



Alum becomes youngest First Marine Division Band drum major.



Saratoga's Madronia Cemetery holds rich history.



Boys' basketball team wins four straight to start league season.



THE saratogafalcon

AN INDEPENDENT HIGH SCHOOL PUBLICATION

Friday, January 28, 2022

Saratoga High School Saratoga, CA

Vol. 62, No. 6

OMICRON WAVE SHIFTS POLICIES

BY VictoriaHu & SarahZhou

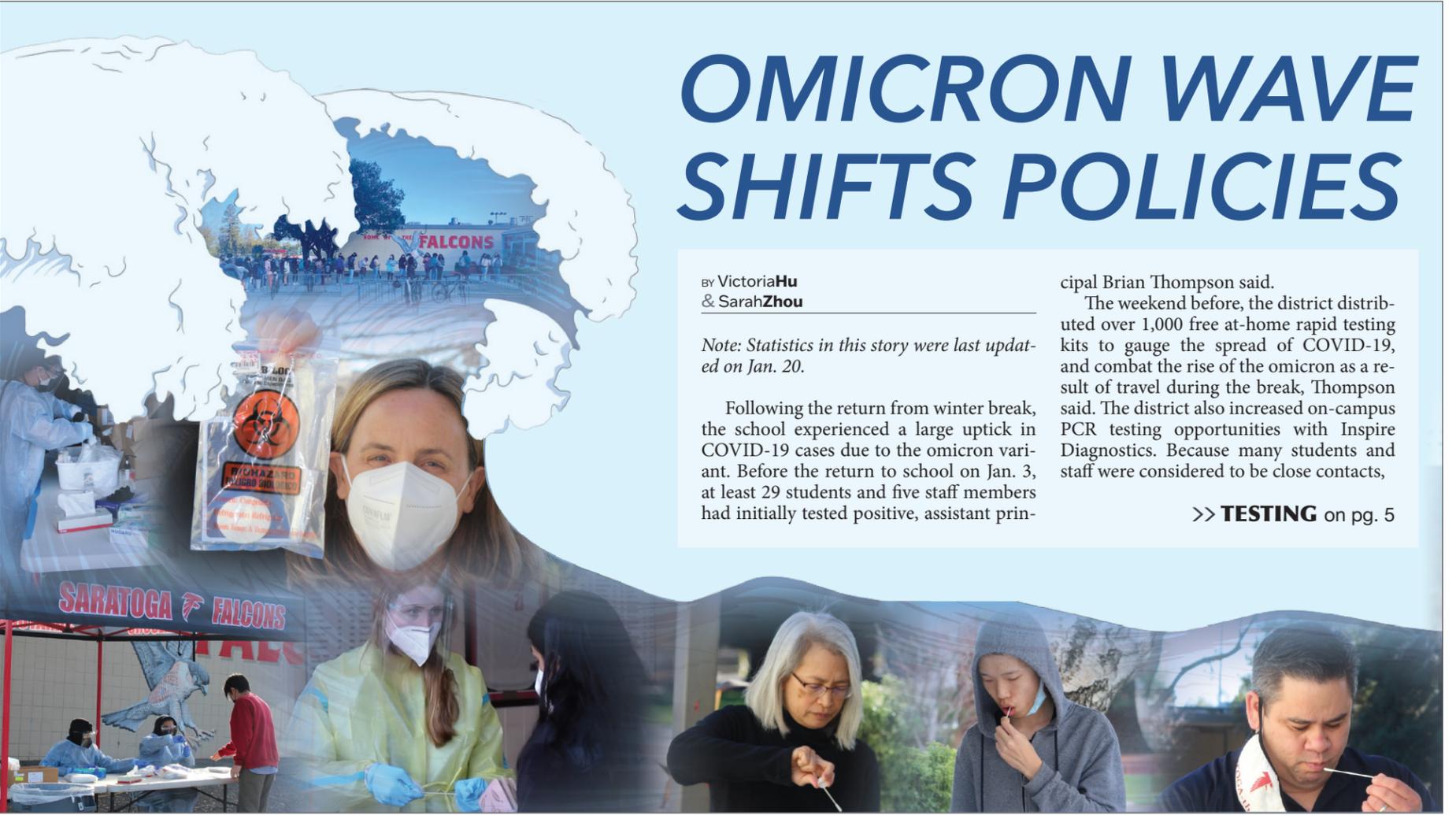
Note: Statistics in this story were last updated on Jan. 20.

Following the return from winter break, the school experienced a large uptick in COVID-19 cases due to the omicron variant. Before the return to school on Jan. 3, at least 29 students and five staff members had initially tested positive, assistant prin-

icipal Brian Thompson said.

The weekend before, the district distributed over 1,000 free at-home rapid testing kits to gauge the spread of COVID-19, and combat the rise of the omicron as a result of travel during the break, Thompson said. The district also increased on-campus PCR testing opportunities with Inspire Diagnostics. Because many students and staff were considered to be close contacts,

>> **TESTING** on pg. 5



FALCON // SELINA CHEN, ANDREW LIN, MINA YEAP, SARAH ZHOU

12- to 15-year-olds receive boosters after approval

BY SelinaChen & SanjoliGupta

The school partnered with Safeway to host a COVID-19 Vaccination and Booster Clinic on Jan. 22, following the Center for Disease Control (CDC)'s approval earlier in the month of Pfizer-BioNTech booster shots for 12- to 15-year olds.

Students who have just become eligible are now receiving their boosters to enhance protection against the omicron variant; however, the surge of positive cases due to omicron has also thrown students into an unexpected dilemma with current policies.

Sophomore Nidhi Vadlamudi, 15, is

making plans with her parents to get the booster shot.

"Getting the booster shot is the best way to control the spread of [COVID-19], and extra immunity is the best way to combat new variants," Vadlamudi said.

According to the Harvard Gazette, the purpose of a booster shot is to increase the "quantity and quality of antibodies that are produced." These new and matured antibodies can "be more effective at recognizing variants with multiple mutations," thus protecting against omicron.

When it comes to the speed of approving the booster, Vadlamudi sees both sides

>> **BOOSTER** on pg. 5

School to remain in-person unless trends worsen further

BY SarahZhou

New cases can be tracked using the District's COVID-19 Dashboard.

Despite the rise of the highly transmissible new omicron variant, the district said that Saratoga and Los Gatos High Schools are unlikely to return to remote learning. District leaders say they are following all COVID-19 Safety Guidelines established by the County Health Department and Office of Education in an attempt to ensure students remain healthy and in classes.

The district currently partners with Inspire Diagnostics to host biweekly PCR testing for all students and staff at both schools,

and though there has yet to be a severe outbreak, it has prepared a contingency plan to transition online in the case of one, assistant principal Brian Thompson said.

A community outbreak, according to the CA School COVID Safety website, occurs when "three or more people with COVID-19 within a 14-day period have had identifiable connections to each other at school." Returning to remote learning is a decision that would be made by the Santa Clara County Department of Public Health and the Santa Clara County Office of Education, not the district, said Thompson.

"The site itself does not have the ability to

>> **ONLINE** on pg. 5

Community mourns loss of 23-year teacher Todd Dwyer

BY ChristinaChang & AtreyDesai

The school is mourning the death of longtime teacher Todd Dwyer, who passed away at age 60 on Dec. 10.

Dwyer carved a unique career path and held occupations ranging from military service to a construction worker to a social studies teacher. He is survived by his mother, brother, wife, children and

granddaughter.

Throughout his 23 years at the school, Dwyer was known for his firebrand personality and strongly held views. He gave numerous interviews to both the newspaper and yearbook student journalists over the years and expressed his own opinions published in the Mercury News.

>> **DWYER** on pg. 4

NONPROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE
PAID
HAYWARD CA
PERMIT #3335

Los Gatos-Saratoga Union Joint High School District
SARATOGA CA 95070
20300 HERRIMAN AVE

 newsbriefs

Negotiations result in pay increases for teachers

Following continuous efforts to rally for higher pay in the fall, the members of the District Teachers Association (DTA) came to an agreement with LGSUHSD in December.

The agreement entailed a 5% raise for three consecutive years for a total of 15%, along with improvements to dental and vision healthcare plans.

The chief negotiator representing Saratoga High and Los Gatos High teachers was Marcy Cooper, a teacher at Los Gatos High, while the chief negotiator for the district was associate superintendent Carrie Bosco.

Teachers said their salaries in recent years weren't close to matching inflation and fell far short compared to other local districts, like Santa Clara and Mountain View-Los Altos.

While most teachers voted in favor of the agreement, roughly a third voted against it, including history teacher Mike Davey.

"We didn't get the average raise we wanted, even though it's not the fault of our negotiators," Davey said. "The district played hardball and they won. I'm really disappointed."

For her part, Bosco said this was the largest total raise provided in the district at any time and is much larger than those granted by most other local districts in recent years.

"This recognizes the skill and dedication of our staff and keeps our total compensation highly competitive in the area," Bosco said.

— Christina Chang and Martin Xu

District maintains bell schedule for second semester

After receiving negative teacher and student feedback for the first semester bell schedule that lacks a daily tutorial, district leaders sent a survey to the students, parents and staff members at both campuses before winter break to gauge which schedule changes the stakeholders would like to see. There were three options, some with shorter passing periods and others with daily tutorials or consistent end times.

On Dec. 15, superintendent Mike Grove announced that the fall bell schedule would carry over to the spring semester after 50.5 percent of all respondents preferred to stick with the current one.

Grove said the decision to maintain the status quo was aimed at preventing pressure on teachers with their tight schedules. Additionally, changing the bell schedule immediately was not an urgent demand from most stakeholders.

Even though the district chose to stay with the current bell schedule for the spring semester, a new bell schedule that includes a daily tutorial is likely for next year. By state law, it will maintain an 8:30 start time.

— Andrew Lin and Nikhil Mathihalli

Newly credentialed teacher hired in social studies

After recently graduating from San Jose State University's Teacher Credential program, social studies teacher Bismah Siddiqi was hired as a long-term sub in January to teach the classes of longtime teacher Todd Dwyer, who passed away suddenly and unexpectedly in December.

Siddiqi teaches four periods of world geography and one period of economics. She hopes to quickly get settled and help her students to the best of her abilities.

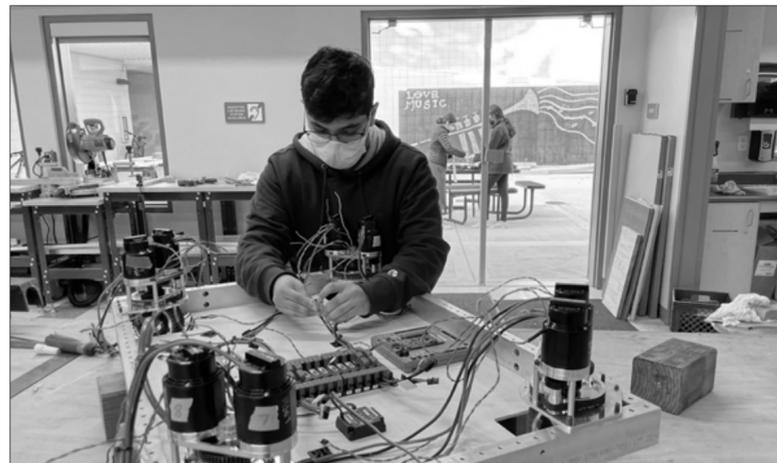
Before getting her teaching credential, she attended and graduated from California Polytechnic State University with a Bachelor of Science in Anthropology and Geography and a Master's degree in Multicultural Education.

Siddiqi said she has always wanted to become a teacher. Not only does she enjoy the process of lesson planning, presenting and talking to students, but her parents also emphasized the importance of education early on in her life, which left a great impression on her.

"The students here seem ready to learn and engage in class which I appreciate as a teacher," she said.

— Martin Xu

picturethis



Courtesy of SHEEBA GARG

Robotics | Senior Shreyas Rana connects the robot circuitry to ready a prototype drivetrain for the software team to test with on Jan. 17; the team recently attended the FRC kick-off on the week of Jan. 8.

Speak Up For Change announces this year's theme: Stepping Forward

THE EVENT, WHICH WILL OCCUR OUTDOORS DURING TUTORIAL ON FEB. 4, REVOLVES AROUND DESTIGMATIZING MENTAL HEALTH

by Christina Chang & Lynn Dai

During the 2022 Speak Up for Change assembly on Feb. 4, students will share their experiences overcoming adversity related to the theme "Stepping Forward," which emphasizes the importance of openly discussing mental health in order to break its stigma. The event is slated to take place outdoors during tutorial.

Each year, the Speak Up For Change commissioners submit three themes to the school's administrators and ASB, who then choose one theme for the event.

"Stepping Forward," the theme that was chosen, is also our favorite, so we're really excited," senior outreach commissioner Catherine Kan said. "Last year's event was virtual, so there wasn't much participation. Our speakers are really great, so I'm also pumped that we're going to have a crowd this year."

Kan said this year's Speak Up For Change was more difficult to plan compared to previous years because the commission is far more limited, with commissioners split between outreach (the commission responsible for hosting Speak Up For Change) and other leadership branches. She and senior Alex Yang — another commissioner — had to enlist additional officers from leadership groups to work with them.

According to Yang, they selected the theme of mental health because the youth mental health crisis has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Last year, Speak Up For Change was held live over YouTube, a platform that Yang said "lost the intimacy" of being able to actively engage with and relate to students' experiences.

"We hope that the event will make students feel more connected and comfortable in the school environment," Yang said. "For me, seeing the upperclassmen talk about their struggles throughout

high school boosted my confidence. I saw that these stellar kids who seemed to achieve so much without any problems also struggled as well, and that sort of realization brings our school community together."

Since the event is in person this year, commissioners also encouraged clubs to participate in order to increase the inclusivity of the event, as well as encouraging different parts of the school to work together. Clubs like Sources of Strength, Singing for Smiles, Crafting Club, Yoga for All Club, LEO Club and Chinese Club will be providing activities to boost wellness throughout the event, which starts on Jan. 31.

Chinese Club, for example, is hosting performances to simultaneously celebrate the 2022 Lunar New Year on Feb. 1. Sources of Strength will be making wellness posters and putting them up around the school.

The commission has tried to avoid "commercializing the event" in an inconsiderate way.

While commissioners posted a speaker sign-up QR code on the @semicolonsaratoga Instagram page, Yang said the commission team has tried to avoid "commercializing the event" in an inconsiderate way, as topics like mental health are sensitive.

Instead, each commissioner reached out to specific students they felt would be comfortable speaking and invited them as speakers for the event.

Senior Raya Khanna and juniors Ishir Lakhani, Allison Tan, Jasmine Ispasiou and Elsa Blom are among the featured speakers.

Khanna said she had been hard on herself for not putting much effort into changing the community around her for a long time, so she

decided to speak up at the event to share what she has gone through.

Her speech will revolve around how her mental health experience has affected her over the course of high school and how she has worked to overcome it.

"You're usually not the only one who's going through something. A lot of people relate to you, even if you don't recognize it."

SENIOR Alex Yang



Yang

ICAC plan Bombay in the Bay show amid Omicron

by MeherBhatnagar & NikhilMathihalli

The Indian Cultural Awareness Club (ICAC) officers are planning to be under the bright lights of the McAfee Center again next month with their annual Bollywood show, Bombay in the Bay (BNB), on Feb. 17, 18 and 19.

Last year, due to COVID-19, audience members watched a pre-recorded show from their cars at the SHS parking lot.

While planning to have everyone wear masks and be safe in the theater, officers recognize the rapidly spreading omicron variant could force a change of plans. According to senior officer Alaina Srivastav, they are planning alternative show ideas, such as performing on the football field or pre-recording and live streaming the show like last year.

A typical BNB show consists of 18 dances — grade-level dances and specialty dances including Tamasha, Classical, Singing and Bhangra — paired with an ongoing skit throughout the show.

This year, the skit will be based on the Bollywood movie "Dil Dhadakne Do." Each grade hosts a boys, girls and co-ed performance. The seniors also hold all-girls

dance (AGD) and all-males dance (AMD), which are selectively for seniors who have performed all throughout their high school years.

Tickets for the show will cost \$15 and will be open for sale online in late January.

Similar to last year, practices are still being held outdoors with masks on. Showing vaccination cards may also be mandated before audience members enter the event.

The funds from the show, obtained from the ticket prices and the food profits, will go toward the Tamil Nadu foundation, which supports underfunded government schools in India. They provide resources like laptops, computers, better instructors and better facilities.

The public schools there suffer a lack of basic technology or working bathrooms, said senior club officer Kavya Narayan, saying, "We helped them [the Tamil Nadu foundation] out a few years ago and they were a really easy charity to work with. They even had someone fly out to watch our performance a few years ago."

Along with this effort, the other money raised throughout the year through samosa fundraisers and other sponsors will go directly to the tech crew, onstage expenses and McAfee Center rental.



FALCON // SANJOLI GUPTA

The sophomore class rehearses their co-ed dance on Jan. 20 in preparation for the show.

Senior club officer Adithya Peruvemba has also planned out where the money will go if the show is virtual. Instead of renting the McAfee Center and accounting for onstage expenses, the funds would go to renting

out a projector and projection screen and hosting a drive-in show.

Though Peruvemba has accounted for several scenarios, he remains hopeful about the upcoming show. ♦

Junior, senior class offices prepare in-person prom

by NicoleLu & SarahZhou

The start of the second semester marks the beginning of one of the biggest projects for the junior and senior class officers: planning a combined junior and senior prom. It will be the first combined prom in recent memory and a model the school plans to follow in the future.

"We're still just getting started, but our main goal is to make sure that the seniors have their time to shine," junior class treasurer and secretary Allison Tan said. "We want to make sure they get everything that they would hope for, especially because they didn't have a junior prom."

Both class officer groups will tour prospective venues with their respective class advisers — guidance counselor Monique

Young and administrative assistant Julia Peck for the seniors and U.S. history teacher Faith Daly for juniors — to help them communicate with all potential vendors and make sure they cover all bases, senior class vice president Kaylie Wong said.

Though planning for prom began in October, most details, including venue, date and theme, will be finalized this semester in collaboration with the DJ and caterer to properly coordinate the event.

"Senior class does get the final say, but we do take into consideration the junior class's opinions because they are paying for some parts of the prom," Wong said.

When making decisions, class officers are considering the rise in COVID-19 cases. For example, they had to rule out some venues due to location or size.

"I think that we're definitely a bit scared

that our venue might need to be changed again because the guidelines are always changing," Tan said. "We had to make sure that our venue was outside. I think that it might be subject to change due to COVID-19 protocols, so it's a bit stressful having the venue decision still up in the air."

In addition to cases, the class office budget is limited as compared to past years, Wong said. While fundraising traditionally came from in-person parent nights at the beginning of the school year, this year's virtual parent night caused a subsequent decrease in revenue.

"We have a lot less money going into prom as previous senior classes would, so we just have to take that into account with ticket prices and everything," senior class president Apurva Chakravarthy said. "Not having the in-person experience of plan-

ning community events for the past one and a half years is really hard because you hit the ground running during the biggest year of high school."

In spite of these challenges, the success of recent fundraisers and initiatives this year, such as selling boba in the quad, has brought back hope. Along the way, the senior class officers have found solace and support from their advisers, other class officers and each other.

"I'm proud of my senior class office," Wong said. "Besides [Chakravarthy] and [senior class treasurer and secretary Cheryl Wu], the rest of the senior class office is new. Even though we don't exactly have the strongest background in class office, we're still able to work together and come up with a lot of fun ideas. I think we've been working really well together." ♦

Seniors share experience with early college applications

by ChristopherChen & LynnDai

Every fall, thousands of high school students across the globe scramble to apply early decision and early action to their dream schools — according to the 2020-21 Common Data Set, many universities reported an increase of over 10 percent in admissions from the pool of students who applied early decision or early action over those who applied regular decision last year.

In the early action application, students can apply to multiple schools and receive their decisions earlier, typically in mid-December to mid-January. Early decision (ED) applications are similar, but the agreement is binding and students may only apply to one school for ED.

Students applying restricted early action may only apply to one private school, but if accepted, they are under no obligation to attend.

On top of managing schoolwork, these seniors have to plan out their essays, interviews and set aside enough time to research programs offered at their prioritized list of schools. So how do they do it?

For a senior who prefers to remain anonymous, categorizing essay prompts into groups of similar topics was key to maintain efficiency. Northwestern-bound, double-majoring in Computer Science and Applied Mathematics and minoring in Musical Composition, he said that switching between essays and the course load from

classes, helped him avoid burnout.

His sister gave him a guideline for researching schools during the summer and he wrote most of his essays the week before applications were due.

In order to manage stress from school, parents and friends, however, he said that removed his mom from getting involved in the college application process.

"I didn't have a college counselor, and realized that my mom had the biggest amount of pressure on me," the senior said. "She offered good advice but was simultaneously insulting me, but it reached a point where she took it too far."

Even so, the senior was able to reach out for guidance from his sister, an undergraduate at UC Berkeley.

While his parents encouraged him to pursue a major in Computer Science, he was more interested in mathematics, having participated in math tournaments since elementary school and completed all advanced math courses at De Anza and West Valley College.

He found it thrilling to do math in a time limit at competitions that had no effect on his grades. After tutoring two years at Afficent, a Silicon Valley-startup focused on education, the senior discovered his knack for helping other students.

"Teaching math also helped me understand how to interact and communicate with people more because not every student

has the same approach for learning. Math has helped me explore the world around me," he said.

Although Massachusetts Institute of Technology was his longtime dream school, he wanted to find a school that had a good balance of both music and STEM — Northwestern's Bienen School of Music, Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences and McCormick School of Engineering were the perfect match.

"I really put a lot of effort into the schools I cared about," he said. "After I researched more about the niche parts of the major programs at Northwestern, I could see myself applying to it."

Having played piano since he was 7, the senior was interested in music composition, which would allow him to access the treasure trove of musicians at the school.

Along with him, senior Arnav Shah has had a long-standing interest in medicine, specifically in pediatrics, and found biology the perfect major to delve deeper into the field. However, he still wanted the freedom to explore other fields.

"I really love that Boston University lets me explore a lot of options within the first couple of years without committing to a specific major," Shah said.

After exploring BU's programs and campus, essentially the city with buildings integrated into the long stretch of Commonwealth Avenue, Shah was excited to apply.

"I spoke with my friend at Boston this year who gave me a virtual tour," he said. "While I could not travel to Boston due to the pandemic, seeing her housing at the brownstones and hearing about her exciting experiences living downtown deepened my interest in the school."

Shah will likely need to adjust to the drastically different climate in Boston, but he is excited to have snow and "see all four seasons." BU's location also places it close to many other universities, like Northeastern University and Tufts University, which his friends have applied to or are applying to.

"I'm excited that we might be able to still be really good friends for each other," he said.

The university's Bollywood dance team is another attraction for Shah.

"Over the four years in high school, Bollywood dancing has become a huge passion of mine," he said. "I am currently the captain of the competitive Bollywood dance team, Tamasha. I definitely want to continue dancing at Boston."

Another appealing element that struck out to Shah is Boston's travel abroad opportunities, which offer "70+ programs, 20+ cities, and 15+ countries" in locations like Spain and Australia. The Madrid Science Program in particular suited him well, having studied Spanish since 8th grade.

"After living a somewhat sheltered life in Saratoga, I hope to have the opportunity to understand the world through the lens of other cultures," he said. ♦

DWYER

continued from pg. 1

Distracted and unfocused as a teen, Dwyer dropped out of Wilcox High School in his junior year. Nobody he knew had gone to college, so he said he had no incentive to pursue higher education. Though he initially did not want to enlist in the U.S. army, he had no other options.

In the Army, Dwyer served in a variety of roles. He was first stationed at Fort Louis, Wash., in May 1978 as an intelligence analyst.

As a part of 19th Infantry Division, his task was to examine the military situation, create possible ways to extract the 54 Americans trapped in the embassy and prevent American military technology from crossing the Iran-Soviet Union border.

He continued to work in the military intelligence division until May 1981 and gathered intelligence for other crises including the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, before being transferred to Pyeongtaek, South Korea under special duty at a U.S. post office.

He spent his final six months in the military at Fort Riley, Kansas, before being honorably discharged after his three years of service.

Returning to civilian life, Dwyer worked as a grocery clerk at Alpha Beta, now known as

Lucky's. Unsatisfied with the job, he even had a stint as a bartender for a couple years before going on to be a glazier for the cladding service, Walters and Wolf.

Realizing the importance of a college education, Dwyer went back to school at De Anza College for four years. He later transferred to UC Davis and pursued a double major in international relations and history for three more years.

After studying under inspiring professors in college, Dwyer was interested in experiencing the other side of the classroom.

“The thing I took away from Dwyer's class was his passion for economics”

TEACHER Erick Rector

Dwyer's legacy: his impact on students and colleagues

Dwyer started off his teaching career with one year as a history teacher at Wilcox High School, his alma mater. Due to his students' lack of interest, he did not enjoy the school's environment.

In 1998, Dwyer's friend showed him an ad in The Mercury News for a mid-year job opening at Saratoga High. He applied for it and

got it; he would remain a teacher at SHS until his passing in 2021.

Dwyer taught English teacher Erick Rector over the summer of 1999 when Rector enrolled in a six-week-long economics course.

“As a student, the thing I took away from Dwyer's class was his passion for economics. He loved it,” Rector said. “And when you listened to his lectures, if you were able to understand everything he said, it was enlightening.”

However, Rector's favorite memory of Dwyer was after he returned to teach at SHS in 2006.

A number of years ago, Dwyer had shown up to Rector's English 9 class by chance as he was walking by.

The class had been learning about “Romeo and Juliet,” and Dwyer came into the room and delivered a theatrical rendition of Friar Laurence's speech.

“It was fantastic. I asked him to come in and deliver it basically every year since, and he did,” Rector said. “It was something that he had memorized before and just something he really liked.”

Guidance counselor Eileen Allen, another SHS graduate, also had Dwyer as her economics teacher in the 2000-2001 school year. She recalls her best memories of Dwyer were of his “fiery lectures.”

Allen said Dwyer taught his econ classes like college lectures. She noted that Dwyer often used



Graphic by AITREY DESAI

Counter-clockwise from top to bottom: Todd Dwyer stands under a 16,000 pound piece of glass when earning money for his second year at UC Davis. Dwyer teaches his World Geography class about the different control zones in the Middle East on Oct. 25. A young Dwyer smiling.

the phrase: “Folks, you can't pick your parents.”

Assistant principal Matthew Torrens remembers Dwyer's kind and caring side.

“When one of our SHS teachers' houses was devastated by the Santa Cruz fires, several of us went to help fix up the house,” Torrens said. “Mr. Dwyer was one of the first to arrive and the last to leave.”

Allen said that she will remember

him as a “fascinating and impactful teacher, because that is when he was happiest and at his best.”

“Despite him having many personal challenges in the more recent years that I knew him, I truly believe he did change the world for the better as a teacher at Saratoga,” Allen said. “He made a lot of us more empathetic, engaged and open minded.”

January 28, 2022

January 28, 2022

BOOSTER

continued from pg. 1

of the argument. While she believes that getting the booster can effectively slow the spread of the virus as vaccine efficacy wears off — especially among those who spend a lot of time at school in close proximity to other students — she recognizes that there is a substantial number of people, such as experts from Mayo Clinic, who believe the booster was approved too quickly.

“I think [medical professionals] should have approved it a lot faster because people keep getting sick,” she said. “But there's also a lot of people who won't get the vaccine because they think it was approved too fast without being tested, so spending time on it was important to gain trust.”

Assistant principal Matt Torrens said that holding clinics at school encourages staff and students to get the booster shot, and makes it more convenient and accessible.

When it comes to classrooms, he said that having many people indoors at once creates a risky environment; despite the ventilation system the school provides in classrooms, many students are still testing positive.

“We're trying to minimize the impact that COVID-19 might have on learning,” Torrens said.

For 16- and 17-year-olds, the CDC approved the booster shots on Dec. 9, and older students have been gradually getting their shots.

Senior Miwa Okumura and her mother made an appointment online at Walgreens after they struggled to find a walk-in booster shot at a clinic near her home due to conflict with school hours.

They received their shots a week later on Jan. 6 after a 40-minute wait at the clinic, an experience Okumura described as frustrating.

However, Okumura was told on the day of her appointment that she was a close contact of a friend who tested positive for COVID-19, having sat next to and shared food with them a day prior.

She still received her shot despite guidelines, such as Kaiser's, asking people to certify that they have not been a close contact for 10 days, on top of the CDC's five-day quarantine for close contacts.

“I understand there's a medical reason for us not to get the booster shot if we're a close contact, but it's frustrating that we [technically] can't get the booster shot — which is needed right now,” Okumura said.

She said that her foremost motivation for getting the booster shot is that she wants to contribute to curbing the pandemic.

She also wants better immunity because she plans to travel to Japan this summer to see her father.

“He's had a long string of successes [against] schools we had no business playing with.”

ADMIN Matt Torrens

One of Lugo's hallmarks as a coach was in creating innovative offenses that could rack up 40 or 50 points a game.

“Our reputation is of being an offensive powerhouse, and that's thanks to him,” assistant principal Matt Torrens said. “The numbers our quarterbacks put up have been tremendous. He's had a long string of successes with football teams that have competed with Wilcox, Paly, Los Gatos, schools we had no business playing with.”

Lugo's coaching legacy also includes multiple CCS appearances as well as the Falcons' historic 21-17 home win over Los Gatos in 2010, the first and only regular season victory over their cross-district rivals since the 1980s.

Though senior captain Parsa Hashemi said he is sad to see Lugo go — considering Lugo's bond with the team and the years of experience he's acquired — he is still optimistic for the future of the SHS football program.

“I wish [Lugo] the best of luck and future success at Mountain View,” Hashemi said.

SHS parent steps up to fill in as English teacher

BY Jonny Lugo

After her husband was hired for a job late last semester that required him to frequently travel, veteran English 9 and 10 teacher Kelly Wissolik began trying to figure out how she was going to care for her two young children and teach three English classes.

Ultimately, she made the decision to leave the school where she has taught for more than two decades, although she hopes that she can eventually resume working in the profession in a few years once her children are older.

Replacing Wissolik as a long-term substitute for this semester is Andrew Dimock, a Saratoga High parent who has an extensive background in English and teaching. His younger daughter Hannah is a sophomore, and his older daughter Katie is a 2021 alumna.



Dimock

Dimock graduated from Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, with a Bachelor of Arts in the humanities, where he studied classical and modern literature.

Following his time at college, he taught English at a private girls' high school in Providence, R.I., and social studies at Amherst Regional High School in Massachusetts, where he once attended school.

To further explore his interest in English, Dimock attended Yale University for his master's degree in English and English literature, focusing on American fiction and poetry in the 19th and 20th century.

During his time at Yale, Dimock served as a teaching assistant, where he met with undergraduates in small discussion

sessions after lectures.

After Dimock passed his qualifying exam and earned a Master of Philosophy, Dimock was able to teach his own classes as a faculty instructor rather than a professor.

Dimock was unable to finish his PhD program because of the move. Still, Dimock continued to pursue his passion in English.

“I taught a class [at Stanford as a teaching fellow] called ‘Hollywood Goes to War,’ focusing on silent movies about WWI and contemporary times, too,” Dimock said. “I really like to incorporate film in my classes when I can because I think it complements [literature] really nicely.”

However, as his wife's job became busier, Dimock needed to leave full-time teaching and become the primary caregiver for their children.

Four years ago, Dimock's family moved to Saratoga and he began to take on roles in the schools, including the Redwood Middle School cross country team coach and a member of the Executive Board of the Saratoga Music Boosters for the past two years.

His first experience as a long-term substitute was for a biology teacher at Los Gatos High School who was on medical leave.

Along with now teaching Wissolik's three classes — two English 9s and one English 10 — Dimock is continuing to act as an emergency substitute for other classes, which is especially important in current situations.

Dimock has enjoyed seeing the English curriculum from a teacher's perspective, whereas he used to look at it from a parental perspective.

“I sort of watched the English

curriculum and grades nine and ten from a parental perspective, and I even read or reread many books in the curriculum,” Dimock said. “So, when the opportunity came up, I was in a great position to leverage it.”

Because of his strong background in classical literature, the transition from Wissolik to Dimock was relatively smooth.

For example, he has prior experience teaching “The Odyssey,” the next book in the English 9 curriculum, to students ranging from the middle school to college level.

For Dimock, being a long term-substitute has brought many positive changes, including being able to build relationships with students, something he normally cannot do as a short-term substitute.

Dimock added that he “got glee from being able to decorate the classroom” with some of his own items and that he enjoyed being able to return to favorite classics including “All Quiet on the Western Front” that his sophomore class is currently reading.

Dimock said that he is thankful for the support he has received from his fellow English teachers, who have shared activities and assignments with him.

Along with subbing, Dimock plans to pursue a teaching credential program, which will begin this summer, and he hopes to find employment with the district or another nearby one.

“If the first week was any indication, I feel like I'm really in the right place,” Dimock said in early January. “I've done many different things, but all of them have involved teaching in one way or another, and this really feels right. I have a lot that I want to share about literature.”

Lugo takes job at Mountain View

BY Andrew Lin

After 14 years here, well-respected head football coach and P.E. teacher Tim Lugo has moved to Mountain View High as their new athletic director, head football coach and PE teacher.

Lugo said declining football participation in recent years was his primary reason for leaving his job here. This past season, there were only 17 players on the varsity team by the end of the season.

Lugo noted that the lack of a full JV team this past year led to inexperienced players joining varsity, many of whom were unable to properly bond and learn to play with one another.

“If you don't have that brotherhood — everybody rowing the boat in the same direction — it doesn't work well,” Lugo said.

He recalls a trip the football team took to Lake Tahoe years ago. While the players initially underperformed and were uncoordinated, after four days of eating meals and consistently playing together, their teamwork improved and they were far more successful on the field, beginning a winning tradition.

“The more you sweat, grind and hurt together, the easier it is,” Lugo said. “All the hours in the weight room and all the conditioning we do in the summer to get ready for the season is a shared experience, and that unity brings [the team] together.”

Another reason Lugo is departing is that the Mountain View-Los Altos district has a significantly higher salary schedule than LGSUHSD, even after the salary increase that the district recently agreed to with teachers.

Although Lugo values the connection he built with his students and fellow teachers over his many years here, he said that his dedi-

TESTING

continued from pg. 1

over 1,000 PCR tests were administered the week of Jan. 3-7, and over 1,300 tests occurred during the week of Jan. 10-14. Although district policy changed on Jan. 15 to consider all students and staff who regularly visit campus to be close contacts, during the first two weeks, students identified as close contacts were asked to test twice — one test as soon as possible and another five days after. The testing revealed another nine student cases and two staff cases in the first week after break, 31 student cases and three staff cases in the second week back and at least 12 student cases and six staff cases in the third week for a total of 81 student and 16 staff cases, respectively.

With the rise in cases, multiple on-campus activities have been affected — including the varsity boys' basketball team having to postpone a game against Los Altos on Jan. 7, due to two positive cases. Increasing teacher absences, especially at Los Gatos High, have also exacerbated an ongoing substitute teacher shortage; a district email sent out by superintendent Michael Grove on Jan. 15 implored parents with bachelor's degrees to apply as emergency substitute teachers.

In the same email, the district announced that all students and staff who came to campus are now considered close contacts. Thus, the school has shifted its COVID-19 exposure policy; students will no longer receive emails if they are exposed to a positive case.

Between Jan. 14 and Feb. 11, the school will instead implement weekly testing rather than continue their current exposure notification process. During the week following this announcement, 505 students were tested on Jan. 18 and an additional 377 students were tested on Jan. 20.

This policy revision is in accordance with the California Department of Public Health's Jan. 12 guidance update for TK-12 schools with wide-scale exposure and the Santa Clara County Public Health Department and Office of Education's Jan. 14 decision to consider all on-campus individuals close contacts.

“The volume [of close contact notifications] has become unmanageable and quite honestly, given the frequency of these notifications, they have become meaningless in practice,” Grove said in his announcement. This policy change stems from instanc-

es such as Jan. 11, where over 800 students and staff were tested at school as a result of being in close contact. However, with limited time slots to test, students were forced to wait in long lines and often missed a significant amount of class time. In science teacher Cheryl Lenz's first-period Chemistry Honors class, for instance, over half the class raised their hands when she asked for students who needed to take a PCR test that day. Lenz decided to send them to wait in line near the beginning of class, “mistakenly thinking they could get ahead of everyone else,” she said. As a result, the majority of Lenz's students missed over half an hour of class, due to long lines snaking around the small gym and through campus hallways.

To accommodate students who were testing, Lenz had to reschedule a quiz for the next class. She also recorded herself working on example problems to post on Canvas for students who had missed class.

“There was a little stress because the main thing I really wanted to make sure of was to get to the lab that I couldn't postpone,” Lenz said.

Though long waiting times disrupted her plans, Lenz believes the school has done its best with testing under the circumstances, she said.

“If we had PCR testing daily, then we could schedule it and have different grades or classes test at different times,” Lenz said. “That'd be great. But because Inspire Diagnostics is only here two days a week, they're trying to squeeze everyone in during those times.”

Besides Lenz, many students found the long wait times to be inefficient. Sophomore Hannah Munson found the close contact testing system to be “tedious and frustrating,” stating that being gone from class caused students to miss important class material. Though testing times take place during school, the majority of those hours are during class. She feels that even if a teacher permits students to get tested during their class, being gone for a short amount of time from class can still cause students to miss important information.

“Having only two days [of testing] likely adds to the delay in when results get back,” Munson said. “If results start taking more than 36-48 hours to come back, that's still enough time for someone who is positive to go to school and possibly spread COVID. Seven hundred tests on one day versus 300 tests over the span of two or three days could probably make a major difference.”

ZOOM

continued from pg. 1

make the decision to shut down our school and return to remote learning,” Thompson said.

In an announcement emailed on Jan. 15, superintendent Michael Grove detailed information regarding the current status of remote learning plans.

Emergency Orders issued by the State of California allowing school districts to switch to remote learning at any time based on local conditions expired in summer of 2021, Grove said.

“Under current law, all school districts are required to offer in-person instruction to all students and to offer an Independent Study (IS) option for students who do not want to attend school in-person due to Covid concerns,” Grove said. “Our district has provided both of these options to students since August. The AB 130 IS program comes with a plethora of requirements including having individualized contracts and intake meetings for each student and requiring parental consent to participate in IS.”

According to the Mercury News, Public Health Director Sara Cody encouraged schools not to go online because “remote learning doesn't support [students'] mental health, emotional health and academic well-being nearly the way that in-person learning does.”

LGSUHSD will continue to remain in-person unless more staff members are unable to teach than there are substitute teachers available, Thompson said. The district's plan to shift to remote learning,

which is similar to the format of the 2020-21 school year, would need to be approved by both Santa Clara County Office of Education and the State of California. Though the school does still plan on continuing current COVID-19 guidelines and in-person instruction, some students believe that further restrictions should be implemented.

For sophomore Maithreyi Bharathi, who tested positive for COVID-19 after coming back from winter break, transitioning school online would have made schoolwork more convenient while she was out.

“I think anyone with symptoms should have to stay home. I know they already say to do that, but people don't really want to because they could miss school,” Bharathi said. “SHS should improve the online format so people feel comfortable not coming to school. The school is not really incentivizing that currently because school is difficult to follow at home.”

Others believe that a hybrid system, similar to phase 3B last year, or staying in-person while tightening COVID-19 policies may be a better option.

“I think tightening up masking restrictions would be something to do as most students don't wear their masks while outside,” sophomore Jarrett Singh said. “If students were infected with omicron or it became prevalent in the community, I think the school should consider returning to online learning temporarily.”

Math teacher PJ Yim, who was forced to stay home because of COVID protocols, was able to continue instruction with students remotely after needing to quarantine for 12 days. Though he found teaching remotely to be undoubtedly less effective than in-person instruction, Yim was grateful for

On the other hand, senior Parsa Hashemi found the school's COVID-19 testing process to be “rather quick and easy.” He believes that mass testing did “a decent job of keeping the student body safer than we would think.”

Sophomore Maithreyi Bharathi, who tested positive through a rapid test distributed by the school on Jan. 4, added that increased testing was an important preventative measure.

“I'm glad that both the PCR and rapid tests were free,” Bharathi said. “Because the school was asking everyone to test, a lot of cases were revealed, preventing more people from becoming infected.”

Munson much prefers the new weekly testing model over the close contact system. “I think it is better than the close contact testing because it holds opportunities to have better-spaced testing days which would hopefully allow for faster test results,” Munson said.

In addition to weekly testing, Grove's email reported that the district has received “significant quantities” of N95/KN95 masks. They have enough to last the next two months and are expected to receive more, Grove said. Masks are mandated on campus, and the district strongly urges students and staff to use N95/KN95 masks to effectively protect against airborne virus transmission.

On Jan. 21, the school supplied each student with two N95/KN95 masks during sixth period, each to last one week. The district plans to repeat the mask distribution cycle every two weeks, with replacement masks available in the office, Munson believes that providing N95s is a good move on the district's part to support those who cannot buy the masks themselves.

“Of course, the distribution does not mean everyone will wear one or that the spread of COVID-19 will necessarily change, but it's still a good decision,” Munson said.

While he believes that a surge in positive cases is inevitable, Hashemi approves of the administration's efforts in giving free rapid and PCR testing opportunities.

“The school should definitely keep doing what they're doing; the problem is just that [they] can't force kids to take the test,” Hashemi said. “I'm sure a lot of kids unknowingly have it or just don't want to speak up about their symptoms. So a way to crack down on the truths of people's symptoms and for people to take it more seriously would be ideal.”

resources such as Canvas and Zoom. “[When I teach], I'm actively looking at students' eyes. So I don't even like the fact that students have masks on because I only get to see half of their face,” said Yim. “When I'm teaching on Zoom, the pictures are really tiny, so it's even more difficult to read students.”

While he wasn't able to be physically present in class, Yim was able to maintain his class plans with the help of teacher colleagues and substitute teachers.

When comparing his week-long remote teaching experience with the 2020-2021 school year, Yim found that because he already had half a semester to know his students, he was able to connect with them more, even through an online setting.

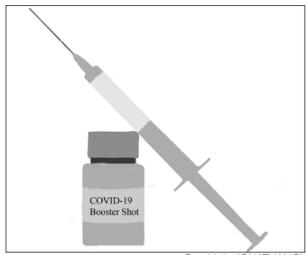
“I saw all of my students live and in-person for all of the first semester,” Yim said. “So in that regard, because I already knew them, being home wasn't that bad.”

Others like senior Lance Wong believe that the school should only return to online instruction as a worst-case scenario.

“I think online learning was unproductive and unfavorable,” Wong said. “Returning to Zoom learning would almost certainly be a detriment to our education and high school experience as many of us were unable to properly connect with/consult teachers, see and efficiently work with classmates, and in general focus on our work.”

Senior William Leung strongly favors in-person instruction if at all possible.

“I think remote learning has a lot of disadvantages such as a loss of motivation,” Leung said. “It makes learning incredibly difficult and thus should really only be considered as a last resort.”



Graphic by JONATHAN SI

MAP equipment worth \$30,000 stolen, later recovered undamaged on roadside

By Anamika Anand & Victoria Hu

On Monday, Jan. 3, the first day after winter break, school staff discovered that about 30 cameras along with several microphones, tripods and batteries were missing from the library.

During first period, Media Arts Program teacher Alex Hemmerich's sophomores went to the library to retrieve cameras for a mini film project to learn how to use certain features of the camera, such as exposure and sensitivity, but the equipment wasn't there.

MAP teacher and technology coordinator Joel Tarbox was one of the first to be notified of the issue.

"The library technician emailed me and said, 'Hey, there's no cameras or tripods here,'" he said. "And so I went over and looked, and she was right."

Tarbox proceeded to ask other teachers and contacted school administrators. Later that morning, the office staff received a call from a CalTrans officer: He had found the missing MAP equipment on Highway 9, just outside of downtown Saratoga, Tarbox said.

The cameras were found neatly placed inside four large duffel bags and the tripods were shrink wrapped and put inside trash bags. Despite the rainy weather over break, the equipment was clean, dry and undamaged.

According to Tarbox, there were about 30 camera kits and tripods, 15 microphones, 10 boom poles, five portable lighting kits, a digital audio recorder and an assortment of batteries and other small items. Although the stolen equipment was old and not nearly

as expensive as other devices like the MacBooks and laptops kept in the library, each camera was \$800, each tripod was \$110 and each lighting kit was \$250 — totalling approximately \$30,000.

"I'm very relieved because we're so dependent on it for second semester projects."

MAP TEACHER Joel Tarbox

Tarbox said. "It is what our boosters have paid for, some things the district has paid for and some things the foundation has helped us with, so I'm very relieved [that we found the equipment] because we're so dependent on it for second semester projects."

Tarbox met with two sheriff deputies and CalTrans officers at the scene and brought the equipment back to the library. Assistant principal Matt Torrens led the process of counting, sorting, photographing and checking the serial numbers of the equipment to confirm that nothing was missing.

The administration is currently reviewing two weeks' worth of security footage and working with the sheriff department's investigation into the break-in. No suspect has been identified.

The library was locked over break and had an alarm system active and security cameras operating, Torrens said. Even so, the burglars somehow managed to enter and exit the library with the equipment

without triggering alarms. The administration has contacted the security system company, Sonitrol, to try to figure out how the intruders may have managed to bypass the alarm system.

After this incident, the administration has added additional cameras and locks to the library for strengthened security — just in time for a second break-in attempt during the first weekend after break. The cameras recorded footage of what appears to be a tall man in a white outfit unsuccessfully trying to enter the library by accessing a roof hatch. It may or may not have been the same burglar.

These two recent break-in attempts are only the latest in a string of incidents at schools in the area. Over the spring break of 2020, a group of burglars broke into the school library and stole equipment that was stored in the same area as the recent case's MAP equipment. The week before Jan. 3, Prospect High was also broken into, Torrens said.

Although the thieves from two years back were caught stealing on camera, Torrens theorizes that the recent break-in could have been done by the same group, citing the similarities between the break-ins.

In both cases, the thieves "didn't pull everything off the shelves, and cherry-picked certain things," he said. "When they were here before, they spent 45 minutes inside. And they may have found a key or something that allowed them access this time."

While the thieves' motives for stealing and then dumping the equipment remain a mystery, Torrens thinks that seeing labels and traceable QR code stickers on the

equipment may have dissuaded them from keeping the equipment to resell. They avoided expensive but easily trackable technology such as MacBooks entirely.

"Unfortunately, this is the way that our society is now," Torrens said. "Even in Saratoga, you see that there are thefts. People come here and are finding ways to try to make easy money. So as far as with the school, we're going to look at ways to increase our security in and around the library." ♦



Courtesy of GREG LOUIE

Surveillance cameras recorded a person trying to enter the library through a roof hatch.

Sophomore wins Congressional App Challenge

By Anamika Anand

Sophomore Zeyneb Kaya was recently announced as a winner of the 2021 Congressional App Challenge, a competition where middle and high school students can submit their original apps. Kaya was judged and placed first within Congressional District CA-18, represented by local Congresswoman Anna Eshoo. Her app, along with her fellow winners from across the country, will be put on display in the U.S. Capitol building for one year.

Kaya's app, Cultive, found on the App Store, helps farmers and home gardeners identify, manage and track diseases in their plants, as well as prevent and treat plant diseases.

Kaya remembered caring for plants in her family garden when she was younger. Her curiosity in disease prevention sparked when her garden plants started dying.

"I found out that this is a bigger problem because diseases in plants result in a really big loss of production, which impacts food availability and food waste," she explained. Creating Cultive allowed Kaya to address this issue using skills she learned from a young age.

Before creating Cultive, Kaya began her coding career through the summer program LaunchX.

Learning to grow a business from the ground up, Kaya left the program having co-developed an app called Foodi, which allows users to see what products fit their diet by scanning the barcode on the food label.

"I didn't really know how much I could do with coding until I started high school," Kaya said. "When the pandemic hit, I started looking into AI and how simple calculations and algorithms could do complex tasks."

According to Kaya, building Cultive took four months. Most of the app was programmed using Swift, a coding language for iOS apps. The AI was written using the cod-

ing language Python.

In addition to code, Kaya manually entered information based off her research on ways to manage and treat specific diseases.

To use the app, the user holds their device over a plant. The app uses AI to scan the plant for any diseases using the phone's camera. If any diseases are found, the app provides the next steps for the user to manage or treat the specific disease.

However, her success didn't come easily. While building the app, Kaya experienced technical challenges, one of the biggest being compiling enough data and images for each disease.

"It's hard to find enough images of plant leaves for the app to be able to predict what diseases are in a plant accurately."

SOPHOMORE Zeyneb Kaya

The app uses data from over 40,000 images of plant leaves for the most accurate results in identifying a plant disease. Kaya also used image augmentation to increase the amount of data.

Another trying task was making the app usable on mobile devices. "You have to convert one coding language to another, and that took some time," Kaya said.

She used Apple's Core ML framework to make the code compatible on mobile devices as an iOS app before putting it into Swift and working from there.

While there are other existing apps that provide information on plant diseases, Kaya believes that Cultive is more in-depth, accurate and affordable, providing resources for prevention and keeping track of their plants and their conditions on a map to control

disease spread.

Kaya said the Congressional App Challenge provided the perfect opportunity to share her app with a bigger audience. Upon deciding to enter, she made some modifications to her app in order to better fit the competition's criteria.

To her surprise, her dedication paid off and she was one of the winners. "I was so excited that my work on Cultive had been recognized and that I would get the chance to reach more people," Kaya said. "I want to continue to improve the app and learn more from experiences like this one." ♦

The Jay Koo Academy

EXPERT TEST PREP AND COLLEGE ADMISSIONS CONSULTING

Free Seminar: Negotiating Standardized Tests during the Pandemic

- Via Zoom
- Sunday, February 20, 2022, 10am
- Online Registration Required

May 7 SAT Comprehensive Prep

- Reading/Grammar/Math
- SAT Taking Strategies
- Course starts March 15, 2022
- Classes meet Tuesdays and Saturdays

Please refer to the website for detailed schedules and fees.

408-712-5274

www.jaykooacademy.com

info@jaykooacademy.com

12280 Saratoga-Sunnyvale Rd., Suite 201

Saratoga, CA 95070

THIRDPERIOD STAFFPOLICY

The Saratoga Falcon is published 12 times per year by the Advanced Journalism classes of Saratoga High School, 20300 Herriman Ave., Saratoga, CA 95070. Views expressed in The Saratoga Falcon are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the administration, faculty or school district.

MISSIONSTATEMENT

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.

LETTERS OF THE EDITOR

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

Editors-in-Chief

Andy Chen
Anouk Yeh

Associate Editor

Viraaj Reddi

News Editor

Kaasha Minocha

Opinion Editors

Harshini Velchamy
Tiffany Wang

Sports Editors

Christina Chang
Ethan Lin

Lifestyles Editors

Audrey Mah
Joann Zhang

Entertainment Editors

Arey Desai
Hannah Lee

In-Depth Editors

Esther Luan
Shreya Rallabandi

School Scope Editors

Nicole Lu
Stephanie Sun

Web/Multimedia Editors

Howard Shu
Martin Xu

Backpage Editor

Bill Yuan

Head Copy Editors

Chris Chen
Jonathan Si

Head Photographer

Mina Yeap

Associate Photographers

Andrew Lin

Art Editor

Lynn Dai

Business/Ad Manager

Vicky Bai

Reporters

Anamika Anand
Lena Aribi
Sam Bai

Meher Bhatnagar
Victoria Hu
Annie Liu
Jonny Luo
Shannon Ma
Nikhil Mathihalli
Arnav Swamy
Brian Sheen
Aiden Ye
Sarah Zhou

Adviser
Mike Tyler

Printed by Folger Graphics
in Hayward, Calif.

Schools should be able to go online again

In the weeks after winter break, COVID-19 cases have exploded in schools across the nation: At SHS, at least 40 students and a handful of staff members had tested positive as of Jan. 20, a number that is likely to increase as the contagious omicron variant spreads. In fact, cases have risen to the point that the school implemented mandatory weekly testing for students and staff in the week of Jan. 17. Given these realities, it's unsurprising that some students and parents have urged superintendent Mike Grove to move school online.

Grove, however, has stated that the district will consider transitioning online only if it has more teachers out sick than substitutes available, or if "a large percentage of the school population has tested positive within a short timeframe." Grove has also reminded parents and students that district leaders cannot unilaterally shut down in-person learning and would need authorization from county and state officials — the waiver that allowed for distance learning expired in June last year. Currently, schools need to apply for a waiver from both the county and the state to shut down entirely, and schools can only revert to online if "every family member in the class signs a waiver, agreeing to switch."

While the county and state's decision to keep schools in person is understandable, considering the consensus among students and teachers that online education results in a significantly poorer quality of education, state officials currently need to prioritize student safety and renew the distance learning waiver instead of waiting until COVID-19 overruns individual communities and forces districts to transition online. This would allow districts to preemptively revert to an online format in

order to ride out the current COVID-19 surge.

For a district like LGSUHSD, online learning could end on February break, with either travel restrictions or a mandatory quarantine period.

Although a transition online may lower the quality of education that students receive for a couple of weeks, the school's current system, which remains almost identical to pre-omicron times, isn't fair to students who, for example, choose to stay at home for fear of catching and transmitting the virus to an elderly family member.

The number of students in these situations will only increase over time — already, in the first two weeks, attendance has lowered from 95-97% during "normal times" to 90.8%. For students who are COVID-19 positive or close contacts and stuck at home, attempting to continue their learning at home with no institutional online learning protocols is difficult, if not impossible, especially considering the mountain of work to make up once they return to campus.

Currently, the school has limited options for students quarantining at home to continue their education. The Independent Study program has a different curriculum than teachers at the school, so students have to make do using lectures and materials posted online.

Remaining in person is forcing some parents to choose between their child's education or the health and well-being of parents and family members. A short-term transition to online learning would help slow the spread of COVID-19; instead of interacting with hundreds of different people each day, a student would instead only interact with family members and a few close friends during the worst of the surge. After returning from



Graphic by LYNN DAI

online learning, parents may feel safer sending their students back to school knowing that the spread of COVID-19 has stopped or decreased.

The state's decision to not allow distance learning has already forced some schools to make tough decisions regarding student health and surging COVID-19 cases. For example, Hayward went remote from Jan. 10 to 18 due to lack of staff — 365 staff were out and 81 classrooms were uncovered — and testing kits against the recommendations of state and county officials. The school reportedly lost \$2.5 million in state funding per day online, and it was forced to circumvent the lack of a distance learning waiver by hosting areas on campus where students could attend online class in person.

Although LGSUHSD is not currently facing a staffing shortage of this level, this situation

could easily happen here — on Jan. 15, Grove sent out an email requesting parents to sign up as substitutes.

Since a move to online learning would only be temporary, "significant academic learning loss" caused by distance learning last year would be minimized. For the sake of students' education and the health of everyone on campus, the state should allow schools to temporarily transition to online learning, while the county should impose travel restrictions outside the county and postpone all in person activities and sports.

If the situation worsens, districts like ours could face a situation where hundreds of students quarantining at home struggle to learn and students in person struggle to learn due to a lack of substitutes. A better solution is to seriously consider a short-term move online. ♦

Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

Editors-in-chief

Andy Chen
Anouk Yeh

Opinion Editors

Harshini Velchamy
Tiffany Wang

Reporter

Jonny Luo

The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 26-12 in favor of this article.

In-person education still the better choice

By Arnav Swamy

Due to the recent spike in COVID-19 cases resulting from the highly transmissible omicron variant, some students, parents and teachers alike are calling for a return to online school, if only for a few weeks.

Currently, however, the in-person policies put in place by the district have been adequate, and a pre-emptive switch to online learning makes little sense.

Required COVID-19 testing for close contacts that evolved into the new weekly testing mandate available on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays are necessary precautions the district has taken, along with providing better N-95 and KN-95 masks to all students and staff.

The district has also had a comparatively low number of cases as of late, so we still have time to tame the virus before any drastic steps need to be taken.

In-person schooling remains imperative to maintain the academic and social wellbeing of students. Online school will only place a steep roadblock in their success, halting their academic momentum and incentivizing

them to engage in distractions.

The added dilemma of online school is the longer a student remains online, the more unprepared they become to return back to in-person school.

Due to a lack of proper exposure to the material and to the jarring shift of in-person school, if a student does not truly understand the material taught during online school, they will not have the proper foundation to go back in-person.

The pace and events of in-person school prompts students to adopt a regimental approach to academics that forces them to find the schedule and habits that work for them. In-person school enables far more fluidity than online school, since all resources are readily accessible for students to utilize.

The academic component is arguably not the most important of online school. The biggest gripe I have with proponents of online school is their claim that it's "flexible."

I don't understand in what sense it's flexible, since so much of it is limiting for students. The vast majority of activities are being done in the same room. Every sin-

gle day.

With the repetition of procedures, students become increasingly more complacent with an online lifestyle. Succumbing to the same day of constrained activities deliberately harms students' overall health, and it's unsustainable for extended periods of time.

In-person schooling remains imperative to maintain academic wellbeing.

Social interactions and mental health as such are jeopardized. When caged up in a room staring at fellow black squares with names for months on end, it can quickly become quite lonely to not interact with someone face-to-face.

With apps like Discord and Facebook Messenger, social interaction isn't completely limited; however, it still is undeniably less effective than going to a club during lunch or working with a friend during tutorial.

The effects of low social interaction and other pandemic conse-

quences have resulted in an uptick in mental health issues.

According to a report by the CDC, as of February 2021 around 41.5% of adults and adolescents report symptoms of anxiety and depressive disorder due to online work and school.

Why return to this if we can help it?

If we regress back to an online setting due to the increasingly more problematic variants, our options regarding social interaction will become woefully limited. Without such interaction, students will begin to feel cornered in their own home, which will slowly but surely deteriorate their mental health and lifestyle, which has lasting implications even if online school ends.

I am very aware that online school as a tool is intended to keep everyone safe, and to that, I cannot object if a pandemic is currently ravaging the world at the moment. However, while SHS is still in-person, we as a student body should keep this format for as long as possible.

The better we do our part to fight the pandemic, the longer we'll stay in person and the better we'll emerge from it. ♦

Boycott of Beijing Olympics: IOC officials need to step up their game

BY LYNN DAI

On Dec. 6, the Biden administration announced that the U.S. will be diplomatically boycotting the upcoming 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing, citing "ongoing genocide and other human rights abuses" in Xinjiang. The U.K., Australia and Canada joined the boycott shortly after, and as usual, the People's Republic of China (PRC) responded with a biting threat of unspecified, "resolute countermeasures" — to have the U.S. "pay a price for its practices."

The administration's actions are praiseworthy — its protecting athletes' personal rights and simultaneously acknowledging prevalent humanitarian issues on a national stage, providing needed media attention and awareness — but no effective change will take place so long as the International Olympic Committee (IOC) continues to allow abusive countries like China and Russia to host the Olympics in the first place.

While the U.S.'s current diplomatic boycott still allows athletes to attend the games, the U.S. — along with more than 60 other countries — previously imposed a full boycott of the 1980 Winter Olympics in Moscow to protest against the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. The protests were to no avail. Troops from the Soviet Union stayed in Afghanistan until 1989, and the games were hurt by unruly behavior from spectators, cheating by officials and intrusive security. The only real harm was to protesting athletes, many of whom lost their only chance to participate at an Olympics.

In 1936, Olympic officials gave Hitler's Nazi Party the go-ahead to host the games

in Germany, despite protests from the U.S. and other sports officials citing the persecution of Jews. When former IOC President Avery Brundage maneuvered the Amateur Athletic Union of the United States to a close vote in favor of sending a team to Berlin, they came to see giant swastikas plastered all over the walls of the stadium.

There was great hope that other countries' actions during the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics would change China's human rights policies for the better: According to the book "Inside the Olympics" authored by Richard Pound, former vice president of the IOC, the decision to give the games to China was made in the hope of improvement in human rights.

At the time, the city was under scrutiny for civil unrest in Tibet and terrorist attacks by Xinjiang separatists. In the months leading up to the games, violent protests broke out in Tibet against the PRC's repressive policies, resulting in some 30 Tibetans being jailed, some for life.

It was "naive," however, to think that the Olympics would change China in ways the IOC suggested: According to AP News, instead of accelerating improvement in human rights, China's strict stage-management of the games was deemed a soft power victory, announcing the nation as a superpower on the global stage and casting the games as a "symbol of China's rejuvenation," according to Historian Zheng Wang.

Since its inception in 1894, the Olympic Movement was founded with the intent of "blending sport with culture and education to help communities and nations live in harmony with each other," according to the Olympic Charter. Founder Pierre de Coubertin characterizes the Olympic Games: "The important thing in life is not the triumph, but the fight; the essential thing is not to have won, but to have fought well."

Coubertin's words represent one of the Olympic System's most important principles: Participation is paramount.

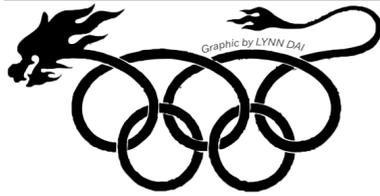
But how can the IOC hold itself responsible for these words if it can't manage to select an appropriate country to host the games?

In people's hearts, the Olympics stands as a token of ultimate sportsmanship and talent, not politics. Yet the 50th Rule in the IOC's handbook, which prohibits political, religious and racial propaganda in Olympic venues, has never stopped nations from using the games as a platform to broadcast their stances on political issues.

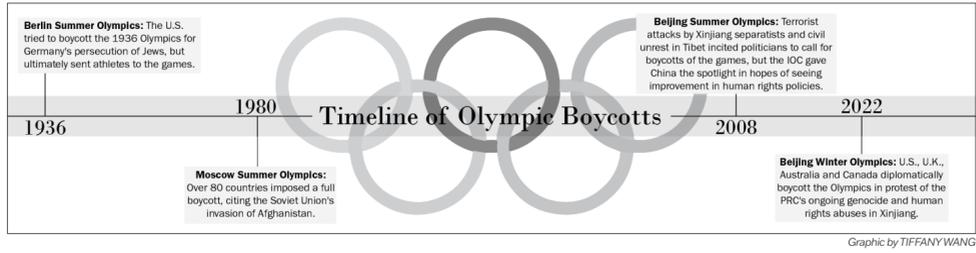
From the Olympics' long history of boycotts, the IOC cannot expect nations to turn a blind eye to controversies such as human rights abuses. By choosing to remain silent about these issues and thereby prioritizing their principle of political neutrality, the IOC in turn undermines its own core values of participation and respect.

Other sporting organizations, such as the Women's Tennis Association (WTA), have already established their stance on political issues. After accusing a top Chinese leader of sexual assault, Chinese tennis star Peng Shuai quickly disappeared from public view for weeks in November. Following her disappearance and China's warning against "malevolent investigation" into her case, the WTA pulled out all games in China.

While the IOC need not take as drastic measures as the WTA did, restricting its policies of selecting the host for the Olympics to uphold the values it represents is a good start. Ultimately, it's up to the IOC — not competing countries — to toughen up and denounce unethical behavior from countries wishing to host the games, or risk tarnishing the memories of the Olympics for people around the globe. ♦



Graphic by LYNN DAI



Meat from plants: a revolutionary invention

BY ANAMIKA ANAND

In the six years I've lived in the U.S., I have never tasted a beef burger. Until last year, every family barbecue yielded the same black bean veggie burger on my plate, which I slowly learned to accept.

After all, what I lost in taste, I gained in moral standing: growing regular meat is harmful to the environment because of its heavy reliance on energy as well as pollution of water, land and air. Specifically, 65% of nitrous oxide and 37% of methane result from livestock farming.

With this in mind, I resigned myself to a vegetarian lifestyle — honestly not a bad choice, when you consider that the process of livestock farming is incredibly inhumane. Each year, millions of animals are taken from their mothers, crowded in cages and slaughtered. The root of the problem is that most meat-eaters don't witness the horrors firsthand.

Many meat-eaters are also unaware of the health risk that comes with eating meat. A study by Oxford University with 1.4 million participants found that for every 50g per day higher intake of processed red meat, the risk of coronary heart disease increases

by 18%. Another Oxford study showed that every 70g per day higher intake of red meat is associated with a 15% higher risk of ischaemic heart disease and a 30% higher risk of diabetes. Cutting down your meat consumption can lower the risk of getting these diseases, especially as you get older.

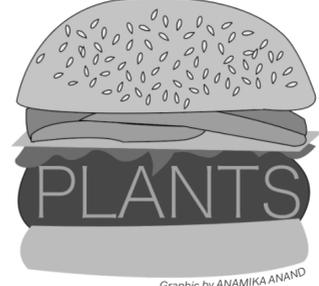
However, ditching meat completely is likely not an option for most meat-eaters, because while my problem is that I can't eat meat at all, their problem is that they can't stop eating it. In fact, 89% of Americans are avid meat consumers, and 59% of Americans think that eating meat is part of the American way of life, according to Ipsos.

Lucky for both parties, there's a middle ground: plant-based meat! For vegetarians like me, plant-based meat opens a door to a variety of delicious flavors and dishes that were not an option before. When I first tasted the Beyond Burger last year, my life changed.

Plant-based meat is an ideal option for people on the opposite side as well, those who already love eating meat but want to help save the planet. In fact, according to Ethan Brown, CEO of Beyond Meat, 93% of people buying the Beyond burger are not

vegan or vegetarian. Most plant-based meat, such as Beyond Meat, is made of healthy ingredients such as peas, potatoes and beets that, when combined, taste like meat. Plant-based meats have no cholesterol and much less sodium, so it's a much healthier option that still tastes good.

I highly encourage you to take a chance and try plant-based meat, whether it's a burger, chicken nuggets, pork or meatballs. You may end up liking it, and you'd be doing both you and the planet a huge favor. ♦



Graphic by ANAMIKA ANAND

Overturning Roe v. Wade jeopardizes more than just abortion rights

BY STEPHANIE SUN

On Jan. 22, 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court officially ruled that a Texas statute banning abortion was unconstitutional, establishing that a woman's right to an abortion was implicitly protected under the right to privacy in the 14th Amendment of the Constitution.

Roe v. Wade was a landmark decision from the court. It decriminalized abortions, which had been illegal in most states.

In early December 2021, the current conservative-dominated court placed Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health on its docket. The new Mississippi law in question would severely restrict the ability for women to get an abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy — well before the 24-week time period of fetal viability presented in Roe.

It is ignorant to pretend that both Dobbs and its addition to the Supreme Court's docket are not direct challenges to Roe, and that the motivations of the court, which currently holds a 6-3 conservative majority, are anything short of purely political. Conservative Justices Brett Kavanaugh, Amy Coney Barrett and Clarence Thomas, who are anticipated to vote in favor of the law, have already proved through their arguments that their reasons for overturning Roe are only ideological.

Kavanaugh, for example, argued that the court's history of overturning cases in the past have helped the U.S. progress to where it is today. While this is true, the cases Kavanaugh listed such as Brown v. Board of Education and Obergefell v. Hodges, involved the court overturning precedents that gave excessive state power over what should be perceived as individual issues. This is the exact opposite of Dobbs challenging Roe.

Furthermore, Kavanaugh's argument points out the extended ramifications of states' rights that will follow overturning Roe. Roe v. Wade did not invent abortion in the U.S., but is a landmark case for women's rights. A state's right to dictate abortion, granted through Roe, was based on the precedent set by the 1965 case Griswold v. Connecticut, when the Supreme Court legalized contraception for married couples and found a constitutional right to sexual privacy for adults.

Griswold also paved the way for many other cases all under the basis of privacy found in the 14th Amendment, specifically those which legalized consensual sex for adults regardless of gender and established the right to same-sex marriage. This theory of the right to privacy, substantive due process, has established multiple other rights over the course of the last several decades, including Loving v. Virginia, which legalized interracial marriage, and Eisenstadt v. Baird, which allowed unmarried people the right to birth control.

Overturning Roe v. Wade means there is little protecting these other cherished rights. While Roe seems to be in grave danger, the court's decisions have been unpredictable in the past. Perhaps the justices will come to their senses and not endanger these wide range of rights that are now embedded firmly in the fabric of American life. ♦

OK, everyone's done this next

Perm-anently against a perm

BY SHANNON MA

I remember — as clearly as if it was yesterday — the day I walked into the hair salon with the naturally curly hair that had frustrated me for years, and walked out five hours later with the silky, bone-straight hair I had always wanted. I felt pure joy knowing that the days when a single shower washed away my straightened hair were now behind me — I'd keep my new, sleek hair for another 10 months.

The first few months were heaven. I no longer feared blow-drying my hair and I could finally brush it thoroughly without producing a static fluff of disaster. The amount of time I saved every day, especially on school mornings, was extremely refreshing.

About four months in, I noticed two changes: One, sometime between the excitement I felt getting straight hair and getting used to it, I had developed a longing for my natural hair.

My straight hair was so ready to go each morning that I paid little to no attention to it anymore — its charm had vanished for me. Not to mention, many of my friends remarked that they missed my old hair, with one friend even innocently inquiring, "Shannon,

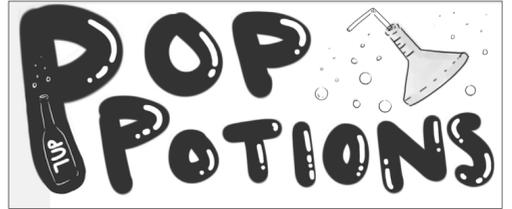
have you been straightening your hair every day?" I wished the perm would wear off faster.

The other change: My baby hairs were getting noticeably curly, which brings me to my next point.



Aside from the emotional facet of getting a perm, another perm hazard to be aware of is the stage when your natural hair has grown back to a substantial length from your roots.

That half-half phase where the top half of your head is covered in curls but the bottom half is slick



BY VICKY BAI

My love for mixing sodas at the soda machine started with an empty cup. I had my heart set on Coca Cola, but it ran out mid-pour and I was left with a cup half empty ... or half full, if you're feeling optimistic.

Reluctantly, I filled the rest of the cup with root beer — the next best thing. Little did I know that this simple half-half creation would send me off on a lifelong journey of questionable soda combinations.

My favorite base soda to start off a combination with is a classic Diet Coke. It carries a mellow flavor, and topping off Coke with 10% of any flavorful, diabetes-inducing drink like Dr. Pepper or Orange Fanta turns the relatively bland Coke into unicorns and rainbows in my mouth.

Pro tip: Go easy on the Dr. Pepper; it can easily overpower other flavors. My advice? 20% Dr. Pepper max in any drink. Try 45% Coke, 45% Sprite and 10% Dr. Pepper — I promise you won't regret it. Or try what I call "Sproke": a ratio of 2/3 Coke to 1/3 Sprite.

When I mix sodas, the world is my oyster: I can imitate the taste of Smarties (80% root beer, 20%

Dr. Pepper), Orange Creamsicle (70% Orange Fanta, 30% Barq's Root Beer) or whatever else my imagination desires.

On the sour side, I guess normal people don't consider it a sin to mix the lemonades (Arnold Palmer, anyone?). My In-N-Out go-to would be 2/3 pink lemonade and 1/3 lemon lime soda with a lemon slice, but the real deal is pink lemonade combined with Blue Raspberry Powerade.

My drinks typically turn out as an ugly brown color, but that's OK because the opaque lid covers the swamp inside. And it's not like I'm ashamed — I'm always proud to show my creations to whoever asks. If anyone is looking to hire a barista for mixing sodas, I'd be more than happy to stand at the soda machine, ready to serve my top-secret soda combinations.

Mixing isn't just a practice; it's a lifestyle. The next stop: mixing cereals. You'll catch me pouring 25% Frosted Flakes, 50% corn flakes and 25% Rice Krispies into my milk bowl.

That's right, I pour milk (still testing out the best ratios of soy milk, dairy milk, and oak milk) in the bowl before cereal, too — I'm a monster. ♦



What's in your Apple Notes app?

BY LENA ARIBI & MEHER BHATNAGAR

The Notes app — our sacred online diary, containing everything from random passwords to birthday charts. Throughout any given day, our fingers frequently hover over our iPhones' Notes app as we debate whether to open it and furiously type our hearts out. This app knows every thought on our minds, some that we don't dare to say aloud.

At first glance, our notes look like utter chaos. There have been many times when we opened Notes only to find a list of random words staring back at us. Like, what account does the password "unlock" unlock? Why are grocery lists, wish lists and random drawn out math problems all on the same note? What was the password for the locked note "Untitled 33"? We couldn't answer these questions if we tried.

But while our Notes may seem like just a jungle of incoherent phrases (which, admittedly, they are), the app is also our professional therapist, best friend and diary. Typing in Notes is basically talking to a wall, but it still brings us a feeling of warmth; it's a safe space to let out all our built up emotions without facing any kind of judgment. The locked note titled "c" for example, contains multi-paragraph rants about every single detail of what happened throughout the day.

As admittedly petty people, we confess that in the past, we've made long lists of the names of people that wished us a happy birthday so that we would wish those people — and only those people — back on theirs. It might sound mean, but neither of us plan on going out of our way to say "Happy Birthday" to someone who couldn't even bother to remember ours.

OK, everyone's done this next

one at least once ... or maybe it's just us? Imagine a seemingly random set of numbers written out in long lists in increasing order on a note which has now extended almost 50 rows — 102,376, 103,101, 103,409 and 103,998, for example. Our explanation: Seeing that guys we are interested in have left us on delivered while their Snapchat Snap score still goes up is infuriating, so keeping track of people's Snap score has become a "hobby" that we just can't stop.

The Notes app happens to be our favorite online whiteboard as well. Sometimes, it just takes too much work to find yourself a paper and a pencil when doing math problems. By using the pen feature to scribble out and solve problems by using your fingers is so much more efficient than writing them down using pencil and paper.

We both like to keep our information private and generally don't share too much about ourselves except to our best friends or family. So when someone sneaks up on us while we are typing in the Notes app, our first instinct is to quickly close the app and tuck our

phones into our pockets.

It's not like there is anything wrong with being caught using the Notes app necessarily, but we just get an uneasy feeling about someone looking over our shoulder as we're looking at the most private place on our phones. You know the feeling you get when someone walks into your room abruptly and, even though you are doing something completely normal like fixing your bed, you still feel like you just got caught doing something illegal? Yeah, that feeling.

But not all notes are for our eyes only. Our friend groups share communal notes with lists of random information ranging from wish lists to ideas of what to do when we hang out together. It's fun being able to communicate random information on a shared note instead of an iMessage group chat — it's like a Google Doc, but less formal.

Who would've known the Notes application had so many uses? From passwords to Snap scores to rants, this simple app stores it all in a safe space with no judgment. ♦



VIVIAN WU (12)

CARINA YEE stress in art

BY ChristopherChen

At Art Hub Academy, student artists work on their paintings propped up on desks and on easels lining the walls. The well-lit room smells heavily of oil paints and carries the ambient mix of audio — folk rock artist Don McLean's lyrics blending with teachers talking to students and rough brush strokes against canvas.

Most of junior Carina Yee's oil paintings are created in this studio and at her home, with canvases carried back and forth between each location.

Although Yee started drawing at 5, she began to take art seriously as a teenager. To Yee, art is a calming influence in her life — as long as she meets her own deadlines! — and it has taught her to explore topics on a deeper level.

Each piece Yee creates starts with an idea or a prompt and a collection of reference photos, with her generally using photos of "mundane things" as inspiration. In the search for things that appear visually interesting, she also looks to connect them to something she could portray in her art.

For example, Yee was inspired to paint a moth mask because she was interested in the insect's aesthetic; she looked at pictures of

moths online and connected the predator-repelling eyes on moths' wings to human eyes to create a mask.

A recent painting, "Trapped in Curtains," features a figure whose torso and head are completely surrounded by a thick gray curtain. The curtains trap the figure, symbolizing the feeling of academic stress and other responsibilities engulfing students.

"I was just taking pictures of curtains and I wanted to see how I could twist it visually to fit my message," she said. "Often I hold myself back, and I feel like what seems easy in concept — staying organized, paying attention, and being on top of responsibilities — is always difficult for me. I should just be able to stand up and take off the curtains, and things would be clear, but then I just sit there waiting for something to change."

For this piece, Yee took inspiration from a hotel room where she stayed, incorporating the hexagonal pattern of the curtains to add dimension and create interesting shapes. Although this patterning was a struggle, they were also what Yee was most proud of.

Yee chose heavier colors for this piece, shifting the tones from clean and bright colors to pallid greens and browns, to emphasize the concept of stressors. "It's not a super pleasing color palette to look at, and I wanted people to be vaguely confused and put off when they looked at the piece," she said.

Yee said she usually starts paintings with

a rough sketch in graphite or charcoal, then creates an underpainting — an initial layer of paint to help plan out where the rest of the colors should go.

Her style incorporates bright highlights, smooth gradients and fuzzy edges in a semi-impressionistic way. She attempts to emulate Mark Tennant's high contrast and "collage-esque" artworks, as well as the "raw emotion" of Egon Schiele paintings.

For each art piece Yee creates, she thinks carefully about how to incorporate her ideas and messages into the piece, twisting the original image into something new and different.

"Instead of just having the imagery of someone trapped in a curtain, I wanted to see how I could turn feeling of the artwork into an unsettling experience," she said.

In college, Yee plans to major in fine arts. Although she is certain on pursuing traditional art over digital formats like design, the uncertainty of financial success as a fine artist deters her from pursuing that career path, and pushes her instead to a career as an arts professor or art curator.

"I've been doing art for such a long time that I feel like it's just a part of who I am," she said. "I try to revolve my life around furthering my art." ♦



"Sketch" (digital art)

by AnnieLiu & JoAnnZhang

A face drowning in quicksand, a screaming figure bound in gauze — senior Shani Chiu's art isn't afraid to get scary.

But a sense of complex beauty underlies many of their haunting works, like their graphite illustration of a man cramped within the parameters of the page. His gaunt, puppet-like face and terror-stricken eyes subtly contrast with the pretty floral pattern of his pants, though the concentric circles on his blazer hypnotize and deepen the tightening gyre of panic conjured up by this piece.

"I really liked this concept of something being scary but also beautiful and captivating at the same time," Chiu said. "So I tried to put that eeriness but also that sense of beauty into artwork as well."

The illustration, which they posted on Instagram alongside the caption, "Claustrophobia," emerged from Chiu's own experience with claustrophobia, which has made driving and staying in small rooms uncomfortable, if not unbearable.

"I tried to portray an unsettling feeling. I like how scary art is able to affect people," said Chiu, whose AP Art and college portfolio centers on phobias. "It's fascinating that people have these different reactions toward certain things."

In another portfolio piece, captioned "fear of drowning in quicksand," a terrified eye just barely surfaces from the sand, which submerges the rest of the face. "I wanted to show how desperate and afraid the person was despite not being able to see many of their features,"

Chiu said. The same sense of nearly feral helplessness is present in much of their work, but a greater motivation towards understanding and empathy drives these frightening

pieces.

"Fear is something that is stigmatized, looked down upon and not often addressed," said Chiu. "People are unable to understand each others' fears, so I tried to create art pieces that would inflict the same feeling to the person with that phobia [would experience]."

Themes of the taboo, particularly regarding mental health, also color much of Chiu's work. Their art often reflects what goes on in their life: In an untitled painting made at a low point in their life, somber blues surround a figure with roughly painted red horns and wings. Raw-edged brushstrokes and a face replaced by scrapes of red are unnerving and unsettling.

During difficult times in their life and mental health, they "tend to go more towards a morbid theme" and add more emotions and the feeling of helplessness.

Their usual sources of inspiration are aesthetics and their mood, and also different media — as an artist with ADHD and autism, Chiu often hyper-fixates on games and TV shows, and enjoys drawing characters and celebrities.

Chiu also creates their own characters, with complex and often marginalized personalities— socio-paths, psychopaths and sadists.

Chiu wants people to feel conflicted when they see their characters' personalities. Their inner turmoil and their divergence from the norm make the characters interesting for Chiu, who admits they "really like making characters with a bit of a crazy personality."

One of the characters Chiu is currently working on, a girl with an eyepatch on her left eye, stands with her hands on her hips in a tough, belligerent

stance. She's supposed to be "the ultimate loan shark," and was designed for a fan game of the popular Japanese video game franchise, Danganronpa.

Inspired by their brother, who majored in game art, Chiu plans to pursue a career in character design, possibly game-specific design, with the goal of creating their own game one day.

"My brother is a really big influence on me," said Chiu. "When I was younger, I would always watch him drawing, and it really inspired me to do the same."

Chiu's friends and family are extremely supportive of their artistic career path. "They already had to go through my brother so they're already eased into the idea of it," Chiu said. "And my friends, they're not in that traditional mindset but they're also involved [in art], so they understand."

As they approach the end of their high school career, Chiu is considering attending San Jose State University or Laguna College of Art and Design. But ultimately, they just want to go with the flow and see where life takes them.

"If you don't enjoy yourself, then what's the point of doing something?" they asked. "I want to show people that no matter who you are, if you love doing something, then you can do it." ♦

SHANI CHIU fear in art



+ ARTISTS

at work in Toga



"Claustrophobia" (graphite and ink)

SAMIKA AGARWAL anxiety in art

BY LynnDai

Bold strokes of orange melt across a frame littered with scraps of assignments and tests. A dark abyss of blacks and blues drips down the right of the painting, framing the silhouette of a frowning man leaning against her desk, arms crossed. Thin threads of orange and black entangle in a mess

above her head.

These are snapshots from "Tangled Shut Down," a selection from junior Samika Agarwal's AP Drawing portfolio. She felt that the mixed-media painting was "eating her alive."

"I was so invested in it, I couldn't sleep," Agarwal wrote in one of her progress-check-ins, online Canvas discussions where she and her classmates can share the inspirations behind their works.

Her AP Drawing portfolio explores a range of mental health issues and the perceived toxic competitive atmosphere of high school in ways that Agarwal says she can't express through words.

"You understand complex things through art that you can't say through words, and you're connected to a certain feeling or thought," she said. "It's important that artists use that voice."

In many of her artworks, Agarwal illustrates the ways she deals with the stress and frustration of schoolwork.

One of her favorite pieces, "I need to play tag," showcases a somber, black-and-white collage of ripped homework, tests and notes crumpled underneath two hands. Doodles of cartoon animals and childishly-drawn buildings are etched throughout the canvas, representative of the childhood innocence she longs for.

At the bottom of the painting, four children hold hands as they run across a field, the bright colors of their clothes pervading the mundane gray space around them with shades of pink, purple and blue.

The painting illustrates a prevalent process Agarwal uses in her paintings: She often takes bits of homework, newspapers and Post-Its and pieces them together to create the background and framework for her paintings. Agarwal said the process of destroying things and pasting them back together allows her to portray her feelings and communicate directly with her intended audience: high school students, who she hopes can relate to and resonate with her work.

The hands-on approach also allows her to work more quickly and keep pace with the rigorous workload of the school's AP Drawing course taught by Diana Vanry, where students are expected to complete 15 quality pieces based on a self-selected theme in just under

nine months.

Unlike most other AP Courses, AP Drawing has no formal test. Instead, the assessment consists of a "Sustained Investigation," a portfolio submission graded out of five points on the artist's ability to explore their chosen theme with a variety of materials, ideas and processes of creating the works. At school, Vanry and AP Drawing students critique each other's work in a group meeting at the back of the class, once for every piece they complete.

"I'm not a very patient person," Agarwal said. "I try to pour everything into my artwork, but when I work on a piece for too long, that initial excitement for the idea fizzles away."

As a result, she said she doesn't follow a structured way of approaching her paintings but instead "works in the moment." Agarwal spurns the traditional process of planning out her pieces in small sketches called thumbnails in favor of working on her pieces directly. This spontaneous way of working has often led to "accidents" that turn out for the better, she said.

While Agarwal mostly draws inspiration from her daily experiences with high school, she has found inspiration in the works of modern artists like Banksy, a street artist and activist known for spray-painting poignant, black-and-white images on buildings; and historical movements like the Bay Area Figurative Movement of the

1950s and 1960s.

"Learning from other artists and immersing myself more in the art community will help me build a stronger portfolio," she said. "These artists take experiences from their own lives and spread messages about issues people should be more aware about, and I want to do that with my art."

Agarwal's latest art piece, as yet untitled, is a continuation of her theme of deteriorating mental health in the face of anxiety and stress. It depicts modern students' struggles with school, a system which she said is both "built for students but also against us." The piece juxtaposes the act of destroying textbooks and learning from them through cut-up sections arranged to represent a stomach, an analogy for the feeling of a knot-in-stomach test anxiety.

While she hopes to continue painting throughout her life, Agarwal believes pursuing traditional art wouldn't be feasible financially. Still, she hopes to explore her creativity by combining the field with technology and other areas of study in interdisciplinary majors like industrial and communications design.

"I create art because I enjoy the process and looking at my completed pieces makes me happy," Agarwal said. "But most importantly, it's a platform for me to advocate for what I care about. When promoted the right way, art can have such a strong impact on people." ♦

"Trapped in Curtains" (oil on canvas)

"Tangled Shut Down" (mixed media)

"I need to play tag" (mixed media)

Math and CS teacher Jarvin Bayona brings lessons from games to class

by SamBai
& AidenYe

While video games and education are commonly viewed as two non-overlapping fields, AP CS and Precalculus Honors teacher Jarvin Bayona regularly incorporates the lessons he learned from video games into his daily teaching.

Bayona started his gaming journey at age 2. He remembers playing video games on his parents' Nintendo Entertainment System.

He especially liked "Bubble Trouble," a deceptively simple video game where the only objective was to pop bubbles.

"My verbal stamina has increased due to [playing games]."



TEACHER Jarvin Bayona

Ever since, Bayona estimates he has clocked in over 4,000 hours on games like

"Dota 2" and "Call of Duty."

Bayona not only enjoys the games themselves but also the ideas and concepts that can be applied to real life.

For instance, video games often reward perseverance and learning from mistakes. Mirroring this philosophy, Bayona tries to give his students the opportunity to fix their mistakes through test corrections and quiz retakes.

"There are times where you make mistakes. Let's say you are playing Mega-Man or Mario and your character dies," Bayona said. "You have multiple lives to try again and learn the level better."

While Bayona believes that second chances are necessary, he does worry that a policy of giving second chances can be easily abused by students.

He said this can be compared to "save scumming" in gaming, the act of saving right before a boss fight in order to restart in case the fight goes badly.

"For some game developers, this is not the intended way to play the game — maybe if you die the first time, you may think, 'I'm not strong enough' or 'I need to do more side quests or pick up some more items,'" Bayona said. "But you can't just brute force your way through the boss."

Bayona's experience as a Twitch video game streamer has also helped improve his



Courtesy of JARVIN BAYONA

Teacher Jarvin Bayona enjoys playing games such as "Monster Hunter" and "Dota 2" at home.

class. On Twitch, Bayona loves to shoutcast his favorite games, commenting what is happening in the game.

Because of this, Bayona feels like he has had a lot of experience breaking down any given situation — whether that's in gaming or math.

"Shoutcasting has helped me in my speaking, whether I'm doing live coding or explaining math problems," Bayona said.

Because of shoutcasting, Bayona said his verbal stamina has increased: He's able to talk for hours on end in the classroom without needing a break.

Bayona said that, without his gaming experiences, he may not have learned the key lessons, gained the crucial experiences or obtained the important practice that helped create his own teaching style. Although gaming and teaching are viewed as polar opposites, Bayona hopes that he can bridge the gap between the two of them, bringing one world to the other.

"Seeing how students are performing in my class and how that reflects the grades I'm giving them, I think I'm doing a good job so far combining the two subjects," Bayona said. ♦

'GoT' prequel may correct missteps in original HBO series

by SarahZhou

Three years after the end of "Game of Thrones" (GoT), the most-watched television show in history, its long-awaited prequel, "House of the Dragon," will premiere on HBO in 2022 with 10 episodes.

"House of the Dragon" — which is set 200 years prior to GoT — was announced in October 2019, replacing a previous prequel for the show that was set thousands of years in the past. HBO reportedly spent over \$30 million on the pilot but scrapped the show a f t e r HBO executives decided the show "just didn't work."

Production for "House of the Dragon" began in April 2021 at locations in Northern Ireland, England, Spain and Morocco, though filming was temporarily paused in July due to a positive COVID-19 case.

The show — starring Olivia Cooke, Matt Smith, Emma D'Arcy and Emily Carey — derives its plot from "A Song of Ice and Fire" series' prequel book, "Fire & Blood: 300 Years Before A Game of Thrones," written by GoT creator George R.R. Martin. Additionally, Martin will also

play a role in producing and directing the show.

"House of the Dragon" will illustrate the world of Westeros before the events of GoT.

"House of the Dragon" tells the story of House Targaryen, going in-depth with the ultimate downfall of Aerys, the last Targaryen to control the Iron Throne (the ultimate symbol of power in Westeros).

Though highly anticipated by critics and fans, the show's cast features almost no recurring characters from the GoT cast, and many of us would m u c h r a t h e r see a sequel or rewrite to GoT to mend the ruined plot development after the unsatisfying ending replacement for Season 8.

Indeed, none of the main characters from GoT will be appearing in the series, which many fans, myself included, would have looked forward to seeing.

"I'm cautiously excited for the prequel," said senior Dana Steinke, who watched the show this past summer. "I haven't seen movies or shows featuring the new actors for this show before but I'm excited to see new depictions of the Targaryen family." ♦

Riot's 'Arcane' delivers a plot enjoyable for any audience

by ChristopherChen
& JonathanSi

After six years in the making "Arcane," the highly anticipated TV show developed by Riot Games, premiered on Nov. 6, garnering mass positive reception and rave critic scores: 100% on Rotten Tomatoes and a 9.2/10 on IMDb.

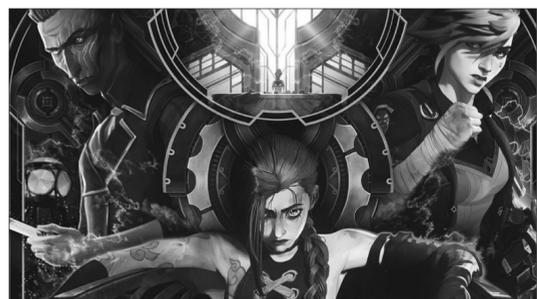
Focusing on several characters from the video game "League of Legends," "Arcane" centers on the conflicts between the regions of Piltover, an upper-class, refined steampunk city, and Zaun, the seedy, cheapunk undercity Piltover exploits.

Currently, the entire first season, consisting of nine 40-minute episodes, is available on Netflix.

While the first season does end with a cliff-hanger, the show will continue in a second season slated for after 2022.

The plot is deeply complex, featuring several interconnecting stories and developing main characters. From scientists Jayce and Viktor's development of Hextech, a technology that utilizes magic crystals as its energy source, to the straining relationship between sisters Vi and Powder, plot points become increasingly connected and ultimately factor into the overarching story: the conflict between the two sides of the city.

"Arcane's" plot stands out because of its character development. All the characters have cohesive motivations and believable actions, with even the antagonist of the show, a meticulous, idealistic drug lord named Silco, having a sympathetic character arc. Despite the already-known lore of League of Legends probably being able to predict the show's ending, "Arcane" is still able to maintain high dramatic tension by introducing new, com-



Courtesy of RIOT GAMES

Riot's first foray into TV shows was a success among critics and audiences.

pelling characters and showing how characters transition into their present selves. (In fact, the show might even be better if you *haven't* played the game.)

For example, although the future of sisters Vi and Powder are already described in their established character lore, the show closely examines their rocky relationship brought on by the circumstances that force them apart, such as a childhood traumatic experience and the influence of Silco, who serves as Powder's adoptive parent.

The visuals of the show, which were crafted for over six years by French animation studio Fortiche Production, are expectedly gorgeous.

This is Fortiche's longest product, as their previous works had all been short music videos or trailers, including the hit "K/DA - POP/STARS," which currently has 486M views on YouTube.

Fortiche's director of animation Barthélemy Maunoury explained to the Mashable, an online entertainment news website, that there was a balance of 2-D and 3-D animations. Many of the visual effects like

explosions and tears were digitally hand-painted and 2-D to reinforce the illustrated, painted visual of the show.

Powder's hallucinations are especially impressive, resembling childish drawings and audibly shrill echoing noises, stemming from her childhood trauma that is explained in the first three episodes.

Similarly, another fight scene she appears in carries similar weight. Aside from graphics, the character's designs and costumes and the overall environment are intricately detailed.

Multiple characters needed to be created for the show, and each were given different appearances that reflected their circumstances in the show.

For example, the affluence of the two cities is reflected in the symmetry and asymmetry of its architecture and clothing styles.

Though the show is centered around the characters in "League of Legends," its cohesion, character development, visuals, and music provide for an experience also enjoyable for viewers unfamiliar with the game. ♦



Graphic by LYNN DAI

by JonnyLuo

Warning: major spoilers ahead.

When I watched Amazon Prime Video's animated series "Invincible" over the summer, I was immediately hooked by its excellent animation and emotional voice-acting.

Adapted from its namesake comic written by Robert Kirkman, "Invincible" starts off like any other coming-of-age superhero story: Mark Grayson, son of Omni-Man, the world's premiere superhero, suddenly gets his father's powers and learns how to be a superhero. What sets this show apart from the rest, however, is its extreme use of violence.

For example, when Invincible (Grayson's hero alias) fights the series' main antagonist — whose identity I won't reveal due to spoilers — during the season finale, one scene includes said antagonist holding Invincible in front of an oncoming subway through Invincible's eyes.

Viewers see the visceral killing of hundreds of subway-goers, with their blood and organs spilling all over the screen, just so that the show's antagonist can prove a point about the pointlessness of human lives. The show also progressively ramps up the violence throughout the season, with the title card shown at the beginning of each episode gradually gaining more blood.

Though some may see the show's excessive use of violence as unnecessary for a superhero cartoon, I loved how the show showed more realistic implications of someone having super-strength or super-speed. Punching someone wouldn't just knock them unconscious or even crack their neck; it would literally rip their head off their shoulders.

Besides the realistic violence, the show

has great animation, although it's not as great as other animated shows like Netflix's "Castlevania."

The animated series provides a faithful adaptation of the comics — in fact, Kirkman was actually on the team to script the show — but it also adds depth compared to the comics, which was often too fast-paced. For example, in the comics, we don't see much of the Guardians of the Globe, the "Invincible" universe's version of the Justice League, before they are murdered by the series' antagonist. Yet, in the animated series, a large portion of the first episode is dedicated to the Guardians. We see their impact on the world — for example, saving the White House — as well as their normal lives outside of their superhero personas, and this little detail makes their death so much more impactful than it was in the comics.

I also enjoyed how this series was animated instead of live-action. Many of the "Invincible" fight scenes are extremely over-the-top, and it's simply difficult and expensive to portray these types of scenes well in live-action media.

Because "Invincible" is animated, the show's able to include huge battles in almost every episode without blowing through mountains of cash. A show that I think falls prey to this is "The Boys," released on Amazon Prime in July 2019, because some episodes just felt dull without the large fights that I've come to expect from superhero media.

Some live-action TV shows actually are able to pull this off, such as Marvel's phase four shows, but those had much larger budgets than most studios are able to afford; some Marvel phase four shows, including "Loki" and "The Falcon and the Winter Soldier" had reported budgets of over \$25 mil-



Graphic by ANNIE LIU

lion per episode.

So, seeing as how "Invincible" was a huge success, I hope that more future, mainstream superhero media can be made through animation. The show also feels realistic compared to other superhero works — the government is actually competent and doesn't totally rely on supernaturals to save the world. Additionally, characters are written believably, and no one overreacts simply for the sake of adding drama to the show.

"Invincible" stands out for its excellent plot and its intriguing twist villain. Twist villains are dramatically ironic characters with motives that aren't necessarily meant to be a surprise to the audience but rather meant to surprise the characters. Shakespeare does this well in many of his plays, where audience members know of a character's deception and thus feel scared for the victim whenever they have screen time.

If you're already hooked on watching the show, I'd stop reading here and start watching on Amazon Prime Video to find out

who the twist villain is for yourself. Otherwise, here we go:

"Invincible" reveals the villain to be Omni-Man, Grayson's father, in the very first episode, when most, if not all other characters still think of him as a powerful, benevolent hero. The show leaves audience members hanging for his underlying motives until the season finale.

While I was watching, I truly felt scared for the characters in the show, especially Omni-Man's wife, who was conducting her own investigation on who killed the Guardians of the Globe. When she finally confronts Omni-Man about the murders, I truly had no idea of whether she would live or not — if you haven't watched the show, you'll just have to see for yourself.

I'm excited for the next season to air, even though I've already spoiled the entire plot for myself by reading the comics. And since the show is animated, hopefully, it won't have any production delays due to the pandemic. ♦

ACHIEVING PERFECTION AFTER NINE TRIES:



Graphic by ANJALI PAI

by SamBai
& AndrewLin

Warning: spoilers ahead.

2021 was a big year for the film industry. Despite the pandemic, over 500 million people went to theaters to see movies on the big screen, more than doubling 2020's movie attendance. A whopping 12,307 movies were released just last year in the U.S..

Among all the excellent films we saw, one stands out from the crowd for us: "Spider-Man: No Way Home."

Following the events of "Spider-Man: Far From Home," where the main antagonist, Quentin Beck, reveals Spider-Man's true identity as Peter Parker and frames him for Beck's murder, Peter Parker faces widespread public hatred. In just a few moving scenes, the movie both did a convincing job of showing how much pressure Parker was under and also subtly commented on cancel culture.

Even though he was declared innocent in the court of law, Parker was still perceived as guilty in the court of public opinion. This is illustrated through the constant public harassment of the Parkers — news helicopters keep circling their apartment building and someone throws a brick through the apartment window. The media and public's harassment — along with Parker's friends' rejections from MIT — sets the premise for Parker's decision to try and erase the public's knowledge of Spider-Man's secret identity.

Parker asks his friend Doctor Strange

to cast a spell, making everyone forget that he's Spider-Man. However, Parker ruins the spell, which forces Strange to contain it in a box.

Unbeknownst to either of them, this botched spell opens portals in the Multiverse, bringing characters from other universes into theirs. For the rest of the movie, Parker and his friends try to fix his mistake and send the villains from alternate universes back to their homes.

In monetary terms, "No Way Home" overshadowed all other releases this year, with worldwide profits exceeding \$1.3 billion as of January, replacing "Black Panther" as the No. 12 highest-grossing film of all time. Compared to Marvel's "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings," which was originally the most successful film of 2021, "No Way Home" surpassed it in the United States and Canada by a factor of four.

Even disregarding these record-setting profits, "No Way Home" is still the best movie released in 2021.

As the third installment of a collaborative series by Columbia Pictures and Marvel Studios, it is nevertheless an

outstanding movie by itself, even without watching the preceding "Homecoming" and "Far From Home."

The main cast consists of humorous yet emotionally rich actors Tom Holland, Zendaya and Jacob Batalon. The two previous movies starring these characters have built a deep connection with the audience throughout the trilogy. This continuity is what gives "No Way Home" an advantage over other movies, as the audience is already invested in the characters and want to know what happens to them.

A major gripe many critics had with "Homecoming" was that Peter Parker was too cheerful and carefree, considering his somber origin story in the original comics where his Uncle Ben dies due to his reckless actions.

Contrary to "Homecoming," "No Way Home" captures a more comic-aligned version of Parker. All the conflicts in the plot arise from Parker's bad decisions, echoing the adage made famous by Stan Lee — "With great power comes great responsibility."

This is different from previous films, where Parker was just someone that bad things happened to. Parker's own



Graphic by ANNIE LIU

choices causing disaster makes those bad things far more tragic.

Although Holland's Spider-Man still retains his endearing nerdiness, his character becomes more independent, flawed and realistic. The film deals with themes of loss and guilt, and the Spider-Man at the end of the film is a far cry from the meek and submissive Spider-Man in "Homecoming."

Many iconic villains from previous Spider-Man worlds are brought back such as Doc Ock, as well as many heroes. The characters look identical to how they did years ago, bringing a sense of nostalgia for many older fans.

This separates it from other movies made this year, being the only one to bring in characters from separate reboots of the same movie franchise.

These old characters are also given a major role in the plot, and their inclusion caters to fans who watched the original movies decades ago. This commitment to dedicated fans boosts "No Way Home" from a fun action movie for kids to a film that acknowledges and gives closure to the original two movie series, neatly tying together the entire Spider-Man franchise.

Even though there were a lot of strong contenders for the best movie of last year, "Spider-Man: No Way Home" has to be the best. It combines over 20 years of Spider-Man into one movie, a move unexpected to anyone. Now Sony and Marvel will have to decide whether there will be a sequel or a reboot. ♦

2019 alum Caroline Okuno trains to become youngest 1st Marine Division drum major

By HowardShu

In early October, when Staff Sergeant Jay Black, a recruiter from RSS San Jose South, walked into the SHS band building and introduced himself and the San Diego-based Marine Division Band, junior Alison Okuno and senior Christopher Okuno eagerly anticipated watching their older sister Caroline Okuno perform in the professional band.

Caroline, a class of 2019 alum, returned to the school as drum major for the 1st Marine Division Band San Diego to perform for 1st and 3rd period band students in early October.

At the beginning of the period, music students could hear the band warming up just outside the room.

The introduction concluded with Black saying, "OK, here they come."

Alison and Christopher heard Caroline's voice coming from outside, and immediately following that, the 40-person band came into the room, marching in formation to the tune of the drumbeat.

"It was perfect. Their uniforms were pristine; each member was perfectly in step with everyone else," said Christopher, who is one of three drum majors in the SHS band this year.

"I was proud of Caroline and just really impressed by everything that [the band] was doing."

SENIOR Christopher Okuno

After they finished playing their first piece, the band introduced themselves and talked about their experiences before playing the next piece, which mainly involved the brass band, and a few jazz pieces in a New Orleans style.

The band then discussed how high schoolers could enter their program and performed one more piece before marching out.

"I was proud of Caroline and just really impressed by everything that they were doing," Christopher said.

Caroline pitched the idea of performing at the school when she visited SHS in July during band camp.

She talked to band and orchestra teacher Michael Boitz about her work and experience in the Marines and Boitz asked her if her group could come play for the school band.

Following that, Staff Sergeant Eric N. Gonzales, the official drum major and narrator for the First Marine Division band, planned and helped organize the event with Boitz.

Though Caroline said it felt a little strange to return to the school and see a new group of students, many of whom she had worked with when they were in the fifth grade beginning band, she very much enjoyed the experience.

"Seeing how the school changed and then getting to still be involved with it was a really neat experience," Caroline said.

Caroline's musical background

Caroline, who is the youngest musician ever invited to be trained as a Marine Drum Major, is not the only musician in the Okuno family. Christopher plays the euphonium and Alison plays the trumpet. The three siblings also have an older brother named Michael who is currently a member of the Second Marine Division band in Jacksonville, North Carolina.

According to Christopher, the goal of the Marine Division bands is to perform in as many places as possible, from all 50 U.S. states to other countries like France, to represent the Marine Corps.

Every Marine is first and foremost a rifleman," Christopher said.

"They're given the same training as any other military job is given, so they're trained in shooting, and they're also kept to physical standards and have several hours of [physical training] every day."

Members of Caroline's band also practice individually in addition to their regular group training.

On average, the Marine Division band performs around two to five times a week, but during peak weeks, they can perform up to 12 times a week.

For example, when they were in the Bay Area during San Francisco Fleet Week, which is an annual public event that honors the contributions of people in the U.S. Armed Forces, the band performed two to three times a day for a total of about 12 performances throughout the week.

Caroline said she first discovered her passion for music when she started learning and playing the flute when she was in fifth grade.

Going into high school, she started playing the piccolo for the school's music program, specifically wind symphony and symphonic wind ensemble, trombone for the marching band and saxophone for the jazz band.

Christopher said he knew Caroline's passion for playing instruments and her leadership grew because of her consistent participation in the SHS band program during her high school years.

"A lot of people were really inspired by her because she really committed to marching band and raised the underclassmen in a lot of ways," Christopher said.

"She really committed to experiencing marching band and having the best time possible. A lot of us are still affected by that today."

The Marine Band training process

In her senior year, Caroline made it into the county Honor Band and All-State Band, after which a Marine Corps recruiter found her name on a list of All-State musicians around the time when she was applying for colleges.

After the recruiter talked to her about the Marine experience and subsequent opportunities, she was convinced to try to join.

Caroline was accepted into the 1st Marine Corps Band after auditioning during the last month of her senior year of high school.

In July 2019, about a month after she graduated, she went to boot camp for 13 weeks.

"We get to shoot rifles and fight people in boot camp. We get to hit people. It's fun," Caroline said. "It's honestly kind of humbling because you meet a lot of people from different backgrounds. I'm always meeting people from New York, Missouri, Idaho and just everywhere from every different walk of life."

After boot camp, she went to Marine Combat Training (MCT), which is also required for all Marine Division Band musicians.

The training, which occurred over the duration of one month, included developing skills for combat, training with machine guns, hiking and physical training. Then, Caroline and other musicians were sent off to the Naval School of Music in Norfolk, Virginia. The Naval School trains naval, Marine Corps and army musicians all in the same place with similar classes such as the Basic Musician's Course.

The Basic Musician's course, the course



Courtesy of CHRISTOPHER OKUNO

Alum Caroline Okuno of the 1st Marine Division Band performed at SHS on Oct. 8.

Caroline was enrolled in, lasted six months and teaches students how to march, play jazz, do music theory and sight sing.

After Caroline passed these hurdles and graduated, she went to Camp Pendleton in Southern California, joining one of 10 Marine Corps bands, and she has been there ever since.

"I've been here for a year and four months about now and my job is to play flute and piccolo, march around and sometimes do drum major things," she said.

Caroline is now coming up on two years as a Marine Corps musician and has begun the necessary training to become a drum major for the band since March.

The drum major's role varies from band to band.

Oftentimes, they serve as representatives of the marching band and lead performances, meaning they are at the front, often conducting with a baton.

The drum majors also have the responsibility to perform and be "clean," exact and precise, since they are essentially the face representing the marching band and the first person spectators see when the band enters.

Caroline's responsibilities as drum major in the performance at the school included calling the commands to get the band's attention and get them to start marching off.

"Caroline has a lot of natural skill and she's also very strong mentally," Christopher said. "I never expected or forethought of the possibility of her becoming drum major to this extent or doing anything beyond just being a musician, but I'm not surprised by

the fact that she did manage to do it because she's really amazing."

Though Christopher is not looking to join the Marine Corps Band like his sister, he said he is still inspired by the path she has taken.

"In terms of her skills as a leader and her pathway of always achieving excellence, I aspire to be like that," he said. "When she presents herself to an audience, she's bold and knows what she's doing."

Throughout her journey being in the marching band at Saratoga High, Caroline said one of the most important things she learned was to take initiative.

"You can't expect things to come to you in life and you have to go out and work for them," she said. "I put a lot of work into that marching band trying to improve myself and improve the people around me, especially once I got to be a section leader with the trombone section. Being responsible for their well being and for their success really taught me to find a place and fill that role wherever I go." ♦



To watch the Oct. 6 performance at SHS, scan the QR code above.

To encourage reading, English teachers check out books from classroom libraries

By ChristinaChang

Walking into English teacher Amy Keys's Room 006, students see bookshelves hugging almost every wall, organized by genre, author and topic. Books range from poetry and anthologies to science fiction and mystery, carrying titles like "The Great Gatsby" or "The Round House" and authors from Shirley Jackson to Louise Erdrich and John Steinbeck.

With her father being a former English teacher, Keys grew up reading aloud and listening to audiobooks with her family, which led to her love for reading. She recalls that in elementary, middle and even high school, her friends would go over to her house to "flop down and read," especially during school breaks.

Keys said she wanted to have a mini library of sorts in her classroom to "entice students with accessible books and reading for pleasure." She noted that the "terrible paradox" of school, which she experienced herself in both high school and college, was that students are too busy to read for pleasure, despite the importance of reading as a central foundation of education.

"I think we should keep reading all the time," Keys said. "It's important for our brains, our mental health and emotional well-being to have another world to escape into and gain another perspective on things. It's something to keep us going creatively."

She said she likes to "ship students with books," to find the book that's going to speak to them, excite them or get them inspired to read other books.

With a wide range of books in the classroom, at least one book is checked out weekly, Keys said.

To check out a book, students pick one off the shelves and bring it over to Keys, then take a notecard, write their name, the date and chosen book title on it before placing the card into the book checkout box. Students can keep the books for up to one semester, and every couple of weeks Keys's TAs look through the book checkout and send messages to students with overdue books.

The most popular books have been "The Round House" by Louise Erdrich, "Friday Night Lights" by H. G. Bissinger and "All the Light We Cannot See" by Anthony Doerr.

For Keys, a good and compelling book lives in her psyche even when she is not reading; she finds herself thinking about



FALCON // CHRISTINA CHANG

English teacher Amy Keys showcases her collection of books, including "The Sentence" and "The St. Paul Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald."

characters from the book she is currently reading and wondering what they'd think of various events happening in the day. Other times, she's so in love with the structure of a sentence or the beauty of an image captured by the author that it changes her view of the object or idea.

"That experience of getting lost in a book, losing track of time and experiencing another world is so beautiful," Keys said.

Fellow English teacher Suzanne Herzman also finds joy in immersing herself deep within a book — like Keys, she has also created a classroom library to share her love for literature.

Keys and Herzman first met in 2007; Keys worked as a teacher mentor for the New Teacher Project (NTP) in Santa Cruz County and Herzman taught English at Scotts Valley High School at the time. Keys would often bring relatively new teachers

from the NTP to observe and learn from Herzman.

With Herzman coming to work at SHS in 2009 and Keys in 2011, the two have continued to cultivate their tight-knit friendship, along with English teacher Natasha Ritchie. Now, the three frequently discuss reactions to books and recommendations, among other topics.

Similarly, Herzman invites her students to discuss books during tutorials, after class or after school.

To entice students to read, Herzman has an anecdote on the topic which she tells her classes every year. Her first job out of college involved lots of commuting as she lived in San Francisco and worked in Richmond in the East Bay. Every day, she would take a 45-minute BART ride to and from work, bringing a

book along with her to read.

One day, a man sat next to her and told her she was lucky that she could read. At first, Herzman assumed he meant literacy was important, but the man went on to explain that while he could read and decipher words, he was unable to lose himself in the book the way she could. Herzman realized she had always taken that ability for granted.

Herzman said she sees her classroom library as a means for readers to communicate; she could recommend the perfect book by simply grabbing it off the shelf.

"In our discipline, when you think about what it is that you hope students leave high school with at the end of it all, it's that they may become lifetime readers," Herzman said. ♦



Herzman

Cutback Cleanups promotes environmental awareness

CLUB FACES CHALLENGES IN ORGANIZING PROJECTS WHILE OPERATING WITHOUT ASB APPROVAL

By SarahZhou

While most Santa Cruz-goers plan beach excursions with their friends to play in the waves or relax under the sun, senior Marina Kaypaghian, co-president of Cutback Cleanups, has different motives in mind: Her visits to the beach with her club are intended to reduce ocean pollution and educate students on climate change.

To date, Cutback Cleanups, a larger organization of Bay Area clubs, has hosted over 40 beach cleanups at locations ranging from Seabright State Beach in Santa Cruz to Beer Can Beach in Rio Del Mar. Kaypaghian hopes to mirror the organization's success at SHS.

However, Cutback Cleanups is unlike other Saratoga clubs; while it is an approved club at Los Gatos High School, Soquel High School and West Valley College, it has run in Saratoga without ASB approval for two years.

The club originally presented to ASB early in the pandemic but was not approved as the club did not yet have a plan for a beach cleanup carpool system, Kaypaghian said.

ASB officers encouraged the club to collaborate with the Green Team, another club

that encourages environmental awareness. But that collaboration hasn't worked out so far, with Kaypaghian saying the Green Team hasn't responded on social media and hasn't been meeting regularly.

When the club decided to reapply with a carpool system for beach cleanups, Kaypaghian said they were denied again due to ASB officers thinking their club was too "cliche."

"I love the idea of having students evaluate clubs," Kaypaghian said. "Overall, I think ASB generally does a great job of evaluating clubs. However, Cutback Cleanups feels that ASB needs to track club participation better because of our experience with the Green Team."

With the release of a new ASB club policy, Kaypaghian was concerned about a rule that unapproved clubs cannot claim SHS affiliation.

"We want people to know our club is representative of multiple schools (I.G. Santa Cruz and Saratoga)," Kaypaghian said. "We have never claimed ASB affiliation at SHS, but we would like to be able to say that our club is inclusive of Saratoga High School students."

Another challenge the club has faced

while operating without approval is finding new members and advertising to underclassmen.

"We have never claimed ASB affiliation at SHS, but we would like to be able to say that our club is inclusive of Saratoga High School students."

SENIOR Marina Kaypaghian

ASB-approved clubs receive ASB endorsement at events such as Club Day, which help increase participation, Kaypaghian said.

"With all club meetings online, it's definitely been harder to keep all of our members informed," senior co-president Elizabeth Lemberg said. "We have become super active on our social media platforms in order to advertise our events."

Kaypaghian and Lemberg have been actively working with Los Gatos club president senior Hailey Anderson to turn the club into a nonprofit organization. All Cutback Cleanups officers from different schools meet together over Zoom every Sunday to discuss future plans and upcoming projects. Cutback Cleanups provides various opportunities each month for members.

"We started out only doing beach cleanups but now we have a variety of different events and projects," Lemberg said. "Every month, we collaborate with Groundswell Coastal Ecology in watering plants for the monarch butterflies. Over the summer, members created informational skits on climate change for Save our Shores, an organization that we partnered with."

Currently, the Saratoga branch of Cutback Cleanups is undecided on reapplying for ASB approval, as both Kaypaghian and Lemberg are soon to graduate.

"We definitely have more events and projects than ASB-approved clubs because we need something to keep our members engaged," Lemberg said, "but without the help of ASB, it's hard to find out what underclassmen would be qualified to keep the club running." ♦

A walk through Madronia Cemetery to explore what life was like in earlier times

THE 12.5 ACRE PROPERTY BEGAN OPERATION IN 1863 AND IS THE RESTING PLACE FOR HISTORICAL FIGURES

By Lena Aribi & Meher Bhatnagar

A large fenced gateway marks the entrance to Madronia Cemetery, a Saratoga historical site located about half a mile north of Saratoga Village. A blooming arboretum and walkway of beautiful flowers line the entrance. Placards engraved in stone cover the front wall of the cemetery.

Begun in 1863, the cemetery was named after the madrone trees that cover the site. Despite the cemetery's rich history, visitors are rare because of its tucked away location, according to office staff Sandra Gonzalez.

Since Madronia is an "active cemetery," burials are still taking place. In the past, new land was purchased near the back of the cemetery to accommodate more burials, but Gonzalez said that new land is not currently being bought because "the existing land will last up to 30 years."

At least 5,400 people have been buried there, including family members, community leaders, and prominent historical figures.

Madronia is also known for its arboretum, which features many varieties of trees representing "people from all over the world," assistant principal Matt Torrens told

us during a tour we took with him one day during first semester.

There are currently 294 trees from 91 different species located around the cemetery grounds. Benefactors have donated small half curved benches that surround the trees, giving guests a place to sit and relax amidst the shade.

In the middle of the cemetery is an area in which guests can fill up a plastic can and water flowers placed near or on top of the cemetery's headstones.

Near the back of the 12.5-acre cemetery are cremation boxes to be filled with ashes. Instead of spreading ashes, people can buy

a box to put the ashes in, keeping them in a wall at the cemetery near other gravesites. On the boxes, visitors can engrave information as one would on a tombstone.

According to Gonzalez, a landscaping company comes in once a week to tidy the cemetery. However, the company does but does not touch or clean the tombstones — each individual is responsible for maintaining the tombstone they have purchased.

As the cemetery continues to grow, housing Saratoga's loved ones, its reputation as Saratoga's oldest institution still prevails — many historical figures are buried right under the cemetery's ground.

The first person interred: C.B. Buckman



In 1854, Saratoga had its first death: a young boy named C.B. Buckman, who drowned while crossing the Saratoga Creek. Since there were no established cemeteries at the time, residents decided to bury him on a plot of land further up from the sawmill that was located near today's downtown so his body wouldn't float above ground in case of flooding.

This death led the residents to begin to bury bodies at the same plot of

land, which eventually became Madronia Cemetery Torrens said.

A placard at the front of the cemetery informs visitors that the cemetery land was donated by Don Jose Ramon Arguello, the principal owner of the Quito Ranch, in 1863.

Today, the land donated by Arguello is considered to be the "Old Section" of the cemetery. Ever since, new land has been purchased to expand the plot of the cemetery's ground and allow more space for graves.

Mary Brown: wife of famed abolitionist

Mary Ann Day Brown's grave is the most visited site in Madronia Cemetery. Mary was the wife of radical American abolitionist John Brown, a wanted man who killed slave owners in May of 1856 during the Pottawatomie massacre.

Mary was just 17 when the two got married — John was 36 and had taken a fancy to Mary's looks, Torrens said. They had eight children together; two died of tuberculosis within a week of being born,

and another died in a burn accident after a pot of boiling water fell onto her head.

Eventually, one of their daughters moved to California after John Brown's death and convinced Mary to move as well. They settled in California and moved to Saratoga. Mary and two of her children are buried in the same location at the Madronia Cemetery.



John Pourroy: soldier from World War I



John Pourroy, a World War I veteran, was a Saratoga Elementary School graduate who died at war. He was buried over 110 years ago at Madronia.

Over time, a tree has been planted and grown on top of his gravesite. The tree is fully grown — those who wish to see Pourroy's grave need to use their

hands to brush the dirt and leaves away from the base of the tree.

Pourroy's name is also engraved into the arch that stands at the entrance of Saratoga Village alongside five other Saratoga Elementary graduates who also died at war. Pourroy and the other veterans buried at Madronia have special headstones etched with their veteran status.

Mark Bingham: hero of Flight 93

On Sept. 11, 2001, Flight 93, originally bound for California, had been hijacked and directed to the White House. Three hijacked flights hit their targets that day: the North Tower, the South Tower and Pentagon — but Flight 93 never did.

Some passengers aboard — including Los Gatos High School graduates Mark Bingham, 31, and Todd M. Beamer, 32, — rushed into the cockpit and forced the plane into a nosedive into a Pennsylvania field before it could reach what was believed to be the White House, sacrificing

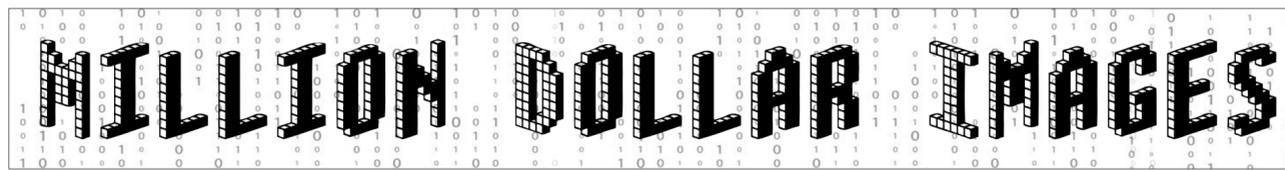
their lives to protect the terrorists' intended target. Thirty-three passengers, seven crew members and the four hijackers were all killed when the flight was sent into the field at 563 miles per hour.

Bingham — a hero whose actions inspired Americans during the 9/11 era — is buried in the Madronia Cemetery and is one of the many stories worth learning about in one of Saratoga's most historic places. ♦



Graphic by ESTHER LUAN

All Photos Courtesy of HARSHINI VELCHAMY



Graphic by SHAAN SRIDHAR

STUDENTS PROVIDE INSIGHT ON THEIR RISKY NFT INVESTMENTS AND THEIR POTENTIALLY LUCRATIVE RESULTS

By George Huang & Jonathan Li

Cryptopunk #9998 sold on Oct. 28 for \$532 million to an anonymous buyer. This jaw-dropping price soared so high largely because it was transferred to various crypto wallets owned by the same individual until the price reached \$500 million. It is now on sale on Larva Labs for 250KΞ or a whopping \$796.31M. Nevertheless, this figure only represents a fraction of the value of non-fungible tokens currently circulating the internet.

\$2.5 billion of non-fungible tokens (NFTs) were sold in the first half of 2021, but this number almost tripled by the end of 2021. These little bits of "screen-shottable" media — digital assets that supposedly can be easily copied — are being valued by some at prices that have led some to wonder whether they'll lead to great wealth while others are left scratching their heads.

An example of one of the most expensive NFT series is the Cryptopunk series, consisting of randomly generated pixelated portraits starting at around \$200,000 and going up into the millions. Cryptopunk #7523, Cryptopunk #3100, and Cryptopunk #7804 are three of the nine highly valued aliens in the series, selling at 11.75 million, 7.67 million and 7.6 million respectively.

Another popular series is the Bored Ape Yacht Club, sporting computer generated pictures of monkeys with different expressions and costumes. Of these, the most expensive is #2087 worth 2.3 million. However, investors can also find NFTs on sale for mere cents or even fractions of a cent. The series MetaShiba, where an investor purchases an NFT as a character to play in the MetaShiba game, was valued at \$0.00000000241 as of Jan. 5.

So how can you buy an NFT? The first step is to create a crypto wallet, which is a digital wallet to store crypto currencies. Afterwards, you can send the crypto tokens you purchase into the wallet. Now, you can connect this wallet to a marketplace that sells NFTs and you can bid on ones you want. If you win, the NFT is yours, though you may have to pay extra transaction fees based on the market you are using.

Class of 2021 alumni Isaac Le has been one of the many trading these assets this past year.

"I found it extremely risky at first," Le said. "But when it started gaining traction on mainstream media — that was when I decided to jump in."

Le bought videos and images of various basketball players. At the time, digital collectibles generated by Top Shot were quickly gaining traction, and Le hoped to benefit from the fluctuation of the prices of these assets. In the end, he said he made several thousand dollars on his transactions.

At a broader scale, fueled by

social media and the support of various notable influencers such as Katy Perry and Jay Z, NFTs are now one of the most popular assets traded on the market. Proponents herald their blockchain technology, decentralized nature and empowerment of lesser-known artists.

At the same time, NFTs are highly controversial, considered by many investors to be potentially worthless and unreliable.

"[The crypto space is] disgusting and contrary to the interest of civilization," Charlie Munger, right hand man to Warren Buffett, said during Berkshire's annual shareholder meeting. "I don't welcome a currency that's so useful to kidnapers and extortionists and so forth, nor do I like just shuffling out of your extra billions of billions of dollars to somebody who just invented a new financial product out of thin air."

NFTs can be best compared to art and other similar collectibles in the sense that their value is determined solely by investors. High net worth individuals often acquire pieces for various purposes from art collection to tax evasion.

NFTs have value due to the underlying code that differentiates each piece. They are based on blockchain technology, where transactions are recorded within "blocks" that are completely trackable through a transparent network accessible to all participants.

Each block is unique and linked to the block before it. The "chain" connecting each block makes it very difficult to alter the contents of each block, and the individual blocks confirm the exact time and sequence of the transactions.

This means that NFTs can be securely transferred, and each NFT is completely original. Screenshots of the artwork do not have the same worth — only the original that resides on the blockchain has value.

The most common critique of NFTs lies in disbelief over the concept of owning digital media and doubts about the true value they hold. For many, it is difficult to justify the purchase of NFTs with no apparent physical value in the same way that an original painting by a respected artist has worth.

Le admitted as much, saying, "I'm essentially buying video clips or images that I could just screenshot or watch on YouTube. I think it's a little ridiculous."

Le said he is not completely sold on NFTs, despite the underlying blockchain technology, and he mainly sees it as a trading opportunity. He is critical of the current lack of regulation and other uncertainties surrounding the asset and its value.

"I saw it as an opportunity to quickly make some money," Le said. "It worked out, but I would never invest in it long term."

On the other hand, in a speaker event with the Saratoga High Investment Club, Michael Li, the vice president of Coinbase,

emphasized the importance of looking past the seemingly obvious weaknesses and into the fundamental composition of the NFT.

"We've never had a technology like this before," Li said. "The more you know about blockchain, the more you realize the full range of things you can do with it."

Li believes that blockchain represents the next major phase of innovation. He compared it to the internet in the 1990s and early 2000s, emphasizing that "all applications we use today can be rebuilt for better on the blockchain."

Like currencies, NFTs derive value from demand. Without it, the token is worthless regardless of the blockchain. Among less popular and liquid NFTs, a common practice is to sell it to themselves to artificially increase demand.

The volatility and manipulability within certain NFTs is no different than pump-and-dump schemes in other markets. However, NFTs — like other cryptos and assets — are considered to be property by the IRS and are not a security. This allows investors to sell for a loss, and then use that loss to eliminate capital gains taxes on other assets such as stocks. Investors can quickly buy back the crypto they sold, and in doing so, avoid any losses. This tax loophole is called "tax-loss harvesting."

Despite the relative volatility and lack of regulation, senior Dhruv

Singh believes NFTs are opportunities for wealth building in the near future.

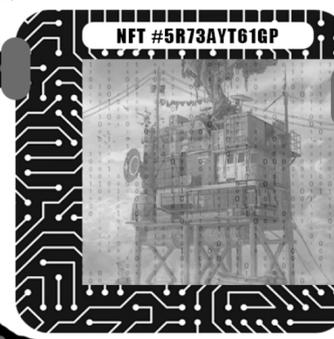
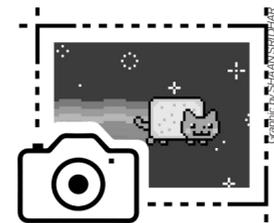
"NFTs are distinctive even within the crypto-asset sphere, since the tokens serve as a 'bridge' between the virtual and physical worlds through corroborating digital ownership, which furthers blockchain adoption, and allows a verage households to participate in the digital economy," Singh said. "From my perspective, NFTs are one of the most exciting innovations within crypto-spheres."

Singh said he looks for three characteristics when evaluating standard assets as potential investments: scarcity, functionality and distinctiveness. He said most NFTs meet the scarcity criteria, but not the functionality and distinctiveness criteria, which he feels is something "investors should understand prior to investing in the asset-class."

With highly volatile markets and cash flows impossible to determine given the nature of the asset, the risks for NFTs are hard to ignore for many investors. Yet over the past few months, an increasing number of auction houses have adopted NFTs, indicating that this market is beginning to be accepted.

In the long term, Singh said that he does not believe that NFTs are only a "fad," and is looking to take advantage of the market by hedging against the asset by taking short and long positions.

"It's easy and completely understandable to laugh off this recent trend," Singh said. "At the end of the day, you get to do what you like with your money." ♦

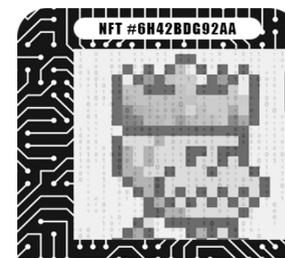


WHAT'S INSIDE AN NFT?

1. 32-BIT RANDOM NUMBER

2. 256-BIT HEADER NUMBER

3. DATA OF YOUR CHOOSING



Graphic by SHAAN SRIDHAR

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Falcons fall to Gunn, still lead league 4-1

By EstherLuan & HowardShu

After a 4-0 league season start, the Falcons were outplayed by Gunn at home last Friday, losing 55-37. According to senior wing Ishaan Bhandari, the loss resulted from poor individual performance on key plays; the Falcons dragged behind Gunn by 10 points for much of the game.

Before this loss, they had beaten Wilcox 61-33 on Jan. 18 and won a back-and-forth 52-47 home game against Los Gatos on Jan. 14, a key victory against one of the strongest teams in the El Camino league.

The Falcons also won 49-45 and 64-54 against Monta Vista and Fremont on Jan. 8 and Jan. 10, respectively.

These wins come in spite of missing key players. Shooting guard senior Som Teymouri, the team's current leading scorer, was out for the first game; senior forward Ishaan Bhandari and junior center Mateusz Palusinski were out for the first two; and junior forward Mason Wang was out for all three due to injuries.



Pai

"Obviously, not having [Teymouri] was a huge loss, but I don't think there was ever a moment I believed we wouldn't win," junior guard Niveydh Pai said.

The team has a motto to "go 120," which tells the team to give over 100% effort, senior point guard Christopher Liu said.

"This year we have 15 guys on our team, which means we can go all out because we're going to have another rotation coming soon," Liu said.

In their well-attended home game against Los Gatos, they edged ahead in the second half. The starting lineup consisted of senior point guard Christian Li, Teymouri, Pai, senior power forward Ayaaz Shah and senior center Giulio Morini-Bianzino.

It was a physical game with high defensive intensity, as both teams were full-court

pressing, fouling often and double teaming at half court. The game remained close during the first half, with neither team being able to build a lead of more than five points.

After trailing 24-23 at halftime, the Falcons rallied to a 5-point victory thanks to key plays from sophomore shooting guard Bryan Wang and great defense. The game was decided after Liu scored back-to-back fastbreak layups to give the Falcons a 49-39 lead with a minute remaining.

"I think this game was super different because of the big crowd. It was a really good turnout that I was super happy about," Liu said. "The game was a lot more exciting."

In their home game against Fremont on Jan. 10, they won 64-54, bolstered by Teymouri's return and a great performance from Pai, who finished with 22 points.

Pai sprained his ankle on a bad landing during the game against Los Gatos, but appeared to be recovering quickly, Li said. The team is anticipating having all their starters in upcoming league games. Though a concentrated offense has been vital to the team's success so far, Li identified defense as their strongest suit; head coach Patrick Judge's Falcons have been tough on defense because of their full-court press and the steals it creates. "We weren't playing as usual [against Fremont]," he said. "We're known as a defensive team, but in the first half we were just out of place and missing assignments."

They led 31-29 at the half, but were able to take a 10-point win because of playing better defense and taking better shots in the second half. In their first league game against Monte Vista on Jan. 8, the team won 49-45 despite underperforming.

"I'd say our team chemistry was a bit off because we had four missing players, especially a few who played a lot," Li said. "But after each game, we're just getting better."

The recent spike in COVID-19 cases has



From left to right: senior Christian Li, juniors Julian Berkowitz-Sklar and Mateusz Palusinski, and senior Christopher Liu celebrate after Liu scores against Los Gatos on Jan. 14.

somewhat impacted the team's performance as well. Li said the team struggled with wearing masks, which covered their nose and mouth for the whole game, as they usually put masks to their chin when playing. Several of the team's star player sit-outs in the past few games have also been due to COVID-19 exposures. Though the team's 9-2 preseason record — still relatively dominant compared to other local teams — pales in comparison to their 21-2 summer record against higher division teams, Li believes recent wins have helped them gain momentum.

"Our morale isn't low, and we're expecting better games," Li said. "I think we kind of relaxed a bit because we have confidence that we're better than other teams, so we need to focus on not playing down to their level but just playing our own game."

In their most recent non-league game against Monte Vista on Jan. 15, the Falcons continued their momentum with a 51-33 win thanks to key plays from senior center Giulio Morini and Teymouri, among others. On Tuesday, Jan. 18, the team won 61-33 in an away game against Wilcox, before losing 55-37 at home against Gunn.

Against Wilcox, Liu was happy with the team's defense, holding both opponents to just 33 points, a feat he believes is pretty insane for their level. For these games, Liu said the team has thrived from playing team ball. "We don't have one [key player]," Liu

"I feel like we're finally grouping together, playing together the way we should be."

SENIOR Christopher Liu

said. "We have five guys on the court that know their own position."

The team is already locked in for CCS after being seeded in due to the 9-2 preseason, but they have sights set on winning the league. They are currently first in the El Camino league, but Liu believes the team still has not reached their full potential.

Their major competitor in the league looks to be the Lynbrook Vikings, a team they will play at home on Feb. 1. ♦

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

COVID-19 sidelines key players, losses pile up

By ChristopherChen

Pandemic-related absences and travel conflicts from players have stymied the girls' basketball team early in the season.

With many players out, they have been outnumbered and overmatched. At various points, the team has missed senior power forward Naomi Mallik, junior shooting guard Jenny Campbell, junior guard Christina Chang, sophomore guard Zineerah Ahmed and sophomore power forward Priyanka Meduri. The Falcons sometimes had 6-7 players available fully stocked opponents.

This contributed to four straight early league losses: 35-34 against Lynbrook on Jan. 18; 58-40 to Los Gatos on Jan. 14; 42-36 to Los Altos on Jan. 7; and 51-31 to Homestead on Dec. 30.

"For those games, all three teams we've played have had larger benches than us. They are able to substitute more people so that they are constantly having a fresh set of five on the court," Campbell said. "Most of us have to stay in the game for extended periods of time, and some play the entire game without any rest."

The quad day game against sister school Los Gatos on Jan. 14 wasn't an exception. Although the game was evenly matched at first, they fell behind in the second half due to a lack of height and tiring out, with only six players available compared to Los Gatos's full bench.

Following these four games, the team was mostly complete in a game they won against Wilcox 46-33 on Jan. 19. With a full team going forward for upcoming games

against Los Altos and Lynbrook, the team is looking stronger than before.

Although the team is "definitely pretty small," junior point guard Tanya Ghai believes lack of height is not a big issue, as she thinks the team has strong guards and posts. However, she believes the team needs to work on producing consistent offense.

"It is too stagnant, but I feel that's an issue only because we have just started playing together and we're trying to learn each other's personal and overall skills," she said. "Building on-court chemistry and implementing an overall offensive game plan has been something we are trying to key in on."

Senior Amarangana Tyagi found the team's offense strong in the match against Wilcox on Jan. 19.

"I think our biggest problem was lack of

movement — we weren't moving when we didn't have the ball," she said. "In that game, we were cutting more, setting screens, and passing dribble handoffs. We really got into this flow, which we hope we can continue."

Coach Joshua Rivera is looking to improve the team chemistry and movement through scrimmages during practices, with a focus on locking down defensively to get more possession.

With the return of most of their players resulting in a win against Wilcox, the coach and the team is generally feeling better about their next few games.

"Every team goes through their own struggles, and tries to find their own identity," Rivera said. "And because everyone's coming back, and it's helped me to go 'I think we'll be OK.'" ♦

WRESTLING

Unable to fill weight classes, Falcons forfeit matches

By MitchellChen

The wrestling team has faced an uninvited opponent early in its 0-4 start to the season: COVID-19 concerns and absences.

With increasing rates of COVID-19 transmission, wrestling has been hit especially hard because athletes aren't willing to risk their health on the mat, members on the team said. Forfeits have been common.

As a result, of the 20 athletes on the team, only 12 have been willing to go on the mat during meets and tournaments.

Sophomore Andy Cao is among those

sitting out. "I am hesitant to wrestle in meets because I wanted to take extra COVID-19 precautions," he said. "It really sucks because I was really looking forward to using some of the new techniques we learned in practice."

While the pandemic has greatly impacted the team, it wasn't the only thing that factored into the rough start to the season. The lack of conditioning and preparation the team has done this year has also contributed to their losses,

senior captain Kendal Jarvis said. Wrestlers haven't pushed themselves and each other to the best of their abilities — and they have much room for improvement.

As a result, in addition to regular practices, the team also conditions twice a week, either on the track or in the weight room.

"I think our conditioning at the moment may not be the best, but as long as we incorporate live wrestling with other workouts, we should be fine," Jarvis said.

During a recent dual meet with Santa Clara on Jan. 20, members of the team felt that while conditioning has helped their performances, there is still more to be done.

"I think we need more conditioning," sophomore Justin Jiang said. "During my match at Santa Clara, I was tired after the first round. If we had more conditioning during the season, it would be effective."

Despite losses, the team is trying to stay healthy and work harder to better prepare themselves for future meets and tournaments. Their next meet was scheduled for Jan. 27 against Mountain View. ♦



Graphic by VICTORIA HU



toga6thman

Follow

25 posts

410 followers

633 following

Official Saratoga 6th Man

Keep up with Saratoga's sporting events!

Created by senior Parsa Hashemi during the fall semester, the account aims to bolster the school's sports culture and audience engagement.

POSTS

REELS

TAGGED

By AnjaliNuggehalli

the word about sporting events."

@toga6thman primarily posts infographics made by junior Kaelli Trateng to encourage students to attend games for all sports. Trateng will most likely take over the account once Hashemi graduates.

"Kaelli approached me and offered to help with graphics, which took a lot of weight off me," Hashemi said. "She talked about her desire to create a more spirited community at the school, and it was really admirable."

Trateng's infographics include a visual, along with the game's time, and opponent; these graphics are advertised further through assistant principal Brian Thompson's school-wide emails. Thompson got involved shortly after the account's creation.

The account's promotion of the varsity basketball games

against Los Gatos on Jan. 14 — as well as ASB's newly implemented "game of the week" — attracted a large number of students. Senior varsity basketball co-captain Ayaaz Shah attributed the team's win to the student section.

"I warmed my heart to see so many Falcons show up for the team," Shah said. "It always makes us play better when we have a supportive crowd when we're playing."

Shah added that the infographics posted by @toga6thman leading up to the game were "very influential," and he appreciates Hashemi's efforts to bolster school spirit.

"I feel like we're only worried about our own little communities, but sports culture brings that sense of unity," Hashemi said. "It's a really good way to bring everyone together and fight for something in common instead of against each other." ♦

Quad Day on Friday, Feb. 15th!

Varsity Basketball

Girls vs Homestead @ : 5:30 p.m.
Boys vs Monta Vista @ : 7:00 p.m.

Watch the Falcons beat up Mountain View!

Varsity Toga Wrestling takes on Mountain View on Feb. 8th @ 6:30 pm!

Watch Girls Varsity Soccer destroy Milpitas on Feb. 1st!

Come support the Falcons @ 6:00 p.m.!

BOYS' SOCCER

Falcons get off to strong start

By AnnieLiu, NikhilMathihalli & TiffanyWang

The boys' soccer team began its league season with a 3-1 record after a 2-1 loss to Lynbrook on Jan. 18, a 5-2 win against Monta Vista on Jan. 13, a 5-1 win against Cupertino on Jan. 6 and a 2-1 victory to Fremont on Jan. 4.

With 10 returning varsity players on the 14-member team, the Falcons attribute their early success to strong team chemistry. These team bonds have been additionally strengthened through the preseason games, junior attacking midfielder Nathan Lim said.

to place many athletes with varsity potential on the JV team due to a lack of experience. Even so, five new athletes — Shaik, junior Taylor Wilson and sophomores Mohit Gandluru, Yul Hong and Jeremy Krainin — fill the absences left by Class of 2021 graduates, including winger Nolan Chen and center back Kyle Massie.

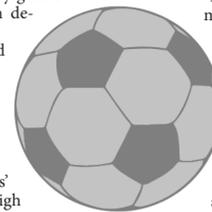
A normal practice, which typically spans for around two hours, consists of warm-up stretches and some keep-away games which are followed up with defense practice.

The team recently played a game against Monta Vista, one of the best teams in the league, which was their "first real test of where we lie," according to senior captain and center back Aidan Costello. The Falcons' 5-2 victory gave them high hopes for the rest of the season.

Prior to the game against Monta Vista, the team played Fremont, and though they won against Fremont early in the season, they were unsatisfied with their performance: The team scored two goals in the first 10 minutes but not again.

"We just didn't really find ourselves after that, so they scored another goal. We didn't think we played very well at all and most people were really upset with that win," Costello said.

The Falcons were scheduled to play Fremont and Cupertino on Jan. 25 and Jan. 27, and the team hopes to secure another win against Milpitas on Feb. 1. ♦



GIRLS' SOCCER

Team maintains preseason success

By JonnyLuo & ArnavSwamy

The girls' soccer team began the league season with a 0-0 tie against Fremont on Jan. 4, a 3-0 win against Monta Vista on Jan. 13, a 5-1 win against Lynbrook on Jan. 18 and a 5-0 victory over Wilcox on Jan. 20 — leading to a 3-1-0 record. Their record continues a strong 4-1-1 preseason record.

The first league game against Fremont was one of the hardest games for the team. They were able to shut down Fremont's offense, but struggled to score.

"We developed our team chemistry and learned how to play really cohesively with each other," said senior outside forward Anjali Nuggehalli, who is new to the team after playing competitive club soccer alone in recent years.

However, the Falcons' schedule has been impacted by the pandemic: A game against Cupertino was rescheduled to Jan. 20 due to COVID-19 cases on the opposing team, and a game against Milpitas was rescheduled to Feb. 5 because the school went online due to the omicron surge.

The team has also seen two COVID-19 cases (1 player and 1 coach), but has not been significantly affected, Nuggehalli said. "The surge in cases has made us play harder because we never know if a game is

going to be our last," Nuggehalli said.

Nuggehalli, who has been recruited to play Division 3 soccer at Pomona College, has played soccer since age 5; however, this is her first year playing on the school team due to transferring to De Anza Force ECNL, which — unlike her previous club, U.S. Soccer Development Academy — lets her play both club and school soccer.

"It's been a new experience being the oldest on the team and playing with younger girls," Nuggehalli said.

Players such as senior co-captains and outside defenders Casey Gilligan and Emma Foley are also critical members of the team because of their speed, Nuggehalli said. She added that senior co-captain midfielder Lauren Yarrington is an essential part of the team's offensive plays.

"All three seniors are amazing leaders both on and off the field in their own unique way," said Nuggehalli.

With goalie Raina Hirekatur's powerful defense paired with Nuggehalli's, Yarrington's and sophomore Katherine Oberhauser's coordinated offense, Nuggehalli is looking forward to a strong season with a well rounded team.

"We have a lot of depth on this team and a lot of girls who specialize in different things which make the team strong," Nuggehalli said.

"I'm having so much fun playing with these girls, and it has been amazing to have gotten so close to them. I'm optimistic for the rest of the season, as long as we keep up the intensity and execute well in our games." ♦



Nuggehalli

The Falcon Crossword: Friday, January 28, 2022

BY Bill Yuan

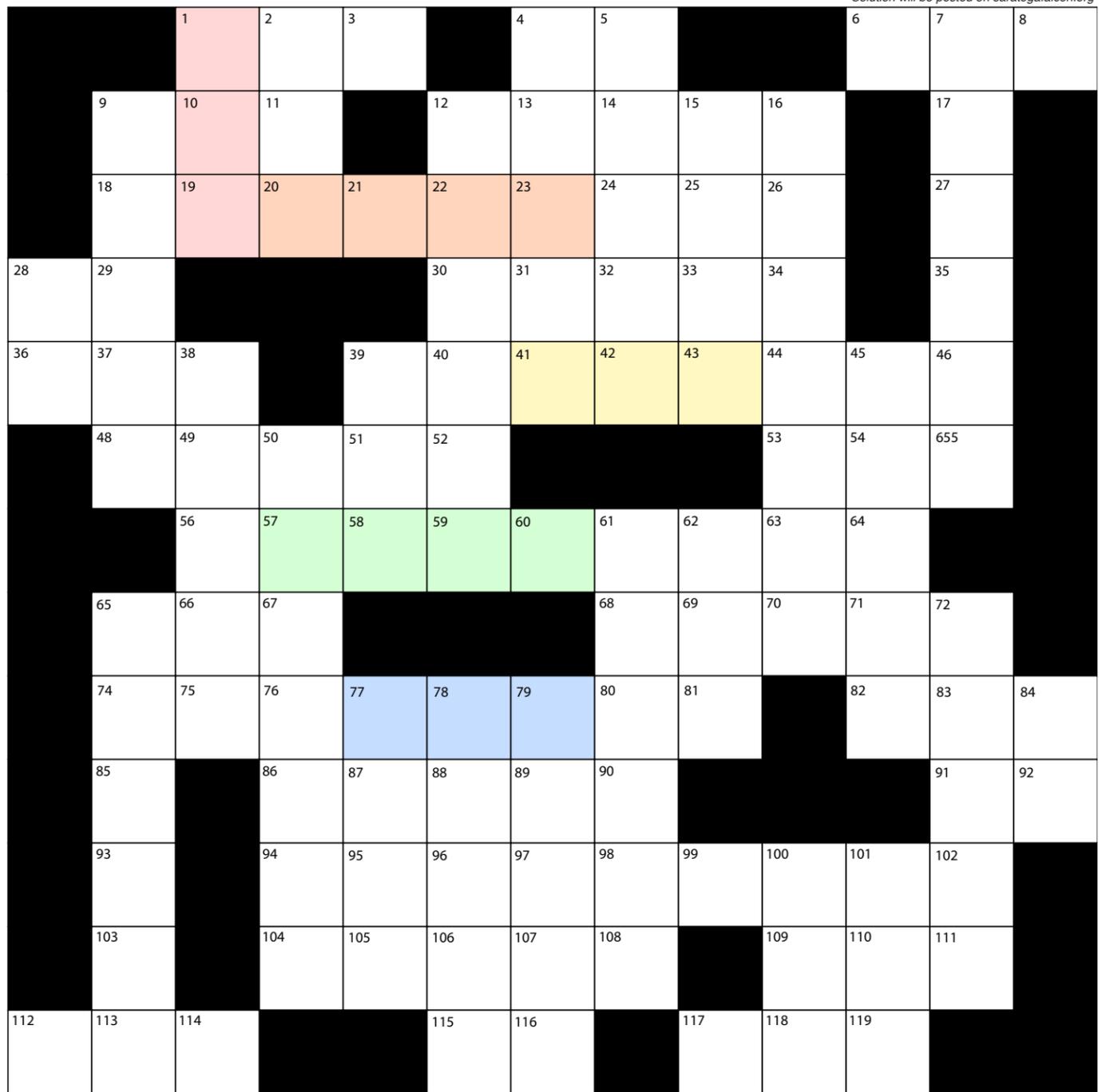
Solution will be posted on saratogafalcon.org

ACROSS

- 1 The region of California that we are from, in slang
- 4 TV Channel that aired Teen Titans, The Powerpuff Girls, Ben 10, abbr.
- 6 Stock that was pumped by r/wallstreetbets in January last year
- 9 78% nitrogen, 21% oxygen
- 12 A Brazilian state along the atlantic coast that is the eighth-largest Brazilian State by population
- 18 Music producer?
- 28 Type of battery
- 30 Pointed at, or set yourself a goal
- 36 A cap for a jar
- 39 Our country's armed forces
- 48 Used to point during presentations, also illegal to shine in the sky
- 53 See 45-Down
- 56 A diagram that might depict an electric circuit
- 65 A board game of comparison, abbr.
- 68 This is ain't your first...
- 74 A headache and nausea, after a night out, perhaps
- 82 Cells that transport oxygen throughout your body, abbr.
- 86 Household appliance company, most known for their vacuums
- 91 As opposed to restrictive early action, say
- 94 What all the highlighted boxes are
- 104 Standardized test for lawyers, plural
- 109 To grow older
- 112 Tom Holland's weapon of choice in his most recent action movie
- 115 Chevrolet Camaro variant with a 6-cylinder engine
- 117 Standardized rating system used in competitive chess

DOWN

- 1 Greek prefix meaning life
- 2 Trajectory of a football
- 4 Subject of the Rhodes Colossus
- 5 ___ Scott, actress who played Jasmine in Disney's 2019 remake of Aladdin
- 7 A person who is killed because of their religious beliefs
- 9 Futile, to no ___
- 12 ___ Foy who plays Queen Elizabeth II in The Crown
- 15 Review of Research, Education, and Treatment, abbr.
- 16 Instructions that you may see on a chemistry lab
- 38 Pappardelle, fettucini, or rigatoni, for



- 39 Expressing a lack of interest or excitement
- 45 Along with 53-Across, what a NASCAR driver is
- 50 The XYZ Affair, Watergate, and class of 2022 driver's ed cheating, for example
- 61 Areas where sports events are held
- 62 Router commonly used to access the deep web, abbr.
- 65 "It all makes sense now!"
- 72 Medically defined as 30 BMI and above
- 77 Cheats or swindles someone
- 78 What the Academy Awards are more popularly known as
- 79 Measures electric potential
- 84 Old way of saving music
- 100 ___ Khan, founder of popular educational website
- 101 Inflated, especially for Freud ♦

Becoming a professional exterminator

insect murd-arah



Sarah Zhou

It all started a few weeks ago at 2 a.m. one unfortunate morning. I was groggily getting ready for bed when I walked into my room, only to discover a gigantic brown blob on my wall. I wasn't about to get up close and inspect it, so since I have bad eyesight, I got my glasses.

The second I saw what the gigantic brown blob was, I wished I hadn't. It was a huge hairy spider glaring down at me. Finding a creepy insect in your room seems like such a small problem for most — or at least for the people who make fun of me for my anxiety about them. Just grab a towel or cup and kill it, right?

So that's what I did. I calmly walked to the kitchen, got a paper towel and killed the spider without throwing a tantrum or screaming for 3 minutes.

Just kidding. I threw a tantrum and screamed for three minutes. My neighbor literally came banging on the door thinking some disaster had occurred. You can imagine the eye roll he gave when he

found out it was "just a spider."

Obviously, my mom yelled at me for making a big deal over a tiny little insect that was "also probably afraid of me."

And after everyone else had gone back to sleep, I still had this spider to deal with, since no one else was being proactively attentive to my issues.

So I sat there. For three hours. Don't believe me? Ask my mom. She got up four times in the next few hours to find me still having a meltdown while engaged in a staring contest with the spider relaxing over my bed.

So, how did I get rid of the spider? I called my dad. He drove an hour to kill my "measly" little spider, and to maintain his sanity — and mine — began to bribe me to kill spiders by paying me \$5 each time I killed one. Sounds like easy cash right? Wrong.

My first job was only days later, hovering on the wall. The spider was really tiny and appeared to be harmless. I didn't realize at the time, but I would soon find that this spider was trained in gymnastics. As I got close to it with the paper towel, it jumped onto the towel and jumped again onto me. Obviously, I had yet another meltdown. Still got \$3 for "participation" though.

Eventually, after days of pretending not

to see every insect in my house, there was a huge one on the ceiling. My mom told me to kill it because I'm 3.5 inches taller than her. The ceilings in my house are 14 feet high. Gosh, my extra 3.5 inches are really going to help us here.

I was standing there calculating the cost of an exterminator when my mom decided to go shopping. She went SHOPPING.

After regretting looking up at the ceiling for a good ten minutes, I decided to rant about my insect troubles to my friend. She made fun of this and jokingly suggested that I poke it to death.

Desperate to continue with my day, I grabbed the long wooden stick perched above the sliding door to the backyard and climbed on the countertop. As I blindly poked at the general area of the spider, praying that I wouldn't shatter the glass roofing, I realized that the spider was gone.

I looked down to find the spider's mangled little corpse on the floor and heaved a relieved sigh.

From there on out, I always used the same long stick to kill all insects, which I dubbed "The Exterminator." The stick allows me to reach high places and keeps me a good 6 feet away from my target, preventing any jumping spider mishaps.

topten

EXCUSES FOR NOT RETURNING YOUR FRIEND'S PENCIL

- 10 "I thought I gave it to you already." If you're the type of person who actually says this, you're extremely bad at lying.
- 9 "I left it at home." Can I borrow another pencil?
- 8 "I'll bring it tomorrow." You're not charging interest, right?
- 7 "Here you go — I only replaced the lead, body and eraser." That's basically the same pencil in my books.
- 6 "My friend borrowed it." They needed it really badly for a test, and I'm extremely selfless.
- 5 "My dog ate your pencil." A classic.
- 4 "I ate your pencil." A modern classic.
- 3 "What pencil?" I don't remember borrowing a pencil from you, not at all. It was \$30? Interesting.
- 2 "I'm not finished using it yet." There's still three inches left for me to use!
- 1 "I lost it." Honesty is the best policy.

>> Nikhil Mathihalli and Aiden Ye