



SCOTUS nominee deserves united backing from minorities.



APES class observes elephant seals at state park.



Swim team moves to West Valley after pool pump, filter break down.



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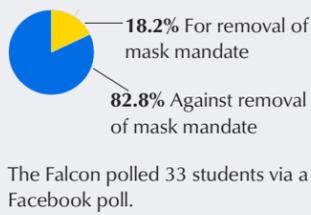
Majority of students and staff chooses to continue masking

FALCON // MINA YEAP and ATREY DESAI

By Christina Chang & Lynn Dai

On Feb. 28, California, Oregon, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York and Washington announced they would be gradually removing the mask mandate in schools in the following weeks. Santa Clara County ended their mask mandate on March 2. Additionally, California Gov. Gavin Newsom announced that the statewide indoor mask mandate

for schools would be lifted for all students and staff, regardless of vaccination status, on March 11. In an email released on March 3, Los Gatos-Saratoga Union High School District superintendent Michael Grove announced that, starting March 14, indoor masking at school will be "strongly recommended, but optional for students and staff." Teachers can request but not require students to wear masks. The change was established



as a result of the CDC's updated metrics: Before Feb. 25, indoor mask mandates were recommended for dense public areas.

Now, the CDC's COVID-19 community level metrics are dependent on three factors: new hospitalizations, hospital capacity and new cases. Many students disagree with these updated masking policies. In a Google form sent out in the SHS 2021-2022 Facebook group which received 33 responses, 81.8% of respondents were against the removal of the school mask mandate, while 18.2% were supportive of it.

When asked whether they would continue to wear masks even after the lifting, 81.3% said they would, whereas 12.5% are unsure and 6.3% would not. The statistics from the survey have been reflected on campus: Despite the removal of the requirement, the vast majority of students and staff at SHS continued to wear masks in the first week when they weren't required. >> MASKS on pg. 3

Measure E: School to conduct major summer renovations

BASEBALL FIELD AND ENGINEERING LAB UP NEXT

By Jonny Luo & Aiden Ye

When assistant principal Brian Thompson was hired here seven years ago, the school was buzzing with excitement over the construction of a new state-of-the-art music building. The building was funded by the Measure E bond. Measure E, passed in 2014, is a \$99 million local general obligation bond split between both Saratoga High and Los Gatos High to fund new infrastructure and

school resources. So far, funds have gone to projects like building the new robotics room, turfing the upper field and providing new technology like Chromebooks for students. The district has already spent roughly \$74.4 million on Measure E projects. This summer, Thompson said that the school is planning to use most of the remaining bond money allocated to Saratoga High to install a new heating,

>> MEASURE E on pg. 3

Night rally, football and dance planned for Spring Fling Week

By Nicole Lu & Sarah Zhou

For the first time in two years, the spirit, rally and dance commissions are working together to host a Spring Fling Spirit Week starting on March 28, one that is highlighted by a night rally, a dance and a new twist on the traditional football games played during the week.

Spring Fling Spirit Days

Monday and Tuesday, March 28 and 29, will be themed dress-up days hosted by spirit commission. Inflatables will also be brought on the upper field on Friday, senior

co-head spirit commissioner Johnny Hulme said. To determine the themes of the dress-up days, the commission will be posting polls on their Instagram account to survey student preference. According to senior co-head commissioner Sadaf Sobhani, in past years, students would go to the upper field during lunch for a party consisting of obstacle courses, races and food trucks. "However, this year, because our [budget was] cut short, we had to limit the activities we host," Sobhani said. >> SPRING FLING on pg. 4

Students and staff denounce Russia's invasion of Ukraine

By Lynn Dai, Andrew Lin & Daniel Wu

In the past few weeks, sophomore Minh Do has felt dismayed as he has followed news about Russia's military assault on Ukraine. He is especially focused on the mounting economic and humanitarian problems for Ukrainians



along with the role social media has played as disinformation within the war. In addition, junior Apoorva Talwalkar said she worries how war will affect Europe. Still other students have expressed differing opinions that China may invade Taiwan in a similar course of action. >> UKRAINE on pg. 5

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newsbriefs

ASB elections experience historic voter turnout

This year's election saw the largest turnout in recent history with 712 students, or 79% of eligible, non-senior voters casting a ballot for 2022-23 ASB officers.

Junior Mason Wang was elected as president, junior Julian Berkowitz-Sklar as vice president, junior Anand Agrawal as treasurer, sophomore Taylor Chu as secretary and junior Avani Kongetira as the clubs commissioner.

ASB recently passed an amendment that allowed Anand, the current treasurer, to run for office again, Wang said.

"The ASB treasurer position is highly specialized, and allowing an existing treasurer to hold the position again would increase ASB productivity and decrease [training time]," Wang said.

Incoming ASB officers plan to work with the district to provide feminine hygiene products in the school restrooms, reimplement daily tutorials and provide more wellness center resources to ease academic pressure.

Many of the officers are friends outside of leadership; thus, Wang believes this will increase their productivity.

"I couldn't have asked for a better group of officers," Wang said. "I am definitely looking forward to a year with them."

— Tiffany Wang

School plans to host Grad Night in person on June 2

The school plans on hosting the Class of 2022's Grad Night in-person with COVID-19 safety precautions. Tickets will cost \$245, and the event will run from 10 p.m. until the early morning of the next day.

It is organized by parents who have graduating seniors. Tickets will be sold until April 1 with over 150 of them already sold and plans on selling 100 more.

As of early November, organizers were planning on individually wrapping food and serving students food directly out of food trucks. The final food choices will be finalized once tickets stop selling and they know what their budget is.

The organizers plan on keeping the theme a secret and providing a DJ, carnival games, inflatable structures and a mock casino in the gym. The senior video, a compilation of pictures of the Class of 2022, will also play during the event.

Assistant principal Matt Torrens hopes the experience of Grad Night will be "a memorable one — one where the kids enjoy each other's company for the last time."

— Sam Bai and Andrew Lin

Benefit fashion show postponed until April 23

The annual Benefit Fashion Show, originally planned for March 5, has been postponed to April 23. Instead of the quad, the show will be held in the gym, with models being masked. Tickets will sell at \$10 online and \$15 at the door.

Head benefit commissioner senior Tiffany Wang attributed the postponement to pandemic-related issues, including difficulties finding stores to sponsor the event and lack of experience in running an in-person show. Previously, the event was sponsored by local clothing businesses, but these vendors have seen their sales severely affected from COVID-19. This means all models, besides ones in the Prom category, will have to use their own clothes.

Additionally, both Wang and fellow head commissioner senior Grace Hsu only have experience with the magazine they created last year. The rest of the commission, seniors Amarangana Tyagi and Chris Liu and juniors Avani Kongetira and Haley Marks, is entirely new.

Along with these challenges, around a dozen models have dropped out due to the schedule change, and there are now a little under 200 models for the show.

"Postponing the show will give us more time to organize," Wang said. "That way we can allow everyone to experience walking down the runway in all its glory."

— Harshini Velchamy

picturethis



WALKOUT | Freshmen Anushka Tadikonda and Alan Cai walk along Saratoga-Sunnyvale Road to advocate against gun violence during the school's March for Our Lives San Jose walkout held on March 16.

Post-pandemic woes — school organizations face funding issues

BY JonnyLuo & NikhilMathihalli

When journalism adviser Michael Tyler returned from his summer break in early August, he was surprised to learn that yearbook prices had not been increased, despite believing the administration had agreed to do so after a \$10,000 deficit accrued because of poor sales during the online year.

This year, the lack of a price increase and slow sales have pushed the yearbook program's projected debt to Walsworth Publishing Company to \$20,000.

The total cost of printing the book is expected to be \$105,000 after shipping and sales tax are added in. To break even, the school would have needed to charge \$117 per book based on sales of 900 books, he said.

The price of the book — \$100 for copies bought before Dec. 1 — has remained the same as it has been for the past 10 years, despite rising inflation and costs of printing the yearbook at Walsworth.

"Right away, we were behind at the start of the school year," Tyler said.

Sales also dropped during the pandemic, from an average of 1,100 books sold in a normal year to around 800 books sold last year. According to Tyler, if pricing doesn't increase, the yearbook staff may be left in a "catch-22" situation each year: In order to decrease the price of the book, the staff must shorten the yearbook from its typical 300 pages to 200-250 pages. On the other hand, those cuts might not be popular and could also hurt sales.

As a result, Tyler thinks that the only real solution to the yearbook deficit is to increase the price "right out of the gate" — charging \$120 before the annual early purchase deadline of Dec. 1. He feels that this price increase would not drive away most students who currently already buy the yearbook.

Additionally, Tyler decided to have a 36-page senior magazine this spring instead of the typical 48-page annual magazine mainly due to the high costs of printing it.

The yearbook program is not alone in its financial struggles. The ASB has had issues raising funds

after last year's mostly online school year.

Junior ASB treasurer Anand Agrawal said the Class of 2022 didn't have the chance to do the ordinary fundraisers that would have stocked their bank account for events like prom.

ASB package sales also took a hit during the pandemic, continuing a downward trend over recent years; they sold 1080 cards from 2017-18, 980 from 2018-19, 771 from 2019-20 and 326 sales during the fully online 2020-21 school year.

Sales partially rebounded this year, with 636 packages sold at the cost of \$159 each; however, much like yearbook sales, ASB package sales have not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

With less money than usual, ASB applied for a grant from the Saratoga Foundation to cover the \$35,000 cost of new bleachers for quad activities. Agrawal encourages students and parents to help support the ASB with donations.

"ASB is the main organization that funds school-wide activities and items, and the ASB package is the main source of income for the ASB," Agrawal said. "Decreasing sales means a decrease in funding for school-wide activities and items, so it is imperative that more people can buy class merchandise and the ASB class package, especially since it pays itself off so quickly."

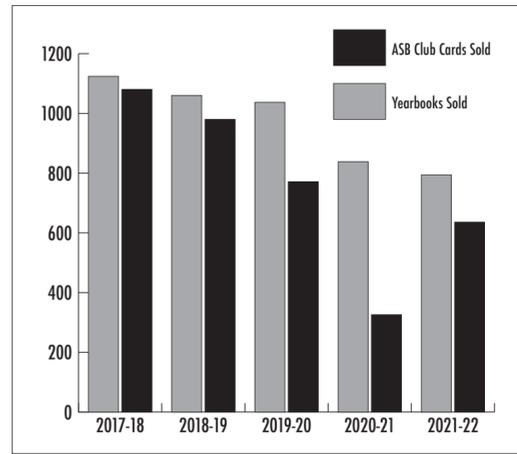
According to senior class vice president Kaylie Wong, the senior class office's financial problems stem from two especially strenuous years, where the class office received much fewer parent donations during online Parents Nights.

Though the class office has a much lower budget — \$6,000 compared to a typical budget of \$20,000-25,000 after paying the down payment for prom, Wong said that the class budget is "not stretched thin."

"Normally, in person, we would give a presentation on why parents should donate, and it made them more inclined to donate," Wong said. "However, online, a lot of parents weren't paying attention and had to pay online through the SHS website [instead of writing a check], so it makes it more difficult for parents to donate."

Additionally, the senior class office has held small fundraisers this year, such as selling roses at the recent Bombay in the Bay show and holding a mask fundraiser, to increase its budget.

"The senior class office is not in an ideal situation [monetarily]," Wong said. "I hope that once an in-person Parent Night returns, funds will start coming in easier for future class offices." ◆



Graphic by NIKHIL MATHIHALLI

MEASURE E

continued from pg. 1

ventilation and air conditioning system (HVAC) in some wings, replace the baseball field's grass with turf, replace single-pane windows in the gym, build a new pool shade for the poolside bleachers, install new roofs, remodel the covered walkways and remodel the engineering lab.

The hope is that these projects will be finished before the 2022-23 school year starts. The remodeling will, however, prevent the school from renting out its facilities to summer program organizations such as Los Gatos Rack and Maxwell Soccer.

Long overdue projects prioritized

The summer renovations seek to upgrade a long-overdue remodel to the engineering building; the work began over February break and will continue for the remainder of the school year. With a cost of approximately \$3 million, the project will remodel the lab's interior and add a working HVAC system. Windows will be added to provide sunlight, the ceiling lights will be secured and a new electrical panel will be installed.

According to engineering teacher Audrey Warmuth, the current lights do not satisfy the school's earthquake safety standards. Warmuth is also concerned about the antiquated electrical panel, which would often blow when students used large amounts of current while soldering.

Since the engineering room shares infrastructure with the fitness center, the fitness center will also be closed for part of the summers, potentially impacting coaches who want to get a head start training athletes.

While the building is being remodeled, Warmuth has temporarily moved her class-

es into the robotics building, which has significantly less space. As a result, she has had to compromise between important inventory and working space. While the engineering classes still have a bin of materials and tools, the majority of the power tools from the engineering room will not be accessible during the remodel, although the robotics room contains many similar engineering power tools for student use.

"We're super excited about the changes. It's been in the works for a long time, and I'm really looking forward to working in a more healthy place, both emotionally and physically," Warmuth said.

In addition to the overall building structure, the building's heating system will also be upgraded. In the past, Warmuth said that the lack of a working heater and air conditioning has been difficult for students to contend with.

"It's so hot in the summer and so cold in the winter, and that really just wears on you year after year," Warmuth said.

The plan is to place individual HVAC systems in each room in the math, 100, 300 and 600 wings. Currently, these wings can only control temperature using a 25-year-old system within a range of five degrees, which is sometimes distributed unevenly throughout classrooms. Construction will begin on June 3, the first day after graduation, and end on Aug. 15, the week of school reopening.

"The benefit is it will increase efficiency by giving teachers the ability to control the temperature in their own rooms for the comfort of their students," Thompson said.

Baseball field to be turfed

Along with heating, the school plans to turf the baseball field, a renovation projected to start near the end of the school year and finish before the next baseball season in



FALCON // SANJOLIGUPTA

The engineering room was cleared out before February break to allow for remodeling. Current students in engineering classes have moved to a previous robotics building.

January 2023.

Despite the project's high estimated cost of \$4.45 million, baseball players said the change was necessary.

"I'm really looking forward to working in a more healthy place, both emotionally and physically."

TEACHER Audrey Warmuth

In addition, a turf field requires less maintenance from the school. Currently, Saratoga's landscape personnel must patch up missing grass, trim the edges and address any other natural deterioration before every season, resulting in additional maintenance and costs.

Thompson is thankful for the community members and parents who supported the Measure E project and for helping create a positive impact on the community.

"I would like to thank our community in Saratoga and Los Gatos for voting for Measure E," said Thompson. "For the last seven years that I've been on campus, it has been amazing to see the modernization and modernization of the school, and I truly believe that it impacts students in a positive way for their education, physical safety and emotional well-being." ◆

"Sometimes, when it rains a lot, we can't practice because the field is so wet," junior Lucas Dennis said. "All we can do is batting practice in the cages."

togatalks

Will you still wear a mask after the mask mandate lift and why?

"I won't remove my mask until my unvaccinated siblings receive the COVID-19 vaccine."



freshman Joseph Warren

"COVID-19 hasn't disappeared. I'll wear my mask since I want to protect myself and family."



junior Morris Yu

"Masks are pretty uncomfortable, and students are vaccinated, making masks obsolete."



senior Konark Navare

MASKS

continued from pg. 1

However, if trends continue and cases remain low, more say they may begin to unmask in the coming weeks.

While sophomore Dhruva Jayanth said he is not worried about his safety as he is fully vaccinated and has received one booster shot, he doesn't mind others going without masks inside.

For her part, biology and chemistry teacher Kellyann Nicholson, who is immunocompromised, described the dropping of the mask mandate as concerning.

"I am a little freaked out," she said. "I'm worried about getting sick and about students bringing the virus home to little ones under 5 who haven't been vaccinated yet."

Nicholson noted that schools around the nation were shutting down because of a few cases in March 2020; yet in the first week of March 2022, there were 10 new cases on campus, and school has continued to run as usual with safety precautions. She is especially concerned about the transmission of cases inside smaller classrooms — in most math classrooms at school, students are tightly packed next to each other in rows and columns. While she said she understands the political and economic reasons for the new masking guidance, Nicholson will be asking students to keep their masks on in her classroom or sit in the back.

Although she's not sure when the mask mandate should ideally be removed, Nicholson prefers to keep masks on while people are already used to it rather than flipping back and forth with mask requirements.

"If cases start increasing again, we'll have



Graphic by ATREY DESAI

Timeline of important events preceding the decision to remove the mask mandate in schools.

to put our masks back on," she said. "I'd rather just get rid of them once and for all."

"I'm tired of wearing masks. It feels really good to just speak freely and breathe some fresh air."

SOPHOMORE Johan Amirineni

Nicholson noted that while wearing a mask can feel uncomfortable, she witnessed its efficacy recently firsthand when she tested negative for COVID-19 after an hour of

some fresh air."

Similarly, physics teacher Kirk Davis supports the removal of mask mandates as he thinks it's "appropriate given the infection rate" as the number of cases are dropping.

Additionally, Davis has not known anybody who has gotten severely sick with the virus after being vaccinated. Regarding his students who have contracted COVID-19, a majority were asymptomatic and mostly just "frustrated to stay home for five days."

However, because Davis will be flying to Scotland for his daughter's wedding in early April, he will continue to wear an N95 mask to be extra cautious.

"I'm fully vaccinated and boosted. I have no other health liabilities," Davis said. "So I think even if I got [COVID-19], it wouldn't be a severe illness."

Another reason to not wear masks has to do with good teaching, he said.

"I think there's a lot that can be communicated [through facial expressions]," Davis said. "I tend to joke a bit in class, and it's hard to tell when I'm joking versus when I'm serious without seeing all my facial features."

He also looks forward to seeing his students' faces because when he sees students outside his classroom without their masks, he sometimes can't recognize them.

Davis sees the lifting of the mandates as a sort of middle ground.

"I think it's an individual choice," he said. "People who say 'no more masks; I don't want to wear them,' they can do what they want. And if you feel comfortable wearing a mask and want to be protected, [you can wear it]. Everybody's got different opinions, and [we have to make sure that we respect that]." ◆

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SPRING FLING
continued from pg. 1

"In the past years, we could accumulate more money from our dances, but this year we had to cut some inflatables out."

To advertise spirit activities to students, the commission plans on creating promotional social media videos and graphics and placing posters around campus in popular places such as the cafeteria, the library and the office.

Flag Football Games and a night

Along with spirit days, intramural flag football games will begin at lunch on Wednesday, March 30 and will continue until Friday.

After receiving positive reception from implementing a gender-inclusive Homecoming court, the rally commission has replaced the Powderpuff, a traditionally girls-only football game, with flag football under the name of Falconpuff to reemphasize gender inclusivity.

The rally commission is also organizing a potential lip dub that may happen later in the school year and a night rally, which hasn't been done for ten years.

Earlier this year, the commission surveyed students on their interest in attending a night rally through Instagram polls.

Because of the positive student responses they received, the commissions will be hosting the first night rally that the school has held in ten years.

"Our rally that we recently had in February was not the best that we've ever had because we had some emergency setbacks," Christie said. "So we started planning over [February] break, outlining our script and brainstorming promotional material to avoid dealing with those difficulties again."

The night rally will be held indoors. While the maximum capacity is 1000 people, commissioners are confident that stu-

dents will practice the necessary social distancing measures.

They plan to sell tickets at low prices to prevent outsiders from other schools from sneaking in, and food and drinks will also be sold on-site.

"We got approval from our COVID task force to have the dance indoors, so it's very exciting because it will be the first indoor dance since 2020."

TEACHER Kristen Cunningham

Because this event is completely new for the rally commission, Christie hopes to heavily advertise and ask teachers to promote the rally to their students as the date draws closer.

The commission is also in talks to film a lip dub.

"Some things are still up in the air, but we're really excited for all the events we have planned out for Spring Fling," Christie said.

"We're working under a 'go big or go home' mentality, so our commission is definitely planning on making this week memorable for everyone."

Spring Fling dance concludes

Lastly, Spring Fling week will wrap up with a semi-formal dance, similar to Homecoming, that will be held on Saturday, Apr. 2 from 8-10 p.m. in the large gym.

The commission has settled on "Winnie the Pooh" as the theme and urges students to dress in colorful outfits like springtime dresses.

Ticket sales begin the week of March 14 starting at \$10 with ASB package and \$15 without, with prices increasing by \$5 every



Christie



April 2, 2022 || 8-10pm
Large Gym

Courtesy of SHS Dance Commission

The Dance Commission expects at least 400 students in attendance at the Spring Fling dance

week.

The commission is in the process of finalizing logistics such as finding catering and DJs.

Though the dance was originally to be held on the tennis courts, issues arose with the lack of restrooms and the ongoing tennis season.

"We would have had to spend thousands of dollars for the evening to rent bathrooms, and that would really have brought the ticket prices up which we didn't prefer," activities director Kristen Cunningham said. "The other thing is that we got approv-

al from our COVID task force to have the dance indoors, so it's very exciting because it will be the first indoor dance since 2020."

With the recent lifting of indoor mask mandates, the dance commission is expecting roughly 400-500 students.

The dance will also adhere to the school and county COVID guidelines, Cunningham said.

"This is going to be the last dance of the year for a lot of underclassmen and the first indoor dance," head dance commissioner Avani Kongetira said. "We want to end the year with good memories for them." ♦

UKRAINE

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Economy and social media

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has shaken the global economy, consequentially raising prices of raw materials like gasoline. According to CNBC, the nationwide average gasoline price is likely to rise past the four dollar mark — the average California gasoline price has soared above \$5 and sometimes \$6 a gallon — accounting toward an extra \$75 billion in annual spending by Americans to fill their gas tanks.

"People are already spending more than ever before, and the issue has only worsened. It's remarkable that a conflict 10 time zones away has such a profound international impact," Do said. Aside from economic damage, Do strongly disapproves of the behavior exhibited across social media platforms regarding the war.

Many users have viewed the war as a means to generate content, with TikTok about the "ghost of Kyiv" taken from footage in a military-based shooting game, disregarding the role that hero propaganda plays and the severity of the ongoing crisis.

Do noted that the Russo-Ukrainian war is among the first where social media has played an outside role, with individuals inside Ukraine releasing rarely-seen-before footage from the perspective of citizens under attack.

"The stark contrast between a Ukrainian civilian posting a video of a cruise missile striking his home versus an entitled teenager in the U.S. making jokes about World War III is striking," Do said. Do emphasized the importance of staying informed and understanding the scope of diplomacy before posting something which could be detrimental and downplay the crisis at hand.

Additionally, Do feels the war is a prime example of ignorant usage of social media, and believes people who are granted the luxury of free speech ought to use it to create a positive impact. "I think people should look at the situation from the angle of a citizen from Ukraine or the Baltic states. It deeply saddens me that people have poked fun at the situation because it is not a joke and my heart reaches out towards the Ukrainian people," Do said.

Dispute over NATO's responsibility

Countries such as the U.S., Britain, Germany, Hungary, Poland, China and Syria have already seen the conflict between Ukraine and Russia impact its economic and foreign relations. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, alliance security commitments between NATO members will likely cause tensions between Russia and neighboring NATO countries to increase, especially if such countries are likely to involve the U.S. Moreover, the war may strain future cooperation on arms control, cybersecurity, nuclear nonproliferation, counter-terrorism and more.

Taiwan — a possibly mirrored situation

While the unfolding crisis may not severely impact Americans beyond a significant uptick in prices, students of Taiwanese descent with family members on the island are worried that the West's course of action — or specifically, lack thereof — against Russia may embolden neighboring superpower China to invade Taiwan.



Do

Beijing considers Taiwan as a rogue province of China and has stated it is willing to commit to any means to "reunite" the island with the rest of the nation. China has regularly breached Taiwan's airspace since the start of the pandemic in an effort to antagonize their neighboring country, with violations numbering 380 in just 2020 alone, according to The Guardian. Recently, their efforts have only strengthened; numerous Chinese war-

planes were detected within Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone, with the largest incursion being 39 planes in a single day. Chang fears the tensions between China and Taiwan could boil toward a conflict similar to the Russo-Ukrainian war, where Russian forces initially limited their attacks to key military targets but later transitioned to the shelling of civilian areas.

"My primary worry is that China will not restrict itself toward attacking purely military targets and target civilian areas as well," he said. In addition, Chang believes Beijing is monitoring the Western response to Russia's aggression and taking note of how it could influence a hypothetical invasion of Taiwan in the future.

In Chang's view, the U.S. and its allies ought to step up their efforts by arming the Ukrainians with higher tier anti-tank and airplane weaponry along with placing even tougher sanctions on Moscow. "The United States needs to realize that if it's not careful with its response, it could further fuel the flames of another conflict in the Taiwan Strait," Chang said. The best-case scenario is that the U.S. can maintain diplomatic relations with China and take into account the millions of Taiwanese citizens whose fates lie in the hands between two jockeying superpowers.

On the other hand, senior Derek Hsu, the ASB president, has extended family in Taiwan and says there are "undeniable differences" between China-Taiwan and Ukraine-Russia tensions. Both of his parents are from Taiwan and immigrated to America as children.

"Vladimir Putin's war looks more like a deterrent to Xi Jinping than a road map."

SENIOR Derek Hsu

He noted that the two conflicts have different motives and different geographical situations: The Taiwan Strait creates a physical barrier between Taiwan and continental Asia, and the precedent of U.S. forces sup-



Graphic by ANJALI PAI

porting Taiwan over the past several years magnifies the risk of an escalated global war if China does attempt to invade Taiwan, which may deter Chinese action.

Hsu referenced a Reuters article that he said perfectly summarizes his perception of the conflict: "Vladimir Putin's war looks more like a deterrent to Xi Jinping than a road map."

"I do believe the Ukraine conflict does create a paradigm shift in leaders like Xi Jinping and Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-Wen," he said. "The amount of resilience among Ukrainians should motivate the Taiwanese to have a similar response in a potential invasion. Of course, this is all speculation, but there remains a level of concern as we follow the Ukraine conflict."

The day after the invasion began, Ing-Wen described the situation Taiwan faces as "fundamentally different." While Hsu found the statement "surprisingly early" considering the lack of information at that stage, he said he believes Taiwan can persevere and avoid a similar situation, but much depends on the world's main superpower.

"The U.S.'s reaction can inspire or disappoint people depending on their world views, and it becomes a litmus test of our world's willingness to avoid war," Hsu said.

European impact

According to the European Union, an estimated 7 million displaced refugees will flee to Ukraine's neighbors in Europe. So far, there have been 1.2 million Ukrainian refugees since February.

"I think the war between Russia and Ukraine is incredibly scary," Talwalkar said. "No one is really sure how far Putin will go because he believes he is doing the right thing for Russia and the world. Putin has also threatened Europe and the west, and we could possibly be seeing a nuclear world war in our future." Beyond military action, however, Talwalkar emphasized the importance of having access to credible information. She said that Putin's actions of blocking social media platforms such as Facebook (now renamed to Meta) in Russia prevents Russian citizens from gaining access to credible information, leaving them with only government-fed propaganda.

"Misinformation plays a huge role in the conflict," she said. "It's important to look at credible sources to get your information and do your research on the situation." While Talwalkar is glad that the U.S. has

pledged support for Ukraine and Moldova, she said that it's important to back it up with action and measures that will help Ukraine.

"Right now, just donate when you can," Talwalkar said. "Unicef has a link in bio to donate for aid to Ukrainian children, and there are many charities that are taking donations to aid Ukraine and provide relief for refugees."

"Do we come together to rally around a country that is independent and free?"



HISTORY TEACHER Jerry Sheehy

Parallels with past conflicts

World History teacher Jerry Sheehy said he sees a lot of parallels between the current crisis and the event leading up to the start of World War II in Europe — particularly with Hitler and Czechoslovakia.

"Putin has used language similar to Hitler's in claiming that he is not invading Ukraine or even starting a war, but instead aiding Ukrainian dissidents," Sheehy said. "However, in this case, Putin has access to nuclear weapons that Hitler didn't."

In his 23 years of teaching at the school, Sheehy said he doesn't remember "anything quite like this."

Considering the pandemic and the recent political polarization in the U.S., the direct involvement of the U.S. and Russia makes the conflict unlike anything else post-Cold War.

However, the "million dollar question" still remains, Sheehy said: How does the U.S. support Ukraine without starting WWII?

While he isn't sure what the best course of action for the U.S. is, Sheehy said the Russian-Ukraine conflict will be a "pivotal moment in history."

"Do we come together to rally around a country that is independent and free and wants to be part of NATO, E.U., etc. — or is Putin allowed to annex it?" Sheehy asked. "Do we stand up to an authoritarian regime and the growing authoritarianism in general in today's world? And if Putin is allowed to annex Ukraine, will this only embolden him to take back more former Soviet states?" ♦

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togatalks

What are your thoughts on the conflict in Ukraine?

"I find the current situation in Ukraine very concerning."

sophomore **William Cao**

"The people of Ukraine are facing Russian imperialism and that is bad."

junior **Jasmine Ispasoiu**

"I just hope that all of the refugees will be able to get away from the conflict safely."

junior **Jeremiah Chung**

Satake: Students make better course selection choices, but overreaching is still a problem

By HowardShu

In early February, the guidance counselors began encouraging freshmen, sophomores and juniors to start browsing through potential course offerings for the next school year.

The class selections for all grades were due by Feb. 11, and students subsequently met with their guidance counselors from Feb. 14-18 to discuss and confirm their courses.

With the data the guidance office has gathered so far, guidance counselor Alinna Satake has not seen a major difference in course registration trends from previous years besides an increase in students putting off P.E. requirements until their senior year of high school.

Some of the highest demand classes include AP Computer Science (APCS) and AP science courses.

Satake said that if a student requests two AP sciences, they may not get both of them. "For students requesting multiple AP sciences, don't be surprised if you get a backup choice for your second choice," Satake said. "There will probably be more signups than there is space in AP Physics C. That was the case for this year."

New courses offered for next year

STEM Lab is a new course replacing the Intro to Engineering and Intro to Computer Science classes.

Students in this course will take one semester of computer science and one semester of engineering.

Additionally, the Japanese program will expand from only having Japanese 1 and Japanese 2 classes to also housing a Japanese 3 Honors class, which will only be available for students who took Japanese 1 and Japanese 2.

However, due to declining enrollment, Satake is unsure whether the school will be able to sustain the program.

Class changes in the music department

Along with the new courses, there have also been changes to some music classes.

Honors Jazz Ensemble, equivalent to the current Advanced Jazz Ensemble class, has been accredited for honors credit to match courses between Saratoga High school and Los Gatos High school.

In addition, AP Music Theory is now being offered every year instead of every other year, as principal Greg Louie believes the school should make the entire course catalog available to students and see what they sign up for.

"If students are interested in taking AP Music Theory every year, then we want to offer it every year," Satake said. "We hope to offer courses that are driven by student interest and student voice."

Students sign up for high academic classes

Like previous years, Satake observed

a pattern of students signing up for tough schedules with the expectation of being able to drop classes if the workload gets too tough.

"Especially when I was talking with students last week, I feel like there's this idea that students are like, 'Well, I'm just gonna sign up for insane classes and give it a try, and if it doesn't work, I'll drop,'" Satake said. "I want students and parents to know that that's not always possible."

For example, some students who wanted to drop from AP Calculus BC to AP Calculus AB this year were not able to do so because AB classes were already at maximum capacity.

"The takeaway for us is the courses we offer are driven by student voice."



GUIDANCE COUNSELOR Alinna Satake

A similar instance occurred in the history department, as students were unable to drop from AP U.S. History to college prep U.S. History.

"It is really important for students to

choose the courses that they need to take," Satake said. "If a student comes in and tells us they're going to take AP Calculus BC, the assumption is that they're going to stick with it. We're not calculating extra space in case a bunch of students want to drop out of the class during the semester."

Satake encouraged students to make the best choice for themselves right now, rather than hoping to modify their schedule in August or September.

However, she also feels that students, especially sophomores who initially decided to sign up for a tough schedule and sports, have been more responsive about lessening their course load.

"I feel like students have been more thoughtful about the process [of lessening course load] than before," Satake said. "I can't extrapolate larger trends, but it's been a positive experience for me. Usually in the spring, I tend to get more frustrated with students who I know are going to wind up dropping or struggling."

Ultimately, Satake wants students to be able to articulate why they want to sign up for the classes aside from simply wanting honors credit or because of peer pressure.

"It's really hard to not sign up for the same things that your friends are taking or feel pressured to take the exact same classes, but you will be much happier if you're not investing in classes that you have no interest in and you're taking classes that you actually care about," Satake said. ♦

MSET Cuttlefish team qualifies for Worlds in Houston

By MartinXu

All three of the school's FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC) teams qualified and competed at the FTC NorCal Regional Championship, which occurred over the weekend of March 12 at Newark Memorial High School.

Only 48 teams in NorCal were invited to the two-day regional tournament based on performance at previous qualifiers; of those 48, three teams — including one from SHS — will advance to the prestigious FTC Worlds in Houston, Texas.

Typically, the robot game winner, Inspire Award winner and Inspire Award runner-up qualify for Worlds. The Inspire Award is awarded to the team judges best feel is a strong ambassador for FIRST programs and a role model FIRST team.

Cuttlefish: Journey to Worlds

The 6165 MSET Cuttlefish, the school's flagship FTC team, had high hopes for both the robot game and award selection after organizing various outreach initiatives and completely redesigning their robot in December.

Their hard work ultimately paid off, as they were the highest ranked team in the qualification matches as well as the playoffs.

"It was just really exciting to be there, since a day prior we didn't think we would be in the finals at all," senior design lead Joseph Zhang said.

In the finals, however, the Cuttlefish and their alliance partners, sister team 7390 MSET Jellyfish and 16236 Juice, faced an unfortunate series of events including multiple collisions, a blown fuse and an unresponsive robot that led to an extremely close 2-1 defeat. The team was disappointed; they had missed winning the robot



The three FTC teams gather up with their mentors for a group photo after their tournament on March 12.

game — and qualifying for Worlds — by just 8 points.

However, though they failed to qualify for Worlds through the robot game, they were ultimately awarded the Inspire Award, the most prestigious award of the competition, automatically qualifying them for Worlds. For the second time in the team's history, they stand as one of 120 teams globally to qualify for Worlds, which will take place in Houston from April 20-23.

To prepare for Worlds, the team plans to do more driver practice and develop game strategies. In addition, they hope to do more tuning of their autonomous software and adjust some hardware parts for a more efficient robot.

Although Zhang was disappointed that they lost the robot game, he was happy that their ro-

bot eventually functioned properly and that they ultimately did advance.

"It was exciting to see our hard work pay off," Zhang said.

Jellyfish: A bittersweet ending

The 7390 MSET Jellyfish, one of two MSET FTC rookie teams, had high expectations for the tournament due to their high performance at their qualifier in Sunnyvale on the weekend of Jan. 29, placing second and winning the qualifier's Inspire Award. Additionally, they were confident in their robot capabilities and game strategies.

"I thought we had a decent shot at Worlds since our hardware and design is well thought out," sophomore software lead Matthew Huan said. "Our robot could score in the shared hub very well, which syner-

gizes with other teams well."

In the days leading up to the competition, Huan spent numerous hours fine tuning the robot's autonomous program that would run for the first 30 seconds of the match and account for garnering a significant amount of scorable points each round.

The team placed third in the qualification matches and was picked by Cuttlefish to compete in the playoffs and the championship.

If their alliance had won the championship, qualifying the Cuttlefish as both the NorCal Inspire Award winner and robot game winner, the Jellyfish would have advanced to Worlds as the Winning Alliance Captain (Cuttlefish's) first pick.

"While I'm really happy [that] we placed high in the qualification matches, we barely missed out

on the World's Championship by eight points, so I was really disappointed," Huan said.

Although the team missed their chances of going to the World's Championship, Huan said their high rank in the competition qualified them for the Maryland Tech Invitational (MTI) held over the summer, a prestigious offseason FTC competition exclusive to the highest ranked teams in each region.

The tournament was a great learning experience, Huan said.

"The best part of the competition was watching our autonomous and robot finally work," Huan said. "It was satisfying to see the product I contributed to in action and be so competitive."

Bettafish: Gaining experience

For the 7641 MSET Bettafish, the days leading up to the competition were spent fine tuning their autonomous program, practice driving the robot and packing spare parts for the competition.

According to sophomore Kai Otsuka, a software member of the team, the team unsure of how they would perform; however, after setting a high score during the competition and placing second in the Silicon division, they looked to continue the success.

Unfortunately, after choosing their alliances, the team lost 2-0 in the semifinals of the playoffs, eliminating them from the competition.

"Though I would have been happy with our results before the competition because we easily placed so high, I was pretty disappointed since there were a lot of logistical issues such as uncharged batteries and driver issues," Otsuka said. "Overall, I'm happy with how we did, but given the nature of the competition, I think we could have done better." ♦

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

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Lifting of school mask mandate is not premature but we must remain wary

“Wow! That’s what your nose looks like?” We’ve all dreamed of a time where we don’t have to wear these nefarious masks. A time where we can actually see people’s mouths move — avoiding those frequent moments where we awkwardly nod to nondescript mumbling, pretending to understand.

Since California officially lifted school mask mandates on March 15, that time has finally come. Although there are some that consider the lifting of mask mandates to be premature, lifting the mandate was a necessary move to improve the learning of students — after all, we’ve been wearing masks for the past two years. Without masks, students can interact better with teachers, communicate easier with their peers and learn in a more proficient manner. Verbal communication is much more effective without masks, as according to the National Institute of Health, facial cues are extremely important to building meaningful conversations with peers. Additionally, masks can affect coherency and listening — factors that are integral for classes that teach a second language, like Spanish, in which pronunciation is especially important. Many teachers have also noted the effects that masks have on the development of elementary school students who are just learning English.

Even without the mask mandate, the school should maintain its Screener-19 policies.

According to Megan Powers-Dunn, a teacher who runs a child care center in Rancho Cordova, there has been a significant increase in behavioral and language issues for children when teachers teach in masks five days a week. However, in this mask-less academic environment, certain measures still need to be taken to mitigate risks.



COVID-19 is not disappearing anytime soon. Like the flu, it will be a recurring illness that has the power to make lives miserable or worse. Even without the mask mandate, the school should still maintain its Screener-19 policies. Though admittedly a hassle for students to fill out every morning, students should still elect to be truthful in their responses, as Screener-19 is still an essential first check prior to arriving at school.

Rather than speedrunning the familiar “no, no, no, yes” answers in quick succession, students should be honest about their health — if they have a sore throat or feel nauseous, they should remain at home (as they should have remained at home before the pandemic), even if they may not have COVID-19.

Similarly, having students check in with Screener-19 for their first and second period classes is also

helpful in contact-tracing, in case a virus outbreak does happen on campus.

To maximize student safety, the district should keep offering its frequent opportunities to get PCR tested or rapid tested; testing is now more important than ever to know if the virus comes roaring back or stays in check.

Perhaps most of all, students still have the choice to wear a mask, and most are choosing to do so. For those who are immunocompromised, wearing masks still remains the safest and ultimately best option. Accordingly, students should still be mindful of others and continue being careful. ♦

Opinion of the Falcon Editorial Board

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The Saratoga Falcon staff voted 28-8 in favor of this article.

To take AP Lit or AP Lang? Ay, there’s the rub

By Selina Chen

If you’re an underclassman envisioning your incredibly exciting academic journey, or a junior having doubts about your senior year schedule (I sympathize), my humble opinions here might be of interest to you. I cannot choose a favorite between AP English Literature and Composition (Lit) versus AP English Language and Composition (Lang), but I will make a “quantified argument” — something you’ll become intimately familiar with should you decide to take the latter, but that’s beside the point.

Mythbuster No. 1: Lit = reading & Lang = writing

When I was a junior, the only piece of information I received to inform my decision was that “Lit has more reading, and Lang has more writing.” Knowing that I love both reading and writing, I decided to take both classes. However, I’ve found the dichotomous classification untrue, because in all honesty, the two classes have a highly malleable load.

In general, I’ve been doing less writing in either Lit or Lang in person than I did when taking English 11 Honors online last year. If you

are daunted by writing, don’t fear either class. If you want more writing, hey, we could always use more Falcon reporters.

Mythbuster No. 2: Lit = long, easy texts & Lang = short, difficult hard texts

In the beginning of the year, this was somewhat true. I was jarred by the juxtaposition of Lit’s sudden load of 100 pages per class and Lang’s meager three pages per class. Furthermore, the accessible verses of “The Odyssey” were the antithesis of some confounding philosophy written in Latin by a French dude born in the 1500s who decided to meditate on whether a table is really a table. Seriously!

However, this soon evened out. Lit readings increased in difficulty and decreased in page count as we ventured into Shakespeare and poetry, not to mention braved works such as Dostoevsky’s incomprehensible “Crime and Punishment.” On the other hand, many Lang readings encompass modern works that go on forever, but are presented in simple English. Ultimately I may have spent a little more time on Lit readings, but the difference is minuscule.

Truth: Lit = fiction & Lang = non-fiction

Now, this is not a myth, but the distinguishing factor I wish hadn’t been overshadowed by trivialities like the amount of writing and reading.

Lit only analyzes fiction and is structured like the English classes from ninth to 11th grade, with great emphasis on text analysis.

On the other hand, Lang is a philosophy course with a touch of argumentation — nothing like the English classes you’re used to. On a typical day, we hop between small-group and whole-class discussions about the previous night’s reading, covering units that question “What do we know?,” “Who am I?,” “What is ethical?” and so on. If you’re a voracious reader and enjoy an audience, consider Lit.

If you’re introspective and embrace intellectual challenges, consider Lang. I’ll even dare to say, the former is more Gryffindor-Hufflepuff while the latter leans toward Slytherin-Ravenclaw, though I never felt that House classifications are mutually exclusive.

Beyond the crossroad

That said, Lit versus Lang is not a binary choice. You can always take Saratoga’s unique MAP program or English 12.

However, here I’d like to advocate for my choice of taking both Lit and Lang — known as a “doubler.” I know our community is heavily focused on STEM, with the English requirement often treated as a burdensome necessity.

I won’t try to convince you that literature or philosophy should be your foremost passion in life, for I acknowledge that math is far from mine. But I invite you to try both classes, where you’ll find doors to topics — empathy, agency, morality and more — that speak to all of us as humans. ♦

Right wing rhetoric seeks to tarnish Biden court nominee

By HannahLee

After Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer, 83, announced his coming retirement earlier this year, President Joe Biden said he would fill the empty seat with a Black female judge. In February, Biden tapped Ketanji Brown Jackson, a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, as his nominee.

After Biden’s announcement, Ilya Shapiro, former Vice President of the Cato Institute, tweeted right after Biden announced his plans to fill the spot in the high court with a Black woman: “Objectively best pick for Biden is Sri Srinivasan (an Indian-American jurist and attorney serving as the Chief Circuit Judge of the United States Court of Appeals) ... but alas doesn’t fit into the latest intersectionality hierarchy, so we get a lesser Black woman.”

By tweeting, Shapiro not only tore Jackson down, calling her underqualified with an extremely racist and sexist tone but also inserted another person of color into the conversation, feeding into this detrimental idea of pitting minorities against each other.

This tendency to pit minorities against one another is an old and often successful tactic, but it’s as wrong today as it was a generation ago.

It’s ironic that people tend to be enraged when it comes to topics that shouldn’t be controversial in the first place, especially minority women, or minorities in general. But when other groups, such as white male politicians say or do something actually controversial, take for instance President Donald Trump’s unyielding series of fiendish racist and homophobic remarks; they often escape the intense criticism directed at minorities and women.

Affirmative Action in the high court

While the term affirmative action is commonly used in the context of college admissions, the phrase aptly describes Jackson’s nomination — and it should engender no shame for Jackson, Biden or anyone else.

As defined by Cornell Law, affirmative action is “a set of procedures designed to eliminate unlawful discrimination among applicants, remedy the results of such prior discrimination and prevent such discrimination in the future.”

The two other candidates who competed with Jackson for nomination included Michelle Childs, who earned her bachelor’s de-



gree at the University of South Florida and J.D. from the University of South Carolina School of Law; and Leondra Kruger, who comes from a family of doctors, graduated from Harvard and attended law school at Yale. The now-nominated Jackson graduated from Harvard for both her bachelor’s and Ph.D. in law. All three also hold positions as judges in numerous district courts.

All are extremely qualified in terms of education and work background, and so in a sense, any one of them would be absolutely fit to serve regardless of if they were Black women or not.

Their candidacy, however, is affirmative action because of its root in racial and gender-based discrimination which reparations cannot solely solve. This is all to the good; affirmative action plays a positive role as it rarely disadvantages other groups of people, and gives an opportunity to a marginalized group for some sort of representation.

Additionally, considering just three of the 115 justices have been people of color — former Justice Thurgood Marshall and sitting Justices Clarence Thomas and Sonia Sotomayor — the high court could surely use more representation from marginalized and underrepresented groups.

However, the essence of diversity — which American claims to be built on and value — revolves around much more than just race. It would have been even better if Biden and other leaders considered socioeconomic background and education when choosing between contenders for a wider array of perspectives.

Although Jackson’s nomination is a monumental step forward for the Supreme Court in terms of a new voice being brought to the

table, Childs may have been a better candidate to fill ex-Justice Breyer’s spot in that she differs slightly in her upbringing and socioeconomic status. Her father died when she was a child, and her mother worked at a telephone company; she is also a first-generation college graduate.

Although Kruger and Jackson could bring new perspectives on the basis of their race and gender despite their upbringings, Childs could contribute more through her difference in socioeconomic background and schooling on top of her race. Especially when the Supreme Court plans to hear the lawsuit against affirmative action policies at Harvard later this year, it’d be interesting to hear her opinion.

Despite this, I’m looking forward to learning more about Jackson and what she plans to bring to the high court if the Senate approves her. Seeing her recent decisions on certain issues such as workers’ rights and how she advocates for a liberal stance on social and economic issues despite the intense backlash she has been receiving from many conservatives, I am confident that she would make a principled and empathetic justice who will serve to protect the people and the law America’s democratic institutions oath to protect.

Although important, Supreme Court nominations shouldn’t solely take qualifications for the job into account, but rather should embody the principles America states it’s built on — including diverse ethnic groups, culture, individuality, etc. Therefore, affirmative action is an effective and necessary step to ensure the court consists of justices with different perspectives, best representing the American people. ♦

The U.S. should not pursue direct military action in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict

By EthanLin

In April 2021, Russia began amassing thousands of troops near the Ukraine border — the country’s largest military mobilization since the 2014 Crimea annexation. Just over half a year later in December, Russia’s dictator Vladimir Putin demanded the international community bar Ukraine from joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and reduce NATO troops in Eastern Europe — ultimatums which, if not met, could trigger “undefined military action.”

Unsurprisingly, the U.S. and NATO rejected these demands, prompting Russia to make the shocking move of invading Ukraine on Feb. 24 — the largest military mobilization since World War II.

Many historians, fearful of imminent global conflict, have compared this invasion to the start of the Cold War and even Germany’s initial invasion of Poland at the beginning of World War II. The U.S., a leader of NATO and a strong proponent against Russian expansion, is a major part of this brewing dispute; the potential decision to mobilize troops in Ukraine could perma-

nently shift international relations, for better or for worse.

According to CNN, about 42% of Americans call for direct U.S. military involvement — “boots on the ground” — to help Ukraine fight for its sovereignty should sanctions fail to work, following U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s promise of a “swift, severe” response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Ultimately, however, the U.S. should not mobilize troops for the sake of avoiding greater international conflict. They should instead play an indirect military role by supplying training and weapons to Ukrainian troops, or even better, negotiating with intent of compromise. Instead of direct conflict, Washington should choose to increase support for Ukraine via arms provisions, as this approach will incur relatively little cost and risk to the U.S. — a view championed by Michael Kimmage, professor of history at the Catholic University.

If American soldiers and air power were to mobilize along the Ukraine and Russian border, this could radicalize Putin’s war aims and cause substantial short and long term financial costs. Currently, U.S. forces in the region are too small to make any dif-

ference and would only become casualties, so sending in more troops and engaging in direct military intervention could carry even higher risks.

More importantly, the risk of nuclear annihilation remains very real, as direct American involvement could quickly spiral into a global war. Russian President Vladimir Putin has already issued orders to put nuclear weapons on high alert, and Russia maintains an open invitation to China to establish a coalition with Russia against the U.S.

Thus, negotiating a compromise would be the best option for the U.S., even compared to continuing its indirect military role.

Stricter economic sanctions, like that of the current disconnection of Russia from the SWIFT banking system and other tariffs, should also be imposed to prevent the deescalation of a world war.

The talks between secretary of state Anthony Blinken and Russian foreign Sergei Lavrov have not succeeded, but these sessions and direct talks between the combatant nations still remain the best opportunity to minimize casualties and de-escalate to the possibility of a larger war. ♦

Don’t believe the narrative of “saving kids from sex ed”

By EstherLuan

Earlier this month, the Florida State Senate passed a bill prohibiting “classroom discussion about sexual orientation or gender identity” in primary schools.

Dubbed the “Don’t Say Gay” bill by opponents, the legislation is part of a much larger attack on LGBTQ+ rights that has resurfaced in recent months in some conservative-leaning state. The bill would additionally allow parents to sue educators or schools that teach said prohibited topics. Particularly concerning is the way the ban is worded: It restricts teaching content that is not “age appropriate” or “developmentally appropriate” for students.

These bills are rooted in the idea that teaching adolescents and younger students about gender identity and sexual orientation will encourage sexual activity. In reality, elementary and middle school sex ed courses rarely teach anything beyond positive biological and gender self-image, consideration of and options for safe sexual practice and respectful treatments of peers.

There is no scientific evidence or basis for the assertion that teaching children basic sex and gender knowledge leads to anything harmful. While conservatives have long advocated for sex education to be taught at home rather than in schools, it is impossible to ensure all students receive education that covers understanding of abuse and healthy sexual conduct without mandating it in the classroom, a lack of which may leave children vulnerable to sexual harassment and violence.

Guidelines for sexual education should first and foremost be set by educators, not politicians.

The fact that this bill and its related controversy are being weaponized as a talking point by conservative figures is a sure-fire signal that it doesn’t stem from any real concern for children affected by harmful sex-ed. Rather, it’s a campaign to demonize the LGBTQ+ community and its generally more communicative perception of sex — a moral quack fighting against supposed degeneracy rather than ill education. The distinction lies in that considering sex, which LGBTQ+ individuals are forced to do by nature of societal norms, is not the same thing as encouraging it.

For LGBTQ+ youth, education about gender and sex is vital, not political. This misunderstanding underscores the issue: Education about sexual or gender identity is not degeneracy, nor can it be changed through “education.” For example, studies have shown that suicide risks for transgender youth are abnormally high — a statistic often cited to invalidate gender transition. Context shows, though, that this pattern is intimately linked with codified discrimination.

The inclusion and legitimization of LGBTQ+ identities in general school-administered sex education is a way for young LGBTQ+ youth to at least feel seen and acknowledged.

As institutions for social and moral development as well as academic learning, schools — and sex education — have the unique power to validate LGBTQ+ identities in a political climate that is trying relentlessly to dismiss them. ♦



'Falconpuff': a step for gender inclusivity

By Stephanie Sun

Traditionally each March or April, the school hosts Spring Fling week, featuring events like rallies, the Spring Fling dance and powderpuff football. Powderpuff, featuring female players and male cheerleaders, has been a long celebrated tradition dating back past the '90s here.

This year, commendably, the name has at least been changed to flag football instead of powderpuff.

As we reestablish these events and traditions after the online school year, it is important to reflect on how they come across in context of the changing nature of gender roles in today's society.

Powderpuff was first created around the early 1930s or 1940s, but did not pick up in popularity until the 1970s in the wake of Title IX. It became an ongoing trend in high schools and continues to be a popular tradition throughout the U.S.

Gender demographics in sports today, however, differ greatly from what they were in the 70s. The percentage of high school sports played by girls increased from 24.2% in 1973 to 42.9% in 2018 and continues to grow. At SHS, girls now play sports that tra-

ditionally have only seen male participation, such as football and wrestling. Think of this year or the girls who have played on the football team in recent years.

While powderpuff may have been relevant toward encouraging women to participate in sports when it was first introduced decades ago, it no longer holds the same intention. The name "powderpuff" originates from a makeup tool used by women in the 1940s, which was essentially a fluffy cotton ball. Naming the sport after this makeup item reinforces typical stereotypes of femininity and perpetuates the idea that women are fragile or weaker than men, as well as the idea that only women

can wear makeup or behave in certain ways. This is further depicted in the other aspect of powderpuff, in which male students dress up as cheerleaders.

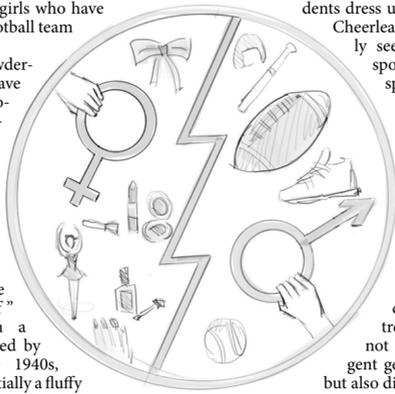
Cheerleading is commonly seen as a feminine sport, if considered a sport at all, and this aspect of powderpuff seems to mock the idea of participating in more female-dominated activities. The way female students playing football and male students cheering are treated as spectacles not only fortify stringent gender stereotypes, but also discourage students from pursuing more interests deemed to be typical of their gender identity. Just as significantly, nonbinary or transgender students may feel excluded or con-

flicted due to the strict implicit gender guidelines of the game. Simply put, the idea of powderpuff feels outdated.

However, there is no need to completely get rid of a fun flag football event altogether. The school's change this year in renaming the event to "Falconpuff" is a step forward, although it should advertise it as such instead of continuing to promote it using the original name.

Nonbinary or transgender students may feel excluded due to the implicit gender guidelines of the game.

It is also now gender neutral; anyone can participate in either the flag football game or the cheerleading — another good step. The school has been working to improve its inclusivity this year with past events like the changes to the Homecoming royalty titles being gender neutral. Altogether, these are big steps toward a more inclusive school. u



togatalks

Do you think powderpuff reinforces gender stereotypes?

"I feel like it's telling us that the 'norm' is for girls to do cheerleading and boys to play football."



freshman Madison Saville

"The name is limiting, but I think renaming to Falconpuff this year makes a more inclusive environment."



senior Ben Bray

"I don't think there's anything wrong with the word 'powder' that implies gender stereotypes."



senior Savannah Lin

Same subject classes should have similar difficulty levels

By Nikhil Mathihalli & Aiden Ye

Students here are fortunate to attend a school with a wide variety of course offerings, from a multitude of language and science courses to a wide range of electives. Of course, these different courses all have varying levels of difficulty, but there's a fundamental problem when classes with the same title are taught or graded markedly differently by different teachers.

When it comes to tests, policies and methods can vary widely.

One case in point: While some students under one teacher may face traditional closed-notes tests, students with a different teacher have the luxury of open-notes tests or even take-home tests. These discrepancies are more prevalent among non-AP math and history courses, which sometimes have two or three teachers spread between a single course.

Considering the weight of tests, especially in more rigorous honors and AP courses, differences in assessment policies between classes could mean the difference between a whole letter grade. Ideally, a particular student in any course should have the same grading policies regardless of who the instructor is.

Not only do inconsistent policies cause class results and rigor to differ greatly, but they may also tie into how well students actually learn the information and skills.

Some classes, for example, are paced severely slower than others. Sometimes those slower-paced classes don't cover all the material that a faster-paced class gets to in a year, putting these students at a disadvantage in future classes.

Not only are some classes behind, but others seem to follow different curricula altogether, resulting in different experiences for students, despite registering for the same class. This is seen in many non-AP math and history classes, where the material covered seems not to be standardized (as compared to AP classes).

Inconsistent policies may also tie into how well students actually learn the information.

While a particular class may be learning something at the beginning of the second semester, a different class of the same subject may be covering the same material at the end of the second semester, or worse, may not cover the material at all.

The issues are not as pronounced in classes taught by one or two teachers, like AP Calculus BC, English 10 and Chemistry Honors. Classes like these should serve as a standard for other departments that have multiple teachers instructing the same subject: The best method is a set curriculum with the same testing policies that ensure students have an equal opportunity to learn

and perform regardless of the instructor. In our view, more communication within subject departments could help teachers create a set curriculum with standard tests and testing methods. Ideally, students' grades — and the amount they learn — should never be affected by the teacher they are assigned to. u



Parents: stop competing with your kids' academic accolades

By Sarah Zhou

"Oh, your child isn't taking double sciences or APUSH this year? Well, my child is taking seven APs this year, competing in various STEM competitions, enrolling in courses at West Valley and working on their non-profit."

While this comment may seem like an animated exaggeration of a conversation between Saratoga parents, the sentiment in the exchange echoes messages sent by dozens of parents in various SHS parent groups — everything is a form of competition.

With many parents looking to elevate their child onto a pedestal of academic success and validation, a conversation in a WeChat group that starts off as a few helpful comments and anecdotes can quickly become a bragging session that inadvertently leads to other parents to question their own child's efforts and ambition to handle academic rigor.

It's no wonder scores of students complain about their declining mental health and seek counseling in places like CASSY.

Understandably, many parents want to see their child succeed. In Saratoga, that often correlates to being accepted into a prestigious university like Stanford, MIT or Princeton. Saying that some are merely "pushing" their children to go above and beyond, however, is a clear understatement.

The increasing number of students enrolling in every AP and honors class available, whether they are interested in the subject or not, has gotten to the point where taking a "regular" class can be considered shameful. This, in turn, leads to academic stress and what feels like impossibly high expectations for many students, exacerbating stress already felt from peers.

Obviously, if it is the student's own desire to take an advanced class, it is a completely different story. But, let's be real. Who actually wants to take every single AP course CollegeBoard offers purely for their

own enjoyment?

Many online parent groups require members to state their child's expected graduation year, and the amount of class of 2030+ parents joining chats and constantly chiding in with their opinions on classes is ridiculous. Class of 2037 parents — please, let your 3-year-old enjoy preschool and at least get through fifth grade before you launch them into various AP test prep classes.

While gossip about which courses and competitions certain SHS alums have partaken in to win the lottery of the college admissions process may seem eye-opening, the reality is that there is no special formula of 16 APs, 20 extracurriculars and \$10,000 summer programs that get students into prestigious universities.

According to BBC, one of the primary reasons for competitive parenting is that parents feel their children's actions are a "direct reflection of how well they are doing as a parent," with many parents' competitive tendencies stemming from their own insecurities.

Parents boasting about their child's accomplishments completely ignore how it affects both their children and other students. Their own children would likely be incredibly uncomfortable if they discovered their name and LinkedIn page being tossed around parents groups as a guideline for success in college admissions.

My advice to parents: Embrace your child's passions and strengths rather than attempting to mold them into something they're not. Forget about impressing other parents on social media or at parties and let them grow into the young adults they want to be.

For most students, completing everyday coursework, activities and maintaining their mental health is stressful enough. The added pressure of constantly being compared to their peers is unnecessary and unhealthy. It's time for it to end. u

All cartoons by ANNIE LIU

My life's a blur

By Hannah Lee

E, C, V ... umm ... a P? No wait, an N?

Oh, gosh. Maybe I shouldn't have watched so much "Wild Kratts" 4 inches away from the TV when I was a kid.

At my annual eye doctor appointment during 7th grade, I tried awkwardly to shrug off the fact that I couldn't read a single line of the vision chart. It's probably supposed to be a bit blurry, just like the whiteboard at school, I told myself.

According to the National Institute of Health, 6% of Americans are visually impaired. When it hit my overdramatic middle school self that I was now a part of that minority, I cried my near-sighted eyes the entire way home.

Looking back, I think crying was very much justified, given that it's been undeniably downhill since.

I refuse to put my prescription on blast, but it's like I-mistook-a-lamp-on-the-ground-as-my-dog-just-earlier-today-bad. (Not that this ever happened, haha).

Still, I'm extremely grateful that my vision is correctable, and have tried several alternatives and prescriptions to aid my vision woes.

Just like everyone else, I started off with glasses. Except, unlike everyone else, I look terrible in glasses. So after switching back and forth between Ortho-K, glasses and day contacts (sorry, Mom and Dad!), I now wear day contacts to school and switch to glasses as soon as I get home. Though I found that this combination has worked the best for me, I still haven't gotten used to the daily struggles that come with my poor eyesight.

I have chronically dry eyes, for one. Having to hunt down a bottle of eye drops every month is just as annoying as it sounds.

And I'm constantly taking my glasses on and off — am I supposed to wear my glasses every time I look at my devices? The screen is far enough that I have to squint, but too close to view comfortably with my prescription glasses.

Don't even get me started on looking for my glasses when I

wake up in the morning — that's a whole other level of frustration.

Also: awkward staring. I'm not sure if this is a universal contact-wearer experience, but I've noticed that I tend to unintentionally stare at things for an extended period of time. My apologies to anyone I've made uncomfortable by staring — I have a good excuse, I promise.

I'll never get over the daily routine of reaching up to brush away what feels like a bothersome piece of fluff in my eye, but instead ending up smacking my glasses, leaving them sprawled crookedly across my nose.

Another occurrence that happens more than it should is showering, forgetting that I have my contacts in and then wondering aloud about why my eyes burn extra today. No, I'm not crying — my contact lenses are just violently poking at my cornea.

And lastly, just not being able to see. As the only one of my siblings without perfect vision,

I've had to endure my family's persistent teasing, bearing the brunt of an onslaught of daily "how many fingers am I holding up?" jokes.

I can only think of two up-sides to seeing blurs. One is that when I chose to walk around blind during the

summer, presenting in front of the class wasn't the slightest bit daunting due to the fact that I saw a bunch of faceless figures. Another occurred when my cousins came over and offered to watch a horror film. Acting brave is a breeze when you can't even make out the images on the screen.

Through all of this, I've definitely considered Lasik, but after hearing stories of the possible side effects, I've decided that it might not be for me.

Truthfully speaking, many people have far worse vision problems and I'm mainly just ranting. Bad eyesight is not my biggest problem in life, and I'm incredibly grateful for the glasses, contacts and eye doctor appointments, despite my complaints.

But since I refuse to get Lasik and won't stop whining about it, I guess I'll just squint for now. ♦



The ASB joke of the day blasts through the loudspeaker and you're met with a dilemma: Do you put your head down and sigh? Or do you laugh along?

Toga boys: Stop acting 'hood'

By Lena Aribi & Meher Bhatnagar

Disclaimer: This is attributed to our personal preferences, reader discretion advised.

We live in one of the most expensive areas in the country, yet many boys who attend the school act like they're starring in "Shameless" Season 4.

From constantly throwing up gang signs and sagging your pants down, revealing your Ellen DeGeneres or Fruit of the Loom boxers, you look pathetic.

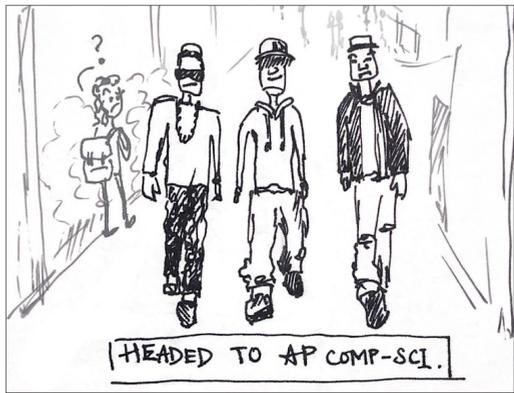
So we are here to tell you to pull those pants back up and get to your AP Computer Science class.

Although we won't ask you to fully change your style, there are a few things that simply must be said.

The other day, we were having a conversation with a fellow student when out of nowhere they began to say things like, "ya hurd," "cuh" and "jit." Our conversation ended with them saying, "Don't forget to hmu to link later at the basketball game."

The two of us exchanged baffled glances. What do these words even mean?

That same night, at the game, we saw someone step out of their mom's Tesla with pants that didn't fully cover their boxers. Now, there's a distinct difference between baggy pants and ripped black skinny jeans that don't even fit over your rear end, and this person definitely fell into the latter





TOM VAUGHAN (10)

JACKET \$8 GOODWILL



T SHIRT \$2 GOODWILL



HAT \$0 MERCH

PANTS \$4 GOODWILL



SHOES \$80 TUK FOOTWEAR

STYLETOGA

All graphics by LYNN DAI and JOANN ZHANG

✿ HAKONE GARDENS ✿ THE MOUNTAIN WINERY ✿ MONTALVO ARTS CENTER ✿ WILDWOOD PARK ✿ SUSHI HEAVEN ✿ SARATOGA VILLAGE ✿ GARROD FARMS ✿ HONG'S GOURMET ✿ CONGRESS SPRINGS ✿ WEST VALLEY COLLEGE ✿ SUE'S GALLERY CAFE ✿ LA CUEVA ✿

SARATOGA AND WHY WE LOVE IT

95070



ANNIE LIU

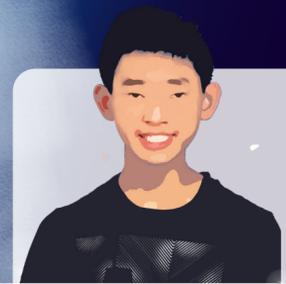
Waking up on Saturday mornings, my mom often greets me with: "Do you want to come along with me to the farmers market?" "Yeah, I'll come." The weekly farmers market at West Valley College is the only part in Saratoga that reminds me of my old home in Taiwan. We arrive to find bustling stands with sellers advertising their products and people carrying large grocery bags or even roller baskets to buy fresh vegetables and fruits, reminding me of Taiwan's night markets and morning flea markets. At age 3, I began going to the farmers markets of Taipei with my mom. Just like the farmers markets here, it only opens in the morning, and the alleys would be filled with stands and

people who carried around grocery bags full of goodies. Now, when time allows, it's always nice to go for a walk during weekend mornings at the farmers market. My mom and I stroll through the rows of stands, eagerly surveying the artisan ceramics, piles of freshly picked fruit and seasonal vegetables even when we don't need to buy anything. From afar, we can see a parade of flamboyant, brilliant colors: the flower stands. They're marvelous — the flowers are well taken care of and come in a wide variety of shapes, sizes and colors. Bouquets of meticulously picked roses, delicate baby's breath and smiling daisies are neatly bundled together. Though overpriced, it's still nice to look at things you will never buy. Ironically, my mom often gets severe allergies from the flowers that grow in this region, sometimes to the point that her face is entirely swollen. She found her remedy at the farmers market: a daily spoonful of unpasteur-

FARMERS MARKET (fresh & flowery)

ized, local-made honey. Also at the farmers market are pastries, freshly baked bread, crepes and other ready-to-eat food. I personally really like to buy lasagna from a specific stand and bring it home for lunch. The tomato sauce is rich and savory, the cheese is nicely melted so that it has a stringy pull and the beef is loaded with flavor that ties it all together with its juicy and tender taste. There are also fruits and vegetable stands that always seem to have crowds scrutinizing goods for blemishes or ripeness. Customers hold the fruits, examining them and picking out which ones they think are the best. The farmers market here is a much smaller version of Taiwan's. Taiwanese markets are like very diverse supermarkets but just in the form of a long street. They're loud, often unsanitary and unpleasant, but I grew to appreciate them. There lie the shops and stalls. Each and every one of the street market stands sell its own particular prod-

ucts. From meats, veggies, clothes, bags and so on, the products lay on rickety tables covered with tablecloth under tents with faded colors. Meats are freshly cut, and pieces from big to small are all available. Just ask, and the friendly seller will put it in a bag for you. There are bags that replicate designer bags, and believe it or not, some can be very durable. The items sold there are not the best quality, but once loved and used as intended, they all work perfectly well. Merchants yell as loud as their throats can bare to advertise their products. "Pork chops, buy one, get one free!" yells one seller. "Hand powered fans, get 20 percent off!" cries another. Though the markets in Saratoga and Taiwan differ in character, they give the same homey feeling — I just love the way people come and go from the stands and streets. The farmers market is where people gather to buy things, stuff their bellies, walk away from a week's hard work and find community. ♦



JONNY LUO

On the outskirts of Silicon Valley, nestled on the foothills of the Santa Cruz mountain range, lie a small town called Saratoga. Its 40,000 inhabitants live on the land of once proud orchards, which were subdivided in the mid-1900s into the sprawling neighborhoods of today. I remember the first day my parents drove into Saratoga. It was strange, coming from a neighborhood in San Jose with narrow streets and stereotypical, picket-fenced houses, and suddenly seeing sprawling mansions interspersing run-down houses and endless deadends that splintered off from bustling

SARATOGA STROLLS (city of no lights)

roads — a confusing layout that my friend said looked as if "the city planner scribbled on a piece of paper." Weirdest of all, it was dark; flashes of lights from far-away houses were the only source of light in the pitch-black night. During my first night-time outing, I noticed that Saratoga lacked street lights. My parents' car, an old Acura, had feeble headlights that failed to pierce far into the night, a fact I didn't appreciate until much later in my life. To be frank, I was scared of the night when I was younger. The dark hid monsters who feasted on children, and I couldn't walk around a dark house without flicking on every light switch. For me, night was a time to stay inside, bundled up in blankets, and build "forts" with my brother, although he soon graduated from these childish games. In middle school, however, I outgrew my childhood phobia and began to appreciate the ambience that the lack of streetlights lends Saratoga. I started to go on walks at night: short, infrequent trips into the darkness that lay beyond my house.

Nighttime walks, with only the dark quietness of Saratoga to accompany me, have been some of the best times of my life. Stillness and melancholy hang in the air, like fog on a cold morning; the bustling of cars crossing Highway 85 rushes like a gentle river in the background; the sounds of crickets pierce the air like shards of glass. These walks are refuges that help clear my mind. Usually, when I feel overheated or overwhelmed by work, I'll take a walk outside — sometimes in just a T-shirt and pants. The cool wind wakes me up, and on clear days, the moon and stars cast a dim glow onto the resting giant that is Saratoga. I sometimes like to look at the scenery when I take my walks — trees that look different at night than during the day, flowers whose scent I can smell from a block away and houses that illuminate the dark. I pass houses that are pitch-black and those that are brightly lit, trying to imagine what the people who live in those houses are like. The pitch-black house is that of

an old grandma, one who wakes up early every morning to volunteer at Argonaut Elementary. Inside the brightly lit house, I picture an overworked student struggling under the SHS workload. When I go on walks at night, I take two things with me: earbuds and a lantern. Earbuds heighten the experience with music — I usually listen to classical — and the lantern is for warning drivers that there is someone on the road. I often feel like a Hobbit, holding a small lantern against a sea of black, venturing through the night. When I finish my walk and return to my house, there is a shock as I adjust to the warm environment. Afterwards, I'll either head straight back to my room to finish my homework or lounge on my couch, cradling a cup of warm hot chocolate. The safe environment in Saratoga that allows me to walk alone at night is something that I am immensely grateful for. These nighttime walks are something that I'll never forget, and though the lack of streetlights scared me as a child, I've come to appreciate their absence. ♦

My public library — because yes, it belongs to me and the hundreds of other people who frequent it every month — has shaped me into the person I am today. You may think I'm exaggerating, but my first memories in Saratoga after moving here in second grade seem to have all taken place in the lively children's section of the Saratoga Library.



NIKHIL MATHIHALLI

Without the library, I never would have heard about Tintin's adventures with Snowy or how Auggie overcame his struggles in "Wonder." The Saratoga Library, a modern 48,500 square foot structure, instilled in me a love for reading that will last a lifetime. My house is a 10-minute walk away, so when I first moved here, I went to the library with my sister and parents every weekend. I looked forward to those two hours in the library, the

time I spent picking out Tintin comics with my dad or Magic Tree House books with my mom. And as I grew older, my capacity for literature expanded, and I began taking different routes during my library visits. Instead of taking the usual right-turn to enter the children section, I started taking a left into the teen section. I was introduced to the magical world of Harry Potter and the dangerous expeditions featured in the Hunger Games and Maze Runner series. My fascination for books increased — all because of my visits to the library. It was also at this time that I noticed the other rooms in the library. Some days, after school ended, I would walk with my friends to the library. For the most part, we were responsible and did our homework together, but sometimes we played "Minecraft" or "Super Smash Bros" in the Community Center or at the desks near the window in the adult fiction section. My experiences at the library have taught

SARATOGA LIBRARY (heart of the city)

me many necessary lessons in life. For example, I learned how to strike conversations with complete strangers — you can meet all kinds of people at the library, and just talking to them can be an eye-opening experience. For instance, when I was in 5th grade, I met a college student who was looking at a textbook that had to do with advanced calculus. Being one of those kids who wanted to brag about knowing calculus, I asked the man if he could teach me some of the basic concepts in his book. He agreed, and I understood almost nothing, but my interest in math —

which still remains today — grew so much just because of that one conversation. The library is a place where I can go to study for tests, work on projects with my friends and be productive. The countless hours I spent in the various areas of the library have given me memories and friendships that I still cherish today. In a few years, I'll go off to college and leave Saratoga. I'll get a job and probably live elsewhere, maybe even start a family someday. But my experiences at the Saratoga Library, a truly special place, will stay with me for the rest of my life. ♦



Producer of 'Butter' explains its making as a family affair

by HannahLee & StephanieSun

On Feb. 25, "Butter," director Paul A. Kaufman's feature film debut, was released in theaters. The film, originally released in 2020 at the Cinequest Film & Creativity Festival and the Socially Relevant Film Festival, follows titular protagonist Butter as he struggles with social acceptance at his high school.

Butter, bullied for being extremely obese but fed up with his social status, devises a plan: On New Year's Eve, he will eat himself to death on the internet. Immediately, Butter gains newfound attention from his classmates, who begin to see him differently and talk to him about his plans, treating him more positively as a result.

The film struggles slightly in its storyline; Butter's newfound friends like him, but don't do anything to discourage him from his suicide plan. Overall, however, it's a sweet film with a message of acceptance and the importance of kindness despite superficial differences. The Falcon had the chance to interview Julie Bram, a producer for the film, about it.



Bram

Q. What first drew you to the movie's concept and why did you decide to do it?

My husband and I are actually both in real estate — my husband is in finance and real estate, and I've spent much of my adult life in charity and philanthropy. The filmmaker is actually my brother, Paul Hoffman, and around six years ago, he said he wanted to discuss his latest project with us. At first, my husband said he wouldn't even give him a penny, but he came over and explained the concept of "Butter's Final Meal" and how it was based on a young adult novel

by Erin Jade Lange. As soon as he finished explaining, I asked him how much he needed — and that's how we got involved in this amazing independent film. We didn't have any backing from any kind of studio or streaming platform.

Q. What was it like working on the movie?

As executive producers, we were really responsible for raising the money. The budget was only \$1.7 million which is really, really low for a film to be made. The thing about this film is that everyone involved — from the cast, the filming crew, to the studios — all were gravitated to the themes of this film and wanted to make a difference in the world. So it's been sort of elevating experience.

Q. With the film airing this year, what are you currently up to?

Right now, we're trying to get the word out. I'm also trying to get through the emails and messages we're getting from people all over the world, saying they can't wait to see the film and how much it resonates with them. Some of the emails say, for example: "Thank you for reaching out to someone who has personally struggled with mental health issues such as depression, anxiety and ADHD and has been diagnosed with a mood disorder, not to mention has struggled with my own physical appearance. I relate in a lot of aspects to the film."

Q. Did you have any difficulties working on the film?
The main challenge was staying on budget. Thankfully, my brother's whole adult career has been in the making of TV shows, so we got a studio at a great rate, donated cameras and Dell computers that were sponsored. Many people wanted us to make

this movie, so they were really helpful.

Another hardship was a specific scene when Butter, the main character, had to jump off a cliff into the water. Because there was a drought the year we filmed (about four years ago), my brother couldn't find a place for him to jump. And so we started thinking, maybe we could find someone with a big swimming pool and he could jump off the roof. Eventually — I don't know how my brother found it — but he did a pool and the scene looks great in the movie.

Q. Who is the target audience for this film?

"Butter's Final Meal," though it will appeal to teenagers, can also be enjoyed by anyone with special needs or specific mental health illnesses. I think anyone who raises a child will want to see the movie. It's also a great movie to see with one's parents and spark a discussion.

Q. What do you hope viewers gain from the film?

We have a whole campaign launching called "R U OK?" to sort of help people open up. I think there's the definite message that over time things will be OK and that there's always someone available to help. You know, Butter goes through his own struggles — there are people and there are resources.

Q. Do you have any goals regarding the film for the future?

Originally, "Butter's Final Meal" was going to open in around 20 to 25 theaters across the country. Apparently, though, AMC and some of the other theater companies loved the movie so much that it's now showing in close to 200 theaters. We're really excited and after its national release, we hope to get a good international deal.



Courtesy of BLUE FOX ENTERTAINMENT

Butter's Final Meal is a coming-of-age film.

We're also doing a TikTok campaign, and it would be great if people could follow the film on TikTok — we've got Jack Griffo and so many other amazing people on board.

Q. Anything else viewers could look out for?

At the end of the credits roll, there's a really nice shout-out to my husband and me in a really cute way. Pentatonix also has a song playing through the credits, and it's really beautiful.

The film is like our baby, and has become a real family passion project. We want to see it soar and do good in the world. ♦

'Dawn FM' embodies versatility

by ArnavSwamy & TiffanyWang

On New Year's Eve, fans of Canadian singer Abel Tesfaye, professionally known as The Weeknd, opened Instagram to find a since-deleted screenshot of a cryptic text message exchange between Tesfaye and his creative director La Mar Taylor. In the message, Tesfaye described how "music can heal" and how he has to drop his upcoming album and "enjoy it with the people."

His succeeding post on Jan. 2 urged his audience to "wake up at dawn tomorrow" for the drop video of "Dawn FM," his fifth studio album, which was ultimately released on all streaming platforms on Jan. 7.

The album's theme revolves around a radio station aiming to entertain listeners who are currently in purgatory, waiting to reach their destination or the "dawn" of their life. 103.5 Dawn FM settles listeners into around 45 minutes of immersive synths.

With its bass-heavy, psychedelic retro theme, "Dawn FM" contrasts extremely well with the darker, more introspective tones of Tesfaye's previous album "After Hours," which sought to explore the blindness and loneliness that fame has brought him. "Dawn FM" seems to be a comforting reconciliation of these issues as the increased mention of death

and religion comfort him as he finds internal understanding.

Tesfaye took a clearly dance-pop approach with the album, unorthodox compared to his earlier R&B albums which are more pensive and slow. With their energetic and chaotic beats and vocals, songs like "Take My Breath" and "Sacrifice" embody the hallucinatory rush that the album is based around.

The album's dance-pop feel complements the lyrics and theme of all the songs, which revolve around the tumult but relentless love in a declining relationship. With the aforementioned immersion of the instrumentals, Tesfaye unlocks his emotions and thought process on relationships on a personal level.

Although the composition and execution of "Dawn FM" are extremely strong, one of the album's downsides is a lack of depth behind the lyrics. Besides the mysterious interludes, the consistent theme of heartbreak and its aftermath became somewhat stale, especially since the pop scene is already inundated with extremely thematically similar songs. Message-wise, "Dawn FM" pales in comparison to Tesfaye's previous works, which are adorned in aching, nihilistic, and realistic motifs.

The internal gearing of "Dawn FM" also dictates that the al-



Graphic by ANNIE LIU

bum is only complete as a consecutive story. The intermittent beeps from the radio host result in the majority of songs being somewhat incoherent for single streaming. As such, the flow and meaning of the story are fractured when the album is shuffled.

Regardless of these nitpicks, the sheer production quality of the beats and the unique approach Tesfaye took vocally make "Dawn FM" a towering addition to his discography. The album clearly seems to be made to satisfy Tesfaye's internal resolution with fame, money, relationships and religion.

With the progression of the album, Tesfaye clearly marked the album as a reflection of a past stained with sin. The last song before "Carry's" conclusive interlude, "Less than Zero," is a testament to accepting and embracing the life Tesfaye has led and how he has found internal peace at the summit of the music industry.

With the progression of the album, Tesfaye clearly marked the album as a reflection of a past stained with sin. "Dawn FM" is a clear ode to Tesfaye's evolution as a vocalist and is a profoundly unique way to kickstart 2022's musical era. ♦

WORDLE

Graphic by ANJALI PAI

A SIMPLE YET COMPELLING LETTER GAME

by JonnyLuo

I love Wordle. For those of you who don't know what Wordle is, Wordle is a simple, slightly addicting, online game where the player tries to guess a five-letter word in less than six guesses. The letters in guessed words are color-coded based on their correctness: a gray letter means it's not in the word, yellow means it's in the word but in the wrong position and green means it's in the right position.

Wordle is a browser-based game, something that confused some people when they downloaded the game — which, at the time the browser-based Wordle went viral, did not include the game where users guess a five-letter word in six guesses — off of the App Store. The creator of this other word game, Steve Cravotta, actually ended up donating all the money he made from in-app transactions to charity.

Unlike many others, I did not discover Wordle by seeing a grid of gray, yellow and green boxes on my Instagram page. I discovered it a few weeks ago while reading the news on my phone. Poetically, Wordle ended up replacing my daily news brief when I ate breakfast every morning. Now, I read the news, and immediately hop onto Wordle for my daily dose.

Every morning, I start by guessing the word, "adieu." Everyone has a different strategy, but I like this word because it contains

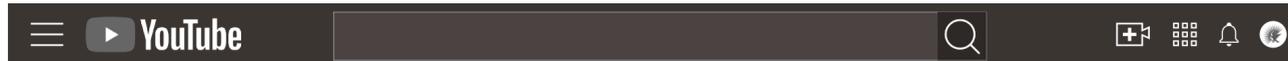
four vowels. Afterward, I try to incorporate the correct letters from "adieu" and add the vowel "o" or other common letters like "y." Then, it's just a guessing game until I, hopefully, get the right answer. Fingers crossed, but so far I haven't lost a single Wordle.

For me, Wordle is compelling for a few reasons. One — you only get one puzzle means it's not in the word, yellow means it's in the word but in the wrong position and green means it's in the right position.

Two — everyone gets the same puzzle. It's great to be able to talk to people about how difficult or easy the day's puzzle was. This social aspect of the game spreads the word about the game in a fun, entertaining way, as players have the option to share their results (spoiler-free) on social media platforms, using emojis to depict their daily results.

Recently, the game was sold to The New York Times to be eventually folded into its subscription game package. It's supposed to "initially remain free," but I'm skeptical about how long that will last. But when it does start costing money, I'm not sure I will pay for the NYT games bundle.

But that's all in the future. If you've been living under a rock and haven't yet played Wordle, you should hop on your browser, search for Wordle and start your addiction. ♦



NileRed: a professional amateur chemist, savior of students

By SamBai

Do you hate chemistry? Does your brain refuse to understand the subject? Do concepts like stoichiometry, thermodynamics and titration make you want to physically repulse and clench your stomach?

If so, might I suggest a remedy: NileRed, a highly bingeable, chemistry-oriented YouTube channel. While it has the potential to confuse you even more, the channel has one other effect: It will make you want to keep learning chemistry.

Nigil Braun, the creator of NileRed, focuses his content on a wide variety of ideas, from exploring myths and creating dangerous substances to answering important life-altering questions: for example, whether cyanide smells like almonds.

Starting the channel from scratch in 2014, Nigil started with simple experi-

ments like exploring piranha solutions, an extremely reactive solution that quickly dissolves any substance that enters it.

As time passed and his channel grew, Nigil began tackling greater topics like turning cotton balls into cotton candy, creating grape sodas from plastic gloves and making deadly chemicals in his parent's garage.

I was first introduced to NileRed after seeing my cousin watch a video of him demonstrating a sample of aluminum and mercury touching each other. When a bead of mercury was dropped into a plate of aluminum with its outer shell scratched, tiny white hairs started to appear where the two made contact. Soon, the hairs grew into a tree-like structure until the weight of the aluminum hairs crashed down on itself.

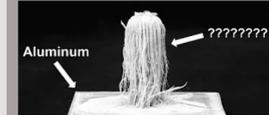
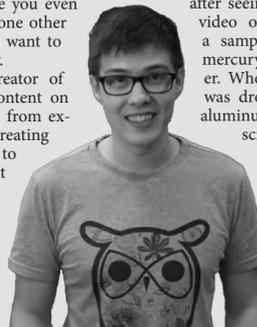
One thing that sets his work apart from other educational channels is his ability to explain difficult topics in a way that even complicated jargon can start to make sense. Along with easy-to-follow footage demonstrating what he's doing, it is easy to become immersed in whatever experiment he is working on.

NileRed also has side channels and fan-made channels such as NileBlue, NileRed shorts, and NileGreen.

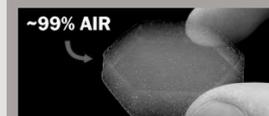
NileBlue contains all of the smaller experiments that Nigil does such as the process for cleaning up a larger project or explaining about the dangers of chemistry.

NileGreen is a fan-made channel that uses an AI Nigil voice changer and clips from NileRed to create parody videos, like "what if Nigil was bad at chemistry" and "Nigil making a nuclear reactor in his parents garage."

If you ever have some extra time on your hands and you would like to learn some chemistry, then visit NileRed. You will be entertained for hours, maybe even days on end, while learning valuable life lessons (and not-so-valuable chemistry ones!). ♦



Aluminum and Mercury
43M Views · 4 years ago



~99% AIR
23M Views · 1 year ago



MAKING SUPERCONDUCTORS
16M Views · 1 year ago



MAKING TRANSPARENT WOOD
12M Views · 10 months ago

Courtesy of NILERED



Best Of: Educational YouTube

The perfect blend of Ent and Ed: 'Kurzgesagt — in a nutshell'

By JonnyLuo

Have you ever wondered what would happen if you dropped a bird in a black hole? No, probably not. But if you have, I present to you the YouTube channel, "Kurzgesagt — in a nutshell," to satisfy all of your quirky scientific questions.

The channel, often just called Kurzgesagt, is an educational YouTube channel that uses short animated videos to convey complex scientific topics. If you were wondering, Kurzgesagt is pronounced "kurts-guh-zaakt" and means "in a nutshell" in German.

The channel centers around exploring scientific concepts, ranging from the inner-workings of the immune system to the implications of finding alien life.

The channel has recurring characters, all of them birds. One is a black duck with an orange bill named Duck. Duck can be found in various videos and also on Kurzgesagt merch.

These birds are somehow given increasingly more gruesome deaths in each subsequent video.

They first appear as cute little animals, until they get obliterated by a planetary nuke or sucked into a black hole mere moments later.

What stands out most about Kurzgesagt is its amazing animation and

the narrator's smooth voice. The team behind the channel creates all its animation in painstaking detail through Adobe Illustrator and After Effects, and the narrator's voice is consistent and pleasant to listen to.

Looking through the channel's history, viewers can find that the channel's excellent animation extends back to its very first video on evolution, with an arguably questionable scene where two teddy bears have censored intercourse (for purely educational reasons, of course).

Although the channel's videos are short for the complex content they cover, often glossing over specific details, it provides a perfect mix of visual enjoyment and education. And in a world where it seems hard to

trust scientific information online, Kurzgesagt stands out for the hundreds of hours its team spends on researching topics.

The creators try their best to be accurate, and when they make mistakes, they always notify viewers.

Watching the channel's videos has often led me to conduct fur-

ther research, which often include looking at sources the channel lists in its description.

For example, after one video brought up the 1975 Banqiao Dam failure in China, I dove into independently researching the dam and even had a conversation with my mother about its collapse. Death estimates range from 26,000 to 240,000, statistics that were never published in China. She only learned of the catastrophic failure when she immigrated to the U.S.

A few months ago, I decided that I wanted to support the channel for bringing me entertainment over the years, so I decided to buy their app that shows the scale of objects in the universe from the incredibly small Planck length to the entire observable universe.

I paid \$3 for the app, but haven't even used it once. I try to console myself by saying that I'm contributing to spreading science throughout the world, and that I can't even buy a school pizza slice with the money I spent on the app.

Thankfully, buying Kurzgesagt merch isn't necessary to gaining value and entertainment from this channel, and if you learn one thing after reading this article, it's this: Go watch Kurzgesagt; you won't regret it. ♦



The Black Hole Bomb
24M Views · 3 years ago



The Immune System Explained I
45M Views · 7 years ago



What If We Nuke a City?
23M Views · 2 years ago



Quantum Computing Explained
16M Views · 6 years ago

Courtesy of KURZGESAGT

AP Art History teacher reflects on Catholicism's impact on his teachings

Graphic by ANNIE LIU

BY Arnab Swamy

On late Red Day afternoons, Joel Tarbox can be found clicking through an elaborate slideshow of European Christian art and architecture for his seventh-period AP Art History students.

When delving into the intricacies of concepts such as patronage and the various subjects present in a piece, he finds that his Catholic upbringing is instrumental and effective in helping him understand and explain such art to his students.

"A good slice of European art revolves around the teachings of the Bible," Tarbox said. "With the pantheon of characters in Christianity to keep track of, I feel that I can help decode the images better."

Tarbox's Catholic upbringing

His Catholic understanding is rooted in his childhood. Growing up in Maine, he said that Catholicism was "a part of daily life during the '80s."

His mother went out of her way to ensure that he and his siblings attended weekly serves and mass until they reached adulthood.

Holidays, especially Christmas and Easter, were also highlights of his religious experience throughout his adolescence.

From kindergarten until 11th grade, Tarbox attended a Catholic after-school program, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, that was taught by local nuns.

He also later attended a Jesuit high school and eventually attended Bowdoin College, where he served as vice president of the Newman Association, an on-campus Roman Catholic student ministry.

Into Tarbox's sophomore year, he began noticing some viewpoints of the Newman Association which he felt opposed to, sparking a deteriorating relationship with the faith.

"While I did enjoy the Newman Association, I couldn't help but question some of the activities they did, specifically protesting against pro-choice rallies that popped up on campus," Tarbox said. "I don't want to promote abortion, but I understand that the choice exists for those who need it and I couldn't align myself to protest against it."

Although he still remained

Catholic, Tarbox also participated in a multitude of Buddhist studies courses to pursue his increasing interest in exploring other religions.

In his senior year in 1991, he decided to participate in a study abroad program offered by Bowdoin.

He chose to visit and live with a Buddhist family in Sri Lanka, a traditionally Theravada Buddhist country.

While living in Sri Lanka, Tarbox recalls Buddhism intermingling and evolving with other religions such as Hinduism.

Buddhists would regularly attend Hindu temples and vice versa to fulfill their religious duties.

During the Sri Lankan Civil War, he noticed that Buddhism provided people with a moral footing that guided them through daily life.

"Living in Sri Lanka unveiled so much more about Buddhism and people in general than I anticipated," Tarbox said. "Reading about profound Buddhist philosophies versus seeing them put into practice during the war was disappointing but also very relatable. It was very telling of human nature."

Separation from Catholicism

Upon returning, Tarbox said his experiences with how religion was used in Sri Lanka along with the Newman Association helped him find clarity regarding the disagreements he had with the Catholic Church as a political asset.

Tarbox's unease about Catholicism ended up reaching a breaking point after watching the movie "Spotlight."

The 2016 Oscar Best Picture recipient depicts the journey of two reporters for The Boston Globe investigating child molestation allegations against Catholic priests and the Church.

The movie is based on an actual sex scandal in the Boston church uncovered by the Globe reporters in 2002.

Tarbox said the massive scandal helped him sever his last ties to the religion.

One of the priests uncovered in 2002, after committing his crimes at Boston College High School, was sent to my high school to teach history, coach wrestling and serve as a parish priest," Tarbox said. "It bothered me that someone committing such vile acts

could be circulated so easily. What was even more repugnant was that he continued his behavior at my high school."

Since then, Tarbox said he had considered rejoining the church but found it difficult to weave past the atrocities committed by the priests representing the Catholic faith.

He chose to detach completely after hearing a snippet from a priest at a service commenting on an article in the Santa Cruz Sentinel regarding the issues.

"One of the priests said to a crowd that priests should be let go [in light of recent events], and with that, I decided to leave," Tarbox said. "It's immoral that victims are not prioritized."

As of now, Tarbox considers himself agnostic.

Though the politics regarding Catholicism eventually led him to separate from the church, he still finds immense value in its teachings and traditions.



Courtesy of JOEL TARBOX

While in Sri Lanka in his senior year of college in 1991, AP Art History teacher Joel Tarbox kneels to take a photo of a Buddhist monastery.

tool for explaining how Catholicism and Protestantism clashed at the time and what art forms blossomed from these religious implications.

Tarbox said his favorite piece from this era is the painting The Feast in the House of Levi by Paolo Veronese.

With the influence of Catholicism in Italy, he said that Veronese defied the Church by including people not commonly seen in Renaissance art while depicting the biblical Last Supper, like Muslims and Black people.

When Veronese was put on trial for heresy by the Church, he gained acquittal after agreeing to repaint the piece, only to rename it to its current name instead of the Last Supper.

Tarbox admires this piece's underdog element with the story behind it of Veronese thwarting the Church.

He said such art throws a splash of fresh humanity into an era like the Renaissance, which sparked both the blooming and constricting of human identity.

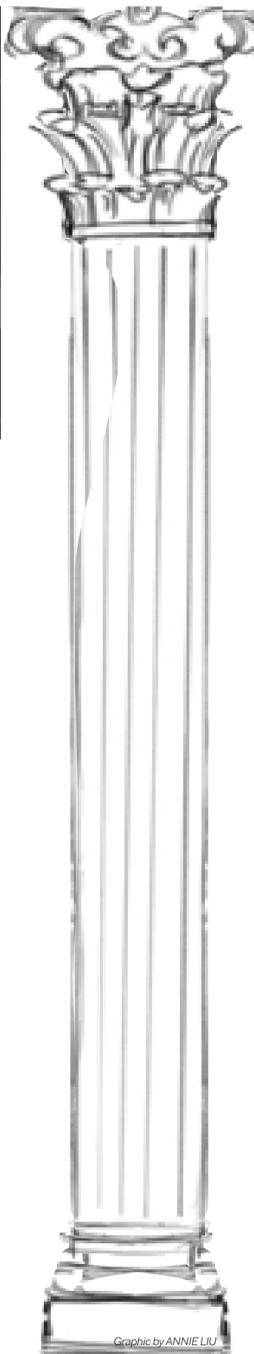
Tarbox said that religion has opened his eyes to what truly defines humanity in art.

"Human attributes like love, violence, sexual relationships, politics and religion are fascinating and beautiful when you look closely," Tarbox said. "So much of our world is visual, and examining art and our surroundings is a powerful unfurling of perspectives that we may have glazed over otherwise." ♦

Catholicism in art
When explaining Christian stories like the Fall from Grace and the Annunciation, prevalent in art from the Byzantines and the Renaissance, Tarbox's forte shines in expounding all facets of the art from a religious stance from the era.

In the Renaissance, art became integrated into society as a political and cultural asset in the fractured city-states of Italy.

Tarbox said he finds that his Catholic education is a powerful



Graphic by ANNIE LIU

Año Nuevo State Park allows environmental students the chance to observe elephant seals

THE MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE INCLUDES TOURING THE PARK AND WATCHING ELEPHANT SEALS FIGHT

BY Victoria Hu
& Sarah Zhou

Instead of heading to their usual morning periods on Feb. 10 and 11, most students in science teacher Kristen Thomson's AP and regular Environmental Science classes boarded buses to Año Nuevo State Park in Pescadero to see dozens of elephant seals in their natural habitat.

The field trip, a staple of the Environmental Science classes pre-pandemic, was the fruit of Thomson's efforts — she had been planning the event for months in advance, since first semester. As the only Environmental Science teacher, she handled the logistics of the trip by herself, as she had in previous years.

"It was cool to see these animals in their undisturbed habitat because it's hard to see animals in areas without human interference."

SENIOR Lance Wong

"I had to book the tours at the beginning of October and that is always nerve-wracking because I have so many tours and I have to book them two days in a row," Thomson said. "I never know when we're going because it's always a race to get to the phones first."

Thomson was also concerned about whether the field trip would be possible due to the timing of the Omicron surge.

"I was really nervous that they were going to cancel it like they did two years ago,"

Thomson said. "We were supposed to go the last week of school before lockdown, so it was tragic that we missed the trip by two days."

Nevertheless, the field trip was able to proceed on Feb. 17 and 18 as positive COVID-19 cases began to dwindle.

To mitigate the possible spread of the virus during the trip, particularly from spending two hours in enclosed buses, students and chaperones were required to take rapid tests a day or two prior to leaving. Once they arrived at the park, students were required to keep their masks on if they were unable to maintain a 6-foot distance from rangers or other groups.

During both days of the trip, the buses left at the start of the school day and took a little over an hour to get to Año Nuevo. Once they arrived, students were able to walk around the park and visit the beach before their tours.

Depending on the day, the students were split into three or four different tour groups of around 20 that took hikes to the park's ranger station.

Once they met with a park ranger, the group would listen to the ranger provide background information on the seals and park environment and follow the ranger to a beach where the elephant seals resided.

Students walked two to three miles total on hiking trails and tours, returned to their buses and made it back to the school by 3 p.m. Due to the field trip's earlier than usual date, there were more seals and activity than in previous years.

"We got to see some pretty cool elephant seals," she said. "We got to see babies and females. We even got to see males fighting, which I'd never seen before. It was the busiest I've ever seen, so that was fantastic."

Senior AP Environmental Science student Lance Wong said he was glad to go to



Courtesy of LANCE WONG

Elephant seals at the Año Nuevo State Park lay on the sand and prepare for mating season.

Año Nuevo and see practical applications of environmental science.

On the field trip, students were able to observe the remaining descendants of the dwindling population of seals, which was highly applicable to what students were learning in class about bringing certain animals back from the brink of extinction.

"It was cool to see these animals in their natural, undisturbed habitat because it's

hard to see animals in areas without human interference," he said.

Ultimately, Thomson was happy and proud of those who went out of their comfort zones on the trip.

"I just hope the students enjoyed the trip and felt more connected with nature," Thomson said. "I think if students have an experience that they have fond memories of, then I can't ask for anything more." ♦

APUSH students take on National History Day

BY Lynn Dai

For their National History Day (NHD) project this year, juniors in AP United States History used a variety of mediums — historical papers, documentaries, exhibits, performances, podcasts and websites — to explore issues based on the 2022 theme of "Debate & Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences."

The juniors in teacher Faith Daly's classes took inspiration from issues ranging from the 1969 Stonewall riots advocating for gay rights to the 1898 annexation of Hawaii.

Saratoga High has participated in National History Day for over a decade, with the exception of last year due to pandemic conditions. This year, 81 students participated in the senior division of the Santa Clara County competition, held at the school on March 12. Each category selected an honorable mention and three champions to proceed to the next level.

"I'm really glad that NHD gave us the opportunity to conduct this research project," junior Maithili Kulkarni said. "It taught me the importance of looking at both sides of an issue and how to do that."

Maithili Kulkarni: Stonewall and the Gay Rights Movement

Kulkarni and her two group members made a group documentary titled "Stonewall and the Gay Rights Movement: Continued Oppression on the Basis of Gender and Race." It won one of three Champion group documentaries awards at the competition.

Kulkarni conducted her research with a question in mind — were the Stonewall ri-

ots a turning point for gay rights as popular understanding had commonly suggested? She found out that while the Stonewall movement sparked a change in the gay rights movement and turned previously "complacent" demonstrations into more active ones, there were still LGBTQ+ minorities that existed within the gay community at the time. People of color and people of different gender identities, such as transgender individuals, were still discriminated against.

Their documentary features 120 photos of the movement and narrations from voiceovers of all three group members. Kulkarni estimates that the total amount of time for finding the photos, recording the voiceovers and assembling the documentary was 20 hours.

"We thought that a documentary would provide a more complete picture because it has both audio and visual elements," she said. "It just took a lot of time."

Lisa Fung: The Delano Grape Strike and Boycotts

Junior Lisa Fung wrote a historical paper titled "Relations Turned Sour: The Delano Grape Strike and Boycotts." She found out about Cesar Chavez and the farmworkers movements in her Spanish class and decided to pursue the topic for her NHD project because of the parallels between the NHD theme and the tactics farmers used to grow their debate.

Her paper focuses on debate and diplomacy spanning from 1965 to 1975. It begins

by providing a synopsis on the background of farmworkers in California, goes through

how farmers partnered with organizations to gain public attention and concludes with historical significance, the gains and failures in managing the farmer unions.

Though the project involved many stages — researching, creating an outline, writing and editing — she said the APUSH class schedule helped her coordinate and plan her time.

"Outside the project, history just seems to be reading from a textbook and analyzing documents," Fung said. "But for NHD, you had to consolidate all the documents and see how different sources contribute to a holistic view of what really happened."

Other groups were interested in analyzing the future impact of past historical events.

Dyne Lee: The Annexation of Hawaii

For junior Dyne Lee and her two group members, the subject of the annexation of Hawaii fit their interest in American expansion into overseas territories.

They created a website documenting the influences over the debate in Congress, which discussed possible economic advantages and ethical concerns about Native Hawaiians opposing annexation. The group considered multiple factors affecting the debate and concluded that petitions created during that time didn't influence the debate as much as other factors.

"Formatting, making the website look good and keeping articles concise to fit under the word limit was pretty difficult," Lee said. "But I enjoyed finding the political car-

toons and photographs of people."

Wasil Khan: The Legacy of Change Brought by the Vietnam War

As soon as he saw the theme "Debate and Diplomacy," senior Wasil Khan immediately thought of the Vietnam War.

Throughout the war, public opinions about U.S. participation remained half-half. Khan's website, which won a Champion award at the competition, talks about the specific impacts the division caused and factors that influenced foreign policy and immigration decisions.

While most groups said they started the project in January or early February, Khan admitted he started the afternoon before it was due and finished at 4 a.m.

"There's a lot of things I could've done better, but I enjoyed making the website because it was something new," he said. "I also felt that this project was better than ones I've done in the past: It's more formal since it's an actual competition."

Khan's interest in history started in elementary school. Other subjects didn't make as much sense to him, but he found history interesting because it was similar to the retelling of a story.

"I couldn't get enough of it," he said. Daly has noticed that the freedom of choice in the competition frequently allows students to be passionate about their subjects.

"For many students, it's a life-changing experience, or at minimum, a highlight of their middle and high school years," Daly said.

You can find the full list of NHD winners and their projects on saratogafalcon.org. ♦

togotalks

What's your favorite concept you've learned this year?

"Rulers that use art as propaganda or for legitimacy and how the purpose of art changes over time."



junior Lisa Fung

"Different cultures appreciate art for different things and not every piece is meant to look realistic."



sophomore Matthew Zhang

"How different forms of art like photography and sculpture surfaced over periods of time."



junior Jonathan Si

DATED WASC RECORDS REVEAL AN UNFAMILIAR PAST

by Lynn Dai & Howard Shu

In 1968, Mary Monroe was a senior at the school and was the ASB treasurer. She lived in a secluded house on top of a hill surrounded by orchards on Glen Una Drive. Her high school sweetheart and later husband, Kim Monroe, the Class of 1968 ASB president, frequently biked through streets that were then still lined with orchards rather than multimillion-dollar houses on his way to school.

Then, the school's 1,461 students were mainly from white, upper middle class families living in booming suburbs of a growing tech industry. Other students came from farming families who tended to vineyards and horses.

In the 54 years since the couple graduated, many of those family farms have disappeared, transforming the then-agricultural environment to the pricey upper class neighborhoods of today.

This change in scenery and socioeconomic status of students is just one of several staggering changes in the school highlighted by the school's 1968 Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) record, a 246-page document of the school's climate, courses, academic statistics and concerns.

Since WASC's founding in 1962, the organization has asked schools to self-study their culture and campuses and, in return, earn accreditation that verified them as providing adequate educations. WASC is responsible for accrediting the schools in California, Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau and Northern Marianas Islands. If a school isn't accredited, state colleges and universities will not accept its student applications.

In the WASC accreditation process, schools use rubrics to self-study and rate attributes such as school services, personnel, student culture and academics.

During evaluation years, the school, led by a WASC coordinator as a school staff volunteer, prepares a binder full of information collected over the year. The procedure involves several committee meetings where administrators, teachers and select students discuss and evaluate individual reports, which are then summarized into a list of major recommendations. Faculty and administrators then use these recommendations to improve the school.

For example, in response to a 1968 WASC recommendation that the school should continually evaluate how effectively it is achieving its objectives, faculty conducted evaluation studies of graduates' records, collected reports on first and second-semester grades from colleges and set up informal personal conferences with graduates and their parents.

After reading and evaluating the report and visiting the school, WASC gives a term of accreditation anywhere from one to six years based on how well the school meets their criteria.

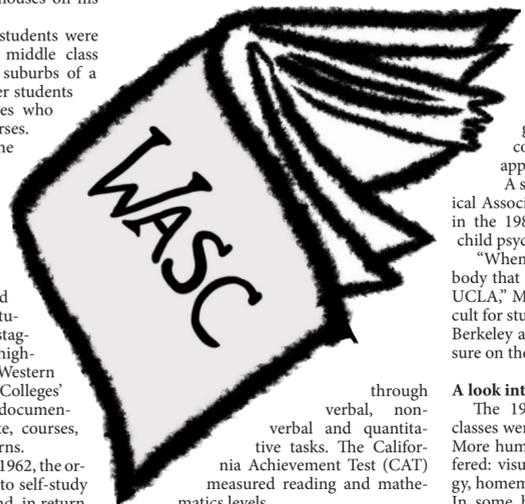
"Saratoga has always gotten a six-year [accreditation term] because they're not too worried about the school in terms of meeting the needs of the students," said now-retired assistant principal Kerry Mohnike.

From outdated language to yellowed pages, the 1968 WASC record on Saratoga High comprehensively describes a seemingly foreign school culture, course selection and system of assessing and placing students in classes.

While there were some similarities between the school in 1968 and now, including low dropout rates and top academics, nearly everything else has changed.

like the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) are currently used to gauge student academic performance and construct a school's profile, a different and controversial test was used then.

In 1968, incoming freshmen and transfer students were administered the Lorge-Thorn-dike test, later renamed the Cognitive Abilities Test, which estimated students' problem-solving abilities.



Intelligence Quotient (IQ) tests measuring students' innate abilities, which were selectively administered to graduating classes, were then separated into two sections: students with an IQ of 115 or above, and the rest of the class. The school then analyzed the percentages of these "upper students" who completed an adequate number of courses in English, math, science, foreign language and social studies.

A teacher who saw the downside of using these tests was Dr. Hugh Roberts, one of the school's original social studies teachers who was hired when the school opened in 1959.

"When I was teaching, counselors would use or misuse IQ tests as one of the measures to suggest future employment or college," Roberts said. "They used them less and less over time."

In the 1960s, enrollment in advanced classes was contingent on achieving a certain score on standardized tests. For example, some classes would administer the reading exam to determine whether a student would qualify for it.

According to Roberts, the school didn't strictly uphold such policies of test-in-class. Admission into more selective courses was primarily based on past teacher recommendations, and students would be given a pretest about material later covered in the course.

"I don't believe I ever refused a student who showed up for a class," Roberts said. "After the pretest and the first set of assignments, if the student's performance was so low that they would do badly later on, I would counsel them to see if they still wanted to try it. If they did, it was their choice."

Unhealthy academic standards since 1968
Even in 1968, the WASC documentation shows that parents had "unrealistically high" aspirational goals for children — but while expectations were generally similar for male and female students, the reasoning differed.

While college education was viewed as a "necessity for the economic success of the boys," girls were expected to have "suf-

ficient" college experience to prepare for a good marriage, an opinion deemed as "important" by 90% of parents of incoming freshmen, according to WASC records.

In 1965, 133 students — 86% of the graduating class — planned to attend college, 23% of which went to state universities. 20% attended state colleges, 19% attended other four-year colleges and 38% attended two-year colleges, with 94% of those students attending West Valley.

Mohnike, who started working at Saratoga High in 1991, believes the school has always been academically focused.

She does believe, however, that student stress levels have grown since the 1990s, since the competitive nature of the college application process has intensified.

A study by the American Psychological Association (APA) stated that students in the 1980s reported more anxiety than child psychiatric patients in the 1950s.

"When I was in high school, almost anybody that had a decent GPA could get into UCLA," Mohnike said. "Now it's very difficult for students to get into colleges like UC Berkeley and UCLA. It's just that the pressure on the seats has gotten worse."

A look into past course offerings

The 1968 WASC report showed that classes were markedly different from today. More humanities-focused courses were offered: visual and performing arts, sociology, homemaking, music and industrial arts. In some homemaking classes, the school taught sociological aspects of family problems. Other offerings included office practice, typing, salesmanship, woodshop and auto shop.

Homemaking, a group of electives taught from 1959 to 1981, sought to "integrate and apply [all the subjects taught in high school] in the daily process of making a home," the report said. Such classes were primarily taken by girls.

Also known as Home Economics, the course involved helping students develop the "appreciation, knowledge and skills necessary" for effective participation in home activities: Specifically, the curriculum consisted of four two-semester courses, teaching subjects from foods, clothing and furnishing to courtship, marriage and family, which prepared girls for marriage.

According to the 1968 WASC records, the average Home Ec student "[came] from a lovely home with progressive parents. They want[ed] help in planning, entertainment and decorating for gracious living."

The course was marketed toward the "less able student" who was usually "discouraged" by the prerequisite of biology, chemistry, mathematics and other STEM classes to apply for college. It stressed the importance of budgeting, using credit wisely and other consumer buying practices to aid students' "expensive tastes for gourmet foods, social graces, flower arrangements and history of furniture and architecture."

Members from professional departments were invited to the school to provide their perspective in homemaking departments. Doctors, parents, nursery school directors, pre-school children and returning SHS alumni were invited to provide different outlooks and ideas for the students. In the food sector of Homemaking I and II, for instance, the school invited butchers to present lessons on meat.

The curriculum for these classes was created solely by teachers and advised by

alumni, institutes and professional publications, as there were no textbooks or state guidelines to follow.

The content taught in other humanities classes has also changed drastically. While World History and U.S. History were still required, the school also mandated civics and sociology for most students while offering Asian History, Latin American History and World Affairs as electives.

The civics class involved students assisting city and state elections by having them campaign to get higher voter turnout. It also focused on evaluating and understanding ballot measures as well as the results of elections.

Similar to how there are currently various levels of the same subject (e.g. regular, honors, AP), some of the social studies classes used to also be separated into "lower level classes" for "less able students," and "higher level classes" for "regular students."

Other electives, such as drafting, typing, shorthand, book-keeping, salesmanship, office machines operation and office operations, were created on the basis of giving "terminal students certain skills that will have market value."

Students taking office-related classes were given on-the-job instruction in the school's office, while other students were provided opportunities in custodial and gardening work.

Another major difference in courses is that students who were deemed "less proficient" through standardized tests were tracked into less challenging classes.

There was an A track for students considered to be likely-college-bound, a B track for students in the middle of the road and a C track for students considered to be "less smart." Students in the lower tracks received less work and learned less than the higher tracks.

"Tracking is kind of antiquated and people now understand that's just not the best way to help people to grow as students," Mohnike said.

Roberts said many teachers fought against tracking because it often caused students to live up or down to their label.

"I was really bothered by having a tracking system at Saratoga High School — it was so intellectually indefensible," Roberts said. "There was a rebellion among the staff and the administration to get rid of those programs."

The movement against tracking started as early as the second year of the school in 1960, Roberts said, and the practice eventually ended in the 1970s. Afterwards, teachers were encouraged to offer more electives to provide more academically rigorous opportunities. The Advanced Placement (AP) classes were introduced to the school in 1984.

School spirit in the '60s

School culture was dramatically different in the 1960s. The married couple, Class of 1968 ASB President Kim and ASB Treasurer Mary Monroe, believe students had much more free time to explore different interests.

For his part, Kim participated in rock 'n' roll bands since middle school, swam competitively for a few years of high school and was part of the football team in his senior year. When he and other candidates were campaigning for school government, they put on skits or other activities in the quad.

Though student activities were more organic, restrictions on student behavior in the 1960s were significantly stricter. Kim recalls how the Dean of Boys — assistant principals who supervised different groups of students based on gender — had refused to let one student graduate with a mustache.

A similar instance happened to another male student with very long hair.

Mary also remembers how she and Kim were told not to hold hands when they were walking down the hallway. The Dean of Girls did not allow female students to wear pants to school and required that their dresses be a certain length. There were also separate P.E. classes for girls and boys. The school's rules generally reflected the opinions of parents in the community.

"I was really bothered by having a tracking system — it was so intellectually indefensible."

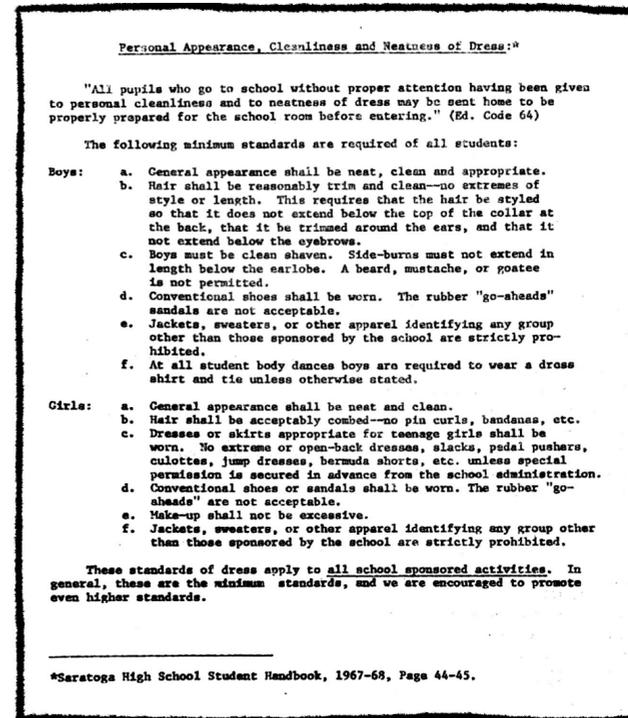
FORMER TEACHER Hugh Roberts

However, parents and students alike "fought like crazy" when "New Math," a learning crusade that stressed conceptual understanding of mathematical concepts over technical computing skills, was introduced to the nation in the 1960s.

While getting into a top college is one common goal for the student body now, Kim said students in the 1960s weren't particularly focused on college admissions. Mary was even advised not to go to college. Even so, both chose to attend college and graduated from UC Santa Barbara in 1972.

Demographics and student activism

Most classes in the 1960s and early 1970s weren't equipped with textbooks. In cases such as the sociology course taught by Roberts, who taught at the school from its opening in 1959 to 1979 and served as the former head of the Social Studies Department, freedom in curriculum structure gave



Dress code standards for the 1967-68 school year, which students were expected to follow at all school events and activities, as described in the school's Student Handbook.

schools, but advocates argued it was needed to allow elderly homeowners to stay in their homes and not be forced out by huge property tax bills that grew as prices increased.

Two students from the Class of 1968, Jamie DeAngelo and Kim, were inspired by Roberts, who was then working with the American Sociological Association on a National Science Foundation grant and writing paperback books on topics such as poverty and racism in America.

1968 was a year rife with political upheaval and civic action, from the Vietnam War to the height of the Civil Rights movement. During this time, many schools on the East Coast held "incredibly active" Black student unions, Roberts said. He and other faculty members also took a day off from work to join an anti-Vietnam War protest in San Francisco.

Interestingly, the school rarely had more than two African American students at a time. In 1968, approximately 97% of the school's student population was Caucasian; of the 1,461 students enrolled, only six were "East Asian" — a far cry from the 60% of Asian American students who now attend the school. WASC records describe the then-minority demographics enjoying the "same socio-economic status as those of the rest of the community," with the exception of a dozen Mexican-American students from farm-labor families.

"Students here felt they had no prejudice," Roberts said. "They didn't even know anyone who was Black."

In an attempt to educate students about racial diversity and to promote active change against racism and override stereotypes, Kim Monroe led a series of student exchanges by bus that year with Overfelt High School's Black student union in East Side San Jose.

"We thought, well, here we are in Lily-white Saratoga and we don't have much connection with other people from different backgrounds," Monroe said.

Three busloads of students from each school traveled to the other school, where they discussed issues pertaining to race in all classes — foreign language, science and mathematics, for example. The day ended with a party and dance.

DeAngelo, another student from the Class of 1968, led a petition of students to change the dress code, which prohibited girls from wearing pants and skirts above knee-length. The petition proved successful in 1970.

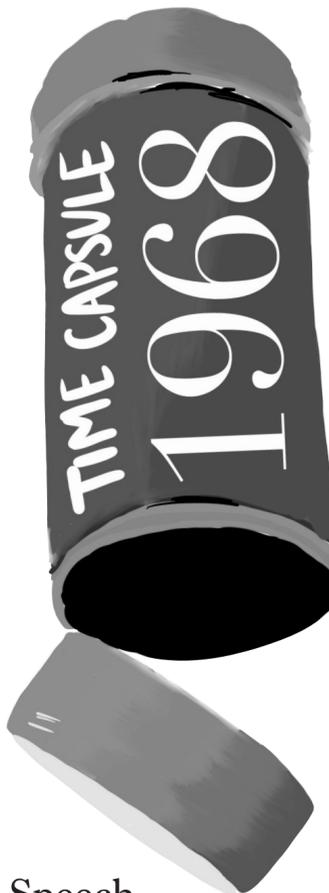
Roberts and his sociology students also investigated discrimination within the community, a practice called redlining. From the 1930s to the 1960s, developers used covenants and other means to keep Blacks and other minorities from buying homes in some majority-white neighborhoods — in fact, one of Monroe's neighbors threatened to bomb his house if his family sold it to a Black family.

In response to this kind of gross discrimination, Roberts created a petition in support of a Black couple moving into Saratoga. An "overwhelming percentage" of Saratoga residents signed.

Students in his 1968 sociology class researched the stereotypes about Black people and other minorities, and broke them down into survey questions to gauge student attitudes on a 1 to 6 scale.

"The results tell you that the degree of strong prejudice in Saratoga has never been that high," Roberts said. "It's been talked about a lot, but it's been mild relative to the total culture in the United States."

The two-page survey, frayed, folded and ripped at the edges, still holds characteristics representative of documents at the time — monospace font on typewriters and ink that bled through. The 1968 WASC records — filled with aphoristic quotes from the faculty committee, administrators' suggestions, observations and reflections regarding the school's philosophy — show how much has changed in the five decades since. ♦



Speech & Debate:



1960



2018

Orchestra:

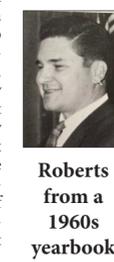
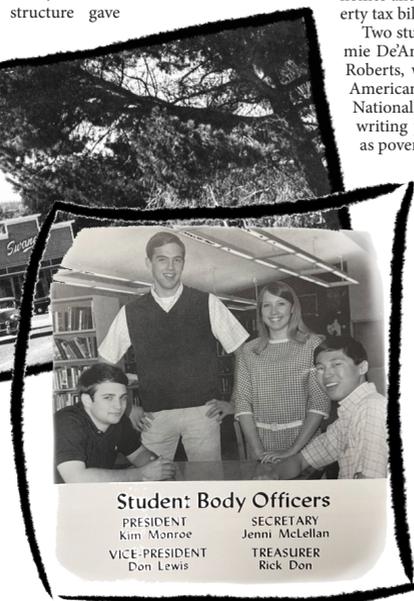


1960



2018

IQ Tests: standardized exams of the past
While state-mandated standardized tests



JOEL SCHNEIDMILLER

SHS ALUMNUS PLAYS PROFESSIONAL VOLLEYBALL FOR DUTCH TEAM LYCURGUS

BY Sarah Zhou

The greatest men's volleyball player in school history, 2017 graduate Joel Schneidmiller, is now playing the sport professionally in Europe.

After SHS, he went on to play at UC Irvine, earning a string of honors, including selection as a three-time National Volleyball Association/American Volleyball Coaches Association Division I-II Honorable Mention All-American. The UC Irvine Class of 2021 alumnus is now playing for Lycurgus, a Dutch professional volleyball team.

Schneidmiller's 9-month contract began in August; the Netherlands was one of Schneidmiller's top destinations when looking at clubs overseas, as most Dutch natives are fluent in English due to the standard education taught in Dutch high schools, removing the language barrier he would likely have faced in some other countries.

Before playing professionally, the 6'-6" Schneidmiller was a star at UC Irvine, where he built strong bonds with his teammates. Still, the bonds differed from those cultivated through playing professionally.

"When I played at UC Irvine, it was a balance between school and volleyball and trying to find time for some personal time in between," Schneidmiller said. "Now, volleyball is my job and basically all I do. Guys come in, work hard, do what they need to do and we go our separate ways, whether that's

to an 'actual' job or back to their apartment."

Playing professionally, Schneidmiller found, requires dedication and focus.

"Playing professionally takes a different level of commitment and love for the game," Schneidmiller said. "You don't have some of the distractions that you have when you're at school. Volleyball is a job and everyone treats it that way."

Every morning from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m., the team meets to lift weights or have morning practice. They then practice beginning at 4 p.m.

Between practices, Schneidmiller relaxes or cooks, he said. He routinely stays in touch with friends and family through various communication platforms.

"Living on my own was the hardest thing to get used to, and being away from my friends and family for nine months takes a toll on my mental health," Schneidmiller said. "But the more I get out and do things or hang out with teammates, the happier I am."

Though members of the team try to spend time with one another, the ongoing pandemic has posed challenges — Schneidmiller tested positive for COVID-19 in December and was quarantined for a week.

Schneidmiller said he began playing volleyball because of his dad, citing that the two would go to Santa Cruz to play beach volleyball. When he was 12, Schneidmiller began playing at the Bay to Bay Volleyball Club in Campbell, which was when he "really started to focus on Volleyball."

"What I love about the sport is the team aspect. In order to have success each person on the court must be doing their job well, or else it's hard to win," Schneidmiller said.

Schneidmiller credits his UC Irvine volleyball teammate, Dante Chakravorti, a starting setter who graduated in 2019, as someone who helped him through his first two years in college.

"Dante took it upon himself to make sure I passed all of my classes while also being our starting setter and having a ton of work to do for his own classes," Schneidmiller said. "We spent late nights studying together after practice. While I hated him during those moments, I am extremely grateful for him and the way he helped me. I would not be where I am today if not for him."

In regards to the future, he is still undecided on his plans after his volleyball career.

"If you asked me [about my goals and aspirations] a year ago I would've said I want to play professionally as long as possible and hopefully make the national team roster in the U.S. someday," he said. "But honestly, I'm not sure where I want to go with this sport. I will definitely need to make some decisions in the near future regarding what I really want to do with the next ten years of my life."

Though his plans for the future are unclear, Schneidmiller's goal while playing for Lycurgus is to enjoy an experience few athletes are lucky enough to have.

"I just want to become the best player I can be during my time here and want to win and make lasting friendships with my teammates," Schneidmiller said. ♦

SHS'S GREATEST MEN'S VOLLEYBALL PLAYER



Schneidmiller

BOYS' VOLLEYBALL

Falcons adapt to new coach, build teamwork

BY Nikhil Mathihalli & Viraa Reddi

After an injury-ridden 2021 season, the recovering team hopes to run back a similar, albeit healthy roster to reach CCS. They started their season with two 3-0 losses against Harker on March 11 and Cupertino on March 16.

Senior captain and outside hitter Andy Tran said the team is confident in their potential, especially with rival schools having lost many of their star seniors.

While the team did lose graduated seniors outside hitter Dylan Li and libero Oliver Ye, Tran emphasized the team's "youth" and rapid improvement gives them an edge over other teams.

According to Tran, many current sopho-

mores have gotten better since last year.

Additionally, unlike recent years, there is a JV team this year. Previously, there was only a varsity team due to a lack of participation from underclassmen. As team captain, Tran has needed to coach JV players to prepare them for varsity.

"We just pick one or two of the players and pull them up to try and get them to our speed," Tran said. "We're really trying to refine one player at a time."

Tran noted that the JV team allowed younger players to gain more experience, allowing them to more easily transition to varsity. Especially with the support of the varsity team, he said that those players will be better developed in future years.

"For example, we have a young freshman this year on JV, [middle blocker] Ryan

Backhus, who is new to volleyball and kind of uncoordinated," Tran said. "If we're able to refine him, he should be able to hit even harder and get his timing right."

"We pick one or two players and pull them up to get them to our speed. We're trying to refine one player at a time."

SENIOR CAPTAIN Andy Tran

The new head coach Lori Gragnola is a Saratoga alum who has coached school and club volleyball for 14 years.

The previous coach, Brendan Chung, who led the team for 3 years, left to coach club volleyball.

"We first thought [Gragnola] had that mom gene in her, where her priority would be trying to get everyone involved vs. trying to win games," Tran said. "Now that we've known her for a little bit, she's very competitive, which is nice."

While Tran said the JV coach Robert Chen is able to establish fundamentals with the overall team, he stressed that individual improvement could only come about with player effort.

Barring any injuries, Tran is confident in the team's ability to reach CCS this year.

"As long as none of our starters get injured, we should have a phenomenal season," he said. ♦

BADMINTON

Led by Mar, team works to develop foundational skills

BY Jonny Luo & Nikhil Mathihalli

The badminton team won 16-14 in a game against Gunn on March 17, ending a string of losses that plagued the team: They had previously lost 16-14 against Lynbrook, 24-6 against Cupertino and 16-14 against Monta Vista.

"These games could have gone better, but we're still very early on in the season and figuring out our lineups," said senior co-captain Enoch Jung.

According to Jung, the team did better against Lynbrook because they had the home-field advantage.

"I think that, in badminton, the court really does matter," said Jung. "The lighting in the gym and the ceiling really does matter."

In badminton, players cannot play the same player twice in different events, so players need to be strategically placed where they will likely beat the opponent. However, lineups often need changes as positions should not be "overkill or underpowered."

Additionally, head coach John Li often swaps players around in different events to give athletes exposure to multiple positions. The team is led by senior co-captain Adrian Mar, who has played badminton for eight years and is currently ranked as the

No. 1 badminton player under 18 in the U.S. He currently plays at the Campbell Bintang Badminton court and participates in school practices when he can.

Mar attends all games and also acts as an assistant coach, where he helps both new and veteran players improve their technique.

"I see the underclassmen as a group of individuals who have a lot of potential to grow, and I am excited to see their improvement throughout the season," Mar said. "They are a hardworking bunch, and it is very fun to work with them this season."

The team faces one significant obstacle: lack of experience. That means the team

has much to learn, according to junior Evan Oaklander.

"A lot of new players [close to one fourth of the 48-player team] have joined that don't really know how to play," he said. "So we're developing as a team right now and trying to raise their skill level."

Despite the early losses, Jung sees reasons for hope for the remainder of the season, especially as the team has already played the top three schools in the league: Monta Vista, Cupertino and Lynbrook.

"It's actually good for our team to face the top teams early so we can gain more confidence as we go along through the season," Jung said. ♦

All graphics by CHRISTINA CHANG

Assistant principal Brian Thompson continues growing his million baseball card collection

BY Arnab Swamy

On June 29, 1980, 7-year-old Brian Thompson peered over the crowd on his father's shoulders to witness baseball sensation Willie McCovey's last at bat at a home game for the San Francisco Giants against the Los Angeles Dodgers. A tense moment was shattered by a crack of the bat, igniting a torrent of screams as the crowd sprung up to see McCovey sprinting across the bases. The Hall of Famer had hit a double off the fence, winning the game for the Giants and sparking Thompson's lifelong passion for the sport.

"I remember how excited the crowd was and how the players ran onto the field to congratulate McCovey," the assistant principal said. "From then on, I fell in love with baseball."

Besides playing the sport, he also began collecting baseball cards — a passion that he has continued throughout life.

Introduction to card collecting

Growing up in San Jose, Thompson was introduced to card collecting by a veteran in Thompson's neighborhood, who cemented the pastime as a neighborhood tradition. Thompson adored collecting Giants cards, especially of McCovey. As an adult, he said

his hobby has evolved into collecting rookie cards of young, promising players called prospects.

Rookie cards are the first iteration of cards created for prospects, and their cards can skyrocket in value. For example, New York Yankees prospect Jasson Dominguez's rookie card was auctioned for \$474,000.

"I love to open cards with my family and add to our collection," Thompson said. "In order to fund it, I play in the prospecting market."

When Thompson was a child, he said that many shopping centers had card shops in them. But with the advent of the internet, most card shops have been driven out of business. With the exception of cards bought at the Stevens Creek Sports Card Shop, which he occasionally visits to support the local business, Thompson acquires his cards through Facebook.

Card collecting has also connected Thompson to fellow enthusiasts across the country through Facebook groups. In a group, a member purchases a large case of cards for a sum, and the rest of the members in the group pay the buyer for a specific team's cards from



Courtesy of BRIAN THOMPSON



Thompson

One of Thompson's favorite cards, which features his nephew Kyle Harrison, the top Minor League pitcher for the San Francisco Giants.

This process is called "box-breaking," and it allows Thompson to obtain far more cards from a single team compared to purchasing a box of random cards. "Box-breaking is how I gain most of my rookie autographed cards," Thompson said. "Social networking is the most streamlined and effective way to get the cards I want."

Building social connections

Thompson's search for completing personal collections and sets is shared by his family and friends. His extensive social networking has introduced him to an

extremely diverse group of people all across America. With this social circle, Thompson completes sets for less money by exchanging cards, connecting with others living in very different situations.

Thompson said much of the money he has made from collecting cards amounts to smart speculation and luck. The card collecting community pays close attention to card manufacturers, who typically create a small number of a valuable card for distribution, polarizing supply and demand.

"It's like buying stocks: You're investing money and time, hoping that you get something worthwhile in return," Thompson said.

For now, Thompson has sorted his inventory of over a million cards into sections. One portion of his collection are cards he is willing to sell to earn a profit to fund collecting.

"[Card collecting] is an expensive hobby," he said. "I don't spend much money, so I sell my inventory so I can pay for what I value."

The other section is of antique and emotionally valuable cards that Thompson wants to pass down to his children.

"I have hundreds of Buster Posey cards I've kept for my fam-

ily," Thompson said. "I also have a personal collection of prospects that I really love, so I'll save those cards and see if they make a name for themselves in the future."

Shaping Thompson's work ethic

Since McCovey's game-winning hit versus the hated Dodgers, card collecting has only reinforced Thompson's love for baseball. He has coached baseball in the Bay Area for a number of years, but as assistant principal at SHS, he hasn't found time to coach and instead oversees all of the school's athletics along with athletics director Rick Ellis.

Thompson said card collecting as a hobby has helped him foster an earnest work ethic. For example, he and his kids have learned to care for their cards by understanding the emotional and monetary value they hold. He said that, with any hobby, card collecting requires intrinsic dedication and passion.

"We have so many talented individuals at SHS with hobbies that have evolved beautifully," he said. "As educators, we get to see the lessons they've learned in the classroom, in clubs and in extracurricular activities. The character building that sprouts from any hobby is very obvious and telling of the love that people have in their craft." ♦

BASEBALL

Falcons look to win with their well-rounded roster

BY Howard Shu

The Falcons went 4-3 to start the preseason but lost 4-3 against Gunn on March 17 in their first league match. They are looking to dominate the league following their success in the second half of last season.

Thus far, the team lost 6-1 against Sacred Heart Prep on March 12, won 16-6 against Mission at home on March 8, won 5-4 against Del Mar at home on March 5, lost 4-3 against Lincoln on March 3, lost 8-6 against Piedmont Hills at home on March 1, won 1-0 against Gunderson at home on Feb. 26 and won 22-1 against Galileo at home on Feb. 25.

In the game against Gunderson, senior outfielder/catcher Adrian Gecilis won the game after laying out to catch a fly ball. Two weeks later, against Del Mar, sophomore pitcher and third baseman Nathan Lee hit a game-winning, walk-off triple.

For the first two matches the team played, there were three players missing as they were wrapping up with winter sports, but the Falcons now have a full team available to play. Senior catcher and first baseman Derek Casini said they have had good defense and pitching behind solid performances by Junior shortstop and pitcher Lucas Dennis, but believes the team still needs to get better staying out of their own heads.

"[Our performances] are kind of where we want them to be right now," Casini said. "I imagine as the season keeps going on, we're going to keep getting better."

Casini said their CCS goals are more probable this year because the team moved down to the El Camino league from the De Anza league last year. The team has also been bolstered by new head coach Jason Bugg, who played college baseball for San Jose State and minor league baseball on the affiliate team for the Atlanta Braves. He has

had around 20 years with the San Jose State team and other high school teams, and is replacing former head coach Sean Hodson.

"[Coach Bugg] has been pushing us to new limits that a lot of us probably didn't think we could get to," Casini said.

"We have a lot of good underclassmen coming up and a lot of them have played baseball their entire lives."

JUNIOR Max Timmons

The team has also seen more participation from the freshman class this year than in previous years. Though all the freshmen are put on JV initially, Dennis is confident

that many will get pulled up to varsity at some point in the season.

Junior outfielder and catcher Max Timmons believes freshmen and sophomores, despite inexperience, will be key players for varsity sometime in the near future.

"We have a lot of good underclassmen coming up and a lot of them have played baseball their entire lives," Max said. "We don't really have to teach them how to play; they're just coming in and helping."

Even with a new coach and new underclassmen players, Dennis believes the team morale and chemistry is similar to what it was in the second half of last season, especially since many team members have been playing together since their freshman year.

"We could go really far. I think our immediate goal would be to win the league," Dennis said. "Obviously, CCS is looming behind that, but we'll take it one game at a time." ♦

SOFTBALL

Increasing participation fosters growing enthusiasm

BY Lynn Dai & Victoria Hu

After last year's short-staffed season, the softball team has returned with a larger roster. They hope to train new players in a supportive environment and find their footing working together as a team.

According to senior captain Arya Taymuree, last year was a "strange time," as some players were at school for hybrid learning, while others were coming to practices from home. Due to COVID protocols and the rearrangement of sports seasons, the team was undersized and there was no JV team — many softball players chose to partake in other sports such as track, she said.

This season, the team's roster has grown

to 10 players on varsity (five new players) and 10 players (nine new players) on JV compared to last year's 13-member varsity team. Some will be "going back and forth between JV and varsity."

The team is training in hopes of back-to-back making CCS. Last year, they opted out of the playoffs because the seniors did not want to risk contracting COVID-19.

During practices, the team splits into infielders and outfielders to drill various skills such as throwing, catching, batting and fielding. COVID-19 restrictions mandate that players wear masks inside the dugout, but masks are optional on the field.

"For varsity, we're cleaning up our own

skills, polishing them and getting back into our normal rhythm of playing softball," Taymuree said. "A big thing right now is just learning how to work together as a team, because there are a couple of new faces."

As one of four team captains, Taymuree hopes to encourage new players, build team confidence and foster a healthy learning environment as past captains have done.

Sophomore outfielder Ariana Tootoonchi, who is beginning her first year on the softball team, found the team to be supportive.

The team has practiced scrimmages within themselves in order to prepare for future games, Tootoonchi said. The Fal-

cons played their first scrimmage on Feb. 17 against Los Gatos, a team placed in a higher division, where they lost. However, Tootoonchi found her first scrimmage to be a nerve-racking but fun experience.

While the team's first preseason game on March 3 against San Jose High was postponed due to their team not having enough players, she looks forward to future games in Santa Cruz and far distance tournaments. Their next game is scheduled for March 14 against Lincoln High School. Overall, the team has a positive outlook on the upcoming season.

"Each day we've been getting better and better," Tootoonchi said. "So it's really just the confidence and motivation that we need to keep up." ♦



Taymuree

BOYS' LACROSSE

Fueled by early wins, Falcons hope for a dominant season



Courtesy of NOW & FOREVER STUDIOS

During a home game on March 1 against Woodside High School, senior Zachary Joe dodges past defenders, cradling the ball into opposing territory, allowing the team to win 8-1.

By Lena Aribi & Meher Bhatnagar

The Falcons won their first four league games starting with a dominant 9-1 preseason opening win against Latino College Preparatory Academy on Feb. 17.

They won 6-2 in a home game against Leland High School on March 15, 9-8 in a home game against Aragon High School on March 10, 13-4 in an away game against Pioneer High School on March 8 and 8-1 in a home game against Woodside High School on March 1.

While last year, in an attempt to decrease COVID-19 transmission, the number of games the lacrosse team played was halved, the team is expected to play a full set of 16 league games this season.

The team's successes thus far have not been without challenges: Most notably, the Falcons lost eight players to graduation.

"It's incredible how much we're improving [...] It's going to be a great season."

SENIOR Victor Nyden

The team now numbers 21 players, enough to make up a full varsity team with a comfortable number of subs, but not enough to form a JV team, senior attack Nathan Zaragoza said.

Despite relatively low numbers, senior

captain and midfielder Victor Nyden has high expectations for this season as he has seen the players' increasing vigor reflected in their practices and games.

"It's incredible how much we're improving as a team. Yesterday, we had practice and we were running plays that I've never seen us run before," Nyden said.

Midfielder Sawyer Chao, the only freshman on the team, said he has warmed up to both the environment and his fellow teammates. Because the team is mostly seniors, his teammates emphasized guiding him and their newer members through plays, which he quickly adjusted to.

"I am a little scared of getting injured out there because I'm playing against guys two to three years older than me and it's a pretty high intensity sport," Chao said. "Still, I'm pretty good friends with all the other guys and I'm liking the sport, so overall I think I'll be good."

Another slight roadblock at the start of the season was that many multi-sport athletes on the team were unable to attend practices because other winter sports like soccer were still wrapping up.

In spite of this, head coach Jeff Roper said that the team did "a really good job" of working together on both offense and defense. Because of the team's strong early start enabled by their ability to collaborate on the field, Nyden is hopeful the team will make CCS.

"It's going to be a great season," Nyden said. ♦

GIRLS' LACROSSE

With a new coach in tow, team works toward building chemistry

By Stephanie Sun

Following the loss of three seniors to graduation, the team lost 17-1 to Los Gatos on March 9 (with a goal scored by senior midfielder Caroline Keogh) and 13-3 on March 14 against Mountain View (with all three goals scored by senior midfielder Casey Gilligan).

The team faced low participation during their preseason: Eight of 23 athletes returned at the beginning of the season, prompting uncertainty regarding if the team would have enough athletes to field a team. Since then, they have grown to be a 15-player team.

With a fuller roster, the team hopes to improve their overall performance under the guidance of new head coach Alyssa Dunlap.

Dunlap played D1 lacrosse at Vanderbilt University for four years.

Additionally, Dunlap has three years of coaching experience, after work at Stanford from 2014 to 2016.

She is also a co-founder and coach at Verve Lacrosse club.

"We actually didn't know whether we would have a team this year because our old [head coach Mario Lile] left to coach at a club full time in Marin, but I feel like we've all adjusted really well," junior defender Lucy Campbell said.

Campbell added: "She's a very intense coach and you leave practice feeling really accomplished."

Dunlap emphasizes conditioning drills like sprints and 7-mile runs, and the team dynamic has improved in aspects like communication,

Campbell said. Despite their early lopsided losses, Campbell is optimistic about the rest of the season. During practices, the team has been working in the weight room and developing stick skills as well as practicing plays.

After their first match against Los Gatos, the team also switched their practices to focus more on offensive work, Campbell said.

"The entire team worked well together and we support one another," Campbell said. "We really got an idea of where we need to be." ♦



FALCON // ATREY DESAI

Following a 17-1 loss against Los Gatos on March 9, the girls' lacrosse team is working on offense through scrimmages during practice under a new head coach.

Titans of tennis: Siblings leave legacy at SHS and beyond

By Lynn Dai

"He was born on the tennis court," said Sheila Stratakos of her son, sophomore Luke Stratakos, who will be playing for boys' varsity tennis this spring.

She's also the mother of Class of 2020 Monica Stratakos and Class of 2018 Dean Stratakos, two of the school's past No. 1 singles tennis players. Monica now plays for UC San Diego and Dean plays at Stanford.

As for Luke, his mother said, he began playing with tennis balls before he knew how to run.

The family's love for tennis began with their oldest brother Dean. Mrs. Stratakos had dabbled in tennis and she pushed her kids to try out virtually every sport: Dean practiced taekwondo and Monica also participated in various sports including volleyball, baseball, softball, track and field, cross country and lacrosse.

However, all three chose tennis in the end, citing the individuality and personal responsibility of the sport.

"As is the case with many athletes, my sport helps me find balance in my days," Dean said. "It gives me a great outlet for the stressors in other parts of my life such as academics, and it allows me to focus my energy into competition for a few hours each day."

Dean Stratakos: Pac-12 Champion

Having played tennis since age 5, Dean said it has always been a constant in his life. His dedication and drive for the sport also "transfers back" to the rest of his life.

He led the SHS tennis team to an undefeated season in 2017 as the team captain and MVP. Since then, he has won the title of 2021 Pacific Coast Conference (Pac-12) Champion with Stanford, besting a collegiate athletic conference that has won more NCAA national championships in team sports than any other conference in history.

He attributes his success to maintaining a confident and positive attitude, a guiding principle throughout his tennis career.

"Tennis is a very mental sport. You can play tons of matches and practice for endless hours, but if you are not mentally strong, then you will not see success," Dean said.

Dean said his parents have always been a source of unwavering support. Additionally, he said playing on a team at Stanford is drastically different from the largely individual tennis he played in the juniors and high school. He said many of his favorite

memories come from his time on the college team, a sentiment echoed by the Bryan Brothers.

"On our team, we have cultivated an amazing culture that allows everyone to lift each other up, hold each other accountable, and push one another to be better teammates, tennis players and people," he said.

He plans to continue building special relationships and experiences through tennis.

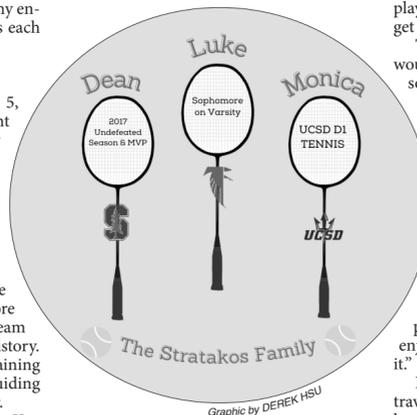
"Tennis is a sport that can be played for life, and I will continue to build lasting relationships through it," Dean said.

Monica Stratakos: deadly lefty since age 3

Monica, who also attributes the mental aspect of the sport as one of the main reasons she loves tennis, trains 20 hours a week, plus overtime for tournaments.

"When Dean and I are both home from college, we practice together and motivate each other," she said. "It's nice to have a built-in hitting partner who doubles as a brother!"

One skill that has gained her an advantage over other players is her lefty spin — it is difficult for right-handed players to play against left-handers because there aren't many of them.



Graphic by DEREK HSU

As such, Monica has modeled her spin after her role-model Angelique Kerber, a left-handed player from Germany. Monica starts off her games with a big serve and pushes through with her lefty spin.

She has been ranked among the top ten in Northern California by the United States Tennis Association (USTA) every since age 10. Since her parents enrolled her in a tennis camp at age 3, it has been one of the



Courtesy of DEAN STRATAKOS

From left to right: Class of 2018 alum Dean Stratakos, sophomore Luke Stratakos and Class of 2020 alum Monica Stratakos. The siblings are a cornerstone of Saratoga tennis history.

most important aspects of their lives. "All of my closest friends have been made through traveling to tournaments across the country," Monica said. "Tennis plays a huge role in my life as it helped me get into college."

The NCAA recently passed a policy that would allow athletes to be paid by sponsors; so far, Stratakos has collaborated with Liquid I.V. by posting about the company on social media for monthly products. In the future, she hopes to collaborate with more brands.

Luke Stratakos: Champion in-the-making

Luke was inspired to play tennis after he saw his older brother taking the sport more seriously.

"Our parents pushed us into it, and I found motivation from my siblings pursuing tennis," Luke said. "We found enjoyment in the sport and I grew to love it."

He has played hundreds of tournaments, traveling to many states, though most are local or in SoCal. Luke currently ranks top 200 in the nation; before the pandemic, he ranked No. 10 in NorCal.

While his siblings played a significant role, Luke said he never questioned why he was playing tennis — his love for competition was always there.

"When you're having a good day and you find the sweet spot of the ball, it's such a nice feeling," he said.

For Luke, being on the court is more

than just a mental relief. It's his way of expressing himself, of "hitting the ball so hard when angry" and reaching a state of happiness and peace afterwards.

"Tennis is a sport that can be played for life, and I will continue to build lasting relationships through it."

2018 ALUM Dean Stratakos

Before the pandemic, he would practice three days a week, two and a half hours each day. While lessons stopped during COVID-19, he continued to practice with his siblings. However, when games started trickling back near the beginning of 2021, Luke had surgery on his left knee, a "wear and tear" injury he had already been battling for a couple of years.

"I couldn't move my leg but I kept hitting because I loved the feel; I didn't want to lose it," Luke said.

Having received full clearance a couple months ago, Luke said he now works on strengthening his body for a full recovery.

"There's been a lot of influence and support in getting me to play the sport, and I love that, but it's just a part of growing up," Luke said. "You got to come to do something you love." ♦

SWIMMING

Broken pool leads to all away meets

By Andy Chen & Tiffany Wang

The swim team's 2020-21 season was characterized by rare triumphs in the face of ever-constant low morale.

The team implemented a split-schedule practice format that minimized COVID-19 exposure but sacrificed team bonding opportunities; athletes livestreamed and recorded their times in an individual digital meet format, rather than competing side-by-side with other schools.

Though COVID-19 protocols have since decreased, the team has continued to face its fair share of challenges coming into the current season including the school pool's pump and filter breaking, preventing the swim team from using the school pool since late February.

Until the repair is completed, which Huynh estimates will be March at the earliest,

the team is practicing at West Valley College (WVC) and all meets will be away.

Practices have been moved from right after school to 4 to 6 p.m. and mostly function like normal, although WVC pools lack flags and the team is unable to practice backstroke, senior swimmer Ethan Chan said.

Even so, senior Brooke Huynh said practices have been progressing well so far, and the underclassmen have proven "surprising fast."

Still, the team suffered a loss during their first meet against Los Altos on March 4.

"Since it was our first meet, people are still getting back into the groove of things," sophomore Jarrett Singh said.

With the loss of graduated key

seniors Peng, Brandon Fong and Taesu Yim, as well as decreased upperclassmen participation, the team faces a challenging season.

She added that many current seniors who had previously swam for the team for two to three years chose not to this season for personal reasons and a lack of motivation, which "is sad for the team because we did have a lot of older teammates who won't be able to hype up the underclassmen."

Although the team may have fewer members, Huynh said practices returning to normal — as opposed to last year's system which split the team into two cohorts — has allowed a more supportive and intimate atmosphere.

"We can actually interact with everyone," Huynh said. "Because of the pandemic last year, we only had two people per lane who would swim on opposite sides — you were pretty much just linked to yourself, which made it a little bit harder because what gets you through the sets is that interaction with others." ♦



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TRACK

Team hits the ground running

By Esther Luan & Harshini Velchamy

Coming off a shortened and COVID-19-ridden season, the track team has seen a steep decline in returning team members: Most of the team is newcomers.

"With COVID-19, fewer people decided to take sports back up in general," head coach Archie Ljepava said. "We have a lot of athletes that are coming out for the first time, so they're just learning how to sprint properly."

"We won't be resting any more athletes, so our next invitationals should go pretty well."

SENIOR Soorya Kuppam

Ljepava forecasts the season to start out rough, but sees a lot of potential in the members — especially with the increase in girls' cross country members participating in distance events.

Also, with the return of star athletes such as senior Giulio Morini Bianzino, junior Yuvraj Singh who were away from practice because of winter sports, Ljepava has high hopes for the main part of the season.

The team's first meet on March 3 at Santa Clara set them off to a good start, according to senior sprinter Amitav Rawat.

Off the back of key performances by star players, the boys' varsity team won 78-43 and the girls' varsity team won 85-34.

Notable performances included Singh winning the 100m, senior Harrison Dance winning both 1600m and 3200m, junior Elizabeth Stoiber getting first in the 1600m, junior Isha Goswami winning the 400m and junior Jalyn Harrigan posting the fifth fastest time in CCS for the women's 300m hurdles.

A second meet on March 10 at Mountain View was less successful; many of the stars, including Dance, were resting.

Singh won the 100m again, junior Jason Cheng won second place in the 400m and senior Soorya Kuppam won long jump.

"We won't be resting any more athletes, so our next invitationals should go pretty well," said Kuppam. "Overall, we've been sweeping our events and have good performances." ♦

BOYS' TENNIS

Sophomore leads singles lineup

By Hannah Lee & Aiden Ye

Ending the 2020-21 season with a short-lived CCS run and a 7-1 regular season record, the boys' tennis team is working toward continuing their momentum and starting the season off strong.

As of March 17, the Falcons have a 2-3 record: a 4-3 loss against Homestead on March 8, 6-1 win against Los Gatos on March 10, 5-2 loss against Gunn on March 15, 4-3 win against Los Altos on March 16 and 5-2 loss against Cupertino on March 17.

In the face of these mixed results, they plan to continue improving their skills.

Additionally, the team emphasized having better mindsets before games and making sure they encourage one another.

While the singles positions have been finalized, including sophomore Kosei Ogata (No. 1 Singles), senior Anthony Zheng (No. 2 Singles), senior Ben Bray (No. 3 Singles) and, sophomore Johan Amirinemi (No. 4 Singles), the team is also still experimenting with doubles combinations.

"Especially with certain players preferring a net-game or baseline game, it's tricky to find the players who work the best together so early into the season," Bray said.

The varsity squad has new additions including freshmen Sarang Narasimhan, Teddy Oyung and Alex Lu, and juniors Luke Wang and Areen Mehra.

"The freshmen are pretty solid, and they're a great addition to the team," said Ogata.

Despite their positive outlook for the season due to strong new additions to the team, the team remains on guard for their biggest obstacles in last year's CCS run, Menlo and Bellarmine.

After their 6-1 loss against Bellarmine two years ago, the Falcons are working toward strengthening the team as a whole and maintaining a good record if they play them later this year in CCS.

"I think with a little more focus and practice, we could easily beat our opponents by going into the game with some fighting spirit," Bray said. "Sometimes players mess around just to have fun because they compete so much outside of the school matches, so I think we just have to buckle down from now for a great season." ♦



Ogata

The Falcon Crossword: All Hands On Deck

BY Bill Yuan

Solution will be posted on saratogafalcon.org this Sunday

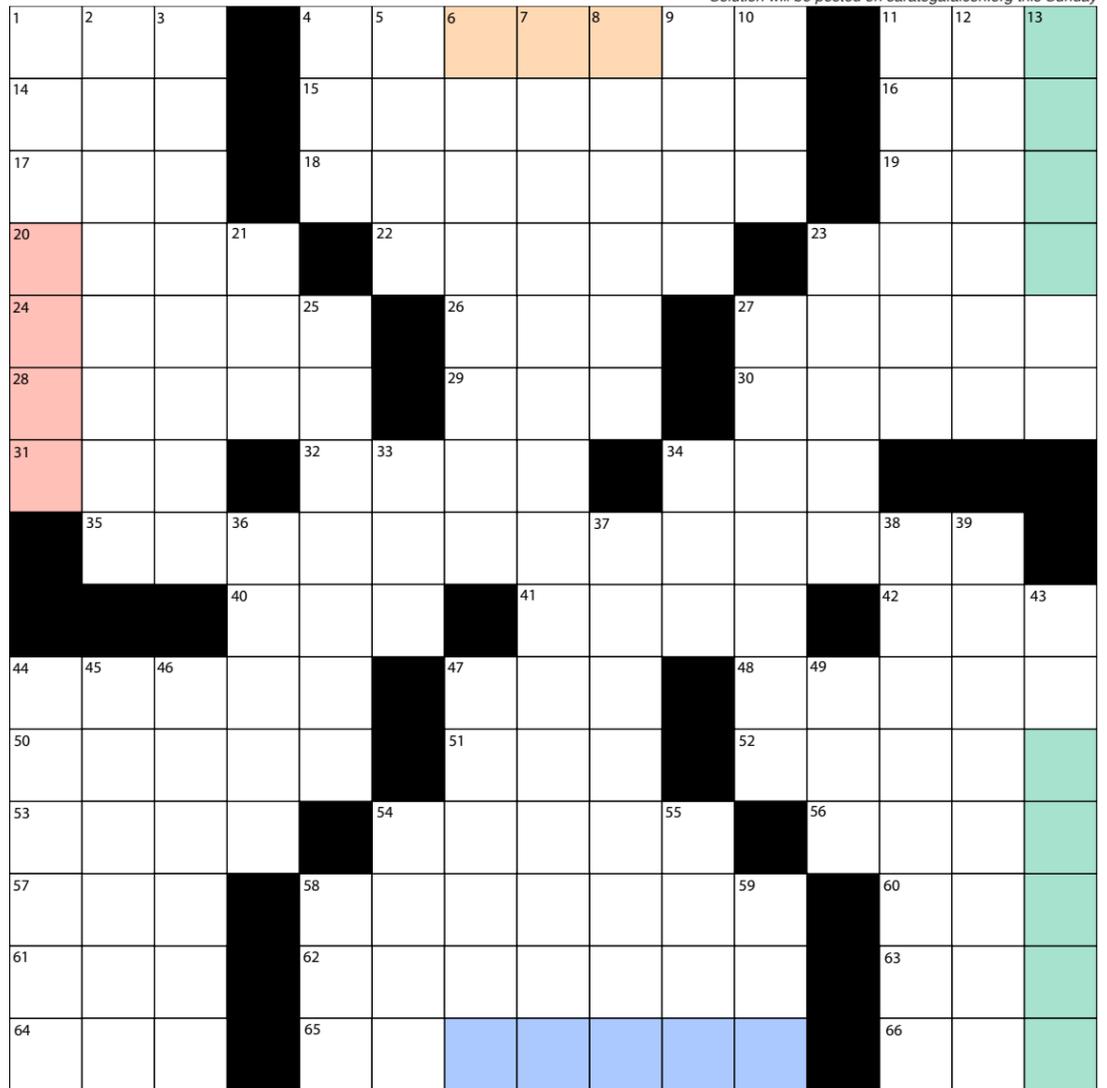
ACROSS

- 1 File extension of a software that gives you an infinite free trial
- 4 Nudged sharply
- 11 Sincerely and not joking, in texting slang
- 14 Unstoppable serve
- 15 Oil change, fluid change and brake change, for a car
- 16 Little bit of ink
- 17 What's recited to the American flag every morning, acronym
- 18 Rises from the ashes
- 19 Capital city of the confederacy, abbr.
- 20 I could, in Spanish
- 22 Farmland units
- 23 "I got the eye of a tiger, a fighter"
- 24 Municipality in the comarca of La Safor in the Valencian Community of Spain
- 26 Latin prefix meaning around
- 27 Stove with several burners and ovens
- 28 Taylor Swift 2012 charity single
- 29 Texting abbr. that might be used to express surprise or concern
- 30 Double-_____ sword
- 31 Brand of borax, abbr.
- 32 Popular review site
- 34 Computer hardware company with a dragon logo
- 35 What the highlighted boxes in 1-Down, 13- and 43-Down, 6-Across and 65-Across point to, in their respective positions
- 40 Commonly used version control software
- 41 Shamu
- 42 Little, in French

- 44 A sacred object, maybe carved in wood and in a pole shape
- 47 Gardner of "Mogambo"
- 48 Dominant energy drink?
- 50 Macaulay Culkin movie Home _____
- 51 Latin prefix meaning "thing"
- 52 Definition of "steal"
- 53 Give off, as an odor
- 54 Person that has no fixed home
- 56 Putin's greatest fear
- 57 In the, in Italian
- 58 8-bit handheld game console
- 60 Brazil, in the Olympics
- 61 Summer cooler
- 62 He's really flat
- 63 What juniors should be asking their teachers for soon, acronym
- 64 Doer: suffix
- 65 Occidental
- 66 Conclusion

DOWN

- 1 Connection established for an interview
- 2 Result you might get when measuring electrical charge
- 3 Overthink, maybe
- 4 Spanish sixth sense?
- 5 To you as well, in Hebrew (gam _____)
- 6 D.R.A.M. vegetable song
- 7 Get better, but too much
- 8 Napa Valley staple
- 9 Response to "What is the extra credit?" ("The _____")
- 10 Famous rapper Gore
- 11 How some like their coffee
- 12 Pillage
- 13 Rubbernecked
- 21 Longoria of "Desperate Housewives"
- 23 Ulnae neighbors
- 25 "Glad I could help!"
- 27 Go back to square one



DM @thesaratogafalcon on Instagram with your solution. First five submissions will get a shoutout!

- 33 New York time
- 34 1200, in ancient Rome
- 43 To disembark
- 49 One billion years
- 36 James Bond, for one
- 37 Expo markers, for example
- 44 Species of tapeworm
- 54 Ex-NBA player Thurmond
- 38 Being a matter of opinion
- 45 Creators of big stone heads
- 46 Bathroom chair
- 55 Couch potato's opposite
- 39 Opposite of a positive beta
- 47 Scents
- 58 Lethal injury, or regional basketball team, abbr.
- 59 Opposite of NNY ♦

Standing up for roller backpack rights

Hu's on a roll?



Victoria Hu

If I were to keep track of the insults I receive on a weekly basis, they'd be about my roller backpack, my (lack of) fashion, my roller backpack, my personality and my roller backpack — and did I mention my roller backpack?

Of all these jabs, the ones directed at my beloved JanSport are the ones that hurt. And despite the controversy surrounding my trusty wheeled companion, I will stand by the fact that roller backpacks are superior to "normal" shoulder-strap backpacks.

The reason is simple: Do you want chronic back pain? If your answer is yes, then yippee — your future physical therapist will be able to get a nice Saratoga mansion off those medical bills! If not, then the logical solution is to invest in a roller backpack. You'll appreciate your own wisdom when you're 80.

Here's a simple experiment: Put a 6 pound math textbook on your back. Then take it off. Would you rather carry the textbook, or not carry the textbook? It's enough for the homework to be weighing on your mind — you don't need that kind of pressure on your shoulders too.

I mean, as a whole, Saratoga kids are already pretty short. And our backpacks are stuffed from all the ill-advised AP courses we take. You don't need to become a hunched little 4-foot homo Neanderthal by letting the 30 pounds of your backpack sit on you like a chubby toddler. By getting

a roller backpack, you can elongate your spine to your fullest height and enjoy being a 4-foot-1 homo sapiens instead.

Shoulder-strap backpacks are pushing humanity backwards in evolution, but roller backpacks? They're the face of the future.

In fact, the recent surge in COVID-19 cases has only made the roller backpack far more essential than before. I'm sure anyone would prefer to keep their distance from the unmasked buffoons running around the hallways and jostling people's shoulders.

The solution? Get a roller backpack — it comes with natural social distancing technology. After all, the long handle and giant lump of space that it takes up effectively deters people from standing too close. I like to think of it as having stage presence and the ability to part crowds.

Imagine a school of fish being scattered by a shark. Imagine Moses parting the Red Sea.

What can I say? Roller backpacks just have that kind of power and influence.

For those who complain about tripping: if you do manage to stomp on my poor, verbally abused backpack and en-

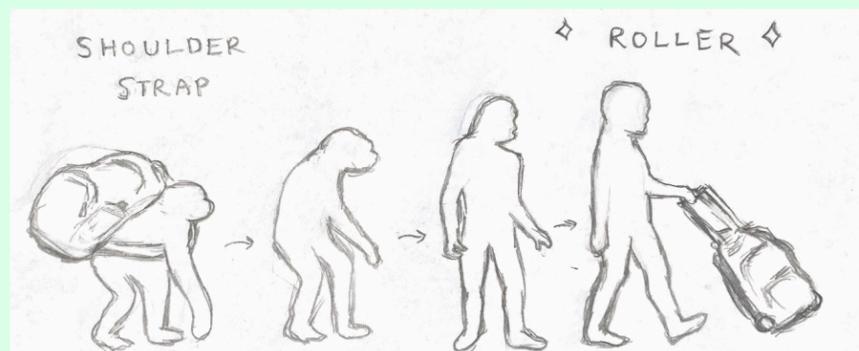
croach on my personal bubble of space, then please stay farther away. I don't want your crusty COVID germs or your anti-roller-backpack propaganda getting within 6 feet of me, thank you very much. That way, you don't trip and neither of us get infected. Win-win.

Critics also say that roller backpacks are annoying to listen to, but music is a matter of taste. Between listening to students moan about tests and groan about grades, why not add a little spice to the campus ambience with that lovely, rhythmic sound of wheels over pavement? At the airport, you can hear the hums of vacation luggage everywhere and I've never heard the TSA guy complain.

Roller backpacks do not deserve slander and hate when their beloved cousin, the roller luggage, is acknowledged by all. Nobody carries their entire luggage on two straps.

Honestly, we all went through a Zuca phase in 3rd grade for a reason: roller backpacks reign supreme.

It's time to choose logic and no medical bills. It's time to embrace the innocence and unstrained spines of our childhoods. It's time to choose roller backpacks. ♦



Graphic by VICTORIA HU

topten

FONTS

- 10 **Courier Prime.** The type-writer style looks interesting, but isn't very practical for most purposes, unless you're writing a screenplay.
- 9 **Helvetica.** It's just an Arial clone with a longer name. There is no point switching to Helvetica when Arial is selected by default.
- 8 **Comic Sans.** A font universally loved by all.
- 7 
- 6 **Impact. Throwback to the 2013 memes.**
- 5 **Oswald.** Unique, compact style, but does not perform well when used in body text because it is so narrow.
- 4 **Verdana.** Similar to Arial, but its wider appearance makes it more unique and easy to read.
- 3 **Times New Roman.** Used in MLA format, it's nice, concise and professional.
- 2 **Arial.** Google's default font is relatively large, perfect for filling up those pesky 2-page assignments.
- 1 **Minion Pro.** The font is used for The Saratoga Falcon's body text, making it objectively the best font.

>> Andrew Lin and Atrey Desai