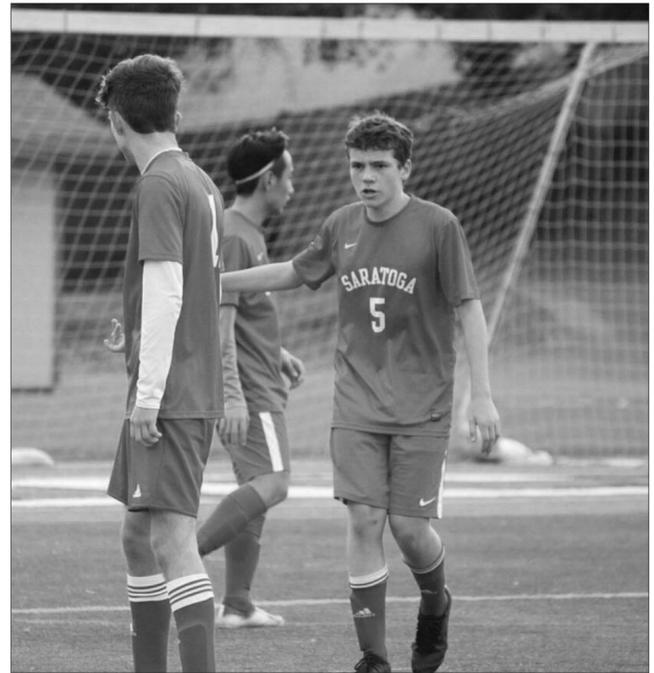
He currently plays for De Anza Force U17 Academy.

After deciding that he wanted to play soccer at the next level, he has been eyeing Ivy League and other academic-focused schools.

"I am not too concerned about the level of soccer at any school although it's definitely a bonus," Casanova said.

Although the athletes understand the need to stay distanced and safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, the loss of their seasons and the new difficulty of the recruiting process has proved frustrating.

"Junior season is definitely the most important to put your name out there and the fact that our season is in jeopardy is really disappointing," Hashemi said. ♦



Courtesy of ETIENNE CASANOVA

Junior Etienne Casanova gestured to a teammate during a game against Gunn in early 2020.

Competitive swimmer switches up workouts

By Neeti Badve

With every new year comes New Year's resolutions. Since I'm a competitive athlete restricted to the confines of my home, a few of mine are bound to be fitness related.

In my eight years of swimming, I've had multiple injuries in my back and shoulders from overuse. When I first tell people about this string of injuries, I generally receive confused looks — isn't swimming a full body workout and one of the least injury-prone sports?

Yes, but there's a catch: Swimming is a full body workout for the big muscles like the trapezius, abdominals, quadriceps and hamstrings. Because of this, the big muscles in my back continued getting stronger with repetition, but the smaller ones that support them, mainly my scapula, grew weaker. The scapula holds up the shoulder blades, deltoids and trapezius, so when it became incredibly weak, those muscles began to also wear and tear from overworking themselves to build support back up.

Since I'm not able to attend swim practices over quarantine, I have come to rely on a high intensity interval training (HIIT) and cardio workout schedule that gives me the same burn and fatigue I felt in the water. But even after being out of the water for months, I felt the same pain in my upper back.

I realized the problem with emulating being in the water was that it meant I was still overusing the same big muscles. That's why, this new year, I've decided to push myself out of my exercise comfort zone and focus on rebuilding smaller muscles in my body for long-term injury prevention.

After doing some research, I added muscle-isolation workouts in the form of barre and pilates so I can strengthen and tone specific muscle groups at a time.

Barre is a hybrid of ballet and yoga focused on high-impact, low-intensity movements. You use only your body weight to churn out rep after rep of a specific exercise targeting one area of your body, and this aerobic exercise pushes muscles to the

point of fatigue.

Pilates, on the other hand, is barre's anaerobic counterpart. It moves between small and big muscle groups, concentrating on body stabilization and core strength. Unlike barre's intense repetition, pilates is more yoga-based and focuses on holding movements or poses rather than repeating them.

To make sure I don't injure myself simply by doing the wrong exercises, I turned to YouTube. For those getting started, I highly recommend Lottie Murphy and Move With Nicole for pilates and POP-SUGARfitness for barre.

When I first tell people about this string of injuries, I generally receive confused looks — isn't swimming a full body workout and one of the least injury-prone sports?

The great thing about these modes of exercise is that both improve flexibility and agility while also aiding injury prevention. Because of all the problems in my shoulders, my current posture is as curvy as one of those Silly Straws I used to drink out of as a kid, so hopefully this balancing conditioning fixes that as well.

I feel excited to discover new techniques and exercises, and my body feels a little better because it's not overworking the same muscles and feeling the same continual soreness. With this muscle lengthening, I hope I will be more in tune with my body once I'm able to get back into the water, and my bigger muscles will find their support again. Until then, though, I know this new journey will ease me into a less injury-prone lifestyle and into a better 2021. ♦

Senior recovers from once career-threatening injury

By Anjali Nuggehalli

Senior Ryan Gilligan, a varsity football and baseball player, still recalls the fateful football game in September 2019 when his athletic career took an unexpected turn.

As he dove to catch a throw, Gilligan felt the weight of another player fall directly on his leg and instantly heard a snap. Determined to move to the next play, Gilligan tried to get up, but knew something was horribly wrong.

It turned out Gilligan had broken his femur, the longest bone in the body, extending all the way from the hip to the knee joint.

More serious than a simple bone fracture, Gilligan's leg required intensive surgery involving inserting screws into his knee.

"At first, I told myself I was fine, even as I was getting carried off the field on a cart because I couldn't walk," Gilligan said. "I didn't realize how serious the procedure and recovery were going to be."

During his 8-month recovery period, Gilligan dedicated three days a week to intense physical therapy. Trainers came to Gilligan's house to help with rehab, aiding him with regaining range of motion in his knee.

Four months after his surgery, Gilligan was cleared to begin weightlifting and running.

"The initial recovery was a super extensive process because I couldn't even bend my knee," Gilligan said. "I went from basically having no range of motion to slowly working my way back to normal."

Although his doctor estimated Gilligan's recovery to take a full year, Gilligan was cleared to return to full contact after only eight months. He credits his efficient recovery to the constant support of his friends and family.

In the first three months after his surgery, Gilligan was in a wheelchair while

learning how to walk again. He acknowledged the initial discomfort in going to school in a wheelchair, but the help of his friends made the transition a lot easier.

"It's definitely weird coming back to school in a wheelchair and having everyone notice it," Gilligan said. "But my friends being there to push me around and carry my things really helped me stay optimistic throughout all the rehab."

Gilligan admitted that the journey to recovery was not easy. When he would watch his teammates play without him from the sidelines, he truly realized the extent of his injury.

"When I still had my cast on, I didn't notice how immobile my knee was," Gilligan said. "But as soon as I took it off and wasn't able to bend my knee, I felt helpless."

For the most part, however, Gilligan was adamant in staying positive throughout his recovery, constantly goal-setting in order to keep moving forward.

For example, Gilligan focused on being cleared by baseball season, and he was successful in reaching this goal by the spring, though the season was shortened because of the pandemic.

Eight months later, in May, Gilligan was cleared to play full contact sports, and since then, he has returned to playing football and baseball. Gilligan said he remains a confident athlete, blocking out negative thoughts about reinjury during games.

While there are moments during weightlifting where he fears that something will happen to his knee again, Gilligan believes that positive self-talk has an impact on staying physically healthy as well.

"I think the reason I was able to return to full contact was because I set so many goals for myself, and I would tell other injured athletes to do the same," Gilligan said. "I was told that I might not ever get to play football again, but I knew that I was going to get back. I just had to focus on how to motivate myself to get there." ♦



Gilligan

Boys' basketball coach unites team during pandemic

BY AvaniKongetira

Boys' basketball coach Patrick Judge always dreamed of playing college basketball. But when he arrived at college and mustered the courage to approach the head basketball coach, the response was not what he had hoped for.

"I love your energy and your enthusiasm for the game, but you're just too small to play for us," the coach said, to Judge's dismay. "You should really think about coaching."

Judge was disappointed, but rather than mope about this setback, he took the advice to heart.

"I thought that sounded fun, since I love basketball, I love kids and this gives me an outlet to keep my competitive fire burning," Judge said.

His mom and uncles had kindled his love for basketball from a young age. As he grew older, the fast paced nature of the game fueled his passion.

He started in 1993, coaching the sixth grade boys basketball team at Valley Christian Junior High.

"They hired me, we went 12-0, I absolutely loved it and I've been coaching ever since," he said.

In addition to being a coach, Judge is a real estate manager for Interlo. He said scheduling conflicts are not an issue since basketball practices take place in the evening.



Boys' basketball coach Patrick Judge instructed his team during a timeout in the 2020 season.

"While managing a real estate office is time consuming, it's also something that I can balance with my coaching duties," he said. "I basically am a full-time coach, and I absolutely love it."

Judge has come a long way since his first stint as a sixth grade basketball coach, winning the CCS Coach of the Year award in 2010 while employed at Leigh High School. Most recently, the league presented him with the SCVAL award for 2019-2020 Boys' Basketball Coach of the Year.

He joined the Saratoga High basketball program in 2016. Under his leadership, the boys' basketball team has been competitive every year, even when players are undersized compared to other teams.

"Coach PJ deserves all the credit I can give him," senior Cameron King said. "He understands us as players and always wants a personal relationship with everyone on the team."

Because of the pandemic, however, the basketball team's time together has reduced

significantly — and safety is Judge's priority.

The team has not seen any COVID-19 cases so far. During conditioning in June, they were permitted to play on the same court but had to remain 6 feet apart with masks on and with separate balls. When they cannot hold practices, team members report their daily fitness and improvement to their group chat.

Before the pandemic, King and his teammates would meet and spend time together outside of practice. Even during the pandemic, they find ways to safely socialize.

"My teammates and I all have super close bonds with each other," King said. "Sometimes I'll meet up with a few of them to shoot around and other times I'll send a teammate a quick text or play a video game with them."

In his efforts to keep the team close-knit, Judge has the boys do individual and team challenges. He encourages them to stay active in the group chat and discuss topics like NBA games.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, Judge is grateful for the team's sense of community and is excited for the day when he can get back to coaching in-person.

"There are hundreds of moments throughout the years in which I've said to myself 'this is why I coach,'" he said. "One would think that these moments come after wins, but most of my memorable moments have come off the court, spending time with my team and having an impact." ♦

An avid NBA fan rates top five in the league

ben-li-eve
in me

Benjamin Li

After the eventful 2019-2020 playoff season, many fans' perceptions of certain NBA superstars have changed. Although some players, such as Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James, have maintained their position through amazing displays of dominance, others have fallen out of favor with the audience.

Taking into account what happened last year, I'll be ranking the top five players I believe will do the best on their respective teams going into the 2021 season.

The fifth best player in the NBA goes to Bucks forward Giannis Antetokounmpo, nicknamed the "Greek Freak." Although some see him as just another player that has clear dominance but low playoff success, his athleticism and awards — including back-to-back MVP with one Defensive Player of the Year (DPOY) last season — are more than enough to earn him this spot.

Not only has Antetokounmpo worked on his 3 point shot and free throws, but the Bucks organization has also developed a strong roster around him, featuring players like point guard Jrue Holiday with the ability to space the floor and shoot. With more of a set system, the Bucks will be favored to head to the Eastern Conference Finals this year.

As a superstar who changed the course of the game forever, Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry takes fourth place. Curry recently put up a career high of 62 points against the Portland Trail Blazers, avenging the loss they had taken days before. Without his former teammate guard Klay Thompson, who was a critical shooter and defender for the team, Curry has become the sole focus of the opposing defense. Although some may think this would result in offensive struggles and difficulty scoring, Curry has shown what he is truly capable of through his off-



Lakers forward LeBron James walks across the court during first round of the playoffs against the Portland Trail Blazers on August 22, 2020.

ball movement and spectacular shooting.

The third best player in the league is Brooklyn forward Kevin Durant. Despite his worrying achilles injury, Kevin Durant seemingly will make a full return to his previous level of play. With astonishing performances such as his 34 points, nine rebounds and 13 assists game against the Denver Nuggets, it's clear that Durant is still able to perform on par with his previous self.

Despite what many fans believe, Kawhi Leonard's struggles against the Nuggets in the second round of the 2019-2020 playoffs do not invalidate his second-place ranking. Just a year earlier, Leonard was being compared to LeBron James, and

it would be foolish to cast him outside of the top 5 because of one down game.

Even in the playoff series where doubters claimed Leonard "choked," he averaged 28.3 points; Leonard even singlehandedly pulled the Clippers out of their first round Dallas matchup by averaging an absurd 32.8 points in their 6 game series. Leonard is one of the most consistent players the league has ever seen, and he deserves his spot in the top 2.

Unsurprisingly, the top spot is going to the man who has dominated the league for the past 17 years. Despite his age, Lakers forward LeBron James still manages to amaze us year after year with his untouchable level of play. James shows no signs of

slowing down: Not only did James win a championship last year, but he silenced all doubters by averaging 29.8 points, 11.8 rebounds and 8.5 assists. Under James' leadership, the Lakers are the favorites to repeat this season and take another championship.

With so many returning stars, the 2021 NBA is certain to be competitive and the Lawrence O'Brien trophy could be hoisted by any one of several contenders. Whether it be the dominating Lakers from Los Angeles, the deadly trio in Durant, James Harden and Kyrie Irving from Brooklyn or the Bucks coming back for revenge or a team no one is thinking of now, the NBA will be fun to watch for the next six months. ♦

High school athletes participate in trash talk culture

BY AnoukYeh

During a timeout during a volleyball game last spring, senior volleyball player Dylan Li was dissecting other teams' lineups with his teammates when an opponent made it clear how little respect he had for Li's game.

After hearing that, after every winning point, Li made sure to smile and shake his head at the player — sometimes even mouthing a few words — to let him know that "he couldn't stop me."

Li and other student athletes aren't immune to the occasional trash talking so often practiced in the professional leagues.

Although Li said he isn't usually one to start it, "if somebody I'm playing against is doing bad, chiming in a comment about their performance can often get them to play even worse."

He's not alone in his rationale. Sports are competitive, and athletes often do everything they can to gain an edge over their opponents — even employing underhand tactics like trash talking.

Although the act of trash talking was only formally given a name in the 1990s, it had already been highly popularized by Olympic boxer Muhammad Ali starting from the 1960s.

With insults like "he's too ugly to be world champion" and boasts like "I'm the king of the world," Ali's trash talking showed having a big mouth could come with big

payoffs. (In his prime, Ali was the world's best known athlete.)

Assistant principal Matthew Torrens said in his over 10 years at the school, he has witnessed a good amount of trash talking during sports games.

"Trash talking happens a lot, especially in football and basketball games," Torrens said. "It could be people in the crowds, someone you know or a stranger on the field."

In fact, Torrens said trash talking is "the worst" between SHS and Los Gatos because the students are usually familiar with each other. Between the two schools, a lot of the players grow up playing youth league sports together, so many of them are acquainted with each other.

"If you know the other players, it's a lot tougher because they know everything about you," Torrens said. "They'll know that you work at Lucky's or that your uncle's in jail, so the trash talking is a lot rougher."

Torrens said one of the most memorable instances of trash talking between Saratoga

and Los Gatos occurred when Los Gatos' basketball team started chanting "SAT Prep" at Saratoga's basketball team, poking fun at the school's academic focus. Saratoga's basketball team and the Saratoga crowd fired back, chanting "Community College" for the remainder of the game.

Li, who avidly attended basketball games during the 2019-20 season, said the main role of the fans is to affect and change the momentum of the game.

In addition to providing "a huge energy boost" to players whenever the team makes a good play or when a call is made in their favor, the crowd is also effective in "disrupting the rhythm" of the other teams.

"If they focus their energy on responding to the crowd, it takes away from their ability to stay focused on the game," Li said.

Some tactics players use include chanting loudly and calling out players on the opposing team by name after finding the team rosters online. According to Li, shouting names makes it "almost impossible to focus."

On the other hand, sophomore Irene Frazier, a three-sport athlete who has participated in football, wrestling and softball,

said throughout her athletic journey, she hasn't experienced or participated in many instances of trash talking.

"At Saratoga, I've found that we are very respectful towards the other teams we play," Frazier said. "From my experience, we really don't trash talk them unless we know some of the players or what the school is known for."

Frazier said the closest thing to trash talking she witnessed was during the fall 2019 season when the football team was playing against Lynbrook High School.

"Some of our players viewed playing them as an [easy] win and said that we weren't going to have to try because of how bad they were," Frazier said. "They were right: we won."

Despite these few victorious instances, Frazier said she believes trash talking "isn't OK" and tries her best to avoid it.

Frazier's perspective accords with the behavior rules for high school sports. Trash talking comes in direct violation of code 7 of the CCS Athlete Code of Conduct, which states that "[Players shouldn't] engage in or allow trash-talking, taunting, boastful celebrations, or other actions that demean individuals or the sport."

"If someone trash talks during a game, they would probably get in trouble for starting a fight," Frazier said. "Then the player would have a risk of ejection, and if we don't have enough players at that point, we risk a forfeit." ♦

Field hockey player endures setbacks as months stretch on

BY ApurvaChakravarthy
& AnjaliNuggehalli

Inspired by her older sister, junior Olivia Kinoshita first started playing club field hockey in sixth grade. From there, she would continue to play the sport for the next 6 years. After playing with the high school freshmen for her first two years, Kinoshita joined the Redwood Middle School field hockey team in eighth grade with juniors Rima Christie, Lauren Yarrington and Lauren VandeVort. After enjoying their season, they all decided to keep playing at the high school level. Kinoshita, who plays left fullback, said the team has received many mixed messages about starting their season and what it might look like.

In addition, the team also found out that

their old coaches, Nanu and Kam Sidhu, stopped coaching the team.

Both started attending dentistry school in the fall; the lack of a coach prevented the team from practicing in the fall when it would have been possible.

No coach had been named as of Jan. 14. While Kinoshita considered playing the sport in college her freshman and sophomore year, she is now rethinking her decision because of the pandemic.

"I was planning on playing [in college] last year because I signed up for a travel program," Kinoshita said. "But then, with COVID, everything has shut down, and I haven't been motivated to keep going at it enough to actually have colleges recognize me."

Although Kinoshita misses seeing her

friends every day at practice, the most important aspect of field hockey she misses is the structure the sport brought to her life. Because Kinoshita would finish school, go home to eat a snack and do some homework, go to practice and then come back home, she always felt her days were efficient, meaningful and fun.

"I think I'm definitely disappointed because it was just something so routine," Kinoshita said. "I also just got to hang out with my friends every day, and I liked to stay in shape."

Despite the uncertainty of whether the team will reach the field this school year, Kinoshita is already looking to the future. If the sport is cleared to play normally in the fall, her main goals are to get to know their coach, re-learn skills and plays and teach the

freshman and sophomores the game.

Since the team will lose five members from the Class of 2021 next year and many of the other members have little to no experience in the game, Kinoshita said it will "be a really big building year."

Because every sport will essentially have two new classes to teach, Kinoshita anticipates the majority of freshmen and sophomores will join JV to learn how the sport works. As the 2021 season nears, she plans to host a few summer practices in an effort to acustom the new players to the sport.

"When we finally get back to playing field hockey, it's definitely going to be a building year, but I'm OK with that," Kinoshita said. "I think I can speak for everyone when I say I just want to get back on the field and feel like a team again." ♦

EPL thrives in face of coronavirus

BY JasonCheng
& VinayGollamudi

With the dawn of the new year, the 2020-21 English Premier League season, regarded by many fans as the most competitive soccer league in the world, has just about reached its halfway mark.

Thus, we've decided to take a look at how the season has played out so far. The events of this season have been unexpected, to say the least. Teams like Southampton and Everton are outperforming their usual mid-table finishes, sitting in 6th and 7th, respectively, out of a total of 20 teams. There have been many disappointments too, with top caliber teams like Chelsea and Arsenal currently in 9th and 11th, far from their true potential.

Still, the season has been as exciting as ever. With more and more young talents moving from other foreign leagues to the Premier League, the competition between teams is fiercer than ever before.

Only seven points separate the top 10 teams. To put this into perspective, even-tinged champions Liverpool were already top of the table by a margin of 10 points last season, whereas now, they are only ahead based on goal difference with the same points as second-placed Manchester United.

This year's star-studded Premier League has also seen the rise of young talents and new rivalries, while other athletes and teams have failed to live up to expectations. The race for the Golden Boot, award-

ed to the player with the most goals at the end of a season, is tight, with Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah (13 goals) narrowly ahead of Tottenham Hotspur winger Heung-Min Son (12 goals), Manchester United ace Bruno Fernandes (11 goals) and Everton's breakthrough star Dominic Calvert-Lewin (11 goals).

On the other hand, Tottenham Hotspur striker Harry Kane has already hit 11 assists, forming an electrifying duo with teammate Son — the duo have already combined for 13 goals this season, breaking

On the contrary, some promising teams have failed to reach expectations this year, including Chelsea's German duo of midfielder Kai Havertz and forward Timo Werner, who succumbed under pressure despite their price tags.

Arsenal's target-man Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang has also disappointed with a measly three goals so far, although his team has recently bounced back to win their last three matches.

Most importantly, this year's title race has been blown wide open following Liverpool's 1-0 defeat by Southampton's solid defense. Manchester United look to overtake Liverpool on the top in their next match, with Leicester City, Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester City hot on their heels.

The Jan. 17 match between Manchester United and Liverpool, set to be the game of the season, culminated in a draw with the two sides gaining one point each.

On the other side of the table, Sheffield United has gained just two points in the whole season, a record at this stage in the competi-

tion. Despite their 9th place finish last season, they have regressed completely and are on track to end the season with the fewest points ever in a top flight season.

Even under these circumstances, the Premier League season hasn't disappointed so far, and the remaining half of the season could be even more exciting than the first. As seen from last year, nothing in soccer is predictable, and the rest of the season will surely be a contest worthy of a watch. ♦

Pros must wait for vaccination

BY JustinGuo

With the approval of multiple COVID-19 vaccines, many are wondering when and how they can get them. While many agree that essential workers and those at risk such as the elderly should be given priority over the general public, it gets a bit hazy when it comes to the world of professional sports.

The primary argument for letting professional athletes skip the line is that they would encourage the general public to also get vaccinations. Additionally, with the 2021 Olympics in the distance, some think athletes should get vaccinated ahead of time to begin more effective in-person training.

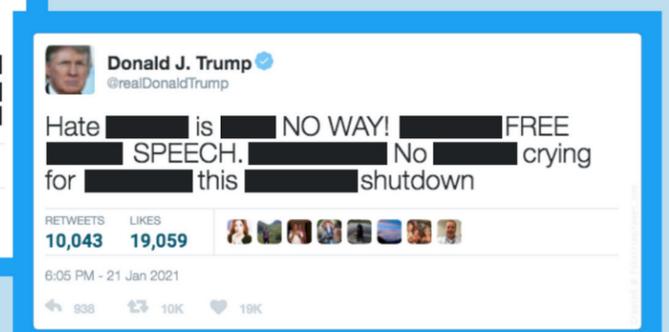
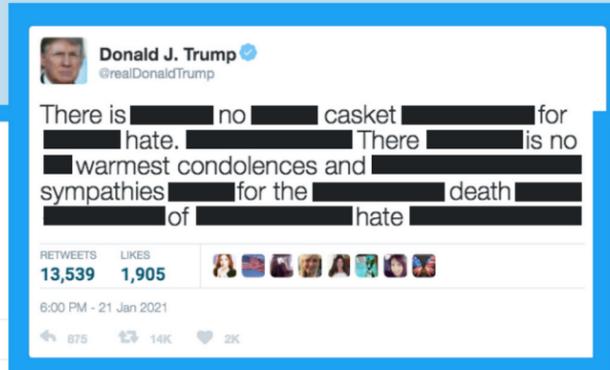
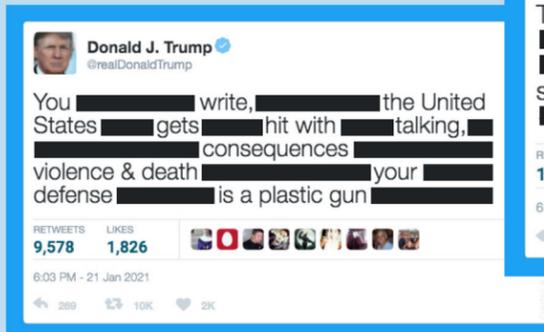
With this being said, though, I don't think athletes should get access to the COVID-19 vaccine before the public does because, truly, they aren't essential workers. When it comes to what's really important for adjusting back to pre-COVID times, healthcare workers, police officers, teachers, restaurant employees and the like are at the top of the list. Professional athletes should begin to receive the vaccine only after these essential workers have been taken care of.

But the more fundamental reason professional athletes shouldn't be allowed to skip the line is that most are doing well financially, to say the least. Between the NBA, MLB, NFL and NHL — four of the biggest sports leagues in the U.S. — the median salary in 2020 was about \$4 million.

I love sports as much as the next person, but it doesn't make sense for professional athletes — who have access to COVID tests, are well-off and stay in tip top shape — to receive the vaccine before the general public. ♦

An anti-elegy for Trump's late Twitter account

COMPILED AND CONDENSED FROM REAL DONALD TRUMP TWEETS



Graphic by ANOUK YEH

Standing desks stand out from the crowd

need-i stand up



Neeti Badve

Ever since online school began last March, leaving my desk has become increasingly rare.

From synchronous classes to homework to college supplemental essays, it seems I'm always in front of a laptop and sitting in a chair.

Over time I felt my legs actually get weaker because of how inactive they were. Every time I got up, I would want to crack my knees, and I found myself leaning back to the point of toppling over just to stretch them.

My problems had gotten so crippling bad that my mom decided to order a standing desk without even telling me just because she "couldn't bear to see the arch in my back anymore." (In my case, she got the Tresanti 47-inch adjustable height desk, which she says is famously known for its sleek design.)

And let me tell you, it's a game changer.

My mom is a standing desk expert, having had one at her office desk for years, and she made me realize that standing desks are more than just tables for work — they are a lifestyle.

When you're bored in class, BAM!

Now, you're standing and bored.

When you need to stretch your legs, BAM!

You can stand now.

A lot of desks even have timers that you can set to remind you to stand, which has

actually helped me feel more active. It certainly opens up a whole new world of possibilities.

I fully expected to turn into the health junkie that I traditionally associated standing desks with (you know the ones with the green juice and exercise balls instead of chairs), but I just became a little happier and more comfortable.

I've definitely noticed some un-arching of my back because I'm not hunched over my computer in my classes, and honestly, I just like shaking my legs out and getting blood flowing through them.

Another bonus is that my desk makes me feel like a sneaky spy.

The desk makes a cool whirring gadget noise as it lifts and lowers, and no one else knows I'm standing because the computer is still level with my face.

And who doesn't want to feel like a secret

agent every once in a while?

All benefits aside, though, the standing desk does come with a learning curve.

There have been many times in class where I accidentally brush against the up or down button and get stuck in an awkward position somewhere between sitting and standing.

It's also not practical to think that you will be able to do all your homework standing up, because doing pen-to-paper homework while standing and still hunching over actually hurts more than it does when sitting.

Clearly, though, the advantages of standing desks outweigh the negatives, and I'd recommend them to anyone considering getting one. (There's a reason why two of our past principals use standing desks.)

Your legs — and your back — will thank you. ♦

Capricorn examines her stars for a week

amandatory zhucchini



Amanda Zhu

To Gen Z-ers, zodiac signs are a big deal; they play a role in friendships, relationships and other life changing decisions.

But to be honest, I never really knew what my sign — Capricorn — meant until recently. So I made it my mission to try to live all aspects of my life as a true Capricorn for a week.

Before my week began, I had to do some research. I learned everything about my sign: strengths, weaknesses, likes and dislikes.

The website said that Capricorns like to camp or hike.

Despite being an earth sign, I'm not a fan of camping — I've never really done it before and don't think I would ever want to.

Instead, I went hiking with my family. We went to Sanborn County Park twice and hiked on different trails, which I surprisingly found relaxing and stress relieving. I enjoyed it so much that I've decided to incorporate hiking into my weekly routine.

Hiking with my family also tied into some other supposed hobbies of Capri-

corns.

One of them was spending time and talking with family, which recently I've gotten the chance to do a lot of. Another activity was cooking, which I have also been doing often with my family.

Next, I saw that Capricorns are supposed to enjoy manicures. Because so many businesses are closed right now, I decided to paint my nails at home alone. Even though it wasn't a very significant change, it gave me something to do and was a nice way to pass the time.

Another apparent pastime I saw was reading, which I was excited about.

Ever since I was young, I've always enjoyed reading, but I didn't have much time to read for pleasure as my school workload got harder.

But as a senior, I've found a lot more free time and I've been able to read many more books.

I got "Jane Eyre" and read it every night before bed, which is definitely a habit that I'm going to continue (even though I can never stop after I start, which ruins my sleep schedule).

In terms of food, Capricorns are supposed to enjoy coffee and chamomile tea. I began drinking a lot more tea over winter break, although I didn't feel many differences from it.

As for coffee, I didn't need some random website to tell me that I like coffee — I've been a regular coffee drinker for years now and don't plan on stopping anytime

soon.

As accurate as a lot of the information was, there were also some points that were not entirely accurate. I read that Capricorns should enjoy creating to-do lists and bullet journaling.

Unfortunately, bullet journaling is not my forte, and I most likely cannot maintain a long term to-do list to save my life.

And for the highlight of my week: my power color.

Capricorns' power color turns out to be dark blue, which apparently represents "depth of intelligence, and also speaks to the intensity lying below Capricorn's smooth surface."

I decided to incorporate my color in a creative way: my outfits.

For the whole week, I wore dark blue colors. I'm not going to lie, it did get pretty exhausting to only pick out blue towards the end of the week, but it was a fun challenge nevertheless.

On the first day, I wore a dark blue crewneck; my second day I wore a blue zip-up hoodie.

On Wednesday, I wore a dark blue jean jacket, and on Thursday, I wore blue jeans. For my last day, I wore the iconic Saratoga Falcon sweatpants.

Following my horoscope for a week has led me to some pastimes and hobbies that I really enjoy, but overall, I still believe that horoscopes should not be made out to be as big of a deal as people make them out to be. ♦

topten

THINGS TO DO AFTER COVID-19

- 10 **Hit the gym.** But, like, for real this time.
- 9 **Go to the movies.** Yes, I simply cannot wait to spend another \$20 for popcorn and drinks.
- 8 **Attempt awkward handshakes.** Bonus points if you miss.
- 7 **Eat dine-in foods.** Beware: waiters will now be able to spit in your food.
- 6 **Go to a Warriors game.** Now you can watch Kelly Oubre Jr. miss 3's in person.
- 5 **Shop for new clothes.** Unfortunately, you can't turn your camera off in real life.
- 4 **Throw your mask away in the trash.** (This post was made by the anti-maskers gang.)
- 3 **Play more League of Legends.** Who cares that we can go outside now? The grind doesn't stop.
- 2 **Hang out with other human beings.** Sorry, introverts.
- 1 **Attend in-person school.** Right. Almost forgot about that one.

- Andy Chen and Justin Guo